

Adam McLean's Study Course on the Ripley Scroll

Lesson 6 : The type II scrolls

There are five scrolls that differ so substantially from the coherent group of sixteen manuscripts that we can place them in a second group, the Type II Scrolls

B.L. Add 5025-1	16th cent.
B.L. Add 5025-3	16th cent.
B.L Sloane 2424A	16th cent.
Ashmole Rolls 53	17th cent.
Ashmole Rolls 54	17th cent.

Of these British Library MS. Add 5025-1 and Ashmole Roll 53 appear to be close copies, and British Library MS Sloane 2424A is substantially similar to these. Ashmole Roll 54 is a rather corrupted and poorly drawn version more closely following the Type I scrolls than others in this group. British Library MS. Add 5025-3 is entirely unique. It has only a few elements of the symbolism on the Type I scrolls, however, as it has become used as illustrations in a number of recent books on alchemy, following Jung's use of it in his *Psychology and Alchemy*, many people confuse this unique and idiosyncratic manuscript with the coherent type I scrolls.

Let us look firstly at the Type II scroll exemplified in British Library MS. Add 5025-1, Ashmole Roll 53 and British Library MS Sloane 2424A.

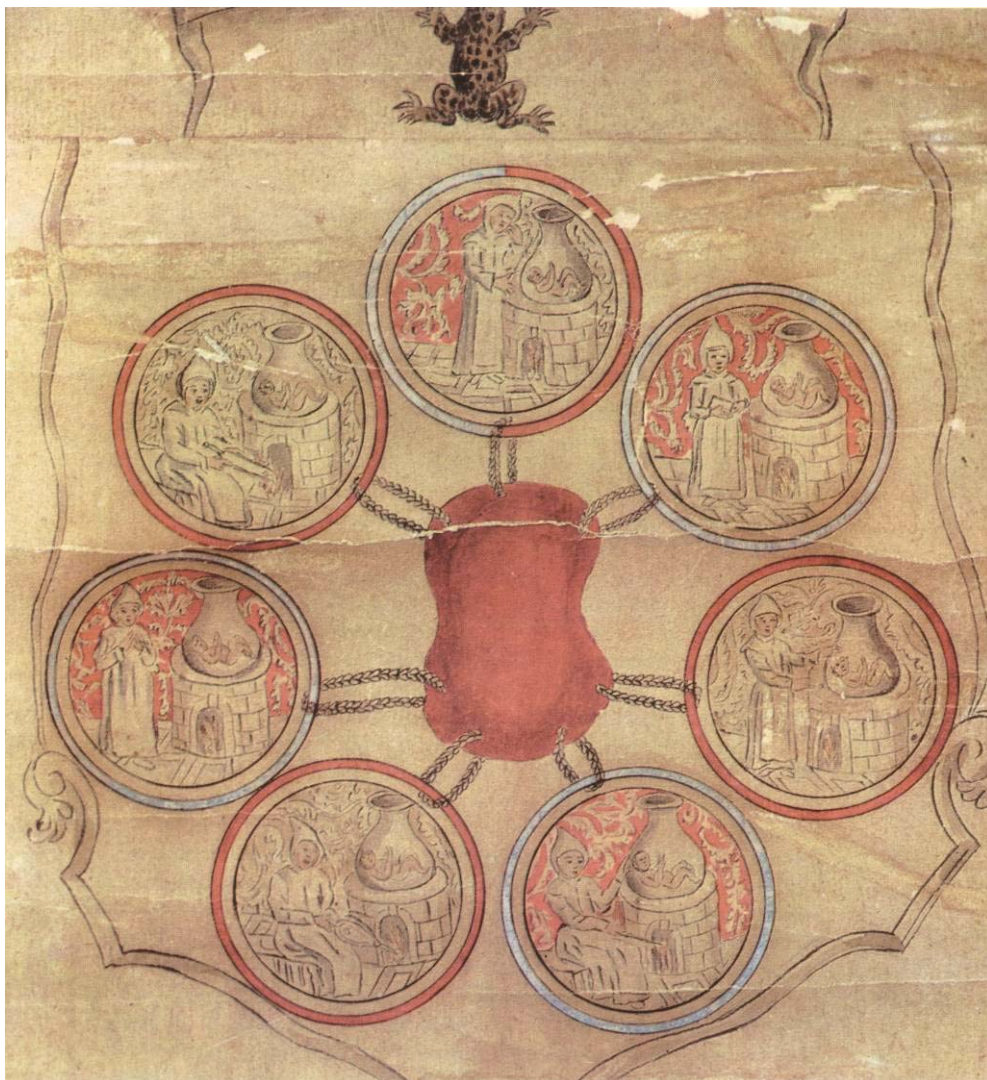
We should immediately notice a simplification of the complex imagery on the Type I scrolls, and also the absence of the text. Instead of the alchemist holding his flask at the top of the Type I scrolls, this group begins with two pictures of a monk lying on his bed. Angels appear to him and present objects. Firstly, a plate of bread (or possibly stones), and then a heart pierced by a knife on a plate. A banner states "Collirio iunge oculos tuos ut videas" – connect your eyes with these striking things, so that you can see and understand.

