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Children of Alchemy: (Un)Covering
the Significance of the Hermetic Art in Literary Texts, East and West

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Comparative Literature

by

Angela Ann Chi Chung

December 2013

Dissertation Committee:
Dr. Yenna Wu, Chairperson
Dr. George Haggerty
Dr. Sabine Doran

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The Dissertation of Angela Ann Chi Chung is approved:

Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

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Dedication

To my parents

for their encouragement, support, and patience

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Children of Alchemy: (Un)Covering
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by

Angela Ann Chi Chung

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Comparative Literature
University of California, Riverside, December 2013
Dr. Yenna Wu, Chairperson

If hermetic texts are inherently “intertextual” as David Meakin has stated, then literary works referencing alchemy might also contain this same “intertextuality.” Reading such literary works together with alchemical texts would thus appear to be a fruitful endeavor. The significance of alchemy on literary works, however, has rarely been discussed, likely because a working knowledge of the hermetic art is required before undertaking any comprehensive analysis. The aim of this work is therefore to closely read several literary texts with the “will” to interpret them in what Karen Pinkus has termed a decidedly “alchemical key.”

The texts chosen falls into two general categories. First, texts that refer to alchemy explicitly: *The Journey to the West*, E. T. A. Hoffmann’s “The Golden Pot,” and William Godwin’s *St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century*. Our investigation here will reveal that the extent of alchemy’s significance in these texts would be lost to a reader who is not familiar with the alchemical tradition. Second, texts that do not refer to

alchemy at all but, as we shall see, are in fact extremely alchemical: Ludwig Tieck's "The Runenberg," Hoffmann's "The Mines of Falun," Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, and Sigmund Freud's *Totem and Taboo*.

The analysis undertaken indicates that literary texts referencing alchemy appear to become "intertextual" once they refer to the hermetic art. To read such texts with knowledge of alchemy will both assist in an expanded understanding of the texts and also enrich the current scholarship. Knowledge of alchemy may, therefore, be useful for further explications of other texts containing hermetic references. Finally, we will discover that it is possible to take a comparative approach with respect to such disparate texts from the Chinese, English and German traditions, as all use one common alchemical idea to comment on the human condition, namely: the figure of the homunculus.

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Chapter I

Introduction: Reading Alchemically and Our *Prima Materia*

Although in the foreword to his alchemical manual, *Opus Mago-Cabbalisticum et Theosophicum*, Georg von Welling apologizes for using “alchemical symbols, terms and phrasings,” he nevertheless excuses himself by pointing out that they would be easily “decipher[able] for those experienced in such things”.¹ While this may be true for the *philosophus adeptus* (that is, the philosophical adept, or adept, for short), as “those [who are] experienced” were called, it is also true that many did not possess the requisite knowledge.² Indeed, it is difficult to see how a reader without any knowledge of the hermetic art, the other name by which alchemy was known, would be able to make sense of texts that were composed entirely of “metaphor, enigma, allegory and riddle.”³ Further, even if a reader was aware that alchemical texts are always “figurative, [and] not literal,” this understanding alone would not be sufficient to decipher the meaning of these texts (G. Roberts, *Languages* 8). At the same time, it is precisely this inherently figurative nature of alchemical texts that makes alchemy so “attractive” and “adaptable”

¹ Georg Von Welling, *Opus Mago-Cabbalisticum et Theosophicum*, trans. Joseph G. McVeigh, ed. Lon Milo DeQuette (San Francisco: Weiserbooks, 2006) xv. Hereinafter cited in the text and referred to as *Theosophicum*.

² Hensing, “Dr. Hensing’s Discourse on the Philosopher’s Stone,” *Theosophicum* 503.

³ Gareth Roberts, *The Languages of Alchemy* (London: The British Library Centre for the Book, 1997) 8.

to literary treatment.⁴ Certainly, the fact that alchemy was still referred to or alluded to in literary texts even after it had been delegitimized as a valid science (a point to be elucidated later) bears testament to this very fact.

Given the foregoing, it is perhaps surprising to note that critics have not generally shown much interest in analyzing alchemical references in literary texts in any sustained manner. As Alexandra Lemberg has noted, there are in fact only a “few minor academic studies” on the impact and influence of alchemy on literature.⁵ Indeed, many critics have been content, especially where they are dealing with a text that refers explicitly to alchemy, to just mention that alchemy appears in the text in question, for example, as a plot device, as a “basis for imagery, simile or metaphor,” or else note that certain symbols used are alchemical in origin, and nothing more; as a result, it is possible to remark that critics generally have not been interested in investigating how alchemy might function in a text as a whole (Linden, *Darke Hieroglyphicks* 24). There seems to be something amiss with this approach, however, for if alchemical texts are themselves inherently “intertextual,” would it not follow that literary texts that refer to alchemy might contain just this same kind of “intertextuality,” even if it just refers to the idea of alchemy itself?⁶

⁴ Stanton J. Linden, *Darke Hieroglyphicks: Alchemy and English Literature from Chaucer to the Restoration* (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1996) 7.

⁵ Alexandra Lemberg, *The Heritage of Hermes: Alchemy in Contemporary British Literature*, Leipzig Explorations in Literature and Culture 10 (Glienicke: Galda, 2004) 9.

⁶ David Meakin, *Hermetic Fictions: Alchemy and Irony in the Novel* (Keele: Keele UP, 1995) 29.

Perhaps the reason for the lack of scholarship relating to alchemy in literary studies lies in the fact that “[s]ince the earliest times alchemy contained, or actually was, a *secret doctrine*,” as C. G. Jung has pointed out in his *Alchemical Studies* (emphasis added).⁷ From this, it follows that a reader would not be able to understand alchemical references in a literary text (especially references that are not made explicit) unless the particular reader possesses a good working knowledge of alchemy in the first place. To read a text with a prior understanding of alchemy to determine whether and to ascertain the extent to which the hermetic art plays a role in the text in question is a type of reading that Karen Pinkus has referred to as “read[ing] in an alchemical key,” which is a kind of reading that also includes a “certain *will* to interpret [a text] alchemically” (emphasis added).⁸ The foregoing is, then, precisely what we shall attempt to do here, that is, to undertake a close reading of several texts with the “will” to interpret these texts in a decidedly “alchemical key.”

This kind of reading is predicated on the idea that a literary text that refers to alchemy conceals within it a secret, in some shape or form, by virtue of the fact that the “secret doctrine” of alchemy is mentioned. As we shall see, the implication of the shroud of secrecy of alchemy on literary works is twofold. First, even if a literary work refers directly to alchemy, the extent of its significance would be lost to a reader who is not

⁷ C. G. Jung, *Alchemical Studies*, The Collected Works of C. G. Jung 13, trans. R. F. C. Hull, eds. Herbert Read, Michael Fordham, Gerhard Adler, and William McGuire (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1967) 122.

⁸ Karen Pinkus, *Alchemical Mercury: A Theory of Ambivalence* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2010) 78.

familiar with the alchemical tradition. Second, references to alchemy in a literary work that does not mention alchemy explicitly would be overlooked since the reader is not even aware that they are there. We will therefore be taking a close look in this work at the roles that the hermetic art plays in these two types of texts, that is, in texts that refer to alchemy openly and in texts that do not explicitly make any mention of alchemy at all.

Our critical investigation will begin with the beloved Chinese story of the Monkey King, Sun Wu-k'ung, in *The Journey to the West*, first published in the late sixteenth century and a text that refers directly to alchemy.⁹ Although critics like Anthony C. Yu have recognized that alchemy plays a significant part in this work since it contains a “vast complex of alchemical ... terminolog[y],” it is worth noting that scholarship in this regard has been limited to just one of the two types of Chinese alchemy, that is, to internal alchemy (or esoteric alchemy, as this type of alchemy is referred to in the West) or “*nei tan*.”¹⁰ However, if it is true that the author of *Journey* has “frequent[ly]” and “skillfully woven the language of alchemy into the fabric” of the text as Yu has asserted, it should also be possible to find references to the *other* type of alchemy that was also practiced in China, that is, to find references to external alchemy (or exoteric alchemy, as this type of alchemy is referred to in the West) or “*wei tan*” in

⁹ *The Journey to the West*, trans. and ed. Anthony C. Yu, 4 vols. (Chicago: U of Chicago P., 1977-1983). Hereinafter cited parenthetically in the text and referred to as *Journey*.

¹⁰ Anthony C. Yu, introduction, *The Journey to the West*, trans. and ed. Anthony C. Yu, vol 1 (Chicago: U of Chicago P., 1977) 36, 42; Anthony C. Yu, “Two Literary Examples of Religious Pilgrimage: The *Commedia* and *The Journey to the West*,” *History of Religion* 22.3 (1983): 223.

Journey (49, 45).¹¹ As we will see, there is in fact strong evidence of *wei tan* in the first seven chapters of *Journey* that narrates “the birth of Sun Wu-k’ung, his acquisition of immortality and magic[al] powers under the tutelage of Patriarch Subhodi, his invasion and disturbance of Heaven, and his final subjugation by Buddha under the Mountain of Five Phases” (Yu, Introduction 15).

After our discussion of *Journey*, we will turn our attention to E. T. A. Hoffmann’s *The Golden Pot: A Modern Fairy Tale* (1814/1819).¹² With respect to Hoffmann, it is extremely interesting to note that whenever critics speak of his works, the subject of alchemy is often mentioned, albeit in passing. For example, Lemberg notes in *Heritage of Hermes*, a work that discusses the influence of alchemy on literature, that alchemical references “frequently appear” in Hoffmann and David Glenn Kropf makes the comment in *Authorship as Alchemy: Subversive Writing in Pushkin, Scott, Hoffmann*, a work that discusses authorship generally and touches briefly on the use of language similar to that used by the alchemists in certain texts, that the “art of alchemy appears frequently” in

¹¹ J. C. Cooper, *Chinese Alchemy: The Taoist Quest for Immortality* (New York: Sterling, 1984) 21; Obed Simon Johnson, *A Study of Chinese Alchemy* (New York: Arno, 1974) 43. In his analysis, Rob Campany states that although references to the alchemical “refinement of the outer ... elixir of immortality” can be found in *Journey*, it is the references to the “inner elixir of immortality” that are particularly accentuated in this text (emphasis added). Rob Campany, “Demons, Gods, and Pilgrims: The Demonology of the *Hsi-Yu Chi*,” *CLEAR* 7.1/2 (1985): 102.

¹² E. T. A. Hoffmann, “The Golden Pot,” *The Golden Pot and Other Tales*, trans. Ritchie Robertson (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992) 1-83. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text and referred to as *Golden Pot*.

Hoffmann as well (Lembert 59).¹³ David Meakin agrees with the foregoing when he states that Hoffmann's oeuvre is comprised of "fantastic stories, sometimes involving quasi-alchemical lore, playfully intercut by mundane bourgeois reality."¹⁴ The fact that Hoffmann should make use of alchemy in his works should come as no surprise, argues Ronald Taylor, since there was a marked increase in the number of secret societies at the time during which Hoffmann was writing, stemming from a resurgence of interest in the "old alchemy of Hermes Trismegist[us]" ("Hermes"), the "father" of alchemy, "through the influence of such earlier mystics as Paracelsus," another renowned alchemist.¹⁵ Indeed, Hoffmann was known to have read von Welling's lengthy *Theosophicum*, and he was not only known to have studied, but was deeply impressed by, Gotthilf Heinrich Schubert's *Ansichten von der Nachtseite der Naturwissenschaft* ("Nachtseite"), in which Schubert discusses the development of the universe in three stages which is relevant not only to Hoffmann's cosmology in *Golden Pot*, but also relevant to the way in which the alchemists also viewed the creation of the world.¹⁶

¹³ David Glenn Kropf, *Authorship as Alchemy: Subversive Writing in Pushkin, Scott, Hoffmann* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1994) 210.

¹⁴ David Meakin, *Hermetic Fictions: Alchemy and Irony in the Novel* (Keele: Keele UP, 1995) 36.

¹⁵ Ronald Taylor, *Hoffmann* (London: Bowes, 1963) 83.

¹⁶ Danny Praet, "Kabbala Ioculariter Denudata: E. T. A. Hoffmann's Ironic Use of Rosicrucianism, Alchemy and Esoteric Philosophy as Narrative Substructures in *Die Irrungen* and *Die Geheimnisse*," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*. 79.2 (2005): 271; Kenneth Negus, "E. T. A. Hoffmann's *Der goldne Topf*: Its Romantic Myth," *Germanic Review* 34.4 (1959): 263; Yvonne Jill Kathleen Holbeche, *Optical Motifs in the Works of E. T. A. Hoffmann* (Göppingen: Verlag Alfred Kümmerle, 1975) 4-5;

Given the above, it is perhaps surprising that Hoffmann's use of alchemy in his works has not been more discussed. Danny Praet is perhaps the only critic in the English language who has undertaken an in-depth analysis of Hoffmann in this regard in his essay "*Kabbala Ioculariter Denudata: E. T. A. Hoffmann's Ironic Use of Rosicrucianism, Alchemy and Esoteric Philosophy as Narrative Substructures in Die Irrungen and Die Geheimnisse.*"¹⁷ As the title of his paper shows, Praet's analysis is limited to only two of Hoffmann's texts, the later *Die Irrungen* ("The Errors," 1820) and *Die Geheimnisse* ("The Secrets," 1820), and he does not discuss Hoffmann's earlier novella *Golden Pot* (1814/1819), which is arguably one of Hoffmann's most alchemical tales. Although a reader with a passing interest in alchemy will be aware that Hoffmann uses alchemy quite explicitly on the surface of his novella, for example, by making references to obvious alchemical symbols so that *Golden Pot* can be said to be a text that refers to alchemy openly, we will also see that Hoffmann uses alchemy on a deeper level to show how alchemy is relevant to the German Romantic notion of the poet-genius and how alchemical cosmology can be found reflected in the way the German Romantics viewed the universe.

James McGlathery, *Mysticism and Sexuality E. T. A. Hoffmann: Part One Hoffmann and his Sources* (Las Vegas: Peter Lang, 1981) 160.

¹⁷ Please see note 16 above for the reference to Praet's "*Kabbala Ioculariter Denudata.*" Hoffmann's use of alchemy in his works has been discussed more extensively in the German language by Kurt Stiasny and Detlef Kremer. Kurt Stiasny, *E. T. A. Hoffmann und die Alchemie* (Aachen: Shaker, 1997); Detlef Kremer, "Alchemie und Kabbala: Hermetische Referenzen im *Goldenen Topf*," *Hoffmann Jahrbuch* 2 (1994): 36-56.

After the analysis of *Golden Pot*, we will continue our investigation of alchemy in relation to the German Romantics by turning our attention to two works, namely, Ludwig Tieck's "The Runenberg" and Hoffmann's "The Mines of Falun," both of which make no mention of alchemy but are in fact particularly alchemical texts.¹⁸ It is perhaps the lack of direct reference to alchemy in *Runenberg* and *Mines* that critics have not thought to analyze these texts in alchemical terms. It is worth noting here that criticism of *Runenberg* falls into the following general categories: a comparison of the plant and mineral worlds, or the organic and inorganic (Maria M. Tatar, Richard W. Kimpel, and Von Lawrence O. Frye), geological analysis (Heather L. Sullivan), religious analysis (William J. Lillyman), analysis based on erotics (Ralph W. Ewton Jr.), and on psychoanalysis, in terms of Jungian archetypes (Harry Vredeveld) and the Lacanian gaze (Alice Kuzniar).¹⁹ Scholarship on Hoffmann's *Mines*, which is in fact an interpolated

¹⁸ Ludwig Tieck, "The Runenberg," *Six German Romantic Tales: Heinrich von Kleist, Ludwig Tieck, E. T. A. Hoffmann*, trans. Ronald Taylor (London: Angel, 1985) 34-55; E. T. A. Hoffmann, "The Mines of Falun," [trans. Alex Ewing, *The Serapion Brethren*, Vol. 1 (London: George Bell, 1908) 182-211]. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text and referred to as *Runenberg* and *Mines* respectively.

¹⁹ Maria M. Tatar, "Deracination and Alienation in Ludwig Tieck's *Der Runenberg*," *The German Quarterly* 51.3 (1978): 285-304; Richard W. Kimpel, "Nature, Quest, and Reality in Tieck's *Der Blonde Eckbert* and *Der Runenberg*," *Studies in Romanticism* 9.3 (1970): 176-192; Von Lawrence O. Frye, "Irretrievable Time and the Poems in Tieck's *Der Runenberg*," *Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch* 18 (1977): 147-171; Heather I. Sullivan, "Collecting the Rocks of Time: Goethe, the Romantics and Early Geology," *European Romantic Review* 10.3 (1999): 341-370; Heather I. Sullivan, "Ruins and the Construction of Time: Geological and Literary Perspectives in the Age of Goethe," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture 30, eds. Timothy Erwin, and Ourida Mostefai (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 2001) 1-30; William J. Lillyman, *Reality's Dark Dream: The Narrative Fiction of Ludwig Tieck* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1979); Ralph W. Ewton Jr., "Life and Death of the Body in Tieck's *Der Runenberg*," *Germanic Review* 50 (1975): 19-33; Harry Vredeveld, "Ludwig Tieck's *Der Runenberg*: An Archetypal Interpretation," *The Germanic Review* 49.3 (1975): 200-214; Alice Kuzniar, "'The Crystal Revenge': The Hypertrophy of the Visual in Novalis and Tieck,"

tale that appears in Hoffmann's *The Serapion Brethren* (a work in which Hoffmann uses multiple layers of story-telling to illustrate his famous "Serapiontic Principle" that imposes the requirement of realism on literary works created by the German Romantics) is relatively scarce compared to the criticism of his other works like *Golden Pot*. Where *Mines* has been discussed, critics mostly undertake a psychoanalytic approach to the tale, for example, in terms of dream (Diana Stone Peters, Elizabeth Wright and Yvonne Jill Kathleen Holbeche), in terms of the unconscious and the death-drive (Taylor, Horst Daemmrich and Kenneth Negus), or in terms of sexuality (James McGlathery).²⁰ Aside from a brief mention of *Mines* as an example of the "faustian pact" in literature by Negus in *E. T. A. Hoffmann's Other World: The Romantic Author and His New Mythology*, no other critic has mentioned the possibility that *Mines* could be linked to alchemy (111).

We will see, however, that the alchemical tradition is referred to in both texts in their use of certain symbols. In respect of *Runenberg*, we will discover that parts of its narrative structure seem to mirror the process by which the alchemists attempted to create their ultimate goal, the *lapis philosophorum*, that is, the philosopher's stone. Although the landscapes presented in *Mines* can be considered as particularly alchemical, the

The Germanic Review 74.3 (1999): 214-228; Alice Kuzniar, "Stones that Stare, or the Gorgon's Gaze in Ludwig Tieck's *Der Runenberg*," *Mimetic Desire: Essays on Narcissism in German Literature from Romanticism to Post Modernism*, eds. Jeffrey Adams and Eric Williams (Columbia: Camden, 1995) 50-64.

²⁰ Diana Stone Peters, "E. T. A. Hoffmann: The Conciliatory Satirist," *Monatshefte* 66.1 (1974): 54-73; Elizabeth Wright, *E. T. A. Hoffmann and the Rhetoric of Terror* (Leeds: W.S. Maney, 1978); Horst, S. Daemmrich, "Hoffmann's Tragic Heroes," *Germanic Review* 45.2 (1970): 94-104; Kenneth Negus, *E. T. A. Hoffmann's Other World: The Romantic Author and his "New Mythology"* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P., 1965).

deeper significance of alchemy in this text will come to light with an elucidation of the relationship between mining and alchemy that shows that both were predicated on the same understanding of nature, together with its functions and its aims. In the discussion that follows, not only will it become clear that there are marked resemblances between *Runenberg* and *Mines* in terms of narrative, characterization, and symbolism, it will also become apparent that the protagonists of both these texts can be considered as alchemists who have achieved the philosopher's stone as well as obtained the secrets to the hermetic art, albeit in different ways. Finally, by undertaking an investigation into the significance of the "stones" in these two texts, we will come to an understanding as to why the idea of "stone" is particularly important for the German Romantics.

After our discussion of the relevance of alchemy to the German Romantics, we will then turn our attention to how alchemy has been used in the English literary tradition during the Romantic period. Our analysis in this regard will begin with William Godwin's *St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century*.²¹ Since *St. Leon* is the "tale" of a man, Reginald St. Leon, who comes into possession of the philosopher's stone with disastrous consequences for both himself and his family, alchemy is thus explicitly referred to in this text. However, most critics consider that alchemy plays a very minor role in this text.²²

²¹ William Godwin, *St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century*, ed. William D. Brewer (Ontario: Broadview, 2006). Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text and referred to as *St. Leon*.

²² There are, in fact, few critical studies on Godwin's *St. Leon* in general. As Wallace Austin Flanders has noted, histories of the novel and studies of Godwin's works usually only mention and briefly touch on *St. Leon*. Wallace Austin Flanders, "Godwin and Gothicism: *St. Leon*," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 8.4 (1967): 533, note 1.

Given Godwin's admission in the 1799 Preface to his novel that he had misjudged the importance of marriage in *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, many critics have read *St. Leon* as Godwin's literary attempt to demonstrate and thus affirm his newfound belief of all the "gratifications that attend upon domestic affections" as an "universal truth" (Godwin, *St. Leon* 83).²³ For example, according to Don Locke, the moral of *St. Leon* is that "[h]appiness and security lie not in powers or possessions but in a life of simplicity, the fulfillment of marriage."²⁴ As a result, the institution of marriage had to be "protected" from "insincerity" as well as the "dehumanized beyond," the realm of "ambition" (Flanders 359).²⁵

In addition to highlighting the importance of domestic affections, critics also call attention to the fact that Godwin's novel should also be considered as an "allegory of political injustice," especially in light of Godwin's depictions of "society's reactions" to Reginald once he is rejected by society for possibly practicing the "diabolical arts" of alchemy (Lembert 58; Flanders 359; Godwin, *St. Leon* 312).²⁶ While it is true that

²³ William Brewer, introduction, *St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century*, by William Godwin (Toronto: Broadview, 2006) 13; Gary Kelly, *The English Jacobin Novel 1780-1805* (Oxford: Clarendon P., 1976) 266.

²⁴ Don Locke, *A Fantasy of Reason: The Life and Thought of William Godwin* (London: Routledge, 1980) 149.

²⁵ W. M. Verhoeven, rev. of *The Travels of St. Leon*, by Pamela Clemit, *Romanticism* 3.1 (1997): 132; William D. Brewer, *The Mental Anatomies of William Godwin and Mary Shelley* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2001) 44.

²⁶ Betsy Van Schlun, "William Godwin's *St. Leon* and the Fatal Legacy of Alchemy," *The Golden Egg: Alchemy in Art and Literature*, eds. Alexandra Lembert and Elmar Schenkel (Glienicke: Galda, 2002) 44.

Reginald was indeed often the victim of injustice in the novel, he was nevertheless guilty of committing “political injustice” himself, for example, in his dealings with his jailors, all of whom he tries (both successfully and unsuccessfully) to bribe. *St. Leon* is therefore a novel that also contains an extensive commentary on “moral corruption” (Flanders 359).

Since Godwin emphasizes the importance of marriage and affirms his views on political justice in *St. Leon*, many critics consider that Godwin used alchemy merely as a plot device in his novel. According to Chris Baldick, Godwin uses alchemy to demonstrate how an “obsession” can destroy “familial loyalties” and relationships.²⁷ Tilottama Rajan, on the other hand, considers that Godwin used alchemy in *St. Leon* as a means to conduct “thought experiments” to support his conclusions relating to political injustice.²⁸ Betsy Von Schlun therefore states that Godwin was not interested in alchemy as a subject per se, but rather as an “instrument of power” so that he could use it to study “its effect on the individual endowed with this power” (45). As a result of views such as these, it follows that Godwin’s use of alchemy in *St. Leon* has not been much investigated or discussed. Indeed, Rajan even goes so far as to query whether alchemy exists in the novel at all since Rajan is of the opinion that the “entire plot [of the novel] is based on the positing of a presupposition [that is, alchemy] that may be groundless” (156).

²⁷ Chris Baldick, *In Frankenstein’s Shadow: Myth, Monstrosity, and Nineteenth-Century Writing* (Oxford: Clarendon P., 1987) 37.

²⁸ Tilottama Rajan, “Gambling, Alchemy, Speculation: Godwin’s Critique of Pure Reason in *St. Leon*,” *Romantic Narrative: Shelley, Hays, Godwin, Wollstonecraft* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2010) 165.

Rajan's view is clearly incorrect, given the ample evidence in *St. Leon* that proves that Reginald did indeed possess the "great secret of nature, the *opus magnum*," that is, the "great work" of alchemy, "in its two grand and inseparable branches, the art of multiplying gold, and of defying the inroads of infirmity and death" (Godwin 53). It is because Reginald is clearly able to create gold and he manages to make himself immortal by alchemical means (by creating and ingesting the form of the philosopher's stone known as the *elixir vitae*) in the novel that Van Schlun acknowledges that Godwin was at least somewhat "concerned with the exoteric side of alchemy," that is, with the "practical work in the laboratories" in *St. Leon* (Van Schlun 44; Lember 36). According to Van Schlun, Godwin in his novel was not, however, overly "concerned with ... the esoteric and metaphysical" side of alchemy, that is, the "knowledge and practice of spiritual transformation" of the adept (Van Schlun 44; Lember 36). This statement raises an interesting issue.

When he was preparing to write *St. Leon*, Godwin researched alchemy extensively beforehand and he familiarized himself with various alchemical treatises, for example, the works attributed to Hermes (Brewer, Introduction 17).²⁹ Given the foregoing, it is highly probable that Godwin must have been aware of the esoteric side of alchemy. Pamela Clemit argues, in fact, that Godwin's research into alchemy "indicates his attraction to the original visions of ... the Hermetic ... traditions" which of course includes the esoteric side of alchemy in addition to the exoteric side, whereas Van Schlun

²⁹ Pamela Clemit, introduction, *St. Leon*, by William Godwin (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994) xviii.

notes that the esoteric side of alchemy in *St. Leon* might be “implied” (Van Schlun 50, 51). If Godwin was indeed aware of the esoteric side of alchemy, would it then be possible to find evidence of this in *St. Leon*? As we will see, it is indeed possible to undertake a strictly alchemical reading of Godwin’s novel which is, after, all, a novel that explicitly concerns alchemy. However, while it is true that Reginald was successful in mastering the exoteric side of alchemy, we will find that he was nevertheless unable to grasp the significance of the esoteric side of alchemy. Further, we will discover that it is precisely because Reginald was unable to attain the esoteric side of alchemy that he should be regarded as a representative of the stereotype of the “evil alchemist” that Roslynn Haynes has identified in her article, “From Alchemy to Artificial Intelligence: Stereotypes of the Scientist in Western Literature.”³⁰

After discussing *St. Leon*, we will then move to Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein: Or, The Modern Prometheus* where we will find that Victor Frankenstein can be viewed in ways that are extremely similar to Reginald in *St. Leon*.³¹ In fact, Haynes considers Victor to be the archetypal example of the figure of many of the various stereotypes of the “scientist” she explores in her article since his story created the “most powerful and most common myth of our time” (243). The fact that Reginald and Victor can both be considered in the same light comes, of course, as no surprise, since many critics have

³⁰ Roslynn Haynes, “From Alchemy to Artificial Intelligence: Stereotypes of the Scientist in Western Literature,” *Public Understanding of Science* 12 (2003): 244.

³¹ Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 1818, ed. J. Paul Hunter, Norton Critical Edition (New York: Norton, 1996). Unless otherwise indicated, all references to *Frankenstein* will be to the 1818 edition of this novel.

already noted the similarities between Godwin's *St. Leon* and his daughter Shelley's *Frankenstein*. According to Gregory Maertz, the "overall design and thematic patterns of *St. Leon* are replicated typologically in *Frankenstein*" since "Reginald's fate is shared by Victor and the monster" and because both novels are "myths of misguided benevolence in which hubristic transgression of social, religious and epistemological conventions is punished by exile from human society."³² Clemit considers the kind of "hubristic transgression" that Maertz describes to be an "image of monstrosity" that links the two novels together while Marilyn Butler states that *St. Leon* and *Frankenstein* not only share the same plot, but also protagonists who are mirror images of each other since the protagonists of these two texts are both "selfish intellectual[s who trade] domestic happiness and marital love for the chimaeras of scientific knowledge, success and power" (Clemit, Introduction xvii).³³ Butler's reference to "scientific knowledge" is particularly interesting for our purposes as this implies that it is not only Victor who is a "scientist" but that Reginald could also be considered a "scientist" as well. However, as will become clear, Reginald was in fact no true "scientist" but rather an alchemist. Since this is the case, and if it is possible that the terms "scientist" and "alchemist" could be interchangeable, it appears that Victor could be considered an alchemist rather than a scientist. Marie Roberts seems to think that this is possible, since she considers *St. Leon*

³² Gregory Maertz, "Family Resemblances: Intertextual Dialogue between Father and Daughter Novelists in Godwin's *St. Leon* and Shelley's *Frankenstein*," *The University of Mississippi Studies in English* 11-12 (1993-1995): 305.

³³ Marilyn Butler, introduction, *Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus, The 1818 Text*, ed. Marilyn Butler (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993) xiv-xv.

and *Frankenstein* to be similar by virtue of their same “emphasis” on “alchemy and the elixir of life.”³⁴

Various critics have, however, disagreed with the assertion that *Frankenstein* is a text that is based on alchemy. John A. Dussinger, for example, states that Victor could not be considered an alchemist since he “show[ed] no penchant for transmuting base metals into gold.”³⁵ Christa Knellwolf and Jane Goodall, as well as Samuel Holmes Vasbinder, base their assertion that Victor cannot be an alchemist on the fact that Victor showed no indication that he was aware of or practiced the esoteric side of alchemy.³⁶ The opinions of these critics, however, cannot hold.

As we will see, alchemy is not only concerned with the transmutation of base metals into gold since it also includes the formulation of the *elixir vitae*; in this work we will also see later that the hermetic art includes the creation of the homunculus as well. Further, the absence of esoteric alchemy does not necessarily preclude the existence of exoteric alchemy (at least in literature); Reginald’s successes in his alchemical endeavors – his creation and use of the philosopher’s stone as well as the *elixir vitae*, while either being oblivious to or ignoring the requirements of esoteric alchemy, clearly

³⁴ Marie Roberts, *Gothic Immortals: The Fiction of the Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross*, (London: Routledge, 1990) 96.

³⁵ John A. Dussinger, “Kinship and Guilt in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*,” *Studies in the Novel* 8.1 (1976): 45.

³⁶ Knellwolf, Christa and Jane Goodall, introduction, *Frankenstein’s Science: Experimentation and Discovery in Romantic Culture, 1780-1830*, eds. Knellwolf, Christa and Jane Goodall (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008) 6; Samuel Holmes Vasbinder, *Scientific Attitudes in Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research P., 1976) 58.

demonstrates this point. It is precisely because of the foregoing that Vasbinder's argument that Victor cannot be an alchemist merely because there was "no hint in the careful preparations Victor performed in the assembling of [the monster's] component parts that he attempted to keep himself pure in the ritualistic sense" cannot be sustained (60). In the analysis below, we will therefore be showing that there is in fact ample evidence in *Frankenstein* that supports the argument that Victor's creation of the monster was more alchemic than scientific.

As we will see, one of the main reasons why Victor's experiments can be considered more alchemic than scientific have to do with the new standards of proof required by the modern scientific community. Although the scientific community did in fact make allowances for the alchemists to submit their work and findings to them for evaluation and "vetting," it soon became clear that alchemy was not only "outmoded," but was in fact a "system" of thought that was the "empty [creation] of deluded minds" so that it finally had to be "discredited" by the modern scientific community at large (Butler, Introduction xxx; Dussinger 44).³⁷ At the same time, it seems that it was more difficult for some of the new scientists to let go of the ancient art of alchemy than they thought since the vestiges of alchemy continued to appear in scientific discourse up to at least the beginning of the twentieth century. We will see that the foregoing was true for Sigmund Freud, whose seminal text on the Œdipus complex, *Totem and Taboo: Some Points of*

³⁷ Warren Montag, "The Workshop of Filthy Creation: A Marxist Reading of *Frankenstein*," *Mary Shelley*, ed. Johanna M. Smith (New York: Twayne, 1996) 308; Glen Cavaliero, *The Supernatural and English Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995) 62.

Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics and the last text that will be analyzed here, in fact contains *more* than just a trace of alchemy.³⁸

It is worth noting here that Freud wrote *Totem* at a time when he was trying to establish psychoanalysis as a valid science that could meet the new scientific standards of proof. As we will see, the means that Freud used to accomplish this was not only to ensure that he used language in *Totem* that would be considered as scientific, but also to attempt to remove all traces that could possibly be linked to alchemy in his text. Indeed, it is astonishing to see how he manages to omit alchemy as one of the major ways by which man attempted to learn how to “control the world around [him]” while readily admitting the role that “sorcery” and “magic” played in man’s life throughout history (Freud, *Totem* 97-98). As we will see, the concepts of totem and taboo as defined by Freud are in fact relevant to alchemy and a careful comparison of these concepts with various alchemical treatises and commentaries will reveal this to be the case.

After our analysis of the various Chinese, German and English texts listed above, it will become clear that these literary texts that refer to alchemy are indeed “intertextual” by virtue of the fact that they refer to the hermetic art. An understanding of alchemy therefore helps to guide the reader through the “maze of intertextuality” that lies within these texts (Meakin 29). Indeed, the hope here is that the readings below in an “alchemical key” will lead to new and fresh interpretations of the texts discussed. From

³⁸ Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1950). Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text and referred to as *Totem*.

this, it follows that knowledge of alchemy may be useful for further explications of other texts as well. In relation to the texts discussed here, we will see in the end, that there is a certain aspect of alchemy that can be found in each of these texts, namely, the figure of the homunculus or the “artificial man” that the alchemists believed they could create.³⁹ The foregoing should come as no surprise, however, given the fact that literature has the “human condition as its prime concern” (Linden 24). Since this is the case, where else would we be able to find better representations of what the “human condition” should be, if not in a literary text that refers to alchemy, the ancient art that dreams of the possible transformation and transmutation of all things including man himself?

³⁹ “Alchemy,” *Encyclopaedia of Superstitions, Folklore, and the Occult Sciences of the World*, Cora Linn Daniels and C. M. Stevans, vol. 2 (Detroit: Gale, 1971) 929.

Chapter II

The Role of Chinese External Alchemy in *The Journey to the West*

In his introduction to *Journey*, Yu states that one of his objectives is to “determine whether the vast complex of complex alchemical ... terminolog[y] in this text bear[s] some organic relation to the action and characters of the story” (36). This indeed seems to be the case since Yu determines that the “supernatural character” and “magical powers” of the monk Tripitaka’s three disciples are the result of “their [individual] success in internal alchemy, in making the inward elixir of immortality” (Introduction 42). While it is true that the later Sun Wu-k’ung, in the subsequent chapters of *Journey*, becomes particularly “adept” at “perceiv[ing] the mystery of alchemical self-cultivation” or *nei tan*, we will nevertheless see that both the birth and initial development of the younger Sun Wu-k’ung are markedly dependent on the principles of *wei tan* instead (Yu, Introduction 48). In particular, we will find that his birth is distinctly alchemical in the external sense and that certain aspects of his early development can be attributed to the process of *wei tan*. In addition, we will also see how Sun Wu-k’ung might have acquired his repertoire of “magical powers” by ingesting “the Elixir, the Golden Pill[,] or the Pill of Immortality” (“Elixir”), the production of which was the ultimate goal of *wei tan* (Cooper 56). Before we can proceed with our analysis, however, we must first have in mind certain aspects of *wei tan* that are relevant to the analysis of *Journey* that follows.

The primary purpose of *wei tan* was the attainment of “longevity” or “personal” immortality (Johnson 43).⁴⁰ To this end, the Chinese alchemists sought to create gold since it was believed that ingesting gold could produce longevity and immortality given gold’s “extreme durability” (Davis and Wu 225; Johnson 83; Waley 4).⁴¹ Alchemistic gold in China was referred to as Elixir, the creation of which not only required particular ingredients but also adherence to certain procedures that would ensure success.⁴²

Although the ingredients for Elixir in Chinese *wei tan* recipes varied widely, cinnabar was frequently mentioned (Waley 15). Cinnabar was considered particularly important in the creation of the Elixir for several reasons. First, because of its redness like “fresh blood,” this mineral was, like gold, thought to be associated with “vitality and immortality” (Sivin 515). Second, cinnabar was, again like gold, thought to be extremely durable and thus also associated with the idea of immortality in this respect (Cooper 69). Finally, Chinese alchemists believed that cinnabar was one of the sources by which mercury could be obtained (Dubs 73). Mercury was considered the other key ingredient in the creation of the Elixir since it could be changed into artificial gold (Dubs 73). According to the ancient Chinese alchemist Wei Po-yang, mercury was a component of artificial gold: “Gold is chiefly made up of sand and derives other properties from

⁴⁰ Homer H. Dubs, “The Beginnings of Alchemy,” *ISIS* 38.1/2 (1947): 64; A. Waley, “Notes on Chinese Alchemy,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies, University of London* 6.1 (1930): 17; Tenney L. Davis and Lu-Ch’iang Wu, “Chinese Alchemy,” *The Scientific Monthly* 31.3 (1930): 225; E. J. Holmyard, *Alchemy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1957) 32.

⁴¹ N. Sivin, “Chinese Alchemy and the Manipulation of Time,” *ISIS* 67.4 (1976): 515.

⁴² It is, of course, entirely possible to think of Elixir as the Chinese equivalent of the Western *elixir vitae*.

mercury.”⁴³ In addition to transforming into gold, mercury was also thought to be able to change into any of the four other metals, namely, “lead, copper, silver, and iron,” that were associated with Chinese alchemy (Dubs 73; Cooper 93). It should be noted here that these five metals were not only considered “alchemical materials” but were also part of the “*Wu-hsing*” theory which related to the “quintet” of “water, fire, wood, ... metal ... , and earth” (Dubs 73; Davis and Wu 216). Also important to the following discussion of *Journey* is the relationship between these “five [elemental] powers, their respective colors, metals, and their respective directions” which is as follows: “earth = yellow = gold = center, wood = azure = lead = east, fire = red = copper = south, metal = white = silver = west, and water = black = iron = north” (Dubs 73).

Once the relevant alchemical ingredients had been collected according to the particular *wei tan* recipe, they were “treated” and “mixed,” after which the mixture was “heated, or roasted, five times, or in multiples of five, up to five hundred” (Wei Po-yang 243; Cooper 94). It is worth noting here that the number five was thought to be particularly imbued with alchemical power as this number corresponded with the “five major planets” in ancient Chinese astrology and the five alchemical metals referred to above (Cooper 94; Holmyard 36). The “heating” or “roasting” of the alchemical mixture also had to be carefully regulated. According to Wei Po-yang, the “flame at the start [of the alchemical process] should be weak, so as to be controllable, and should be made strong at the end” and “[c]lose attention and careful watch should be given so as to

⁴³ Wei Po-yang, “An Ancient Chinese Treatise on Alchemy Entitled *Ts’an T’ung Ch’i*,” trans. Lu-Ch’iang Wu, *ISIS* 18.2 (1932): 241.

regulate properly the heat and cold” (243). This careful regulation of heat was known as “*huo hou*” or “fire-phasing” that sometimes took place in a three-tiered furnace (Sivin 518, 519).

There seem to be different levels or grades with respect to the Elixir. According to another ancient Chinese alchemist, Ko Hung, “[t]he more the Gold Medicine [that is, the Elixir] is heated, the more exquisite are the transformations it passes through.”⁴⁴ In his alchemical treatise, Ko Hung provides a list of various Elixirs, all of which seem to vary in potency and effect (240-241, 243-252, 254-255). The time it took for the different Elixirs to grant immortality ranged from the same day of to ten or even one hundred days after eating. The additional effects of these Elixirs also differed, including the ability to “walk in fire and water uninjured” and the acquisition of various ghosts, spirits, and minor deities as servants (Ko Hung 240, 241). Indeed, it appears that one particular type of Elixir was prized above all, namely, the “Returned Medicine” or “Reverted Elixir” known as “*Huan Tan*” that involved “putting the cinnabar through nine different processes in order to refine it to the highest quality” (Cooper 51; Ko Hung 240).

Success in the creation of the Elixir depended on the strict adherence to a number of conditions that are of particular relevance to this analysis of *Journey*: the Elixir should be “prepared on a famous mountain,” the methods for producing the Elixir should be “learnt directly from the accomplished,” and the “compounder should be on a diet for one

⁴⁴ Ko Hung, “Ko Hung on the Gold Medicine and on the Yellow and the White: The Fourth and Sixteenth Chapters of *Pao-P’u-Tzū*,” trans. Lu-Ch’iang Wu, *Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 70.6 (1935): 236.

hundred days previously and should perfect the purification and anointment of the body with the five perfumes” (Ko Hung 239, 259). Finally, it should be noted that once immortality was obtained by ingesting the Elixir, a person could become what was known as a “*hsien*” or a person who acquired the “attributes and possibilities of a spirit” in body as well as “supernatural powers” (Cooper 23).⁴⁵ There were, nevertheless, different categories of “*hsien*” (Cooper 27). Two of these categories will become relevant in our discussion of *Journey*, namely, the intermediate “grade” of the “*ti hsien* or earthly immortal, who ... chose to remain in an earthly environment” and who “resorted to a famous mountain,” and the “highest” ranked “*t’ien hsien*, the heavenly or celestial immortal who ascended to heaven ... and joined the supernatural spirits” (Cooper 27). With all of the above information relating to *wei tan* in mind, it is now possible to direct our attention to *Journey* and undertake an analysis of the text.

Refining and Purifying a Monkey Created by Stone

After beginning with an explanation of how the world was created, the narrator of *Journey* informs us that “[t]his book is solely concerned with the East Pūrvavideha Continent” in which there was a “famous” mountain named the “Flower-Fruit Mountain” in a “country named Ao-lai” (1:66). In fact, the Flower-Fruit Mountain was so “magnificent” that a “testimonial ... *fu* poem” was composed in honor of it, the contents

⁴⁵ Mircea Eliade, *The Forge and the Crucible*, trans. Stephen Corrin (Chicago: The U of Chicago P., 1978) 113; Joseph Needham, *The Refiner’s Fire: The Enigma of Alchemy in East and West* (The Second J. D. Bernal Lecture, Birkbeck College, London, 4 Feb. 1971) 5.

of which suggest that this mountain is intricately associated with the concepts of *wei tan* (*Journey* 1:66).

We find that the Flower-Fruit Mountain occupies a geographically central location in the world described in the early chapters of *Journey*. Not only did this mountain “[constitute] the chief range of the Ten Islets,” it also formed the “origin of the Three Islands”; the poem confirms that the Flower-Fruit Mountain was “indeed the pillar of Heaven” and the “Earth’s great axis” (*Journey* 1:66, 67). Given its privileged geographical location, it is no surprise that this mountain had the power to “[command] the wide ocean” and to “[rule] the jasper sea” since it is portrayed as being an immortal mountain that has been “in ten thousand kalpas unchanged” once it “came into being after the creation of the world” (*Journey* 1: 66, 67).

Like the Flower-Fruit Mountain itself, the various plants on the mountain were also “unchanging” since the “[s]trange grass and flowers never wither; / [g]reen pines and cypresses keep eternal their spring” (*Journey* 1:67). The inhabitants of the “Flower-Fruit Mountain” also appear to be immortal:

Atop the crimson ridges
Phoenixes sing in pairs;
Before precipitous cliffs
The unicorn singly rests.
At the summit is heard the cry of golden pheasants;
In and out of stony caves are seen the strides of dragons;
In the forest are long-lived deer and immortal foxes.
On the trees are divine fowls and black cranes ... (*Journey* 1:67)

All these creatures are significant from the perspective of *wei tan*. The figure of the phoenix and the dragon in China are two of the “Four Spiritually endowed, or Sacred Creatures” that are not only “fabulous” but also “composite creatures that combine both

the *yin* and *yang* powers,” these “male and female” powers being the complementary “primordial pair” that is crucial to any discussion of alchemy (Cooper 135, 143). The figure of the crane is also related to *wei tan* since it symbolizes the goal of the Chinese alchemists, that is, longevity (Cooper 134). The figure of the unicorn can equally be considered as alchemical owing to its rarity and elusiveness, much like alchemistic gold or the Elixir (Cooper 26). While the other animals referred to in the poem are not usually thought of as being immortal, the poem makes it clear that they are; the foxes are referred to specifically as “immortal” and the deer as “long-lived,” whereas the pheasants and fowls are implied as being immortal by virtue of the fact that they are described as being “golden” and “divine” respectively. Given the fact that “immortal peaches” can readily be found on the mountain, it is no surprise that immortality has been conferred on even these “lesser” inhabitants of the Flower-Fruit Mountain (*Journey* 1:67).

The narrator informs us that, on top of the Flower-Fruit Mountain, there existed an “immortal stone” that became “pregnant with a divine embryo,” eventually “giving birth to a stone egg” that was ultimately “transformed into a stone monkey endowed with fully developed features and limbs” (*Journey* 1: 67). After learning “to climb and run,” the stone monkey “also bowed to the four quarters, while two beams of golden light flashed from his eyes to reach even the Palace of the Polestar” (*Journey* 1:66-67). It is important to note that these “beams of golden light” were so powerful that they provoked the “Jade Emperor” in his “Cloud Palace” in Heaven to investigate their origin by way of instructing “Thousand-Mile Eye and Fair-Wing Ear” to look out of the “South Heavenly Gate” (*Journey* 1:67).

From the perspective of Heaven, the Flower-Fruit Mountain is to the South, which, as we will recall from the discussion of *Wu-hsing* above, represents fire. Since the stone monkey had been created from an “immortal stone” that had been “nourished for a long period” by various celestial and elemental “essences,” including that of the “sun,” it can be argued that the “immortal stone” was “roasted” by a particularly strong fire element inherent in the Southern direction in order to produce the “divine embryo” from which the stone monkey was born (*Journey* 1:67). In fact, even the “ridges” of the Flower-Fruit Mountain also seem to have been affected by this fire since they are “crimson” in color as can be seen in the excerpt from the poem quoted above.

