



BOOK OF ABSTRACTS – SCIENTIAE CONFERENCE, NANTES, JUNE 9–12, 2026

TUESDAY, JUNE 9

Pre-conference event (11am-1pm)

Panel Title: Early Modern Treasures: Natural History, Economy, and Politics in the Age of Colonization

Organizers

Samir Boumediene (CNRS, Lyon) & Matthijs Jonker (Utrecht University)

Panel Abstract

As a predecessor of and rough equivalent to our modern concept of “natural resources”, this panel uses the notion of “treasures” to interrogate the intersections of natural history, economy and politics in the age of colonization. The papers discuss the natural historical and botanical knowledge that was both needed for and the result of land improvement and the transplantation of crops in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Latin America and Southern Europe. Through the analysis of natural history treatises, scientific illustrations, dictionaries, and landscape paintings we examine how natural treasures were valued, transformed, and exploited in the early modern world.

Antoine Duranton (EHESS, Paris)

From barren to fertile: soil descriptions and improvement of the land in early colonial Mexico

In the aftermath of the conquest of Mexico, the Spaniards appropriated and occupied vast tracts of land, which they described, evaluated and hierarchized. Classifications ultimately distinguished between barren and fertile soils but also used a range of intermediate and uncertain categories, following a system that was not always consistent. These categories corresponded to the purposes given to these lands, in the context of the constitution of large agricultural estates in which European plants were the main production. This paper will describe how Spaniards valued soils and how certain practices and plants were supposed to turn lands described as barren into fertile and valued places. The cultivation of the “right” plants, namely European ones, symbolically associated with evangelization, was the key factor of the improvement of a barren soil. This domesticated and Christianized nature became a coveted asset, something related but quite different to the modern concept of “natural resources”.

Anca-Delia Moldovan (Maria Skłodowska-Curie COFUND), Institute of Advanced Studies and the Center for the Study of Renaissance, University of Warwick, UK)

Piero Vettori and the Noble Art of Olive Growing: Botanical Knowledge as Environmental and Economic Strategy in Sixteen-Century Tuscany

In the dedicatory letter to his 1569 treatise on olive cultivation addressed to Cosimo I de’ Medici (Duke of Florence, 1537–69; Grand Duke 1569–74), the Florentine humanist Piero Vettori (1499–1585) praised the

bountifulness of the Tuscan olive tree and its vital role in the prosperity of the Medici state. It may, therefore, seem surprising when later in the book, Vettori admitted that Tuscany lacked ideal climatic conditions for olive growing. Vettori believed that diligent agricultural practices could protect plants from the harmful effects of the sky, but knowledge of such methods had been obscured by centuries of neglect following the barbaric invasion of Italy. His treatise was as much an effort to restore the state's landscape and economy, as it was an attempt to reclaim classical tradition through empirical approaches. Writing in vernacular Italian, Vettori sought to popularize his (re)discovery of the vegetative propagation via uovuli with both landowners and practitioners. His ambition to reform the agricultural landscape of his time transpires from his correspondence exchange with naturalists, humanists, and state rulers. This presentation will examine the valuable contribution of Vettori's little-studied Treatise on the Praise and Cultivation of Olive Trees to the agronomical improvement and natural-historical debates that animated the second half of the sixteenth century. By exploring this treatise alongside Vettori's epistolary rich exchanges and situating it within the premodern intellectual and politico-economic context, the talk will showcase the early modern intersection of botanical inquiry with environmental and economic concerns. In doing so, the olive tree will emerge at the centre of sixteenth-century tensions between city and countryside; climate and economy; self-sufficiency and commercial ambitions; and classical frameworks and new experiential drives. Looking at the history of this tree implies, therefore, looking more broadly at the early modern world.

Laura Valterio (postdoctoral researcher at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence)

Reproducing Value: Animal Care and the Colonial Economy of Fertility in Early Modern Depictions of Sericulture

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a rich corpus of written and visual representations of sericulture was produced in Italy. Far from providing neutral records of agricultural practice, these works were addressed to noblewomen, celebrating and prescribing their roles as wives and mothers. This paper examines the gendering of silk production in two printed series: *Vermis sericus*, engraved after drawings by the Florence-based artist Jan van der Straet, and the woodcuts accompanying a sericulture manual by the Jewish Venetian entrepreneur Magino Gabrielli. I argue that these images exploited the ecological knowledge of female peasant workers to construct moralizing allegories of femininity, domesticity, and fertility. As they sexualized the interspecies care provided to silkworms through visual tropes of pregnancy and motherhood, these representations simultaneously naturalized women's reproductive roles. Produced at a moment when Europeans sought to transplant sericulture to the Americas, the prints also register the increasing commodification of fertility—human and nonhuman alike—within expanding colonial regimes of resource extraction. I show how this reproductive imagery blurred boundaries between human and animal, participating in the production of gendered, classed, and racialized difference within an emergent global order. This analysis will expose reproductive labor as a crucial site through which early modern power inscribed hierarchies across bodies, species, and empires.

Marie-Anne Dragon (PhD, Art History and Archaeology at the Université libre de Bruxelles-ULB)

Treasuring Nature. The Landscapes of Frans Post in Dutch Brazil.

This paper proposes to examine the landscapes of Frans Post as forms of “treasuring” colonial nature in seventeenth-century Dutch Brazil. The scenes depicted present a lush environment characterized by the richness of its fauna and flora. This abundance is grounded in careful observation of tropical environments and contributes to the production of ecological knowledge based on the description of species and their habitats. A detailed analysis of the natural elements reveals a strong coherence between the species represented and the ecosystems of the Atlantic Forest. This precision gives the images a descriptive and scholarly dimension, situating these landscapes within a visual culture attentive to naturalist knowledge.

At the same time, these landscapes are embedded in a process of transformation. Certain elements reveal dynamics linked to colonial expansion, notably the fragmentation of vegetation, the alteration of waterways, and the presence of anthropized environments. These features point to practices of exploitation associated with the development of plantations, particularly within the framework of the sugar economy. The environment thus appears as a worked, organized space integrated into economic logics.

The notion of “treasure” makes it possible to account for this articulation between observation, valorization, and exploitation. The represented nature acquires value through its pictorial rendering. The landscape operates a selection, organization, and hierarchization of natural elements, contributing to the depiction of the environment as rich, ordered, and available. This visual structuring participates in the construction of a legible space, one that can be appropriated and integrated into economic and political circuits, much like a treasure.

Plenary Panel

Writing Asian histories of science: transmission, geopolitics, infrastructure, c. 1563-1682 (organizer: Stefano Gulizia)

This panel assembles three interventions that discuss medical and scientific knowledge moving from early modern Asia, in its plurality of voices and institutional patronage, to the consumption of European collectors. The overall aim is to complicate received narratives of imperial science, and move away from metaphorical uses of 'trading zones' in favor of inner port cities and sites-specific formulations. In addition, we also hope to suggest some ways to cement the study of objects by paying attention to processes of translation and teamwork, the materiality of epistemic practices, and, perhaps most importantly, to the geopolitical dimension of such infrastructures, taken together.

The three papers presented by Kapil Raj, Stefano Gulizia, and Harold J. Cook offer an overview, in broad lines and with concrete examples, of book-length projects, either in progress or forthcoming. As such, they also represent a departure from the case-study or micro-historical approach. Ideally, in their diverse and global scale they will bring some new light to practices of intellectual and interdisciplinary exchange, which concern Eurasia, mercantile networks, scientific academies, and the learned reading publics.

Kapil Raj (EHES-École des hautes études en sciences sociales, Professor Emeritus)

A Treatise on Oriental Natural History for European Consumption, or a Manual for Asian Inter-Port Trade? Revisiting Garcia da Orta's *Colóquios dos simples e drogas e coisas medicinais da Índia* (1563)

The Portuguese physician, Garcia da Orta (c.1500-1568), who spent the second half his life in India and died in Goa, is perhaps one of the best known of 16th-century savants, someone who had already made a name for himself in Europe during his lifetime, his only work, *Colóquios dos simples e drogas e coisas medicinais da Índia* printed and published in Goa in 1563, was translated into Latin and published in 1567 by none other than Carolus Clusius (1526-1609) one of the founding fathers of fledgling discipline of botany. After a long period of neglect, however, he was resurrected at the end of the 19th century and there is, indeed, now a flourishing Orta industry that celebrates him as the author of one of the first treatises on oriental natural history, a monumental book at the origin of "much of Europe's understanding of Indian flora". But is the *Colóquios* a "monumental" work? Is it really one of the founding texts for the understanding of Indian flora by European residents? Was it indeed even made chiefly for readers in Europe? After succinctly presenting its contents and geographical coverage, this talk will try and answer

these and other important questions relating to the work. Keeping in mind that Orta was the personal physician to the governor, and later viceroy, of the Portuguese maritime empire in Asia, we shall then situate the *Colóquios* within the context of its political, commercial, economic and demographic evolution to show that the work was meant primarily for the Portuguese community in Asia – functionaries as well as casado settlers – in order to help them enter the thriving regional trading networks largely comprising of materia medica and other natural historical objects.

