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De furore Britannico: The Rosicrucian Manifestos in Britain

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Abstract

The Rosicrucian manifestos of 1614–1615 were published in England in 1652, based on a translation that circulated for at least twenty years in manuscript copies in England and Scotland. The manifestos were introduced in a preface by the Welsh alchemist Thomas Vaughan (1623–1666), who had published a series of short books on aspects of alchemy and esoteric knowledge. Ignoring the radical religious and political overtones of the Rosicrucian message developed in Germany, Vaughan emphasized the limitations of European science and the power of the learning that Christian Rosenkreuz was said to have brought from the Arab world. He concentrated on the Rosicrucians' 'physical work' in alchemy, but he understood it as having implications for beyond the physical world in the celestial and supercelestial worlds.

Keywords

Alchemy – Manifestos – Rosicrucianism – Vaughan, Thomas

When the Rosicrucian manifestos reached the British reading public, in 1652, they arrived as part of a cultural exchange that would continue for several hundred years. They had fallen out of favour in Germany, where they first appeared in the second decade of the century, and they inspired writing in Britain that would appeal to German readers in the next century. The British writers—Scottish and Welsh as well as English—took the Rosicrucian message in new directions, reflecting their diverse social, religious, and intellectual concerns, and their writings reached German-language readers in the eighteenth century. The exchange continued through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, tes-

timony not only to the appeal of the foreign but to the imaginative power of the original manifestos.

This essay surveys British responses to the Rosicrucian message during the half-century after the *Fama fraternitatis* and *Confessio fraternitatis* appeared in print, in 1614 and 1615. It pays special attention to the Welsh alchemist Thomas Vaughan (1621–1666), who introduced the manifestos in their English translation. It also discusses the manuscript culture through which they passed before the breakdown of censorship during the English Revolution of 1642–1649 as well as public perceptions of Rosicrucianism throughout the period. In conclusion, it suggests briefly how the understanding of Rosicrucian ideas in writings of Vaughan and his contemporaries affected both the British imagination and the changing conception of Rosicrucianism.

1 Early British Responses

The first British response to the manifestos came just two years after the first manifesto was printed, in 1614.¹ It was written by Robert Fludd (1574–1637), a member of the Royal College of Physicians of London, whose family had roots in Wales (the name is said to be a cognate of Lloyd). Fludd supported the Paracelsian reforms in medicine;² he also recognized that the manifestos grew out of the Paracelsian movement in Germany and reflected its ideals. He had travelled through south-western Germany at about the time the manifestos were conceived, ca. 1603, and it may have been then that he met the Landgrave Moritz of Hesse-Kassel (1572–1632), who was instrumental in getting them published.³ He also realized that the medical authorities in England had excluded the cosmological ideas of Paracelsus, under what Allen Debus has called ‘the Elizabethan compromise’;⁴ accepting only certain of his chemical cures. Fludd had personally experienced resistance to the cosmology when he was rejected for membership in the elite College of Physicians on his first application, in 1605. He seems to have reserved those thoughts for his books and his personal advice to patients, for he was said to have an inspiring bedside manner.⁵

In 1616 Fludd responded to a heated attack from the anti-Paracelsian Lutheran chemist Andreas Libavius (1555–1616), who accused the brethren of

1 The complex history of these texts is traced in Gilly (ed.), *Cimelia Rhodostaurotica*.

2 Debus, *Chemical Philosophy*, vol. 1, 205–293.

3 Huffman, *Robert Fludd*, 13–14.

4 Debus, *English Paracelsians*, 49.

5 See the testimony of Thomas Fuller, quoted in Debus, *English Paracelsians*, 106.

heresy.⁶ Fludd's first response was prepared in some haste; it countered the charge of heresy, but went on to praise the goals announced in the manifestos. Fludd promised an enlarged version, and made good on the promise in 1617 with an *apologia* ten times longer than the first. He defended the Rosicrucians on three counts: the usefulness of their 'mystical characters' as a sort of advanced scientific notation, the superiority of their knowledge to the official scholasticism taught in universities, and the need to keep certain knowledge secret.⁷ As with almost all of his other later books, Fludd wrote in Latin and sent the tracts to a publisher overseas, this time in Leiden.⁸ Nevertheless, his apology must have promoted British awareness of the Rosicrucians, and of himself as their first famous British spokesman.⁹ Indeed, King James asked him whether the Rosicrucian faith was not heretical, and Fludd replied that both he and the brethren were fully in accord with 'the reformed religion' in their respective states.¹⁰ Even as talk of Rosicrucians was dying down in Germany, it began to build in England.

In a poem printed in 1621, the poet George Wither voiced his lack of interest in alchemy or in those who, like the Rosicrucians, claimed to know its secrets:

I care not for the goodly Precious Stone;
Which *Chymists* haue so fondly doted on.
Nor would I giue a rotten Chip, that I
Were of the *Rosy-Crosse*, Fraternity:
For, I the world too well haue vnderstood,
As to be gull'd with such a *Brother-hood*.¹¹

A few years later, the great Ben Jonson referred to the famous 'brethren' when, in a reprise of his learned language in *The Alchemist*, he had a satisfied diner

6 Fludd, *Apologia Compendaria*; responding to Libavius, *Analysis Confessionis*. The *Apologia* is partly translated in Huffman, ed., *Robert Fludd*, 45–53.

7 Fludd, *Tractatus Apologeticus*. On the debate, and especially the use of mystical characters, see Willard, 'Rosicrucian Sign Lore', 141–143.

8 For information on the publisher and his British connexions, see Yates, *Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, 102–103.

9 From a passage in the *Tractatus*, later included in Fludd's *Summum Bonum*, some have concluded that he was initiated as a living Elijah; see Hutin, *Histoire des Rose-Croix*, 114–118.

10 'Declaratio Brevis', in: Huffman, ed., *Robert Fludd*, 83.

11 Wither, *Withers Motto*, C8 verso. The sentiments are in keeping with his Latin motto *nec habeo, nec careo, nec curo* ('I have not, I lack not, I care not').

liken his cook to an adept, saying, 'He has *Nature* in a pot, 'bove all the *Chymists*, / Or airy brethren of the *Rosy-crosse*'.¹² In short, the brotherhood was known as a learned hoax—a *ludibrium* as one of its perpetrators had insisted.¹³ Moreover, the Rosicrucian message was understood in the context of a debate over the chemical medicine and philosophy of Paracelsus that reached England in the Elizabethan age and continued, with shifting focus, for a century.¹⁴ Meanwhile, the learned don Robert Burton, who seemed to read everything published at home and abroad, wrote: 'our Alcumists me thinks, and Rosie-Crosse men afford most rarities, & are fuller of experiments: they can make gold, separate and alter metals, extract oyls, fats, lees, and doe more strange workes then *Geber*, *Lullius*, [*Roger*] *Bacon*, or any of those Ancients'.¹⁵ Burton rightly regarded Paracelsus as their 'master', and noted their apparent desire to reform the world: 'they wil amend all matters, (they say) religion, policy, manners, with arts, sciences &c'.¹⁶

Of all the literary references to Rosicrucians in seventeenth-century English poetry, the best-known was written in Scotland:

For what we do presage is not in grosse,
For we be brethren of the *Rosie Crosse*;
We have the *mason word* and second sight,
Things for to come we can fortell aright¹⁷

This is not only the first known example of the term 'mason word', a reference to the Freemasons' password or rites in general,¹⁸ it is the first known connexion of Rosicrucian and Masonic ideas. The larger context is equally important

12 Jonson, *Staple of Newes*, 52 (act 4, scene 2). Jonson also brings the Rosicrucians into *The Fortunate Isles* (1624).