It could, moreover, be argued that the stone monkey is in fact already a type of Elixir at his birth. We noted earlier that the “beams of golden light” emanating from the stone monkey’s eyes were so powerful that they managed to reach heaven. It can therefore be argued that the stone monkey already possesses gold within his very being or that he consists of Elixir even at his inception.⁴⁶ This view can be corroborated by the spatial position the stone monkey occupies. We noted earlier that he “bowed to the four quarters,” that is the four directions of North, South, East, and West, and it is because of this that the stone monkey should be considered as being at the *center* of these four directions; we will recall from the *Wu-hsing* that this central position is representative of gold, the metal most prized in *wei tan*. Although we have seen how the stone monkey

⁴⁶ Yu notes that Sun Wu-k’ung is consistently “identified with ... gold” throughout the whole of *Journey* and that the names of “chin-kung” and “chin-wêng” – both of which begin with the Chinese character for gold – by which Sun Wu-k’ung was also known, are the metaphorical names for lead, another crucial ingredient in the *wei tan* process (Introduction 50).

can perhaps be regarded as Elixir, it is clear that this Elixir is not particularly refined at the beginning of *Journey* and we will see that the stone monkey not only needs further refinement but also that he is further tempered as the story progresses.

The stone monkey initially blends in with the other monkeys on the Flower-Fruit Mountain by “[s]winging from branches to branches, / Searching for flowers and fruits” and “play[ing] two games or three” but soon he undergoes a transformation that will distinguish him from his simian friends (*Journey* 1:68). The monkeys become curious as to the source of the water on the mountain and they soon discover a “great waterfall” (*Journey* 1:69). However, since the “ordinary” monkeys are too afraid to “penetrate the curtain and find out where the water comes from without hurting [them]sel[ves],” the stone monkey volunteers to do so on their behalf (*Journey* 1:70). “[W]ith one leap,” the stone monkey “jumped straight through the waterfall” whereupon he discovered that “there was neither water nor waves inside, only a gleaming shining bridge,” beyond which lay the “Water-Curtain Cave” that had been set up so that it “indeed resembled a home” for all the monkeys to “settle in” (*Journey* 1:70, 71). Like the Flower-Fruit Mountain, the Water-Curtain Cave also seems to be able to confer longevity or immortality on its inhabitants since within it the monkeys no longer needed to be afraid of the “whims of Heaven” or the elements (*Journey* 1:71). As the stone monkey says, in the cave all the monkeys will have:

A retreat from the wind,
A shelter from the rain.
You fear no frost or snow;
You hear no thunderclap. (*Journey* 1:71)

The Water-Curtain Cave also seems to contain another potential for immortality within its walls. We noted earlier that this cave “resembled a home” and, in this ready-made “stone mansion,” the monkeys find “stone ovens and stoves, stone pots and pans” all of which “show[ed] traces of fire” even though it is clear that the cave had been unoccupied for a long amount of time (*Journey* 1:71, 70). In a footnote to the translation of *Journey*, Yu explains that the words, “Cave Heaven,” were often used by “Taoists as euphemisms for their residences”; the implication of this, perhaps, is that the former residents of the Water-Curtain Cave might have been alchemists who had succeeded in making the Elixir and had already ascended to Heaven as *hsien* thereby leaving the cave unoccupied (505, note 8). If it can be argued that the “Water-Curtain Cave” does have alchemical possibilities in this manner, it seems that the stone monkey will be further transformed while he is in the cave. This is, of course, exactly what happens next.

The stone monkey’s reward for braving the perils of the waterfall and for finding his comrades a new home is that he becomes their king. “The stone monkey ascended the throne of kingship” and at that very moment, he “did away with the word ‘stone’ in his name and assumed the title, Handsome Monkey King” (*Journey* 1:72). It can be argued that the stone monkey has not only been transformed from a social perspective, but that he has also been refined from an alchemical perspective. This view is confirmed by the “testimonial poem” that follows which confirms that “the egg [that] became a monkey” not only acquired a “name” but also “elixir success” so that he is able to enjoy an “insouciant existence for three or four hundred years” (*Journey* 1:72).

The transformation from stone to King, however, is not the only change that happens to the monkey whilst in the Water-Curtain Cave. The initial “elixir success” is not enough to satisfy the Handsome Monkey King who soon becomes “a little concerned about the future” because he realizes that in his current state, he is unable to “rank forever among the heavenly beings” (*Journey* 1:72, 73). The Handsome Monkey King realizes that he has to actively seek immortality so that he can be “young forever and escape the calamity inflicted by King Yama,” the king of the Underworld, and the narrator informs us that this realization “at once led him to leap clear of the Web of Transmigration and to turn him into the Great Sage, Equal to Heaven” (*Journey* 1:73). In other words, it seems that in this transformation from King to Sage, the Elixir has further been refined in the Water-Curtain Cave. At the same time, however, it appears that the alchemical possibilities of the Water-Curtain Cave have been exhausted for the moment since the Great Sage has to look for the secrets of immortality elsewhere.

The Quest for Immortality and the Production of Alchemical Elixirs

The Great Sage’s quest takes him to the “West Apragodānīya Continent” where he comes upon another “magnificent” mountain called the “Mountain of Heart and Mind” (*Journey* 1:76, 79). Like the Flower-Fruit Mountain, the Mountain of Heart and Mind is also depicted as being an immortal mountain with “old trees,” “rare flowers,” and “tall bamboos and lofty pines” that have “for ten thousand years grow[n] green in this blessed land” (*Journey* 1:76). In addition, this mountain also seems to be associated with the concepts of *wei tan* since the creatures that dwell there are also alchemical. When the

Great Sage “stood straight up to take a better look” at his surroundings, he saw that there were “immortal cranes” and even a “phoenix” with a “plume with five bright colors,” most likely the five colors of the *Wu-hsing* since the phoenix was thought to “combine the five colors which represent the five cardinal virtues” in Chinese thought (*Journey* 1:79; Cooper 135). Given the fact that the Mountain of Heart and Mind is thus associated with alchemy, it is no surprise that the Great Sage will find someone “accomplished” in *wei tan* there from whom to learn the secrets of immortality “directly.”

The Great Sage is directed to a cave in the Mountain of Heart and Mind called the “Cave of Slanting Moon and Three Stars” where he meets “Master Subodhi” (*Journey* 1:80, 81). It is immediately clear that Master Subodhi has acquired knowledge of the secrets of immortality; not only is he described as “[a]n immortal of great perception and purest mien,” he also possessed a “Buddha-nature [that] could perform all things” since he was “[f]ully tried and enlightened” (*Journey* 1:81). In addition, Master Subodhi should be considered a *ti hsien* because he is an “earthly immortal ... who ... chose to remain in an earthly environment” by “resorting to a famous mountain.” Further, since his residence in the “depths” of the Cave of Slanting Moon and Three Stars, with its “rows and rows of lofty towers and huge alcoves, ... [and] pearly chambers and carved arches,” is reminiscent of the “stone mansion” in the Water Curtain Cave, it becomes possible to compare the alchemical significance of these different caves (*Journey* 1:80).

We noted earlier that the Great Sage was unable to discover all the secrets of immortality in the Water-Curtain Cave and it can be argued that this occurred because there was no one “accomplished” in the Water-Curtain Cave to teach these secrets to the

Great Sage. We will recall that although the “stone mansion” in the Water-Curtain Cave was vacant when discovered by the stone monkey, there was nevertheless the potential for the stone monkey to be transformed alchemically. We will further recall that he was refined twice so that from a stone monkey he was changed first into the Handsome Monkey King and second into the Great Sage, Equal to Heaven whilst in the Water-Curtain Cave. It can be argued that there exists in the Cave of Slanting Moon and Three Stars not only this same alchemical potential but also an even *greater* potential for the Great Sage to learn all the secrets of immortality for several reasons.

First, the Cave of Slanting Moon and Three Stars can be viewed as akin to the Water-Curtain Cave for they are both residences of *hsien*. Second, if this is the case and given what previously happened to the Great Sage in the Water-Curtain Cave, it is highly probable that the Great Sage will undergo further transformations while in the Cave of Slanting Moon and Three Stars. Finally, as alluded to above, the fact that there exists an “accomplished” immortal in the Cave of Slanting Moon and Three Stars from whom the Great Sage could receive instruction “directly” seems to guarantee complete “elixir success” in due course.

The first transformation that the Great Sage undergoes in the Cave of Slanting Moon and Three Stars is a significant one. Not only does he become accepted as Master Subodhi’s “pupil,” he also acquires a “*hsing*” and a “personal name”: Sun Wu-k’ung (*Journey* 1:81, 82). This name is one that is imbued with possibility for further development and transformation since it means “Wake-to-Vacuity”; the narrator’s remarks seem to confirm this when he states that “[w]hen the world was first created,

there was no name; / To break the stubborn vacuity one needs to wake to vacuity” (*Journey* 1:82). Under the tutelage of Master Subhodi, Sun Wu-k’ung does indeed undergo further transformation.

After a period of “seven years,” Master Subhodi offers to teach Sun Wu-k’ung various “Tao[ist] ... practices,” all of which “may result in Illumination” (*Journey* 1:84). However, since these “practices” do not seem to “lead to immortality,” Sun Wu-k’ung initially rejects learning all of them (*Journey* 1:84). These “practices,” however, are extremely interesting from the perspective of *wei tan* since some of the abilities acquired from these “practices” are in fact the exact results of what was supposed to happen after various types of Elixirs are ingested.

According to Master Subhodi, after the “practices” of the “Art” and the “Schools division[s]” have been mastered, one would be able to “[summon] immortals” and “conjure up saints.” These abilities are identical to the effect of the Elixir known as “*Shên Tan*” that Ko Hung describes which, once ingested, will have the result of “the *Hsien*, the maids-in-waiting of the spiritual realm, the ghosts and spirits of the mountains and rivers ... com[ing] in the form of human beings to wait on the person who has eaten it” (240). It therefore seems that the abilities gained from the “practices” of the “Art” and the “School division[s]” can also be granted by way of the Elixir created by *wei tan*. This view seems to be supported by the fact that the other “practices” Master Subhodi describes also seem to refer to *wei tan*.

According to Master Subhodi, the “practice of the Silence division” consists of “activities” designed to “cultivate fasting and abstinence, ... quiescence and inactivity,

meditation ... and a vegetarian diet” in order to gain “entrance into complete stillness, contemplation in solitary confinement, and the like” (*Journey* 1:85). When Sun Wu-k’ung asks Master Subhodi whether these “activities” could lead to immortality, Master Subhodi informs him that the “activities” prescribed alone are not enough since they are “no better than the unfired bricks on the kiln” and that they must be further “refined by water and fire” (*Journey* 1:85). These “activities” are very similar to one of the conditions that must be fulfilled before the creation of the Elixir that we noted earlier, that is, that the “compounder” is required to “diet for one hundred days previously” and to “perfect the purification and anointment of the body.” Further, it can also be argued that a direct parallel is drawn between the “activities” of the “Silence division” and the *wei tan* process since in both cases the pre-conditions of “dieting” and “purification” are not enough and a subsequent process relating to further refinement (especially by “fire”) is required before there can be “elixir success.”

The production of Elixir, moreover, seems to be one of the chief goals of the “practice of the Action division” which includes “experimentation with alchemical formulas ... and forging cauldrons” (*Journey* 1:85). This particular “practice” includes “taking red lead, [and] making autumn stone” which, according to Yu in a footnote to the translation of *Journey*, are metaphors for ingredients considered “indispensable” in the *wei tan* process (*Journey* 1:85, 506, note 6). Although Master Subhodi may have used metaphors initially, he later explicitly refers to “the gold elixir” and it can be argued that Master Subhodi, as one who is “accomplished,” is more than capable of teaching Sun

Wu-k'ung the secrets of *wei tan* so that Sun Wu-k'ung can “be a Buddha or immortal at will” using the methods of *wei tan* (*Journey* 1:88).

The view that Master Subhodi might have taught Sun Wu-k'ung how to make the Elixir seems to be supported by the fact that the “supernatural powers” or *hsien*-like abilities that Sun Wu-k'ung acquires are, like the abilities acquired from the “practices” mentioned above, also ones that can be obtained by the ingestion of various types of Elixirs according to the ancient Chinese alchemists. Sun Wu-k'ung first learns the “Art of the Earthly Multitude, which numbers seventy-two transformations” (*Journey* 1:90). According to Ko Hung, anyone who eats “*Hsien-mên-tzŭ's*” Elixir will obtain the “power to transform himself into anything that he desires” (245). Sun Wu-k'ung also attains the ability to “ascend like mist into the air and fly” which is the same ability that can be gained if one ingests the “medicine ... called *Han Tan*” that will make the eater “light of body” and able to “[fly] on wings” (*Journey* 1:90; Ko Hung 241). Further, according to Wei Po-yang, once the Elixir is consumed, one will “[attain] buoyancy of movement” and be “able to travel great distances” (239). It can be argued that Sun Wu-k'ung is not only able to achieve this ability by “practic[ing] ardently” the “cloud-somersault,” but also because he lives in the Cave of Slanting Moon and Three Stars since Ko Hung states that “buoyancy of movement” can only be attained if the Elixir is ingested whilst “liv[ing] in a *stone chamber* in a famous mountain” (*Journey* 1:91; Ko Hung 254, emphasis added).

Although Sun Wu-k'ung is expelled from the Cave of Slanting Moon and Three Stars soon after mastering the “Art of the Earthly Multitude” and the “cloud-somersault,” it is clear that he has been further refined since he “acquires the body of an immortal” so

that he “can project his spirit, change his form, and perform all kinds of wonders” (*Journey* 1:97). In addition, it seems that he has gained enough knowledge of *wei tan* to make other types of Elixirs after his expulsion so that he can add even more *hsien*-like abilities to his repertoire.

Sun Wu-k’ung shows that he is able to use the “method called the Body beyond the Body” during his battle with the “Monstrous King” who terrorized the monkeys of the Flower-Fruit Mountain whilst he was away (*Journey* 1:97). This “method” consists of his “[p]lucking a handful of hairs from his own body” and changing them into “two or three hundred little monkeys” and can be viewed as an extension of the “Art of the Earthly Multitude” which, as we have already seen, can be acquired by eating the Elixir of *Hsien-mên-tzŭ*.

Sun Wu-k’ung later displays the “magic of body concealment” that makes him invisible (*Journey* 1:141). According to Wei Po-yang and Ko Hung, the ability “to appear and disappear [at will]” can also be achieved if one “partake[s] ... a knifebladeful of the Yellow” Elixir (Wei Po-yang 239; Ko Hung 244). Sun Wu-K’ung also displays the “magic of displacement” that commands the wind which was an ability, according to Ko Hung, that a “great spiritual being” named “Yüan Chün” who had consumed the Elixir possessed (*Journey* 1:101-102; Ko Hung 241).

In addition, Sun Wu-k’ung is also able to “employ the magic of water restriction” so that the “waves ... parted for him” when he wanted to go to the “Dragon Palace of the Eastern Ocean” (*Journey* 1:103). In this regard, Ko Hung states that those who have taken *Shên Tan* will be able to “walk in ... water uninjured” (240). Ko Hung also states

that those who have ingested either *Han Tan* or “the medicine of Wang Chün” will become “invulnerable” and their bodies will not “age” or “decay” (241, 249). Sun Wu-k’ung informs the Dragon King that he has “acquired a birthless and deathless body,” a claim that is duly proven (*Journey* 1:103). After Sun Wu-k’ung is subjugated after causing (much) havoc in Heaven, we are informed that although the “celestial guardians ... slashed him with a scimitar, hewed him with an ax, stabbed him with a spear, and hacked him with a sword, they could not hurt his body in any way” (*Journey* 1:166). Sun Wu-k’ung is also completely unaffected by “fire” – another ability granted by ingesting Elixir as we will recall – and by “thunder” and he manages to endure both with such resiliency that “[n]ot a single one of his hairs was destroyed” (*Journey* 1:166).

From the above it is clear that there is a distinct possibility that Sun Wu-k’ung acquired his supernatural abilities by ingesting various types of Elixir and that he was able to do this by “learning [the methods for the production of Elixir] directly from the accomplished” Master Subhodi. In addition, it should be noted that Sun Wu-k’ung seems to have undergone a “diet” and “perfect[ed] the purification and anointment of ... [his] body with the five perfumes” prior to attaining his “supernatural powers” since he had not only survived during his time in the Cave of Slanting Moon and Three Stars by “eat[ing] his fill of peaches” – another symbol for longevity and immortality in China – and learning “how to speak and move with proper courtesy,” but he had also “burned incense” as part of his daily routine (*Journey* 1:83). It is also important to note that the various Elixirs Sun Wu-k’ung apparently ingested were all produced on “famous mountains.” If it is true that Sun Wu-k’ung learned the *wei tan* procedure from Master

Subhodi on the Mountain of Heart and Mind and it can be argued that he might have continued to make more Elixirs upon his return to the Flower-Fruit Mountain since he continued to increase the number of supernatural abilities once he returned there as we have just seen.

It is also clear that Sun Wu-k'ung has also achieved *hsien*-hood during his development. We noted earlier that even before his journey to the Mountain of Heart and Mind he was able to live an “insouciant existence for three or four hundred years.” Although it can be argued that he could probably be considered a *ti hsien* at this point of his existence, especially since his abode was on a “famous mountain,” the fact that Sun Wu-k'ung did not “cho[o]se to remain in an earthly environment” indicates that he was not yet a true *ti hsien*. Nevertheless, Sun Wu-k'ung manages to “erase [his] name” from the “register of births and deaths” in the Underworld, to “[ascend] to the high rank of immortals from the Sky,” and to ensure that his name is “enrolled in the cloud columns and treasure scrolls” (*Journey* 1:111, 116). According to Ko Hung, the foregoing should have confirmed Sun Wu-k'ung's status as a fully fledged *t'ien hsien* but that does not turn out to be the case since he is constantly referred to as a “bogus immortal” or a “monkey monster” during his stay in Heaven (Ko Hung 254; *Journey* 1:120, 134). Sun Wu-k'ung is initially given a position of the “lowest of the low ranks,” the “unclassified” post of the “pi-ma-wên,” and later, although he is (grudgingly) acknowledged as the “Great Sage, Equal to Heaven,” it is nevertheless an “empty title” and a “rank without compensation,” “official duty or salary” (*Journey* 1:121, 120, 131). It can therefore be argued that Sun Wu-k'ung becomes a true *ti hsien* when he voluntarily leaves Heaven

after discovering the truth behind his appointment in Heaven and he “go[es] back to the Region Below [to the Flower-Fruit Mountain] to be a king” (*Journey* 1:141).

The Monkey as Elixir

Of course, Sun Wu-k’ung does not leave Heaven only because he found out that the other Immortals do not take him to be a true *t’ien hsien*, he leaves because he has eaten all of the peaches in the “Garden of Immortal Peaches” and also because he has stolen and consumed all of the “finished Golden Elixir of Nine Turns” produced by Lao Tzu that were “reserved for ... the next Grand Festival of Cinnabar” (*Journey* 1:135, 143). We have already seen that cinnabar was a crucial ingredient in the production of Elixir and it should therefore come as no surprise that the “Golden Elixir of Nine Turns” was intended to be consumed at a “Grand Festival” to celebrate this very ingredient in *wei tan*. In fact, the episodes that include Lao Tzu in *Journey* are the parts in the narrative in which the process of *wei tan* is most explicitly discussed.

When Sun Wu-k’ung tries to visit the “Most High Lao Tzu” in his “Tushita Palace” located at the “uppermost of the thirty-three Heavens,” Sun Wu-k’ung finds that the “old man” is not there because Lao Tzu was in fact “giving a lecture on the tall, three-storied Red Mound Elixir Platform” (*Journey* 1:141). It can be argued that this “Platform” is probably the same as the furnace in which Elixir was produced and refined during the *wei tan* process. Not only do both the “Platform” and the *wei tan* furnace comprise “three-stories” or tiers, the “Platform” is also explicitly stated as being red – the color of cinnabar and of blood – as well as explicitly related to “Elixir.” It can be argued that the

“Elixir” referred to in the name of the “Platform” is the Elixir obtained by *wei tan* because there is also an “alchemical room” in Lao Tzu’s “Tushita Palace” in which there is “fire burning in an oven beside the hearth, and around the oven were five gourds in which *finished elixir* was stored” (*Journey* 1:141, emphasis added). Sun Wu-k’ung is correct in realizing that he has stumbled upon the “greatest treasure of immortals” since it seems that the “finished elixir” is not just any (old) Elixir, but the “Returned Medicine” or “Reverted Elixir” known as *Huan Tan* (*Journey* 1:141). We will recall that *Huan Tan* was the Elixir that was prized above all other Elixirs because of the extent of its refinement by “putting the cinnabar through nine different processes in order to refine it to the highest quality.” It is surely no coincidence that the full name for this “finished elixir” is the “Golden Elixir of *Nine Turns*.”

It is also surely not by coincidence that Lao Tzu’s abode is located at the “uppermost of the thirty-three Heavens” since he seems to be the only immortal who is able to create *Huan Tan*. We have already noted that Lao Tzu was “giving a lecture” when Sun Wu-k’ung finds his way into the “Tushita Palace” and it is highly possible that the subject of this “lecture” is an explanation of the process involved in the making of *Huan Tan*. Lao Tzu is, in other words, another “accomplished” immortal from which one could learn the secrets of *wei tan*. In fact, the text seems to allude to this with Sun Wu-k’ung’s reaction and subsequent actions upon finding the “finished elixir”:

Since old Monkey has understood the Way and comprehended the mystery of the Internal’s identity with the External, I have also wanted to produce some golden elixir on my own to benefit people. While I have been too busy at other times even to think about going home to enjoy myself, good fortune has met me at the door today and presented me with this! As long as Lao Tzu is not around, I’ll take a few tablets and try the taste of

something new.” He poured out the contents of all the gourds and ate them like fried beans. (*Journey* 1:141)

This passage is particularly revealing with respect to *wei tan* for several reasons.

First, it is clear that Sun Wu-k’ung is aware of the intricate workings of both *nei tan* as well as *wei tan* as evidence by his affirmation that he has “comprehended the mystery of the *Internal’s* identity with the *External*.” Second, the fact that he considered the “finished elixir” as “something [entirely] new” which he had never seen before seems to indicate that although he had mastered the processes for other (lesser) Elixirs as we have seen, he had never produced the highest grade Elixir of *Huan Tan* himself.

Sun Wu-k’ung consumes all of the “finished elixir” like one would eat “fried beans” and, after he is finally subjugated by the celestial guardians, Lao Tzu attempts to retrieve the precious “finished elixir” from his body by “tak[ing] him away and plac[ing] him in the Brazier of Eight Trigrams, where he will be smelted by high and low heat” (*Journey* 1:167). It is clear that the procedure that Lao Tzu prescribes is in fact the same procedure used to create the Elixir by way of *wei tan* and the text confirms this when it later explicitly refers to this method as the “*alchemical* process of Lao Tzu” (*Journey* 1:167, emphasis added). We noted earlier that the “roasting” of the alchemical mixture had to be carefully regulated by “heat and cold” by way of *huo hou* and this is exactly the process that Sun Wu-k’ung is subjected to. Not only was he “smelted by high and low heat,” Lao Tzu also instructs a “Taoist” to “[watch] over the brazier” and a “page boy in charge of the fire to blow up a strong flame for the smelting process” (*Journey* 1:167). Although Lao Tzu is convinced that, by using this method, Sun Wu-k’ung would “finally

[be] separated from ... [the finished] elixir” and that “his body will certainly be reduced to ashes,” this does not happen (*Journey* 1:167).

Although we noted earlier that Sun Wu-k’ung had already “acquired a birthless and deathless body,” it appears that by ingesting the “finished elixir,” his body had become even more resilient so that it became a “diamond body” (*Journey* 1:167).⁴⁷ Lao Tzu thought that he would be able to separate the “finished elixir” from Sun Wu-k’ung’s body because he believed that the “finished elixir” must have “form[ed] a single solid mass” after it had “probably [been] refined in his stomach by the Samādhi fire” that could be extracted (*Journey* 1:167). However, the fact that Sun Wu-k’ung was able to walk away completely unharmed after being subjected to the “alchemical process of Lao Tzu” seems to indicate that the “finished elixir” was not at all separate from his body but rather, that the “finished elixir” is already *part* of him.⁴⁸

The foregoing strengthens our earlier assertion that Sun Wu-k’ung should be thought of as the Elixir itself and the narration seems to confirm this by stating that Sun Wu-k’ung was “[r]efined a long while in the brazier” by “alchemical fire” (*Journey* 1:168, 177). In other words, Sun Wu-k’ung is treated as if he was Elixir even by the narration

⁴⁷ In fact, this reference to a “diamond body” confirms again that Sun Wu-K’ung is an immortal since to possess such a “body” in Chinese alchemy means that “immortality [had been] attained through the transformation of the body.” C. J. Jung, “The Idea of Redemption in Alchemy,” *The Integration of the Personality*, trans. Stanley M. Dell (London: Routledge, 1940) 266.

⁴⁸ Since Sun Wu-k’ung later becomes associated with the element of fire as Andrew H. Plaks has confirmed, it is no surprise to find that his stomach contains a fire that is able to further heat, mix, and refine Elixir. Andrew H. Plaks, “Allegory in *His-Yu Chi* and *Hung-Lou Meng*,” *Chinese Narrative: Critical and Theoretical Essays*, ed. Andrew H. Plaks (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1977) 177.

itself. If this is true, it is therefore no surprise that, during the “smelting” process, Sun Wu-k’ung even permanently acquires the blood-red color of the cinnabar that could be refined into *Huan Tan* itself: “smoke reddened his eyes, giving them a permanently inflamed condition ... called Fiery Eyes” (*Journey* 1:167).⁴⁹ Despite this further refinement in Lao Tzu’s “brazier,” it is clear that Sun Wu-k’ung is still not fully developed as Elixir at this point in the narrative since he must undergo one further process of *wei tan*.

Sun Wu-k’ung is finally subjugated by Buddha who traps Sun Wu-k’ung within his palm so that the “five fingers” were not only “transformed into the Five Phases of metal, wood, water, fire, and earth” but they “became, in fact, five connected mountains, named Five-Phases Mountain, which pinned him down with just enough pressure to keep [Sun Wu-k’ung] there” until “someone ... c[ame] to deliver him” (*Journey* 1:174, 179). It can be argued that Sun Wu-k’ung is subjected to a further alchemical process whilst he is imprisoned under the “Five Phases Mountain.” Not only are the five “alchemical materials” of the *Wu-Hsing* explicitly stated as being present, Sun Wu-k’ung is also provided with “melted copper to drink when he was thirsty” which, as we have seen, is specifically associated with fire according to the *Wu-Hsing*.

In this connection, it is surely no coincidence to find that Sun Wu-k’ung was subjected to the alchemical process a total number of five times in the first seven chapters

⁴⁹ It is interesting to note that consuming “Ch’ih-sung-tzü’s” Elixir will not only bring “immortality” but also “redness to the features and hair” according to Ko Hung (246). The similarities between this “redness” and Sun Wu-k’ung’s “Fiery Eyes” are immediately obvious.

of *Journey*. We will recall that alchemical ingredients in *wei tan* had to be “heated, or roasted, five times, or in multiples, of five, up to five hundred” because the number five was thought to be particularly imbued with alchemical power.

First, we will recall that Sun Wu-k’ung was born from a “divine embryo” contained within a “stone egg” on top of the “Flower-Fruit Mountain” which had been “roasted” by a particularly strong fire element inherent in its geographical location. The “Flower-Fruit Mountain,” in other words, seems to act like an alchemical furnace by producing the “stone egg.”⁵⁰ Second, we will recall that Sun Wu-k’ung undergoes refinement whilst dwelling in the “Water-Curtain Cave” that contains “traces of fire” so that he is changed from the stone monkey to the Handsome Monkey King and finally to the Great Sage, Equal to Heaven. Third, we have seen that Sun Wu-k’ung not only acquires a *hsing* and a “personal name” but also acquires the secrets of *wei tan* and supernatural abilities under the tutelage of Master Subhodi of the Cave of Slanting Moon and Three Stars. Fourth, we will recall Sun Wu-k’ung underwent the “alchemical process of Lao Tzu” whilst in Heaven which seemed to have strengthened him further by fully incorporating *Huan Tan* into his body by mixing this Elixir with the other types of Elixir already in his body. Finally, we have just seen how the “Five Phases Mountain” can be considered an alchemical furnace as well. In fact, it can be argued that this mountain is the furnace in which Sun Wu-k’ung as Elixir can be further refined and, ultimately, perfected since we are informed that although Sun Wu-k’ung’s “evil’s full to

⁵⁰ Here, it is interesting to note that the monkeys eventually “made the Flower-Fruit Mountain as strong as an iron bucket or a city of metal” since this detail seems to reinforce the idea of the mountain as an alchemical furnace (*Journey* 1:102).

the brim[,] ... [his] unfailling ... spirit will rise again” after his “penance” is “fulfilled” (*Journey* 1:179).

It is clear that Sun Wu-k’ung was subjected to the “roasting” and refinement process in the five different types of furnaces just identified as the initial preparation for his long journey ahead as the disciple of Tripitaka; *Journey* is, of course, based on Tripitaka’s “famous pilgrimage” that he took in order to obtain the Buddhist scriptures in India (Yu, Introduction 1). The various wondrous “practices” that Sun Wu-k’ung masters while under the tutelage of Master Subhodi in the Cave of Slanting Moon and Three Stars – for example, the ability to “transform himself into anything that he desires” and the ability to “[summon] immortals” – do, after all, become invaluable over the course of the journey to India since Tripitaka and his disciples are, more often than not, accosted by evil “monsters and demons” who wish to eat Tripitaka’s flesh (as to do so would immediately make them immortal).⁵¹ It is usually Sun Wu-k’ung who uses both his supernatural abilities as well as his keen wits to ensure that no harm comes to his master Tripitaka or his fellow disciples. Given the foregoing, it does not seem incorrect to say that Sun Wu-k’ung’s *real* journey only properly begins after the first seven chapters of *Journey*.⁵² It is no wonder then, that Sun Wu-k’ung would first need to be properly prepared according to the processes of *wei tan* before he can accompany Tripitaka on his

⁵¹ C. T. Hsia, “Journey to the West,” *The Classic Chinese Novel: A Critical Introduction* (Ithaca: Columbia UP, 1968) 126.

⁵² The events that occur during the pilgrimage to India are set out in a total of ninety-two chapters after which *Journey* concludes with one chapter narrating the party’s subsequent return to the East and their individual attainment of true immortality.

pilgrimage. Indeed, it is only during the pilgrimage proper that Sun Wu-k'ung is able to finally to cultivate his *nei tan*, the “inward elixir of immortality,” which is, in fact, a spiritual journey and a “means towards transcendence” that he must undertake to undergo the necessary “self-cultivation” and achieve the kind of “self-perfection” needed so that Sun Wu-k'ung can be properly called a *t'ien hsien*, in both name and spirit, at the end of his journey (Sivin 525).

Chapter III

The Golden Pot: E. T. A. Hoffmann's Very Alchemical P(l)ot

In this chapter we will undertake an alchemical reading and analysis of Hoffman's *Golden Pot*. We will find that Hoffman uses various alchemical symbols, as well as alchemical lore and alchemical color theory extensively and ingeniously in this novella. We will also see that the relationship between Anselmus and Privy Archivist Lindhorst can be understood as a relationship between a student-adept and a master-chemist; indeed, we will also see how Anselmus could be considered as the philosopher's stone itself with Lindhorst as the alchemist who is responsible for the creation of the same. A closer look at the characteristics and goals of a student-adept, however, will reveal that the image of the ideal student-adept in alchemy and the concept of the poet-genius as understood by the German Romantics are very much alike. Finally, a careful comparison of the cosmic myth Hoffman sets out in *Golden Pot* to alchemical cosmology will reveal there are significant similarities between these two systems of thought.

The very title of Hoffmann's novella already gives the reader clues that what they are about to read might be alchemical in nature: the title tells the reader that there is a pot, and it is made of gold. It is commonly known that one of the goals of alchemy was to turn base metals into gold and apparatus like "pots and pans" often appeared in artistic

representations of an alchemist's laboratory.⁵³ The separation of the novella into twelve "Vigils," instead of "chapters," also seems to indicate that there is something unusual about the events that are about to unfold. The word "vigil" evokes images of not only sleepless nights (perhaps even the image of an alchemist tirelessly watching over the fire under his alchemical vessel throughout the night), but it also gives the impression that something miraculous might very well happen. The number twelve can easily be understood as relating to the twelve months of a calendar year, in other words, a full cycle from beginning to end (Praet 278). The number twelve is, however, also significant from an alchemical viewpoint since some alchemists believed that there were twelve individual operations within the three overarching stages of the *opus magnum*: the *nigredo*, the *albedo* and the *rubedo* (Lembert 40). Indeed, we will see later that even the idea of a full cycle is one that is thoroughly alchemical.

There are, of course, other alchemical symbols that appear in *Golden Pot*. A reader with a passing interest in alchemy may notice the appearance and significance of the salamander, a mythical creature associated with alchemy by virtue of its connection to fire, as well as the black dragon which also appears in alchemical lore as a symbol for the base matter that the alchemist will turn into gold.⁵⁴ A reader with some knowledge of alchemy might also be aware that, for the alchemists, a red lily represented the red

⁵³ John Read, *The Alchemist: In Life, Literature, and Art* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1947) 65.

⁵⁴ M. M. Pattison Muir, *The Story of Alchemy and the Beginnings of Chemistry* (New York: Appleton, 1903) 104; Allison Coudert, *Alchemy: The Philosopher's Stone* (Boulder: Shambhala, 1980) 126.

philosopher's stone obtained at the final stage of the *opus magnum*, the *rubedo*. Indeed, alchemical color theory also plays an important role in *Golden Pot* as we shall see. Aside from the colors red and gold already mentioned, the colors green and blue/azure feature prominently in the text, and the colors orange and yellow are repeated several times. All of these colors are, in fact, indicative of or related to various stages in the *opus magnum*. The precious stone, the emerald, is also a recurring motif in Hoffmann's text and we will find that this green stone also holds a particular significance for the alchemists as well. The full import of all these symbols and colors just mentioned will become clear as we proceed now with a close reading of *Golden Pot*.

As many critics have noted, Hoffmann's novella begins on a specific day, at a specific time, and at a specific location: "On Ascension Day, at three in the afternoon, a young man ran through the Black Gate in Dresden" (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 1).⁵⁵

Ascension Day celebrates the ascension of Jesus to heaven; it is a day during which there is a movement from the earthly plane to a higher plane and it is therefore a foreshadowing that Anselmus, the hero of the story, might also be able to make such an upward vertical movement in due course. The number three is imbued with particular significance for the alchemists, since it is the number of the overarching stages of the *opus magnum* as we saw earlier, and also because it is the number of the three principles

⁵⁵ Gwendolyn Bays, *The Orphic Vision: Seer Poets from Novalis to Rimbaud* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P., 1964) 59; Horst S. Daemmrich, *The Shattered Self: E. T. A. Hoffmann's Tragic Vision* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1973) 30.

in alchemy – salt, sulphur, mercury – required to make the philosopher’s stone.⁵⁶ The fact that the action begins in the market at the “Black Gate” (*Schwarzthor* in the German) is also significant by virtue of the color black, since the first stage of the *opus magnum*, the *nigredo*, is characterized by this very color (“Colors,” *Dictionary*).⁵⁷ Although Anselmus believes that his collision with the apple woman and the ensuing scene where “[a]nything that luckily avoided being squashed was scattered all over the pavement” and the mass of “crones” who “surrounded” Anselmus and “scolded him with plebeian fury” is evidence of his bad luck, what he does not realize is that, in alchemy, the *nigredo* is a stage that requires this necessary “return” to “chaos” (Hoffman, *Golden Pot* 1; Meakin 25). This scene at the market thus marks the beginning of Anselmus’ alchemical journey since it is precisely because of what happens in the market that makes him unable to go to “Linke’s Restaurant” to enjoy a “bottle of strong beer” as he originally intended, since he had to give his “small and not particularly well-filled wallet” to the apple woman to compensate her for her split “apples and cakes” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 4, 1). Instead of going to the restaurant, Anselmus goes to an “elder-tree” under which he will get his first glimpse of another plane of existence that is an arguably higher plane of existence compared to his existence in Dresden (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 2).

⁵⁶ Lyndy Abraham, “Three Principles,” *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998). Hereinafter this dictionary is cited in the text and referred to as *Dictionary*.

⁵⁷ E. T. A. Hoffmann, *Der goldne Topf*, 1814, Projekt Gutenberg-De, 25 Oct. 2013 <<http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/buch/3103/2>>; John Read, *Prelude to Chemistry: An Outline of Alchemy, its Literature and Relationships* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1939) 146.

It is significant from an alchemical viewpoint that this “elder-tree” is located next to the “golden yellow waves of the beautiful River Elbe” since gold is the product of the miracle of philosopher’s stone. A miracle indeed happens to Anselmus here in the text, for this is where he catches his first glimpse of Lindhorst’s daughters, “three little snakes, gleaming in green and gold,” the youngest of whom is his destined beloved, Serpentina (Hoffmann *Golden Pot* 2, 5). It is also important alchemically that of all the colors Hoffmann could have chosen for these snakes he would have chosen the color green since the alchemists believed that “weakness of the eyes” could be cured by “gazing upon the emerald” which is of course also green in color.⁵⁸ It appears, therefore, that Hoffmann is suggesting that these little snakes, by virtue of their green color, will have the ability to “cure” Anselmus’ “weakness of the eyes” (a point to be elucidated later) and it is surely no coincidence to note here that Hoffmann refers to the little snakes as “sparkling emeralds” later on in this very same passage (*Golden Pot* 5).

Hoffmann also makes a point to draw Anselmus’ (and the reader’s!) attention to Serpentina’s eyes that are described as a “pair of magnificent dark-blue eyes” (*Golden Pot* 5). The color blue or azure is also important in alchemy, for it is a color that appears just before the final stage in the *opus magnum*, the *rubedo*, and a color which is indicative of the “fifth element” or “pure and incorruptible quintessence” that is produced after the four opposing elements of earth, air, fire, and water are reconciled into “one harmonious unity” in the philosopher’s stone (“Colours,” “Elements,” and “Fifth Element,”

⁵⁸ John Maxson Stillman, *The Story of Alchemy and Early Chemistry* (New York: Dover, 1960) 215.

Dictionary). Given the foregoing, it can certainly be argued that Serpentina, by virtue of her mesmerizing “dark-blue eyes” contains the alchemical “quintessence” within her, thereby making her a thoroughly alchemical being.

The philosopher’s stone was the ultimate goal of the alchemists and, in Hoffmann’s novella it can be argued that it is Anselmus who is both the student-adept who needs to learn how to create the philosopher’s stone as well as the *prima materia* that will ultimately be changed into the philosopher’s stone. Not only did the philosopher’s stone have the ability to transform base matter into gold, it also had the ability to “transform earthly man into an illumed philosopher,” that is, into a true alchemist (“Philosopher’s Stone,” *Dictionary*). Anselmus is, in other words, the “chosen one” and this fact is reinforced early on in the novella by the sun who tells Anselmus that he has “poured [his] blazing gold upon [him],” thereby marking Anselmus as special, especially in the alchemical sense (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 5). Anselmus, of course, does not understand any of this, and it is up to Lindhorst to take on the role of master-chemist and show Anselmus, his student-adept, the correct path to take in order to complete the *opus magnum* as well as transforming Anselmus into a philosopher’s stone along the way.

The Master-Alchemist and his Student-Adept

When Lindhorst first appears in the text, Registry Heerbrand presents him to us as a “Privy Archivist” in the following way:

There is in this town a strange, eccentric old man, who is said to study all kinds of occult science; but as there are no such things in reality, I am

inclined to believe that he is a scholarly antiquary and also something of an experimental chemist. ... As you know, [Lindhorst] lives all alone in his old house in a remote part of town, and when he is not occupied with his duties, he may be found in his library or in his chemical laboratory, to which, however, no one else is admitted. Besides many rare books, he owns a number of manuscripts, some written in Arabic and Coptic, and even in strange characters which belong to no known language. (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 12)

Even with all the evidence that he has just provided, what Heerbrand does not realize is that Lindhorst is in fact an alchemist for several reasons.

First, Lindhorst is understood to be knowledgeable about “all kinds of occult science”; despite the fact that Heerbrand does not believe in such things, he nevertheless recognizes that these “kinds of occult science” bears some similarity to “experimental chemistry.” Like chemistry, alchemy is also based on experimentation and as many scholars have noted, alchemy should be considered as the forerunner to chemistry.⁵⁹ Unlike chemical experiments which are conducted in public spaces like laboratories, Lindhorst’s experiments are instead conducted in secret; Lindhorst’s “house” is specifically stated as being “in a remote part of town” and it is also worthwhile to note “no one is admitted” to his “laboratory” thereby emphasizing the secret nature of his work.⁶⁰ These details seem to indicate that the experiments that Lindhorst conducts are alchemical in nature since Albertus Magnus states in his *Libellus de Alchimia* that any

⁵⁹ Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science: During the First Thirteen Centuries of Our Era*, 4 vols (New York: Columbia UP, 1923) I:198; Justus Von Liebig, “Letter III,” *Familiar Letters on Chemistry: In its relations to Physiology, Dietetics, Agriculture, Commerce, and Political Economy*, 4th Ed. (London: Walton, 1859) 56, 60.

⁶⁰ Steven Shapin, “Pump and Circumstance: Robert Boyle’s Literary Technology,” *Social Studies of Science* 14 (1984): 488.

“worker” in the “art” of alchemy “must be ... secretive” and he must have “a place,” that is, a laboratory, in a “special house” hidden “away from the sight of men” in which to conduct his alchemical experiments (Thorndike II:572).⁶¹

Second, it is also significant from the viewpoint of alchemy that Lindhorst possesses many “manuscripts, some written in Arabic and Coptic, and even in strange characters which belong to no known language” since scholarly investigation into the origins of alchemy has revealed that alchemy was transmitted to the West through contact with the Arabian Empire during the Middle Ages (Lembert 15). It appears highly likely, therefore, that some of the manuscripts Lindhorst has in his possession deal with alchemy by virtue of the fact that they are written in Arabic and in Coptic, an ancient Egyptian language.⁶² It can also be argued that the manuscripts that were written “in strange characters which belong to no known language” are also alchemical since the alchemists were known to have used pictographic symbols “extensively” in their manuscripts to “denote the various metals, minerals, the elements, planets and constellations, processes and procedures.”⁶³ Indeed, Kropf even extends the foregoing argument further by associating Lindhorst’s manuscripts with “The Emerald Table” which is attributed to alchemy’s founding father, Hermes (210).

⁶¹ Albertus Magnus, *Libellus de Alchimia*, ed. Stanton J. Linden, *The Alchemy Reader: From Hermes Trismegistus to Issac Newton* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003) 103.

⁶² Alexandria in Egypt was one of the most important centers for alchemy during the Hellenistic period and the Arabs in fact obtained their knowledge of alchemy from Egypt only after it was conquered by the Muslims in the 7th Century (Lembert 15).

⁶³ Stanton J. Linden, introduction, *The Alchemy Reader: From Hermes Trismegistus to Issac Newton*, ed. Linden, Stanton J. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003) 21.

As stated earlier, one of Lindhorst's roles in *Golden Pot* is to instruct Anselmus in the "art" of alchemy as a "master" or a "mentor" (Negus, *Other World* 54; Kropf 214). The figure of a "master" in alchemy is particularly important Kropf notes, since it is the "master" who "fosters and nurtures the talents of a pupil and who prevents ... the student from being corrupted by the public sphere" (214). As we will see, Lindhorst plays the role of the master-chemist perfectly.

In the Fourth Vigil, Lindhorst stumbles across Anselmus pleading with the "elder-tree" to show him "his fair beloved, the little green and gold snake" again (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 22). Anselmus then tells Lindhorst of the wonderful things he saw during Ascension Day and, although he is *almost* convinced that what he saw was real, Anselmus admits to Lindhorst that he nevertheless has a shadow of doubt in his mind that what he saw could have been the "product of [his] overheated imagination" (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 23). Lindhorst, however, assures Anselmus that what he saw *was* real, and he even reveals to Anselmus that the snake he has fallen in love with is none other than his "youngest [daughter], whose name is Serpentina" (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 23). To reinforce the truth of the matter to Anselmus, Lindhorst then shows Anselmus his "ring with a wondrous, sparkling, flaming stone," and it is in this "shining crystal mirror" that Anselmus sees the "three green and gold snakes" again, "dancing and coiling," shortly after which "the snake in the middle stretched her head right out of the mirror ... and her dark-blue eyes said [to him]: 'Do you know me – can you believe in me, Anselmus? Only in faith is there love – can you really love?'" (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 23, 24).

What Lindhorst teaches Anselmus in this scene is that Anselmus must believe and continue to believe in the amazing things he has seen because they are real. In other words, Lindhorst's task as a master is to ensure that Anselmus understands that there is another plane of reality that is more wondrous than the reality that exists in Dresden. Lindhorst's task as a master is also to ensure that Anselmus realizes that he is destined for a "higher life" (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 42). As Negus notes in "Romantic Myth," one of Lindhorst's "purpose[s]" in the novella is "to bring about a higher and more productive form of life than Anselmus' previous one" (271). What Lindhorst therefore does is to enlarge Anselmus' perspective of the world beyond the borders of the ordinary. Here it is significant from an alchemical viewpoint that the "flaming stone" on Lindhorst's ring turns out to be a "small emerald" since its color, just like the emerald color of Serpentina's skin as observed earlier, also has the ability to "cure" Anselmus' "weakness of the eyes" which we can now understand has to do with Anselmus' doubt as to whether or not the other world he keeps getting glimpses of is in fact real (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 24).