Then we have the text found at the head of the Type I scroll, "Est lapis occultus secreto fonte sepultus fermentu variat lapide qui conta colora". We then see the toad and a very restricted and simplified version of the roundels of the first panel of the Type I scrolls. Below this we have an abbreviated version of the basins, here in the form of a single hexagonal vessel, rather than the foursquare and the heptangular ones seen in the second panel. The serpent woman again descends but instead of crawling down the trunk of the tree in the upper seven-sided vessels now she entwines around the column and kisses the Atlas figure seen in the of the lower foursquare vessel of the second panel in the Type I scrolls. Here we have a radical simplification and conflation of the symbols.

I here show the Ashmole Rolls 53 on the left and the B.L. Add 5025-1 on the right

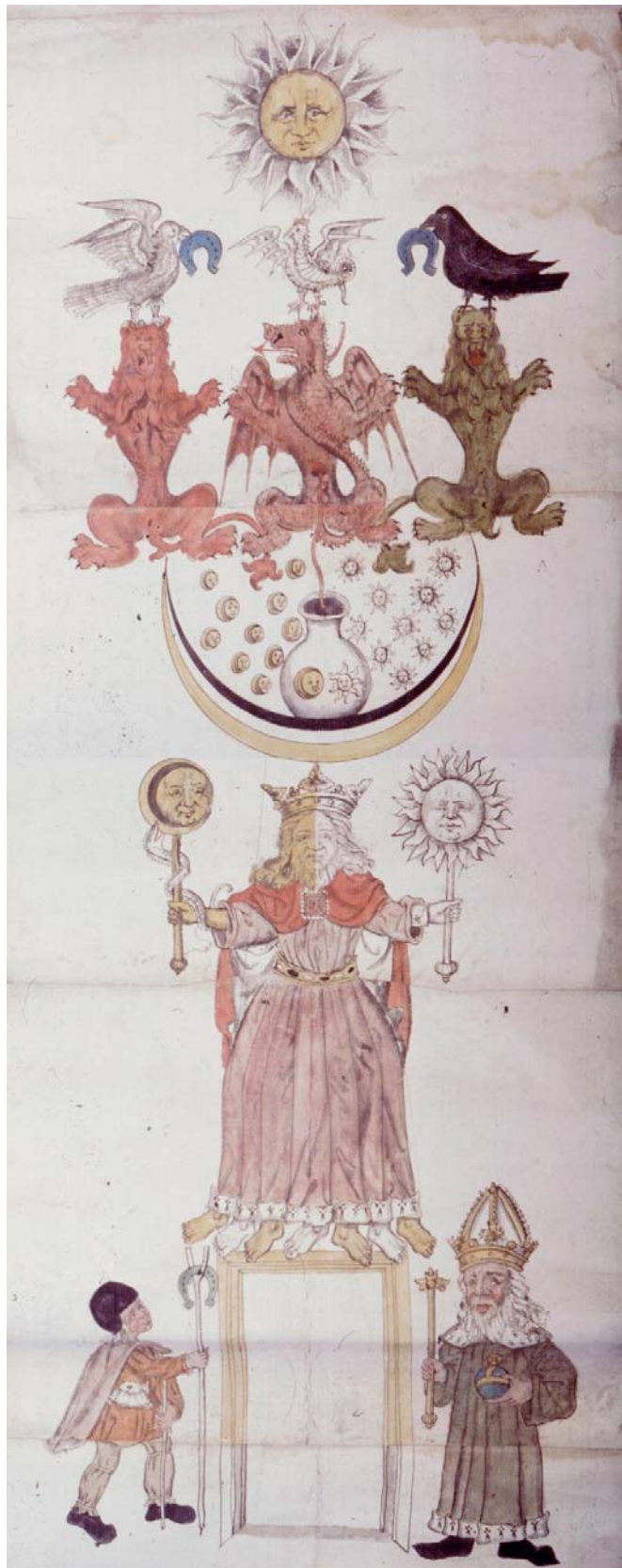


The roundels have been radically simplified. In B.L. Add 5025-1 we see that a single monk attends the furnace and a child or homunculus only appears in all seven flasks. There is no sense of transformation or the addition of substances to the flasks.