13 See Willard, 'Andreae's *ludibrium*'.

14 Debus, *Chemical Philosophy*, vol. 1, 182–191.

15 Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, 281; also see 383.

16 Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, 59. The Rosicrucians' reputation as reformers is based on a misreading of the satiric sketch on 'the reformation of the whole world', appended to early German editions of the *Fama*, but not included in Vaughan's edition.

17 Adamson, *Muses Threnodie*, 32.

18 'mason, n.1', *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (2013), <http://o-www.oed.com.lib.exeter.ac.uk/view/Entry/114637> Date accessed: 3 November 2013. The terms 'mason-craft' and 'mason-lodge' date to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, respectively. There were guilds of stonemasons in England as early as the fourteenth century. For early Scottish extensions of practical into speculative masonry see Bauer, *Isaac Newton's Freemasonry*, 17–25.

because it suggests an early alliance of Rosicrucian and royalist interests. The poet, Henry Adamson of Perth, ‘presage[s]’ the close tie of his town and the new King of England and Scotland, Charles Stuart, predicting that a new bridge will be built across the river Tay with the name ‘Carolus Rex’ in gold letters. Because the Stuart dynasty originated in Scotland, there developed an early tie between Scottish Freemasons and the Stuart cause.

Meanwhile, the teachings of this supposed order came occasionally into religious discourse in England. In Northamptonshire a preacher warned that there was no medical remedy for an ‘afflicted conscience’:

Oh! in this conflict alone, and wofull wound of conscience, no Electuary of Pearle or pretious Baulme, no Bezoars stone; or Vnicornes horne; Paracelsian quintessence, or Potable Gold; No new devise of the *Knights of the Rosie-Crosse*, nor the most exquisite extraction, which Alchymy, or Art it selfe can create, is able any whit, or at all to revive ease, or asswage. It is onely the hand of the holy Ghost, by the blood of that blessed Lambe, *Jesus Christ the holy, and the righteous*, which can binde up such a bruise.¹⁹

Speaking from the open-air pulpit at Saint Paul’s Cross in London, another preacher denounced Rosicrucian books as a bad influence on the ‘Seuerall Kinds of Mysticall *Wolues* breeding in England’:

I would wee had not Rosey-crosse-Wolues which turn Diuinity into fantasies, & idle speculations of their owne braine, esteeming text-men, or such as endeavour to keepe to the naturall sense of Scripture (not daring to make an allegorie in a Text where the spirit of God desires to be vnderstood without an allegorie) to bee vulgar Diuines, as they inculcate in some of their phancifull bookes; boasting also of their ability to worke miracles and shew their Proselytes God almighty in a bodily shape ...²⁰

The preacher worried about Anabaptists and Familists who practised their heresies less ‘priuately’ than the ‘Rosey-crosse Wolues’. He did not explain how he could know whether or not the Holy Spirit meant a text to be read as an allegory (did the Spirit *really* intend the story of Abraham’s two sons to be taken *per allegoriam*, as Saint Paul did?²¹). Rather, he was mainly concerned about a

19 Bolton, *Instructions*, 88–89.

20 Denison, *White Wolfe*, 37, 38. For the tradition of public pronouncements from this pulpit, see Morrissey, *Politics*.

21 Galatians 4.24 (Vulgate).

boxmaker named John Hetherington, who was leading people away from the established Church. Other ecclesiasts continued the attack. In a popular tract of 1647, purported to be the work of a simple shoemaker in Massachusetts, a retired minister denounced both ‘Theosophers, that teach men to climbe to heaven upon a ladder of lying figments’ and ‘Rosie-Crucians, who reject things as Gods wisdom hath tempered them, and will have nothing but their Spirits’,²² which is to say, things of the spiritual world. A guide to writing sermons, directed at young men in the Church of England, included a longer comment:

Besides these Treatises of *positive* divinity there are some other Writers that are stiled *Mysticall* Divines, who *pretend* to some higher illuminations, and to give rules for a more intimate and comfortable communion with God. And these of late have been by some much cryed up and followed. But they do in the opinion of many sober and judicious men, deliver only a kinde of Cabalisticall or *Chymicall, Rosicrucian* Theologie, *darkning wisdom with words*, heaping together a *farrago* of obscure affected expressions and wild allegories, containing little of substance in them but what is more plainly and intelligibly delivered by others.²³

The author cited a dozen offending writers, mystics from Catholic and Protestant states, before and after the Reformation, but none from Britain.²⁴ Again, the great objection was to the treatment of chemical processes like the production of the Philosophers’ Stone as Christian allegories.

After all the negative press, it must have seemed odd when the young Welsh alchemist Thomas Vaughan humbly presented his first book ‘to the most illustrious and truly reborn brethren of the Rosy Cross’ (*Illustrissimis, & vere Renatis Fratribus R. C.*).²⁵ The little book was registered with the Stationers Company of

22 Ward, *Simple Cobler*, 17–18.

23 Wilkins, *Ecclesiastes*, 71. The comment was added to the third edition (1651) and did not appear in the earlier versions of 1646 and 1647. Contemporaries would have found in the italicised words following ‘Theologie’ an allusion to Job 88.2: ‘Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?’

24 The obvious Protestants were Jakob Böhme and Valentin Weigel from Germany, but there were also Teresa of Ávila and Thomas à Jesus from Spain, Bartholomaeus Riccius from Italy, Francis de Sales from France, Henricus Harphius and François-Louis Blossius from Belgium. Older mystics included Johannes Tauler from Germany, Johannes Ruysbroeck from Holland, and Johannes Climachus from Syria.

25 Vaughan, *Anthroposophia*, A1 *recto*.

London on Christmas Eve, 1649, less than a year after the execution of Charles I and the legislation in Parliament that made England a Commonwealth. Champions of liberty in printing had every expectation that official censorship was a thing of the past—that the press, like the countryside, belonged to the commoners or Commons rather than the church or king. Five years had passed since John Milton made his famous speech to Parliament, calling ‘For the Liberty of Vnlicens’d Printing’.²⁶ In those years, a dozen books had appeared with translations of the Bohemian esotericist Jakob Böhme (1575–1624). One of them, sold by the stationer who later registered Vaughan’s book, included a prefatory note by the translator. John Sparrow dared to hope that Böhme’s insights could settle disputes among ‘Reformers’:

then all Hearts will blesse the Hands of such Reformers [as Böhme and his followers, England’s so-called Behmenists], and Love will cover All the Ends of the Earth, and the God of Love will give us his blessing of Peace all the world over, and then the King of Glory will dwell with Men, and all the Kingdomes of the Earth will be his.²⁷

The political implications for England were not lost on early readers. Sparrow, who with his cousin John Ellistone translated Böhme’s complete works from German, ‘took an interest in legal reform and [like Milton] was a member of the parliamentary civil service’.²⁸ His thoughts are echoed in the writings of Gerrard Winstanley, the Digger who advocated return of common land to the common people.²⁹ Winstanley’s books were all printed for the London stationer Giles Calvert, for whom the Rosicrucian manifestos were printed in their English edition.