According to Lindhorst (and Serpentina), Anselmus also needs to have constant "faith" in the existence of the other world, just like the adept in alchemy who is required to be true to his "art" and to have "fervent faith in the existence" of the philosopher's stone (Lembert 39; Read, *Alchemist* 29). Continuing to have this "faith" is arguably Anselmus' greatest challenge, for there is a dark force at work that conspires against him in the form of the menacing old apple woman who Anselmus collided with on Ascension Day. This old woman is, in fact, a witch called Mrs Rauer and it turns out that she was

also formerly the nurse to Sub-Rector Paulmann's daughter, Veronica. Mrs. Rauer is determined to prevent Anselmus from marrying Serpentina and achieving a "higher life" by having him marry Veronica and become a (boring old) "Counsellor" instead (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 27). Lindhorst is, however, there to prevent Anselmus, the "student[-adept,] from being corrupted" by Mrs Rauer and Veronica, the latter being one embodiment of the pedestrian desires of people in the novella who are fated to live forever in the "public sphere" as they are unable to see beyond the boundaries of their "mundane bourgeois reality" in Dresden.

Lindhorst, as the master-chemist, guides his student-adept Anselmus every step of the way and to help him overcome any obstacles. When Anselmus tells Lindhorst he was unable to attend his first day of work as Lindhorst's copyist because Lindhorst's "fine big bronze door-knocker" turned into the face of Mrs Rauer and the "bell-pull" turned into a "transparent white boa constrictor" which strangled him and rendered him senseless before he could enter Lindhorst's house, Lindhorst gives Anselmus a "small bottle of golden yellow liquid" – another appearance of the color gold in the text – with the instruction to "dab a little of this liquid on [Mrs Rauer's] nose" if the door-knocker should change again (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 13, 14, 25). Lindhorst's "liquid" works like a charm the next time Anselmus tries to visit Lindhorst's house again: "Without a second thought, Anselmus squirted the liquid into the hideous face, which instantly smoothed itself into a gleaming round door-knocker" (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 36). With Lindhorst's help, Anselmus is finally able to enter Lindhorst's house so that his real

“apprenticeship” with the master-chemist can properly begin (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 42).

As mentioned earlier, Lindhorst had newly employed Anselmus to “expertly” copy his manuscripts “on parchment, in Indian ink, with the utmost exactness and accuracy” owing to the fact that Anselmus was known not only to “write in a good clear hand” but was also able to “make exact and elegant line drawings” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 12). Before starting his first day of work, Anselmus thus “gathered together his pencils, his raven’s quills, and his Indian ink”:

‘for,’ thought he, ‘these materials are better than anything the Archivist could invent.’ Above all, he inspected and arranged his masterpieces of calligraphy and his drawings, in order to show them to the Archivist as proof of his ability to perform what was required of him. (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 13)

Unfortunately for Anselmus, however, Lindhorst is most unimpressed with his “masterpieces” and writing materials. Anselmus then begins to defend his work, by speaking “at length about how everyone else had acknowledged his skill, and about his Indian ink and his specially chosen raven’s quill-pens” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 40-1).

All this was to no avail, however, for when Lindhorst hands a sheet of Anselmus’ work “in English style” back to him, Anselmus was “thunderstruck to see how wretched his writing looked ... here and there a line was written with moderate success, but spoiled by horrid pot-hooks such as schoolboys might scrawl” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 40). To add insult to injury, Lindhorst then points out that the ink Anselmus was so proud of was in fact “not durable” at all, and Lindhorst proceeds to make all the writing on the sheet disappear in front of Anselmus’ eyes by “dipp[ing] his finger in a glass of water, and

dabb[ing] it gently on the letters” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 40). This amusing scene serves an important alchemical purpose for it reveals to Anselmus the kinds of qualities he must possess in order to become a successful student-adept.

Some Requirements for Success in the Hermetic Art

One of the most important traits for an adept to possess is humility since “vainglory” is an “impediment” to any who wishes to learn the hermetic art (Eliade 159; Thorndike III:351). The lesson that Lindhorst is therefore trying to teach Anselmus in this scene is therefore a lesson in humility. Although Anselmus describes his work to Lindhorst as showing only “modest talents,” his thoughts betray the fact that he does not believe his talents are “modest” at all since when he first “produced his drawings and calligraphic exercises from his pocket,” he also felt “rather pleased with himself and certain of delighting the Archivist by his *remarkable* talent” (Hoffman, *Golden Pot* 39; emphasis added).

Lindhorst also reinforces another important precept for the alchemical adept in this scene, one that was also emphasized by Magnus. According to Magnus: “the worker in this art should be careful, and assiduous in his efforts, and not grow weary, but persevere to the end. For if he begins and does not preserve, he will lose both materials and time” (103). The requirements for the “work” of the adept that Magnus describes can easily be applied to Anselmus’ job as Lindhorst’s copyist. We will recall that Anselmus was employed to copy Lindhorst’s manuscripts “with the utmost exactness and accuracy” and this is a task that requires the utmost care, for Anselmus had already been warned at

the outset against “mak[ing] a single blot” for, “[i]f a blot falls on the copy, then there is nothing for it but to start all over again” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 13). The danger inherent in possessing excessive pride coupled with a lack of perseverance is precisely why Lindhorst stresses the importance of “hard work” rather than “skill” to Anselmus (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 39). This indeed turns out to be the case, since once Anselmus begins copying the first manuscript, an “Arabic manuscript,” Anselmus’ “spirits and ... his skill” began to “increase” with “every word that he managed to inscribe on the parchment ... [a]s he worked away diligently, with intense concentration ... perfectly contented with the task before him, and hopeful of accomplishing it” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 40). Anselmus is clearly a quick learner, and the foregoing shows that he most certainly possesses the potential to become a successful adept. In fact, Anselmus demonstrates a particular affinity for all things alchemical even *before* he begins his first copying task for Lindhorst.

After Anselmus is finally able to enter Lindhorst’s house, Lindhorst takes him to a “magnificent conservatory” and, as Anselmus “stood [there,] as though rooted to the spot by enchantment,” he suddenly hears “a giggling and tittering ... and small, clear voices began teasing and mocking him” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 37). The owners of these “small, clear voices” turn out to be “many-coloured birds ... fluttering around him and making fun for him with continual laughter” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 38). In this scene, Anselmus shows that he is actually able to understand what these birds are saying to him when he remarks to Lindhorst that “the birds are having no end of fun at the expense of [his] poor self!” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 38). Anselmus shows, therefore, that he is able

to understand the “Language of the Birds,” a “language” that has a particular alchemical significance.

As noted earlier, the alchemists were fond of using pictographic symbols in their manuscripts and they did this in order to keep the art of alchemy secret. The alchemists also used various types of “wordplay” to obfuscate what they had learned about the *opus magnum* in their texts, for example, “riddles, puns, and assonance”; it is precisely this “wordplay” that is referred to as the “Language of the Birds” amongst the alchemists.⁶⁴ By making the birds speak in the text and having Anselmus understand this speech, Hoffmann seems to indicate that Anselmus has mastered not only the “Language of the Birds” in the literal sense, but also that he may very well have mastered the “Language of the Birds” in the figurative and alchemical sense as well! Perhaps the foregoing is a (unstated) reason why Anselmus’ copying continues to improve by leaps and bounds after he breaks for lunch: “The copying of the Arabic had gone well even before the meal, but now the work went better still” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 41). In fact, he improves so much on his first day at work that he even begins to “understand the unknown characters” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 41). Anselmus’ ability to understand these characters, moreover, advances even further as he continues to work for Lindhorst: “His copying went on very fast, for it seemed more and more that he was only inscribing the parchment with long-familiar characters, and scarcely needed to glance at the original in order to reproduce everything with the utmost precision” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 50).

⁶⁴ Sean Martin, *Alchemy and Alchemists* (Harpenden: Pocket Essentials, 2006) 36.

Soon thereafter, Lindhorst deems Anselmus capable of copying manuscripts “written in special characters” that require an even higher degree of skill, and Lindhorst takes Anselmus to work into an “azure room” where he keeps these special manuscripts and “which can only be copied [there] on the spot” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 51). When Anselmus sees that the characters on these manuscripts are so “strangely intertwined” and consisting of “many dots, strokes, dashes, and curlicues, which seemed by turns to represent plants, or mosses, or animal shapes,” Anselmus’ “courage nearly failed him” and he wonders whether “he would be able to copy all these signs exactly” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 52). Immediately after this initial thought, however, Anselmus starts to “meditate” on the task before him, and he quickly decides that, instead of being discouraged, it would be more prudent to “set diligently to work” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 52).

As he listens to the “wondrous music from the conservatory,” Anselmus “concentrated ever more firmly on the inscriptions on the parchment, and soon inner intuition told him that the characters could have no other meaning than ‘Of the Marriage of the Salamander and the Green Snake’” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 52). The foregoing certainly seems to add emphasis to the argument that Anselmus has mastered the alchemists’ “Language of the Birds.” This scene, moreover, reveals that he is acquiring even more traits necessary to be a true student of the hermetic art. We saw earlier that an adept “should be careful and assiduous . . . and not grow weary, but persevere to the end” and it is clear that Anselmus has already internalized this requirement. Anselmus also appears to understand the importance of “meditation” and he has learned to be “patient”

so as not to “trying to hurry nature” but rather, let his mind be “free and in harmony” with the task at hand; all the foregoing are requirements that an adept must learn and follow (Eliade 159; Thorndike IV:351).⁶⁵

The idea of harmony, moreover, is particularly important in alchemy and appears in the scene just described in the “wondrous music from the conservatory” that accompanies Anselmus when he is attempting his most difficult calligraphic task so far in the text. Many alchemists believed that music played a critical role in their operations since the musical scale consists of seven notes and the number seven is particularly imbued with alchemical significance (Read, *Alchemist* 11; Meakin 25).⁶⁶ Indeed, some alchemists have been known to either play music themselves or hire musicians to play for them in their laboratory as they worked on the *opus magnum* (Coudert 56). Given the foregoing, it is no surprise that the music that Anselmus hears is also able to help him in his task.

Anselmus is, of course, assisted in his calligraphic endeavors by the “faith” in his “innermost heart” and also by Serpentina who keeps reassuring him throughout (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 41, 50, 52). In addition to showing Anselmus the correct path to take by instilling in Anselmus the values needed to undertake the hermetic art, Lindhorst

⁶⁵ Elias Ashmole, Prologomena. *Fasciculus Chemicus*, Arthur Dee, trans. Elias Ashmole, ed. Lyndy Abraham (New York: Garland, 1997) 10.

⁶⁶ According to Meakin, the seven notes of the musical scale can correspond to the “seven metals,” the “seven stages of the Great Work” (bearing in mind here that the number of stages in the *opus magnum* differed according to different alchemists), the “seven days of the week,” as well as the “seven planets” (45).

also keeps encouraging Anselmus just as any good teacher should do. Lindhorst first tells Anselmus that “if [he] preserves in the task [he] was obliged to begin, faith and insight will lead [him] to [his] goal,” and later, when Anselmus worries whether he will be able to copy the manuscripts “written in the special characters” Lindhorst assuages Anselmus’ doubts by telling him to “[t]ake heart” and reassures Anselmus that “if [he] ha[s] proven faith and true love, Serpentina will help” him (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 42, 52).

It is also worth noting here that Lindhorst teaches Anselmus by way of showing; he does not explicitly tell Anselmus to be humble, rather, he shows Anselmus the need for humility. Lindhorst is also careful not to push Anselmus too much too soon; he starts Anselmus’ “apprenticeship” by having him first copy manuscripts in Arabic, a script that is already familiar to him since he “had often copied Arabic script before” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 40). It is only when Anselmus demonstrates that he has fully mastered the Arabic script as mentioned earlier that Lindhorst gives Anselmus the more difficult manuscripts “written in the special characters” to copy. In other words, Lindhorst is just like the “teacher” who “guide[s] and nourish[es] his pupil’s ‘inborn flame’” (Peters 67).⁶⁷ Lindhorst is, however, no ordinary “teacher” for it turns out that Lindhorst is no ordinary alchemist either!

⁶⁷ Peters’ comment here in relation to the “teacher’s function” was in reference to the teacher and student in Novalis’ *Novices of Sais*; however, this comment is equally applicable here to Lindhorst’s role in *Golden Pot* as a master-chemist.

The Wondrously Hermetic Archivist

We noted earlier that Lindhorst could be considered an alchemist by virtue of the fact he undertakes his experimental work in secret and the fact that he possesses many manuscripts which could very well be alchemical ones. There are, however, other reasons why Lindhorst should be considered especially alchemical.

We are informed that Lindhorst's true identity is that of a "salamander," which, as we have already seen, is a mythical creature, related to alchemy by virtue of its connection to fire (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 54). For the alchemists, the salamander was also the symbol for the philosopher's stone itself; the alchemists regarded both the stone and the salamander as "child[ren] of fire" by virtue of the fact that they are both "born in ... fire" and because they can both "live in ... fire and is nourished by it" (Read, *Prelude* 244; "Salamander," *Dictionary*).⁶⁸ According to M. M. Pattison Muir, the alchemists considered the salamander to be the "king" of animals because he not only "lived" but "delighted" in fire (104). Given the foregoing, it is no surprise that Hoffmann would have chosen a salamander for Lindhorst's original form. Like the salamander in alchemical lore, Lindhorst is also "royal" for he is in fact also a "prince" of the other world (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 17). Lindhorst also shows that he both "live[s] and delight[s] in fire" just like the alchemical salamander; not only is he able to climb into Paulmann's pipe while it was lit as well as climb into the flaming "arrack" in the gold goblet and emerge unscathed on both occasions, he is also able to light Heerbrand's pipe

⁶⁸ The salamander was also often a "fixture" in artistic representations of the alchemist's laboratory (Read, *Alchemist* 75).

by “snapp[ing] his fingers” and turn the lilies on his dressing gown into flaming lilies that he can use as weapons (Muir 104; Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 65, 81, 83, 58, 71). Lindhorst’s virtuosity with fire reveals him not only as a salamander but also as a true alchemist; since alchemy is the “art of fire,” alchemists are therefore “master[s] of fire” (“Fire,” *Dictionary* 76; Eliade 79).

That Lindhorst should be considered a true alchemist as well as an especially alchemical being should come as no surprise, however, for he can also be connected with the “chief figure” in the alchemical tradition, “Hermes or Mercurius” who was thought of as a “trinity” (Jung, *Studies* 122, 221). Given the fact that Lindhorst has three “existences” in the text, that is, a Privy Archivist, a Prince of the “wondrous race of the salamanders,” and a “great bird,” it can surely be argued that he is not only associated with Hermes, but also that Lindhorst might possibly be Hermes himself in other guise (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 54).⁶⁹ Like Hermes/Mercurius who is “present everywhere and all times during the opus,” Lindhorst is also apparently “present everywhere and at all times during” the events in *Golden Pot*. Lindhorst watches over Anselmus unseen as he works so that Lindhorst is able to “[appear] at the precise moment when Anselmus had finished the last character of a manuscript” to “g[iv]e him another”; Lindhorst is also present during Anselmus’ wild drinking party with Heerbrand and Paulmann where he watched all the participants lose control of themselves while “sitting in the punch-bowl” even though the revelers could not see him (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 50, 65). Lindhorst can be likened to

⁶⁹ George Brandes, *Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature, The Romantic School in Germany*, vol. 2 (New York: Macmillian, 1902) 167.

Hermes in another way as well. Just like the god Hermes in the Classical tradition, Lindhorst is a trickster type; he clearly revels in the fact that he can “create” an “unfamiliar and wondrous atmosphere” by “merely following his whims” to confuse and disorient the other characters and destabilize them from their staid existence in Dresden (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 53).

Lindhorst has the ability to be “present everywhere and at all times” because he is Mercurius who is “not only the prima materia ... which is sought at the beginning of the work, but also the ultima materia (the philosopher’s stone), the goal of his own transformation” (“Mercurius,” *Dictionary*). Mercurius is thus “simultaneously the matter of the work, the process of the work, and the agent by which all this is effected” (“Mercurius,” *Dictionary*). As such, it seems only fitting from an alchemical viewpoint that Lindhorst, as a master-chemist and an alchemical salamander as well as Mercurius all at once, should live in a house where there is a “magnificent conservatory” filled with “rare and wondrous flowers” including “luminous lilies” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 37).

We saw earlier that the red lily is particularly important in alchemical symbolism since it represents the philosopher’s stone. Thus, it is surely no coincidence that the centerpiece of Lindhorst’s “magnificent conservatory” is a “gigantic bush of glowing orange lilies” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 37). It is also surely no accident that Lindhorst himself, in this scene, appears to be one of these orange lilies until Anselmus realizes that the “brilliant red and yellow flowers on the Archivist’s dressing-gown had deceived his sight” (or did they?) (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 38). It can easily be argued that the “orange lilies” are similar to the red lily of the alchemists by virtue of the fact that they “glow” as

if on fire, and because the color orange also appears in a flame, as does the color yellow which, for the alchemists, represents another stage in the *magnum opus*, known as the *citrinas*, that appears between the white of the *albedo* and the red of the *rubedo* (“Colours,” *Dictionary*). In this scene, the color orange of course dominates, and if the “glowing orange lilies” can indeed be associated with the red lily of the alchemists, then Lindhorst appearing as such a lily himself is almost expected, for we have already seen how he can be considered to be the philosopher’s stone himself since he is not only a salamander but also possibly Hermes/Mercurius in another guise.

Given the foregoing, it is no surprise that Lindhorst’s “conservatory” is reminiscent of the hermetic “Garden of Philosophers” which “presents a many-colored spectacle” with a multitude of flowers in full bloom representing the various stages of the *opus magnum* (Read, *Prelude* 259; “Flowers,” *Dictionary*). The other room in Lindhorst’s house that also references the “Garden of Philosophers” is the “azure room” where Lindhorst keeps and has Anselmus copy his special manuscripts with the “strangely intertwined characters.” We have already seen that the color blue or azure is the color that appears just before the final stage of the *opus magnum* and that it is the color of the alchemical quintessence needed to create the philosopher’s stone. It is therefore surely no coincidence that the golden pot can be found in the middle of this azure colored room.

We saw earlier that the golden pot could be related to alchemy by virtue of the fact that it is made of gold and the fact that apparatus like pots often appeared in artistic representations of an alchemist’s laboratory. Hoffmann’s text, however, seems to

indicate that the pot is no “ordinary” pot and that it is actually the *vas Hermeticum* (“*vas*”), that is, the round vessel the alchemists used to make the philosopher’s stone; the word “pot,” in fact, turns out to be one of the many synonyms that the alchemists used to denote the *vas* (“Alembic,” *Dictionary*). Once the philosopher’s stone was achieved, the *vas* was then referred to by the alchemists as the “Garden of Philosophers” in which red lilies bloomed (“Alembic,” “Lily,” *Dictionary*). Given the foregoing, it is surely no accident that the golden pot in Hoffmann’s novella was created for the specific purpose of producing a “fiery lily” ... with an “everlasting bloom,” in other words, a philosopher’s stone (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 56).

The golden pot, of course, also has another important function in the text since its “luster” provides Anselmus with a “splendid and dazzling reflection” of the other world (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 56). The golden pot can therefore be likened to the “shining crystal mirror” produced by Lindhorst’s emerald ring since the “surface” of the pot is also a “mirror,” albeit a gold one; the golden pot and the emerald ring are therefore both a “form of visual contact between the everyday world” and the other world (Holbeche 62, 63). The golden pot is, in other words, another method by which Lindhorst “cures” Anselmus’ “weakness of the eyes” and this link between the golden pot and the emerald seems to be reiterated by the fact that the golden pot is surrounded by “lofty palm-trees” with “colossal leaves, gleaming like sparkling emeralds” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 38). It is in this way, then, that the “azure room” could also be considered an example of the

“Garden of Philosophers” since this garden is also a “signpost showing the way to the visionary experience of the supernal world.”⁷⁰

The Final Test by Fire and the Creation of the Philosopher’s Stone

We have just seen how Lindhorst attempts to instill “faith” in Anselmus by showing him the other world through his emerald ring and the golden pot. These visions should have been enough to irrevocably convince Anselmus of the existence of the other world. However, due to evil machinations by Mrs. Rauer, Anselmus temporarily loses his “faith” and has to undergo one final test before he can accept his fate that he is destined for a “higher life.” After Mrs. Rauer succeeds in turning Anselmus’ thoughts away from Serpentina to Veronica, Anselmus can no longer see the amazing things he had seen in Lindhorst’s house before:

Walking through the Archivist’s conservatory, he was astonished that the objects there should ever have seemed to him so strange and wondrous. He could see nothing but ordinary potted plants, various kinds of geraniums, myrtle-bushes, and so forth. Instead of the brilliantly coloured birds that had teased him in the past, there were only a few sparrows fluttering to and fro, which made an unintelligible and unpleasant noise on catching sight of Anselmus. The blue room also looked quite different, and he could not understand how the garish blue colour and the unnatural golden trunks of the palm-trees with their shapeless gleaming leaves could have appealed to him for one minute. (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 64-66)

⁷⁰ Randall A. Clack’s comment here in relation to the “hermetic garden” was in reference to Edgar Allan Poe’s “Arnheim”; this comment is, however, equally applicable here to the function of the two “Gardens of Philosophers” identified here in *Golden Pot*. Randall A. Clack, *The Marriage of Heaven and Earth: Alchemical Regeneration in the Works of Taylor, Poe, Hawthorne, and Fuller* (Westport: Greenwood P., 2000) 78.

Along with losing his ability to see the marvelous, Anselmus has also lost the ability to understand the “Language of the Birds.” Not only is he unable to understand the literal “Language of the Birds” – he can no longer understand what the birds are saying – he is also unable to understand the alchemists’ figurative “Language of the Birds” for when he looks at the manuscript he is supposed to copy after this scene, he can only see a “jumble of crooked lines and curlicues, which bewildered the eye without giving it a moment’s respite” so that “it seemed wellnigh impossible to copy” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 65). In fact, Anselmus’ sight has deteriorated to such a degree that he cannot even recognize the manuscript *as* a manuscript nor see the script thereon *as script*: “the parchment seemed to be only a lump of marble with coloured veins, or a stone with patches of moss” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 52). Having lost both his sight and his ability to understand the “Language of the Birds,” Anselmus then commits the gravest error and is immediately punished for the same:

[H]e ... dipped his pen in the ink-well, but the ink would not flow; he impatiently pressed the pen, and – oh heavens! – a big blot fell on the original. ... ‘Fool! endure the punishment for your impudent crime!’ cried the frightful voice of the crowned salamander. ... [Anselmus] lost consciousness. When he came to himself, he could not stir; he seemed to be surrounded by a brilliant light, and to knock against it every time he tried to raise his hand or make any other movement. Alas! He was sitting in a tightly stopped crystal bottle on a shelf in Archivist Lindhorst’s library. (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 65-66)

It is particularly important from an alchemical viewpoint that Anselmus should find himself trapped in a “tightly stopped crystal bottle” and that this bottle should also be referred to as a “glass prison” in the text (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 67). As we have already seen, the alchemists performed the *opus magnum* in the *vas* and that this *vas* was

referred to metaphorically as the “Garden of Philosophers.” Practically speaking, the *vas* was actually a “vessel of thick glass” that had to be “hermetically sealed ... so that the gases (*spiritus fugaces*) could not escape” (Thorndike, III:91). In the *Libellus de Alchimia*, Magnus stated that alchemists should only use “vessels ... of glass” in their operations; it is therefore quite common to find “glass flasks” included in artistic representations of an alchemist’s laboratory (Magnus 103; Read, *Alchemist* 65). Since the material used to make the philosopher’s stone as well as the gases produced from heating the same had to be contained within the *vas* at all times, the alchemists accordingly referred to the *vas* as a “glass prison” (“Glass,” Dictionary). Thus, if Anselmus is the *prima materia* that has to be transmuted into the philosopher’s stone as we have been arguing, it should therefore come as no surprise that his last trial should occur in this “tightly stopped crystal bottle.”

It turns out that Anselmus is not the only person in this predicament for he soon realizes that “there were five more bottles standing next to him on the same shelf, and in them he perceived three sixth-formers from the Cross School and two solicitor’s clerks” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 68). Unlike Anselmus who fully realizes that he is “confined” in a glass bottle, these five other men instead believe that they are roaming free in Dresden while having the time of their lives (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 68). This in fact explains why Anselmus is the one who is destined for a “higher life” for, despite Mrs. Rauer’s evil plan and the fact that “his thoughts knocked against the glass with a discordant sound that dulled his senses” so that he could no longer hear the “clear voice of his inner spirit,”

Anselmus nevertheless still “believe[s] in the salamander and the green snake”

(Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 68, 69).

If Anselmus is the *prima materia* that will be transmuted into the philosopher’s stone, it follows, moreover, that the other five men in the glass bottles are in fact *failed* alchemical experiments. Since these men believe that they are not “confined” in “tightly stopped crystal bottle[s] on a shelf in Archivist Lindhorst’s library,” they therefore cannot see the battle that ensues between Lindhorst and Mrs. Rauer who is trying to steal the golden pot. The “crystal bottle” therefore functions in the same way as Lindhorst’s emerald ring and the golden pot in the text since it is another medium through which Anselmus is able to see the other world; from this it follows that the “crystal bottle” is, in addition to being another example of the *vas* in the text, also another means that Lindhorst uses to educate Anselmus and “cure” his “weakness of the eyes” (Holbeche 69).

It is interesting to note here that Lindhorst defeats Mrs. Rauer by using three distinct types of fire. Lindhorst’s first turns the lilies on his dressing gown into flaming lilies and throws them at Mrs. Rauer. Lindhorst then uses a “blue” fire to set fire to Mrs. Rauer’s “strange armour of coloured scales” made from “parchment”; to deal the killing blow, Lindhorst “assails” Mrs. Rauer with “flickering, hissing bolts of fire that seemed to come from inside the Archivist” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 71, 70). The heat from these fires in Lindhorst’s library must have been intense, and so intense that even Anselmus would have been able to feel this heat from inside his “glass prison.” If this is true, then it can certainly be argued that Anselmus was heated by the “three fires” of the alchemists just like the *prima materia* in the *vas* (“Fire,” *Dictionary*).

It can, moreover, be argued that the alchemical process of the *rubedo* occurs in this scene since the *rubedo* is where the alchemists “raised the heat of the fire to its highest intensity” so that the “chemical substance in the furnace” undergoes a “fiery torment and purification” (Jung, *Studies* 138).⁷¹ We have already noted the intensity of Lindhorst’s three fires and the fact that Anselmus should be considered the *prima materia* in the *vas*. It is clear that Anselmus goes through a “fiery torment” while imprisoned in the glass bottle for not only does the narrator tell us that Anselmus “suffered ... unutterable tortures in his glass prison,” Anselmus himself refers to this experience as an “infernal torment,” a “torment” that is particularly heightened when he hears Mrs. Rauer instructing her son the black cat to “kill the green snake” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 67, 70).

After the battle between Lindhorst and Mrs. Rauer, Anselmus finds himself redeemed and purged of all guilt for, according to Lindhorst, Anselmus’ loss of “faith” was through no “fault” of his but rather the result of a “malign and destructive principle which strove to penetrate [his] heart and estrange [him] from [him]self” which has now been squashed out (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 72). Anselmus is, in other words, “purified” and, just like the *prima materia* in the *vas* at the end of the *opus magnum*, he has turned into the philosopher’s stone as well as an “illumed philosopher.” That Anselmus undergoes this dual transformation at the end of the text should come as no surprise for, as we have already seen, the alchemists believed that the “spiritual transformation of the

⁷¹ Larry Gates, “Carl Jung’s Alchemical Psychology,” *Journal of Evolutionary Psychology* 13.1-2 (1992): 61.

[student-]adept” went “hand in hand with the “chemical processes of transformation” during the creation of the philosopher’s stone (Lembert 40).

In the end, Anselmus is revealed as a true alchemist since he is ultimately found worthy of the “magnificent wonders of the golden pot” and Serpentina’s hand in marriage (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 42). The marriage between Anselmus and Serpentina is, of course, a thoroughly alchemical one, since it is in fact the “Chemical Wedding” of the alchemists which is often depicted as a “royal wedding” between a “king and queen” (“Chemical Wedding,” *Dictionary*). For the alchemists, the “Chemical Wedding” symbolized the “perfect union” between the “male” and “female” principles that would produce the “philosophical child,” that is, the philosopher’s stone (“Chemical Wedding,” *Dictionary*).⁷² Given the foregoing, it is certainly no coincidence that, once joined together, Anselmus (the *prima materia*, the philosopher’s stone, and the alchemist) and Serpentina (the alchemical quintessence) are able to produce the most “magnificent lily” – which as we have already seen, is nothing other than the philosopher’s stone – in the *vas* that is the golden pot (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 82). It is also surely no accident that it is *Lindhorst* who facilitates this marriage since the alchemists believed that the “Chemical Wedding” can occur by way of a “third mediating principle, that is, “Mercurius” who, in this role, is “known as the glue, gum, or priest who ties the knot at the wedding” (“Chemical Wedding,” *Dictionary*).

⁷² H. J. Sheppard, “Egg Symbolism in Alchemy,” *Ambix* 6 (1958): 148.

The Alchemical Genius

We have seen from the above that Anselmus can be considered both a alchemical student-adept as well as the philosopher's stone itself and we have noted that the reason for Anselmus' success can be attributed to his "faith." There is, however, another reason why Anselmus managed to prevail and achieve his alchemical goals in *Golden Pot*, a reason that is closely tied to the concept of the poet-genius of the German Romantics. Anselmus has, besides his "faith," the rare, "child-like poetic spirit" inherent in his "spiritual character" (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 56). It can be argued that this "spirit" is, in fact, identical to the "naïve" quality that the poet-genius must possess.

According to Friedrich Schiller in his *On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry*, the "naïve way of thinking ... combines childlike simplicity with the childish" and it "belongs to children or childlike-minded men" who "often act or think naively" even in the corrupted world with "ingenuousness and innocence."⁷³ Anselmus, who is "mocked by the rabble because of the lofty simplicity of [his] behaviour and because [he] lacks what people call worldly manners" clearly meets this requirement (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 56). Not only is Anselmus "childlike" by virtue of his clumsiness, as shown during the market scene at the *Schwarzthor* in Dresden at the beginning of the novella, he also displays his "ingenuousness and innocence" when he makes references to the other world at the most inopportune times. A particularly amusing example here occurs after

⁷³ Friedrich Schiller, *On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry*, trans. William F. Wertz, Jr., The Schiller Institute, 6 May 2013
<http://www.schillerinstitute.org/transl/schiller_essays/naive_sentimental-1.html>. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text and referred to as *Naïve*.

Anselmus sees the “green and gold snakes” for the first time under the “elder-bush” and hears their voices that sound like a “trio of crystal bells” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 5). Immediately after this scene, Anselmus is invited to accompany Veronica’s singing on the piano; however, when Heerbrand remarks that Veronica has a “voice like a crystal bell,” Anselmus instinctively compares Veronica’s voice to the voices of the three snakes and “burst[s] out ... quite involuntarily” (and inappropriately!): “Nothing of the sort!” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 11).

For Schiller, “true genius must be naïve or it is not genius” and genius is not only “true to its character and its inclinations” but also “intelligent” and “bashful” at the same time (*Naïve*). The poet-genius, in other words, must be modest. The requirements for the “naïve” poet-genius are therefore remarkably similar to the requirements for the adept in alchemy. We have already seen how important the trait of humility is for the adept. Just like the poet-genius who was required to be “intelligent,” the alchemical adept was also required to be “scholarly” – and here we may note that both the birds in Lindhorst’s conservatory as well as one of the sixth-formers in the crystal bottle refer to Anselmus as their “scholarly friend” (Eliade 159; Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 37, 38, 68). The alchemical adept was, moreover, required to have a “pure and pious heart,” to possess an “upright and honest soul,” and to “lead a sincere life” (Lembert 39).⁷⁴ The similarities between the foregoing and Schiller’s requirements that the “naïve” poet-genius be “true to [his] character and its inclinations” are immediately obvious.

⁷⁴ Grillot de Givry, *Witchcraft, Magic and Alchemy*, trans. J. Courtenay Locke (New York: Dover, 1971) 349.

Anselmus can, of course, not only be related to Schiller's idea of the "naïve" just because he is a poet by virtue of his "child-like poetic spirit," but also because he is able to "feel" nature instinctively (Schiller, *Naïve*). Anselmus knows and believes in the marvelous other world intuitively as shown by his thoughts after Lindhorst confirms that what he saw under the "elder-tree" on "Ascension Day" was indeed real: "Anselmus felt as though he were now being told in so many words something he had *long suspected*" (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 23; emphasis added). As his teacher, Lindhorst's other function is therefore to "engender poetic creativity in Anselmus" and he does this by having Anselmus copy manuscripts in order to "develop Anselmus' latent poetic talents" (Negus, "Romantic Myth" 271; Holbeche 62).

For Hoffmann, a true poet is one who "understands the voices of nature" (Daemmrich, *Shattered Self* 29). It can easily be argued that Anselmus is one such true poet since he can understand the "Language of the Birds" both literally and figuratively as we have previously seen. This poet must also be a "seer," that is, he must be capable of "visionary perception" (Bays 59; Daemmrich, *Shattered Self* 36). Anselmus, with his ability to see the other world as already discussed, clearly meets this requirement. Anselmus can, moreover, be likened to a true poet by virtue of the fact that his vision of the world "transcends the views of his time," that is, the "mundane bourgeois reality" in Dresden (Daemmrich, *Shattered Self* 31). We have already noted how Anselmus was "mocked by the rabble because of the lofty simplicity of [his] behaviour and because [he] lacks what people call worldly manners" and also how he is destined for a "higher life" with Serpentina than the life he would have led in Dresden if he had married Veronica

instead. Indeed, we have already touched on just how pedestrian, narrow, and superficial Veronica's dreams are; unable to see beyond the boundaries of the everyday world in Dresden and, despite the fact that she appeared to have her heart set on marrying Anselmus so that she could become a "Counsellor's lady," it turns out in the end that it did not really matter to her *who* that "Counsellor" is (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 27)!

This (bourgeois) lack of imagination was exactly the kind of attitude Hoffmann considered an impediment to the "poetic spirit" (Holbeche 1). For Hoffmann, the "poetic spirit" cannot thrive in a world like Dresden in *Golden Pot*, where "Romantic capers" were sneered at, where people considered those who possess the "poetic spirit" to be "*non compos mentis*," and where people routinely refuse to believe what they see and dismiss anything out of the ordinary as "[s]tuff and nonsense" (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 29, 73). In a world like Dresden, "true art has become [such] an anachronism" that the poet's creativity is hindered not only by society's inability to "understand his aims" but also by society's inability to understand the poet himself (Daemmrich, *Shattered Self* 27, 28.) The importance of "creative spontaneity" and "artistic consciousness" in Hoffmann's formulation of the Romantic – and indeed, for all the German Romantics – cannot be emphasized enough for a life without imagination, intuition, or inspiration is a life that is "limited and deadening" and therefore not worth living (Taylor 33-34; Peters 84). This is why Anselmus must ultimately leave Dresden for the other world since his "imaginative transformation of life" has no place within it (Daemmrich, *Shattered Self* 28).

Like the German Romantics, the alchemists also underscored the importance of the imagination in the creation of the philosopher's stone. The *opus magnum* had to be

performed “with true imagination” and an alchemist was actually required to “employ his imagination as the major tool” (Jung, “Redemption” 216; “Philosopher’s stone,” *Dictionary*). This explains why the alchemists also believed that the “Chemical Wedding” represented the “perfect union of creative will or power (male) with wisdom (female) to produce pure love (the [philosophical] child, the Stone)” (“Chemical wedding,” *Dictionary*). Given the foregoing, we can now see that the union of Anselmus and Serpentina in *Golden Pot* takes on a further layer of alchemical meaning; together, Anselmus and Serpentina are able to produce the most “magnificent lily,” the philosopher’s stone, precisely because they are the embodiments of the male “creative will or power” and female “wisdom.”

The alchemists and the “naïve” poet-genius can also be likened to each other in another way for they play the role of the “savior.” Whereas the alchemists thought of themselves as “saviors” since they were able to “redeem” base matter by purifying and transforming it into gold, the German Romantics likewise believed that it was the “naïve” poet-genius who could “redeem” and thus save a disenchanting or disillusioned world (like the world of Dresden in *Golden Pot*) by showing it the beauty that is nature once more because, according to Schiller, the “naïve” poet-genius “is nature” himself (Coudert 135; Schiller, *Naïve*). The philosopher’s stone and the “naïve” poet-genius could, moreover, be considered as the same for they both function as the same “bridge” between the “earth[ly] ... material” and the “heaven[ly] spiritual realms” (Clack 77). If the foregoing is true, then the “naïve” poet-genius can also, by extension, be equated with the alchemical adept as well. It is in this way, then, that the “naïve” poet-genius can finally

be considered as equivalent to the alchemist Mercurius. As we have already seen Mercurius was considered to be “simultaneously the matter of the work, the process of the work, and the agent by which all this is effected.” Given the foregoing, it should now come as no surprise for us to learn that the “naïve” poet-genius who revealed nature to us again while being nature himself was spoken of by Schiller in the following way, in terms nearly identical to the way Mercurius was thought of by the alchemists: “he is the work, and the work is he.”

Atlantis, an Alchemical Representation of the Golden Age and Hermetic Cosmology

According to the German Romantics, the “naïve” poet-genius had a particularly important duty: the duty to discover and show to us the “true meaning of the world” that exists in nature (Taylor 14). In so doing, the “naïve” poet-genius would be able to bring the disenchanted or disillusioned world back in contact with the Golden Age again.

Following Schubert in his *Nachtseite*, the German Romantics believed that there were three stages in the development of the universe. The first stage was the Golden Age, an “initial period of harmony” between man and nature where man understood nature and her wonders “intuitively” (Holbeche 56). The second stage, however, was a time of disenchantment or disillusionment where man was “estranged” from nature (Holbeche 56).

Both Schiller and Hoffmann believed that this fall from the pristine state of the Golden Age had to do with the advent of science. In his poem, “The Gods of Greece,” Schiller refers to a “lifeless ... flaming ball” that “dull[s]” man’s “sense[s]” so that man

can no longer be filled with “careless joy” as he was in “the age gone by” when “Nature” had a “virgin-bloom.”⁷⁵ The “age gone by,” of course, refers to the first stage of the Golden Age, and the “flaming ball” represents science which, although it gave man intelligence and resulted in human progress in certain areas, nevertheless greatly diminished the sense of wonder that man had in nature before. Hoffmann likewise considered the pursuit of science contrary to the “child-like poetic spirit” and he even considered science to be dangerous since it had the potential to lead man to “useless” and even “false or destructive knowledge” (Taylor 73). This attitude towards science is demonstrated in *Golden Pot* when Heerbrand introduces Lindhorst as an “experimental chemist” instead of an alchemist since Heerbrand refuses to entertain the idea that an “occult science” like alchemy can exist in a “reality” that now puts its “faith” in sciences like chemistry. Indeed, like many of his other tales, *Golden Pot* can be thought of as Hoffmann’s critique of the Enlightenment that embraced the scientific revolution and emphasized the importance of the scientific method. According to Jack Zipes, Hoffmann in *Golden Pot* “served notice on the ‘society of enlightenment’ that he would be judging it severely”; the foregoing explains why Hoffmann “has his protagonist Anselmus reject a secure career as a privy councillor for life in poetry with the salamander Serpentina.”⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Friedrich Schiller, “The Gods of Greece,” 1788, *Schiller’s Poems: Poems of the Second Period*, Project Gutenberg-tm, 25 Oct. 2013 <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/6795/6795-h/6795-h.htm>>.

⁷⁶ Jack Zipes, “The Revolutionary Rise of the Romantic Fairy Tale in Germany,” *Studies in Romanticism* 16 (1977): 445.

We noted earlier that, in addition to marrying Serpentina, Anselmus leaves with her to live in the other world. This world turns out to be the mythical island of Atlantis which is, in other words, the location of the Golden Age for Hoffmann in *Golden Pot*. Anselmus leaving Dresden for Atlantis, in fact, represents the third stage of the development of the universe according to Schubert and the German Romantics, namely, man's return to the Golden Age where he would be able to "recapture" his "lost intimacy" with nature (Taylor 76; Holbeche 56). It is important to note here, however, that this return is a return to the beginning but on a "more advanced level" since man returns to it with all the knowledge that he has gained during the second stage (Holbeche 56). The foregoing is, of course, why the return to the Golden Age for the German Romantics was thought of as a spiral to show that the return is not a straightforward return to the point of origin but rather, a return to the origin on a different, higher level of consciousness altogether.

The German Romantics believed that only true poets had this ability to return to the Golden Age and in *Golden Pot* it is only Anselmus with his "child-like poetic spirit" and "faith" in the same who is able to make this return successfully. Here we may recall the five other men who were, like Anselmus, trapped in "crystal bottle[s] on a shelf on ... Linhorst's library"; although these five men might have had the potential to return to the Golden Age, the text makes it clear that such a return is ultimately not possible for them since they are apparently doomed to be trapped within the bottles forever.

Like the German Romantics, the alchemists also believed in the existence of this Golden Age and they also believed that man could return to this state again; the

alchemists' "desire" was in fact to "see the Paradisal state restored to man on earth."⁷⁷ The alchemists therefore set themselves to the task of "transform[ing] the iron age into the golden age through the circulation and return of the elements," the "iron age" being another way of referring to the second stage in Schubert's formulation where the world had lost its intuitive understanding of nature ("Return," *Dictionary*). The alchemists believed they could facilitate this return through the creation of the philosopher's stone; M. Roberts has astutely pointed out that the philosopher's stone and the idea of a Golden Age are synonymous, since both the stone and the idea are in fact "powerful metaphors beckoning for the integration of mankind with the divine principle in a reharmonisation with nature" (13). Given the foregoing, it is no surprise that Anselmus, who is both a "naïve" poet-genius, an alchemist, as well as a philosopher's stone, is particularly well suited to show us the way back to Atlantis, Hoffmann's expression of the Golden Age in *Golden Pot*.

Since the Golden Age was a time of harmony and purity, Hoffmann's description of Atlantis has been described as a "mythical vision" of an "*Urzeit*" or "primal time" depicted as a "poet's paradise" (Negus, *Other World* 55; Daemmrich, *Shattered Self* 35). Given the "primal" nature of this world, it is perhaps no surprise that the cosmology shown in *Golden Pot* reflects a more "primitive" time. What is particularly noteworthy about the cosmology in Hoffmann's novella, however, is the fact that it bears a remarkable similarity to the way the alchemists viewed the world.

⁷⁷ Lyndy Abraham, *Marvell and Alchemy* (Aldershot: Scolar, 1990) 16.

The alchemists considered the world as both hylozoistic and animistic, that is, they believed that all nature was alive and that there existed “supernatural powers, such as demons and angels,” that “exercise[d] their powers on the mundane world” (Lembert 37; Coudert 108).⁷⁸ The world of *Golden Pot* is depicted in this same fashion. As we have seen, even in the “mundane world” of Dresden, there not only exists talking snakes and birds, but even the sun itself is capable of communicating with man. Given the foregoing, it should come as no surprise that everything in the primal world of Atlantis is alive, from the “sun” who is able to “nurse and warm” the vale down to the “granite rocks” that are able to “[bow] their heads in sympathy” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 15).

It is clear that “supernatural powers” also exist in Dresden, and that these power “exercise their powers” on the inhabitants of this world. We have already seen how Mrs. Rauer tries to prevent Anselmus from reaching his destined “higher life” in Atlantis and we have seen how Lindhorst manages to thwart Mrs. Rauer’s evil machinations at every turn by means that are clearly not “natural.” That Mrs. Rauer and Lindhorst have or are “supernatural powers” who “exercise their powers on the mundane world” is a fact that is not at all lost on Anselmus who states that he “can see and feel that all the strange figures from a distant world of wonders, which before [he] saw only rare and remarkable dreams, have now entered [his] waking life and are making [him] his plaything” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 25).

⁷⁸ Arthur John Hopkins, *Alchemy, Child of Greek Philosophy* (New York: Columbia UP, 1934) 28.

The alchemists also had an anthropomorphic view of the world for they believed it was a world in which “minerals had feelings, fell in love, and married” (Lembert 38; Coudert 109; G. Roberts, *Languages* 21). The anthropomorphic view of the world in *Golden Pot* is, however, extended beyond “minerals” since it is a “youth called Phosphorus” and a “fiery lily” who are able to “fall in love” with each other (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 15). Indeed, the feelings between Phosphorus and the fiery lily can be thought of as an example of the “mystical sympathy with the world” that the alchemists believed could be experienced (Eliade 34).

The feelings between Phosphorus and the fiery lily are, moreover, an expression of the German Romantics’ belief in man’s “essential oneness of Nature, the realm in which he would see the underlying unity of all living creatures and all natural forces” (Taylor 78). This “essential oneness” and “underlying unity” of all things in the world is remarkably similar to the alchemist’s belief in a “holistic world view” which held that the “microcosmic world of man” was “one with the macrocosmic universe” as reflected in the famous maxim from Hermes’ “The Emerald Table”: “That which is above is like to that which is below, and that which is below is like to that which is above” (Lembert 38; Hopkins 28).⁷⁹ It can be argued that *Golden Pot* contains within it this same “holistic world view” where the “individual soul is a microcosm of the universe” (Taylor 76). To understand how this might be the case, we must first undertake an analysis of the cosmic

⁷⁹ Ronald D. Gray, *Goethe the Alchemist: A Study of Alchemical Symbolism in Goethe’s Literary and Scientific Works* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1952) 8-9; [Hermes Trismegistus], “The Emerald Table,” *The Alchemy Reader: From Hermes Trismegistus to Issac Newton*, ed. Linden, Stanton J. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003) 28.

myth that Hoffmann sets out in the Third, Eighth, and Twelfth Vigils and compare the same with the cosmological beliefs of the alchemists.