We see the symbolism of the third and fourth panels in a much simplified form further down the scroll. The dragon seen in the fourth panel of the Type I scrolls (which is depicted green on those which are coloured) is here a bright red colour.

At the end of the Type II scrolls there is a complex emblem not seen in the Type I scrolls. Here a red and a green lion flank a winged lion or perhaps a griffin. Birds on their heads hold horseshoes, a white eagle on the red lion and a black crow on the green lion, while on the head of the lion/griffin is a small winged dragon or cockatrice. Below in the belly of a crescent moon a flask is seen with the sun and moon within it. Standing beneath this is a strange, possibly hermaphroditic, figure. One side of its body is golden, the other silvery white. It is crowned and holds up the sun and moon on sceptres. It has seven feet, four golden and three silvery. These are likely to be the seven planetary metals three of which are solar having sun discs in their glyphs - Mars, Sun and Venus, three lunar with lunar crescents in their symbols- Jupiter, Moon and Saturn, and Mercury having both. Here is the image from Ashmole Rolls 53.



This strange double figure stands above a doorway. On the left we see an echo of the pilgrim/secretary/scholar at the end of the Type I scrolls. Here he appears more like a peasant holding a crutch with a horseshoe. On the right is a king holding his orb and sceptre. This king is seen on four of the Type I Ripley Scrolls (as is described in the second lesson of this course).

I think we can see that this subgroup of the Type II scrolls draws substantially upon the Type I scrolls. Many of the symbols from there are included but much of the detail has been removed and it is difficult to grasp the coherence of the imagery without referring to the Type I versions. Two extra emblematic sections are added – the monk encountering the angels, and the sun and moon-sided king. The verses, so important to understanding the import of the symbolism, are not included. We should perhaps see this group as a later reworking of the scroll. It is interesting to see how the symbolic material is handled differently, but this group of manuscripts does not seem to throw any new light onto the Scroll or help us substantially in reading its symbolic message. For that we should perhaps rely only on the Type I scrolls.

