

Symposium:

# Alchemy, Hermeticism, and Islamic and Jewish Mysticism Around the Time of Chrétien de Troyes



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## Call for Papers

Eagle Hill Foundation, Steuben, Maine, USA

Friday, October 15th, through Sunday, October 17th, 2010

This symposium will have a dual thematic focus on (1) major esoteric and mystical movements of the fascinatingly rich intellectual and religious cultures of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, namely, alchemy, hermeticism, and Islamic and Jewish mysticism; and (2) the works of Chrétien de Troyes, whose Arthurian romances seem to suggest an awareness of some aspects of these movements. Recent scholarship has suggested that there was not only a higher degree of intercultural and interreligious permeability during this time period—especially between Spain and France—than previously suspected, but that important channels of transmission of ideas, treatises, and texts have been overlooked. The symposium is intended to foster an exchange of ideas among participants, whose areas of expertise are generally considered to be distinct from one another. This confluence of otherwise diverse academic perspectives will provide a comparative framework to explore the broad range of cultural resources accessible to writers and intellectual communities during the time of Chrétien de Troyes.

Experts in 1) medieval alchemy, hermeticism, Islamic and Jewish Mysticism, 2) the interpretation of the romances of Chrétien de Troyes, and 3) the translation or modes of transmission of treatises and texts around the time of Chrétien de Troyes are invited to give presentations providing insights into their own research and ideas, or to provide a broad overview of some aspect of their respective fields. Summaries of past and current research are important, since these will provide the broad context for discussions among participants with regard to the more enigmatic

aspects of Chrétien’s romances, and possibly also the works of other contemporary writers, such as Wolfram von Eschenbach. Although a familiarity with the romances of Chrétien de Troyes is not essential, this would be helpful, since the motif of “the quest” is a recurrent theme, both in the narrative strategies of Chrétien, and in the esoteric and mystical movements of his time. It is thus hoped that a consideration of the romances of Chrétien will lead to a better understanding of how the medieval esoteric and mystical movements can be studied from the standpoint of their contribution to the popular milieu, and how this may have inspired literary geniuses like Chrétien.

The symposium will provide ample informal opportunities for group discussions, since accommodations and meals are available within easy walking distance of the lecture hall and rooms where the symposium will be held. Participants are welcome to extend their discussions late into the night by the fireplaces in the main symposium building.

**Call for abstracts.** Scholars interested in giving a presentation are invited to submit an abstract, no longer than 2,500 characters or 500 words in length, to [office@eaglehill.us](mailto:office@eaglehill.us) by April 30, 2010. Inquiries about possible presentations are welcome.

**General invitation.** An announcement, with a list of presentations, will be sent out on May 31, 2010. The symposium is open to all who share an interest in scholarship about the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.

**Published proceedings.** Presenters are invited to submit a manuscript for inclusion in the symposium proceedings, which will be published in *Arcanum*, a new scholarly online and print journal, presently in the early planning stages (ISSN 2152-6621). This peer-reviewed journal will be dedicated to research on the confluence of ideas which gave rise to the many fascinating intellectual accomplishments of the twelfth and thirteenth Centuries. Inquiries regarding the journal are welcome. The journal will be published by the Eagle Hill Foundation, which already



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publishes the *Journal of the North Atlantic*, a peer-reviewed scholarly journal whose core focus is on Viking age archaeology and the environmental history of the greater North Atlantic.

**Deadline for submission of manuscripts.** The suggested deadline for the submission of manuscripts for the proceedings is November 15, 2010. The journal *Arcanum* follows an article-by-article online publishing model. Articles which have met with the approval of the peer-review and editing process are formally published/uploaded on the journal's website as soon as the galley proofs are reviewed and accepted by their respective authors and guest editors. The Table of Contents is updated as each article is published. Once the volume of proceedings is complete, a print version will be issued.

**Symposium schedule.** The arrival day is Thursday, October 14, 2010. Friday, Saturday, and Sunday are full program days. 4. The departure day is Monday, October 18th. However, scholars are welcome to extend their stay in order to continue discussions, enjoy travelling along the scenic Maine coast, and/or take advantage of airline discounts.

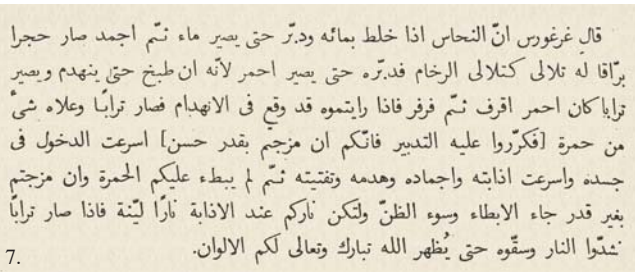
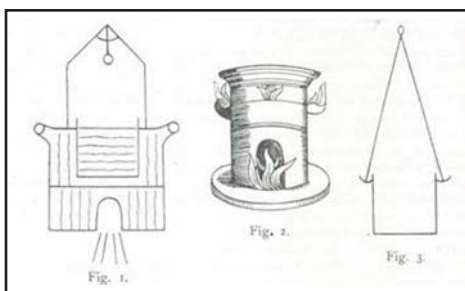
**Location.** The Symposium will be held at the facilities of the Eagle Hill Foundation and Humboldt Institute, situated on the summit of Eagle Hill on the coast of eastern Maine. Acadia National Park and the Canadian border are both within a scenic one-hour drive. Mid-October falls in the midst of Maine's spectacular autumn foliage season.

**Costs.** There is a \$150 symposium registration fee, which will be waived for presenters. Information about accommodations and meals for this 3-day symposium is available on the Institute's website.

**Travel options.** The nearest airport is Bangor, Maine, with easy connecting flights from New York City, Boston, and Portland. Bangor is just over an hour from the Institute by bus, taxi, or rental car (car-pooling will be facilitated).

**Contact person.**

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- 1) The Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes" ed. Keith Busby, et. al, 2 vols. (Amsterdam : Rodopi), 1993.
- 2) Maimonides teaching about the "measure of men," from a Hebrew translation of Maimonide's Guide for the Perplexed, from the Royal Library in Copenhagen, (originally authored in Arabic), dating from 1347.
- 3) A page from a 12<sup>th</sup> century Latin translation of an Arabic manuscript (in the Bodleian Library).
- 4) Illustration of an Aludel. "Summa Perfectionis Magisterii" by Jabir ibn Hayyan.
- 5) From the Leyden Papyrus X.
- 6) Giorgione : The Three philosophers.
- 7) From the Kitab Al-Habib.