The cosmic myth in the Third Vigil begins: “The spirit looked upon the waters, whereupon they stirred and surged up in foaming waves and plunged thundering into the abysses” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 15). Hoffmann’s cosmic myth therefore opens with a scene of chaos but it is important to note that it is an unnamed “spirit” that causes this chaos to occur. This unnamed “spirit” is remarkably reminiscent of the alchemical “presupposition” of “philosophical chaos,” that is, the “first matter from which all things could be derived.”⁸⁰ It is no surprise, therefore, that this “spirit” or “philosophical chaos” is able to cause the “violent interaction” between the “waters” and the “abysses” to produce the “granite rocks” that will become the protector of the “vale” (Negus, “Romantic Myth” 269). Once the “granite rocks” are created, the “sun” is then finally able to take the vale into “her maternal lap to nurse and warm it” to make the “thousand seeds that had been slumbering under the sandy waste” wake and grow (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 15).

Within this vale, however, there also exists a “black hill, which rose and sank as does man’s breast when it heaves with ardent yearning” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 15). This “black hill” is, in fact, the representation of the “potential power of creativity” since it, once it is “touched” by the sun’s “pure ray,” gives “birth to [the] splendid fiery lily” that will fall in love with Phosphorus (Negus, “Romantic Myth” 269). As we have seen,

⁸⁰ Betty Jo Teeter Dobbs, *Alchemical Death and Resurrection: The Significance of Alchemy in the Age of Newton* (Washington: Smithsonian, 1990) 14.

a red lily can represent the red philosopher's stone obtained at the final stage of the *opus magnum*, the *rubedo*. At this point in Hoffmann's cosmic myth, however, it is clear that the "fiery lily" has not yet been transformed into the philosopher's stone.

When the "fiery lily" confesses her love for Phosphorus, he tells her:

I would gladly be yours, fair flower, but ... you will desire to be greater and mightier than any of the flowers that now share your happiness as equals. The yearning that suffuses you will be split into countless rays and will torture you, for the mind will give birth to the senses, and the supreme joy kindled by the spark that I now cast into you is the agonizing despair in which you will perish, to grow anew into an alien guise. This spark is *thought!* (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 16-17)

Since the "fiery lily" is created from the "black hill," it follows that the "fiery lily" should likewise contain within her the "potential power of creativity." The "fiery lily" is, however, different to all the other flowers because of her "desire to be greater and mightier" than them; the "fiery lily," in other words, contains within her more than just the "potential" for the "power of creativity." The foregoing results in the "fiery lily" being transformed into an "alien guise," that is, something totally new and never seen before: "Then the youth Phosphorus kissed her, and she burst into flame as though filled with radiant light. From the flames sprang forth an alien being which swiftly escaped from the vale and roamed through infinite space" (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 16). This "alien being" born from the "flames" that engulfs the "fiery lily" is, of course, remarkably similar to the mythical creature known as the phoenix which the alchemists believed was a symbol for both the philosopher's stone as well as the *opus magnum* itself

since both the “fiery lily” and the phoenix die in flames only to be reborn anew (“Phoenix,” *Dictionary*; Dobbs 11).⁸¹

The “fiery lily” is also distinguished from the other inhabitants of the mythical world described by Hoffmann because she also contains within her the “spark” known as “thought” and it is for this reason that the “fiery lily” has been understood as a “prototype of man” (Negus, “Romantic Myth” 270). Once the “fiery lily” discovers “thought” and turns into the “alien being,” she then “swiftly escapes from the vale and roamed through infinite space” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 16). Given the importance of the imagination for both the German Romantics as well as the alchemists in the creation of their “work,” it can surely be argued that the “alien being” can be thought of as the imagination that enables man to “escape” and “roam” far from his surroundings. The imagination, however, is sometimes not permitted to have full reign, and this is represented in Hoffmann’s cosmic myth by the “black dragon” born from one of the granite rocks, who catches the “being that had sprung from the lily, bore it to the [black] hill, and enfolded it in his wings” where “it became the lily once more” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 16).

The dragon is, of course, a creature that is thoroughly alchemical since it is a symbol of the “base matter” that the alchemists would use to create the philosopher’s stone (Coudert 126). The emblem entitled “Putrefaction” in the alchemical emblem *Book of Lambspring* shows a warrior in full armor fighting with a dragon accompanied by the following verse: “If any man cut off his head, / His blackness will disappear, / And give

⁸¹ Kathleen P. Long, *Hermaphrodites in Renaissance Europe* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2006) 112.

place to snowy white” (qtd. in Coudert 126). When viewed alchemically, the warrior in the emblem is the alchemist who must change base matter represented by the dragon from the “blackness” of the *nigredo* to the “snowy white” of the *albedo* in order to ultimately create the philosopher’s stone (Coudert 126).

Given the foregoing, it is surely no coincidence in Hoffmann’s cosmic myth that it is Phosphorus, who “put[s] on gleaming armour ... and f[ights] the dragon” until the “dragon’s strength vanished, and he hid himself, defeated, in the depths of the earth” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 16). Phosphorus can be regarded, in other words, as an alchemist who is able to change base matter in order to create a philosopher’s stone. We noted earlier that the creation of the philosopher’s stone was also referred to as the “Chemical Wedding” which was often depicted as a “royal wedding” between a “king and a queen.” It is therefore no surprise that the first part of Hoffmann’s cosmic myth should end with just this type of wedding: “The lily was freed, the youth Phosphorus embraced her in the ardent passion of heavenly love, and in an exultant chorus of the flowers, the birds, and even the lofty granite rocks paid homage to her as the queen of the vale” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 16).

It can be argued surely, that the cosmic myth described in the Third Vigil originates from the unnamed “spirit” which we have identified as the alchemical “philosophical chaos” since the unnamed “spirit” is the original source of *all* creation in that world. If this is the case, then the unnamed “spirit,” which we can now refer to as spirit of Creation itself, must be situated at the top of the hierarchical organization of beings in the cosmic myth. The fact that the spirit of Creation occupies a spatial position

above all the other inhabitants in the world described by virtue of its vantage point where it acts on the inhabitants of the world and watches the events unfold – the “spirit looked upon the waters” – seems to add credence to this argument. Below this top tier in the hierarchy we find the “black hill” and the “fiery lily” (in her original form) since they represent only the “potential for creativity” (and not Creativity itself) as we have seen. Finally, underneath this middle tier we find the “depths of the earth” where the dragon – who restricts and hoards imagination, possibility because he either has limited or no imagination of his own – hides himself after being defeated by Phosphorus.

Hoffmann’s cosmic myth in the Third Vigil, then, consists of these three realms, a higher, middle and lower realm (Negus, “Romantic Myth” 268).⁸² These three realms, however, are remarkably similar to the way the alchemists thought the world was constructed. Following Cornelius Agrippa in *Occult Philosophy*, the alchemists believed that the cosmos was split into three distinct realms, the natural, celestial, and divine realms.⁸³ The natural realm was located at the bottom of this hierarchy since it was “impure and burdened by matter” (Friesen 11). It is clear that this natural realm is similar to if not the same as the lower realm described in *Golden Pot*; not only is the dragon

⁸² It should be noted here that while Negus also considers Hoffmann’s cosmic myth to be comprised of these three realms, his formulation of the same is slightly different to the hierarchy described here. According to Negus, the higher realm is the realm of the unnamed spirit, the middle realm includes the “waters,” the “abysses,” the “wind” as well as all the inhabitants of the vale, and the lower realm consists of the “abysses” and the “vapors” that issue from there as well as anything that lives under the “sandy waste” and he relates these three realms to the substances of “spirit, water, and darkness” respectively (“Romantic Myth” 268-269).

⁸³ Ryan Curtis Friesen, *Supernatural Fiction in Early Modern Drama and Culture* (Brighton: Sussex Academic P., 2010) 10-11.

representative of the “base matter,” which is by its very nature “impure” as we have seen, the dragon is also trapped in “depths of the earth,” unable to escape quite literally because it is “burdened by matter.” The celestial realm is a realm that is “purer” than the natural realm but it is not as pure as the divine realm that is considered the “purest” realm of all (Friesen 11). It is not difficult to see how the middle realm described in Hoffmann’s cosmic myth can be equated to the celestial realm for, although this realm is the realm of the “fiery lily,” the lily is nevertheless affected by the dragon, the representative of the lower realm, from below; here we will recall that the dragon was able to catch the “alien being” and trap it in its wings. At the same time, the beings in the middle realm are also affected by spirit of Creation that sets the entire cosmic myth in motion from the highest realm as we have already noted. It is significant that it is the spirit of Creation who acts on the beings in the other two realms while remaining unaffected by the events that unfold in the middle and lower realms in the cosmic myth itself. Given the forgoing, it can surely be argued that the spirit of Creation occupies the celestial realm of the alchemists, the “purest” realm of all.

We have just seen how Hoffmann’s view of the creation of the universe was based on a tripartite structure that is very much like the cosmology of the alchemists. Hoffmann, however, takes the application of this three part cosmos even further in *Golden Pot* to show how these three realms can be related to three worlds described in his novella, that is, the initial world of creation, Atlantis, and Dresden. As Gordon Birrell has noted, the interpolated tales in *Golden Pot* “relate a succession of mythic cycles,

beginning with ... the origins of the universe and leading down ... to the realistic level of the tale as a whole.”⁸⁴

We have already seen how the events that make up the origins of the universe in Hoffmann’s novella unfold above. These events can be summarized as follows: first, the spirit of Creation creates the world; second, an external force (Phosphorus) enters the world bringing with it the “spark” of “thought”; third, this “spark” transforms the world (the “fiery lily”) through imagination; fourth, the representative of the lower realm (the dragon) tries to reign in imagination whereupon a “cosmic battle” between the external force of “light” (Phosphorus who brings the “spark” of “thought” into the world) and the dark “forces of limitation” (the dragon) ensues; fifth, the dark forces is “defeated but not annihilated”; and lastly, imagination is released from its captivity the world rejoices in a vision of cosmic harmony (Birrell 126). Variations of these same events are, in fact, repeated in tale “Of the Marriage of the Salamander and the Green Snake” as well as Anselmus’ story that takes place in Dresden.

In the Eighth Vigil, Serpentina relates the story of her father and mother to Anselmus and she tells him that this story takes place in the “land of Atlantis” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 54). We should note here that Atlantis can be distinguished from the world described in the creation myth in the Third Vigil by virtue of the fact Atlantis was created only *after* cosmic harmony was achieved in that world. Since the world is already created in the Atlantis tale, this tale begins midway with the salamander finding the “fiery

⁸⁴ Gordon Birrell, *The Boundless Present: Space and Time in the Literary Fairy Tales of Novalis and Tieck* (Chapel Hill: The U of North Carolina P., 1979) 126.

lily” in a “splendid garden” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 54). Like Phosphorus before him, the salamander “touches” the lily whereupon the lily “opened her petals” revealing to the salamander her “daughter, the green snake” in which the “spark” of “thought” was “preserved” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 54). Although Phosphorus warns the salamander not to “embrace” the green snake, the salamander does not heed this advice and “enfold[s] the green snake in his arms” whereupon the green snake, just like her mother the “fiery lily” before her, “crumbled into ashes, and a winged being, born from the ashes, shot away through the air” (here, the green snake is described in terms that are even more reminiscent of the alchemical phoenix; Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 54).

Driven mad with grief, the salamander then “laid waste to the garden of Prince Phosphorus in a fury” until his “flames [were] extinguished” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 62, 63). As punishment for this crime, Phosphorus condemns the salamander “to the earth-spirits” so that they can “tease,” “mock,” and “keep [him] captive” until his “fiery substance catches light again and rises radiantly from the earth with [him] as a new being” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 55). The salamander is, in other words, condemned to a realm below in the same manner as the dragon in the creation myth. As it turns out, the dragon was not only “hiding” in “the depths of the earth” but was in fact imprisoned there by Phosphorus who instructed the “earth-spirits” to “keep [it] bound in chains” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 54). Before the “salamanders and the earth-spirits” could restrain the dragon, however, the dragon escapes, dropping “black feathers” which “gave birth to malign spirits” like Mrs. Rauer who was created from the “love between one such feather . . . and a mangel-wurzel” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 56, 57).

From the foregoing we can see that a “cosmic battle” also ensues in the tale in the Eighth Vigil which culminates in the dark forces “defeated but not annihilated” once more. However, it should be noted that the story “Of the Marriage of the Salamander and the Green Snake” is not finished which explains why the tale cannot close with the world rejoicing in a vision of cosmic harmony and this vision can only be foretold as an event that happens some time in the future. The salamander and the green snake cannot have a “happy ending” because the salamander’s punishment is not yet over.

Although the salamander’s “fiery substance will catch alight anew,” this will only occur during the “unhappy time when the degenerate race of men will no longer understand the language of nature” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 55). This “time” referred to is, of course, the second stage in the development of the universe that Schubert identified, the time of disenchantment or disillusionment where man was “estranged” from nature. At that time, the salamander will then “rise only to the level of mankind and must accommodate himself to their wretched life and endure its privations” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 55). The salamander will, however, not only “retain the memory of his primal state,” he will also regain his supernatural powers (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 55). Using these powers together with his knowledge of “nature” and “all its marvels” together with his supernatural powers, the salamander is tasked with helping mankind rediscover the lost Golden Age with the help of his “three daughters, who will appear to men in the same guise as their mother” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 55). It is only when the salamander and his three daughters are able to convince three “youths” of the existence of the “distant land of wonders” – that is, Atlantis – “to which he can courageously ascend

by shaking off the burden of common cares” by having a “living and ardent faith in the wonders of nature, and in [their] own existence amid these wonders,” and these “youths” fall in love with and marry the salamander’s daughters, that the salamander can finally be reunited with his beloved green snake and can “cast off his weary burden and [re]join his brothers” in Atlantis (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 55-56).

From the above, we can see how the events that took place in the cosmic myth set out in the Third Vigil is related to the tale “Of the Marriage of the Salamander and the Green Snake” set out in the Eighth Vigil. We noted, however, that the story of the salamander and the green snake was not yet finished and that it cannot be concluded until the salamander’s task is completed. The salamander’s task, of course, takes place in Dresden, and in Anselmus’ story we will see that the same “mythic cycle” appears as well.

Since the world of Dresden has already been created like Atlantis, the story begins midway (and in *media res!*) with the events that befall Anselmus at the Black Gate that lead him to the elder-tree where he sees Serpentina for the first time. Serpentina can thus be thought of as the “spark” that transforms Anselmus’ world, just as her mother the green snake was the “spark” that transformed the salamander in their story. As we have already seen, Anselmus is not entirely convinced that the other world he sees is in fact real until Lindhorst steps in to assure him that this is indeed the case. What Lindhorst provides to Anselmus is thus the same kind of “thought” that Phosphorus brought to the world in the cosmic myth; one of Lindhorst’s functions in *Golden Pot* is, after all, to “engender poetic creativity in Anselmus” as we have seen. (Lindhorst, of course, also

brings this spark to the other inhabitants of Dresden as well.) Since Mrs. Rauer is the daughter of the black dragon's "feather ... and a mangel-wurzel," it is no surprise that she will play the role of the dark forces that try to reign in and stamp out the imagination that was created from the "spark" in Anselmus. We have also seen how a cosmic battle between the external force of "light" (Lindhorst the salamander) and the dark "forces of limitation" (Mrs. Rauer) takes place in Dresden in Lindhorst's library. Although Mrs. Rauer is ultimately defeated by Lindhorst, we can safely assume that other dark forces continue to exist since the black dragon did not only drop "one feather" that was capable of giving "birth to malign spirits"; the dragon must have dropped more. If this is the case, then it seems that the dark forces are merely "defeated but not [completely] annihilated." Unlike the salamander's story, however, Anselmus' story can come to a close, since he is ultimately found worthy of the "magnificent wonders of the golden pot" and Serpentina's hand in marriage as we have seen. Finally, since his imagination is no longer fettered (by the dark forces or by the "burden of common cares") Anselmus can then go to live in Atlantis with Serpentina whereupon their "happiness" is celebrated by all the beings who live there in an extended vision of cosmic harmony and thereby bringing this mythic cycle to a close (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 82).

We have just observed how *Golden Pot* "relate[s] a succession of mythic cycles, beginning with ... the origins of the universe and leading down ... to the realistic level of the tale as a whole." These mythic cycles can, in fact, be understood as a representation of the alchemist's "holistic view" by virtue of the fact that what happens on the "macro" level of the tale in the cosmic myth in the Third Vigil is reflected in the "micro" level of

the novella as a whole in Dresden; this “micro” level is, of course, also influenced by what happens in the “middle” level of the tale in Atlantis. It is precisely because of the foregoing that Anselmus can be considered “part of the cosmic myth” in the tale.⁸⁵ The alchemists believed that man was the “universe” in miniature and that the microcosm and the macrocosm were replicas of each other” and this belief is certainly illustrated here in *Golden Pot* where the events that play out in Dresden are (almost) identical to the events that occur in the cosmic myth as well as in the tale of Atlantis as we have just seen (Gray 8-9).

The alchemists believed, moreover, that the macrocosm and the microcosm were “animated by the same spirit” (Gray 9). Such a “spirit” clearly animates both the macrocosm and the microcosm in *Golden Pot* and this “spirit” is the spirit of Creation that is facilitated by the imagination. This spirit in the Hoffmann’s novella is, in fact, very similar to the alchemical quintessence which, as we will recall, is the substance that is produced after all the opposing elements in the world were reconciled into “one harmonious unity.” In fact, the alchemists believed that the quintessence had another function: they believed that the quintessence was not only responsible for the creation of the “sky and its heavenly bodies” but that it was also capable of “further influencing the creation of earthly matter” (Lembert 37). It is surely no coincidence that the “spirit” in *Golden Pot* should fulfill this same function as the alchemical quintessence.

⁸⁵ Ralph Tymms, *German Romantic Literature* (London: Methuen, 1955) 358.

We have already seen how Schiller believed that man could reclaim his “naïve” state by going back to the Golden Age and it is the “naïve” poet-genius who is able to show man the way through nature because the poet-genius is himself nature. For the German Romantics, nature was the “source” of all poetry and they believed that there was an “immanent, creative soul in nature” (Negus, *Other World* 15, 21). The alchemists likewise believed in such an “immanent soul” in nature; they believed the world was a “living organism with a material body” and an “immaterial ‘world-soul’” and that beyond the “material realm” there existed a “divine intellect” that was the “source of ‘ideas’ ... that became manifest in nature.”⁸⁶ Once man was able to understand nature again, he, just like the “base matter” of the alchemists, could then be redeemed and thereby find his way back to the Golden Age once more. This is exactly what Anselmus achieves at the end of *Golden Pot* for he, through the “spark” of “thought,” the spirit of Creation and imagination as we have seen, has finally found “supreme knowledge,” that is, his “essential oneness [with] Nature, the realm in which he would see the underlying unity of all living creatures and all natural forces” as revealed by his final words to Serpentina: “Faith in you, love for you has disclosed to me the innermost being of nature! You brought me the lily ... the knowledge of holy harmony of all living things, and in this knowledge I shall live in the utmost happiness for evermore!” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 83).

⁸⁶ Gavin Ashenden, *Charles Williams: Alchemy and Integration* (Kent: Kent State UP, 2008) 13-14.

Chapter IV

The (Secret) Alchemies of

Tieck's *The Runenberg* and E. T. A. Hoffmann's *The Mines of Falun*

In this chapter we will be investigating the (secret) part that alchemy plays in Tieck's *Runenberg* and Hoffmann's *Mines*, both of which make no mention of alchemy but are in fact particularly alchemical texts. We will first begin our discussion with an alchemical analysis of *Runenberg*. This analysis will then be followed by a comparison of the (obvious) points of similarity between *Runenberg* and *Mines*. An explanation of the relationship between mining and alchemy will then be provided, after which we will then be in a position to proceed with an alchemical reading of *Mines*. We will close this chapter with remarks relating to the importance of the "stone" concept that is used in both texts.

The Call of the Mountain

It is perhaps the lack of direct reference to alchemy in *Runenberg* that critics have not thought to analyze this novella in alchemical terms notwithstanding the fact that this novella posits clearly the conflict between the plant world and the stone world with a particular emphasis on the importance of the latter. It is not, however, only because of the existence of the stone world that makes alchemy so relevant to *Runenberg*; alchemy plays a crucial role in this novella's narrative structure and also assists in a further

understanding of Christian's "quest ... to attain an object of great value" which, as will be argued, is in fact an alchemical journey to obtain the philosopher's stone (Kimpel 183).

As we saw in our discussion of *Golden Pot* above, the first stage of the alchemical process was called the *nigredo*; it is now relevant to note here that the *nigredo* was the stage where the alchemists began the *opus magnum* by "dissolving or decomposing matter into its original dark state" (Jung, *Studies* 68; Gates 60). Jung discovered that the *nigredo* could be equated with "melancholia" and "the subjective state of depression" (*Studies* 331). Tieck's novella opens with Christian in a state of melancholia and depression: "In the depths of the mountains a young gamekeeper sat in pensive solitude among the birds" (34). Although he tries to raise his spirits by singing a rousing hunting song, Christian "grew more and more melancholy" and "he continued to sit there unhappily" (Tieck 35, 36). It is important from an alchemical viewpoint that during this scene Christian "wished he could have had those old books which he used to see in his father's house but which he had never wanted to read" (Tieck 35). It seems that Christian wants to read "those old books" in his melancholia so that he can gain knowledge from them. It can be argued that this knowledge may be alchemical knowledge and it is significant that, although Christian desires "those old books," he never comes into possession of or is able to read them. According to Hensing, if an aspiring alchemist "learned all these things [that is, the art of alchemy] only from books, [we] should cast a wary eye on him, as he is certainly no [alchemical adept]" (503). Christian is, however, not going to "[learn] all things from ... books," he is instead about to learn how to be an adept by way of experience.

Although Christian does not yet know it, his melancholia is caused by the fact that he is seeking hermetic knowledge as well as the philosopher's stone. The existence of this knowledge and the philosopher's stone is hinted at when Christian "[a]bsent-mindedly ... pulled at a root that was sticking out of the ground. Suddenly, with a fright, he heard a dull whimper which quivered mournfully through the earth beneath his feet and finally died away in the distance. ... He had heard of the mysterious mandragora" – referred to as the "Alrunenwurzel" in the German original – "which was said to utter such a heartrending cry when it was pulled up that it drove people out of their minds" (Tieck 36).⁸⁷ Although Christian's reaction can be understood as an instinctive one owing to the superstition that surrounded the mandrake, his reaction is also relevant in alchemical terms.⁸⁸

For the alchemists, the mandrake represents the "inverted tree" which is a symbol for "the growth of the arcane substance and its transformation" into the philosopher's stone (Jung, *Studies* 311, 274). Christian's fear of the mandragora reveals that he is not yet ready to recognize the mandrake as the "inverted tree"; since Christian is "absent-minded," that is, without or incapable of thought at that moment, he is not in a position to understand the "dull whimper" that he hears. It is also significant that the "dull

⁸⁷ Ludwig Tieck, *Der Runenberg*, Projekt Gutenberg-De, 23 Nov. 2008
<http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/?id=5&xid=2879&kapitel=1#gb_found>

⁸⁸ Tatar has pointed out that Tieck changed the spelling of "Alraunwurzel" to read as "Alrunenwurzel" in order to "subtly [alert] his readers to a possible link" between the root Christian unearths and the Runenberg in the title of his story (286). There is, therefore, structural support for the argument made here that the "Alrunenwurzel" is also related to the stone tablet that Christian will find on (or in) the Runenberg.

whimper ... finally die[s] away in the distance”; if the mandragora’s “whimper” can be equated with the knowledge that the “inverted tree” can impart, then it *has* to disappear into the distance because the appearance of the mandragora only signifies the beginning of Christian’s journey for alchemical knowledge.

It is, of course, the “friendly stranger” who motivates Christian to start on his journey (Tieck 36). After hearing Christian explain that he had, since his youth, “pictured to [him]self mountain peaks, giant crags, ravines and forests of pine trees,” the stranger tells Christian as they part ways to:

look over there at the old Runenberg – see how its steep walls look down on us and entice us towards it. ... Anyone who knows how to look ... and whose heart is really in the search, is bound to find [there] ... ancient glories – indeed, all the things for which one most deeply longs. (Tieck 37, 39)

With these words, the stranger indicates that he seems to know for what Christian most deeply longs; Christian seems to recognize this too, since he immediately sets out for the Runenberg without any hesitation whatsoever. “Everything drew [Christian] towards [the Runenberg]” and, once there, Christian “found himself in places the life of which he had never known” (Tieck 39). Even at this initial stage of his journey, Christian has acquired new knowledge and it is “the desire for knowledge” which is the primary purpose of his journey to the Runenberg (Tatar 292).

Inside or on the mountain (the text is not clear about this) Christian encounters a woman who gives him “a stone tablet glittering with inlaid rubies, diamonds and hundreds of other precious stones” (Tieck 40, 41). Several arguments can be made that the tablet is in fact the philosopher’s stone that Christian most deeply longs for in his

heart. First, this tablet is made of stone. Second, Jung has noted that it is because of “the magical power” attributed to the philosopher’s stone that a “similar importance attached to gems, to which all kinds of magical and medicinal properties were [also] attributed” (*Studies* 98). Third, although there are many different kinds of jewels on the tablet, there are specifically “rubies,” which in the alchemical tradition is a symbol for “the red stone,” the philosopher’s stone, which has the power to “transmute earthly man into an enlightened philosopher” (“Ruby,” *Dictionary*).⁸⁹ Once this transmutation has been achieved, the “enlightened philosopher” will “[know] the secret of the stone” and will be able to “[understand] their words” (Jung, *Studies* 69). Christian is unable, however, to read the “strange, inscrutable pattern of lines which stood out in a mass of flashing colors” on the tablet (Tieck 41). This detail is important for several reasons.

First, Tatar has suggested that if this pattern of lines on the tablet is “related to the name of the mountain that Christian ascends,” then the lines must be runes (297).⁹⁰ Tatar notes, moreover, that runes are not only “mysterious in character,” but that they are “generally ... used ... to convey a secret message” (297). This interpretation therefore adds support to the argument that the tablet is a philosopher’s stone that contains the “secret doctrine” of alchemy.

⁸⁹ The description of the tablet is also remarkably similar to the effect of the philosopher’s stone described in “George Ripley’s ‘Song of the Newborn Chymical King’”: “A rounded shape ... / ... turned again ... to deepest red, / ... And rises now much more from words that wise men do relate, / To the circles of the sun, with rubies, jewels, and gold ornate.” George Ripley, “George Ripley’s ‘Song of the Newborn Chymical King,’” *Theosophicum* 109, 111, 115-116.

⁹⁰ Kuzniar similarly refers to the pattern of lines as “hieroglyphs” (“Crystal Revenge” 225).

Second, although Christian is unable to understand the lines on the tablet, he nevertheless feels that he “felt [like] a different person” after seeing them (Tieck 41). In other words, Christian no longer knows himself because he has changed and, by feeling that he has changed because of the tablet, Christian indicates that he has recognized the potential that it contains. Indeed, it can be argued that the transmutation process has already begun since Christian, once he is in physical possession of the tablet, feels “as though the figure had *become part of his own being*,” a feeling that results in a “a sense of rapture” because he has caught a glimpse of the higher knowledge that he could possess (Tieck 41, 42; emphasis added).

Third, the fact that the lines look like “a mass of flashing colors” seem to reinforce the argument that the tablet is a philosopher’s stone since “the black nigredo” is followed immediately by a “rainbow” colored stage in the alchemical process referred to as the “peacock’s tail” (“peacock’s tail,” *Dictionary*). The similarity between the “flashing colors” and this “rainbow” colored stage is immediately obvious.

Fourth, it can be argued that “the white stage or *albedo*” (the alchemical stage that immediately follows the “rainbow” colored stage just described) has also been achieved at the end of this scene since this stage is represented by “a silver, moon-like illumination” where things are “seen for the first time” (“Argus,” *Dictionary*; Gates 61). It is surely no coincidence that Christian makes discovers the tablet under a “crescent moon” and in “pale moonlight” (Tieck 38). Also worth noting is the circumstance under which Christian loses the flash of insight that he gains from the tablet; Christian ultimately becomes unable to “recapture his former feelings, the sense of rapture” as “he gazed at

the precious tablet” when he tries to decipher the lines again in “the reflection of the pale blue light of the *waning* moon” (Tieck 42; emphasis added). In other words, at this point in the narrative, the alchemical process was a failure, and Christian must start the process again.

Given the foregoing, it is no surprise, therefore, that Christian loses the tablet immediately after this scene: “It was still resting in his hands when drawn broke, and exhausted and half-asleep he stumbled back down the mountain in a daze. When he awoke from his trance ... he looked for the stone tablet – but it was nowhere to be found” (Tieck 42). With the loss of the tablet comes a renewed sense of the black *nigredo* when Christian experiences “total confusion” and “his memory was as though covered by a dense cloud behind which shadowy forms glided to and fro in meaningless confusion” (Tieck 42). Without the tablet-philosopher’s stone, Christian cannot even collect his thoughts, and although Christian eventually decides that he must have had been “the victim of a dream or nightmare,” the text makes it clear that Christian cannot forget about the tablet-philosopher’s stone and, by extension, the alchemical knowledge afforded by it.

The person who shows Christian the way to the tablet again is the “friendly stranger” who reappears in Christian’s life. When the stranger leaves, he presents Christian with a “sum of money” – “*eine Summe Geldes*,” in the German original – with the instruction that Christian may do as he wishes with it in the event that the stranger does not return within a year. As Ewton has noted, the money is suddenly referred to in the German original as “*Gold*” once it becomes clear that Christian is obsessed with “laboriously counting the gold ... by the light of a little lamp” again and again (28; Tieck

48). It is important that Christian sees that the money/gold “looks up at [him], piercing his heart with its blood-red, golden rays” and that he can feel “it tremble with delight” and “quiver” with “passion” while “get[ting] redder and more beautiful all the time” (Tieck 48). This description reveals that Christian is still thinking about alchemy and the tablet-philosopher’s stone for several reasons.

First, the fact that Christian can feel the money/gold “tremble with delight” and “quiver” with “passion” reveals that Christian has made an important alchemical discovery. According to Coudert, the alchemists not only “treated metals with reverence,” but they also considered metals as “sacred, *living* beings with bodies, souls, and *passions*” (72; emphasis added). For Christian, the money/gold is alive and, like a “living being,” it even has the ability to “call out” to him and “beckon” him near so that it can “breathe its message of love in [his] ear” (Tieck 48).

Second, although it is commonly known that one of the chief concerns of alchemy is the “search for a means of creating gold” with the aid of the philosopher’s stone, only the adept knows that gold created in this way is not yellow, but *red* in color (Hensing 490).⁹¹ Christian’s “insatiable appetite,” therefore, does not relate to ordinary gold (as his father believes), but *alchemical* gold. In his criticism, Lillyman points out the “unusual comparison” that Christian makes when he refers to the money/gold as “blood-red,

⁹¹ “Anonymous Alchemical Questions of a Universal and Particular Nature, Translated from the Latin (1726),” *Theosophicum* 512. We may also note here that Roger Bacon has described alchemical gold in the following way: “Gold is a perfect body, engendred of *Argent-vive*, pure, fixed, cleare, *red*, and of *Sulphur* cleane, fixed, *red*, not burning” (“Gold and Silver,” *Dictionary*; emphasis added).

golden rays” and he concludes that it is only after Christian “accept[s] ... this ‘blood’ ... that all his doubts are overcome” so that Christian can “[leave] the valley to join the realm of the mountains forever” (104). Lillyman’s explanation is, however, too simplistic. For the alchemists, blood symbolizes “the transforming arcanum” as well as “the philosopher’s stone, the red tincture or elixir” (“Blood,” *Dictionary*). When viewed with this explanation in mind, the blood-red appearance of the money/gold that gets “get[s] redder ... all the time” seems to indicate that the alchemical process is in the stage before the philosopher’s stone can be produced, the *rubedo* that we discussed in respect of *Golden Pot*, where the alchemists “raised the heat of the fire to its highest intensity” so that the “chemical substance in the furnace” undergoes a “fiery torment and purification.” Also significant here is the fact that the money/gold is round like the *vas*, the vessel in which the alchemists made the philosopher’s stone as we will recall, which is described by Jung as an apparatus that had to be “as round as possible” thereby adding further weight to this argument (*Studies* 197). It seems, moreover, that the money/gold undergoes a “fiery torment” by virtue of the fact that it gets “redder ... all the time” whenever Christian touches or counts it. The alchemical process, in this point in Tieck’s novella, is, therefore nearly achieved.

Third, the appearance of the money/gold in the text and Christian’s obsession over the same can also be read in another way. According to Pinkus, the notion of greed is what distinguishes a false student of the alchemical arts from a true one since the true student would not covet gold for its material worth (10). Christian’s greed for the

money/gold therefore reinforces the notion that he is not yet a true adept.⁹² The foregoing, however, does not preclude the fact that the money/gold reminds Christian of the tablet-philosopher's stone. The money/gold pierces Christian's heart precisely because he desires the thing that it signifies, the blood-red philosopher's stone. It is not, as Lillyman contends, that Christian's "doubts are overcome" so that Christian can leave his home for the mountains, but rather that the money/gold reminds Christian of the potential that the philosopher's stone holds for him so that he can, once again, set off in search of what he has lost, the "precious tablet."

Before Christian can find the tablet-philosopher's stone again, however, two important aspects of the text are repeated. The first is the mandrake which, as we have seen, is the symbol for the "inverted tree" in alchemy. It is significant that Christian shows that he is no longer afraid of the cry of the mandragora: "it was a plant which first revealed to me the tragedy of the earth, and only since that time do I understand the sighs and laments one hears in nature, if only one is prepared to listen" (Tieck 50). With these words, Christian shows that he finally recognizes the mandrake as the symbol for "the growth of the arcane substance and its transformation" into the philosopher's stone. According to Hensing, one of the requirements of an adept is that he must be "a superb student of nature, knowing the composition, types and capabilities of all natural things" (497). Christian, by revealing that he now understands "understands the sighs and laments ... in nature," clearly shows that he has met this requirement.

⁹² According to Tymms, "Christian ... is devoured by an irresistible yearning for ... gold, which lure[s] him on, and this base greed depraves him, reducing him to moral impotence" (92).

The second event that is repeated is the (re)appearance of the “friendly man” which also seems to occur. However, Christian realizes that “figure in the distance coming towards him” was not the stranger but “an old woman of frightful ugliness,” referred to in the German original as the “*Waldweib*” (Tieck 51). It is important to note, however, that Christian specifically sees first, that the “features” of the stranger “disintegrates” into those of the *Waldweib* and second, that when the *Waldweib* turns around to face him once more at the end of their encounter Christian sees the woman from the Runenberg (Tieck 51). As Kimpel points out, the text makes it clear that the stranger, the *Waldweib*, and the woman from the Runenberg are “but three manifestations of the same being” (180-181). It is this “trinity” that provides strong support for the argument that there are not only references to alchemy in *Runenberg* but also that the narrative structure of this novella is based on the alchemical process.

As we saw in our discussion of *Golden Pot* above, the “chief figure” in the alchemical tradition was Hermes/Mercurius and that he was regarded as a “trinity.” It is now appropriate to add here that Mercurius was also regarded as “hermaphroditic” and thus referred to as having a “double nature,” in addition to being thought of as a “trinity” (Jung, *Studies* 218, 221). With this in mind, it can be argued that the “three manifestations of the same being” in *Runenberg* is none other than Mercurius, who was also considered to be “many-sided” and “changeable” (Jung, *Studies* 217). Not only is this being “hermaphroditic,” being both male (the stranger) and female (the woman from the Runenberg), this being also possesses a third distinct form (the *Waldweib*).

As the male, the stranger points Christian towards the location of the tablet-philosopher's stone on three occasions and thus acts as Hermes the messenger. Not only does he direct Christian to the Runenberg at the beginning of Tieck's novella and leaves Christian with the alchemical gold in the middle of the novella, his appearance just before Christian finds the tablet again draws Christian to the spot where the tablet is "glinting in the grass beneath his feet" (52). Although female, the woman from the Runenberg is described in a markedly masculine way, as Kuzniar has observed, as "a commanding female figure," "[t]all and powerfully built" thus reinforcing the "hermaphroditic" aspect of Mercurius (Kuzniar, "Stones that Stare" 57; Tieck 40). Christian's desire for the woman from the Runenberg is, of course, also thoroughly alchemical. Not only is Mercurius a symbol for the philosopher's stone, he also had a "secret connection with the goddess of love" (Jung, *Studies* 235, 216). In addition, the woman from the Runenberg is described in a way that is remarkably similar to the woman-as-philosopher's stone that the alchemists sought. In *Runenberg*, the woman wears a "golden veil" (41); in "George Ripley's 'Song of the Newborn Chymical King'" the "maiden" is "crowned with diadems of worth beyond compare / ... Such that every wise man in his heart desired this beauty fair" (121, 133, 136).⁹³ The similarities between these two descriptions are immediately obvious. In addition, it is worth noting here that the woman from the Runenberg "had an otherworldly aura about her" since this suggests that she might indeed be a goddess or, at the very least, a "priestess" (Tieck 40; Birrell 57). Finally, it is important that the being's

⁹³ Please see note 91 above for the reference to "George Ripley's 'Song of the Newborn Chymical King.'"

third form is that of the ugly *Waldweib*, that is, the reverse of the beautiful woman from the Runenberg because Mercurius “consists of all conceivable opposites” (Jung, *Studies* 237).

Mercurius is, moreover, representative of the entire alchemical process itself. As we saw in our discussion of *Golden Pot*, Mercurius is not only the *prima materia* and the *ultima materia*, he is “also the process which lies between, and the means by which it is effected”; Mercurius is, in short, the “beginning, middle and end of the work” (Jung, *Studies* 235). The three different manifestations of the being are introduced in *Runenberg* in this very sequence: the stranger appears first as a guide, the woman then appears to tempt Christian with the tablet-philosopher’s stone that he loses, and the tablet-philosopher’s stone finally reappears near the end of the novella where the *Waldweib* disappears which then leads Christian back to the Runenberg.

It is extremely interesting that the (completed) figure of Mercurius, the alchemical hermaphrodite, appears at exactly this moment in the text because this figure is particularly associated with the penultimate step of the alchemical work, the *coagulatio* or the *coniunctio* (Long 113). Just like the story of the material in the *vas* that is nearly transformed into the philosopher’s stone and therefore incomplete, Tieck’s novella also cannot be concluded until Christian can find his way back to the Runenberg. The appearance of the alchemical hermaphrodite also signifies “True Alchemy,” the kind of alchemy that reveals that a student of the alchemical arts has become a true adept because his actions are no longer ruled by “base greed” for the material wealth that alchemy affords (Pinkus 129). We saw earlier how Christian’s counting and recounting of the

money/gold that the male stranger leaves him could be considered as greed. It must therefore be significant that Christian, once he has made the decision to go back to the Runenberg, loses all interest in money/gold. In fact, the last mention of the money/gold in the text occurs just as the male stranger appears to Christian for the last time – whereupon Christian’s “thought was that he would demand his money back” – before the male stranger transforms into the *Waldweib* and finally the beautiful woman from the mountain who shows him where he can find the tablet-philosopher’s stone again (Tieck 51). Armed with the key that will open the doors of higher knowledge to him, Christian ultimately has no more need of money/gold, thereby revealing himself as well on the path to being a true alchemical adept and making his way back to the Runenberg.

Of course, Christian is only able to make his way back to the Runenberg because he finally understands the “pattern of lines” on the tablet so that he can claim that the tablet is “really and truly” his. It is important that Christian does *not* explain what he sees on the tablet and that the only explication of the tablet we are provided is that of Christian’s father and that this explication is one of utmost horror. It can be argued that Christian does not explain what he sees on the tablet because to do so would not only “profane” the “miracle of the stone” which he “experienced” but also subject him “under penalty [to] the most horrible curse” (Jung, *Studies* 323; Hensing 502). Christian’s father, to the contrary, does not see the “miracle of the stone” because, to him, the stone is a “hostile stone” (Jung, *Studies* 320). Since Christian’s father is not an alchemical adept he cannot “[know] the secret of the stone” and cannot “[understand] their words.” Since Christian now “knows the secret of the stone and understands their words” and he has the

tablet once again in hand, he is finally ready to go into the “old shaft which a miner dug many centuries ago” – and which he was expressly prohibited to enter at the beginning of the novella with the stranger telling him that “it [was] no place for him” – to find the *Waldweib* and conclude his alchemical journey (Tieck 53, 39).

When Christian reappears in front of his family again, he has been “transfigured” (Vredevelt 202). He not only knows the secret of the tablet- philosopher’s stone, it seems that he has truly internalized it; Christian does not even need to carry the tablet with him any longer since “the mysterious emblem and glittering gems” are “in” and part of “every corner of his being” (Tieck 52). Further, Christian is now able to see that even the most apparently worthless rocks have a “glowing fire ... concealed in their heart ... their *true* character” (Tieck 55; emphasis added). When Christian makes “red sparks fly” by “pick[ing] a hard stone and dash[ing] it against another,” he shows that he has fully mastered the hermetic art because he recognizes that rocks all contain “the potential for transformation” (Sullivan, “Ruins and the Construction of Time” 15). The rock is, after all, “the place where the *prima materia* is found, the alchemical vessel” as well as a “name” for the philosopher’s stone (“Rock,” *Dictionary*). Christian is therefore revealed, at the end of the novella, not as a “rock collector” as Sullivan contends, but as a true alchemist (“Collecting the Rocks of Time” 355). That the final glimpse that we have of Christian is of him talking to the *Waldweib* is also significant because the *Waldweib* signifies the “end of the work.” *Runenberg* thus ends here not only from a narrative standpoint, but also an alchemical one with Christian as the true alchemical adept.

The Lure of the Mine

In the discussion above of Tieck's *Runenberg* we saw how Christian ultimately returns to the Runenberg through an "old shaft which a miner dug many centuries ago." Although we noted earlier that the text is not clear about whether Christian's adventures takes place inside or on the mountain, this detail relating to the old mine shaft seems to indicate that there is a strong possibility that Christian's encounter with the beautiful woman from the mountain in fact takes place in a mine. Christian's attraction to the Runenberg can thus be further explained by this very detail. During his first conversation with the "friendly stranger" Christian reveals how "one day [he] heard [his] father talk about the mountains [his father] had seen as a boy, about the underground mines and the men who worked in them," immediately after which a "feeling of excitement shot through [Christian] that this was the life for which [he] was intended" (Tieck 37). It seems clear, therefore, that Christian already had a preexisting affinity for mountains and mining. Indeed, it is this reference to mining that gives us one of the first indications that Tieck's *Runenberg* and Hoffmann's *Mines* are texts that can be related to each other and thus compared.⁹⁴ As we will now see, there are in fact many similarities between these two texts, especially in relation to narrative, characterization, symbolism, and conflict.

Hoffmann's *Mines* begins in a state of *nigredo*. Like Christian in *Runenberg*, the young sailor Elis Froebom finds himself in a melancholy mood. While the rest of the crew of the "East-Indianman" are celebrating their homecoming from a "long voyage" at

⁹⁴ Tymms has noted that Tieck's works generally "[look] back nostalgically to age-old, often *alchemical*, fancies about metals and mining" (94; emphasis added).

the feast known as a “Hoensning,” Elis “slip[s] away from the revel” to “sit[s] alone outside, on the bench at the door of the tavern ... silent and thoughtful” (Hoffman, *Mines* 183, 184). Elis begs to be left alone by himself to his “gloomy reveries”: “it’s no use talking about my enjoying myself. I can’t join in all that riot and uproar; there’s no pleasure in it, for me ... let the gloomy, melancholy Elis stay out here by himself” (Hoffmann, *Mines* 184). As the joyous celebrations in the tavern grow louder and louder, Elis suddenly expresses the wish to be “lying deep, deep beneath the sea” (Hoffman, *Mines* 185). While this statement can certainly be considered a death-wish, it is interesting to note that Elis’s statement hints at the possibility that he might feel an (as yet unknown) attraction to places that are “deep beneath” the surface.

This will, of course, turn out to be the case, especially since Elis makes it clear to Torbern, the old miner who he meets, that the sea no longer holds any attraction for him: “I shan’t go to sea anymore.... When the ship used to go flying along the water, with all sail set, spreading like glorious wings, the waves playing and dashing in exquisite music, and the wind singing in the rigging, my heart used to bound” (Hoffman, *Mines* 186). Hearing this, Torbern, just like the “friendly stranger” in the *Runenberg* who starts Christian on his journey, tells Elis that he was “never ... cut out” to be a “sailor” and that he should “[g]o to Falun, and be a miner” instead (Hoffman, *Mines* 187).

Since Elis is initially frightened at the prospect of “leav[ing] the bright, sunny sky ... and go down to that dreadful, hell-like abyss,” Torbern tells Elis of the “nobleness” of the “miner’s work” and he starts describing the beauty that can be found in the mines of Falun to assuage Elis’ trepidation:

He sat down on the bench beside Elis, and began to describe the various processes minutely, placing all the details before him in the clearest and brightest colors. ... He went, in his description, through the different mine shafts as if they had been the alleys of some enchanted garden. The jewels came to life, [and] the fossils began to move. (Hoffman, *Mines* 187, 188)

Here, just as in *Runenberg* where the “friendly stranger” somehow seemed “to know for what [Christian] most deeply long[ed]”, the old miner Torbern in *Mines* also seems “to know for what [Elis also] most deeply longs.” Listening to Torbern speak, Elis suddenly feels that it “seemed as though the old man were opening to him a new and unknown world, to which he really properly belonged, and that he had somehow felt all the magic of that world, in mystic foreboding, since his boyhood” (Hoffman, *Mines* 188).