Stefano Gulizia (Ca' Foscari in Venice, President of Scientiae)

Naming Difference: Jesuit Cartography and Natural History in 17th-Century China

This paper addresses the complex process of inscribing the names of the Asian natural world – both the natural species and its territorial boundaries – in the records of the Jesuit China Mission as undertaken by one of its official procurators, Martino Martini (1614-1661). It takes a non-Eurocentric view of Martini's *Novus Atlas Sinenfis* (1655), an ambitious collaboration with the Blaeu firm in Amsterdam. And, by extension, it gives a broad outline of the intellectual and commercial value of Martini's career. The first part explores Martini's simultaneous positioning of the 'fantastic' geography of China and the limits of his own writing. The examination of a language of pastoralism, which largely derives from Roman ethnography, points to Martini's portrayal of the region as a potentially utopian space. The second part studies Martini's detainment in Batavia in the 1650s, and juxtaposes the literature of instructions vis-à-vis military or diplomatic methods. My discussion is oriented towards highlighting two key topics: the way in which Jesuits in China and Spanish Dominicans in the Philippines extracted topographical information, all based on teamwork; and the way in which the VOC officials identified the value and presence of 'useful' knowledge by operating a vernacular transcription (some of which is still extant in the company's archives at The Hague). The conclusions, in turn, foreground why we cannot talk of maps as a Latourian 'immutable mobiles'.

Harold J Cook (John F Nickoll Professor History Emeritus, Brown University)

Did the Circulation of the Blood originate in China? A Question for 17th-century Curiosi

One of the most intriguing questions for European physicians of the late 17th century was whether Chinese physicians had known about the circulation of the blood since just after the Deluge. To be sure, this was not a wide-spread debate. But by the 1670s and 1680s the question motivated many of the European curiosi to take an interest in the new literature about Chinese pulse medicine that came from members of the Jesuit Japan mission. After reading some of their manuscripts, Andreas Cleyer, a physician working for the Dutch East India Company, was provoked by the possibility and went on to compile a selection of their translations and essays about Chinese medicine, published in 1682 as the *Specimen Medicinæ Sinicæ*. After reading it, the notorious savant Issac Vossius, who had already commented on pulse medicine on the basis of the anonymous *Les Secrets de la Médecine des Chinois*, placed William Harvey in a lineage of physicians who had obtained knowledge about the circulation of the blood from China via Central Asia. The possibility that Chinese physicians had long known about the “revolutionary” new discovery ascribed to Harvey continued to be raised for the next century. In fact, the question about why Harvey took an interest in the relationship between the motions of respiration and the pulse – a foundation for Chinese pulse medicine and said to be the key to Harvey’s discovery – remains open. It is a curiosity that can tell us much about how the medical understandings of other places provoked the attention of European readers.

15h30-17h00 - PANELS

Panel 1 (organizer: Nicolas Correard)

Session bilingue : « Savoirs et poétiques de l’animalité, XVI^e-XVII^e siècle. » / « *Early Modern Knowledge and the Poetics of the Animal* » (a bilingual panel) – annual congress of Scientiæ, Nantes 9th-10th June 2026.

Cette session présentera les recherches actuelles de spécialistes de littérature française et comparée qui s’intéressent aux croisements de l’histoire des sciences et de l’histoire littéraire sur le thème de l’animalité. Ils montreront l’intérêt des corpus hybrides pour comprendre l’évolution des représentations de l’animalité à partir de trois exemples / *This session will present current research by specialists in French and Comparative literature who are interested in the intersections between the history of science and literary history on the theme of animality. They will demonstrate the value of hybrid corpuses for understanding the evolution of representations of animality, with three case studies.*

Myriam Marrache-Gouraud (Professeure de littérature du XVI^e siècle à l’Université de Poitiers (laboratoire FoReLLIS - UR 15076) et Membre senior de l’Institut Universitaire de France (IUF)

« La controverse de la tortue »

Après avoir rappelé les débats sur le classement des tortues dans l’échelle de la nature, et la querelle dans les récits de voyage sur la taille possible ou impossible des tortues, sera exposé d’une part le conflit descriptif traditionnel de naturalistes rouvert entre Jean de Léry et André Thevet, et d’autre part la manière dont cette controverse naturaliste est réactivée symboliquement, convertie à des fins moqueuses et féroces, pour alimenter une rivalité d’écriture qui tourne au burlesque grâce à la tortue, devenue pièce maîtresse de la satire (trait paradoxal pour deux voyageurs), l’un étant plus lent que l’autre à publier, mais tous deux revendiquant la première place.

Aude Volpillac (Maîtresse de Conférences en Littérature française du XVII^e siècle à l’Université Catholique de Lyon)

« Poétique et esthétique des insectes au XVII^e siècle »

Les années 1660 témoignent d’un changement de paradigme au terme duquel les insectes font leur entrée dans la culture visuelle d’un public plus large qui leur accorde une valeur inédite. Cette promotion axiologique passe notamment par l’émergence d’une conscience esthétique et d’une poétique de la merveille. Si l’usage du microscope polarise, avec Hooke et ses relais en France, les regards et les pratiques, il modifie aussi les pratiques littéraires - même de ceux qui ne l’utilisent pas - en favorisant une attention nouvelle portée au détail et à l’approfondissement de l’écriture du tissu organique. Le geste naturaliste est indissociable d’une description où la mise en scène de soi comme sujet observateur attentif et émerveillé va de pair avec l’émergence d’une expérience esthétique. On étudiera trois procédés littéraires en particulier : l’écriture de la couleur, la poétique microscopiste et l’usage de l’analogie.

Nicolas Correard (Maître de Conférences in Comparative Literature at the Université de Nantes)

« Talking Animals: Interactions between Early Modern Zoosemiotics and Zoopoetics (back and forth) »

Whether animal systems of communication can be considered “languages” remains a debated issue among ethologists and linguists. The idea that animals “discourrent” and “s’entr’entendent”, as Montaigne puts it, was not uncommon in the early modern world, and it was not only a matter of poetical trope. Even though naturalists kept at a good distance from literary fictions, philosophers such as Rorario (*Quod bruta animalia ratione utantur*, c. 1544), Acquapendente (*De brutorum loquela*, 1603) or Cureau de la Chambre (*De la connoissance des animaux*, 1648) developed a strong case for the existence of animal languages. Acquapendente even sketched a scientific program for their observation. It remained a project, but the precise echoes of such theses in literary stagings of speaking animals show that they were inspiring.

Panel 2

Hervé Goerger (PhD candidate Sorbonne-ENS-EHESS, Paris)

“It is never too late to be wise”: Survival as Experimental Epistemology in *Robinson Crusoe*”

This paper reads Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) as a fictional laboratory for early modern experimental knowledge. Crusoe’s island practices, measuring time, cultivating crops, recording the behaviour of animals and the growth cycles of cereals and plants, as well as constructing tools (or failing to), are presented as demonstrations of an experimental epistemology grounded in observation, repetition, a fair amount of failure, and improvement. The paper argues that Defoe translates the ideals of natural philosophy into a vernacular narrative of survival by drawing on the Baconian legacy, « theologically domesticated » to incorporate the role of Providence nevertheless. Crusoe’s journal functions as a scientific notebook, mediating between experience and systematisation, while his errors foreground the contingent nature of knowledge production. The novel thus stages a tension between providential explanations and empirical reasoning, revealing how experimental science coexisted with theological frameworks in the early eighteenth century. Situating *Robinson Crusoe* within broader debates on the popularization of the scientific mind in literature (paving the way for the *robinsonnades* of the late XIXth century), this paper shows how fiction participates in the circulation of experimental knowledge beyond institutional settings. By reading Crusoe as both practitioner and narrator of knowledge, the paper contributes to the exploration of emergent knowledge practices and the literary mediation of early-modern science and literature.

Lisa Klotz (Lecturer at the University of California, Davis, USA)

“Imagining a Rule of Law in Early Modern England: Richard Hooker and William Shakespeare”

The “rule of law” connotes government by law, not by self-interested individuals; it reins in unruliness spawned by defiance of law, or lax or selective enforcement of law, and perpetuates sovereign authority. The rule of law also comprises a distinct way of understanding and perceiving meaning in political and social events. The rule of law is a structure of beliefs and values, a social construction; hence, any community can imagine a rule of law. Richard Hooker in *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* and William Shakespeare in *Measure for Measure* each imagine a rule of law sprouting from different roots. Hooker, publishing most of the *Laws* in 1593, perceives a rule of law originating in the divine will, expressed in community formation, and shaped by human reason, which informs us of the good we should strive to attain. Shakespeare, in contrast, writing most likely in 1604, locates the origins of the rule of law in human will, both collective and individual. Examining the philosophy underlying each work reveals not only the similarities and differences in their construction of the rule of law, but the extent to which the rule of law is an expression of culture.

Claire Pierrot (PhD University of Paris VII, lecturer *Classes préparatoires*, Rennes, France)

“Perception of nature in relation to colonial issues in the sixteenth century, through Thomas More’s *Utopia*”

My proposal focuses on the perception of nature in relation to colonial issues in the sixteenth century, through Thomas More’s *Utopia*.

