

IASEMS



Italian Association
of Shakespearean and
Early Modern Studies

Early Modern Natural Philosophy: Reading the Book of Nature

The Eleventh IASEMS Conference
Università degli Studi di Bologna, 10-12 June 2020

EXTENDED DEADLINE (see below)

In the Book of Nature, as in a well contriv'd Romance, the parts have such a connection and relation to one another, and the things we would discover are so darkly or incompleatly knowable by those that precede them, that the mind is never satisfied till it comes to the end of the Book.

Robert Boyle, *The Excellency of Theology, compar'd with Natural Philosophy* (1674).

The Eleventh Iasems Conference will investigate early modern intellectual engagement with natural philosophy. In the early modern age, reading the Book of Nature, namely the material manifestation of God's design, meant crossing different epistemologies: it was a practice deeply inscribed into old and new cultural frameworks, religious beliefs and mental horizons; it took great advantage of new geographies and technologies, but at the same time valued the anchor of tradition; pervaded by uncertainty and doubt, it made of 'intellectual vertigo' a bewildering, but also challenging, starting point for inquiry. Early modern investigations, narratives and images often encoded attempts to identify safer foundations for man's space in the modern world, to redefine nostalgic longings for lost purity in the relationship with nature, to challenge popular beliefs – while also addressing impending issues of exploitation, competition and control.

We welcome papers dealing with imaginative and factual narratives, intersections between old and new visions and texts, competing ideas of language, power, control, creativity and communication in the discourse of natural philosophy as it was inscribed in early modern literature, language and culture.

Topics of interest include, but are not limited to the following:

- Nature on stage: imagery and discourse
- Natural philosophy and the Christian tradition
- Natural philosophy and the legacy of classical thought
- Natural imagery in classical myths and early modern metamorphoses
- The dissemination of natural knowledge: manuscript, print, image
- Teaching natural philosophy: institutional and non-institutional practices
- Pastoralism and utopianism in Early Modern England
- Curiosity and wonder in Early Modern England
- Experiencing nature: affective/emotional responses
- Exploring the mechanics of nature
- Early modern ‘ecologies’
- Early modern experimentation and travelling: towards the Royal Society
- The emergence of scientific language
- Writing natural philosophy: Latin and the vernacular
- Humanists and the language of natural knowledge
- Natural and philosophical languages

We welcome proposals for twenty-minute papers (maximum). Please send a 500-word abstract and 200-word curriculum vitae by **15 February 2020** to:

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