2 The Stationer and the Publisher

Giles Calvert maintained a bookshop ‘at the black spread Eagle at the West end of Pauls’—i.e., Saint Paul’s churchyard, the epicentre of the London book trade.³⁰ He had become a free member of the Stationers Company of London in 1639 and acquired his bookshop some five years later. He gained a reputation

²⁶ Milton, *Areopagitica*.

²⁷ Böhme, *Second Booke*, a4 verso.

²⁸ Baston, ‘Sparrow’.

²⁹ See Willard, ‘Gerrard Winstanley’, esp. 871.

³⁰ Quoted from the title page of Vaughan, *Fame and Confession*. See Hessayon, ‘Calvert, Giles’.

as a 'sectary', a supporter of radical political and religious ideas, at a time when it was hard to separate politics from religion. Known 'to run considerable risk to get radical books published',³¹ he was regularly summoned for questioning about his role in distributing books that some deemed blasphemous or seditious, but seems to have escaped serious punishment until after the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660. He was thought to have arranged the printing and sale of books that did not bear his name, and did not register every book printed under his name, as the Stationers Guild required. One of the books printed under his name but never registered was the English translation of the Rosicrucian manifestos. A new copy reached the London stationer and book collector George Thomason on April 23, 1652.³²

The book's publisher, in the word's older sense of the person who makes a book public,³³ was Thomas Vaughan. As in earlier books, he used the pseudonym Eugenius Philalethes ("well-born lover of truth"), but his true identity had been exposed by Henry More (1614–1687), the Cambridge Platonist, during an extended pamphlet debate of 1650–1651.³⁴ More told Vaughan that he had begun the attack to distinguish his own Christian Platonism from what he considered the dangerously Gnostic Platonism of Vaughan,³⁵ which was also tainted by his outright acceptance of the Rosicrucian story. In a tract published with the one dedicated to the brethren, Vaughan likened Saint Paul, 'who was carried up to the *third Heaven*', to 'R. C. the *founder* of a most *Christian*, and *famous society*, whose *Body* also by *vertue* of that *Medicine* he took in his *life time*, is preserv'd *intire* to this *Day*', adding: 'Such *Elijahs* also are the *Members* of this *Fraternitie*, who as their own *writings* testifie, walk in the *supernatural light*'.³⁶ Vaughan added the Latin tag *Procul hinc, procul ite Prophani* ('away, keep far away, ye uninitiated')—'misquoted from Virgil's *Aeneid*', as his modern editor notes,³⁷ but quoted precisely as it appears in Johann Valentin Andreae's *Chymische Hochzeit Christiani Rosencreuz*, the third of the original Rosicrucian publications.³⁸ Vaughan thus showed good, if uncritical, familiarity with early

31 Hill, *World Turned Upside Down*, 14.

32 British Library shelfmark E1291[3].

33 'publisher, n.2a', *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (2013), <http://o-www.oed.com.lib.exeter.ac.uk/view/Entry/154076> Date accessed: 3 November 2013.

34 More, *Second Lash*, 172.

35 More, *Second Lash*, 174; for comments on Gnosticism, see More, *Enthusiasmus*, L8 *recto*.

36 Vaughan, *Anima Magica Abscondita*, 42.

37 Vaughan, *Works*, ed. Rudrum, 626.

38 Andreae, *Chymische Hochzeit*, 20. The words (rephrased from *Aeneid* 6.258) are written over the entrance to the royal palace where Christian Rosenkreuz performs the chemical

Rosicrucian material. He was in many ways the perfect person to present the so-called manifestos.

At the same time, he was an unlikely visitor to Calvert's bookshop, which had become a Mecca for religious and political radicals, for he was neither of those. Vaughan had been a royalist in the previous decade. While serving as an Anglican priest in his native parish in Brecknockshire, he became a captain in the king's cavalry and fought alongside his twin brother Henry at the Siege of Chester.³⁹ He was 'extruded' from his priesthood by the largely puritanical Commission for the Propagation of the Gospel in Wales and spent most of his later years in London. When he served as publisher of work by his brother Henry and their former teacher Thomas Powell, he went to distinguished printers and stationers.⁴⁰ Of course, he may have approached such stationers and found them uninterested. Then again, he may have wanted a different sort of audience. He may even have paid Calvert to prepare the book manuscript for sale.

What Vaughan does say, in a brief note from 'The Publisher to the Reader', is that he was not the only person with a manuscript translation of the manifestos. He knew other 'Gentlemen' who had '*their own Copies*', but were pleased to have him present the manifestos to the English-speaking world.⁴¹ Although many bibliographies state that Vaughan made the translation, he says clearly that it was that of '*an unknown hand*'. He notes an error in the translation of the *Fama*, which actually occurs in the first German edition: the name Damascus is used both for the city in Syria where Christian Rosenkreuz first met Islamic scholars and for Damcar in Arabia Felix.⁴² But he lets it stand, having no wish '*to correct another mans Labours*'. His one further remark is that '*the Copy was communicated to me by a Gentleman more learned then my self, and I should name him here but that he expects neither thy thanks nor mine*'. One can only conjecture who this was, but even a conjecture can throw light on the manuscript culture of the day.

wedding. Because Vaughan did not read German, it seems possible that he had access to an English translation of Andreae's allegory, which concerns the transmutation of consciousness that Vaughan discusses in the same paragraph.

39 Speake, 'Vaughan, Thomas'.

40 Willard, 'Publisher of *Olor Iscanus*'.

41 Vaughan, ed., *Fame and Confession*, A3 verso.

42 Vaughan, ed., *Fame and Confession*, 4; cf. Andreae, *Fama Fraternalitatis*, 1615 (Frankfurt edition), 17. There has been much speculation about the identity of 'Damcar', as the corrected text reads. It seems to be modern Thamar in Yemen, which, in the late medieval world, was the capital of the Sabeen empire. See Willard, 'Strange Journey', 661 and note.