Not only do these feelings lead credence to the possibility that Elis already feels an attraction to places that are “deep beneath” the surface before the story begins, these feelings also explain why, soon after this meeting with Torbern, Elis has a remarkable dream:

every thing [sic] around him began to move, and wonderful plants and flowers, of glittering metal, came shooting out of the crystal mass he was standing on, and entwined their leaves and blossoms in the loveliest manner. The crystal floor was so transparent that Elis could distinctly see the roots of these plants. (Hoffman, *Mines* 189)

It can be argued that Elis’ dream can be related to *Runenberg* in two ways.

First, we will recall that Christian could feel that the money/gold the stranger left him “tremble with delight” and “quiver with passion.” The money/gold in *Runenberg* is therefore depicted as being somehow alive. The same kind of anthropomorphism with regard to inorganic matter is also shown in Hoffmann’s text since the metal “plants and

flowers” Elis sees in his dream (and subsequently in the mine itself) are likewise endowed with life.

Second, the detail that Elis could actually see the “roots” of the metal plants is an important one since it can be argued that these plants can be related to the “mandragora” that Christian comes across in the forest at the beginning of *Runenberg*. We have already noted the significance of the mandrake plant for the alchemists. While the foregoing will of course be relevant to *Mines*, it is important to note here what the mandrake plant looks like. Although the top part of the mandrake plant looks quite ordinary, it is the root of this plant that is most remarkable since it looks very much like a “[statuette] of the human figure” (De Givry 346). The true significance of this plant, therefore, cannot be seen unless it is dug up; in other words, the most important part of the mandrake – that is, the root – is the part that cannot ordinarily be seen. If the metal plants in *Mines* can be considered as similar to the mandrake, the fact that Elis is able to see their “roots” in his dream is surely significant. Just like Christian who ultimately realizes that he is no longer afraid of the cry of the mandragora because he can understand its “sighs and laments,” Elis’ dream reveals that he, too, can go beyond the ordinary as he is able to see things that lie beneath the surface that cannot normally be seen.

Given their common ability to see things below the surface, it is perhaps no surprise that both Christian and Elis should find a similar female figure at their respective subterranean destinations. As we have already noted, Christian finds a beautiful woman in the Runenberg, a “commanding female figure,” “[t]all and powerfully built.” In his dream and later in the mine, Elis in *Mines* sees the “earnest face of a grand, majestic

woman” who Torbern refers to as the “queen” of the mine (Hoffman, *Mines* 190). The similarities between these two female figures are immediately obvious.

From the brief discussion above, we will have seen that there are already quite a few points of similarities between Tieck’s *Runenberg* and Hoffmann’s *Mines*, especially in relation to narration, characterization, and use of symbols. We will have recognized how these two texts begin in the same fashion with the same mood of melancholy, that is, the same state of alchemical *nigredo*. We also noted how both protagonists were led to their respective destinies at the suggestions of male strangers; in addition, we saw that similar female figures awaited both Christian and Elis at their end of their journeys to the Runenberg and the mines of Falun respectively. We have also begun to observe the ways in which Christian and Elis could be thought of as similar to each other. We have, moreover, seen how the mandrake plant might be particularly significant and how anthropomorphism is applied to the same kind of inorganic matter in both texts. The foregoing, of course, provides us with hints as to how *Mines* might be thought of as an alchemical text. In order to understand the extent to which alchemy plays a part in *Mines* however, we must first understand the relationship between mining and alchemy, the subject to which we will now turn.

Mining and alchemy can be said to have developed from the same set of beliefs; the underlying belief that they share is the hylozoistic and animistic conviction that all nature, including nature itself, is alive. A sexualized world-view resulted from this idea leading to the belief in, for both miners and alchemists, the existence of an “Earth-Mother” who was capable of giving birth not only to plants, flowers, and trees, but also metals

(Eliade 42; Coudert 111). Mines and caves were viewed as representations of the “belly” of this Earth-Mother, the place where she kept her “embryos” – that is, metal “ores” – in a “state of gestation” so that they could eventually grow into their “intended” state of “highest perfection” (Eliade 42; Muir 46). In other words, both miners and alchemists believed that every metal, given sufficient time to “grow” and become “ripe,” would eventually turn into gold, the most “noble” of all metals (Muir 26; Eliade 46, 42, 51). The role of miners and alchemists with respect to nature was, therefore, to assist nature in some way.

The alchemists believed that they were assisting nature with the creation of the philosopher’s stone which had the ability to change base metals into gold (Martin 22). Further, because the philosopher’s stone could change base metals into gold immediately, the alchemists saw their work as a means of “speed[ing] up natural processes” by “shortening” the “‘gestatory period’ of gold” (Martin 22; Linden, *Darke Hieroglyphicks* 11).⁹⁵ Given the foregoing, the philosopher’s stone could therefore be thought of as something that “superseded [t]ime” (Eliade 78). Miners also thought of themselves as assisting nature, albeit in another way; since they were responsible for the “extraction” of the ores from the depths of the earth, they could be viewed as assisting in nature’s birthing process (even if these “births” were “operation[s] executed before [their] due time”) (Eliade 42). It is in this way, therefore, that miners were viewed, just like the

⁹⁵ Harry J. Sheppard, “European Alchemy in the Context of a Universal Definition,” *Die Alchemie in der europäischen Kultur- und Wissenschaftsgeschichte* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1986) 13.

alchemists who produced the philosopher's stone, as "superseding" the work of nature (Eliade 42).

In our discussion of *Golden Pot* above, we noted that alchemical adepts were required to have "fervent faith in the existence" of the philosopher's stone. This "faith" is, of course, also grounded in a belief in the Divine since the alchemists believed that alchemical knowledge was granted to them directly by God; as a result, the alchemists referred to the hermetic art as the "Divine Art" (Lembert 39; Read, *Alchemist* 23). Given the foregoing, all alchemists were required to be "deeply religious" and engage in spiritual practices daily (Lembert 39). In this regard, we have already noted the requirement of meditation in alchemy in our discussion of *Golden Pot*; there were, however, other spiritual practices that must be followed. For example, Agrippa prescribed that all alchemists maintain high standards of "cleanliness" so that there is "not any material thing [that] can be found" in the alchemist's laboratory "which to the immaterial God is not unclean" (Friesen 25). Keeping with this requirement of purity, Agrippa also cautioned against "dietary excess" and he also urged the alchemists to undertake daily "prayer," "offered in 'Religious [sic] silence' with 'sincere cogitation'" (Friesen 25).

Just like the alchemists, the miners thought that they needed divine aid to undertake their work since it was not easy to find the best place for a mine (Eliade 53). Given the fact that miners believed that mines were places that had been marked by the divine, mines were thus regarded as sacred; to go into and work in mine, therefore, was not only viewed as "contact with something sacred" but also considered as an act that

might agitate “subterranean life and spirits reigning there” (Eliade 56). The foregoing meant, of course, that miners, just like alchemists, were required to undertake various acts of worship and religious rites before they commenced work in the mine so as not to “defile” the ores extracted during the birthing process described above (Eliade 56; Martin 41). It is remarkable to note that these acts and rites are *identical* to those of the alchemists just described: “cleanliness, fasting, meditation, prayers” (Eliade 56).

We have just noted the various ways in which mining and alchemy can be related to each other and these points of similarity seem to indicate that *Mines* could certainly be read as an alchemical text, a reading that perhaps even Hoffmann himself might have anticipated. In our discussion of *Golden Pot*, we saw that Hoffmann had prior knowledge of details relating to alchemy and the alchemical process. It should be noted here that Hoffmann had knowledge of mining as well. Not only was he inspired by the “simple account” in Schubert’s *Nachtseite* of “the finding of a body in the Falun Mine, which an old woman recognized as her betrothed of fifty years before,” Hoffmann also undertook extensive research into the mines of Falun as well as mining practices before writing this story (Hoffmann, *Mines* 210; Negus, *Other World* 110). By virtue of the foregoing it would not seem unreasonable to assume that Hoffmann would have had knowledge of the details relating to mining beliefs and practices just discussed and we may now proceed with an alchemical reading of *Mines* as well as further compare this text with Tieck’s *Runenberg*.

We have seen that Torbern makes the observation that Elis that he was “never ... cut out” to be a “sailor.” According to Torbern, Elis is more suited to be a miner because

Elis “possess[es] a profoundly thoughtful mind, and a character and nature pious, simple, and sincere” (Hoffmann, *Mines* 187). These observations about Elis’ character could be read as a list of qualities that a miner was supposed to possess. If this is the case, then we can compare Torbern’s list to the requirements of miners and alchemists we have already identified.

Being “pious” is, of course, directly related to the requirement for religious devotion we have just seen in relation to both the miner as well as the alchemist; it would also be safe to assume that to be “simple” and “sincere” can also be associated with this requirement as well. It can further be argued that the requirement for sincerity is reminiscent of the requirement for the alchemical adept to be humble discussed above in relation to *Golden Pot* since, if a person is “sincere,” it is highly likely that they would not be boastful or indulge in “vainglory.”

The requirement that Elis possesses a “thoughtful mind,” however, appears to be a particularly alchemical one. Much of the kind of alchemy we have been discussing this far have to do with what was known as “physical alchemy,” that is, the physical labors an alchemist undertook in order to create the philosopher’s stone, for example, conducting research into how to make the philosopher’s stone and working in his laboratory.⁹⁶ Physical alchemy was, for the alchemists, however, not enough for they believed that there was a “spiritual alchemy” that had to take place at the same time as they were working on the philosopher’s stone (McLean 9; Lembert 40). Through acts of worship

⁹⁶ Adam McLean, *The Spiritual Science of Alchemy* (Edinburgh: Megalithic, 1978) 6, 10.

and religious rites, the alchemists believed it would be possible to carry out the “transmutation of the soul,” that is, they believed they could purify their own souls (McLean 10, 8). Once they achieved this purification, the alchemists believed that they would not only be brought closer to the Divine knowledge pertaining to the creation of the philosopher’s stone, but also that they would be brought closer to the Divine itself since they would be able to “ascend” to the work of “spiritual alchemy” which constitutes an “Inspirational Contemplation of the Cosmos” (McLean 9). It can surely be argued that a “thoughtful mind” would assist greatly in the task of “spiritual alchemy” when it was finally achieved. If this is the case, then Elis would appear to be an individual who is particularly well suited to alchemy for this reason as well.

In our discussion of *Runenberg* above we noted how Christian’s greed for the money/gold reinforced the notion that he is not yet a true adept since the notion of greed is what distinguishes a false student of the alchemical arts from one who is true. A similar prohibition against greed seems to exist in mining. According to Tobern, miners were also prohibited from coveting what they were able to extract from the mines because “some calamity would happen as soon as the miners’ impulse to work ceased to be sincere love for the marvellous [sic] metals and ores” (Hoffmann, *Mines* 201). Unlike Christian, whose greed initially prevented him from finding the secret of the tablet-philosopher’s stone, Elis seems to display no material desire at all since his sole purpose for earning “ducats” as a sailor was to please his mother by “shaking” them onto her “lap” and using his money to buy her “handkerchiefs and ... other pretty things” so that he could see “her eyes ... sparkle with pleasure” and see her “clap her hands for joy”

(Hoffmann, *Mines* 186). After Elis learns that his mother has passed away, the “ducats” he brought with him immediately loses their meaning for him; he says specifically that he is no longer interested in earning any more of these “wretched ducats” (Hoffmann, *Mines* 187).⁹⁷

When Torbern is trying to convince Elis to “[g]o to Falun, and be a miner,”

Torbern also tries to sway Elis with the promises of material wealth. Torbern tells Elis:

You’ll soon be a first-class pick-hand; then a hewer, presently a surveyor, and so get higher and higher. You have a lot of ducats in your pocket. Take care of them; invest them; add more to them. Very likely you’ll soon get a “Hemmans” of your own, and then a share in the works.” (Hoffmann, *Mines* 187)⁹⁸

It is interesting to note that Elis is not lured to Falun by these particular promises. Elis, in fact, seems to forget all about the possibility of his being able to buy a “Hemmans” of his own until he is reminded of the same by his employer, Pehrson Dahlsjoe, the “Alderman, and owner of a fine ‘Fraelse’” at Falun (Hoffmann, *Mines* 194). That Elis has no desire for riches is also reflected in his dream where he sees the “wonderful plants and flowers, of glittering metal”; as Wright has observed, the appearance of “glittering metal” in this dream is unrelated to the desire for material wealth (61).

⁹⁷ This (at least partially) explains why Elis was so willing to give “two shining ducats ... and a beautiful Indian handkerchief” to the “gentle” prostitute who tried to get Elis to rejoin the festivities inside the tavern so that she would have something to remember him by (Hoffmann, *Mines* 94).

⁹⁸ A “Hemmans” is a “small farm house” (E. T. A. Hoffmann, *Die Serapions-brüder*, eds. Wulf Segebrecht and Hartmut Steinecke (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2001): 1337 note 214,24; my translation).

Rather than the possibility of acquiring riches, it is instead the possibility of obtaining a higher form of knowledge that leads Elis to the mines of Falun. According to Torbern:

Nature lays bares her most secret treasures to the most deserving miners and that there is “something infinitely higher ... it may be, in the deepest depths, by the pale glimmer of the mine candle, men’s eyes get to see clearer, and at length, growing stronger and stronger acquire the power of reading in the stones, the gems, and the minerals, the mirroring of secrets which are hidden above the clouds. (Hoffmann, *Mines* 188)

In our discussion *Runenberg* above, we have, of course, already seen how the ability to “read” the secrets of stones and gems can be related to alchemy and to the quest for the philosopher’s stone. Given that the alchemists also investigated metals and minerals in their quest for the philosopher’s stone, it can surely be argued that the miner’s ability to “read” the secrets of metals and minerals can also be related to alchemy (Muir 26). From this, it follows that Elis, just like Christian in *Runenberg*, is seeking alchemical knowledge.

The foregoing argument is, moreover, strengthened by the fact that Torbern’s statement – that what can be found in the mine “mirrors” the “secrets which are hidden above the clouds” – is a thoroughly alchemical one. Torbern’s statement is, in fact, an direct echo of Hermes’ famous alchemical maxim that we noted in our discussion of *Golden Pot* above: “That which is above is like to that which is below, and that which is below is like to that which is above.” This maxim, in other words, indicates that “what is above” is mirrored by “what is below” (and vice versa); the similarity between Torbern’s statement and this alchemical maxim is therefore immediately obvious.

This maxim has, moreover, been interpreted as referring to the “fundamental alchemical doctrine of the unity of all matter,” that is, the belief that everything in the world originated from the “miracles of one thing,” the thing that is the philosopher’s stone (Coudert 28; Hermes 28). Given the foregoing, it can surely be argued that what a miner can discover underground could be the same as what an alchemist can discover *above* the ground, for example, during their “Inspirational Contemplation of the Cosmos.” Indeed, what Torbern seems to indicate is that it is possible for a miner to find “in the stone around him a reflection of the divine” (Holbeche 128). If this is the case, it appears that the higher form of knowledge that draws Elis to the mines is knowledge that is thoroughly alchemical. From this it follows that Elis is not just an “apprentice miner” but also an alchemical-adept (Holbeche 133).

Elis’ dream, moreover, seems to indicate that he understands and has perhaps even internalized this alchemical maxim. Although we have already quoted a small part of this dream above, it is now necessary to quote the first part of this dream in its entirety to fully appreciate its alchemical significance:

Scarcely had he thrown himself, worn and weary he was, upon his bed, when dreams began to wave their pinions over him. He thought he was sailing in a beautiful vessel on a sea calm and clear as a mirror, with a dark, cloudy sky vaulted overhead. But when he looked down into the sea he presently saw that what he had thought was water was a firm, transparent, sparkling substance, in the shimmer of which the ship, in a wonderful manner, melted away, so that he found himself standing on this floor of crystal, with a vault of black rock above him, for that was rock which he had taken at first for clouds. Impelled by some power unknown to him he stepped onwards, but, at that moment, everything around him began to move, and wonderful plants and flowers, of glittering metal, came shooting out of the crystal mass he was standing on, and entwined their leaves and blossoms in the loveliest manner. The crystal floor was so transparent that Elis could distinctly see the roots of these plants. But

soon, as his glance penetrated deeper and deeper, he saw, far, far down in the depths, innumerable beautiful maidens, holding each other embraced with white, gleaming arms; and it was from their hearts that roots, plants, and flowers, were growing. And when these maidens smiled, a sweet song rang all through the vault above, and the wonderful metal-flowers shot up higher, and waved their leaves and branches in joy. An indescribable sense of rapture came over the lad; a world of love and passionate longing awoke in his heart. (Hoffmann, *Mines* 189).

According to Holbeche, this dream functions in two ways. First, it serves as a visual indication that Elis will soon leave his old profession as a sailor and take up his new profession as a miner (Holbeche 129). Second, it can be read as a foreshadowing of Elis' eventual psychological and physical demise since the "disintegration of the ship" hints at the later "disintegration of [Elis'] personality" and the "solidification of the waves" foretells the "petrification of his physical being" (Holbeche 129). While these observations undoubtedly have merit, it is also possible to analyze this passage in other, distinctly alchemical, ways.

Elis' dream is, of course, a direct reflection of Torbern's statement that it is possible to find "in the stones, the gems, and the minerals" in the mines "the mirroring of secrets which are hidden above the clouds." Since we have already determined that Torbern's statement is directly related to the alchemical maxim, "[t]hat which is above is like to that which is below, and that which is below is like to that which is above," this dream therefore clearly relates to this maxim as well. Elis' dream is, in fact, a visual representation of this maxim since what he initially thought was the sea with a "dark, cloudy sky ... overhead" turns out to be a "floor of crystal, with a vault of black rock above him" instead.

We noted earlier that the alchemical maxim relates to the alchemical doctrine of the unity of all matter and it can be argued that Elis' dream relates to this doctrine as well. According to Mircea Eliade, the alchemists believed that all organic and inorganic matter – “plants, stones, metals, bodies of men” – were all “but different moment[s] of the same cosmic progress,” thereby making it possible “to pass from one stage to another, to transmute one form into another” (140). Elis' dream is also clearly a visual representation of this belief, for not only do metals grow into plants and flowers as we have already seen, it turns out that these metals (and thus the plants and flowers) originated from the “bodies of [wo]men,” that is, from the “hearts” of “innumerable beautiful maidens.” In other words, the organic (what is “dynamic”) and the inorganic (what is “static”) are inexplicably fused – or *confused* – together; the organic “maidens” give life to the inorganic metals which, in turn, gives life to the organic in the form of “extraordinary vegetation” (Holbeche 130; Wright 61). Given the foregoing, it can surely be argued that Elis' dream is a confirmation of the alchemical doctrine of the unity of all matter which, in fact, could be one of the “secrets” to which Torbern initially referred.

We noted earlier how the detail that Elis could actually see the “roots” of the metal plants could be significant from an alchemical viewpoint since it indicates that he is able to see things that lie beneath the surface. As Holbeche has remarked, this ability shows that Elis has “insight” (128). In our discussion of *Runenberg*, we saw how Christian recognized the alchemical potential of the tablet when he saw it for the first time since he realized that he was somehow transformed by this experience. We may now add here that the fact that Christian recognizes that there is potential in the tablet

also means that there is likewise potential in Christian himself, that is, Christian has the latent potential to see beyond the ordinary and possesses the capability for insight as well. However, despite having this potential, Christian was not in a position to understand the “dull whimper” of the mandragora or the lines on the tablet at the beginning of his alchemical journey as we will recall. Elis, on the other hand, appears to possess *more* than mere potential even at the beginning of his journey since he is able to see the roots of the metals plants clearly in his dream as we have already noted.

The foregoing argument is, moreover, strengthened by the fact that Elis is able to see beyond these mere roots: “as his glance penetrated deeper and deeper, he saw, far, far down in the depths, innumerable beautiful maidens, holding each other embraced with white, gleaming arms; and it was from their hearts that roots, plants, and flowers, were growing.” Elis is able, in other words, to see on an even deeper level, perhaps even the *deepest* level, since he is able to see, quite literally, straight into the heart of the matter. From this it can certainly be argued that Elis not only sees but that he fully understands the most fundamental maxim and doctrine of the alchemists.

Indeed, even the world he sees seems to recognize this for everything in the world reacts to Elis with delight: “a sweet song rang all through the vault above, and the wonderful metal-flowers shot up higher, and waved their leaves and branches in joy.” As we saw in our discussion of *Golden Pot*, music plays an important role in alchemy and alchemists believed that music could help them as they worked on the *opus magnum*. It is therefore no surprise that music should likewise play a part in this first part of Elis’

dream that culminates in Elis feeling an “indescribable sense of rapture” and feeling that a “world of love and passionate longing [had] awoken in his heart.”

As we have already seen, Christian in *Runenberg* also feels a “sense of rapture” after he sees the tablet for the first time. It can certainly be argued that these feelings of “rapture” for both Christian and Elis occur because they have caught a glimpse of the divine that provides them with the alchemical knowledge that they both seek. In Elis’ case, however, this feeling seems to be more pronounced, not only because he sees more than what Christian could see as we have already observed, but also because of the fact that Elis is able to comprehend the significance of what he sees – Elis specifically says that he “understood . . . the deep significance” of his dream – unlike Christian who grasped that significance for a moment and then lost it immediately after (Hoffmann, *Mines* 195).

Since Elis is already aware of the alchemical maxim, “[t]hat which is above is like to that which is below, and that which is below is like to that which is above,” Elis knows that nature’s “secret treasures” can be found underneath the ground. Thus, it can be argued that when he looks “deeper and deeper” at the world “far, far down in the depths” Elis is perhaps undertaking the “Inspirational Contemplation of the Cosmos” of spiritual alchemy that would lead him to the divine. If the foregoing is true, then the “rapture” he feels and the “world of love and passionate longing” that Elis feels in “his heart” is particularly significant, since these feelings reveal that Elis has achieved the goal of spiritual alchemy wherein the “Secrets of the Cosmos are revealed” so that Elis, as alchemist, has “become God-Realized” in the “state of God-Blessedness” (McLean 11).

Unfortunately for Elis (and just like Christian), he loses this alchemical insight shortly after this dream occurs since he falls in love with Dahlsjoe's daughter, Ulla, immediately after he arrives at Falun. Elis accordingly forgets all that Torbern had told him as well as what he learned from his dream. Thus, when Torbern suddenly materializes next to Elis in the mine to remind him of what he has forgotten, and to tell him that it is because he has forgotten what he had learned that Elis will never be able to see the "grand run of trap" right in front of him, Elis immediately dismisses what Torbern is telling him as pure nonsense and upbraids him for his words (Hoffmann, *Mines* 199). However, when Elis is led to believe soon thereafter that Dahlsjoe was about to give Ulla's hand in marriage to another man, Elis immediately regrets his angry words to Torbern and rushes back into the mine, crying out to Torbern that he was a "wretched fool to fix [his] hopes on any earthly love" and that he now realizes that his "treasure" and his "life" belong "down below" (Hoffmann, *Mines* 202).

Immediately after these words, not only is Elis able to see the subterranean wonders he saw in his dream again, he is also able to see the "vein of metal with the utmost clearness and distinctness, so that he could trace every one of its ramifications, and its risings and fallings" (Hoffmann, *Mines* 203). Elis has, in other words, gained alchemical insight once more and this insight does not leave him from this point forward; indeed, Elis finds himself able to continually "[discover] the richest veins and the most magnificent trap-runs" in the mine (Hoffmann, *Mines* 206).

It is significant that Dahlsjoe and the other miners cannot see what Elis see; instead of the "veins" and "trap-runs" that Elis sees, Dahlsjoe and the other miners can

only see “unproductive rock” (Hoffmann, *Mines* 105). Elis’ explanation in this regard is also important: “he ... would say that none but he understood the secret signs, the significant writing, fraught with hidden meaning” (Hoffmann, *Mines* 206). We have, of course, already seen another depiction of these events before. In our discussion of *Runenberg*, we saw how although Christian was finally able to understand the “pattern of lines” on the tablet, his father was nevertheless unable to comprehend these lines because he did not “[know] the secret of the stone” and thus could not “[understand] their words”; we noted that this occurred because Christian’s father was not an alchemical adept like Christian. Given the similarities of these two episodes, it can surely be argued that the same conclusion can be reached with regard to *Mines*. It appears, in other words, that Dahlsjoe and the other miners cannot see what Elis sees because they, just like Christian’s father, are not adepts in the hermetic art.

The scene in *Mines* just described, moreover, is also reminiscent of the scene in *Runenberg* where Christian appears for the last time to show how even the most apparently worthless rocks have “concealed within their heart ... their true character” that reveals them as “valuable treasures” (Tieck 54). Just like Christian who able to see beyond the surface because he is an adept, Elis is likewise able to see beyond the superficial appearance of the “unproductive rock” and recognize that the “richest veins and the most magnificent trap-runs” in fact lie beneath the surface.

It can also be argued that the philosopher’s stone also lies beneath this surface inside the mines of Falun. As we saw earlier, the rock is both the “place where the *prima materia* is found, the alchemical vessel, as well as a name” for the philosopher’s stone

itself. From the foregoing it should therefore come as no surprise that Elis finally realizes that he must go and find, “[d]own in the depths below, hidden in the chlorite and mica[,] ... the cherry-colored sparkling almandine” (Hoffmann, *Mines* 207). It can be argued, certainly, that the almandine is nothing other than the philosopher’s stone itself for several reasons.

First, the most obvious reason why the almandine should be considered to be the philosopher’s stone is by virtue of its color: “cherry-colored.” The almandine is, in other words, red, just like the philosopher’s stone. Second, it would not be inconceivable that the philosopher’s stone could be found in a mine since it was believed to be “ubiquitous” and thus could be found “in the country, in the village, in the town, in all things” (Eliade 165; Read, *Prelude* 165). Third, it could be argued that the mines of Falun is a perfect place for the philosopher’s stone to be found since it could be viewed as the ideal place for the philosopher’s stone to grow and come to maturation.

In our discussion of *Golden Pot*, we noted that the number three was particularly significant for the alchemists for several reasons including the reason that it was the number of the three principles in alchemy, that is, sulphur, mercury, and salt, required to make the philosopher’s stone. The idea of these three principles was actually relatively new since the third principle, salt, was only added later in the history of alchemy and, even then, not all alchemists included this principle in their recipes (Praet 270; Read, *Prelude* 26-27). The original principles of the philosopher’s stone was thus sulphur and mercury and it can be argued that these two principles can be found in the mines of Falun. The fact that it was believed that metal ores came from the “union” of these very two

same principles not only adds further weight to this argument, but also the argument that the almandine could very well be the philosopher's stone (Eliade 48).

The text makes it clear that sulphur can be found in the mine. On the day that Elis sees Tobern inside the mine, the mine is described as being “shrouded in [such] thick, sulphurous vapour” that when Elis finally emerges from the mine after this encounter, “pale as death,” the Head-Captain of the mine immediately attributes Elis' pallor to his “not [being] accustomed” to the “sulphur gas” (Hoffmann, *Mines* 200). In addition to this gaseous form, it turns out that sulphur is also present in the mine in the a liquid form. When Elis' body is finally recovered from the collapsed mine after “more than fifty years,” his body is found “buried in vitriolated water,” in other words, in a “pool of ... hydrogen *sulfate* solution” (Hoffmann, *Mines* 208; emphasis added).⁹⁹

Although we have just seen that sulphur is present in the mine, the presence of mercury is not so easily detected. In our discussion of *Golden Pot* and *Runenberg* we argued that the triadic figure of Mercurius could be found in those texts. In *Golden Pot*, we saw how Lindhorst, in his three guises – as a Privy Archivist, a salamander Prince, and a bird – could be associated with Mercurius and we also saw how Lindhorst could also perhaps even be Mercurius himself. In *Runenberg*, we argued that the three figures of the stranger, the woman from the Runenberg and the *Waldweib* could likewise be thought of as the figure of Mercurius. It can be argued that Mercurius also appears in

⁹⁹ James McGlathery, *Mysticism and Sexuality E. T. A. Hoffmann: Part Two Interpretation of the Tales* (Berne: Peter Lang, 1985) 94. It is also extremely interesting to note that “vitriol” is also listed as an ingredient in some alchemical recipes (“Vitriol,” *Dictionary*).

Mines and, given the fact that Mercurius is associated with mercury itself, once we establish the existence of Mercurius in *Mines*, it would be possible to argue that mercury does indeed exist (in some shape or form) in the mines of Falun.

The first figure in *Mines* who could be associated with Mercurius is Torbern, the old miner whose roles in the text are very similar to the roles of the stranger in *Runenberg* and Lindhorst in *Golden Pot*. As we noted earlier, Torbern was the one responsible for directing Elis to the mines of Falun, just like the stranger in *Runenberg* who directed Christian to the Runenberg. The text makes it clear that Torbern is associated with the mines of Falun: “More than one hundred years ago, there was a miner here of the name of Torbern. He seems to have been one of the first to bring mining into a flourishing condition at Falun here” (Hoffmann, *Mines* 200). Just like Lindhorst as Mercurius, Torbern also is “present everywhere and all times”; not only does Torbern mysteriously appear next to Elis in the mine as we have already seen, he also appears in Elis’ dream of the subterranean world discussed above, as well as certain points during Elis’ journey to the mines of Falun; whenever “there was any uncertainty about the road,” Elis sees “the old man suddenly appear[ing] out of some ravine, or from thick bushes, or gloomy rocks, [then] stalk away from him, without looking around, and then disappear again” (Hoffmann, *Mines* 192).

Torbern can, moreover, also be likened to Mercurius in the same way that Lindhorst is associated with Hermes by virtue of his trickerish nature as argued earlier in our discussion of *Golden Pot*. Unlike Lindhorst, whose trickerish nature has to do with, quite literally, fun and games as we have already seen, Torbern’s trickerish nature is more

ambiguous. During his journey to Falun, Elis feels that he was “certain that the voice of destiny had spoken to him through the old miner, and that it was he who was now leading him on to his appointed place and fate” (Hoffmann, *Mines* 192). Whether Elis’ eventual “fate” is a positive or negative one remains to be seen, but it can be argued at this point that the fact that two contrary conclusions can be drawn from *Mines* seems to indicate that Torben in his guise as Mercurius is here “associated with the trickier characteristics of life” and thus be considered as an “icon of chance.”¹⁰⁰ It can be argued therefore, that Torben is the “catalyst” who “activates” Elis and the events that befall him (Holbeche 131). If this is the case, then Torben fulfills Mercurius’ role in the alchemical work by being the literal “agent by which” the *opus magnum* in *Mines* is “effected.” The foregoing arguments are, in fact, the same ways that the stranger in *Runenberg* could be viewed, thereby adding further weight to the earlier argument that he is also representative of Mercurius as well.

The second figure in *Mines* who could be associated with Mercurius is the queen of the mine. We will recall from our discussion of *Runenberg* that the woman from *Runenberg* could be considered as the female aspect of Mercurius by virtue of the fact that Mercurius was “hermaphroditic.” It can easily be argued that the queen of the mine could be considered to be the female “side” of Mercurius in this same way. It is clear from the text that Torben and the queen of the mines are closely associated with each other. Not only does Torben introduce the queen to Elis, he also seems to speak for the

¹⁰⁰ Kristin Pfefferkorn, *Novalis: A Romantic’s Theory of Language and Poetry* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1988) 159.

queen as well when he tells Elis to “be faithful to the queen, whom [he] has devoted [him]self to” (Hoffmann, *Mines* 190). Indeed, by leading Elis to the mines, Torbern is in effect leading Elis directly to the queen; the foregoing is why Torbern has been described as the “queen’s emissary” (Holbeche 126). From this, it can surely be argued that the figures of Torbern and the queen of the mine can be considered the male and female aspects of the “hermaphroditic” Mercurius’ “double nature” respectively.¹⁰¹

As we saw earlier, Mercurius is also regarded as a “trinity” and we have just discussed how Tobern and the queen of the mine could represent two sides of Mercurius. It can be argued that the third and final side of Mercurius in *Mines* appears in the figure of the “Metal Prince” that Tobern mentions to Elis during their encounter in the mine (Hoffmann, *Mines* 199). According to Tobern, if Elis does not display genuine “love” for “mine work,” he will become an “abomination to the Metal Prince” and, since he knows that Elis is “trying to deceive” him, this Metal Prince might “take [Elis] and dash [him] down so that sharp rocks tear [him] limb from limb” (Hoffmann, *Mines* 199-200). It should be noted that this is the only place in the text that refers to the Metal Prince so that it is therefore unclear whether or not this figure actually “exists.” Nevertheless, it has been suggested that Torbern and the Metal Prince are one and the same, especially since Torbern is transformed into a figure very much like what a “Metal Prince” *might* have looked like in Elis’ dream: “As Elis looked at [Torbern], he seemed to expand into gigantic size, and to be made of glowing metal” (Holbeche 130; Hoffmann, *Mines* 190).

¹⁰¹ Daemmrich also associates Torbern and the queen of the mines to each other when he notes that both these figures are “of demonic ambiguity” (*Shattered Self* 84).

If the foregoing is true, not only could the figure of the Metal Prince be considered the third side of Mercurius, he could also be indicative of Mercurius' "double nature" if the Metal Prince and Tobern are, in fact, "doubles" of one another.

We have now seen how it can be argued that the figure of Mercurius appears in the mines of Falun; since Mercurius is associated with mercury as indicated earlier, it would therefore be possible to say that mercury can be found in the mines. Now that we have established the presence of both sulphur and mercury, it follows that the mines of Falun is a perfect place for the philosopher's stone to be discovered since it could be viewed as the ideal location for the philosopher's stone, that is, the almandine, to grow and come to maturation. As we have already noted, fire is also necessary for the production of the stone and it seems that fire might also be present in the mine since the "sulphurous vapour" are described as being "hot" (Hoffmann, *Mines* 198). Also, it seems that fire might be produced by the miner's work as well; when Elis sees Torbern in the mine, Tobern is "striking his hammer on the rocks with such force that the *fire-sparks* went whirling all around" (Hoffmann, *Mines* 199; emphasis added).¹⁰²

The mine is, of course, the perfect place for the philosopher's stone to grow and mature by virtue of the fact that it was considered a "belly" of the Earth-Mother as we observed earlier. A mine was, in other words, a womb which, for the alchemists, was

¹⁰² We could perhaps even say that the miners, "just ... coming up from work in the mine," whom Elis sees soon after his arrival at Falun "in their dark mining clothes, with their black, grimy faces" are reminiscent of the appearance of the alchemist depicted in Hans Weiditz's woodcut, *An Alchemist and His Assistant at Work*, showing an alchemist with his clothes dirty and ragged and his face sweaty and blackened by the smoke from the fire that he is tending (Hoffmann, *Mines* 99; Hans Weiditz, *An Alchemist and His Assistant at Work*, [c. 1520], reproduced in Read, *Alchemist*, plate 8).

nothing other than a symbol for the *vas* in which the philosopher's stone was conceived ("Womb," *Dictionary*). Given the foregoing, it could be said that the mines of Falun are themselves *inherently* alchemical. This fact, of course, does not escape the alchemical adept Elis who finally realizes that within the mine lies the "summit of the highest good fortune which it is possible for mortals to attain," that is, the philosopher's stone (Hoffmann, *Mines* 207). Armed with this understanding and all of the alchemical knowledge he has gained throughout his journey as we have seen, Elis descends into the mine, his "appointed place," one last time to obtain his "most ardent desire," the almandine-philosopher's stone, and thus meet his "appointed ... fate" (Hoffmann, *Mines* 196).

The Permanency of (the Philosopher's) Stone

Our analysis of *Runenberg* and *Mines* has revealed that alchemy plays a significant (and oftentimes secret) part in their symbols as well as their narratives. In both *Runenberg* and *Mines*, we have seen that Christian's and Elis' journeys are in fact alchemical quests for knowledge. In *Runenberg*, we saw that the quest is represented as the stone tablet-philosopher's stone, the thing for which Christian "most deeply longs"; indeed, even the gold that Christian has an "insatiable appetite" for points back to the stone tablet because it can be considered alchemical gold. In *Mines*, the goal of the quest is even more obviously alchemical, since it is represented by Elis's "most ardent desire," the red almandine-philosopher's stone that was ripening in the alchemical *vas* that was the mines of Falun.

In respect of *Runenberg*, we saw that although the mandragora may seem to be part of the plant world, this plant is also points to the philosopher's stone as "the inverted tree" of alchemical knowledge. In *Mines*, the alchemical idea of the mandrake plant is reflected in the metal plants that grow underground in Elis' dream. The fact that Elis is able to see the roots of these plants reveals that he possesses a special kind of insight which turns out to be thoroughly alchemical since Elis wakes from this dream with the knowledge of the alchemical maxim, "[t]hat which is above is like to that which is below, and that which is below is like to that which is above," as well as knowledge of the alchemical doctrine of the unity of all matter which holds that the organic and the inorganic are inextricably fused and able to transmute into each other.

We have observed how the narrative structure of *Runenberg* mirrors the alchemical process of the *nigredo*, the "peacock's tail," the *albedo*, and the *rubedo*, to the creation of the philosopher's stone; alchemical ideas and concepts are therefore not only present in *Runenberg*, they are actually embedded into the very structure of the text itself. We have seen, moreover, how both *Runenberg* and *Mines* incorporate the alchemical myth of Mercurius as well as making the three aspects of Mercurius motivating characters in the text who lead Christian and Elis to their distinctly alchemical destinies, that is, to learn the secrets of the hermetic art and to become alchemists who ultimately find the philosopher's stone.

Given all the similarities that we have found between the two texts, it is perhaps not surprising that both *Runenberg* and *Mines* end on a similar note of ambiguity. The German original of *Runenberg* closes with the enigmatic phrase, "*Das unglückliche ward*

aber seitdem nicht wieder gesehen” (“The unlucky one was never seen again”; my translation), and when Elis’ body is recovered from the collapsed mine after “more than fifty years,” it is referred to as “*der Körper des Unglücklichen*” (“the body of the unlucky one”). Who, in these texts, are “unlucky”? In *Runenberg*, is it Christian who carries a bag of stones that he thinks are filled with jewels who is “unlucky”? Or is it everyone else in the text, that is, is it Christian’s father who does “[know] the secret of the stone” and cannot “[understand] their words” and/or Christian’s wife and their child Leonora who cannot see the value in the stones that Christian shows them since they do not have the kind of alchemical insight that Christian possesses? In *Mines*, is Elis the “unlucky one” because he was fated to be trapped in the mines of Falun, never to see the light of day again? Or is it Ulla who is “unlucky,” since she did not understand the alchemical significance of the almandine and was in the end robbed of her bridegroom? Or is it the spectators, who did not understand the true significance of Elis’ “petrified” body (Hoffmann, *Mines* 209)?

In our discussion above, we saw that the alchemists believed they were assisting nature by creating the philosopher’s stone which had the ability to “speed up natural processes,” thereby “superseding” time. When used to artificially produce metals, the philosopher’s stone therefore shortened time (Linden, *Darke Hieroglyphicks* 11). The foregoing was, however, not the only function of the philosopher’s stone and not the only way in which it could affect time: when used to make the elixir of immortality – the *elixir vitae* – the stone was in effect *lengthening* time and, when used to “redeem” matter from its impure state, the stone was in fact *removing* time from matter altogether (Linden,

Darke Hieroglyphicks 11). It can certainly be argued that the “petrification” of Elis’ body could be viewed in the foregoing terms. If the mines of Falun are the alchemical *vas*, it follows that the transformation of Elis’ body must surely be relevant in alchemical terms.

When Elis’ body is brought up from the mines, the spectators notice that the “young man looked as if he were lying in a deep sleep, so perfectly preserved were the features of his [f]ace, so wholly without trace of decay his new suit of miner’s clothes, and even the flowers in his breast” (Hoffmann, *Mines* 208). It is clear from this description that Elis did not change, even after “more than fifty years,” and that his body was perfectly preserved. Elis’ body was, in other words, *completely removed* from time. At the same time, it could be argued that time respect to Elis’ body was also *lengthened* by virtue of the fact that it had been “turned into stone,” since petrification in this sense confers permanence upon the subject. If the foregoing is true, then the transformation of Elis’ body can certainly be said to be a change that is thoroughly alchemical. The idea of permanence is of course related to the idea of immortality and it is for this reason that the German Romantics held the idea of stones in such high regard. In his *Attheneaeums-Fragmente* #116, Friedrich von Schlegel speaks of romantic poetry as a reflection of an “endlessly developing classicism.”¹⁰³ While this reference to “classicism” certainly reflects Schlegel’s belief that the Golden Age was the time of Greek and Roman antiquity (Schlegel was a Neo-Classicist) it can be argued that this reference does not have to do with just the style or the period of Classicism, but also the desire of the

¹⁰³ Friedrich von Schlegel, *Dialogue on Poetry and Literary Aphorisms*, trans. Ernst Behler and Roman Struc (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1968) 141.

German Romantics to create something timeless and durable in their works, in other words, works that would have the same kind of permanency of, say, an Classical Greek statue.¹⁰⁴

The attraction that both Christian and Elis feel in relation to the female figures in *Runenberg* and *Mines* now become clear for, even though Christian and Elis are “heroes” of particularly alchemical texts as we have been arguing, they are nevertheless *German Romantic* “heroes” at the same time. Given the foregoing, it is therefore only natural that they would feel such an intense attraction to female figures that are described as if they were somehow made of stone. In *Runenberg*, we have already seen how the woman from the Runenberg was described as a “commanding female figure” with an “otherworldly aura about her.” It is now appropriate to mention that this woman is described as if she was made of marble: “Then, completely naked, she walked to and fro in the room, her dark flowing locks rippling over her body like the waves of the sea and the shape of her glistening limbs shining like *marble* as she moved” (Tieck 41; emphasis added). The queen of the mines in Hoffmann’s *Mines* is also described as if she was made of stone with a completely “immobile face” (190). For Christian and Elis, to be with these female figures made of stone thus seem to hold the promise for a kind of permanency for them. Indeed, Elis seems to refer to this possibility when he speaks of wanting to “go down to the central point of the earth” so that he can “[rest] in bliss in the queen’s arms”

¹⁰⁴ Birrell refers to this idea of permanency and timelessness as “supertemporality” which is reflected in the stone world by “the nature of stone itself, which may wear away or crumble, but remains substantially unaltered through the passage of time” (104).

(Hoffmann, *Mines* 206). For Christian, however, the possibility for immortality becomes quite clear to him once he realizes that his rightful place is with the woman from the Runenberg and not his wife Elisabeth: “Elisabeth is no longer a fresh, young girl; her youthful beauty is a thing of the past, and I have not the same yearning to look into her eyes as I used to have. So I have wantonly spurned a supreme and *everlasting* bliss in favour of a *fleeting, shortlived* happiness” (Tieck 51; emphasis added). In the end, it becomes clear that the kind of permanency that both Elis and Christian were seeking was nothing less than immortality, and just the kind of immortality that both the German Romantics and the alchemists believed could also be granted by the philosopher’s stone.

Chapter V

Alchemists and Scientists, and Alchemy by Way of Omission

It is appropriate that our discussion of the desire for immortality with respect to the German Romantics should be followed first by the analysis of Godwin's *St. Leon* which contains within it the creation and ingesting of the *elixir vitae* as we will recall, and then with a discussion of Shelley's *Frankenstein* which concerns Victor Frankenstein's obsessive desire to discover the mysteries of (creating and/or prolonging) human life. Our investigation into *Frankenstein* will reveal how the practice of alchemy can be distinguished from scientific experiments by the imposition of new standards of proof by the modern scientific community. Although the requirement of these new standards appeared to act as an immovable wedge between alchemy and the new sciences (by virtue of the fact that these new standards were in direct opposition to the way alchemy was supposed to be practiced), we will see that the distinction between alchemy and the new sciences was not always clear and that it can be possible to find alchemical ideas lingering in the background of modern scientific discourse. This chapter will therefore conclude with an analysis of Freud's *Totem* to show how this scientific text that makes no mention of alchemy is in fact a text which betrays a remarkable indebtedness to alchemy in the development of its central concepts.

Godwin's *St. Leon*: An Alchemical Allegory of the Sixteenth Century

We will recall from the introduction that many critics have read Godwin's *St. Leon* as a moral tale highlighting the importance of domestic affection and an allegory of political injustice. We will also recall that, as a result of the foregoing, many critics considered that Godwin used alchemy merely as a plot device in his novel.

In the discussion of *St. Leon* that follows, we will see that Godwin's use of alchemy in *St. Leon* goes far beyond a plot device. In addition to including details relating to the exoteric side of alchemy, Godwin also provides various clues relating to the esoteric side of alchemy in the text. Our reading will show that while it is true that Reginald was successful in mastering the exoteric side of alchemy, he was nevertheless unable to grasp the significance of the esoteric side of alchemy. As we will see, Reginald was fundamentally unsuited to being an alchemist by virtue of his character and his beliefs. As a result, instead of showing that alchemy is a "sacred art" and the "divine science," all Reginald succeeds in doing is to perpetuate the negative view of alchemy as a practice that involved the "powers of evil" so that it was closer to the "black magic of the Sorcerer" than the "white magic of the Church" (Muir 24, 25). This is not to say, however, that Reginald fails as an adept completely since he manages to faithfully adhere to one of the most important precepts in alchemy, the requirement to never reveal the secrets of the hermetic art.

This requirement of secrecy, in fact, operates on two levels in the novel. In the narrative itself, it is Reginald who refuses to divulge the secrets of alchemy; but outside (or above) the narrative, it is Godwin himself who does not reveal what he has learned

from his research into the hermetic art. Since *St. Leon* is a novel about alchemy, it can certainly be argued that it is an alchemical text in some shape or form, meaning that Godwin must have had to write it in an alchemical fashion. His choosing not to discuss alchemy in any significant way is revealing since the missing details can be read as an omission that points back to the requirement of secrecy. Yet, as Pinkus as noted, the act of “[w]riting (alchemistically) is always already a revelation of the secret, but only to those who know how to read” (17). This, then, is our task in relation to *St. Leon*, that is, to read this novel with knowledge of alchemy to show that alchemy plays a larger role in the text that has previously been assumed so that *St. Leon* can be said, in addition to being a moral tale highlighting the importance of domestic affection and an allegory of political injustice, to be an alchemical allegory as well.

