



Water of Life

Anne Wilson

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This important book looks at the entire history of distilling in the Middle East and Europe from the earliest experiments by the Pythagorean alchemists of Ptolomaic Egypt in the fourth century BC to the commercial production of spirits to drink in the British Isles to the year 2000. It is important because Ms Wilson has explored byways of early history that have been little noticed by previous scholars. She links the art of distilling to alchemical practice; to the Dionysian cults of ancient Greece and Rome; to the development of the art by the Gnostic mystic Christian sects (who greatly influenced the Coptic church in lower Egypt and Ethiopia); to the researches of the Persians and Arabs; to the preservation of the art by various heretic cults in western Europe such as the Bogomils and Cathars and, of course, the Templars; then into more mainstream development by the medieval and Renaissance alchemists; before comparative relaxation into the domestic history of distilling in England for the manufacture of strong liquor and the making of medicinal and perfumed waters by members of the landed gentry.

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