Eight years older than Vaughan, Robert Child (1613–1654) was a widely travelled physician. He was also a great collector of alchemical books and manuscripts. He was highly regarded by his younger contemporaries. The physician John French, who translated Agrippa's *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, dedicated the work to Child, as a man steeped in 'Hermetically, and Theomagically truths'.⁴³ French added: 'You are skilled in the one as if *Hermes* had been your Tutor; have insight in the other, as if *Agrippa* your Master'. Child was clearly a 'learned' man, and one acquainted with Vaughan. For on his return to London in 1650, he formed a 'chymical club' with Vaughan and others, the purpose of which was to share the secrets of alchemy, collect alchemical texts, and publish the most important in English translation.⁴⁴ This club has recently been called 'the only group of self-styled English Rosicrucians about which anything is known'.⁴⁵ However, it was 'Rosicrucian' mainly in the way its members understood Rosicrucianism. The original manifestos had harsh words for at least one aspect of alchemy, which they called 'ungodly and accursed *Gold-making*'.⁴⁶ However, Vaughan's club made alchemy and the transmutation of substances its key concern, whereas the manifestos described medicine as the *ergon*, or primary work, and gold-making a *parergon*, or secondary task. Their model, Child said, was the 'Christian Society' that Johann Valentin Andreae envisioned and organized after the confused uproar about Rosicrucians in Germany.⁴⁷

Perhaps it was the club's project of collecting alchemical texts that brought Child to befriend the younger Elias Ashmole (1617–1692), who was collecting alchemical poetry in English with an eye to publication. Ashmole also planned to publish prose writings of English alchemists (that is why his large anthology of 'Poetical Pieces of our Famous *English Philosophers*, who have written the *Hermetique Mysteries* in their owne Ancient Language' is labelled 'The First

43 French, trans., *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, b1 recto—b2 recto ('To my most honorable, and no less learned Friend, *Robert Childe*, Doctor of Physick'). Vaughan's *Encomium on the three Books of Cornelius Agrippa, Knight*, reprinted from his *Anthroposophia* (53–54), is reprinted at a1 recto.

44 Clucas, 'Robert Child'.

45 Monod, *Solomon's Secret Arts*, 39. The statement applies to the period 1650–1815, with which this excellent study is concerned. For Vaughan's role in promoting the Rosicrucian message, see 38–44.

46 *Confession*, 29–30.

47 See Andreae, *Modell of a Christian Society*. The translator's dedication to the German emigré Samuel Hartlib indicates that Hartlib knew of members in Germany (A2 recto). Also see Raymond, 'Hall, John'; Churton, *Invisible History of the Rosicrucians*, 336–337.

Part' of a larger chemical theatre).⁴⁸ On 21 March 1651, Child and Ashmole travelled to Maidstone, in Kent, to visit a Dr. Flood and browse through the library of his late namesake.⁴⁹ They returned with a large number of manuscripts, possibly including a translation of the manifestos.⁵⁰ Ashmole clearly read the *Fama Fraternitatis* at this time, for he cited a detail from it on the first page of the 'Prolegomena' to his anthology, which he started writing a few days later.⁵¹ There is a translation of the manifestos in Ashmole's papers, now at the Bodleian Library in Oxford.⁵² It bears no resemblance to the text Vaughan published and is not included in the list of texts that Ashmole prepared after the visit. However, Child could have brought a copy.⁵³

The *Fama* was addressed to 'all the learned in *Europe*', but 'sent forth in five languages'.⁵⁴ Ashmole recognized that the brothers did so 'to the end the *unlearned* might not be deprived'. For, he wrote, 'God hath not excluded all who are *Masters* of no other then their own *Language*; from the happinesse of *understanding* many *Abstruse* and *subtill Secrets*'.⁵⁵ Some have suggested that the manifestos' authors commissioned 'official' translations, rather than leave matters to chance.⁵⁶ Fludd would have been a likely candidate, being widely travelled and sharing many of the concerns voiced in the manifestos. However, he wrote that he encountered the Rosicrucian story only after the published manifestos came to his attention in 1616.

The manifestos had circulated in manuscript as early as 1610; while the decision to tell the story of Christian Rosenkreuz and his society is dated to 1604,

48 Ashmole, ed., *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum*, title page.

49 Josten, ed., *Elias Ashmole*, 566. Josten identifies 'Dr. Flood' as a visitor from Italy, but he was more likely Fludd's adopted son, the London physician Robert Fludd, Jr.; see 'Fludd, Dr Robert Junior'.

50 Black, ed., *Catalogue*, cols. 1144–1409, lists many alchemical texts in the library Ashmole bequeathed to Oxford University—e.g., MSS Ashmole 1420–1507, esp. 1445.

51 Ashmole, ed., *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum*, A2 *recto*, referring to a Rosicrucian supposed to have 'cured a young Earl of *Norfolk* of the *Leprosie*' (*Fame*, 16).

52 MS Ashmole 1478, revised by Ashmole in MS 1459; see McLean, 'Manuscript Sources', 273 and 284.

53 Waite suggested that Ashmole was a likely supplier of Vaughan's text, or at least noted his surprise that no one else had made the suggestion; see *Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross*, 375 n. 2.

54 Vaughan, *Fame*, 31.

55 Ashmole, *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum*, 476. Compare *Confession*, 42: 'those should not be defrauded of the knowledge thereof, whom (although they be unlearned) God hath not excluded from the happiness of this Fraternity'.

56 Lepper, *Problems of the 'Fama'*, 4.

a full decade before the first manifesto was printed. Moreover, the decision to have the *Fama* printed seems to have originated outside the circle of friends in Tübingen who first conceived it, apparently as part of a manuscript culture. The expectation, it seems, was that 'the learned of *Europe*' would make copies for themselves and their friends. Thus one copy of the English translation is dated 1633, but seems to have been made from a still earlier copy.⁵⁷ Adam McLean, who has made a close study of the six known English manuscripts, reports that four of them descend from a 'lost original', itself based on a German edition printed in Gdansk in 1615.⁵⁸

Three of the manuscripts that McLean has studied are in Scottish collections; they are associated with Scotsmen known to have a strong interest in esoteric matters and, in one case, a close personal connexion to James Stuart.⁵⁹ The fourth is in the Royal Library in London, where it has been housed since the eighteenth century. McLean's research supports earlier hypotheses that the translation may have originated in Scotland, and may have reached Vaughan through the offices of Sir Robert Moray, who was later to become his patron.⁶⁰ As noted, however, they belong to a manuscript culture that still existed, especially for esoteric texts. The Vaughan text has errors that suggest a late copying, or perhaps a lazy compositor at a busy printing press. Whereas the printed and manuscript German originals condemn the Pope (*der Bapst*)⁶¹ and the English manuscript versions render this more or less correctly as 'Popery', the Vaughan text names Porphyry, the Neoplatonic philosopher. And where the German printed and manuscript originals say that Christian Rosenkreuz found facts about nature that 'did not concord' with older philosophical teaching (*nicht ... richteten*), the Vaughan text says they 'did concord'.⁶²

Vaughan's confidence as a writer was badly shaken by the attacks of Henry More. Far from dealing seriously with the matters Vaughan raised, More wrote dismissively about Vaughan's fascination with the Rosicrucian story, asking: 'He that knows not how to submit himself as a breeching boy to the *Fratres R. C.*

57 Pryce, ed., *Fame and Confession*, 8. Pryce supposes there were 'at least three or four intermediaries of deteriorating copyists between the prototype and its final petrification in print.'

58 McLean, 'Manuscript Sources', 279.

59 McLean, 'Impact of the Rosicrucian Manifestos', 174.

60 Pryce, ed., *Fame and Confession*, 4–8; Willard, 'Rosicrucian Manifestos in Britain'.

61 Van der Kooij, *Fama*, 82–83.

62 Van der Kooij, *Fama*, 78–79; McLean, 'Manuscript Sources', 282.

how can he know so unmercifully to whip and domineer over poor Aristotle?’⁶³ Vaughan announced that his *Lumen de Lumine*, published in 1651 and including a Rosicrucian allegory, was ‘my last [book] and the only *Clavis* [key] to my First’, i.e., to the *Anthroposophia* of 1650.⁶⁴ Vaughan married in September 1651, and distanced himself from his former club-mates, but he did not abandon his literary pursuits. The literary references in his preface to the manifestos suggest he still had access to a large esoteric library such as that of his former housemate Thomas Henshaw.⁶⁵ It seems likely that his friends encouraged him to keep writing, and gave him the charge of introducing the manifestos to the English reading public.