The publication of *Utopia* in 1516, combining philosophical dialogue, declamation, and travel narrative, was met with considerable success. However, rather than offering an Amerindian vision of nature, Thomas More articulates a coherent Western conception that legitimizes both the appropriation of land and the domination of bodies. This paper examines the extent to which a rationalized understanding of nature in *Utopia* makes possible colonization and slavery.

Utopia portrays an ideal society governed by reason, in which citizens are encouraged to transform nature into urban and agricultural spaces through the systematic exploitation of land and livestock. Labor is justified by the need to accumulate reserves and protect the community against natural contingencies, a logic opposed to that attributed to Amerindian peoples, who are depicted as living in a present grounded in trust in nature. This desacralized vision underpins the Utopians' justification for annexing neighboring lands deemed uncultivated. Such territorial appropriation, often carried out through violence, is linked to the presence of slavery in Utopia: slaves are repeatedly mentioned, condemned to arduous labor and marked by social stigma. Ultimately, this paper argues that the Utopian conception of nature is a Western one, predicated on the appropriation of living beings, both land and bodies.

Panel 3

Carlos Teixeira Alves (Researcher at RE:CENT Center for Medieval Visual Cultures and Research Communication, Masaryk University, Czech Republic)

“From Craft to Mathematical Science: Hydraulic Engineering Knowledge Networks in Portugal and Europe (1772–1850)”

This paper explores the epistemological transformation of hydraulic engineering in Portugal through the lens of European knowledge networks between 1772 and 1850. Focusing on the University of Coimbra's interventions on the Mondego River, it examines how Portuguese academic engineers, including Manuel Pedro de Melo and José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva, acted as mediators between local environmental challenges and European theoretical advances in hydraulics.

Building on recent scholarship in the history of science, technology, and knowledge circulation (Secord 2004; Hecht 2011; Roberts 2009), the paper situates Portugal not merely as a recipient of foreign expertise, but as an active contributor to continental discussions on hydraulics. Portuguese engineers drew on Borda's mechanics, Bossut's hydrodynamics, and other continental frameworks, adapting them to local riverine conditions, and in turn producing innovations that circulated back through European networks.

The analysis addresses three central questions: How did academic engineers translate theoretical hydraulic principles into applied solutions for Portuguese rivers? How did transnational knowledge networks shape their technical and pedagogical practices? And in what ways did these epistemic exchanges transform both local and European understandings of hydraulic science? Archival research on institutional correspondence, teaching materials, and engineering drawings reveals how the University of Coimbra's 1772 reform created an institutional framework facilitating both knowledge circulation and professionalization of engineering.

By treating hydraulic engineers as knowledge brokers, the paper demonstrates the entanglement of theory, practice, and institutional structures in shaping early modern science. It contributes to broader historiographical debates on Iberian science, transnational circulation of expertise, and the co-production of technical knowledge and environmental governance.

Eddy Benato (PhD student, Roma Tre University-University of Coimbra, Italy-Portugal)

“Crossing Heresiology and Orientalism: Knowledge as a way to classify, govern and judge people (Portuguese Inquisition 16th-18th Century)”

The art of classifying human populations was a technique adopted by the Portuguese Inquisition to exercise its authority over both non-European peoples and internal religious dissidents. This form of knowledge—covering lands, practices, and beliefs—wasn't neutral or purely descriptive. It served judiciary and political purposes. Inquisitors interpreted information by using strong but flexible categories, enabling them to govern effectively while allowing selective adaptation when necessary. The Inquisitorial manuscript manuals reveal that even if increasingly detailed accounts of Hindus, indigenous Brazilians, Jews, Protestants, and atheists appear in this kind of literature, such knowledge rarely altered persecutors' perspectives. Instead, it functioned as a fragmentary diagnostic tool: facts were recorded to confirm or refute preexisting judgments of heresy, as the structure of inquisitorial trial compelled this to happen. Early-modern epistemic practices could generate extensive data about human diversity without producing genuine conceptual change, but, despite this, purpose-oriented information circulated anyway, helping the religious authority to collect cases and *exempla* for legal precedent and governance. The use of instrumentalized knowledge by Portuguese Inquisition contributes to broader discussions about global intellectual networks, and early-modern strategies of knowledge circulation.

Daria Elagina (PI -project “Bāhira ḥassāb: Knowledge Transmission in Ethiopia and Eritrea from Antiquity to Modern Times,” German Research Foundation (DFG), University of Münster, Institute for Egyptology and Coptology)

« **Ethiopic Astronomy as an Exegetical Tradition** »

The Ethiopic Book of Enoch (1 Enoch) is a Jewish apocalyptic text that has survived in its entirety exclusively in Ethiopic. Amongst its components, 1 Enoch contains the so-called *Astronomical Book*, a highly fragmented and probably mutilated treatise on astronomy and cosmology. Translated into Ethiopic in Late Antiquity, the *Astronomical Book*, became one of the earliest sources of astronomical knowledge in the Christian manuscript culture of Ethiopia and Eritrea. With the inclusion of 1 Enoch in the biblical canon in the fifteenth century, Ethiopian scholars faced the need to systematize and clarify the knowledge preserved in the *Astronomical Book* within an exegetical tradition. This process resulted in the development of collections of commentaries, in which scholars restructured the knowledge and interpolated the concepts from the *Astronomical Book* with material from other sources, such as the calendrical and astronomical traditions of Late Antique Alexandria and medieval Christian Arabic texts. Moreover, Ethiopian scholars conducted astronomical observations to supplement the fragmented information of the *Astronomical Book* and produced several astronomical and cosmological diagrams based on this exegetical tradition. The paper aims to present the first systematic account of the diachronic development of this tradition, its origins, sources, and epistemic practices.

SESSION 2 : 17h30-19h00

Panel 4

Katherine Stratton (Department of French School of Modern Languages, University of St Andrews, Scotland)

« **L'équitation est un humanisme : les académies équestres d'Antoine de Pluvinel (1552-1620) et leur rôle dans la formation de la noblesse française** »

En 1594, Antoine de Pluvinel, écuyer principal du jeune dauphin Louis (le futur Louis XIII), établit sa célèbre académie équestre à Paris, aux abords des Tuileries. Selon son traité *L'Instruction du Roy en l'exercice de monter à cheval* (1625), cette école avait bien sûr pour but la formation de la jeune noblesse française à l'art de l'équitation, mais visait également, de manière significative, à lui fournir une éducation encyclopédique et humaniste, avec un programme scolaire comprenant notamment la musique, la philosophie, la rhétorique, les mathématiques et le droit. Bien plus que de simples écoles d'équitation, l'académie de Pluvinel et ses éventuelles imitatrices – plus que quarante en France à la fin du XVIIe siècle – étaient des lieux d'apprentissage où l'on entraînait le corps autant que l'esprit, afin de former de bons serviteurs de l'État et du roi.

Comment Pluvinel concevait-il le rôle de l'équitation dans une éducation humaniste, voire littéraire ? À travers une étude de son *Instruction du Roy*, cette communication démontrera comment Pluvinel déploie l'usage du dialogue et de la narrativité dans sa pédagogie afin d'établir une connexion entre l'art équestre et les études humanistes, pour faire de l'équation la base d'une éducation générale.

Zuzana Vařáková (PhD student at the Institute of History of the Czech Academy of Sciences)

« **Rabies and Dogs in the 16th-Century Encyclopaedic and Instructive Texts** »

Rabies is among the oldest known zoonoses – as opposed to other significant diseases, its zoonotic origins were already known from antiquity. Over centuries, rabies was a frequent subject in various scientific works as well as in documents regulating everyday life, such as legal norms. In these texts, it was traditionally associated with dogs as the main reservoir of infection. However, there seems to be a distinct ambiguity in attaching importance to rabies across diverse genres. While encyclopaedic sources focus extensively on this zoonosis, the texts of a practical nature such as agronomic manuals usually highlight other issues connected with canines. In this paper, this discrepancy and its causes will be examined using a comprehensive corpus of sources. A broad range of information on rabies from the 16th-century zoological treatise *Historia animalium* by Conrad Gessner will be compared with Latin and Bohemian instructional sources from the same period. It will discuss the potential

impact of rabies on human-dog relationship, as reflected by these texts, and aims at ascertaining the understanding of dogs and rabies in Renaissance society and its various strata.

Babeta Jurámková (PhD student at the Institute of History of the Czech Academy of Sciences)

“Animal suspectum. Bats and Rabies in European Science and Medicine from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment”

In contemporary scientific discourse, bats are predominantly conceptualized as reservoirs of infectious diseases, most notably rabies. Historically, however, rabies was primarily associated with dogs and wolves, while bats occupied an ambiguous position as liminal and enigmatic nocturnal creatures, situated at the intersection of natural philosophy, medicine, and cultural imagination. This paper traces the gradual transformation of scientific and medical paradigms concerning bats from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment, situating these shifts within broader changes in early modern epistemologies of nature and disease.

Drawing on contemporary medical treatises, the paper examines how emerging empirical approaches reshaped contemporary understandings of bats as source of disease. Particular attention is paid to the evolving conceptualization of rabies (hydrophobia), a fatal condition long interpreted as a form of mental disorder, yet one of the few diseases for which animal-to-human transmission was clearly recognized. This dual status posed a fundamental challenge to humoral pathology and stimulated debates on contagion, causality, and species boundaries.

