

APPENDIX 2

THE EPITAPH OF DR JOHN WEBSTER

Hic jacet ignotus mundo, mersusque tumultu
Invidiae, semper mens tamen aequa fuit
multa tulit, veterum ut sciret Secreta Sophorum
Ac tandem vires noverit ignis Aquae

Johannes Hyphantes alias Webster
natus in parochia Silvae cuculatae¹ in
Agro Eboracensi Anno Dom 1610
Ergastulum reliquit 1682

Sicque peroravit moriens, et mundo huic valedicens:
Aurea pax vivis, requies aeterna Sepultis

¹ The translation of Cuxwold as Silvae cuculatae in Latin was almost certainly an alchemical pun on Webster's part; cuculatum majus = aqua vitae.

A rough translation might read as follows:

Here he lies unknown to the world, and buried under a mound of odium,
But his mind was always patient and endured much,
So that it might know the secrets of the ancient sages,
And finally learn of the powers of the fire.

Johannes Hyphantes alias Webster
Born in the parish of the cuckoo wood [Coxwold]
In the county of York in the year of our Lord 1610
Left his prison in 1682.

And so, dying, he bade farewell to this world:
“Golden peace to the living, eternal rest to the buried”.

[This epitaph is to be found appended to the Catalogue of Webster's Library, Chetham Library MS. A.6.47, f.22v. A fuller version is to be found on a monument in Clitheroe parish church erected in memory of Webster.]