What we can know of Vaughan’s motives must be inferred from his contributions to the printed book: an introductory note from ‘The Publisher to the Reader’, a long ‘Preface’, and a concluding ‘Advertisement’. In all of them he strikes a witty literary style, altogether different from the earnest tone of the two manifestos that follow his preface. He opens the note to the reader by quoting Virgil and using Virgil’s reputation as a prophetic writer to predict that the book will have a long life. He acknowledges that he acts on behalf of ‘some Gentlemen besides my self who affected this Fame, and thought it no Disparagement to their own.’⁶⁶ These men had their own manuscript translations of the *Fama* and *Confessio*, but were pleased to have Vaughan introduce the manifestos. He asserts that he did not make the English translation, does not know who made it, and does not intend to correct it, even where there is a clear mistake. Finally, he hopes the reader will keep an open mind. ‘Consider that Prejudice obstructs thy Judgment’, he writes. Consider too that ‘men have deny’d a great part of the World, which now they inhabit’, and that ‘America as

63 More, *Observations*, 71. A ‘breeching boy’ is ‘a young scholar still subject to the birch’, i.e., a whipping boy: ‘breeching, n.2b’, *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (2013), <http://o-www.oed.com.lib.exeter.ac.uk/view/Entry/23015> Date accessed: 3 November 2013.

64 Vaughan, *Lumen de Lumine*, B4 verso and 26–31. The remarkable allegory, which has eluded Vaughan’s editors, is taken from Molther’s ‘Bericht’. As published in a 1617 edition of the *Fama* and *Confessio*, the text is prefaced by Molther’s letter to Johannes Grasshoff, who reprinted the allegory in the 1623 edition of his *Aperta Arta*. Molther (1588–1660) identifies himself as the city physician of Wetzlar in Hesse. For details on his Rosicrucian writings (1616–1617), see Gilly (ed.), *Cimelia Rhodostaurotica*, 98–99 and 107, and Tilton, *Quest for the Phoenix*, 151–155.

65 See Speake, ‘Henshaw, Thomas’ and ‘Vaughan, Thomas’.

66 Vaughan, *Fame and Confession*, A3 verso; *Aeneid* 4.467–468. The typographical conventions of the time called for key words to be emphasized with capital letters or italics, but also for Roman and Italic type to be reversed in prefatory material.

well as the Philosophers Stone, was sometimes in the Predicament of Impossibilities'.⁶⁷

3 Thomas Vaughan's Preface

The publisher's note is followed by an 'Epistle to the Wise and Understanding Reader' translated from German. Then comes Vaughan's preface, which, at fifty-five octavo pages, is as long as the two manifestos put together. Vaughan knows that earlier apologists compared the Rosicrucians to the Brahmins of India as encountered by Apollonius of Tyana.⁶⁸ After a witty introduction, he discusses Apollonius and devotes the larger part of his preface to poking fun at the supposed sage. He then turns to the secrets that Apollonius failed to learn while travelling in India and writes a brief conclusion.

Vaughan begins the preface by announcing that he will 'affirm the Essence, and Existence of that admired Chimaera, the Fraternitie of R: C:'.⁶⁹ He says this realizing that most readers will '*sneak and steal from me, as if the Plague and this Red Cross were inseparable*', recalling that a red cross was painted on the door of any house where a plague victim lived. He hopes mainly to reach people '*of the same Bookish faith with my self*', though only if they are at leisure. He thinks he can explain to them why the Rosicrucians, and all who profess magic, are treated with contempt: they are guilty, he suggests, of '*a double Obscurity, of Life and Language*'.⁷⁰ They retreat from society at large, and use a 'Magisterial way of Writing', including technical terms drawn from the Arabic. The comment is curiously true of Vaughan's personal manner and writing style.⁷¹ He clearly identifies with the Rosicrucians, though he claims '*no Relation to them*' and seeks no 'Acquaintance'. He simply admires their books and sees no reason to doubt their existence '*unless we grant that Nature is studied, and Books also written and published by some other Creatures then Men*'.⁷² In other words, he values the books rather than the society itself, the 'Doctrine' rather than the persons. He notes that the Rosicrucian learning came from the East, and that '*the Eastern Countries have been always famous for Magical and*

67 Vaughan, *Confession*, A3 verso – A4 recto.

68 See Fludd, *Tractatus Apologeticus*, 6, and *Summum Bonum*, 5–6. Maier discusses the travels of Apollonius in *Symbola Aureae Mensae*, 120–127, and the Brahmins in *Themis Aurea*, 11.

69 Vaughan, *Fame and Confession*, a1 verso.

70 Vaughan, *Fame and Confession*, a2 recto.

71 Vaughan, *Fame and Confession*, a1 verso – a2 verso.

72 Vaughan, *Fame and Confession*, a4 verso – a5 recto.

Secret Societies'.⁷³ There follows a long digression on the journey that Apollonius of Tyana made to India. Quoting from the account of Philostratus, Vaughan consistently finds Apollonius blind to the secrets of the Brahmins he encounters.⁷⁴

The remainder of the introduction is devoted to the secrets of the East, common to the Rosicrucians and Brahmins alike. The secrets are curiously close to those touched on in Vaughan's earlier writings. They tell how 'the Terrestrial Heaven' was created by the work of fire and spirit on water, how man was created from this heaven, and how the 'first matter of Man' is liquid salt, from which the other creatures are formed, each according to its own peculiar seed. He adds that the Rosicrucian 'Society *doth* acknowledg *it to be their very Basis, and the first Gate that leads to all their Secrets*'.⁷⁵ Here he may be following the ten "rules" (*canones*) that make up the "chief work" (*ergon*) of Brother C.R., as collected by Fludd's German associate Michael Maier (1568–1622)—rules followed by ten dozen propositions about the "secondary work" (*parergon*) with metals.⁷⁶ The movement from God's alchemy in the creation of the world to the adept's work in the laboratory is typical of Paracelsian thought.⁷⁷ The authors of the Rosicrucian manifestos were clearly Paracelsian in orientation, as was Fludd to some degree and Maier to a greater extent. Vaughan's alchemical tracts often proceeded from God's work in the macrocosm—what he termed 'the Creator's Proto-Chimistry'⁷⁸—to the chemist's work in the microcosm of his laboratory. Here he proceeds from the salt, or *minera* or seed, through 'the Art of Water', also called 'the Philosophers Clavis humida [humid key], and this [Rosicrucian] Societies Parergon'. Again, he thinks cosmically, quoting Cabala and poetry in the same paragraph and following that with a favourite alchemist,⁷⁹ assuming all the while that one truth confirms another, whether it comes from poetry or divinity or natural philosophy.

