What do they think they’re doing?

History, alchemy and the digitization of manuscripts
Earthe of Earth
Take earthe of earth earthes brother,
Water & earthe it is none other
& fyre of earth that beareth the price
& of that earth looke thoue bee wyse
The trewe elixer if thoue list to make,
It out of the earth looke thoue take,
pure, subtile, fayre, & good,
and doo it with watr of the woodd:
for in ear it the earthe desolved must bee
without fyre days unless three
Depart the thyme then fro the thicke
And vapoure it into gumme like picke,
A watr therof distill yo' shall
Our Aqua vitae & o' menstrual:
Stemmata for texts A and B

Diagram of text A:
- A1
- A2
- A3
- A4
- A5
- A6

Dates:
- s. xv
- s. xvi
- s. xvii

Diagram of text B:
- B1
- B2
- B3
- B4
- B5
- B6

Dates:
- s. xv
- s. xvi
- s. xvii
Joint stemma for texts A and B
Insights from combined stemma
Critical editions of both texts

I have a daughter that hight satinse & desyng
Of my daughter withouten deede
This science if ye list to leere
This warre reducith every thing
To tenderness and sinning
Burleuycythe & growlyng & yewth frute & light
Ingression lyf and lasting sight
and all sightfull wercres the soth to say
hit helthyn and bryngthyg in a good wyse

Of spraye take thou thy clotuyght
The redde gomme that is so bright
Of philosophers the sulphur viif
Calld golde withouten stryf
Of hymne drawe out a syncture
And make a matromony pure
Betwene the husband and the wif
Expoused with the sperte of lyf

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1. f. 125v
   "Of [.] take]
   "Take of spraye a1"
2. f. 125v
   "Of spraye a1; Geber of Spaine with a55"
3. f. 125v
   "The; a1"
4. f. 125v
   "Golde called a1, a2, a5, It is called a3"
5. f. 125v
   "Hymne a1; a1"
6. f. 125v
   "Matrimony pure; a1"
7. f. 125v
   "Satinse; a5, a9"
Pulling up copies A4 and A5

Then fede it furthe as ye shulde doo
With mylke & meate that longeth therto
Tyll it be grown to his full age
Then shall it bee stronge & of greate courage
And turne all bodies that lawfull bee
To his owne poure and dignitie/
This is the makinge of s' stone
The truth I haue tolde the eche one./
For truly it is none other waye of very right
But bodie of bodie & light of light
Where all the foole in the worlde sechen
A thinge that they may nev' maynteyn./
For they wolde haue metall out of them
That nev' was founde of earthely man./
For of all thinges I will no mo
But 4. elementes in generall I saye to yo' so./
Soone & moone earthe and watr
And here is all that men of clatf /

fro the moysture of the grape who can it take
and then do owre manystrye make
But nowe beware y' ye not fayle
for then yowe loose yo' greate trauyle
when yowe have drawen owte of the gumme
all the mercurye that wyll commo
wnderstande then liquores three
in that mercurye conteyned be
The fyrste is the water of lyfe ardente
by bathe to be departyd y' is moste lente
yt burnet at Aqua vitae belyve
& is called s mercurye attractyve
wherewyth is made earthe chrystallyne
owte of all calces metallyne
I speake no more hereof as yet
for in this worcke we neede not yet
Then scommyth a water after thicke
& lightnesse that cometh on this.
Pulling up copies A4 and A5