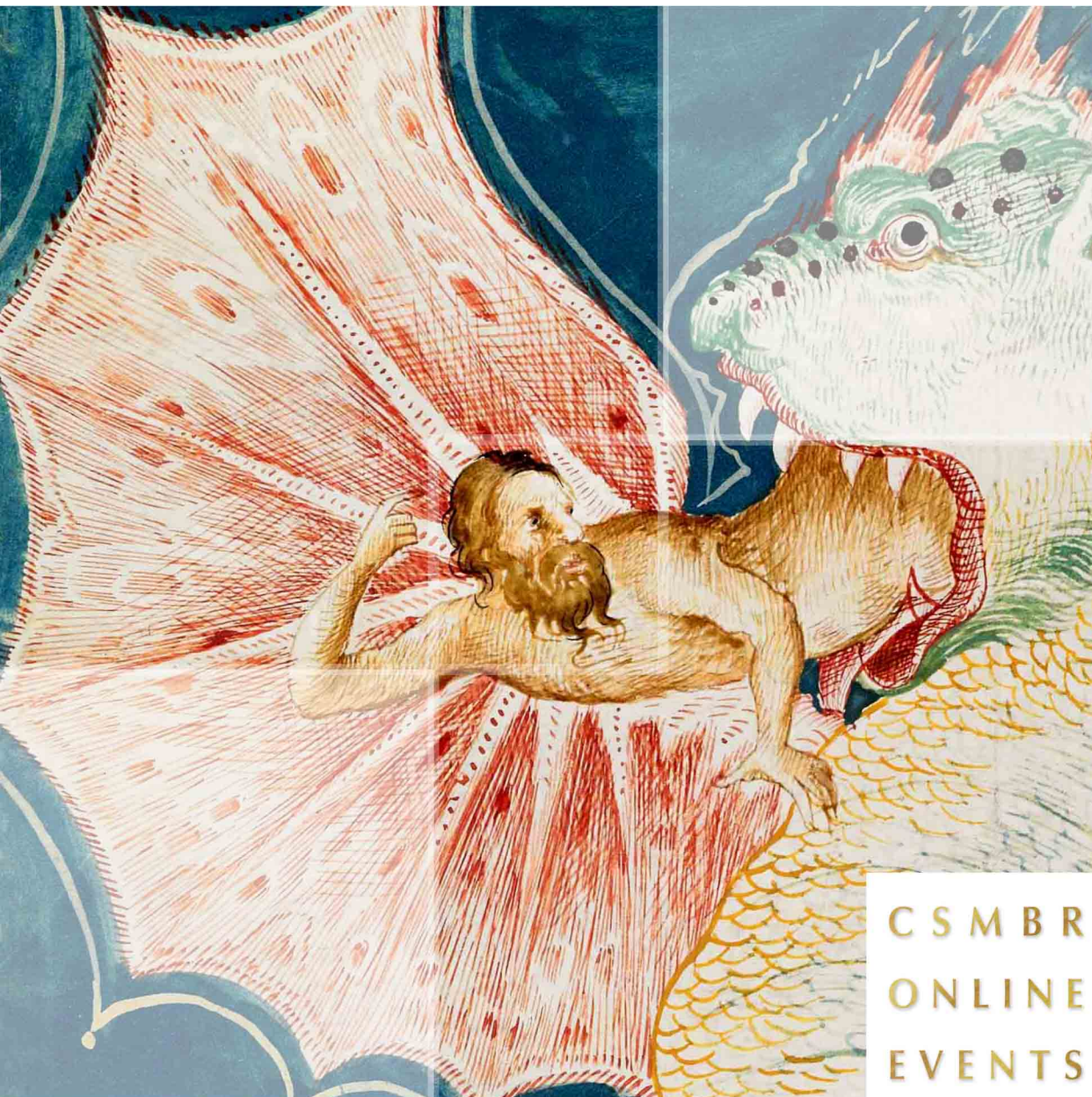


CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF
MEDICINE AND THE BODY
IN THE RENAISSANCE

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UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI PARMA



STUDIO FIRMANO
PER LA STORIA DELL'ARTE MEDICA E DELLA SCIENZA

CSMBR
ONLINE
EVENTS



25
NOVEMBER
2025
5.00 pm CET

MEDICAL ALCHEMY, PHILOLOGY, AND THE ANTICHRIST

JOHN OF RUPESCISSA'S «DE FAMULATU PHILOSOPHIE EVANGELIO»

LAWRENCE M. PRINCIPE • Johns Hopkins University

The Franciscan friar, prophet, and alchemist John of Rupescissa (ca. 1310-1366) is one of the most important and influential alchemical authors of the 14th century. Convinced that the antichrist would soon come to power and persecute the Christian world, John turned to alchemy as the solution. Alchemy could provide new medicines to protect the lives of the faithful, as well as gold and silver to rebuild the impoverished Church after the antichrist's fall.

Despite over twenty years of imprisonment, John wrote prolifically. This talk will focus on his pharmacological work, *De famulatu philosophie*, often referred to as *De consideratione quinte essentie*, written in 1351-52 when he was confined in papal Avignon under Clement VI, and of which I am completing the first critical edition. While John's important contributions to the history of chemistry and of pharmacy have long been recognized,

scholars have almost invariably relied on the printed edition of 1561, often reading it through the lenses of intermediary epitomized or plagiarized versions. I will review the surviving manuscript witnesses and the evidence they present, and point to several textual errors that have led to significant misinterpretations of John's ideas and methods. These methods, more accurately understood, clarify John's thought and reposition it in due context particularly in terms of his Franciscan profession.

The event is free to attend but registration is required. Info at csnbr.fondazionecomel.org