73 Vaughan, *Fame and Confession*, a5 verso, c3 recto.

74 See Willard, 'Strange Journey', 675–678.

75 Vaughan, *Fame and Confession*, c3 verso.

76 'Ergon & Parergon Fr. C.R.', in Maier, *Ulysses*, 183–201; identified by Jennifer Speake and cited in Vaughan, *Works*, ed. Rudrum, 720. For the Rosicrucians' *parergon*, see *Fame and Confession*, 30.

77 See Paracelsus, *Philosophia ad Athenienses*, trans. Henry Pinnel, in: *Philosophy Reformed*, where it accounts for the last two tracts. Vaughan terms this 'a glorious Incomparable Discourse' (*Lumen de Lumine*, 89).

78 Vaughan, *Anthroposophia*, title page.

79 Vaughan, *Fame and Confession*, d1 verso—d2 recto.

Vaughan was a great admirer of Agrippa's *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, which was Englished in 1650 with an 'encomium' reprinted from Vaughan's *Anthroposophia Theomagica*.⁸⁰ Like Agrippa, he assumed the existence of 'a three-fold world, Elemental, Celestial, and Intellectual'—a world in which 'every inferior is governed by its superior and receiveth the influence of the virtues thereof'.⁸¹ Like Agrippa again, he saw parallels between alchemy in the elemental world, astrology in the celestial world, and Cabala in the intellectual or angelical world. He is truly all over the map when he writes about alchemy—here, there, and everywhere—because he regards alchemy as a cosmic science, uniting body, soul, and spirit and thus neither entirely physical or spiritual, but a union of forces. Relating alchemy to astrology, he writes of the element earth: 'we have *astronomy* here under our feet, the *stars* are resident with us, and abundance of *Jewels* and *Pantauras*'.⁸² The word *pantaura* is Ficino's Latinization of the Greek *pantarba*, the name of a semi-magical stone that the Brahmins showed to Apollonius.⁸³ In his preface to *The Fame and Confession* Vaughan calls it 'the Pantarva' and thinks there is good reason to see '*the Affinity of the Pantarva, and the Philosophers Stone*'.⁸⁴ For Ficino and Vaughan alike, the Brahmins' stone represented the union of heavenly and earthly forces.

Finally, following the two manifestos, Vaughan provides 'A Short Advertisement to the Reader'—an 'advertisement' in the word's older sense of 'a notice to readers in a book'.⁸⁵ Here he adds details he has omitted from his description of the *opus magnum* in alchemy, specifically 'the *Solution of the Philosophical Salt*'. He plays a game of esoteric peekaboo, saying he could explain this or that but will only remind the reader that 'the *rare Philosophers* did find in every *Compound* a double Complexion, *Circumferencial*, and *Central*', that is, outer and inner, manifest and occult.⁸⁶ The outer fire is not the same as the inner, which is spiritual. Thus no matter what the outer substance, the inner must be of a rare purity—and if it is not, there is a problem with the physical substance, the chemical operator, or both.

80 Agrippa, *Three Books*, a2 recto; Vaughan, *Anthroposophia*, 53–54.

81 Agrippa, *Three Books*, 1.

82 Vaughan, *Anthroposophia*, 17.

83 Ficino, *De Triplici Vita*, h7 recto -i5 verso (3.13–16).

84 Vaughan, *Fame and Confession*, b6 verso.

85 'advertisement, n.2', *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (2013), <http://o-www.oed.com.lib.exeter.ac.uk/view/Entry/2978> Date accessed: 3 November 2013.

86 Vaughan, *Fame and Confession*, 58, 63.

Of such reflections, one could say what a Masonic historian has said of the Rosicrucian manifestos: they are 'better designed to mystify the profane than enlighten the elect'.⁸⁷ This kind of game is played in earlier Rosicrucian texts to which Vaughan clearly had access. For example, Vaughan quotes Michael Maier on '*the Habitation of R.C.*'. As translated a few years later, the statement reads:

Wee cannot set down the places where they meet, neither the time, I have sometimes observed Olympick Houses not far from a river and a known City which wee think is called *S. Spiritus*, I meane *Helican* or *Pernaßus* in which *Pegasus* opened a spring of everflowing water, wherein *Diana* wash'd her selfe, to whom *Venus* was handmaid, and *Saturn* Gentleman-usher; This will sufficiently instruct an Intelligent reader, but more confound the Ignorant.⁸⁸

From these scant hints, and a few interspersed elsewhere in the text, some readers attempted to identify the meeting place of the fraternity with particular cities. However, the description itself is of a place neither literal nor mythic but both, a place both physical and symbolic, like the space in a consecrated Masonic temple. Waite, who created his own Fellowship of the Rosy Cross, writes: 'We know that the House of the Holy Spirit is a House of Holy Inspiration and Divine Rapture; we know also—or some of us—that there is a Helicon which is not of this world and a Parnassus which is not in any earthly Greece'.⁸⁹

4 The Rosicrucian Tradition in Britain

The publication of Vaughan's edition began what Waite called the Rosicrucian 'awakening in England',⁹⁰ where such thought had been dormant since Fludd's death fifteen years earlier. After this point, it never really slept. But it received a steady blend of utopian and satiric response, reflecting the hopes and fears of British people during the Scientific Revolution. One early scuffle is instructive.

87 Lepper, *Problems of the 'Fama'*, 4.

88 Maier, *Themis Aurea*, 103; c.f. Vaughan, *Fame and Confession*, b2 verso—b3 recto.

89 Waite, *Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross*, 328; see 375–376. On Waite's Fellowship, see Willard, 'Acts of the Companions', 269–273.

90 Waite, *Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross*, 363.

In 1654, two years after the manifestos were published in English translation, the same bookseller, Giles Calvert, offered the reading public an ‘examination of the academies’ written by John Webster, a largely self-educated (and therefore ‘upstart’) physician, chemist, minister, and schoolmaster. Webster called for a complete reformation in education, from grammar study onward, all of it leading to the progressive thinking he favoured. He was far from alone: Vaughan, for one, had railed against ‘Aristotle’, by which he really meant the largely medieval curriculum in English universities, where Aristotle was enshrined, under the Laudian statutes at Oxford and the Elizabethan statutes at Cambridge, as the final authority in all debate. Like the Czech reformer Jan Amos Comenius (1592–1670),⁹¹ Webster wanted language study to start with a closer association of the word and the thing. He therefore advocated teaching ‘the language of nature’ as investigated by the ‘highly-illuminated fraternity of the *Rosie Crosse*’ as a prelude to a more scientific education.⁹² An indignant response soon followed from Seth Ward, a protégé of John Wilkins at Wadham College, Oxford, and, like Wilkins, a future member of the Royal Society of London. Ward showed distaste, not only for Webster’s ideas, but for his sources. Rather like the preachers of earlier decades, he denounced those sources: ‘Magicians, Soothsayers, Canters, and Rosicrucians.’⁹³ Far from reforming language, the Rosicrucians have introduced a lot of sanctimonious argot, or cant. Ward’s argument, which Webster had already made more briefly, was taken up by an Angelican priest who, like Vaughan, had been ejected from his parish living. Writing to defend the traditional training of ministers, Thomas Hall denounced Webster’s reforms and the “Familisticall-Levelling-Magical temper” they reflected.⁹⁴ Without mentioning the Rosicrucians, he thus tied Webster’s proposals to radical religious, social, and scientific groups—to the Family of Love, the Diggers, and the followers of Cornelius Agrippa. He condemned all of these and their publishers, including Calvert:

Lame *Giles Calvers* [sic] shop, that forge of the Devil, from whence so many blasphemous, lying, scandalous Pamphlets, for many yeers past, have spread over the Land, to the great dishonour of the Nation, in the sight of the Nations round about us, and to the provocation of Gods wrath

91 For the Rosicrucian style reforms of Comenius, see Willard, ‘Rosicrucian Sign Lore’, 145–146.

92 Webster, *Examen Academiarum*, 26; see Debus, *Science and Education*.

93 Ward, *Vindiciae Academiarum*, 46; see note 23 above.

94 Hall, *Vindiciae Literarum*, 199.

against us, which will certainly breake forth, both upon the actors & tolerators of such intollerable errors, without speedy reformation and amendment.⁹⁵

Even more than Ward, Hall wanted to reform the reformers, to scale back on the rapid changes brought about by the English Revolution.

Meanwhile, friends of Vaughan translated Michael Maier's commentary on the six rules of the Rosicrucians as set forth in the *Fama*. The published volume included a generous dedication to Ashmole and a Latin epistle to the Rosicrucian brothers, which mentioned the edition of the manifestos 'with a preface by the most illustrious man E[ugenius] P[hilalethes], sun of the British realm' (*Praefatione Viri Illustrissimi E.P. orbis Britannici Solis*).⁹⁶ The authors of this petition have been identified as Vaughan's friend Thomas Henshaw and his brother Nathaniel.⁹⁷ The rules were appropriate to a small society like their 'chymical club', whose members followed Child in the study of medicine. Vaughan actually travelled to Padua, where Child had studied, and purchased medical texts that came into the library of his twin brother. The rules provided a source of private order amid a social experiment with republicanism that Vaughan and Henshaw had both resisted. But society at large was taking a different turn. When Oliver Cromwell died in 1658, efforts to restore the Stuart monarchy gained momentum, and with the Restoration in 1660 reformers of all sorts were lumped together, the Rosicrucians with religious and social reformers like the Quakers and Levellers. Those who, like Thomas Henshaw, greeted Charles II on his return wanted to see 'a bright World, and *Chaos's* divorce' with the king as the newly risen sun.⁹⁸

Many sought to show their orthodoxy by ridiculing the radical ideas that led to the English Revolution. One such was Samuel Butler, who had been writing a kind of doggerel *Don Quixote* about a Puritan aristocrat who took up every daft cause. The first part of Butler's *Hudibras* was printed in 1663 and pretended to celebrate the man it satirized—a man of learning as well as religion. His squire Ralph is as steeped in 'Mystick Learning' as Sir Hudibras is in the university curriculum, and manages to mislead the master as a result. Ralph is

95 Hall, *Vindiciae Literarum*, 215; see Hessayon, 'Calvert', and Hill, *World Turned Upside Down*, 300–302.

96 Maier, *Themis Aurea*, a3 recto.

97 Churton, *Invisible History*, 340. Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, vol. 2, 254, consulted with Ashmole about the book and lists it with Vaughan's publications, calling Vaughan 'a zealous brother of the Rosie-Crucian fraternity'.

98 Henshaw, 'Triumphant Ceremony', A1 recto.

In Rosicrucian lore as learned
 As he that *verè adeptus* earned.
 He understood the speech of birds
 As well as they themselves do words.⁹⁹

In other words, he has the mind of a Rosicrucian and the brain of a bird. His studies include Agrippa, Paracelsus, Vaughan—all names associated with the Englished manifestos printed in the previous decade.

When the first part of *Hudibras* appeared, with the lines about Ralph's Rosicrucianism, the most visible claimant to the Rosicrucian tradition was one John Heydon (1629–c. 1670), a colourful character whom the even-tempered Ashmole described as 'an ignoramus and a cheat'.¹⁰⁰ Waite called him 'the prototypical thief of English occult literature'.¹⁰¹ While still in his twenties, Heydon married the widow of Nicholas Culpeper, the herbalist and astrologer, and set himself up as an astrological physician. To publicize his trade he took to publishing books on 'Rosie-Crucian Physick', taking the contents from Vaughan and other esoteric authors like Agrippa and Paracelsus as well as from literary classics like Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* and Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*, and issuing all the pirated passages under the label 'Rosie Crucian'. He was flagrant enough in his thievery to steal commendatory poems from other books and have them printed under the names of leading astrologers. At one point, he offered a conduct book giving advice to his step-daughter that was stolen from a popular book of advice to a son, which he proceeded to attack. Vaughan, for one, struck back in a pamphlet pretending to be written by Heydon but making small variations on his usual claims. The title page identifies Eugenius Theodidactus ("Well-born man taught by God", Heydon's pseudonym) not as the 'Secretary of Nature' but as the 'Secretary of Naturals', i.e., idiots, and identifying him not as a 'Rosie Crucian' but as a 'Roguy Crucian', i.e., a rogue using the Rosicrucian label.¹⁰²

An even stronger condemnation of Heydon and his cheating appeared in a play written for the London stage. John Wilson, a lawyer with a strong interest in the theatre, updated *The Alchemist* by Ben Jonson as *The Cheats*.¹⁰³ The play is full of cheats in religion, politics, and personal affairs, but at the centre of

99 Butler, *Hudibras*, 1.523, 539–542; 32–33.

100 On Heydon, see Willard, 'John Wilson's Satire', 139–141.

101 Waite, *Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross*, 388.

102 Heydon (attrib.), *Ladies*. For evidence of Vaughan's authorship, see Willard, 'John Wilson's Satire', 148 and note 31.

103 On Wilson's play, see Willard, 'John Wilson's Satire', esp. 141–145.

the action is one Mopsus, an astrological physician who arranges extramarital trysts on the side. His handbill boasts a rare panacea:

our *Magisterium, Elixar* or *Rosie-Crucian Pantarva*. The Father of it is the Sun, the Mother of it, the Moon; its brothers, and sisters, the rest of the Planets, the wind carries it in its Belly, and the Nurse thereof is the Earth.¹⁰⁴

The claim continues at some length, quoting Vaughan's translation of the 'Emerald Tablet' as copied in one of Heydon's books. Mopsus has no faith in the actual concoction, and is as surprised as anyone when it helps an ailing alderman. But the *iron* in the play, who draws attention to his cheating and sexual infidelities, asks later:

Is this your *Magisterium—Elixar—Rosie-Crucian—Pantarva*? No sirrah—The father of this is the Devil, the mother, his Dam, its brothers, and sisters, the tribe of whore-hoppers, the wind carries it, from Bawdy-house to Bawdy-house; and the Nurse thereof is a suburb-*tantrum*.¹⁰⁵

Wilson's play was heavily censored by the Master of Revels when some members of the audience complained about the topical references, but it returned to the stage, where it remained a favourite well into the following century. In the preface to the published text, Wilson acknowledged the mixed reaction, but asked his audience to reflect:

*if you meet with a small pretender to Astrology, Physick, the Rosy-crucian humour, Fortune-telling, and I know not what, ... I shall, instead of plea to it, only enlarge my Request, That you would but run over the late Adventures of that kind, the sad effects of which may well be fear'd to live among the people, when the persons that writ' um, may be either dead or forgotten.*¹⁰⁶

Wilson's remarks are somewhat wishful. Although Giles Calvert, the bookseller who offered the Rosicrucian manifestos in English translation, had been dead for about three months, Thomas Vaughan, who wrote the introduction, would live for another three years, serving as chemical "operator" for Sir Robert

104 Wilson, *The Cheats*, act 3, scene 1.

105 Wilson, *The Cheats*, act 4, scene 2.

106 Wilson, *The Cheats*, A2 verso.

Moray, first president of the Royal Society. John Heydon was still casting horoscopes, and was imprisoned that year after making horoscopes in support of an abortive uprising. He continued recycling “Rosicrucian” material for another two years.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless he was already sinking into the obscurity for which the play prepared him.