As mentioned in the introduction, Reginald was clearly successful in mastering the exoteric side of alchemy since he was able to both produce gold as well create the *elixir vitae*. For example, when Reginald is imprisoned by Bethlam Gabor, he creates a sum of gold to pay for his own “ransom”: “I provided myself with the sum that had been previously agreed on between us. My task being finished, I carefully displayed the produce of my labour” (Godwin 401). This “labour” turns out to be the sum of “ten thousand ducats,” and Bethlam Gabor concludes that Reginald must have been able to create it from the contents of his “chest” that contained “no gold” but “crucibles, minerals, chemical preparations, and the tools of an artist,” since he was “possessed of the grand Arcanum, the philosopher’s stone,” (Godwin 402). After Reginald manages to escape from the Inquisition, he also manages to produce the *elixir vitae* from “various medical

ingredients ... [and] two or three vials, containing syrups and essences” so that he is transformed from a man who appears to be in his “eightieth year” with “hair as white as snow” and a “face ploughed with a thousand furrows,” to a man who is “thirty-two years” younger and who appears as he looked on the “day of his marriage with Marguerite de Damville” (Godwin 342, 341, 344).

It appears from the text that Reginald adhered to various precepts for the adept when he is conducting these alchemical experiments. In our discussion of *Golden Pot*, we noted that Magnus stated in his *Libellus de Alchimia* that any “worker” in the “art” of alchemy “must be ... secretive” and have “a place” in a “special house” hidden “away from the sight of men” in which to conduct his alchemical experiments.” While in Pisa, Reginald, to “more effectively hide” his alchemical “pursuits from the eye of Marguerite,” begins conducting his experiments in a “sort of grotto, buried almost from human observation in a hollow on the banks of the river, and which was connected, by a winding path and a concealed subterranean passage, with the garden” of their house (Godwin 266). Reginald’s creation of the *elixir vitae* is likewise conducted in secret; he waits till Mordecai (the Jew who hides Reginald from the Inquisition after he escapes) and his daughter are soundly asleep before he proceeds with making the *elixir vitae* (Godwin 342). Reginald’s creation of gold while imprisoned by Bethlam Gabor is also conducted in secret; even though Reginald is locked in a “cell” in a “cave,” he nevertheless ensures that he only produces gold during the “occasions when [he] was most secure against the intrusion of [his] jailor” (Godwin 400, 401).

In the experiments just described, Reginald also appears to adhere to the precept relating to the type of equipment required. According to Magnus, alchemical experiments “should be done according to the usage of the art” which includes “collecting” appropriate “supplies” (103). We saw earlier that Reginald possessed “crucibles” for “making and fashioning gold.” Crucibles” were, in fact, important in alchemical experiments since they were used for “collecting molten metal at the bottom of the furnace during the refining process” (Godwin 401; “Crucible,” *Dictionary*). John Read notes that crucibles were in fact the “commonest pieces of apparatus” that could be found in an alchemist’s laboratory (*Alchemist* 65). We also saw that Reginald used “vials” when making the *elixir vitae* and we can note here that vials were in fact used by alchemists specifically for the purpose of “solution and coagulation,” that is, to “convert solid to liquid” and vice versa (“Vials,” *Dictionary*). Given the foregoing, it seems that Reginald has indeed “collect[ed]” the proper “supplies” needed for the “usage of the art.”

When making the *elixir vitae*, Reginald also uses a “pair of scales ... to weigh [his] ingredients” and he also makes use of a “vessel of water, and a chafing-dish ... [containing some] charcoal” (Godwin 342). According to Read, scales are necessary for “incipient measurement and quantitative work” and it was also common to find “basket[s] of charcoal” and a “furnace for boiling water” in alchemical laboratories as well (*Alchemist* 65). Given the fact that Reginald is so well equipped with the “implements for making and fashioning gold” as we have just seen, this detail, coupled with the fact that he has managed to produce gold and the *elixir vitae* successfully, can lead us to safely assume that Reginald has also adhered to the other precepts relating to the exoteric

side of alchemy, namely, to duly “observe the time in which the work must be done and the hours for sublimations and solutions” and to “perform” experiments “according to fixed rules” relating to the proper sequence of operations (Godwin 401; Magnus 103; Martin 21).

Reginald’s success in the exoteric side of alchemy, however, does not make him a true adept. To be a true adept in the hermetic art, the “inner, spiritual transformation of the adept must go hand in hand with the chemical processes of transformation” as noted in our discussion of *Golden Pot* above. In other words, a true adept must master both the esoteric as well as the exoteric sides of alchemy. As we will see, Reginald is ultimately unable to undergo the “inner, spiritual transformation” required of him which explains why even Reginald himself finally comes to realize that all of his alchemical experiments were in fact failures: “I had made a sufficient experiment of the philosopher’s stone, and all my experiments had miscarried” (Godwin 413). Reginald’s “alchemical skills” can therefore only have “limited effect” since he is a person who is ill “prepared to exercise them,” that is, he is a person who does not know how to use alchemy in way that accords with the “original visions of ... the Hermetic ... tradition.”¹⁰⁵

As critics have noted, Reginald’s eventual demise is a direct result of his upbringing, an upbringing that was based on the aristocratic notion of “chivalry” (Clemit, Introduction xi; Maertz, “Family Resemblances” 305).¹⁰⁶ Since Reginald accepts the “gift” of alchemy from the stranger, Francesco Zampieri, as a result of the “ideas he has

¹⁰⁵ Ellen Lévy, “The Philosophical Gothic of *St. Leon*,” *Caliban* 33 (1996): 62.

¹⁰⁶ B. J. Tysdahl, *William Godwin as Novelist* (London: Athlone, 1981) 85-86.

imbibed in his childhood and youth,” it has been argued that alchemy is therefore “analogous” with the idea of “chivalry” in *St. Leon* (Tysdahl 88; Maertz, *Family Resemblances* 305). This view, as we shall see, is in fact incorrect since it is only Reginald’s *own* version of alchemy that is “analogous” with the idea of “chivalry.”

Shortly after the novel opens, Reginald informs us that he was “descended from one of the most ancient and honorable families in the kingdom of France” and, since he lost his father at a young age, he was educated by his mother (Godwin 55). According to Reginald, his mother was “full of the prejudices of nobility and magnificence” and “[h]er whole soul was in a manner concentrated on the ambition to render [him] the worthy successor of the counts de St. Leon” (Godwin 55). As a result, Reginald’s mother’s “mind was inflamed with the greatness of [his] ancestors, and she indefatigably sought to kindle in [his] bosom a similar flame” (Godwin 55). It is clear from Reginald’s description the impact that his mother’s beliefs had on him by his word choices, all of which convey force. It is therefore no surprise that Reginald should carry the ideas of “nobility and magnificence” and the desire to attain “greatness” in his “bosom” for the rest of his life. Reginald himself recognizes that he possessed a “passion for splendor and distinction” at a very young age (Godwin 56). This “passion” explains his intense disappointment at the fact that he was merely a spectator at the Field of the Cloth of Gold and not an active participant in the historic scene before him: “I recollected with anguish that the immaturity of my years precluded me from taking any active part in the spectacle” (Godwin 58).

According to Van Schlun, the “prominent feature of the chivalric age is glory ... that is associated with heroic deeds, with honor and individual excellence” (52). This is exactly what Reginald’s mother teaches him: “You have been instructed in every thing [sic] that might most effectually forward you in the career of glory” (Godwin 60). The mere idea of “glory,” however, is not enough, for it appears to go hand in hand with the desire for fame. The attainment of fame is, in fact, so important that Reginald is even instructed by his mother to “[h]old [his] life as a thing of no account, when it enters into competition with [his] fame” (Godwin 60). The foregoing explains why Reginald so readily agrees to participate in the siege of Pavia since he sees the siege as the “occasion for glory” that he had been so “impatiently long[ing] for” (Godwin 61). Thus, when Reginald tells his uncle the Marquis de Villeroy that “[t]here is nothing that [he] know[s] worth living for but honour,” it can be argued that his intentions are far from noble, as the kind of “honour” that Reginald has in mind is an “honour” that is clearly associated with “glory” and thus the desire for “fame” (Godwin 61).¹⁰⁷ Indeed, even Reginald will make this same connection later in the novel: “I was a son of honour, descended of a race of heroes, and cradled in the lap of *glory and fame*” (Godwin 205; emphasis added).

This desire for “fame” is clearly contrary to the trait of humility that is required of an adept that we discussed in relation to *Golden Pot*. Here, we will also recall that “vainglory” was considered an “impediment” to any who wished to learn the hermetic art. It is clear that Reginald takes much pride in his ancestry; not only is he proud that he was

¹⁰⁷ Flanders has noted that this kind of “false ‘honor,’” was a “favorite target of Godwin’s censure” (536).

“descended from one of the most ancient and honorable families in the kingdom of France,” he is also keen to ensure that the status of his family will perpetuate in this same fashion. The foregoing explains Reginald’s horror and deep shame when he finds himself in poverty and forced to rely on the kindness of his “faithful servant” Bernardin:

What a reproach it was it to me, that, descended from one of the most illustrious families in Europe ... I should ... have reduced myself so low as to be indebted to a peasant and a menial for the means of saving my family from instant destruction! This was a deep and fatal wound to my soul.” (Godwin 152)

It is no surprise, therefore, that Reginald’s first thought, once he learns “the art of multiplying gold,” is to return to France to “re-install” his family “in their hereditary honours”:

I would immediately repurchase the property of my ancestors, which had been so distressfully resigned. The exile should return from his seven years’ banishment in triumph and splendour ... to the court of my old patron and friend, the gallant Francis, and present to him my boy [Charles], the future representative of [the St. Leon] family. (Godwin 167, 190)

Reginald therefore resolves to use his unlimited source of gold to ensure that his family’s glory will continue through generations:

With the advantages I could afford him, the career of Charles could not fail to be rapid and illustrious, and he would undoubtedly obtain the staff of constable of France.... I would marry my daughters to such of the young nobility as I should find most distinguished in talents and spotless in character. (Godwin 191)

We noted earlier Reginald’s “passion for splendour.” Reginald’s attraction to the material is made particularly apparent by his reaction to the Field of the Cloth of Gold where he appears to be chiefly impressed by the visual opulence displayed during this historical event that he describes as a “scene of the most lavish splendour that the world

perhaps ever contemplated,” since the “splendour of dress that was worn upon this occasion exceeds almost all credibility” (Godwin 56, 57). With these words, Reginald reveals that he is extremely superficial and materialistic. His “passion for splendour” is, moreover, reflected in the way he chooses to live his life once he is married to Marguerite:

This ... passion ... contented itself with the frivolous gratification resulting from a certain portion of ostentation and expense. I maintained a considerable train of servants: my apartments were magnificent, and my furniture splendid. When we travelled it was with an attendance little short of princely. (Godwin 88)

Reginald, in other words, clearly revels in the “excess of sensual experience” which is exactly what Agrippa cautions the alchemical adept against (Friesen 25). As we will recall from our discussion of *Mines* above, an adept in the hermetic art had to be pure, and this requirement of purity extends not only to abstaining from “dietary excess,” but also “excess of sensual experience” in general, since it “perverts the mind and so must be avoided” (Friesen 25).

It is also worth noting that Reginald indicates that he wishes to return his family to a similar lifestyle even after he has experienced the pangs of poverty. Not only does Reginald’s desire to return from exile in both “triumph and splendour” betray this fact, Reginald himself admits as much when he states that the “youthful passions of [his] soul, which [his] early years had written there in characters so deep, were by no means effaced” (Godwin 160). The foregoing explains why Reginald immediately thinks of the “advantages” that “wealth” can afford him and his family once Zampieri offers the “gift” of alchemy to him, “advantages” that turn out to be wholly materialistic: “I saw horses, palaces, and furniture; I saw the splendour of exhibition and the trains of attendants, –

objects which had been for ever dear to my puerile imagination” (Godwin 166). This kind of extravagant lifestyle is clearly in total opposition to the alchemical requirement of humility.

Since the kind of life that Reginald wants to lead requires the constant display of wealth, it is therefore no surprise that Reginald should covet gold. In fact, it appears that Reginald covets gold even *before* he loses his fortune by gambling: “I went to the closet where, the evening before, I had deposited my recent acquisitions. I spread out the gold before me. I gazed upon it with intentness” (Godwin 97). It can surely be argued that Reginald’s love of gambling must stem from the desire to acquire wealth so that he can maintain his extravagant lifestyle. Reginald’s gambling, in other words, stems from greed which is exactly that which distinguishes a false student of the alchemical arts from one who is true, as we will recall from our discussion of *Runenberg* above. Pinkus notes that “[g]reed is precisely what is disavowed by those more ‘spiritual’ or philosophical forms of alchemy” (10). An alchemical adept who is aware of and practices the esoteric side of alchemy would therefore not desire gold for its material worth. Reginald clearly does not adhere to the principles of or practice esoteric alchemy; as Justine Crump has noted, Reginald’s use of alchemy is “ostensibly directed at the accumulation of gold” which leads M. Roberts to conclude that “Godwin uses hermetic imagery to symbolize not only material prosperity but also greed” in *St. Leon*.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Justine Crump, “Gambling, History, and Godwin’s *St. Leon*,” *European Romantic Review* 11.4 (2000): 402.

It is precisely Reginald's greed and "passion for splendour" that makes him doubt that Zampieri could really possess any "secrets" that would confer "benefits ... such as kings would barter their thrones to purchase" (Godwin 158). Reginald's judges Zampieri purely from a materialistic viewpoint; when Reginald first sees Zampieri, he notes that the old man's "garb, which externally consisted of nothing more than a robe of russet brown, with a girdle of the same, was coarse, threadbare, and ragged" (Godwin 155). As a result, Reginald finds it impossible to believe that Zampieri could possess "wealth" that "[exceeds] the wealth of empires" since Zampieri's "outer appearance stands in striking opposition to his promise" (Godwin 158; Van Schlun 46). What Reginald does not realize is that Zampieri's external appearance in fact reflects not only the requirement that an adept be humble, but also the requirement for an adept to be "pious" and "simple" that we noted in our discussion of *Mines* above. Reginald, who is unable to see beyond the material because of his "passion for splendour" and who is obsessed with achieving and maintaining glory and fame, clearly cannot meet the requirement to be "pious" and "simple" himself.

In our discussion of *Mines* above we also noted that an adept, in addition to being required to be "pious" and "simple," was also required to be "sincere." At the beginning of this chapter, we have already observed how *St. Leon* iterates the importance of sincerity in "domestic affections." This is demonstrated in the novel with the rapid deterioration of Reginald's marriage to Marguerite. Immediately after Reginald finds that he can no longer be completely truthful to his wife, his marriage that originally reflected a bond between two individuals "united in sentiments and affection" quickly

becomes a marriage that can no longer be “genuine” (Godwin 218, 298). The foregoing is not, however, the only way in which Reginald displays his insincerity.

Once all of Reginald’s efforts to “re-install” his family “in their hereditary honours” end in failure, he turns his attentions to a different endeavor, to use the “art of multiplying gold” for the betterment of mankind. To accomplish this newfound purpose in his life, Reginald sets his sights on saving the people of the war-torn country of Hungary.¹⁰⁹ He imagines himself as the benefactor of “nations and mankind” beginning with Hungary, and he states: “Determined as I was to open at once all the stores of my wealth, I thought I would not find a nobler scene for its display. I resolved to pour the entire stream of my riches, like a mighty river, to fertilize these wasted plains, and revive their fainting inhabitants” (Godwin 413, 360).

On the outset, it appears that Reginald has benevolent intentions but it quickly becomes clear that his intentions are anything but noble. He continues:

Thus proceeding, should I not have a right to expect to find myself guarded by the faithful love of a people who would be indebted to my beneficence for every breath they drew? This was the proper scene for the possessor of the philosopher’s stone to take up his abode. (Godwin 360)

It turns out, therefore, that Reginald is not motivated by altruism at all; his motivation is in fact selfish, since he believes that he can literally buy people’s love with gold by being their benefactor and liberator. David Collings agrees with this assessment when he notes that Reginald’s “seemingly utilitarian justification conceals a powerful pathological

¹⁰⁹ It is worth noting here that Reginald chooses Hungary because of his “rapturous admiration upon the exploits of the heroic Huniades and his greater son,” which betrays, yet again, Reginald’s enslavement to the principles of chivalry described earlier (Godwin 360).

motive, ... to regain noble status and to pursue a glorious destiny” which is, in fact, “indistinguishable from the attempt to seize [political] power.”¹¹⁰ Reginald’s version of “beneficence” thus reeks of insincerity, and the fact that he believes that this display of false philanthropy is “the proper scene for the possessor of the philosopher’s stone to take up his abode” reveals just how little of the esoteric side of alchemy he actually understands.

It should be clear from the discussion so far that Reginald is fundamentally unsuited to being an alchemical adept. Not only does Reginald lack the humility, piousness, simplicity, and purity required of a true adept, the extent of his greed and lack of sincerity in virtually all aspects of his life prevents him from ever grasping the significance of the esoteric side of alchemy. While it is true that Reginald’s beliefs stem from the notion of chivalry, it is also worth noting that this notion does not only consist of the desire for glory and fame. In addition to telling Reginald that he must remember his “rank in society” and aspire to have a “career of glory,” Reginald’s mother also tells him to “[b]e humane, gentle, [and] generous” (Godwin 60). It can certainly be argued that these moral qualities have at least some relationship with the qualities that an adept was supposed to have that we have just discussed, especially if these qualities are based on sincerity.¹¹¹ Alchemy was, after all, “based on a secret reserved for only a few privileged adepts possessing the intellectual and *moral* qualities requisite for obtaining it”

¹¹⁰ David Collings, “The Romance of the Impossible: William Godwin in the Empty Place of Reason.” *ELH* 70 (2003): 864, 867.

¹¹¹ Many critics have noted that *St. Leon* is a decidedly moralistic “tale” (Locke 149; Flanders 533, 535; Van Schlun 56; M. Roberts 45).

(De Givry 347; emphasis added). Thus, if Reginald had been able to internalize the moral aspects of chivalry, he might have been in a better position to eventually achieve the esoteric side of alchemy, in addition to the exoteric side of alchemy. Instead, Reginald's exercise of his version of chivalry ensures that he can never be a true adept of the hermetic art.

At the same time, it appears that Reginald might not be completely to blame for his inability to attain the esoteric side of alchemy since it can be argued that his deficiency in this regard could have been caused by Zampieri for two reasons. First, it is entirely possible that Zampieri never instructed Reginald on the esoteric aspect of alchemy at all, that is, Zampieri transmitted to Reginald hermetic secrets that were fundamentally *incomplete*. Second, even if Zampieri did indeed inform Reginald of the esoteric aspect of alchemy, the very fact that Zampieri did not adhere to the strict precept against transmitting the secrets of the hermetic art might very well have doomed Reginald's alchemical endeavors from the start.

According to Magnus, the "first," and arguably the most important, "precept" for a student of the hermetic art is that:

the worker in this art must be silent and secretive and reveal his secret to no one, knowing full well that if many know, the secret in no way will be kept, and that *when it is divulged, it will be repeated with error*. Thus it will be lost, and *the work will remain imperfect*." (103; emphasis added)

Zampieri, in other words, by sharing the "great secret of nature, the *opus magnum*" with Reginald, ensures Reginald's eventual failure because the hermetic art cannot be "repeated" with success if it is "divulged." The fact that Reginald was only able to master the exoteric side and not the esoteric side of alchemy seems to demonstrate this

very point since the “work” encompasses both these sides of alchemy as we have seen. Reginald might have been able to “perfect” the “art of multiplying gold” and the creation of the *elixir vitae*, but because Reginald himself is also part of the alchemical “work” and he was ultimately unable to “perfect” himself, he is therefore doomed to “remain imperfect” at the end of the day.

The fact that Zampieri did not adhere to the strict precept against transmitting the secrets of the hermetic art indicates that Zampieri himself is also not a true adept. This should come as no surprise, however, since it transpires that Zampieri came into possession of the “great secret of nature, the *opus magnum*” the same way that Reginald did: “Know I would not if I could, and cannot if I would, repose the secrets that press upon me in more than a single bosom. It was upon this condition I received the communication; upon this condition only can I impart it” (Godwin 159). It can be argued, moreover, that Zampieri, just like Reginald, lacks some of the qualities required of a true adept.

Despite the fact that Zampieri external appearance reflects the requirements that an adept be humble, “pious,” and “simple” as we have noted above, the means that he uses to coerce Reginald into accepting the secrets of the hermetic art are anything but sincere since Zampieri “appeals directly to [Reginald’s] passions” (Brewer, *Mental Anatomies* 96). When Reginald hesitates, Zampieri admonishes him with the words:

Feeble and effeminate mortal! You are neither a knight nor a Frenchman! Or rather, having been both, you have forgotten in inglorious obscurity every thing worthy of either! ... Was every a great discovery prosecuted, or an important benefit conferred upon the human race, by him who was incapable of standing, and thinking, and feeling, alone? (Godwin 157)

Zampieri, in other words, “appeals directly” to Reginald’s notion of “chivalry,” a notion which, as we have already noted, is in total opposition to the “original visions ... of the Hermetic ... tradition.” It can therefore be argued that the kind of secrets that Zampieri conveys to Reginald appears to be based on a *false* idea of alchemy. Further, given the fact that Zampieri himself possesses qualities which render him unfit to practice alchemy, it should therefore come as no surprise that he should choose an equally unsuitable person like Reginald to be his successor, a person who is so easily seduced by the idea of chivalry and its attendant values.

As it turns out, Zampieri’s choice in choosing Reginald as his successor is also motivated by pure selfishness:

I am resolved; to die is the election of my soul – a consummation for which I impatiently wait. Having determined therefore to withdraw myself from the powers committed to me, I am at liberty to impart them; upon the same condition, and no other, you may one day, if you desire it, seek the relief of confidence. (Godwin 159)

In other words, Zampieri wishes to unburden his secrets to another person so that he can die at peace with himself. It can be argued, moreover, that when Zampieri coerces Reginald to hear these secrets, he does so with the full knowledge of what may well happen to Reginald in the future since these secrets confer no “benefit” as he alleges but rather, a “curse” (Collings 846; Flanders 536). When they first meet, Zampieri tells Reginald:

I have wandered through every region of the earth, and have found only disappointment. ... I have pined in the putridity of dungeons ... five times have I been led to the scaffold, and with difficulty escaped a public execution. Hated by mankind, hunted from the face of the earth, pursued by every atrocious calumny, without a country, without a roof, without a friend. (Godwin 157-158)

If this was Zampieri's fate resulting from the kind of false or incomplete hermetic secrets he possessed, how could Reginald possibly escape from this same fate when he receives the same kind of information that Zampieri was privy to? As it turns out, Reginald cannot escape this fate, a fact that he eventually recognizes: "I found that I was only acting over again what [Zampieri] had experienced before me" (Godwin 335).

Despite all of Reginald's failings as an alchemist, it can be argued that there is one thing that redeems him, that is, Reginald manages to faithfully adhere to the precept to never reveal the secrets of the hermetic art. Reginald makes it quite clear at the beginning of the novel that he will not divulge these secrets:

I do not sit down now to write a treatise of natural philosophy. The condition by which I hold my privileges is, that they must never be imparted. I sit down purely to relate a few of those extraordinary events that have been produced, in the period of my life which is already elapsed by the circumstances and the peculiarity to which I have just eluded. (Godwin 54)

Critics have made much of the omission of hermetic secrets from Reginald's narrative. William Brewer states that this omission results in Reginald's "fail[ure] to be completely candid with the reader of his narrative" and Rajan uses this omission as a basis for his argument that "entire plot [of the novel] is based on the positing of a presupposition that may be groundless" that we noted earlier (Brewer, *Mental Anatomies* 45).

Reginald's omission of the details of the exoteric side of alchemy is, of course, also *Godwin's* omission in the text. According to M. Roberts, Godwin did not "divulge the mechanics of alchemy in *St. Leon* ... because Godwin believed that such an account might actually perpetuate the very superstition he was trying to dispel" (40). As indicated in the beginning of this chapter, however, these missing details can be read as

an omission that points back to the alchemical requirement of secrecy, a fact that would not have been lost on a reader who is familiar with hermetic texts, that is, “those who know how to read” alchemically. They would have realized that by not “divulg[ing] the mechanics of alchemy *St. Leon*,” Godwin was in fact showing that he was adhering to the *spirit* of alchemy. Godwin, in other words, writes alchemically and, as we have already noted, to write in this way is “always already a revelation of the secret.”

It can certainly be argued that the real alchemical “secret” in *St. Leon* is not the exoteric side of alchemy since we have already seen that Godwin does indeed include details relating to the practical aspect of alchemy in his novel. However, it is the reader who is familiar with hermetic texts who will realize that it is the esoteric side of alchemy that is the true “secret” in Godwin’s novel; this reader will be fully aware that the esoteric side of alchemy goes hand in hand with the exoteric side of the hermetic art. Just because Godwin does not explicitly mention the esoteric side of alchemy in *St. Leon* does not automatically mean that it does not exist in the text. In fact, the esoteric side of alchemy in the novel is revealed as soon as the informed reader realizes both Reginald and Zampieri do not act in ways befitting a true adept of the hermetic art in the ways described above. The fact that both Reginald and Zampieri are doomed to a life of unhappiness even after coming into the possession of the “great secret of nature, the *opus magnum*” indicates to the informed reader, moreover, that their “secret” is a *false* representation of alchemy. As we saw in our discussions of *Golden Pot* and *Mines* above, the possessor of the philosopher’s stone, according to the “original visions of . . . the Hermetic . . . traditions” (that is, according to the *true* alchemy that encompasses both the

practical and spiritual sides of alchemy), was someone who would be bestowed with “the utmost happiness” in the end because he had obtained the “supreme knowledge” that made him “God-Realized” in the “State of God-Blessedness.”

By giving us a depiction of a false student of the hermetic art and his fate, Godwin in effect shows “those who know how to read” how a *true* alchemical adept should be and how he should act. While it is certainly true that Reginald and Zampieri were regarded as “evil alchemist[s]” who were “sinister magicians, probably in league with the Devil” by various other characters in *St. Leon* by virtue of their conduct, it can certainly be argued that Godwin’s novel can be read as a cautionary tale *against* such behavior (Haynes 244).¹¹² If the foregoing is true, then it cannot be true that alchemy merely functions as a plot device in *St. Leon* and we can surely argue that this novel, in addition to being a moral tale highlighting the importance of domestic affection and an allegory of political injustice, must be an *alchemical* allegory as well. Reginald and Zampieri’s fates can, as we have seen, be attributed to the fact that they were fundamentally unsuited to being adepts since they neither possessed the qualities necessary to be such adepts, nor were they able to adhere to the “original visions” of the hermetic art. As a result, their actions and experiments can therefore have no other result than complete and utter alchemical “imperfection,” thereby serving as an effective warning against those who might desire to follow their footsteps along the path of the kind of false alchemy described in *St. Leon*.

¹¹² For example, the people of Pisa consider Reginald to be a “wizard, a necromancer, a dealer in the black art” who was “in league with hell” and who had “sold himself to the devil” and Andrew, the Count of Bathori, considers Reginald in similar terms (Godwin 288, 444).

Mary Shelley's Victor Frankenstein: Scientist or Alchemist?

We have just seen how Reginald and Zampieri in Godwin's *St. Leon* were considered to be "evil alchemist[s]" by virtue of their conduct (Haynes 244). The figure of the "evil alchemist" is, of course, related to the various "stereotypes" of scientists that can be found in literature throughout history (Haynes 244). Amongst the "seven primary stereotypes" that Haynes identifies in her article, "From Alchemy to Artificial Intelligence: Stereotypes of the Scientist in Western Literature," we find the "noble scientist," the "inhuman researcher," and the "helpless scientist," in addition to the "evil alchemist" (Haynes 244). We have already discussed the how Reginald was thought to fall under the stereotype of the "evil alchemist" but it is also worth noting here how he falls under the other stereotypes just mentioned.

According to Haynes, the "noble scientist" is one whose "knowledge is wholly directed to the benefit of society, so that any research likely to be harmful is censored and discontinued" (247). Reginald, who believed that he could save the people of Hungary by using the philosopher's stone, and who does not repeat this same or similar "experiment" again once he realizes that he has done Hungary more harm than good clearly falls into this category. At the same time, Reginald can also be considered to be an "inhuman researcher" since he has clearly "sacrificed [his] emotions and human relationships in an obsessive pursuit of scientific materialism" (Haynes 249). As we saw earlier, Reginald alienates his family to pursue his "experiments" with the philosopher's stone and these "experiments" resulted in Reginald, just like Zampieri before him, being "[h]ated by mankind, ... without a country, without a roof, without a friend." Since

Reginald, blinded by the desire for glory, cannot foresee that his experiments are destined to fail because they are based on a false kind of benevolence and that he is doomed to suffer the same fate as Zampieri, makes him very much like the stereotype of the “hapless scientist” who is the “victim of [his] own discovery,” which resulted from the “scientist’s refusal to foresee or accept responsibility for the disastrous results of his research” (Haynes 252). Given the foregoing, it seems that the figure of the “alchemist” and the “scientist” may have more in common than initially appears, perhaps so much so that these two figures may even be considered not only alike but even interchangeable.

Aside from Reginald, there is, of course, another figure in literature who encapsulates all these stereotypes of the scientist just mentioned, namely, Victor Frankenstein in Shelley’s *Frankenstein* who, as we shall now see, should be considered more an alchemist than a scientist. It will become clear, in the discussion that follows, that there is in fact ample evidence in *Frankenstein* that supports the argument that Victor’s creation of the monster was more alchemical than scientific. A close reading of the novel will reveal that alchemy exerted a greater influence on Victor than he himself admits. From this, it follows that the lack of scientific detail in the novel lends weight to the argument that Victor’s experiments cannot be scientific in nature, especially given the strict requirements for proof relating to empirical scientific experimentation in the day. It can therefore be argued that Victor acts in ways that show that he is not a true scientist but an alchemist. Finally, we will see that Victor’s experiments are conducted as if they were alchemical experiments because the creation of the monster can be read as a *literal* interpretation of the *opus magnum*. Before we begin with this analysis of *Frankenstein*,

however, we will briefly touch on some other ways in which Victor can be considered to be similar to Reginald that relate to the precepts for adepts as well as the various stereotypes of the scientist mentioned above.

Like Reginald, Victor also comes from an illustrious family: “I am by birth a Genevese; and my family is one of the most distinguished of that republic. My ancestors had been for many years counsellors and syndics; and my father had filled several public situations with honour and reputation” (Shelley 17-18). Since Victor was the “eldest” child of Alphonse Frankenstein, he was therefore the “destined successor to all his [father’s] labours and utility” (Shelley 19). It can easily be argued that these “labours” include “honour and reputation.” Just like Reginald in *St. Leon*, Victor is also expected to accomplish things that would and would continue to bring “honor and reputation” to his family and this is precisely Victor’s motivation to study alchemy. It is worth noting here that, unlike Reginald as we have already seen, Victor is not interested in creating the philosopher’s stone to produce gold since he considers “wealth” to be an “inferior object” (Shelley 22). Victor is instead interested in the “elixir of life”: “what glory would attend the discovery, if I could banish disease from the human frame, and render man invulnerable to any but a violent death!” (Shelley 22).

As noted earlier in our discussion of *St. Leon*, the desire for glory runs counter to the requirement of humility in an alchemical adept. It is also this same desire that we saw in Reginald which also makes Victor blind to the possible consequences of his actions so that he becomes the “victim of [his] own discovery” like the stereotype of the “hapless scientist.” As Victor is creating his monster, he believes that he is acting like a “noble

scientist” since he is convinced that his research will lead to the “benefit of society”:
“Life and death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first break through, and
pour a torrent of light into our dark world. A new species would bless me as its creator
and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me” (Shelley 32).
Just like Reginald who believes that he is acting benevolently when he uses the
philosopher’s stone to save the people of Hungary, Victor likewise thinks that he acts
benevolently when he creates his monster since this discovery would mean that man
would no longer have to fear disease or death. While it is certainly true that his
“intention of finding the secret of longevity was humane,” underlying this intention is a
clear desire for fame and recognition: to be the “torrent of light” that will illuminate the
“dark world.”¹¹³ Further, just like Reginald’s belief that the people of Hungary would be
“indebted to him,” Victor similarly thinks that the “new species” he would create will
worship him as their “creator,” as the one who gave them life. From this it follows that
Victor’s act is not an act of genuine altruism but rather an act of megalomania
masquerading as benevolence (Brewer, *Mental Anatomies* 187). As Paul A. Cantor has
pointed out, Victor operates according to a “kind of abstract benevolence” where Victor
finds it perfectly acceptable that other people suffer while he is pursuing his “visionary
dream of aiding mankind as a whole.”¹¹⁴ Victor’s desire to create a “new species” is, of

¹¹³ Wilfred Cude, “Mary Shelley’s Modern Prometheus: A Study in the Ethics of Scientific Creativity,” *The Dalhousie Review* 52 (1972): 212-225.

¹¹⁴ Paul A. Cantor, *Creature and Creator: Myth-Making and English Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984) 118-119.

course, an act of hubris by “trying to rival God” and it is precisely this kind of “overreaching” that reveals that he is actually far less like the “noble scientist” than he thinks he is (Tysdahl 162).¹¹⁵

Victor, in fact, encapsulates every aspect of the stereotype of the “inhuman researcher” that Haynes identified. According to Haynes: “As well as his alchemist traits of pride and isolation, Victor Frankenstein epitomizes that Romantic anathema, the man who, in pursuit of science, rejects relationships – father, fiancée, Nature, and even his surrogate child, the Monster” (249).¹¹⁶ It is not only these “traits,” however, that make Victor more an alchemist than a scientist, especially given his early interests and subsequent education, the subject to which we now turn.

According to Victor, his interest in alchemy began when he was “thirteen years of age” after he stumbles upon a “volume of the works of Cornelius Agrippa” (Shelley 21). His initial feeling of “apathy” towards this text soon changes to “enthusiasm” as he reads and he is exposed to a completely new world: “A new light seemed to dawn upon my mind” (Shelley 21). When he shares his new knowledge with his father, however, Alphonse dismisses what Victor has discovered as “sad trash” (Shelley 21). Since

¹¹⁵ Jay Clayton, “Artificial Creatures of Modern Film Renew Sympathy for Frankenstein’s Creation,” *Bioethics in Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein*, ed. Gary Wiener (Detroit: Greenhaven P., 2011) 104; Robert D. Hume, “Exuberant Gloom, Existential Agony, and Heroic Despair: Three Varieties of Negative Romanticism,” *The Gothic Imagination: Essays in Dark Romanticism*, ed. Gary Richard Thompson ([Pullman]: Washington State UP, 1974) 126; Margaret L. Carter, *Specter or Delusion? The Supernatural in Gothic Fiction* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research P., 1987, 1986) 66.

¹¹⁶ Cantor’s comment that Victor “cannibalized his life for the sake of his experiment” sums up this idea of the “inhuman researcher” perfectly (111).

Alphonse does not explain his opinion, the young Victor disregards his father's remark, especially since Alphonse does not give his son the impression that "he was acquainted with [the volume's] contents" (Shelley 22). As a result, Victor not only continues to "read [the volume] with the greatest avidity," but he also "procures the whole works of this author, and afterwards of Paracelsus and Albertus Magnus" (Shelley 22).

Although Victor attributes his childhood attraction to alchemy to the fact that his family was "not scientific" which resulted in his ignorance of the "modern system of science," it is worth noting that his passion for alchemy does not diminish even after he witnesses scientific experiments involving "distillation, and the wonderful effects of steam," as well as the "airpump" (Shelley 22, 21). Since the alchemists were unaware of these scientific possibilities in their writings, Victor states that the initial appeal of the alchemists was somewhat diminished in his eyes but not completely extinguished: "I could not entirely throw them aside" (Shelley 22). It is only when Victor witnesses the wonders of electricity that he states that his childish attraction to the alchemists is "overthrown" (Shelley 23). It can be argued that the foregoing is in fact a delusion since Victor admits that he "did not feel inclined to commence the study of any modern system" to replace his study of alchemy (Shelley 23).

Indeed, it is difficult to see how a child like Victor, who "delighted in investigating the facts relative to the actual world" since the "world was to [him] a secret, which [he] desired to discover," and who never thought of his "studies" as a chore but rather as a task that "excited [him] to ardour in the prosecution of them," did not immediately replace his studies of alchemy, his "first intellectual passion," with another

subject of study (Shelley 20; Maertz, "Family Resemblances" 307). Perhaps the alchemists, "who had so long reigned the lords of [Victor's] imagination" were still there in his mind even after Victor believed they had been "overthrown" (Shelley 23). This may have indeed be the case, since Victor himself admits that what he "learned [during his childhood] was impressed the more deeply in [his] memor[y]" (Shelley 20). The foregoing is exactly how some critics have regarded alchemy's influence on Victor. According to A. D. Harvey, Victor never "outgrew his early fascination" with the alchemists, so much so that Victor should be regarded, in the end, as an "alchemist, [and] not a chemist."¹¹⁷ Maggie Kilgour agrees when she states that it is Victor's "early reading" of the alchemists that "[influence] his scientific projects," as does M. Roberts, who considers that the alchemists exerted such a "powerful influence on the mind of the young Victor" that they "le[d] him to create his monster" (M. Roberts 88).¹¹⁸

It is clear from Victor's account that the alchemists "fired his imagination."¹¹⁹ The new kind of "natural philosophy," however, does not, which is why Victor finds the "lecture" he attends on this subject so boring and the subject matter itself so repugnant: "The lecture ... was entirely incomprehensible to me. The professor discoursed with the greatest fluency of potassium and boron, and of sulphates and oxyds, terms to which I

¹¹⁷ A. D. Harvey, "Frankenstein and Caleb Williams," *Keats-Shelley Journal* 29 (1980): 22.

¹¹⁸ Maggie Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel* (London: Routledge, 1995) 103.

¹¹⁹ D. J. Palmer and R. E. Dowse, "Frankenstein: A Moral Fable," *The Listener* 62 (1962): 281.

could affix no idea; and I became *disgusted* with the science of natural philosophy” (Shelley 23; emphasis added). This feeling of repulsion seems to persist even after Victor arrives at the University of Ingolstadt. When Victor meets M. Krempe, this “professor of natural philosophy” and Victor tells him that the only “natural philosophy” he had ever studied was that of the alchemists, Krempe tells Victor that “[e]very minute” and “every instance” that he had “wasted” by studying “these fancies” was “utterly and entirely lost” and that Victor had “burdened [his] memory with exploded systems, and useless names” that are “a thousand years old, and as musty as they are ancient”; as a result Krempe tells Victor that he must “begin [his] studies entirely anew (Shelley 26).

Victor’s reaction to Krempe’s words is extremely interesting: “I returned home, not disappointed, for I had long considered those authors useless whom the professor had so strongly reprobated” (Shelley 27). On the surface, it would seem that Victor had indeed “overthrown” the influence of the alchemists. However, if Victor already *knew* that the alchemists were “outmoded” or “useless,” why did he mention that he had previously studied them to Krempe in the first place (Dussinger 44)? Instead of telling Krempe about his previous studies, Victor could have quite easily, and without any shame, told his professor that he knew nothing about “natural philosophy” since his life prior to university had been “remarkably secluded and domestic” and his family was “not scientific” at all (Shelley 26). Instead, Victor chooses to mention the alchemists at the very moment where he is trying to make a good first impression thereby showing, perhaps, that he is still preoccupied with alchemy, albeit unconsciously. Indeed, the

foregoing would explain why Victor “did not feel much inclined to study the books which [he] had procured at [Krempe’s] recommendation” (Shelley 26).

Victor, moreover, makes it clear that the kind of “natural philosophy” Krempe espouses holds little fascination for him since the aims of this kind of “natural philosophy” pales with the lofty goals of the alchemists: “It was very different, when the masters of the science sought immortality and power; such views, although futile, were grand: but now the scene was changed. . . . I was required to exchange chimeras of boundless grandeur for realities of little worth” (Shelley 27). Victor is, in other words, “discontented with the narrow definition of modern science” because of its lack of “ambition” when compared with alchemy (M. Roberts 109; Shelley 27). Victor, in short, dislikes the modern form of natural philosophy precisely because this science “limit[s] itself to the annihilation of those visions on which [his] interest in science was chiefly founded,” that is, the alchemists’ “visions” of “immortality and power” (Shelley 27). It is no surprise, therefore, that Victor should find his chemistry professor M. Waldman’s lecture so much more to his liking.

Waldman stresses the importance and the relevance of the alchemists to the new sciences and he states that the alchemists were in fact the “ancient teachers” of the modern scientists:

these were the men to whose indefatigable zeal modern philosophers were indebted for most of the foundations of the knowledge. They had left to us, as an easier task, to give new names, and arrange in connected classifications, the fact which they in a great degree had been the instruments of bringing to light. (Shelley 28)

What Waldman appears to indicate is that the alchemists laid the groundwork for the modern scientists and that the modern scientists could now not only continue their predecessors' investigations, but also expand and improve on them (M. Roberts 109). In fact, it seems that Waldman may even be hinting at the possibility that modern science might be able to achieve the "dreams of the alchemists" one day (Kilgour 103).¹²⁰ This kind of attitude is precisely what Victor wants to hear, given his partiality to the alchemists' "chimeras of boundless grandeur" as we have already seen. Once Waldman makes this connection between alchemy and modern science clear and he points out to Victor the recent scientific discoveries relating to "how the blood circulates" and the "nature of the air we breathe," discoveries that are every bit as marvelous as the assertions of the alchemists, he is able to convince Victor that the new sciences are indeed a valid field of study (Shelley 27, 28).¹²¹

Unlike Krempe, Waldman takes a broad approach to scientific learning and he urges Victor to do the same. It is not enough to just study chemistry, Waldman advises, for a "man would make but a very sorry chemist, if he attended to that department of knowledge alone" since a true "man of science, and not a petty experimentalist" is one who "applies" himself to "every branch of natural philosophy" (Shelley 28). The

¹²⁰ Christa Knellwolf, "Geographic Boundaries and Inner Space: *Frankenstein*, Scientific Exploration and the Quest for the Absolute," *Frankenstein's Science: Experimentation and Discovery in Romantic Culture, 1780-1830*, eds. Christa Knellwolf and Jane Goodall ([Hants]: Ashgate, 2008) 65.

¹²¹ Crosbie Smith, "Frankenstein and Natural Magic," *Frankenstein Creation and Monstrosity*, ed. Stephen Bann (London: Reaktion, 1994) 51.

foregoing is, of course, exactly what Victor sets out to do while at Ingolstadt; although Victor's primary focus of study was chemistry, he also conducts research into other aspects of "natural philosophy ... in the most comprehensive sense of the term" as well as subjects like "physiology" and "anatomy" (Shelley 29, 30). Such a rigorous and wide range of study, designed to "penetrate into the recesses of nature, and shew how she works in her hiding places," might "discourage lesser men" but is perfect for a person like Victor who, as we will recall, "delighted in investigating the facts relative to the actual world" since the "world was to [him] a secret, which [he] desired to discover" since he was a young boy (Cude 218; Shelley 28). It can be argued, moreover, that Victor's decision to follow Waldman's advice with regard to the breadth of his scientific studies, reveals that he is continuing to learn in a manner akin to the alchemists since it was not only the scientists of the eighteenth century – the period during which the events in *Frankenstein* takes place – but also the alchemists who undertook "unlimited fields of investigation" to "acquire the full extent of knowledge about every aspect of the world" (Knellwolf 65).

We have just seen the extent to which Victor was influenced by alchemy. Although both his father Alphonse and Krempe both dismiss the validity and relevance of alchemy, Victor finds that he cannot "entirely throw [alchemy] aside" and his childhood fascination with alchemy lingers even after he is dissuaded from studying the same.¹²²

¹²² Janis McLarren Caldwell, "Science and Sympathy in *Frankenstein*," *Literature and Medicine in Nineteenth-Century Britain: From Mary Shelley to George Eliot* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004) 39.

The influence of alchemy, moreover, can be seen throughout his university career, especially since his passion for this subject is reignited by Waldman who not only confirms that the modern science of chemistry is derived from the ancient “science” of alchemy but also encourages Victor to undertake a course of study very much like the enquiries the alchemists undertook to discover the secrets of the natural world. It would therefore not be inaccurate to assert that in Victor, the “alchemist[, was] reborn in the scientist” while he was studying at Ingolstadt.¹²³

There is, of course, another reason why Victor should be considered as an alchemist rather than a scientist: his experiments relating to the monster are conducted as if they were *alchemical* experiments rather than scientific ones. According to Shapin, the rise of the new sciences in the seventeenth century was accompanied by new standards of proof so that the results of successful scientific experiments could be considered as valid and “experimental *matter of fact*” (Shapin 482; Carter 119; emphasis in text). Victor must have been well aware of these standards since he “made some discoveries in the improvement of some chemical instruments, which procured [him] great esteem and admiration” while he was at the University of Ingolstadt (Shelley 28). It can be easily argued that if Victor had not met the requisite scientific standards of proof in these “discoveries,” it would have been impossible for him to receive due credit for the same. Victor’s experiments relating to the creation of the monster and his mate, however, clearly fall short of these standards.

¹²³ Paul Sherwin, “‘*Frankenstein*’: Creation as Catastrophe,” *Mary Shelley*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea, 1985) 146.