By reconstructing early modern discourses on bats and rabies, the paper seeks to assess the extent to which premodern scholars were aware of the epidemiological risks associated with bats and to demonstrate how bats gradually emerged as animalia suspecta within European medical thought.

Panel 5

“Ancient Histories for New Realities: Editing and Transforming Classical Texts in the Sixteenth Century” (Organizer : Lucie Storchová)

The aim of our session is to examine how 16th-century Humanists edited and re-used texts of classical Roman historiography in new social and political environments. Our focus will be on the adaptations and uses of the canonical editions that emerged from the 1520s onwards. For example, we will consider the work of Froben's printing house in Basel in the context of the growing confessional and political disputes after 1550, in East-Central Europe and beyond. We will address questions such as how works of ancient historiography, now accessible in standard versions throughout the *res publica literaria*, contributed to the formation of new cultural identities. What was the significance and specific authority of ancient historians according to Humanists? We will discuss how Humanists used it to present and justify their own views and cultural values. How did ancient historiography help to define and describe confessional and political enemies? Could it legitimise violence against them, political coups and radical social changes? Our main goal is to consider how this kind of exchange was related to overcoming geographical and cultural distances, as well as to the rapid development of translations from Latin and Greek into vernacular languages during this period.

Lucie Storchová (Researcher Professor at the Institute of Philosophy of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Faculty of Humanities, Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic)

“Between Editing and Politics: Protestant Adaptations of De bello Iudaico in East-Central Europe after 1550”

This paper examines the translation of histories about the Jewish War in Protestant environments in East-Central Europe between 1550 and 1600. More specifically, I focus on the circulation of the well-known Latin editions of Flavius Josephus' *The Jewish War*, prepared for Froben's printing house in Basel between 1534 and 1548 by the Humanist Sigmundus Gelenius. I will trace their translation into vernacular languages by Protestant scholars in Germany (Caspar Hedio, Zacharias Müntzer, Johannes Sprenger, and Conrad Lauterbach), the Bohemian lands (Václav Plácel and Havel Phäeton), Poland (Lenarth of Urzedów), and Hungary (András Szegedi). The paper will discuss how socially disciplinary and eschatological interpretations of the siege and fall of Jerusalem developed, emphasising divine punishment and retribution. I will also consider how these translations portrayed Jews and provided historical justification for anti-Jewish policies and violence against the contemporary Jewish population in East-Central Europe. Finally, I will demonstrate

how these Protestant translations differed from those in France and England, where, according to earlier scholars such as Groves, Auger, Smith and Mayer, the *Jewish War* was associated with different political issues.

Marcela Slavikova (Department of Comenius Studies and Early Modern Intellectual History, Institute of Philosophy, Institute of Philosophy, Czech Academy of Sciences)

“Howe God plagueth them that conspireth againste their Prince:” 16 Century Editions and Translations of Appian’s Roman History”

Appian’s *Roman History* saw fruitful translation and editorial activity in the 16th century. After the 1502 and 1519 Italian translations by Alessandro Braccesi appeared, two Spanish translations were published in quick succession: Juan de Molina’s *Los Triunphos de Apiano* (1522) and *Historia de todas las guerras*, attributed to Diego de Salazar (1636). Only then, Charles Éstienne produced the first printed edition of the original Greek text (1551). This is when Sigismundus Gelenius (1497–1554), a prominent editor working for Froben’s printing house in Basel, realised that a new Latin translation of Appian was overdue and started working on *Appiani Alexandrini Romanarum historiarum libri* (1554) which soon became the standard Latin version of the text, reprinted for almost half a century later, and set an example for any future translations. Seeing this 16th century prolific translation activity concerning Appian’s text, questions emerge. What reasons do the editors state for choosing Appian to be yet again presented to the public? Did these reasons develop throughout the century depending on the contemporary political situation? How was Appian relevant for the 16th century? To answer these questions, I will make a thorough examination of the extant 16th century Latin and vernacular editions of Appian.

Gabor Petneházi (Postdoc Researcher, University of Innsbruck, Institute for Classical Philology and Neo-Latin Studies)

" Beating the Moderns by Emulating the Ancients: Giovanni Michele Bruto and His Art of History in Theory and Practice”

Giovanni Michele Bruto (1517–1592), the heterodox court historian of Stephen Báthory and Emperor Rudolph was (and still is) considered a rather controversial and enigmatic figure of the late Humanism in Central Europe, whose professional expertise and qualities are nevertheless hard to dispute. His great historiographical works – *Florentinae historiae libri VIII* (Lyon, 1562) and the monumental *Rerum Ungaricarum libri* (never published) – reveal both his personal desire to prove these qualities and a strong wish to defend himself. Indeed, Bruto was completely convinced that his art of history represented the highest quality of the time, even though the historians who allegedly performed much worse than him – esp. Paolo Giovio (1483–1552), known as the Livy of the age, and Johannes Sambucus (1531–1584), the court historian in Vienna – were much more highly regarded by the contemporaries. Through various texts from Bruto, the paper aims to reveal the author’s historiographical doctrine and demonstrate how his confident and unique knowledge of ancient historiography enabled him to triumph over his rivals.

Panel 6

Weihua MA (Professor at School of History, Zhengzhou University, specializes in the history of Chinese science)

“Cultural Conflict and Accommodation in Emperor Kangxi’s Seismic Thought (17th Century)”

The evolution of Emperor Kangxi’s understanding of earthquakes reflected the conflicts and compromises between Manchu and Han cultures, as well as between Chinese and Western traditions. In the course of cultural exchanges between the Manchus and the Han, Kangxi dismissed some Manchu ministers who rejected Confucianism and embraced the Confucian theory of interaction between heaven and humanity to explain the causes of earthquakes. In Sino-Western cultural interactions, to avoid clashing with Confucianism, Jesuit missionaries such as Ferdinand Verbiest deliberately concealed the religious connotations behind their interpretations of earthquakes. Kangxi thus accepted this revised Western explanation of seismic phenomena. Given that the interpretation of natural disasters was closely tied to the legitimacy of the Qing Dynasty, he never openly opposed the Confucian doctrine of heaven-human induction. Shortly before his death, Kangxi

expounded his own theory of earthquakes in his treatise *On Earthquakes*. However, the Chinese Rites Controversy altered his attitude toward Western learning; afterward, he deliberately avoided mentioning Western scholarship and even misinterpreted ancient Chinese classics to justify his own views on earthquakes.

Anne-Constance Legros (Doctoral Student, CESR-Tours, France)

“The blossoming of mycology: intellectual culture and knowledge production in the early modern period (1500-1735)”

During the Renaissance, Greco-Latin texts, particularly those of Dioscorides and Pliny, provided a theoretical framework that structured the first classifications and descriptions of the fungal kingdom. Ancient and medieval legacies had a considerable influence on the intellectual and practical culture of early modern naturalists, who applied mycology to the fields of food and pharmacopoeia.

Correspondences, such as that between Felici and Aldrovandi, attest to the importance of scholarly networks in the production and circulation of information, while travel and *in situ* observations made it possible to compare texts and illustrations with natural realities, in a context where tensions between the Ancients and the Moderns were already emerging. Far from the timorous attitude of their predecessors towards these natural objects, the writings of Renaissance scholars reveal an unprecedented movement of scientific study, independent of any utilitarian considerations regarding fungi. The establishment of classification systems and standards, as well as technical advances (*i.e.* the microscope and works of P. A. Micheli), fostered the blossoming of a discipline in its own right.

This paper therefore aims to explore the mechanisms of knowledge creation and transmission, in order to shed light on how mycological findings have shaped, over time, a new object of science.

Maciej Jasiński (assistant professor, Institute for the History of Science, Polish Academy of Sciences, Poland)

« Two assistants of Johannes Hevelius in his correspondence with Martin Fogel. An example of a quest for helpers in research in the 17th century”

Martin Fogel (1634–1675), physician and naturalist from Hamburg, helped Johannes Hevelius (1611–1687), astronomer from Gdańsk, to find an assistant for his studies; this fact is reflected in their correspondence from 1671–1673. Fogel recommended to Hevelius two young men (whose names in the letters are given as Smidius and Hadlerus), neither of whom took a permanent place: the former died in a shipwreck on route to Gdańsk, the latter abandoned the post, leaving behind unpaid debts. Hevelius’s correspondence with Fogel provides some insights into what the astronomer required (both explicitly and implicitly) from his potential helpers and co-workers and how his expectations were met. In the paper, I will present how Fogel recommended the candidates and how both correspondents reacted to events related to them. I will discuss their case against the background of Hevelius’s studies and his other assistants, and of the culture of scholarly work in the early modern era.