Wilson’s preface is dated November 1663, a matter of weeks after the Great Conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter on October 10 and sixty years after the Great Conjunction of December 17, 1603, that began the Fiery Trigon at the opening of Christian Rosenkruz’s tomb and the recording of his story.¹⁰⁸ The Great Conjunction of 1663 began a new trigon dominated by the element of air, and English astrologers predicted events in heaven and on earth that would prove equal to those of sixty years earlier.¹⁰⁹ During that period, the Rosicrucian theme in England was very largely assimilated into Freemasonry, and Freemasonry into the freethinking that became Deism.¹¹⁰ It was indeed the English freethinker and Freemason John Toland (1670–1722) who arguably was the first to apply the words “exoteric” and “esoteric” to contemporary as well as biblical and classical writings:

The one open and public, accommodated to popular prejudices and the RELIGIONS establish’d by LAW; the other private and secret, wherein, to the few capable and discrete, was taught the real TRUTH stript of all disguises.¹¹¹

107 Curry, ‘Heydon, John’, mentions a new publication of 1670; however, this seems to be a literary ghost. Curiously, Curry takes Heydon’s claims at face value and does not recognize the extent of his piracy.

108 Edlin, *Prae-Nuncius Sydereus*; Burke-Gaffney, ‘Kepler and the Star of Bethlehem’. The *Fame and Confession* mentions the apocalyptic ‘*Trygono igneo*, whose flame should now be more and more brighter, and shall undoubtedly give to the World the last Light’ (*Fame*, 10).

109 Edlin, *Prae-Nuncius Sydereus*, 34–41. In theory the conjunctions would continue through the constellations every 200 years and would make a complete cycle every 800 years. Modern astronomy has found the conjunctions occur at intervals slightly less than 200 years. The last great conjunction occurred in the sign of Taurus in the summer of 2000.

110 See the recent treatment of Rosicrucian and other occult themes in England in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, in Monod, *Solomon’s Secret Arts*, 119–338, and Churton, *Invisible History of the Rosicrucians*, 384–440.

111 Toland, *Clidophorus*, title page. The English usage predates similar developments in French and German by the better part of a century. A master Mason, Toland helped to found the Grand London Lodge in 1717 and belonged to smaller Masonic groups like the Knights of Jubilation and his own Socratic Society. His writings on religion influenced tolerance in Masonic lodges across Europe.

Toland suggested that the exoteric was to the esoteric as religion to philosophy. Meanwhile, interest in the English Rosicrucians was kindled in the German-speaking world. Most of Vaughan's major texts were translated into German, and two of the German translations were incorporated into the *Deutsches Theatrum Chemicum* (1728–1732),¹¹² where they were studied by the likes of Eckartshausen and Goethe, whose writings would inspire new study in nineteenth-century Britain.¹¹³

The Rosicrucian mythos evolved over time, as new authors added to it according to the concerns of their culture.¹¹⁴ What started with a group of millenarian Lutherans and Paracelsians in Tübingen reached British readers who, like Ashmole, were interested in chivalric and Masonic traditions as well as in alchemy and magic. The apocalyptic message of a generation earlier had little appeal to people who had lived through the English Revolution and had seen their world turned upside down, Church and state. What appealed to them was the prospect of intellectual companionship that overcame the limits of time and space, as the Rosicrucian brethren were said to do.¹¹⁵ What they sent back to the Continent was mainly an initiatory Freemasonry that included a Rosicrucian grade. British Masons like the London-based poet and translator Robert Samber, who took his pen name from Vaughan, read the Rosicrucian dream of life-prolonging medicines back into the history of their order.¹¹⁶ In turn, their efforts inspired German readers like the Berlin Freemason and bookseller Friedrich Nicolai, who found Rosicrucian roots of Masonry in England.¹¹⁷ The Rosicrucian rumour, or *fama*, as set out in the manifestos of four hundred years ago has continued to grow and with it the literature of Rosicrucianism. Christian Rosenkreuz may have been a fabrication—the Paracelsus of a previous century. However, his story inspired others to continue the rumour. That is so unless, as Vaughan quipped, we suppose that books are ‘written *and* published *by some other* Creatures *then* Men.’

112 Roth-Scholtz, ed., *Deutsches Theatrum Chemicum*. Vaughan's *Euphrates* appears in 1.415–480, his *Aula Lucis* in 3.855–892. Other English writers include Roger Bacon, John Dee, Edward Kelly, and John Pordage.

113 For example, Goethe's ‘Fairytale of the Golden Snake and the Beautiful Lily’, based on *The Chemical Wedding* and other Rosicrucian sources and included in *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten* (1795), was translated by Thomas Carlyle (1832).

114 See McIntosh, ‘Rosicrucian Legacy’.

115 *Confession*, 39.

116 Samber, *Long Livers*. The author writes as ‘Eugenius Philalethes Jun[ior]’ and dedicates the book to ‘the Free Masons of Great Britain and Ireland’.

117 Nicolai, *Versuch über die Beschuldigungen*.

5 Coda

The title of this essay raises the question whether and to what extent the Rosicrucian writings created a *furore* in Britain. The evidence reviewed here shows nothing so widespread as what Frances Yates famously called the ‘Rosicrucian *furore* in Germany’.¹¹⁸ However, the word “*furore*” applies well to the decidedly mixed response from Britain. The term was introduced into the English language in the sixteenth century, imported from the Italian *furore* (“fury”) and first used by poets like Sir Thomas Wyatt, writing love lyrics in the manner of Petrarch.¹¹⁹ Writers on poetry spoke of it as a kind of “divine instinct” or inspiration, as Plato had said,¹²⁰ while lawyers used it as a term for temporary insanity: a ‘time of furor or infamie of mind’.¹²¹

A very few writers took genuine inspiration from the Rosicrucian writings, primarily Fludd and Vaughan but also Heydon, who could not refrain from claiming the Rosicrucian mantle. Others, including Ashmole and Henshaw, appreciated the spirit of those writings, but kept a certain distance. Still others regarded it as an intellectual folly, as Butler and Wilson did, or as an outright threat to an orderly society with a rational religion, as Ward and Wilkins did in their respective defences of the university curriculum and the Anglican creed. In any case, it caught the imagination of the age and inspired writing that would continue the discussion into the next century.

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