As many critics have noted, there is a curious lack of scientific detail relating to Victor's creation of the two monsters in the text (C. Smith 40; Montag 308).¹²⁴ The absence of these details means that Victor's experiments can never meet the scientific standards of proof necessary to establish them as "knowledge" that is "empirically based" (Shapin 487). According to Shapin, one of the primary ways in which scientific experiments can be validated is if they are performed in front of "eye-witnesses" who can confirm the same (487). The text makes it clear that Victor conducted his two experiments "alone, in the dark of night, cut off from society" and in secret, first, in a "solitary chamber, or rather cell, at the top of the house, and separated from all the other apartments by a gallery and staircase" and second, in one of the "three miserable huts" in "one of the remotest [islands] of the Orkneys" in Scotland (Shelley 32, 112).¹²⁵ Further, by refusing to disclose the method by which he creates the monsters – Victor refuses to tell Walton the "secret with which [he] is acquainted," that is, the ability of "bestowing life upon lifeless matter" – Victor ensures that there is no possibility that his experiments can ever be validated through "virtual witnessing" (that is, by providing sufficient details

¹²⁴ Mario Praz, introductory essay, *Three Gothic Novels*, ed. Peter Fairclough (London: Penguin, 1986) 25.

¹²⁵ Yota Batsaki, "From Alchemy to Experiment: The Political Economy of Experience in William Godwin's *St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century*," *Fictions of Knowledge: Fact, Evidence, Doubt*, eds. Yota Batsaki, Subha Mukherji, and Jan-Melissa Schramm (New York: Palgrave, 2012) 180.

of the experiment in writing), or through “replication” (Shelley 30, 31; Shapin 491, 489; Batsaki 180).¹²⁶

It is important to note that the standards of proof relating to scientific experiments just mentioned were implemented as a reaction against “alchemical ‘secretists’ ... who claimed individual and unmediated inspiration from God” (Shapin 487). It is precisely because of the alchemists’ requirement of secrecy with regard to their operations that scientists were encouraged to “perform experiments in a *social* space” like the “public” and “officially sanctioned space” that is a “laboratory,” and not in a “*private* space” like an “alchemist’s closet” (Shapin 488; Butler, Introduction xxx; emphasis added).

Despite the fact that Victor refers to his “workplace” as a “laboratory,” it is clear that this space is more like an “alchemist’s closet” because the creation of the monster is a “very private enterprise, conducted in ... concealment, [and] in narcissistic abstraction from social ties,” while being totally “divorced from family and society” (Shelley 32, 114; Baldick 51; C. Smith 54).¹²⁷ As Warren Montag has noted, the use of the word “cell” in Victor’s description of his “workshop” as a “synonym” for “solitary chamber” suggests that Victor conducts his experiments in a “closed world” much like that of the alchemists (308). It appears, moreover, that Victor’s “laboratory” is too “ill-equipped[,] even by the

¹²⁶ While it is true that Victor initially kept notes that “described ... every step [he] took” in the creation of the monster, we can assume that he eventually destroyed these notes when he destroyed the “half-finished” female monster after he had “resolved ... that to create another like the fiend [he] had first made would be an act of the basest and most atrocious selfishness” (Shelley 87; 118).

¹²⁷ Hugh Davies, “*Frankenstein* is an Early Research Ethics Text,” *Bioethics in Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein*, ed. Gary Wiener (Detroit: Greenhaven P., 2011) 52.

rudimentary technological standards of the day,” to be a scientific laboratory; Harvey notes that Victor’s “workplace” is not only “remarkably small” but also poorly lit (22). Radu Florescu, moreover, has astutely noted the absence of any equipment in Victor’s “workplace” that could possibly harness the “elemental powers of the sun or of lightning” that Victor could have used to infuse the “spark of being into the lifeless thing” that would eventually become the monster and that so many critics have interpreted to mean that Victor must have used electricity in his experiment.¹²⁸

It is difficult to understand how Dussinger could argue that Victor could not be an alchemist because he “largely ignores the usual paraphernalia of the [alchemist’s] laboratory” when there are places in the text that allude to the kind of “instruments” that Victor may well have used in his creation of the monster (45). When Waldman speaks of the modern chemists to Victor, he mentions that they use both the “microscope” as well as the “crucible,” the latter of which is not only part of the “usual paraphernalia” of the alchemist’s laboratory but also the “commonest [piece] of apparatus” that could be found there as we will recall from our earlier discussion of *St. Leon* above. In that discussion, we also noted that it was also common to find scales, charcoal, as well as a furnace for boiling water in an alchemist’s laboratory. It is possible to infer that Victor might also have needed to use the foregoing items in his “workplace.” Given that Victor had to prepare a “frame . . . with all its intricacies of fibers, muscles, and veins” and that he collected “bones from charnel houses” as well as the “grave,” to create a being that was

¹²⁸ Radu Florescu, *In Search of Frankenstein* (Boston: NY Graphic Society, 1975) 214.

in perfect “proportion,” it would not be too far-fetched to assume that he would require instruments like “scales” to measure his “materials” and that he would also need charcoal to boil water in a furnace to clean the various parts he had gathered (Shelley 31, 32, 34). Indeed, since Victor obtains so many of his “materials” from the “dissecting room and the slaughter-house” it would not be unreasonable to assume that he would also have required tools like shears and knives which can also be readily found in an alchemist’s laboratory (see for example “Apparatus Used by Alchemists and Puffers,” in Mylius’ *Chymica: Basilica Philosophica* and Weiditz’s *An Alchemist and His Assistant at Work*).¹²⁹ From the foregoing, there might be a good chance that at least some of Victor’s “instruments of life” could have very well been alchemical instruments (Shelley 34).

In respect of the private space that Victor chose for his “workshop,” Butler notes that Victor might not have a choice in the matter because “around 1800 few members of even the educated public could have access to a laboratory” (Introduction xxx). This argument is not convincing for a number of reasons. First, we will recall that Victor was in fact a student of “great esteem and admiration” in the University of Ingolstadt who had “made some ... [presumably, revolutionary] discoveries in the improvement of chemical instruments.” Given that Victor is clearly a rising young star in chemistry, it is difficult to see how he would not be able to gain access to a well-appointed laboratory in the

¹²⁹ Mylius, “Apparatus Used by Alchemists and Puffers,” *Chymica: Basilica Philosophica*, 1620, Frankfurt, reproduced in De Givry, *Witchcraft*, fig. 359. Please see note 105 above for the reference to Weiditz’s *An Alchemist and His Assistant at Work*.

university at any time. Second, even if he were not granted such access, Victor should have been able to gain easy entry to Waldman's own personal laboratory. According to Victor: "[Waldman] then took me into his laboratory, and explained to me the uses of his various machines; instructing me as to what I ought to procure and *promising me the use of his own* when I should have advanced far enough in the science not to derange their mechanism" (Shelley 28; emphasis added). It is clear from the foregoing that Victor had a choice (or even choices) in selecting the location of his "workshop"; the fact that he choose a "solitary chamber, or rather cell" to undertake his experiments seems to indicate that his work needs to be kept secret, just like the work of the alchemists.

Vasbinder has argued, however, that Victor's choice in this regard was not based on any alchemical considerations but rather "dictated by necessity" (60). Although Vasbinder does not explain to what "necessity" he refers, we may presume that he is likely referring to the fear of dissection in the early nineteenth century. According to Tim Marshall, dissection of the human body was considered as "morally degrading" in the early nineteenth century when *Frankenstein* was written and published.¹³⁰ Since the law stated at that time that only "convicted murderers" could be dissected, there was a shortage on the number of cadavers that were available for medical research (Marshall 58, 57). As a result, the surgeons and anatomists of the day were often forced to rely on grave-robbers to supply them with cadavers for analysis and experimentation (Marshall

¹³⁰ Tim Marshall, "Frankenstein and the 1832 Anatomy Act," *Gothick Origins and Innovations*, eds. Allan Lloyd Smith and Victor Sage (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994) 58.

57). Since grave-robbing was a crime, any analysis of and experiments relating to bodies acquired this way had to be conducted in secret (Marshall 59).

While it is certainly true that Victor's nocturnal activities in "vaults and charnel-houses" can be read as "allud[ing] to the grave-robbing, dissection, and vivisection popularly associated with radical science" and that his activities are reminiscent of the early nineteenth century surgeon, anatomist, and even the grave-robber, it can surely be argued that Victor's *other* activities might have nothing to do with these professions (Caldwell 28). Surgeons and anatomists obtained cadavers in order to take bodies apart; in order to create his monster, Victor not only had to understand both human "physiology" and "anatomy," he also had to learn how to put a body *back together* again which does not appear to fall within the jurisdiction of either the nineteenth-century surgeon or anatomist. We can speculate, moreover, that there may well have been certain aspects to Victor's experiment that did not necessarily have to be conducted in secret if his experiment was indeed scientific in nature. Since Victor chose to conduct the *entirety* of his experiment in a "private space" as opposed to a "public space," it seems that his experiment cannot be considered to be entirely scientific, if at all.

Given the above, it is no surprise that some critics have concluded that Victor's experiment was more alchemical than scientific. According to Glen Cavaliero, Victor's research and experiment seem to stem from "his previous immersion in the ... science of alchemy" (62). In her assessment, Kilgour goes even further when she states that Victor's "scientific enterprise was not clearly different from the work of alchemy" (196). Butler, moreover, notes that Victor seems to "know too little science rather than too

much.”¹³¹ Victor is ultimately, in other words, not a scientist. Indeed, it can be argued that he takes a decidedly unscientific approach to the *results* of his experiment. As Robert Kiely has remarked, Victor’s reaction to his monster – he “rushe[s] out of the room” and does not return – does not support his “claims to scientific interest” since “he demonstrates no wish whatsoever to observe and analyze the ... results of his experiment” (Shelley 34).¹³²

Victor’s thought-process when creating the monster is likewise unscientific. Victor states that he wanted to “create a human being” but then, upon finding that the “minuteness of the parts formed a great hindrance to [his] speed, [he] resolved, contrary to [his] first intention, to make the being of a gigantic stature; that is to say, about eight feet in height, and proportionably large” (Shelley 31, 32). These words indicate that Victor never cared about the “human being” that he wanted to create; he only cared about himself which is why he so “casually revise[d] his plans at the last moment” (Cantor 115, 116). Victor, moreover, never even bothered to consider what might result from making his creature “gigantic” for the creature itself as well as the society at large. As Cantor has noted, Victor’s decision here shows a “total disregard for practical considerations of the physical needs of man” (116). Victor also fails to see that to make such a large creature with a, presumably, “proportional” musculature means that he is, in effect, creating a

¹³¹ Marilyn Butler, “*Frankenstein* and Radical Science,” *Frankenstein*, by Mary Shelley, ed. J. Paul Hunter, Norton Critical Edition (New York: Norton, 1996): 307.

¹³² Robert Kiely, *The Romantic Novel in England* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1972) 172.

“being that is, potentially at least, a fearfully efficient killer” which indeed turns out to be the case (Cude 218).

Victor, of course, also makes his creation “so hideous” that its countenance fills him with such “breathless horror and disgust” that he is “unable to endure the aspect of the being [he himself] had created,” leading him to “[rush] out of the room” (Shelley 88, 34). To create a being with such a repulsive countenance is to doom it to “discrimination”; as Judith Halberstam has noted, the “criminal anthropology of the 1890s ... made essential connections between outward appearance and inward essence” so that the monster will have no choice but to live “his days in exile,” branded always by the “sign of criminality,” be it true or false, solely by virtue of physical appearance alone.¹³³ The foregoing explains why the monster is not only rejected by everyone he meets – from the shepherd who abandons his breakfast in his haste to get away, to the members of the De Lacey family – but also subjected to various forms of violence, including being pelted by “stones and many other kinds of missile[s],” as well as shot at with a gun (Shelley 70, 95). In fact, the monster’s face is so ugly that it “terrifies” even the monster himself when he sees it for the first time in a “transparent pool” and the monster quickly comes to full awareness of the “fatal effects of [his] miserable deformity” (Shelley 76).

From the above, it can be argued that the monster is not a product of a scientific mind and hence not a product of science. Various critics have therefore argued that the

¹³³ Judith Halberstam, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* (Durham: Duke UP, 1995) 41.

monster should be considered a product of alchemy (Florescu 234; M. Roberts 97; Coudert 33). Of all the critics, Florescu provides the most detailed explanation for this conclusion by considering how the monster fits into various images of the “artificial man” throughout history. We have already seen earlier how Florescu considers that the monster could not have been created by electrical means by virtue of the fact that Victor’s “workshop” lacks any equipment that could harness the “elemental powers of the sun or of lightning.” From this, it follows that the monster could not be viewed as an “automaton, or mechanical man” which is an exclusively “scientific endeavor” (Florescu 230). The monster could also not be viewed as the Jewish Golem, the being that was formed out of clay and “animated ... through a secret name or word of God,” and that could be destroyed by its creator by “eras[ing] the letter ‘E’ from its forehead,” which would then “[result] in the immediate disintegration of the monster” (Florescu 223). In this connection, Pinkus has observed, moreover, that the golem of Jewish legend is characterized by its inability to speak (130). The fact that Victor is ultimately unable to destroy the monster as well as the monster’s eloquence thus makes it impossible to be considered a golem. By the process of elimination, Florescu therefore concludes that the monster could be nothing other than a “homunculus,” the creation of which was detailed in the works of Paracelsus that Victor surely must have read in his youth (226). The fact that Shelley, in true alchemical fashion, did not provide any details relating to the “precise circumstances attending” Victor’s creation of the monster, Florescu argues, thus provides the final clue that the monster must be “more the child of the alchemists ... than of the scientists” (234).

In addition to the reasons Florescu gives, it seems that there is one additional reason why the monster should be considered an alchemical creation since it can be argued that its creation can be read as a *literal* interpretation of the *opus magnum*. In our discussion relating to *Golden Pot*, we noted how the philosopher's stone was created from *prima materia*, that is, from primal matter. It can surely be argued that when Victor conducts his research in "vaults and charnel houses" and "disturbed, with profane fingers, the tremendous secrets of the human frame" he is in fact trying to uncover the secrets of nature of "bodies that have been buried in the earth," bodies that are in effect just like the metal ores that are considered "embryos of the Earth-Mother" as we have seen from our discussion of *Mines* above (Shelley 32; Dussinger 45). From this, it follows that Victor's "materials" can easily be considered to be the alchemical *prima materia* with which he works. Indeed, David Punter seems to agree with the foregoing when he notes that Victor's "work" is "womb-work" since it is a "delving into *primal*, birth-giving matter."¹³⁴

Victor's activities in the "dissecting room and the slaughter house" can also be considered as alchemical. According to the alchemists, the *prima materia* had to be "divided into [the] four elements" during the *nigredo*, the first stage of the *opus magnum* (Jung, *Studies* 84; "Beheading," *Dictionary*). When we note that this idea was commonly described in alchemical literature and images as the *dismemberment* of various animals, birds, and even *man* himself, it can be seen that Victor's work on the "materials" that

¹³⁴ David Punter, *Gothic Pathologies: Text, Body and Law* (Handmills: MacMillian, 1998) 50-51; emphasis added.

would make up the monster suddenly appears much more alchemical in nature than previously thought (“Beheading,” *Dictionary*). To achieve this division of the elements, the alchemists were advised, moreover, that they needed to “break up bodies and torture them until they are altered.”¹³⁵ Victor’s experiment, which requires him to fit together a body comprising “intricacies of fibers, muscles and veins” from disparate, and most likely mismatching parts, can easily be seen as a *literal* interpretation of the alchemical idea of dismemberment and its attendant, albeit allegorical, instructions.

The purpose of the division of the *prima materia* is, of course, to reconcile the separated parts back into a wholeness that would reflect the alchemical doctrine of the unity of all matter that we noted in our discussion of *Mines* above. When we recall that this doctrine comprised the belief that everything in the world originated from the “miracles of one thing,” the thing that is the philosopher’s stone, it can be argued that Victor’s creation becomes all the more alchemical still, especially when we note that the homunculus itself is a *synonym* for the philosopher’s stone (“Homunculus,” *Dictionary*). The monster is, after all, “made up of bits and pieces” so that it not only “uncannily relates but also potentially blurs *all* boundaries between discrete categories: animate/inanimate, ... living/dead, male/female, human/non-human” (Halberstam 36, 37; Kilgour 205; emphasis added). Given the foregoing it can certainly be argued that the monster, who is comprised of *everything*, is in fact the literal *personification* – if such a

¹³⁵ Gareth Roberts, *The Mirror of Alchemy: Alchemical Ideas and Images in Manuscripts and Books from Antiquity to the Seventeenth Century* (London: The British Library, 1994) 71, 73.

word is appropriate to be used in relation to it – of the philosopher’s stone; it is, in other words, a homunculus and thus a true “child” of alchemy.

We have seen from the above that there is indeed evidence in *Frankenstein* that supports the argument that Victor’s creation of the monster was more alchemical than scientific. In fact, we have just seen that alchemy actually exercises such a great influence on Victor that he would eventually use an extremely literal interpretation of certain aspects of the *opus magnum* in order to create his monster. The lack of scientific detail in the novel, of course, lends weight to this argument. At the same time, this lack of detail also supports the argument that Victor’s experiment cannot be scientific in nature. The omission of these details necessarily means that Victor’s experiment cannot meet the new scientific standards of proof as his experiment can neither be verified by witnesses nor validated by replication. Indeed, Victor’s choice to make a “private space” his “workplace,” as opposed to the “public space” of the laboratory, adds further weight to the argument that the nature of Victor’s experiment is closer, if not the same, to the work of the alchemist. The fact that Victor does not act in ways befitting a genuine “man of science” likewise indicates that he is actually no scientist at all, thereby revealing him as a true “disciple” of alchemy in the “eighteenth century” (Shelley 22).¹³⁶ In the end, although it is true that Shelley uses the “vocabulary of science” in *Frankenstein*, it becomes clear in chapter 8 of the 1831 edition of the text that this “science” is in fact a façade for alchemy, for, when Victor finally realizes that what he has done in the name of

¹³⁶ Indeed, even Victor himself would compare his experiment to the work of an “artist,” that is, an alchemist (Shelley 23; Dussinger 46).

this “science” – that is, an experiment that went terribly awry – is in fact nothing more a “dabbling” in what he believes to be “unhallowed arts,” the language he uses is no longer the language of “scientific enquiry” but language that directly references the hermetic *art* of alchemy (Shelley 32; Calvaliero 63; Palmer and Dowse 281).¹³⁷

Speculations on the (Ab)Sense of Alchemy in Freud’s *Totem and Taboo*

We noted earlier that the new standards of proof relating to the new sciences were implemented as a reaction against the alchemists. This is not to say, however, that the alchemists were necessarily excluded from the new scientific community (Shapin 498). Since the scientists could see that some experiments conducted by the alchemists did in fact result in “solid ... findings,” the alchemists were advised to change the way in which they reported the results of their experiments so that their work could meet the new standards of proof (Shapin 498). The foregoing meant, naturally, that the alchemists could no longer use allegorical language or ambiguous references in their writings, that is, those “achemical symbols, terms and phrasings” that were so dear to alchemists like Von Welling as we have already seen. From this, it follows that alchemy could no longer be a “*secret doctrine*” since its details would henceforth be easily “decipher[able even] for those [who are *not*] experienced in such things” once the alchemists agreed to submit to adhering to the clear and precise language now required of them.

¹³⁷ Dorothy Hoobler and Thomas Hoobler, *The Monsters: Mary Shelley and the Curse of Frankenstein* (New York: Little, Brown, 2006) 162; Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 1831, ed. Stuart Curran, Romantic Circles, U of Maryland, 14 Jun. 2013 <<http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/frankenstein/>>.

Despite the new scientific community's attempt to validate the claims of alchemy, it quickly became apparent that alchemy was fast losing its luster. Alchemy was, after all, an "exploded [system]," according to Krempe in *Frankenstein*, that was comprised of "fancies . . . a thousand years old, and as musty as they are ancient." As a result, the "modern masters" of the new sciences soon began to distance themselves from their "ancient teachers," the alchemists (Shelley 27). At the same time, it seemed that it was more difficult for the "modern masters" to dismiss the influence of alchemy than they originally thought it would be since traces of alchemy continued to appear in scientific discourse up to at least the beginning of the twentieth century.

As we will now see, there is more than just a trace of alchemy in Freud's seminal text on the Oedipus complex, *Totem*, which he wrote at a time when he was trying to establish psychoanalysis as a valid science that could meet the new scientific standards of proof, the results of which could thus be regarded as "experimental *matter of fact*." When Freud was writing *Totem*, he was therefore in the same position as the alchemists in the seventeenth century, that is, both Freud and the alchemists found that they had to submit to certain "linguistic practices" to ensure that they, together with the type of "science" that they represented, would be allowed entry into the scientific community (Shapin 499). Freud, however, went even further than complying with the advice that the new scientific community had given to the alchemists; Freud, in *Totem*, did not just ensure that he used language that would be construed as scientific, he also attempted to remove all traces that could possibly be linked to alchemy from his text altogether. However, since we know how to identify and "decipher" alchemical references given that

we are now sufficiently “experienced in such things,” we are therefore in the position to undertake an analysis of Freud’s *Totem* to see where traces of alchemy can be found in this text.

According to Freud, since primitive man had a “practical need for controlling the world around [him],” he states in *Totem* that, as a consequence, “instructions upon how to obtain mastery over men, beasts, and things” were developed bearing the “names of ‘sorcery’ and ‘magic’” (97-98). Although this assertion seems to imply that this “practical need” together with “sorcery” and “magic” belonged primarily to a distant past, it can be argued that this “need” persisted throughout history (perhaps even to present day). Of course, Freud makes it clear in the second paragraph of *Totem* that he is only interested in comparing the psychology of “savages” – his own “substitute object” for “prehistoric man” since they alone “stand nearest to primitive man” – to the psychology of “modern” man, specifically the “neurotic” (4, 39, 184). However, with this gesture of glossing over the undeniably vast period between the primitive and modern ages, Freud omits mentioning another method by which man attempted to learn how to “control the world around [him],” that is, the ancient art of alchemy. According to Grillot De Givry, alchemy was part of a triumvirate of methods by which man attempted to discover the “mysteries” of existence: sorcery sought to “penetrate the mystery of the invisible world”; magic sought to “dispel the darkness surrounding future things”; and alchemy sought to “penetrate the mystery of life and the formation of inanimate substances” (347). If these three methods do indeed go hand-in-hand as De Givry suggests, why did Freud only mention two methods out of the three, that is, why is there no explicit mention of

alchemy in *Totem*? Is it because alchemy is simply not relevant to his arguments or are there other reasons for its absence? Is there in fact a sense of alchemy in Freud's text?

In this discussion we will attempt to trace the (ab)sense of alchemy in *Totem* by first showing how the concepts of totem and taboo, as defined by Freud, are relevant to alchemy by referring to various alchemical treatises and commentaries. We will then argue that the absence of alchemy could be attributed to the fact that it fails to fit within Freud's schema of the progressive development of human *Weltanschauungen* through history. Finally, we will posit that Freud perhaps had no choice but to disavow alchemy altogether in his writings to definitively legitimize and irrevocably establish psychoanalysis as a valid science.

Freud's view is that "taboo" operates by way of "prohibitions and restrictions" (*Totem* 24). The alchemists were forbidden to speak about alchemy, especially the creation of the philosopher's stone, since it was a "secret" doctrine (Jung, *Studies* 122; G. Roberts, *Mirror* 66; De Givry 347). Although this injunction indicates that alchemical discourse was taboo, the sheer amount of alchemical writings that were produced shows that this prohibition was not strictly followed. This did not mean, however, that the alchemists did not realize that a prohibition was in place. One answer to "Anonymous Alchemical Questions of a Universal and Particular Nature" states that "[t]he wise men who possess [alchemical] knowledge have never spoken about the particular order of the steps [to make the philosopher's stone], such that this great secret ... remains concealed in their writings" (514). To circumvent the prohibition, many alchemists used "metaphor, enigma, allegory and riddle" in their discourse (G. Roberts, *Mirror* 8). We have already

seen, for example, how Hermes' "The Emerald Table" enigmatically opens with a reference to "[t]hat which is above is like to that which is below, and that which is below is like to that which is above, to accomplish the miracles of one thing." Some alchemists even deliberately used symbols – which should "not [have] be[en] difficult to decipher for those experienced in such things" – in an effort to adhere to the requirement for secrecy. For example, a typical sentence in von Welling's *Theosophicum* appears in this fashion: "tin and lead do not bind together well and cannot be stretched or hammered, like the four woven metals ☉. ☽, ♀ or ♂" (22).¹³⁸ Thus, although the alchemists did not strictly follow the prohibition against alchemical explication, they did in fact submit to less encompassing taboos by ensuring that their writings were couched in highly "figurative expression and elaborate metaphorical language" and symbols (G. Roberts, *Mirror* 66).

According to Freud, however, taboos are "distinct from religious or moral prohibitions" (*Totem* 24). In this sense, the alchemical prohibition seems to differ from taboo, as it seems to be "based on divine ordinance" since "the secrets of God were being touched on, and direct revelation was sin" (Freud, *Totem* 24; G. Roberts *Mirror* 67). Nevertheless Freud observes that once taboo "became associated" with "ideas of gods and spirits," the "penalty" for violating a taboo was "expected to follow automatically from the divine power" (*Totem* 27). Nicolas Flamel's explanation for why he refused to reproduce certain parts of a "Booke" by an alchemist named "Abraham the Jew"

¹³⁸ These symbols refer to gold, silver, copper, and iron respectively (Linden, Introduction 21).

confirms Freud's observation: "I will not represent unto you that which was written ... for God would punish me, because I should commit a greater wickednesse, then he who (as it is said) wished that all the men of the World had but one head that hee [sic] might cut it off at one blow."¹³⁹ Freud further notes that a "further evolution of the concept" of taboo led "society itself [to take] over the punishment of offenders, whose conduct had brought their fellows into danger," that is, in the establishment of the "earliest human penal system" (*Totem* 26). This assertion is also relevant to alchemy; although Flamel's explanation states that it was fear of God's wrath that led to his self-sanctioning, alchemists in the seventeenth century had a very different reason for being careful with what they said about and what they claimed they could do with alchemy – the fear of the gallows – since they could be convicted and sentenced to death if it was discovered that they had committed fraud.¹⁴⁰ It can thus be argued that the development of the source of the punishment for the violation of the alchemical prohibition follows that of Freud's concept of taboo.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Nicolas Flamel, "His Exposition of the Hieroglyphical Figures," *The Alchemy Reader: From Hermes Trismegistus to Issac Newton*, ed. Stanton J. Linden (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003) 125-126.

¹⁴⁰ Tara Nummedal, "On the Utility of Chemical Fraud," *Chymists and Chymistry: Studies in the History of Alchemy and Early Modern Chemistry*, ed. Lawrence M. Principe (Sagamore Beach: Watson Publishing, 2007) 172, 174.

¹⁴¹ It is interesting to note that the earlier alchemical texts may not have mentioned the prohibition against alchemical discourse. For example, the prohibition is not mentioned in Hermes' "The Emerald Table." If it transpires that other early texts likewise contain this omission, then the argument could be made that the development of the source of the punishment for the violation of the alchemical prohibition actually *mirrors* that of Freud's concept of taboo.

There are also other similarities between alchemy and taboo. Freud isolates a “peculiar magical power” or the belief in “animism” as the source of taboo (*Totem* 24, 94). Although magic may be thought of as distinct from alchemy, J. C. Gregory notes that alchemy had “magical origins” as well as its more accepted and well-known “rational origins.”¹⁴² Later Greek alchemical manuscripts support this assertion since they often included “magical invocations” alongside “practical” alchemical “recipes and processes” for dealing with metals (G. Roberts, *Mirror* 20, 21). It can therefore be argued that magic did indeed play a part in the early history of alchemy. Magic is, moreover, part of the “primitive ‘philosophy of nature’” that Freud identified as “animism” (*Totem* 94). Freud observes that primitive man developed this “philosophy” by observing the “states” of “sleep” in order to understand the “problem of death” (*Totem* 96). He then continues by asserting what was the “natural thing” for primitive man was the “indefinite prolongation of life – immortality” and that the “idea of death” was only “accepted late, and with hesitancy” (*Totem* 96). This “philosophy of nature” seems remarkably similar to one of the uses of the philosopher’s stone as a panacea and as an elixir of immortality in the form of the *elixir vitae* as we have already seen; Lazzarelli, an alchemist from the fourteenth century, actually considered alchemy to be a form of “natural magic” (“Philosopher’s Stone,” *Dictionary*).¹⁴³

¹⁴² J. C. Gregory, “From Magic to Science,” *Journal of Philosophical Studies* 5.19 (1930): 390.

¹⁴³ Wouter J. Hanegraff, “Pseudo-Lullian Alchemy and the Mercurial Phoenix: Giovanni da Correggio’s *De Quercu Iulii pontificis sive De Lapide philosophic*,” *Chymists and Chymistry: Studies in the History of Alchemy and Early Modern Chemistry*, ed. Lawrence M. Principe (Sagamore Beach: Watson Publishing, 2007) 111.

It is clear, however, that the “magical origins” of alchemy were purposely omitted from later medieval and Renaissance alchemical texts (G. Roberts, *Mirror* 22). Although Paracelsus (the famous alchemist from the sixteenth century that Victor Frankenstein refers to), stated that “a few Glances” could still be “reaped” from “the Magick of the Persians and Egyptians,” the word “few” in this statement seems to confirm that magic was fast losing its currency in alchemical discourse.¹⁴⁴ According to Gareth Roberts, the reason for this distancing was that if alchemy was not separated sharply from magic and other forms of “‘curious’ learning,” it would be considered a “dubious [art] taught to fallen mankind by demons” and therefore discredited (*Mirror* 16). This possible demonic view of alchemy thus explains why the alchemists, in addition to using highly figurative language, also used extensive “alchemical analogies for Christian doctrine and history” in their discourse (G. Roberts, *Mirror* 16). In other words, by linking alchemy with and by tracing its origins back to the beginnings of Christianity, the alchemists ensured that alchemy could not be charged with a demonic origin.¹⁴⁵ This turn towards Christianity in alchemy is relevant to Freud’s concept of taboo for two reasons.

First, it accords with Freud’s assertion that the “fear of demons” is another source of taboo since the alchemists were attempting to counter the allegation that alchemy could be a demonic art by using analogies from Christianity, analogies which also

¹⁴⁴ Paracelsus, “The Aurora of the Philosophers,” *The Alchemy Reader: From Hermes Trismegistus to Issac Newton*, ed. Stanton J. Linden (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003) 164.

¹⁴⁵ In explaining the “Original of the Philosophick Stone,” Paracelsus begins by asserting that “Adam was the first Inventor of Arts, because he had the knowledge of all things” and then identifying Noah as Adam’s successor, followed in turn by Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Daniel, and finally, Elias (163).

functioned as an observance of the taboo against speaking about alchemy in express terms as discussed earlier (*Totem* 73). Second, the two opposing views of alchemy – as a holy art sanctioned by God and as a demonic art – confirm Freud’s assertion that the “meaning of ‘taboo’ ... diverges in two contrary directions ... one the one hand, ‘sacred,’ ‘consecrated,’ and on the other ‘uncanny, ‘dangerous,’ ‘forbidden,’ ‘unclean’” (*Totem* 24). It seems possible, moreover, that these two opposing views could be considered an “ambivalent emotional attitude” in Freudian terms – that is, where the feeling of “veneration” is accompanied by an unconscious “horror” – since the alchemists’ great “veneration” for the holy art existed with an “objectified fear” produced by that same art itself in the conception of it as a demonic art. If the foregoing is true, then alchemy, like the word “taboo” for Freud, possesses an inherently “*Ur*” or “primal” quality (*Totem* 84, 33).

It is also worth noting that the alchemists’ attitude towards the philosopher’s stone had a similar ambivalent effect since it was either viewed as a “miracle,” as in Hermes’ “The Emerald Table,” or as “hostile” as we saw in the discussion relating to *Mines* above (Hermes 28; Jung, *Studies* 320). In addition, the philosopher’s stone itself could also be viewed as ambiguous (Pinkus 5). According to Jung, the philosopher’s stone is able to “[perform] beneficent works of healing and ennoblement” as well as “act as a fatal poison” (“Idea of Redemption” 229). The philosopher’s stone can thus be considered a “*Pharmakon*,” that is, something that is both the cure and the poison at the same time (Pinkus 5). The word “*Pharmakon*” is, of course, one of Freud’s famous examples of the “*Urwort*” or “primal word,” a word that is by its very nature fundamentally ambiguous.

The “*Ur*” or “primal” quality of “taboo,” “alchemy,” and the “philosopher’s stone” therefore appears to link these words and concepts together in a particularly Freudian sense.

According to Freud, “totem” is “as a rule an animal ... and more rarely a plant or a natural phenomenon” that “stands in a peculiar relation to the whole clan,” is the “common ancestor of the clan,” as well as the clan’s “guardian spirit and helper” (*Totem* 5). When this schema is applied to alchemy, it can be argued that the alchemists together form an exclusive group akin to a “clan” since they distinguished between those who were genuinely experienced in alchemy, the adepts, and those who did not possess the requisite knowledge, the “false” alchemists known as the “puffers” (Hensing 503; De Givry 350). Hensing states: “If you ever come across someone who claims to be a master of these [alchemical] arts, you might ask him ... [three questions]. If he can explain all these things in a satisfactory manner then you can believe his claim. If not, he is a charlatan” (503). If the alchemists are a “clan,” then what is their “totem”?

We have already noted how Hermes was considered to be the founding father of alchemy and, as his name suggests, the alchemical Hermes is related to the Greek Hermes who, in the ancient world, was known for “both his religious and philosophical wisdom and his seer-like understanding of the most obscure areas of human speculation and experience: astrology, magic, the secrets of plants and stones, and alchemy” (Linden, Introduction 27; “Hermes Trismegistus,” *Dictionary*).¹⁴⁶ Possession of this tripartite

¹⁴⁶ The fact that Hermes was also knowledgeable about magic further strengthens the argument that alchemy contains an “animistic” element in Freudian terms.

knowledge is reflected in “The Emerald Table,” which states: “For this reason I am called Hermes Trimegistus, because I hold three parts of the wisdom of the whole world” (28). Hermes was, moreover, the messenger of the gods and he was also associated with the tortoise in the Greek tradition and a bird born from the philosopher’s stone in the alchemical tradition (“Bird of Hermes,” *Dictionary*).¹⁴⁷ When all these factors are taken into consideration, it is possible that Hermes functioned like a totem. First, he is associated with two animals as well as privy to the “secrets of plants” as we have just seen. Second, he can also be considered the alchemical clan’s “guardian spirit and helper” notwithstanding the fact that he is commonly known as a trickster-type, a fact that we have already noted above (Bulfinch 11). According to Socrates in Plato’s *Cratylus*, several meanings can be derived from the name Hermes, including an “interpreter” and a “deviser.”¹⁴⁸ In other words, Hermes can also be considered a facilitator and it is in this sense that he could be considered a “guardian spirit” (he is a god after all) as well as the “helper” who transmitted the “divine revelation” that would enable the alchemists to create the philosopher’s stone (G. Roberts, *Mirror* 79).

We have already seen how, in the alchemical tradition, Hermes was also associated with the figure of Mercurius who was, in turn, representative of the entire alchemical process including the *ultima materia*, that is, the philosopher’s stone (Jung, *Studies* 122). If Freud’s understanding of totem is extended to include an “object” as

¹⁴⁷ Thomas Bulfinch, *Bulfinch’s Mythology* (New York: Modern Library, 1993) 12.

¹⁴⁸ Plato, *Cratylus*, trans. C. D. C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998) 43.

Myers Fortes has argued, it is also possible that the philosopher's stone is a totem in and of itself.¹⁴⁹ If this is true, then the philosopher's stone can be directly related to Freud's concept of totem in several ways.

First, Freud states that one of the purposes of the totem is to prevent the "great horror of incest" since a "boy's earliest choice of objects for his love is incestuous and that those objects are forbidden ones – his mother and his sister" (*Totem* 8, 22). Second, Freud states that the "horror of incest" is related to the child's conception of his father as a "competitor for the favours of his mother, towards whom the obscure foreshadowings of his budding sexual wishes were aimed" (*Totem* 160). These feelings of the "male child towards his parents" constitute the "Œdipus complex," the "nuclear complex of the neuroses" (Freud, *Totem* 160). The Œdipus complex, further, consists of the same kind of "ambivalent emotional attitude" that we have already seen with respect to taboo since the child's "hatred" of his father has to "contend against his old-established affection and admiration for the same person" at the same time (Freud, *Totem* 160). Third, in primitive times, sons who had been "driven out [by their father] came together, killed and devoured their father and so made an end of the patriarchal horde," a triumph that was also heavily tinged with a "sense of guilt" (Freud, *Totem* 176, 177). This incident marked the beginning of the "totemic religion" with its festive event of the "totem meal" in which the "totem animal" was permitted to be "killed" and then eaten, actions that were usually "prohibited" (Freud, *Totem* 180, 164, 175). For Freud, this "totem animal" is none other

¹⁴⁹ Myer Fortes, "Totem and Taboo," *Proceedings of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 1966 (1966): 6.

than the “substitute for the [hated] father” who was killed and eaten by his sons (*Totem* 175). Alchemy, in fact, deals with these very same issues in its discourse and its images.

As we have already noted, one of the central concepts in alchemy is the “chemical wedding,” that is, the “union of opposites substances” and “reconciliation of opposites,” that would give birth to the philosopher’s stone (“Chemical wedding,” *Dictionary*). In “George Ripley’s ‘Song of the Newborn Chymical King,’” the result of a successful union is described as follows: “It was wondrous to see, how ‘twas made from the two, / A whitness like chalk of this essence renewed, / The child concealed in the mother’s blood most true, / A bond that can never be broken in two” (548-549). In alchemical manuscripts this “union” was often depicted as an act of incest that could occur between “brother and sister,” “mother and son, father and daughter, and king and son” (G. Roberts, *Mirror* 86; “Incest,” *Dictionary*). *The Tomb of Semiramis* tells us that Aristotle, in *The Rosary of the Philosophers*, said: “joyn your Son Gabrius ... with his sister *Beja*, who is a tender sweet and splendid virgin” (qtd. in “Incest,” *Dictionary*; emphasis in text). One sequence of images in George Ripley’s *Cantilena* shows “a king crawling under his mother’s skirt to be reconceived by her” (G. Roberts, *Mirror* 86).¹⁵⁰

Parricide, particularly patricide, also figures prominently in alchemy, sometimes even drawing from the Œdipus myth itself (G. Roberts *Mirror* 74). Petrus Bonus’ *Pretiosa margarita novella* contains a narrative that shows an old king being murdered by his son when he refuses to give a share of his power to his son; the king later rises

¹⁵⁰ George Ripley, *Cantilena*, The British Library, reproduced in G. Roberts, *Mirror*, plate XVII.

from his tomb after which he gives all his sons golden crowns so that they can become kings themselves (G. Roberts, *Mirror* 78, 79).¹⁵¹ The first part of this narrative bears a marked resemblance to the motive for the primitive patricide Freud describes in *Totem*, as a “hatred” stemming from the fact that the father was a “formidable obstacle to [the son’s] craving for power” (177). Although the second part of the narrative differs from Freud’s description of the primitive patricide (since the king/father is resurrected), the result for the sons is nevertheless the same since “each of them acquired a portion of [their father’s] strength” (Freud, *Totem* 176).

It is therefore clear that incest, patricide, as well as the Œdipus myth are relevant to alchemy. However, alchemy deals with these issues in a particular way that differs from Freud. In discussing incest, Freud remarks that it has been “rejected” because of the “distaste which human beings feels for their early incestuous wishes, now overtaken by repression”; at the same time, however, incest still forms the “principle part in [a person’s] unconscious mental life (*Totem* 23, 22). As the examples from *The Tomb of Semiramis* and *Cantilena* show, “incestuous wishes” were not repressed at all in alchemy, they were, rather, consciously expressed; patricide and references to the Œdipus myth are also made explicit in *Pretiosa margarita novella*. In creating these narratives and images, the alchemists therefore subverted both the taboo of incest by deliberately choosing to use incest as a means by which to depict the “chemical marriage,” as well as the prohibition against the killing of the “totem animal” which is the “substitute for the father.” In other

¹⁵¹ Petrus Bonus, *Pretiosa margarita novella*, 1546, The British Library, reproduced in G. Roberts, *Mirror*, fig. 38.

words, the alchemists seem to have been able to overcome the “Œdipus complex” by committing these two taboos vicariously.

It can even be argued that the alchemists also intended to partake in the “totem meal.” As mentioned earlier, the philosopher’s stone could be considered as a totem. In addition, the philosopher’s stone was an elixir of life as we have already seen. As the *elixir vitae*, the philosopher’s stone had to be ingested; indeed, although the philosopher’s stone was described as a stone, it was often described as being in “powder or tincture form” (“Philosopher’s stone,” *Dictionary*). Thus, if the alchemists had succeeded in producing the philosopher’s stone and taken it as an elixir, they would indeed have consumed the “totem meal.”

Given the fact that alchemy is related to Freud’s concepts of totem and taboo, it is surprising that he does not use alchemy to at least illustrate show these concepts persisted between the vast expanse between the primitive and modern ages. However, one possible reason why Freud did not include alchemy in his discussion could be related to his view of the development of human *Weltanschauung* through history.

According to Freud, the “human race” developed “three ... systems of thought,” an “animistic phase followed by a religious phase and this in turn by a scientific one” (*Totem* 97, 110). Freud explains that:

At the animistic stage men ascribe omnipotence [of thoughts] to themselves. At the religious phase they transfer it to the gods but do not seriously abandon it themselves, for they reserve the power of influencing the gods in a variety of ways according to their wishes. The scientific view of the universe no longer affords any room for human omnipotence; men have acknowledged their smallness and submitted resignedly to death and to the other necessities of nature. (*Totem* 110)

Alchemy, however, does not quite fit with the development that Freud describes.

We have seen that although early alchemical texts contained “magical invocations,” these were accompanied by “practical” alchemical “recipes and processes” that provided “technological” instructions for creating, transforming, and transmuting metals (G. Roberts, *Mirror* 19, 21). It seems, therefore, that alchemy never solely relied on animism for success even in its earliest stage. We have also seen that alchemy eventually divorced itself from its animistic roots by tracing its origins to Christianity instead. While this religious turn seemed to transfer omnipotence to God, the alchemists did not believe that they had the ability to influence God. Although alchemy was a “gift ... granted by the Lord God to the Priests [that is, the alchemists] who walk in the divine precepts,” it was left to the alchemists to discover the secrets of alchemy through “deciphering the texts of their predecessors” by being “careful, and assiduous in [their] efforts, and not grow weary, but persevere to the end,” in other words, through hard work rather than by seeking God’s favor as we have already noted above (Paracelsus 163; G. Roberts, *Mirror* 16). Freud’s “scientific view of the universe” also cannot be applied to alchemy as this *Weltanschauung* requires the alchemists to come to terms with the inevitability of death. However, because the philosopher’s stone was thought of as being able to grant eternal life, it is clear that the alchemists had not yet “submitted to death” or to the “other necessities of nature” in their continued pursuit of the philosopher’s stone.

Of course, Freud could have considered this entire discussion as irrelevant to his schema since alchemy, in his view, probably never evolved into a proper science.

Alchemy was, after all, until very recently, considered to be a kind of “pseudo-science, a

kind of misguided placeholder until chemistry came along to explain how nature ‘really worked’” (Nummedal 179). If Freud did indeed hold this view of alchemy, this provides us with another reason as to why he does not discuss alchemy in *Totem*.

Freud, as the founder of psychoanalysis, had a deeply vested interest in establishing and maintaining psychoanalysis as a valid science. Like the alchemists’ disavowal of the “magical origins” of alchemy, Freud had to distance psychoanalysis from certain kinds of beliefs in order to stay within a scientific mode of inquiry and he does so, particularly in the early part of his text.

First, Freud refers to psychoanalysis as a scientific method of inquiry. He defines psychoanalysis as “the *investigation* of the unconscious portion of the individual mind” and he refers to this “investigation” as “research” (*Totem* 33, 121, emphasis added). Freud also submits his claims to further analysis: “We may be inclined to feel that we have given sufficient evidence of the applicability of our view in what has already been said; yet we must attempt to *strengthen the evidence* by entering into our explanation of taboo prohibitions and usages in greater detail” (*Totem* 45, emphasis added).

Second, Freud underscores the relation between psychoanalysis and the already-established sciences. Immediately at the outset, Freud states that:

a comparison between the psychology of primitive peoples, as it is taught by anthropology, and the psychology of neurotics, as it has been revealed by psycho-analysis, will be bound to show numerous points of agreement and will throw new light upon familiar facts in *both* sciences. (*Totem* 3, emphasis added)

Shortly thereafter, when speaking of the similarities between primitive people and “‘obsessional’ patients,” Freud concludes that these are “parallel sociological

phenomenon[s]” (*Totem* 34). By stating that psychoanalysis is related to both anthropology and sociology, Freud therefore presents psychoanalysis as a legitimate science.

Third, Freud continues in this vein by repeatedly using scientific language in his exposition. Freud quotes from a part of Northcote W. Thomas’ article “Taboo” that explains this concept in markedly scientific terms:

Persons or things which are regarded as taboo may be compared to objects *charged with electricity*; they are the seat of tremendous power which is *transmissible by contact*, and may be liberated with destructive effect if the organisms which provoke its *discharge* are too weak to resist it. (*Totem* 27, emphasis added)

Shortly afterwards, Freud further explains that this “transmission” should be thought of in medical terms, as an “infection” that is “dangerous” as well as “contagious” (*Totem* 28, 35, 42). In order to emphasize that psychoanalysis is indeed related to medicine, Freud also stresses that psychoanalysis happens in a “clinical” setting, and that its “clinical ætiology” was made possible by “clinical history” obtained from “psychoanalytic examination” so that he could diagnose his “patients” “sickness” or “condition” (*Totem* 37, 34).

Finally, Freud makes it clear that psychoanalysis does not subscribe to belief systems that cannot be validated scientifically. According to Freud, the “belief in ghosts and spirits” should have no place in the modern age since this belief is only “characteristic of ... low levels of culture” such as the primitive age (*Totem* 29).¹⁵²

¹⁵² In a footnote, Freud states that psychoanalysis has shown, “without much difficulty,” that the “fear of ghosts” can be attributed to the fact that “ghosts are disguises for the patient’s parents” (44).