Keynote Lecture : Prof. Jutta Schickore (Bloomington Indiana University)

Working Philosophies of Science

A familiar story about the rise of modern philosophy of science goes like this: The seventeenth century was a period of intense discussions about scientific methods. Early modern scholars were concerned both with fundamental questions about the natural world, the things in it, our knowledge about it, and with the ways to study it. Their works cannot be neatly compartmentalized into “philosophical” and “scientific”. Philosophy of science came into its own in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, with William Whewell and John Stuart Mill as important contributors. It was then, that philosophical work split off from the sciences. Along with the different scientific disciplines – physics, chemistry, biology and so forth – philosophy of science became established as a separate topic of study and reflection.

Focusing on the (northern) German lands in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, I will outline a different story. I show that there was a wealth of philosophy of science during that period. It comprised all empirical *Wissenschaft*: It was concerned with the sciences of human wellbeing and prosperity, with pharmacology, clinical and veterinary medicine, pedagogy, agriculture, and mining, history, philology, political economy. I call these philosophical accounts “working philosophies” because

they are oriented toward the concrete, day-to-day scientific work. At the same time, they wrestle with enduring questions about the nature and aims of science and the validity of knowledge.

WEDNESDAY 10

Session 1 : 9h00-10h30

Panel 1

Lewis Ashman (Edinburgh University)

“When Science Lost its Soul: Lord Monboddo on Ancient Theism, Modern Physics, and the Tragedy of Secular Knowledge”

The Scottish judge and author James Burnett, Lord Monboddo (1714–99) has appeared, both to modern readers and his contemporaries, as a counter-cultural eccentric. Scholars have nevertheless gained much insight into the Scottish Enlightenment through his work on historical linguistics, the development of civilisation, and the relationship between primates and humans. This talk explores Monboddo's striking proposal to reintroduce the theism of ancients like Aristotle and Plato into modern physics. Monboddo characterised natural knowledge of modern times as metaphysically impoverished ‘mechanics’ that did not deserve the name ‘philosophy’. His six-volume *Antient Metaphysics* (1791–99) thus looks like a mere curiosity, but the work reflects several currents in eighteenth-century scientific thought that merit greater scholarly attention. Monboddo's lament for the demise of theism among the moderns sheds light on contemporary responses to the secularisation of science amid a perceived rise of irreligion, and his critique reflects underappreciated developments in the treatment of causation in eighteenth-century Scottish natural philosophy. Monboddo's critical, contextual reading of early modern physicists like Descartes and Newton as secular thinkers is also interesting because it in some ways anticipated later scholarship which would depict ‘science’ and ‘religion’ as coming into conflict in the early modern period.

Helena Taylor (Associate Professor of French and Comparative Literature at the University of Exeter (UK))

“Collective knowledge making through collective publications in early modern France”

In this paper, I will look at two types of multi-authored works — the periodical and the poetry collection — to interrogate how they constructed, shaped and reflected communities of knowledge. Focussing on the *Mercurie Galant* and the *Recueil de pièces galantes en prose et en vers de Madame la Comtesse de la Suze et Monsieur Pellisson* (1664), and drawing on work that aligns the *MG* with such collections (Schuwey 2020), I will show how these publications shared a mixed-gender target readership and engaged in interdisciplinarity beyond their literary/cultural thrust (across natural history, natural philosophy, moral philosophy). I also show how both have been overlooked by the disciplines of intellectual history and the history of science, studied primarily as literary (Steinberger 2024). Drawing on work that challenges prescriptive disciplinary boundaries (Hutton 2014; Conroy 2021) and calls for a cultural history of philosophy (Van Damme 2014), I argue that these collective publications need to be seen as active agents of interdisciplinary knowledge. What is the relationship between the collective format of these works and the creation of learned communities? How do both types of collectivity enable plural disciplines of knowing? What factors (gendered, generic) have led them to be neglected by certain disciplines?

Catherine Evans (Postdoctoral Research Fellow, University of Exeter, UK)

“Playfighting with Science in Hester Pulter's Garden”

Hester Pulter's poem “The Garden, or The Contention of Flowers” dramatizes an argument between twelve flowers, from the “bashful Violet” to the golden sunflower. This paper will explore how this fanciful conceit enacts a series of scientific debates on topics including the primacy of the senses, the doctrine of signatures, heliocentrism, and the science of colour in the wake of Newton's experiments. As Liza Blake

(2020) has pointed out, Pulter's poetry reveals an obsession with the "causes of things", in this case the literal cause, or seed, of a flower as the blooms blend classical myths and contemporary botanic findings to investigate their origins. Addressed to Pulter's daughter Anne and "at Her Desire Written", "The Garden" demonstrates how sociable play between women should be read as space in which science happens, with the garden simultaneously a pleasure ground and Epicurean school.

Whitney Sperrazza (2024) has made a compelling case for "habitually approach[ing] early modern poetry as an indispensable site of scientific thinking", reading Pulter's highly focused "specimen poems" as motivated by the "fundamental scientific practice" of observation. In "The Garden", I argue, this practice of close observation is combined with another aspect of the scientific method: testing. It is through the "contention" of the individual flowers that their claims and worth are valued and assessed. Pulter collects an herbarium of flowers and becomes their "arbitratix". However, whilst the poem enacts this mode of scientific debate and assessment, Pulter simultaneously dramatizes its limitations. The winner of the contest is never chosen, and the flowers seem likely to continue their self-aggrandizing debate in perpetuity. Despite revelling in the sociability of scientific discussion, Pulter also exposes its restrictions.

Panel 2

"Before there was Light: Figuring Primordial Darkness in Robert Fludd's *Utriusque cosmi historia* and Early Modern Cosmogony" (Organizer: J.B. Shank)

Chair: **Michael Gaudio** (Department of Art History, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, USA)

Panel Abstract: Our pluridisciplinary panel takes its launching point from the famous black square published as a figure/emblem/empirical illustration/diagram/meditative rune or something else in Robert Fludd's widely influential natural philosophic treatise *Utriusque cosmi maioris scilicet et minoris metaphysica, physica atque technica historia* published in 1617 at Oppenheim with copper plate engravings by Johan Theodor de Bry (see Appendix 1). Matthaeus Merian and other print artists also contributed to the book, and our three papers will examine this famous image from different vantage points while also seeking to situate it in within the visual history of early modern cosmogonic science and art making in many forms and contexts as a feature of seventeenth-century European scientific culture and knowledge work.

Ian Karp (Department of Art History, Harvard University, USA)

"Primal Matter and the Mediation between Divine Creation and Artistic Representation in Robert Fludd and Matthaeus Merian's *Utriusque Cosmi Historia* (1617)"

This paper explores the artistic and philosophical rationale of Robert Fludd and Matthaeus Merian's engraving of primal matter within the contexts of alchemy and seventeenth-century speculative science, as well as art theory, iconoclasm, and issues of representation. By putting this image in relation to Fludd's macrocosmic theory, Merian's output at the De Bry workshop, and a longer tradition of cosmogonic images, the 'Black Square' emerges as an image not of nothing but rather of the Ur-stuff comprising all of creation and its possible representation by fallen, human arts. As such, it offers a heuristic for the visual representation and scientific description of the ineffable in a longer tradition of premodern attempts to conceptualize, visualize, and re-present unobservable and even unimaginable phenomena.

J.B. Shank (Morse Alumni Distinguished University Teaching Professor, Department of History, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, USA)

"Seeing Primordial Darkness in Baroque Europe: Fludd's Black Square between Empirical Optics and the Hermeneutics of Divine Cosmogony."

In Book II of Fludd's *Utriusque cosmi historia* an image is offered, together with textual commentary, that appears to offer a diagram mapping the pathways of human sensory perception and their relation to consciousness, mind, and the formation of knowledge (see Appendix 2). This paper will attempt to unpack Fludd's image, and his understanding of sensory empiricism as a resource for cosmogonical scientific understanding in relation to his larger dichotomy between the darkness of the primordial cosmos and the role of divine light in cosmogonical creation. The paper will also situate Fludd's work within what Mark Smith has called the seventeenth-century transition from "Light to Sight" in European optical science, and

the "Baroque Optical Paradox" that Ofer Gal and Raz Chen Morris posit as an integral feature of this transition. The published image will also be considered alongside Fludd's own work as a pictorial illustrator of his own ideas and the role played by artists in the De Bry print workshop such as Matthaeus Merian in creating meaning for Fludd's text through their pictorial art.

Florian Métral (Professeur Junior ARVIGRAPH (CNRS), Centre André-Chastel, Paris, France)
"Darkness and Renaissance Cosmogonical Images"

This paper explores the visual representation of primordial darkness as the "unformed matter" of creation within the Renaissance imagination. By tracing the tradition of the "dark abyss" and its evolution into geometric abstractions, we will examine how the picturing of Chaos enables images and works of art to stand as autonomous worlds. In doing so, we will unveil not only the cosmological beliefs of the period but also the inherent power of images to materialize the invisible.