The remarkable Ms. Add 5025-3

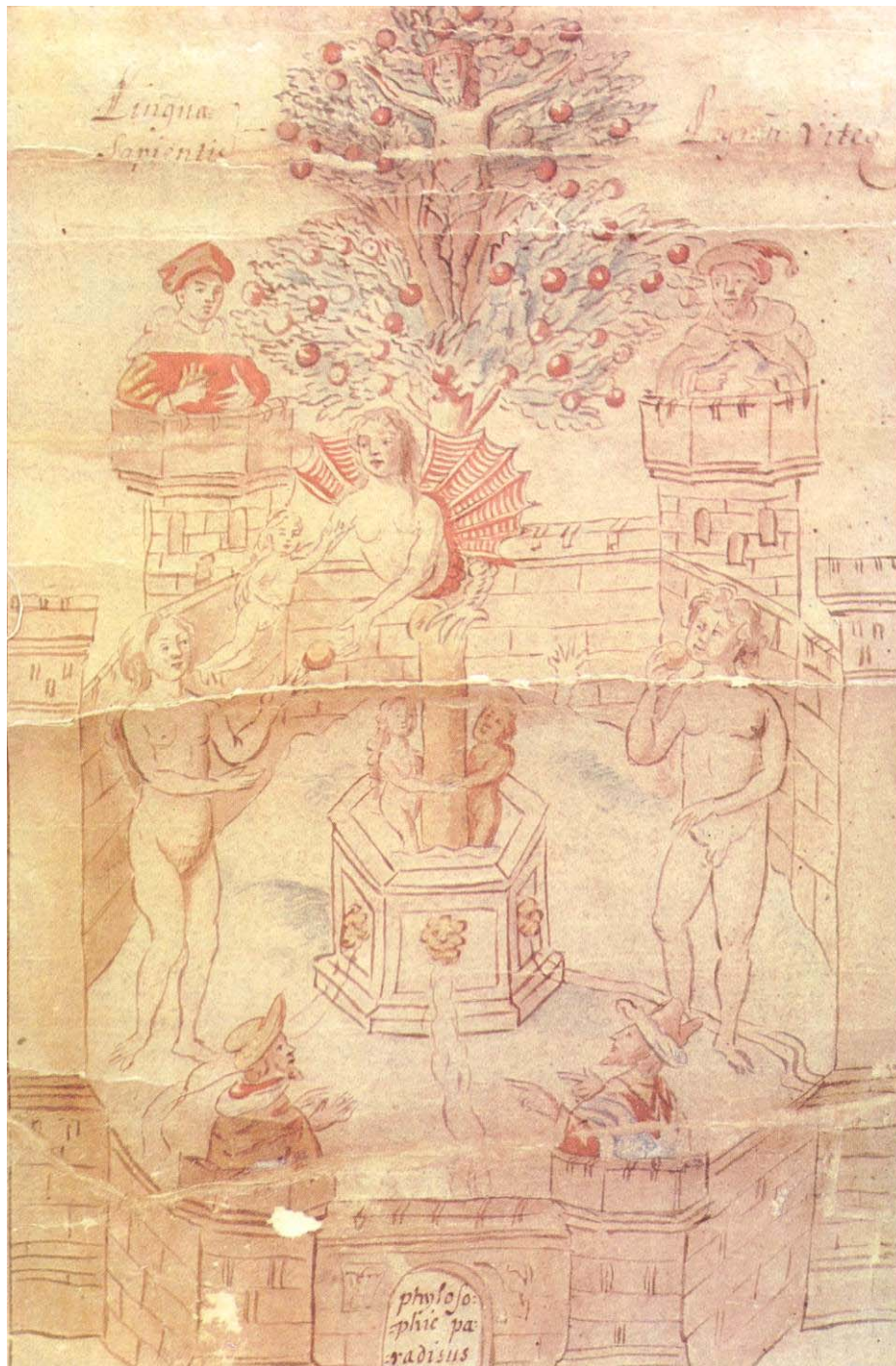
As we have seen this is a unique manuscript. Most of its symbolic material is only found there. Although it seems to bear some links to the other scrolls, its symbolism departs from the Type I and other Type II manuscripts and takes us off on a path of its own. This manuscript really needs a substantial commentary of its own, which would only touch tangentially on the Ripley Scroll. It is of a late date, the closing decades of the 16th century, and is found in the group of four manuscripts constituting MS. Add 5025 in the British Library. These are distinguished by being so much smaller than the other scrolls, about 1/3 the size. They appear to be made by the same hand, and are dated 1588. MS. Add 5025-2 has at the end “This long roll was drane for me in Cullers At Lubech in Germany Anno 1588.” This group includes two Type I scroll, MS. Add 5025-2 a representative of the type II, and this odd version MS. Add 5025-3.

Hopefully, some time in the future, I will be able to produce a commentary on this manuscript, but for now we can merely note the following. At the top of this scroll is our alchemist holding the pelican flask, however there are no roundels or any other indication of the sequence of operations. Next follows the conjoined sun and moon with the dragon underneath, which is based on the fourth panel of the Type I scrolls. There are feathers and drops of liquid to the sides. It seems as if the whole symbolic contents of the Type I scrolls have been compacted into merely the beginning and end. Below this is a rose. The text above this states

Take the fair roses white and red
And join them two in one bed
So between those roses milde
You shall bring forth a [...] child



Then we are shown a castellated space somewhat like the heptangular vessel of the second panel of the type I scrolls. Here it is not itself a basin of liquid but a walled garden “the paradise of the philosophers”. Here we see the tree of the second panel standing in a hexagonal basin of liquid. The bat winged female serpent figure stands on the trunk and hands out apples to the male and female figures. High up in the tree Christ is crucified. This presents us with a radical reworking of the earlier material into a more obviously Christian context.



The rest of this scroll presents us with symbolic material not found in any of the other scrolls

A triple furnace

A pelican flask supported by a lion and a dragon, with male and female figures inside

A furnace with a flask heated in a water bath

A circulatory apparatus with two flasks, the double pelican.

A circulatory apparatus with upper and lower flasks.

A double ouroboros within a zodiacal circle [This is often reproduced in books]

Finally a man lying on the ground [probably Adam] with a female emerging from his side [Even born from the rib.]

These symbols take us some distance away from the Type I scrolls so I will not discuss this in detail here. MS. Add 5025-3 is a remarkable manuscript and deserves a deeper study. Although obviously based on the Ripley Scroll it presents us with another journey through the alchemical process.