Given Freud's position, it is no surprise that he also refers to primitive totemism and animism generally in rather disparaging terms, as things that are particularly "peculiar" (*Totem* 5, 26). He states, moreover, that "demons" never "really existed" and that "like gods they are creations of the human mind" (*Totem* 32). For Freud, "God" is nothing more than a "concept" and nothing more than an "exalted father" since psychoanalysis has "[taught] us with quite special insistence that ... god ... is formed in the likeness of [a human being's] father" (*Totem* 182). In short, Freud disavows all "suspicious" concepts; as he puts it, "[s]uperstition, ... 'anxiety,' 'dreams' and 'demons' [are] ... those provisional psychological concepts which have *crumbled* under the impact of psychoanalytical research" (*Totem* 121, emphasis added). What "lies behind" all of these concepts, Freud therefore concludes, are "always *psychical* realities and never *factual* ones" (*Totem* 197-198; emphasis in text).

Given all of the above, it is perhaps no surprise that alchemy is absent from *Totem* notwithstanding the fact that it shows so many points of agreement – to paraphrase Freud – with the concepts of totem and taboo, as well as further evidence of the persistence of the Oedipus complex through history as we have seen. Alchemy, after all, had roots in animism and magic, the "truth" of which, for Freud, is nothing but a "folly" in the "mistaking an ideal connection for a real one" (*Totem* 104). For someone like Freud, alchemy was, moreover, not considered an actual science and was even considered distinct from chemistry (whose name is in fact derived from the word "alchemy") as an "unfortunate dream from which chemistry fortunately struggled awake" (G. Roberts,

Mirror 8).¹⁵³ Thus, since Freud was attempting to maintain the validity of psychoanalysis as a science, it seems that he had to consciously refrain from mentioning alchemy. There is, however, one further reason that could explain why Freud chose to omit alchemy from his text.

Totem was in fact Freud's response to C. J. Jung's *Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido* (translated as *Psychology of the Unconscious*), a fact Freud refers to in a footnote: "[c]f. the discussion by C. G. Jung (1912), which is governed by views differing from mine" (182). Freud considered Jung's work as a "spiritualization" of psychoanalysis, thereby revealing Jung's "attitude to love, death, and dependency" on "other persons or on a personal God" as contradictory to his own; in fact, it was the publication of Jung's work that caused their famous split.¹⁵⁴ Freud was a "rationalist," while Jung was an "anti-rationalist" who saw value in "mysticism and the occult" and Jung's psychoanalytical investigations in this regard would eventually lead him to alchemy, "which had been dismissed as literal nonsense" (Staude 307).¹⁵⁵ This perhaps explains why there is an absence of alchemy from all of Freud's writings for, if Freud had

¹⁵³ "Chemistry," *Online Etymology Dictionary*, 22 Feb. 2009
<<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?search=chemistry&searchmode=none>>.

¹⁵⁴ John Raphael Staude, "From Depth Psychology to Depth Sociology: Freud, Jung, and Lévi-Strauss," *Theory and Society* 3.4 (1976): 312. It is interesting to note that Freud admits that his claims in *Totem* relies on the "assumption of a collective mind," a concept that seems suspiciously similar to Jung's idea of an "collective unconscious" as explained in "The Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious" (*Totem* 3).

¹⁵⁵ Karen A. Smyers, "Shaman/Scientist: Jungian Insights for the Anthropological Study of Religion," *Ethos* 29.4 (2001): 482.

mentioned alchemy, this act would have revealed that he was perhaps the same as Jung in the end, that is, an “anti-rationalist” at heart.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ According to Peter L. Rudnytsky, Freud never accepted his *own* belief in the omnipotence of thoughts; as a consequence, Freud consistently downplayed the actual significance of this concept in his writings. Peter L. Rudnytsky, “Freud’s Pompeian Fantasy,” *Reading Freud’s Readings*, eds. Sander L. Gilman, Jutta Birmele, Jay Geller, and Valerie D. Greenberg (New York: NYUP, 1994) 224.

Conclusion: *Ultima Materia*

In our analysis, we have discovered that literary texts that refer to alchemy appear to become “intertextual” immediately once they refer to the hermetic art. Indeed, we have seen how reading such texts with a “will” to analyze them in an “alchemical key” can offer a further and expanded understanding and enrich the current scholarship of the texts discussed.

We saw in our discussion of the first seven chapters of *Journey*, that it is indeed possible to find evidence of *wei tan*, that is, external or exoteric alchemy. In particular, we saw how the birth and initial development of Sun Wu-ku’ng not only refer to the principles of *wei tan* but that his birth is a distinctly alchemical one in the external sense and that his acquisition of “supernatural powers” and attainment of *hsien-hood* can probably be attributed to the successful creation and ingestion of Elixir. We have also shown how Sun Wu-k’ung can be considered as Elixir that has been subjected to the “roasting” and refinement process in five different types of furnaces.

We saw just this kind of “roasting” and refining in Hoffmann’s *Golden Pot* where Anselmus can be considered to be the *prima materia* in the *vas* that needed to be subjected to the “heat of the fire to its highest intensity” during the *rubedo*. Indeed, we have seen that it is only after Anselmus survives this quite literal “trial by fire” that he is transformed into both a philosopher’s stone as well as an “illumed philosopher.” In our discussion of *Golden Pot*, we also noted that Anselmus was destined for a “higher life” even before he begins his apprenticeship proper with Archivist Lindhorst. It is, of course,

Lindhorst who teaches Anselmus the qualities that he must possess in order to master the hermetic art, for example, the traits of humility and perseverance. The relationship between Lindhorst and Anselmus can therefore be understood as the relationship between a student-adept and a master-chemist. Further, since Lindhorst has three identities in the text, namely that of a Privy Archivist, a salamander, as well as a bird, we have argued that Lindhorst could be Hermes himself in another guise, especially given the fact that Lindhorst is a trickster type, just like Hermes in the Classical tradition. Since Lindhorst can be equated with Hermes, it is therefore no surprise that he would not only be able to teach Anselmus the hermetic art but that he would also be able to turn Anselmus into a philosopher's stone as well.

In addition to the above, our discussion of *Golden Pot* has also shown that Hoffmann used various alchemical symbols, aspects of alchemical lore, and alchemical color theory extensively and ingeniously in his novella. We have just seen, for example, how Hoffmann incorporates the lore relating to the figure of Hermes and the alchemical salamander into his text. We have also observed how Hoffmann uses the alchemical concept of the "Language of the Birds," a concept that relates to the alchemists' great fondness for "wordplay" to obfuscate details of the *opus magnum* as we will recall, to great effect by making birds speak and having Anselmus understand this speech in *Golden Pot*. In addition, we saw how the colors in the text – red, gold, green, blue/azure, orange and yellow – are in fact all indicative of or relating to various stages in the *opus magnum*. As a result, it can be argued that Hoffmann picked these colors with particular care; these colors are therefore not used in the text as "purely decorative stage

properties ... [merely] to conjure up the magical splendour of Lindhorst's realm" as Holbeche has contended (59).¹⁵⁷

Our analysis of *Golden Pot* has revealed, moreover, that the image of the student-adept in alchemy is remarkably similar to the concept of the poet-genius as understood by the German Romantics. In particular, we saw how Anselmus' "child-like poetic spirit" is in fact identical to the "naïve" quality that the poet-genius must possess; we also saw how both the alchemists and the German Romantics underscored the importance of the imagination in their respective works, that is, in the alchemical *opus magnum* as well as the Romantic work of art. In addition, we discovered that the cosmic myth that Hoffmann sets out in *Golden Pot* is very similar to alchemical cosmology; not only did Hoffmann and the alchemists believe that the universe had a tripartite structure, they also believed in the existence of a Golden Age and that it was possible to return to this Golden Age. For the alchemists, it was the "immanent soul" in nature that would show man the way back to the Golden Age whereas for the German Romantics, it was the figure of the poet-genius who had this potential.

The two works that we analyzed that show exactly how the figure of the poet-genius would be able to show us the way back to the Golden Age particularly well are Tieck's *Runenberg* and Hoffmann's *Mines*, both of which do not refer to alchemy explicitly. As we saw earlier, both these texts can be interpreted as journeys undertaken

¹⁵⁷ It is surely no coincidence that the mineral phosphorus appears in the natural world in the colors white, yellow, red, and black. It therefore appears that even Hoffmann's choice to name the king of Atlantis "Phosphorus" can be related to alchemy. "The Element Phosphorus." *ElementalMatter.info*, 1 Mar. 2012, Elemental Matter, 11 May 2013 <<http://www.elementalmatter.info/element-phosphorus.htm>>.

in order to achieve the philosopher's stone and obtain the secrets of the hermetic art. It is significant that both Christian and Elis both have a certain type of insight that leads them directly to mines which, by virtue of the fact that they were regarded as the "belly" of the Earth-Mother, can be considered as belonging to a primeval time and thus also a representation of the Golden Age. It is also significant that no one else but Christian and Elis in their respective worlds believe in the subterranean wonders that they see and the knowledge afforded by the same. The kind of knowledge that Christian and Elis both attain in the end is, after all, knowledge that is only afforded to the select few who can properly be called an alchemical adept and a poet-genius simultaneously, that is, those who are able to read the "secret signs," know the "secret of the stone," and understand "[its] words." The foregoing explains why both texts end on a note of ambiguity. Indeed, by not revealing who is the "unlucky one" – is it Christian, Elis, the other characters in the texts, or perhaps even the reader himself? – both Tieck and Hoffmann ensure that we are reminded that not everyone possesses or will be able to gain the insight necessary to make a successful return to the Golden Age and that, more often than not, such attempts may well end in failure, just as it did for the five other men trapped in glass bottles on Lindhorst's shelf in *Golden Pot*.

Our analysis of *Runenberg* showed that Tieck used alchemy in an ingenious way to show how alchemy can be reflected in the structure of a narrative. As we have seen, the narrative structure of *Runenberg* mirrors the alchemical process, from the *nigredo*, to the "peacock's tail," the "rainbow" colored stage, to the *albedo*, followed by the *rubedo*, and culminating in the creation of the philosopher's stone. Both *Runenberg* and *Mines*

incorporates the alchemical myth of Mercurius as well as making the three aspects of Mercurius motivating characters in the text. In *Mines*, not only did Hoffmann show how mining can be related to alchemy, he was also able to show us literal representations of the alchemical maxim that relate to the reciprocal natures between that “which is above” and that “which is below,” as well the alchemical doctrine of the “unity of all matter.” In both of these texts, we also noted that the idea of “stone” was emphasized in order to highlight its importance for the German Romantics who believed that their works of art should contain within them something timeless and durable. In other words, the German Romantics believed that their works of art were able to reveal and thus grant a kind of immortality, just like the *elixir vitae* of the alchemists.

The effects of ingesting the alchemical *elixir vitae* and the consequences of using the philosopher’s stone is, of course, explored in Godwin’s *St. Leon*. We have seen how many critics have read *St. Leon* as a moral tale highlighting the importance of domestic affection and an allegory of political injustice and how these critics have therefore considered that Godwin used alchemy merely as a plot device in his novel. We noted, however, that *St. Leon* is a novel that is predicated on the idea of keeping secrets and, as it turns out, we found that Godwin himself was actually withholding a secret from the reader, namely, the importance of esoteric alchemy which is nowhere explicitly referred to in the novel itself.

Our analysis of *St. Leon* has revealed that there is in fact ample evidence of both the exoteric and the esoteric forms of alchemy. In addition to including details relating to the exoteric side of alchemy, Godwin also provides various clues relating to the esoteric

side of alchemy in the text. We have seen how Reginald's unhappy fate can be interpreted as a failure to achieve the esoteric form of alchemy because of fundamental flaws in his character and his beliefs. As a result, despite the fact that Reginald was able to successfully create the philosopher's stone as well as the *elixir vitae*, we concluded that he should not be considered to be a true adept in the hermetic art; Godwin's novel can accordingly be read as an alchemical allegory that serves as a warning to those who might desire to follow in Reginald's footsteps along the path of a false kind of alchemy. Indeed, it is precisely because of Reginald's failure as a true adept that he can be viewed as a prime example of the stereotype of the "evil alchemist" by virtue of his conduct, which is motivated primarily by greed and insincerity and accompanied by an overriding desire to achieve fame and glory.

The other text in which the figure of the "evil alchemist" appears that we have discussed is Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Although we have seen how critics have been divided as to whether or not alchemy plays a part in the creation of Victor's monster, it is clear from the analysis above that not only should Victor's experiment be considered alchemical rather than scientific, but that Victor should be regarded as an alchemist rather than a scientist. His childhood fascination with alchemy did, after all, exert a much greater influence on him than he himself admits as we have seen. We also saw how his later academic pursuits had a decidedly alchemical slant to them. Indeed, it is for this very reason that Peter Brooks has remarked that Victor's "studies in physics and

chemistry ... are always on the verge of becoming metaphysics and alchemy.”¹⁵⁸ Given the foregoing, it is no wonder that there are so few details of Victor’s experiment in the text.

Of course, it is precisely because Shelley does not provide us with much information regarding the creation of the monster that lends weight to the argument that Victor’s experiment is alchemical in nature since his experiment could in no way stand up to the standards of proof required by the new scientific community without this information. The fact that Victor chose to conduct the entirety of his experiment in a “private space” rather than the “public space” that is a laboratory adds further weight to this argument. At the same time, the scanty details provided indicate that it is in fact also possible to view Victor’s experiment as a literal interpretation of the alchemical *opus magnum* which was doomed to failure at the outset by virtue of the fact that the *opus magnum* was supposed to read figuratively and not literally. From this, it follows that Victor’s assertion that it was his “dabbling” in “unhallowed arts” that caused the demise of his loved ones is in fact incorrect, since it was not the case that the “art” he was trying to practice was “unhallowed” per se, but rather, the fact that he *misinterpreted* this “art” that lead to the disastrous results of his experiment.

The absence of scientific detail in *Frankenstein* is mirrored by the absence of alchemy from Freud’s *Totem* which can be read as Freud’s attempt to ensure that psychoanalysis would be accepted a valid field of scientific enquiry in the early twentieth

¹⁵⁸ Peter Brooks, “‘Godlike Science/Unhallowed Arts’: Language, Nature, and Monstrosity,” *The Endurance of Frankenstein: Essays on Mary Shelley’s Novel* (Berkeley: U of California P., 1974) 215.

century. Despite Freud's best intentions to remove all traces of alchemy from his text, our analysis has revealed that his concepts of totem and taboo can be directly related to alchemy. We saw, in particular, that the psychoanalytic theories relating to incest, patricide, and the Oedipus complex can easily be found in alchemical treatises and commentaries that were produced well before Freud would articulate these ideas himself. It therefore becomes clear that Freud owed much to the alchemists who effectively provided him with the foundations of many of his psychoanalytic theories; it is perhaps for this reason that we can say that alchemy is not only the predecessor of chemistry, but also of psychoanalysis as well (Thorndike I:198; Von Liebig 61).¹⁵⁹

As we have seen, the texts selected for analysis here have various points of intersection that go beyond the mere mention of alchemy. At this juncture, it seems appropriate to touch briefly on the similarities between Chinese alchemy and Western alchemy and to discuss how *Journey* could be related to the other texts we have analyzed. Although an in-depth comparison in this regard goes beyond the scope of this present study, the following observations may prove useful for further investigation in the future.

As we may already have noted, not only did both these kinds of alchemies believe that it was possible to make an elixir that was capable of conferring immortality, both Chinese alchemy and Western alchemy highlighted the importance of the esoteric form of alchemy. It is in this way that *Journey* can be related to *St. Leon*, the text that has been the most revealing of all the texts analyzed in this regard.

¹⁵⁹ Gregory Maertz, "Generic Fusion and Appropriation in Godwin's *St. Leon*," *European Romantic Review* 5.2 (1995): 224.

With respect to the exoteric side of alchemy, both traditions believed that numerology influenced alchemical operations and both also paid great attention to the types of fire that was needed for each stage of the alchemical process (Sivin 518; “Fire,” *Dictionary*). It is interesting to observe here that the multi-tiered furnaces that the Chinese alchemists used were designed to be a reflection of the cosmic order; the similarity between the foregoing and the *vas* of the Western alchemists become obvious when we note that the alchemical *vas* represented the microcosm of the world (Sivin 517; “Microcosm,” *Dictionary*). It is no surprise to find, therefore, that both the Chinese and Western traditions believed that their respective arts could speed up natural processes and that their work was akin the work of the miner who assisted nature by “accelerating a natural progress of metals toward perfection” (Sivin 514). Given the foregoing, it seems that *Journey* could be read in conjunction with *Runenberg* and *Mines*, especially given the fact that mountains and mines play such a great part in all these texts as we have already seen.

It is also remarkable to note, moreover, that the figure of the Mercurial trickster can be found in alchemical works of both traditions since the impish Sun Wu-K’ung in *Journey* can easily be equated with Lindhorst in *Golden Pot* who loved to play tricks on the unsuspecting inhabitants of Dresden as we will recall. It is therefore possible that a comparison of these two texts in this regard may prove to be particularly illuminating.

Of course, the chapters we have analyzed with respect to *Journey* also comments on the kind of qualities that a student of alchemy should possess. Since this is the case, it would be possible to compare *Journey* with nearly all of the other texts discussed, that is,

Golden Pot, *Runenberg*, *Mines*, *St. Leon*, and perhaps even *Frankenstein* to a certain degree. Although it is unlikely that *Journey* and *Totem* could be read together in an “alchemical key,” they can certainly be read together in a *psychoanalytical* key. In this regard, it goes without saying that all the literary texts discussed can easily be subjected to psychoanalytic analysis as many critics have already shown.

Homunculi, the Children of Alchemy

In addition to the above, there is, finally, one more way in which all the texts discussed intersect. In the introduction, we mentioned that all the texts discussed can be viewed as texts that concern the figure of the homunculus, the “artificial man” that the alchemists believed they could create. We will therefore conclude this work with a discussion of how this is the case.

In our analysis of *Journey*, we saw that Sun Wu-k’ung could be considered as a representation of the Elixir itself which is, of course, the Chinese version of the Western alchemical concept of the *elixir vitae* which is synonymous with the philosopher’s stone (“Red elixir,” *Dictionary*; Gray 210). From this, it follows that the Chinese Elixir could be thought of as equivalent to the philosopher’s stone. If this is true, then it is possible that Sun Wu-k’ung could also be thought of as the Chinese prototype of what Western alchemists believed the philosopher’s stone could produce, that is, the homunculus (Cooper 46; Johnson 78; Waley 12; Dubs 8).

The Western alchemists thought they could “create little creatures in the image of man by artificial means in the womb” of the alchemical *vas* that they called homunculi

("Homunculus," *Dictionary*). The figure of the homunculus was, moreover, a "symbol for the "philosophical child or infant" and the "philosopher's stone" ("Homunculus," *Dictionary*). It is clear from the above discussion that Sun Wu-k'ung's birth could be considered alchemical and therefore unnatural and "artificial." However, it can also be argued that Sun Wu-k'ung was born from the "philosopher's stone." Like the Western concept of the "philosopher's stone" whose "father ... is the Sun, the mother the Moon," is "carried" by the "wind ... in its womb," and is "nurse[d]" by the "earth," the "divine embryo" that will become the stone monkey is also "nourished for a long period by the seeds of Heaven and Earth and by the essences of the sun and moon" (Hermes 84; *Journey* 1:67). Adding weight to this argument is the fact that the Western alchemical concepts of the father/the Sun and the mother/the Moon can be equated with the Chinese alchemical concepts of the sun and moon as associated with the male power *yang* and the female power *yin* respectively (Holmyard 38; Martin 28). If it is indeed true that Sun Wu-k'ung was born from the "philosopher's stone," it can be argued that he should also be considered a homunculus by virtue of the fact that he "aspires to be something more" than a stone monkey by desiring to be "more spiritually advanced" and "more human" which, according to Pinkus, are characteristics of the figure of the alchemical homunculus (133).

Many critics of *Journey* have duly noted Sun Wu-k'ung's perpetual desire to improve his lot in life. According to C. T. Hsia, the trajectory of Sun Wu-k'ung development can be stated as starting "from inanimate stone to animal shape with human intelligence to the highest spiritual attainment possible" (134). Company agrees with this

view, adding that Sun Wu-k'ung should be considered as “constantly ... striving for ‘the way of humanity’ (*jen tao*)” (103). For Jing Wang, however, Sun Wu-k'ung's true “humanization” only seems to begin while he is imprisoned under the “Five Phases Mountain” (this, of course, adds further weight to our earlier argument that Sun Wu-K'ung had to be properly prepared according to the processes of *wei tan* before he began his journey with Tripitaka during which he would be able to cultivate his *nei tan*).¹⁶⁰ Regardless of when Sun Wu-k'ung's “humanization” begins, however, it is clear that he, in the words of Zuyan Zhou, “crave[d] human status” as evidenced by the fact that he “stripped a [human] of his clothes and put them on himself, aping the ways humans wore them” whilst he was in the “South Jambūdvīpa Continent” (*Journey* 1:80).¹⁶¹

In our discussion of *Frankenstein* above, we noted that although the golem is created in the figure of man, the golem “itself is unable to speak” since speech is “not a gift that can be passed on from the creator to his creation” (Pinkus 130). It is worth noting here that the figure of the golem was in fact considered to be “God's homunculus” and, since this is the case, it appears that the homunculus might very well also be incapable of speech, just like his “powerful literary” predecessor, the golem, at least initially (Pinkus 130). If the foregoing is true, then the detail that Sun Wu-k'ung does not only wish to imitate humans in terms of clothing and “manners,” but that he also desires

¹⁶⁰ Jing Wang, “The Paradox of Desire and Emptiness: The Stone Monkey Intertextualized,” *The Story of Stone: Intertextuality, Ancient Chinese Stone Lore, and the Stone Symbolism in Dream of the Red Chamber, Water Margin, and The Journey to the West* (Durham: Duke UP, 1992) 239.

¹⁶¹ Zuyan Zhou, “Carnivalization in *The Journey to the West*: Cultural Dialogism in Fictional Festivity,” *CLEAR* 16 (1994): 80.

the acquisition of “human speech” becomes particularly important (*Journey* 1:75). It is clear that, although Sun Wu-k’ung was a “monkey monster,” the text describes him in such a way that shows he is actually not that “different from a human being” since “his head points to Heaven and his feet walk on Earth,” a fact that even the “Spirit of the Planet Venus” acknowledges (*Journey* 1:134, 115, 114). If this is true, Sun Wu-k’ung should therefore be considered as a homunculus since he not only looks like a human being but because he eventually manages to acquire the “gift” of “human speech.” Indeed, it could even be said that Sun Wu-k’ung begins his spiritual journey as a baby homunculus since Master Subhodi not only gives him the *hsing* of “Sun” that “exactly accords with the Doctrine of the Baby” but also a “personal name” that means “Wake-to-Vacuity.” Although this name implies that Sun Wu-k’ung is initially as vacuous as a baby, it nevertheless contains the potential for the “vacuity” to be filled at a later time (*Journey* 1:82). This, of course, turns out to be the case since Sun Wu-k’ung, once he returns to China from his pilgrimage with Tripitaka and his fellow disciples after obtaining the Buddhist scriptures, is rewarded by Buddha by being “appoint[ed] ... the Buddha Victorious in Strife” (*Journey* 4:425). Not only does this appointment confirm that the “vacuity” has indeed been filled, it also indicates that Sun Wu-k’ung has clearly achieved *nei tan* since he has finally turned into a *t’ien hsien*, in both name and spirit, at the end of his journey.

We noted earlier that there was no distinction between the figure of the homunculus and the philosopher’s stone and that the homunculus was, in fact, one of the many synonyms for the philosopher’s stone. Since we have already seen how Anselmus

in *Golden Pot* can be considered as a philosopher's stone, it can surely be argued that Anselmus could also be thought of as a homunculus. We noted earlier how Anselmus was punished for his loss of "faith" by being trapped in a "tightly stopped crystal bottle on a shelf in Archivist Lindhorst's library." We also noted this "crystal bottle" seemed to have an alchemical significance since it was hermetically sealed, just like the *vas*. In addition, we observed how the alchemists were instructed to use glass vessels in their operations. It is most interesting to note, for our purposes here, that Rydberg's instructions for "making an artificial man" contains following specific detail: the "artificial man" or homunculus must be made "in the most beautiful *crystal* glass" ("Alchemy," 929; emphasis added). Given the foregoing, it is surely no accident that Anselmus is trapped in not just any ordinary glass bottle, but one that is explicitly stated as being made of "crystal."

In *Golden Pot*, it is surely also significant that the image of the alchemical phoenix appears in the form of the "alien being" that "swiftly escape[s] from the vale and roam[s] through infinite space" after the "fiery lily" is consumed in flames in the cosmic myth, and in the form of the "winged being" that is born from the ashes of the green snake in the tale of Atlantis. The alchemists related the phoenix to the homunculus by virtue of the fact that both represent a "rebirth after death" (Gray 208). It seems, however, that it is also possible to relate Anselmus to the phoenix-homunculus as well. We have already seen how Anselmus, whilst trapped in the "crystal bottle," could be considered to be the *prima materia* that must be subjected to the "three fires" of the alchemists and put through "fiery torment and purification" before he could be finally transformed. Here, it

is extremely interesting to note that the alchemists believed that the *prima materia* must first go through death before it could be reborn again like the phoenix and also to note that it has been argued that it is possible Anselmus had to go through physical death in Dresden before he could go and live his life of poetry in Atlantis.

According to Andrew Kirwin, Anselmus had already expressed the “suicidal impulse to jump into the Elbe” early on in the novella near the end of the Ascension Day episode when he believes that the three “little golden snakes” were “swimming through the waves” in front of the “rowing boat” he was travelling in: “the student Anselmus lunged forward as though to fling himself out of the rowing-boat into the waves” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 9).¹⁶² Kirwin notes that this same image of Anselmus looking down at the Elbe is repeated when Anselmus is trapped in the “crystal bottle” for, according to the other five men in the other bottles, Anselmus is “mad; he thinks he’s in a glass bottle, when he’s standing on the Elbe Bridge and looking down into the water” (Kirwin 55; Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 69). We have already noted that these other men believe that they are roaming free in Dresden while having the time of their lives. Given the fact that the text does not make it clear *who* – that is, Anselmus or the other five men – is actually hallucinating in this scene and that fact that Anselmus already possesses a “suicidal impulse,” Kirwin argues that there must surely be a possibility that when Anselmus “thinks he is breaking free of the crystal bottle and diving off the shelf into Serpentina’s embrace,” he is actually “in Dresden reality ... plunging into the river where

¹⁶² Andrew Kirwin, *Poetics of the Hieroglyph: Allegory and Media in E. T. A. Hoffmann’s Fantastic*, BA thesis, Wesleyan U, 2009, 55.

he drowns” (55). For Kirwin, Anselmus must “cease to exist in his own reality” so that he can “enter ... a fictional realm of his own making,” the land of poetry in Atlantis” (55). The issue of whether or not Anselmus actually experiences what he thinks he experiences in *Golden Pot* in reality and indeed, the issue of whether or not Anselmus is actually mad, is not within the scope of this present discussion. That being said, Kirwin’s reading of this scene is nevertheless illuminating for our present purpose for, if it is true that Anselmus does indeed die “in Dresden reality,” then it can be argued that Anselmus is just like the phoenix who must die before being reborn again, thereby adding credence to the argument that he should also be considered a homunculus.

There is one further reason why Anselmus could be considered a homunculus as well. In her analysis of Peter Ackroyd’s *The House of Doctor Dee*, a novel which explores the possibility that a man named Matthew Palmer might be a homunculus created by the magus and hermetic scholar John Dee, Lemberg makes the following observations:

Many of Matthew’s personal characteristics indicate that he might be a homunculus, that is, a man-made, soulless and dependent human being. For example, Matthew is unable to remember his past and in dreamlike states he loses his sense of reality, hears voices talking to him and sees ghostlike figures. On one occasion, he even perceives himself surrounded by glass – a kind of retort – which in his vision he touches with hands not fully formed. It is particularly this vision which creates the impression that Matthew is a homunculus. (167-168)

The similarities between the “personal characteristics” of Matthew Palmer and Anselmus are particularly striking. We have already seen how Anselmus reacts after receiving confirmation from Lindhorst that the world of Atlantis is in fact real by feeling that he was “being told in so many words something he had long suspected.” In other words, by

“long suspecting” that the other world exists, it is clear that Anselmus has forgotten all about it until Lindhorst reminds him of the same. We have also seen how it can be argued that in “dream-like states,” Anselmus, like Matthew, “loses his sense of reality.” An example is, of course, the scene that has just been discussed where there is a possibility that Anselmus, who “thinks he’s in a glass bottle” is in fact “standing on the Elbe Bridge and looking down into the water.”

In *Golden Pot*, there are in fact many instances where Anselmus experiences similar “dream-like states” and he is thought of as having “lo[st] his sense of reality.” When Anselmus revisits the elder-tree to call for the golden snakes to appear again, the townspeople of Dresden remark to each other that “[t]hat gentleman doesn’t seem to be right in the head!” whereupon Anselmus feels “as though he had been shaken out of a deep dream” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 7). In the scene when Anselmus tries to “[lunge] forward as though to fling himself out of the rowing-boat into the waves” to follow the golden snakes he believes are swimming just ahead of him, the “boatman” asks him if he is “crazy,” and Anselmus catches part of a conversation between Heerbrand and Paulmann that consists of the words, “these fits – never noticed before?” (Hoffmann, *Golden Pot* 9). Even Anselmus thinks that there is a possibility that what he sees might have been “the product of [his] overheated imagination” as we have already seen. Indeed, if it is true that Anselmus has been hallucinating throughout the events in Hoffmann’s novella and that Atlantis is only a figment of his imagination, then it is easy to see how his conversations with the inhabitants of Lindhorst’s house and of Atlantis could all just

be considered imaginary “voices talking to him” and these inhabitants merely “ghostlike figures.”

If Hoffmann’s *Golden Pot* was a straightforward text that definitively gives us answers to questions like whether or not Anselmus is mad or whether or not Atlantis actually exists, it might be the simple fact that Anselmus, like Matthew in *The House of Doctor Dee*, perceives “himself [as] surrounded by glass” that provides the strongest evidence that Anselmus should be considered a homunculus. Hoffmann’s novella is, however, not at all straightforward and, as we have already seen, there is in fact sufficient *alchemical* evidence of why Anselmus should be considered a homunculus, namely, the directive that the alchemical homunculus must be prepared in a “crystal glass” and the fact that Anselmus can be related to the alchemical phoenix that is synonymous to the homunculus itself.

We noted earlier how both miners and alchemists believed that metal ores in the Earth-Mother’s “belly,” if given sufficient time to ripen, would eventually grow into gold. It is now appropriate to note here that a similar belief was held in relation to stones; since stones were thought to be the “source of life and fertility,” once ripened, stones would not only be alive but they would actually be able to “[procreate] *human* creatures” (Eliade 43; emphasis added). It can be argued that the creation of the homunculus must certainly be associated to this belief.

In our discussion of *Golden Pot*, we noted that a “crystal glass” was required for the creation of an “artificial man.” This “crystal glass” is, of course, the *vas* which was round in shape precisely because it was thought of as the “womb” in which the

philosopher's stone was "conceived and born" ("Womb," *Dictionary* 219). Now, since the figure of the homunculus is synonymous with the philosopher's stone as we have already seen, then the similarity between the creation of the "artificial man" in the alchemical "womb" and the "ripening" of stones in the "womb" of the Earth-Mother become immediately apparent. With this in mind, it is therefore possible to interpret Christian's return to the mine inside the Runenberg and Elis' return to the mines of Falun in another light.

We have already ascertained that mines are representations of the "belly" of the Earth-Mother where she kept her "embryos" in a "state of gestation" so that they could grow into their "intended" state of "highest perfection." From this, it follows that Christian and Elis' respective returns to the Runenberg and the mines are therefore returns to the "womb" of the Earth-Mother.¹⁶³ Once inside this "womb," Christian and Elis could be thought of as "embryos" that wait for the day when they would be transformed into their "intended" state of "highest perfection." Since the "womb" of the Earth-Mother can be equated with the *vas* as we have already seen, then it must surely be possible to argue that Christian and Elis, at the end of *Runenberg* and *Mines*, must have become homunculi that have been created inside the alchemical *vas*.

Elis' transformation into "stone" after being inside the mines for "more than fifty years" is, of course, explicitly stated in the text. Indeed, it can be argued that Elis' body

¹⁶³ It is important to note that the return to the womb is also a return in terms of time. In other words, when you return to the womb you are literally going *back* in time to another place and another time. This idea is, of course, closely associated to, if not identical with, the desire of the German Romantics to return to the Golden Age once more.

has been turned into not just any stone, but the *philosopher's* stone. We saw earlier that the “petrification” of Elis’ body indicated that it had been removed from time. Given the fact that such a removal from time occurs when a philosopher’s stone is used to “redeem” matter from its impure state, it follows that Elis’ body could be considered as originally impure matter that had been accordingly removed from time. If the foregoing is true, then Elis’ body would need to be “redeemed” and this in fact occurs in the text.

After being brought to the surface, Elis’ body soon “begin[s] to crumble into dust” (Hoffmann, *Mines* 209). Elis’ body, in other words, “merges again with the organic world” which, for Wright, “can be taken as a sign of redemption” (65). The detail that Elis’ body turns into “dust” is also significant for the argument here since the alchemists believed that the philosopher’s stone could also exist in the form of a “powder” as we have already seen. Given the foregoing, it can surely be argued that Elis’ body, which was first turned into stone and then subsequently turned into powdery dust, is surely synonymous with the philosopher’s stone which is, in turn, synonymous with the homunculus. The homunculus is, moreover, often stated in alchemical texts as being “born [only] after the death . . . of itself” (Gray 208). Elis, who died before being turned into “stone,” clearly meets this requirement, thereby lending weight to our argument that has been changed into a homunculus, albeit one that was “incomplete” by virtue of the fact that it had a “body but no life” (Gray 215).

Tieck’s *Runenberg* certainly contains hints at the possibility that Christian has been turned into a homunculus. When Christian emerges from the Runenberg for the last time, he has completely been transformed. Not only has Christian managed to obtain and

internalize the highest form of knowledge as we have already noted, his appearance has also completely changed, so much so that his wife Elisabeth can no longer recognize him when she sees him again: “He was barefoot, wearing a tattered coat, his dark brown features tanned by the sun and disfigured by a long unkempt beard” (Tieck 54). Christian has, in other words, quite literally been born again after being inside the “womb” of the Runenberg into something “*wunderbar*” according to the German original, and thus possibly something as “*wunderbar*” as a homunculus and the philosopher’s stone.

As mentioned in our discussion of *Frankenstein* above, although Florescu concluded that Victor’s monster must be a homunculus by process of elimination, we were nevertheless able to ascertain that the monster must have been an alchemical creation by virtue of the fact that its creation can be read as a literal interpretation of the *opus magnum*. In particular, we noted that the “materials” used in its creation can be considered the *prima materia* from which the alchemists made the philosopher’s stone and we also saw how the completed form of the monster could be a reflection of the alchemical doctrine of the unity of all matter. Now that we have had a chance to look more closely at the figure of the homunculus to see how it is relevant to the other texts discussed, we are now in a position to revisit Shelley’s *Frankenstein* once more to see whether we can find more evidence supporting the argument that Victor’s monster is indeed a homunculus in addition to what we already noted earlier.

It can surely be argued that Victor’s monster is similar to the alchemical phoenix. We will recall that the alchemists related the phoenix to the homunculus because they both represent “rebirth after death.” Victor’s monster, who was brought back to life from

death, must surely be an example of this “rebirth after death.” Ronald D. Gray notes that homunculi were thought to “be born as the result of the death of some *other* creature”; Victor’s monster, made from various “materials” obtained from “charnel houses,” “graves,” “dissecting rooms” and “slaughter-houses” clearly fits into this idea of the origin of the homunculus (Gray 217). Indeed, George Levine has noted just how much “death” was required to “make [this] new life” since the “making of the monster [was] at the expense of Victor’s immediate world – brother, father, bride, friend.”¹⁶⁴

While it is certainly true that Victor was successful in creating an alchemical homunculus, this success clearly came at a terrible cost. The foregoing might explain Victor’s feelings as his experiment nears completion:

The leaves of that year had withered before my work drew near to a close, and now every day showed me more plainly how well I had succeeded. But my enthusiasm was checked by my anxiety, and I appeared rather like one doomed by slavery to toil in the mines, or any other unwholesome trade than an artist occupied by his favourite employment. (Shelley 33)

These words seem to reveal that, despite his hopes to “pour a torrent of light into [the] dark world,” Victor might have already known that something would ultimately go wrong with his experiment. This, of course, does indeed turn out to be the case.

The creation of a philosopher’s stone or homunculus at the end of the *opus magnum* should have been the happiest of all events, as Victor himself seems to indicate, but the creation of the monster results in feelings that are totally opposite to joy. In the end, it seems, therefore, that Victor’s monster could only be considered an imperfect

¹⁶⁴ George Levine, “The Ambiguous Heritage of *Frankenstein*,” *Critical Essays on Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, ed. Mary Lowe-Evans (New York: G. K. Hall, 1998) 35-36.

philosopher's stone or homunculus that was created via an *opus magnum* that was incomplete. A closer look at the following passage describing the monster's birth will reveal this to be the case:

His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun-white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips. (Shelley 34)

In this passage, we find the colors of the stages of the *opus magnum*, namely the black of the *nigredo*, the white of the *albedo*, and the yellow of the *citrinitas* ("Colours," *Dictionary* 44; Coudert 42). It is surely significant that the color red appears nowhere in this passage. Given the "great and unparalleled misfortunes" that befall Victor and his family as a result of the monster's creation, it should therefore come as no surprise to see in the end that this monster, an imperfect homunculus, would have been created from a version of the *opus magnum* that omits the very color that would have indicated that the matter in the alembic has indeed reached the final stage of the *rubedo* and has turned into a philosopher's stone, the color red (Shelley 17).

We have just seen how the figure of the homunculus can easily be found in *Journey*, *Golden Pot*, *Runenberg*, *Mines*, and *Frankenstein* once we know how to read in an "alchemical key." References to the homunculus in *St. Leon* and *Totem and Taboo*, however, are more elusive.

In our discussion of *St. Leon*, we noted that Reginald was doomed to a life of unhappiness because he had failed to achieve esoteric alchemy. While the foregoing is certainly true, there are two events in the text which show that Reginald was reborn again.

The first event is, of course, the episode where he creates and ingests the *elixir vitae*. We have already seen how Reginald's appearance is transformed from an old man to the younger version of himself; it is clear that Reginald has quite literally been reborn here.¹⁶⁵ The second event occurs while he is imprisoned by Bethlam Gabor. Near the end of his incarceration, Reginald has the following dream:

I imagined I saw a knight, cased complete in proof, enter my prison. A smile of angelic kindness beamed on his countenance. He embraced me with ardour; he made a sign to me to follow him. ... I rose to obey him Presently, with the incoherency usually attendant on a dream, the figure changed to that of a female of unblemished grace and beauty; it unfolded a pair of radiant wings; we ascended together in the air. (Godwin 406)

According to Brewer, this dream "anticipates [Reginald's] close association of his son [Charles] with his dead wife [Marguerite]" (Brewer, *Mental Anatomies* 192). While this argument is certainly valid, it turns out that there is also an alchemical explanation for the same.

We have already observed how Hermes was regarded as hermaphroditic, that is, both male and female. We also noted that the appearance of the alchemical hermaphrodite was important because this figure is associated with the penultimate step of the *opus magnum* after which the philosopher's stone would be created. As a result, the alchemists believed that the alchemical hermaphrodite was related to the phoenix and that it presented the "purified and reborn *materia*" (Long 112). Given the foregoing, it can be argued that the figure(s) that Reginald sees in his dream could be the alchemical hermaphrodite (Reginald is, after all, an alchemist albeit one who is far from ideal) for

¹⁶⁵ Pamela Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel: The Rational Fictions of Godwin, Brockden Brown, Mary Shelley* (Oxford: Clarendon P., 1993) 93.

several reasons. First, we will have noted the detail that the figure Reginald sees appears to be both male and female at the same time. Second, it is certainly no coincidence that the male figure would be wearing a full suit of armor which is, of course, reminiscent of the of the alchemical emblem, “Putrefaction” in the Book of Lambspring, that shows a warrior in full armor fighting a dragon that we discussed in relation to Phosphorus in *Golden Pot*. Third, it is also certainly no accident that the female figure has wings just like the alchemical phoenix. When these details are viewed together, it seems that it is very possible that Reginald was dreaming of an alchemical hermaphrodite.

It is extremely interesting to note here that Reginald’s dream might also have been caused by a type of philosopher’s stone known as the “Angelical Stone” which, once ingested, would confer the ability to speak with angels by “dreams and revelations” (Read, *Prelude* 126). The connection between this “Angelical Stone” and Reginald’s ingestion of the *elixir vitae* as well as the events that occur during his dream are immediately obvious.

Now, if the appearance the alchemical hermaphrodite marks the penultimate step of the *opus magnum*, would the appearance of this figure in Reginald’s dream indicate that a philosopher’s stone would soon be created? Since we have already seen how the philosopher’s stone is synonymous with the homunculus, it follows that the philosopher’s stone *qua* homunculus that would soon be created must be Reginald himself, for he appears to have been transformed soon after this dream with his realization that “all [his] experiments” up to this point with the philosopher’s stone “had miscarried.” There is, however, one more “experiment” that Reginald must undertake before the text concludes,

that is, to use the philosopher's stone to produce the dowry needed so that his son Charles, "the darling of his mother, and the idol of [his] soul," can marry his beloved, Pandora (Godwin 410).

As Van Schlun has observed, although Reginald does this in part to win his son's affections, Reginald's actions are primarily motivated by his love for his son and therefore "based on genuine altruism" and not the kind of false benevolence we associated with Reginald previously (50). It can therefore be argued that Reginald has truly been transformed. Just like the homunculus Sun Wu-kung who wished to become "something more" and who desired to be "more spiritually advanced" and "more human," Reginald shows by his motivations for undertaking his final experiment that he has, in fact, become "more spiritually advanced" and, perhaps, even "more human," thereby lending weight to the argument that he can be thought of as a homunculus that was created after the appearance of the alchemical hermaphrodite.

Finally, it is certainly no coincidence, from an alchemical viewpoint, that Reginald's transformation takes place while he was imprisoned in a "cell" in a "cave," deep within "subterranean caverns." We saw in our discussion of *Mines* above that caves, like mines, were considered to be the representation of the "belly" of the Earth-Mother and could therefore be equated with the alchemical *vas*. In our discussion of *Golden Pot*, we noted that the *vas* in fact was referred to as a "prison." We may now add that the purpose of this "prison" was to restrain the *prima materia* that had been "captured" so that it could be turned into the philosopher's stone (Godwin 393; "Prison," *Dictionary* 156). The similarity between Reginald's predicament and the *prima materia* in the *vas* is

immediately apparent and the foregoing therefore makes it possible to argue that Reginald was ultimately transformed into the alchemical homunculus that is synonymous with the philosopher's stone as we have already seen.

In our analysis of *Totem*, we saw how Freud attempted to consciously suppress alchemy from his text despite the fact that his concepts of totem and taboo can be directly related to alchemy. This is not to say, however, that alchemy does not appear unconsciously in *Totem*. Near the end of the text, Freud provides a quote from a certain work by a certain "poet" that he does not even identify for his reader (*Totem* 196). We are informed by the translator, James Strachey, that the work being quoted is none other than Goethe's *Faust*, a work which not only refers to alchemy, but also includes the creation of a homunculus, and which Jung eventually used as an example in *Psychology and Alchemy* to support his thesis that alchemy was one of the means by which individuation could be reached in the unconscious.¹⁶⁶ This oblique reference to alchemy near the end of *Totem* could perhaps be considered of no consequence except for the fact that it appears again at the very end of the text where Freud concludes by saying, "I think that in the case before us it may be safely be assumed that 'in the beginning was the Deed,'" which turns out to be another unidentified quote from Goethe's *Faust* (200). From this, it seems clear that although Freud wanted to ensure the absence of alchemy in

¹⁶⁶ Harold Jantz, "Goethe, Faust, Alchemy, and Jung," *The German Quarterly* 35.2 (1962): 135; C. G. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, The Collected Works of C. G. Jung 12, trans. R. F. C. Hull, eds. Herbert Read, Michael Fordham, Gerhard Adler, and William McGuire (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1968) 477. According to Lon Milo DuQuette, the "archtype that fired Goethe's imagination" and caused him to write *Faust* was von Welling's *Opus*. Lon Milo DuQuette, foreword, *Theosophicum* vii.

Totem, he could not suppress or *repress* alchemy from his text altogether, however much he wanted to.¹⁶⁷ Instead, not only does this almost unconscious trace of alchemy manage to finally surface at the end of the text like Freud's famous explanation of the uncanny as the return of the repressed, it also becomes a paradigmatic illustration of the "repetition of the same thing," another example of the uncanny according to Freud, thereby pointing to and confirming the existence of alchemy in *Totem*.¹⁶⁸

From all of the above, it is clear that Sun Wu-k'ung in *Journey*, Anselmus in *Golden Pot*, Christian in *Runenberg*, Elis in *Mines*, the monster in *Frankenstein*, and perhaps even Reginald in *St. Leon* could be considered as alchemical homunculi. Although the figure of the homunculus only makes an oblique appearance in *Totem*, the fact that it nevertheless appears in this text must surely reveal that Freud himself was, in the end, "more [a] child of the alchemists" than he – or even we, the readers – could have ever believed.

¹⁶⁷ This perhaps reveals that Freud himself had an "ambivalent emotional attitude" towards alchemy.

¹⁶⁸ Freud, Sigmund, "The Uncanny," *The Uncanny*, trans. David McLintock (New York: Penguin, 2003) 151, 144.

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