Panel 3

Savita Singh (PhD in History, Prostate University, Punjab, India)

"Madrasas, Bilingualism, and Pedagogy of Knowledge Production in Medieval India"

Modern perceptions often reduce madrasas to spaces of exclusively religious education serving a single community. This paper challenges that view by demonstrating that madrasas in medieval India were dynamic institutions of secular and practical knowledge production. It examines curricula, pedagogical practices, and the diverse social backgrounds of students to show how these institutions met varied intellectual needs. Based on Abul Fazl's account of the curriculum, the paper reveals that madrasa education included ethics, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, administration, natural sciences, history, and vernacular studies, reflecting both intellectual formation and practical application. Building on Rajeev Kinra's work on bilingual textual practices, the study treats lexicons, glossaries, and manuals as pedagogical technologies that aided multilingual students navigating Persian and Hindwi learning environments. Drawing on Badauni's descriptions of classroom interactions, in which a student asks a teacher to explain a lesson in Hindi, the paper highlights the linguistic diversity of madrasa students and the centrality of bilingual explanation in everyday teaching practice. By examining manuals, dictionaries, and classroom practices together, this paper argues that madrasa education constituted a vital infrastructure of bilingual knowledge production, fostering communities of learners through linguistic mediation and pedagogical innovation. The study is based on Persian court chronicles, lexicons, pedagogical texts, and other Persian sources, alongside selected Indic-language materials.

Nikita Sharma (PhD Candidate, Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India)

"Horticultural and Animal Treatises: Knowledge of Select Flora and Fauna in Mughal India"

Ecological history is gaining ground in the historical inquiry of early modern empires. There is a growing interest in studying the ecological underpinnings of the Mughal empire that spanned over a vast area of the Indian subcontinent from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. This paper calls for studying the empire from a multispecies lens to unravel the nature and extent of multispecies interactions and engagements in early modern times. To undertake this task, the paper studies some Indo-Persian horticultural and animal treatises that were produced in this space and time to understand how different groups of people engaged with the select flora (especially garden flora) and fauna (elephants, horses, hawks). Through a comparative study of these texts, this paper argues that these texts can serve as instrumental sources in studying how people observed, understood and codified their knowledge about flora and fauna in order to bring desirable changes in them. In this pursuit, early modern gardens and imperial stables emerge as important sites where the multifarious and asymmetrical interactions between humans, animals and plants took place. The paper also argues that these texts were circulating to cater to the ruling elite and the aspiring elite who aimed to exercise better control over flora and fauna.

Eliette Soulier (Docteure en Études hispaniques, Université Sorbonne-Nouvelle, CRES-LECEMO)

« **Le récit du changement dynastique Ming-Qing dans trois sources publiées en castillan (1665-1676): construction du savoir et postérité historiographique** »/ **Narrating the Ming-Qingdynastic transition in three Castilian-printed sources (1665–1676): the construction of knowledge and its historiographical legacy** »

Bien que les récits européens de l'invasion mandchoue et de la chute des Ming en 1644 aient déjà attiré l'attention des historiens, cette communication met en regard trois textes publiés en castillan qui n'ont encore jamais été étudiés conjointement : *Tártaros en China* (Madrid, Joseph Fernández de Buendía, 1665 – traduction de l'original latin publié en 1654), œuvre de Martino Martini (1614-1661), missionnaire jésuite de Chine ; *Historia de la conquista de China por el tártaro* (Paris, Antoine Bertier, 1670), composé par Juan de Palafox (1600-1659), ministre du roi d'Espagne Philippe IV et évêque de Puebla (Nouvelle-Espagne) ; *Tratados históricos, políticos, éticos y religiosos de la monarquía de China* (Madrid, Imprenta real, 1676), du missionnaire dominicain de Chine Fernández de Navarrete (c. 1610-1689). Pourtant, il existait des liens personnels entre les trois hommes. De plus, leur rapprochement permet de mettre en exergue le rôle joué par la circulation des hommes et des livres au sein de l'espace impérial hispanique dans la construction du savoir.

Cette communication s'attache moins à comparer leur récit à l'état actuel du savoir pour en pointer les manques et les biais qu'à confronter la pratique historiographique de chacun des auteurs. En proposant des explications aux différences et convergences constatées, on souhaite réfléchir à ce que veut dire écrire l'histoire pour chacun d'eux, et s'interroger sur la postérité de leur mise en récit, qui à la fois rend compte d'un bouleversement géopolitique, tout en l'inscrivant dans la continuité d'une problématique « civilisation chinoise ».

Session 2 : 11h-13h

Panel 1

Márton Szentpéteri (Professor, Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design (MOME), Budapest, Hungary)

“The Alba Julia Constellation: Creative Interplay between Alsted, Bisterfeld, the younger Piscator and their disciples in Transylvania”

There is a tantalising and lingering topos stemming from Leibniz scholarship according to which Johann Heinrich Bisterfeld, one of the leading disciples of Johann Heinrich Alsted overshadowed his master's role in the eyes of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz as a brilliant logician and encyclopedist. This conception is based on the fact that Leibniz actively read Bisterfeld's Transylvanian works published in Western Europe taking notes and marginalia. Simultaneously, Leibniz consulted and admired Alsted as well, but not to that extent as in the case of Bisterfeld. Based on new manuscript sources, first discussed in my Hungarian book (*Universal Learning in Transylvania: Alsted and the Herborn Tradition*, 2008) then by Howard Hotson (2020) to a certain extent; and lesser-known Transylvanian editions, I intend to argue that there is no factual reason to create such a hierarchy between these eminent scholars. Instead, it is rather useful to think in terms of a certain Alba Julia Constellation in which the Herborners and their Transylvanian colleagues and students worked together interdependently, thinking and working virtually together in the frameworks of the Bethlen-college, the gymnasium illustre at Alba Julia / Gyulafehérvár and the network of other Transylvanian colleges.

Rienk Vermij (Director of The Center for Medieval & Renaissance Studies, Professor, Department of the history of science, technology, and medicine of the University of Oklahoma, USA)

“Jerusalem as centre of the world: fact-based knowledge?”

In the Renaissance period, people increasingly recognized that true knowledge depends on facts that should be independently established. Facts and factual accuracy were a growing concern. The importance

of this development can hardly be overstated. It changed the standards of scientific and scholarly study, including the study of the Bible and theological thinking in general. The present paper discusses the geographical ideas on the Holy Land. Medieval authors often referred to Jerusalem as the centre of the world. This idea was corroborated with reference to (alleged) empirical facts, but people hardly felt the need critically to evaluate these. By the end of the fifteenth century, this suddenly changed. The idea of Jerusalem as centre came under attack and was soon forgotten. The Protestant Reformation appears to have played a minimal role in this process. Rather, the overall growth in communications made it harder to live with inconsistencies in accepted knowledge.

Svorad Zavorsky (Senior research fellow at the Institute of History of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Bratislava, Slovakia)

"History, prophecy, and universal knowledge in the thought of Ferenc Fóris Otrókocsi"

Ferenc Fóris Otrókocsi was a Hungarian scholar who began his career as a Reformed preacher in Upper Hungary. After his condemnation to the galleys, his escape, and his sojourns in Franeker and Oxford, he converted to Catholicism and remained active in Trnava—a centre of Catholic intellectual life—until his death. In Otrókocsi's numerous works, history is treated as an indispensable component of knowledge, or science, as such. If we wish to characterize his vocation, he is best understood as a prophet. Immediately prior to his conversion, Otrókocsi wrote a two-volume history of the origins of the Hungarian nation (*Origines Hungaricae*, Franeker 1693), in which he drew heavily on etymology, arguing that the history of Hungarian origins cannot be properly studied without a command of the Hungarian language. In this paper, I examine *Origines* in the context of his other works—especially those devoted to prophetic science—and show, among other things, how past, present, and future blend together in his thought, thus opening the way toward universal knowledge. For Otrókocsi, a nation's past events foreshadow its future, just as the Old Testament prefigures the New. All of Otrókocsi's works are permeated by historical perspectives, providing a clear example of the importance of history for scholars around 1700.

Panel 5

Clemens Schlip (senior researcher in the SNSF project *Humanistica Helvetica II. Die lateinische Literatur in der Schweiz im 16. Jahrhundert und der ersten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts*, University of Fribourg, Switzerland)

"A Thermal Spa as a Medical and Geological Wonder. Augustinus Stöcklin and Hippolytus Guarinonius on the Tamina Spring"

In the Tamina Gorge (Eastern Switzerland) there is a thermal spring that has been popular with spa guests since the Middle Ages. For a long time, it was difficult to access. In 1630, a wooden channel was therefore constructed to divert the water from inside the gorge. Augustinus Stöcklin, Prince-Abbot of Disentis, published his treatise *Nymphaeum Beatissimae Virginis Mariae Fabariensis* in 1631 to celebrate this event. He was assisted in writing it by the famous Tyrolean physician Hippolytus Guarinonius. This paper presents the various facets of this text. The *Nymphaeum* not only describes the wooden channel in technical detail. The treatise also examines the spring and the gorge from a scientific and medical point of view. It contains geological considerations on the time of the gorge's formation and the origin of the spring water. The medicinal effects of the water are described and treatment plans for different types of visitors are developed. Less familiar to the modern reader is the theological purpose of the text: the precise geological and medical descriptions are intended to serve as proof of the existence of God.

Elisa Ramazzina (Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Insubria, Italy)

"Water as Medicine: Hydrotherapy and Ageing in Early Modern England"

This paper examines the evolution of medical approaches to old age and longevity in England from 1650 to 1800, a period marked by the rise of gerocomy and hydrotherapy. Drawing on key medical texts by Bacon, Wittie, Floyer, Cheyne, Buchan, and Sinclair, it explores how water-based therapies, such as

bathing, spa treatments, and swimming, became central to strategies for promoting health and extending life.

The presentation highlights a shift in medical thinking: practitioners moved from viewing water as a miraculous agent to understanding its physiological benefits. Terms like “bracing”, “elasticity”, and “circulation” began to dominate medical discourse, reflecting new theories about the ageing body and hydrotherapy’s role in maintaining vitality and delaying senescence. Physicians in spa towns played a key role in testing and recommending these practices within broader regimens for healthy ageing. Attention is given to how these therapies were institutionalized and advocated by medical professionals, marking the professionalization of geriatric care. The changing language in medical texts signals the transformation from spiritual associations to evidence-based explanations. Situating hydrotherapy within early modern medical innovation, this paper shows how new practices and theories reshaped the care of the ageing body and contributed to modern concepts of health and longevity.

Hannah Morand (PhD Student, History and Early Modern Studies, Yale University, USA)

"Medical Taxonomy and Colonial Utility: Administrative Knowledge Production in Faux Saunier Deportation to New France in the Early Eighteenth Century"

Between 1730-1749, French administrators deported at least 648 salt smugglers (faux sauniers) to New France, developing systematic bodily taxonomies distinguishing viable settlers from unusable populations. This paper examines how medical certification, climate theory, and 1 family structure assessment functioned as administrative technologies determining colonial fitness.

A 1720 Conseil de Marine deliberation rejected enslaved Africans for Canadian settlement, arguing “le climat est trop froid” (too cold) while advocating faux sauniers as climatically suitable. Yet French origin proved insufficient. Joseph Bertet, certified “hermaphrodite” by royal surgeons, was rejected as “d’une constitution trop foible,” physiologically unusable. Antoine Coiffier, certified “perclus de ses membres,” faced identical repatriation to serve out his sentence in France. Medical inspection produced knowledge about which bodies could labor, reproduce, integrate economically. Family reunification emerged as demographic technology: married faux sauniers with children were prioritized as settlement infrastructure preventing desertion and addressing gender imbalance. René Pierre Odio successfully petitioned for his four children’s passage, yet they never arrived having “dispersed” after his arrest. Faux sauniers occupied ambiguous legal status: “libres d’être travaillés” yet “condamnés à rester dans la Colonie.” Despite demographic impact rivaling the Filles du Roi program, this deportation remains largely unexamined in French colonial historiography. Though this deportation program “failed,” never reaching the planned 150 annual arrivals and ending before France ceded the colony in 1763, the administrative calculus it generated reveals early eighteenth-century settler colonial dynamics: systematic bodily evaluation determining demographic fitness, climate theory justifying racial exclusions, family reunification as retention infrastructure, and legal ambiguity enabling coerced settlement under conditional freedom.

Panel 6

Dina Bacalexi (Ingénieure de recherche, CNRS-ENS, Centre Jean-Pépin, Paris), **Marie-Elisabeth Boutroue** (Chargée de recherche, CNRS-CESR, Tours, France)

“Tracking the reader: marginalia in the Renaissance medical library of Laurentius de Rubeis »

Renaissance marginalia are “hybrids”, situated between manuscripts and print. They witness the reader’s erudition, habits and interests, highlighting the intimate relationship between persons and books, the way books connect people and contribute to knowledge sharing. One of the main motives in studying these marginalia is their philological value for modern editions of ancient texts. Yet, medical marginalia, in particular included in books of a coherent ensemble such as the library of the “prominent physician in Rome” Laurentius de Rubeis, have other facets to put forward. Many of the 317 books of this library, printed between 1501 and 1669, contain annotations, reading or possession marks, indications of transactions, dates and prices. We thus have at our disposal a corpus extended enough to investigate how these books were utilized.

As a continuation of our 2025 presentation, we will examine a sample of marginalia from the Rubeis library, now included in the “Librimed” website, focusing on: the variety of “hands”; attempts to identify the *“sciptor”*; the form and content of the annotations; the possible debates/controversies raised; the challenges of deciphering such “fact sheets” or “aide memoires”. Tracking the Renaissance reader can give clues about the role of this library for the medical art and profession.

Kadir Çelik (PhD student and researcher in the Department of History at Ege University, Turquie)

“Translating Medical “Secrets” from Italy to Lebanon: A Translation of Domenico Auda’s Marvellous Secrets”

The rising popularity of new books of secrets in Europe in the second half of the sixteenth century has been well studied by William Eamon and several scholars. A new Italian book of secrets entitled *Breve Compendio di Maravigliosi Secreti* was published in 1652. The work was attributed to an apothecary of Rome, Fr. Domenico Auda, who became a head-apothecary of the Hospital of the Holy Spirit. Central to this study, the book played an intriguing role in the exchange of medical knowledge between Italy and Lebanon. As recent scholarship has mainly concentrated on the books of secrets in Europe, their reception and reflection in the Islamic East have, to date, remained largely unexplored. This study offers a unique example of this gap, with a particular case of an Arabic-Garshūnī translation of Auda’s work, by examining a late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century manuscript belonging to the Maronites in Lebanon. This paper seeks to shed light on the exchange of medical knowledge—particularly within the books of secrets publications—between the West and the East. It focuses on a manuscript that constitutes a unique extant instance of a translation of books of secrets in the Levant.

Margaret Carlyle (Assistant Professor of History, Department of History and Sociology, The University of British Columbia, Canada)

“Capitalizing on the Body: Private and Private Anatomy Courses at the Jardin du Roi”

This paper examines the public anatomy courses offered at the Jardin du Roi (King’s Garden) in Paris as sites of Enlightenment pedagogy embedded within a broader urban economy of anatomical labour. While these demonstrations presented anatomy as a polite, cultivated form of knowledge that attracted medical professionals, students, and mixed-sex elite lay audiences, I show that they depended on materially messy and morally ambiguous practices deliberately obscured from view. Teaching functioned as a form of public performance through which gentleman anatomists built financial security, intellectual authority, and social standing. Behind the scenes, however, they negotiated access to cadavers drawn from hospitals, prisons, and cemeteries, competed across institutions for priority, and supplemented stipends through private anatomy courses. These fee-paying “cours particuliers” bridged the sanitized spectacle of the anatomy amphitheatre and the morally dubious realities of hands-on dissection undertaken for research. Tracing the rise of public anatomy courses at the King’s Garden, this paper argues that the social, material, and financial dividends of anatomical teaching depended on what I call the infrastructures of death. These included the labour practices and marginalized bodies that both underwrote Enlightenment medicine while remaining deliberately obscured from view.

Plenary Panel 14h30-16h00

Samuel Hartlib and the Hartlib Network Revisited: Fifty Years after the Publication of Charles Webster's *The Great Instauration*. Organizer : Vladimír Urbánek.

This panel marks fifty years since the publication of *The Great Instauration* (1975) by Charles Webster, a seminal study that analysed and contextualised the circle of Samuel Hartlib and illuminated interconnected phenomena of mid-seventeenth-century intellectual life, including millenarianism, the Scientific Revolution, and projects of medical reform. Webster's recent biography of Hartlib has further enriched this field and invites renewed reflection on his legacy.

The three papers presented by Mark Greengrass, Howard Hotson, and Vladimír Urbánek both pay tribute to Webster's achievements and extend his pioneering work in new directions. Each contribution revisits the Hartlib network through a distinct but complementary lens: the concept of happiness in Hartlib's writings; the Central European Reformed diaspora that shaped the network's intellectual foundations; and newly identified documents that shed light on practices of intellectual exchange through Latin occasional poetry and multilingual epistolary communication.

Taken together, the panel reassesses the formation, intellectual ambitions, and communicative strategies of the Hartlib circle, demonstrating the continued vitality of Webster's interpretative framework while refining and expanding it.

Howard Hotson (Professor of Early Modern Intellectual History at St Anne's College, University of Oxford)

The 'Three Foreigners' Revisited: Towards a Central European Perspective on the Hartlib Circle

Hugh Trevor-Roper famously described Samuel Hartlib, John Dury, and Johannes Amos Comenius as 'the philosophers of the Puritan Revolution'. Charles Webster then documented in enormous detail the centrality of Hartlib's circle to the English reform movements of the Civil War and Republican periods. But what was happening in central Europe in the previous generation to prepare these 'three foreigners' for their remarkable intervention in English intellectual history? After dismantling Trevor-Roper's account, this paper will attempt to ground the contributions of the central European Reformed diaspora in the distinctive historical conditions of the Holy Roman Empire in a manner which explains both their impact in England and the limits of their influence.

Mark Greengrass (Emeritus Professor of Early Modern History at the University of Sheffield, UK, member of the Centre Roland Mousnier (UMR 8596) Sorbonne Université, Paris)

Samuel Hartlib's Happiness

This proposal is for a short paper to contribute to a panel organised by Vladimír Urbánek (Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Prague) to celebrate the appearance of Charles Webster, *The Great Instauration* (London, 1975) just over fifty years ago. A major contribution to our understanding of the intellectual context and singular contribution of Samuel Hartlib, it was a pioneering work in understanding the relationship between scholarly millenarianism and scientific endeavour, and in comprehending Hartlib as a serious figure in the construction of communities of knowledge and endeavour in the period of the English Commonwealth (1649-1660). In this contribution to the panel, I propose to examine the distinctive meaning that Hartlib attributes to the notion of 'happiness'. He uses it a great deal, both in his published treatises and in his private correspondence. He sees it as something that is part of God's providential disposition to human kind, an art that we can cultivate, and one of the attributes of the millennial state. The paper will investigate to what extent this distinctive notion of happiness was one that made him an empathetic figure to others, in the republic of letters, and beyond.

Vladimír Urbánek (Senior researcher, Department of Comenius Studies and Early Modern Intellectual History at the Institute of Philosophy of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague)

New Findings: An Unknown Poem by the Young Samuel Hartlib and a Newly Identified Letter to Comenius

Despite the pioneering work of Charles Webster, his recent monograph on Samuel Hartlib, and the Sheffield-based Hartlib Papers Project, important aspects of Hartlib's early formation remain insufficiently explored. This is particularly true of his six years at the academy in Brzeg (Brieg). A newly discovered collection of occasional poetry printed there in 1619 contains what appears to be the earliest extant text written by the young Hartlib. The volume not only confirms his presence at the academy that year but also enables a partial reconstruction of his immediate intellectual milieu.

A second discovery concerns Hartlib's correspondence with Jan Amos Comenius. While approximately seventy letters from Comenius to Hartlib survive, no reply by Hartlib was previously known. Through textual attribution analysis and contextual reconstruction, it has been possible to identify an anonymous German letter as authored by Hartlib. This discovery significantly deepens our understanding of their exchange in the 1630s and sheds new light on Hartlib's broader epistolary practices. By reassessing these materials, the paper illuminates wider phenomena of intellectual networking in the *respublica litteraria*, particularly through the publication of Latin occasional poetry and multilingual epistolary exchange.

Keynote Lecture (Auditorium, Musée des Arts de Nantes)

Prof. Stéphane Van Damme (Maison Française d'Oxford, ENS-Ulm, IUF)

« Uncertain Natures: Scepticism, Libertinism, and the Materiality of Distant Worlds »

This article seeks to renew the history of cultures of doubt by reintegrating the epistemological and natural-philosophical dimensions of scepticism, long overshadowed by its moral, religious, and political interpretations. Focusing on France and the French Empire in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it argues that sceptical, libertine, and materialist approaches to nature were profoundly reshaped by the experience of global expansion and encounters with distant worlds.

These encounters functioned as a laboratory for rethinking knowledge: they destabilised universalist claims and fostered empirical approaches grounded in observation, singularities, and the suspension of judgment. Scepticism thus appears not as an abstract doctrine but as a situated intellectual practice—flexible, strategic, and sensitive to context.

Within this framework, nature is understood as unstable, mutable, and often deceptive, resisting fixed classificatory systems. Sceptical naturalists privileged anomalies, extraordinary phenomena, and case-based reasoning, particularly in fields such as medicine, natural history, and chemistry. Knowledge derived from travel—whether concerning local beliefs, medical practices, or natural resources—fed into a broader critique of established authorities, both scientific and religious.

At the same time, these cultures of doubt were embedded in imperial dynamics. They contributed both to the ordering of the world (through classification, inventory, and exploitation) and to an internal critique of dominant epistemologies. Curiosity about non-European sciences, antiquities, and religious practices supported a reconfiguration of the origins of knowledge and encouraged the emergence of materialist and sometimes pantheistic conceptions of nature.

Ultimately, the article demonstrates that sceptical naturalism constitutes an alternative epistemology grounded in perspectivism, uncertainty, and the critique of universals. Rooted in the experience of distant worlds, this approach anticipates key features of modern anthropology and global sciences, while revealing the deep entanglement of knowledge, power, and imperial expansion.

Thursday, June 11th

Session 1 : 9h-10h30

Priya Nambrath (PhD candidate in the Department of South Asia Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, USA)

“Credible Quotes and Optional Citations: Mathematical Genealogies in Medieval Kerala”

Kerala’s medieval mathematical tradition developed over several centuries through dense chains of teacher–student transmission, as reflected in the region’s textual record. A distinct branch of this tradition was active from the fourteenth to the early nineteenth centuries. Mathematicians routinely incorporated results from their predecessors, both within and beyond their lineage, often quoting verses without explicit attribution. Such unattributed citation was standard commentarial practice across South Asian scholarly genres within a culture that privileged memorization.

This paper examines these practices in the sixteenth-century vernacular treatise *Gaṇita Yuktibhāṣā*, which draws extensively and almost exclusively on Sanskrit sources. I argue that the text’s sparse use of attribution reflects not only a presumption of recognition within a tightly knit scholarly community, but also a calibrated acknowledgment of the layered circuits of transmission and pedagogy through which mathematical knowledge circulated. At the same time, the *Yuktibhāṣā* occupied an unusual position within the Sanskritic intellectual landscape: while its mathematical reasoning deviated from established traditions, its use of the vernacular for advanced exposition also marked a further departure from prevailing conventions. In its turn, the vernacular *Yuktibhāṣā* also became a quotable object, either partially or in full, and was unevenly reabsorbed into the Sanskrit canon, illustrating the dynamic processes through which vernacular innovation could be normalized and canonized.

Martin Pjecha (PhD, History, Marie Curie-CZ grant in Vienna-Prague)

“The Ecumenical Politics of Motion in Johannes Comenius and Nicholas Cusanus”

Johannes Comenius (d. 1670) is remembered as a leading pansophist and utopian, but not for his more nuanced political thought built upon natural philosophy. My interdisciplinary paper will introduce elements of his applauded philosophy of pluralism, but juxtapose this with his highly normative vision of the blissful future. For this, it will emphasize the overlooked political influence of the Platonist philosopher Nicholas of Cusa (d. 1464), starting with his natural theology of the free motion implanted in human anthropology. In Comenius, this inner-freedom translated the spheres of human artifice and even politics into necessary steps of collective participation in God’s salvific plan. Not without significance, Comenius also followed Cusa in elaborating this theology of motion into an appreciation of voluntarism, which gives a positive role to inter-cultural dialogue and consensual politics between rulers and subordinates in the sphere of human collectives. Nevertheless, Comenius breaks with Cusa in appointing this cosmic motion with a highly normative path based on a rationalized end, which he sees in the final triumph of un-negotiable divine law. Apparently, his designs for a perpetual motion machine even would have demonstrated this linearity of movement and disaster of diversion scientifically, had it not been a complete failure.

Jiří Michalik (Palacký University, Olomouc, Czech Republic)

« Intuition and non-discursive thinking in Kepler »

This paper focuses on the role of intuition in Kepler’s epistemology. It attempts to answer the following questions: How does Kepler understand intuition, and how important is intuition for Kepler’s understanding of basic mathematical and geometric axioms? How does intuition—and, more generally, non-discursive thinking—contribute to our knowledge of reality, or rather its mathematical structure? Kepler, like other scientists, had to deal with the problem of identifying the “ultimate simple Principles”; from which all (scientific) knowledge can be derived and which also represent the fundamental

ontological principles of reality. The Platonic and Pythagorean traditions directed Kepler toward the possibility of non-discursive knowledge of these ideas/archetypes. Mathematics and geometry are thus based on intuition as the primary guide for the discursive (re)construction of the structure of the universe.

Panel 2

Christine McWebb (professor of French Medieval Literature and Digital Humanities, University of Waterloo, Canada)

"The Moralization of Scientific Discourse in an Early-Modern Manuscript of Jean de Meun's *Roman de la rose*"

The second author of the medieval *Roman de la Rose* (1269-1278), the scholastically-minded Jean de Meun, had set himself up in opposition to Guillaume de Lorris's more gracefully courtly narrative, peppering his work with debates, discussions and digressions ranging from topics about contemporary political issues and scientific explorations, such as the mechanisms and symbolisms of alchemy. My presentation examines iconographic depictions of the allegory of Lady Nature in two fourteenth-century manuscripts – Chicago, University of Chicago Library, 1380 and Paris, Sainte-Geneviève, 1126 – and, by means of comparison, in a late fifteenth-century manuscript (1498), Paris, BnF, fr. 23492. Together, these manuscripts illustrate the interaction of alchemical symbolism with the debate on human procreation in the continuation of the *Rose*. Across all three manuscripts, the science of alchemy is pushed to the fore not only through textual additions, but also through the linkage of certain miniatures. By tracing these iconographic strategies, this study elucidates the diverse ways in which late medieval and early modern illustrators responded to Jean de Meun's treatment of Lady Nature. In particular, it reveals a marked shift from a primarily scientific interpretation of alchemical symbolism in the earlier manuscripts to a more explicitly moralistic reading in the later one. The depictions associated with the passages under discussion exemplify the fluidity of the medieval opus, demonstrating how new and later interpretative frameworks emerge through the strategic placement and visual detail of manuscript imagery.

Mathilde Mougín (postdoctoral research fellow, Université libre de Bruxelles and the University of Liège, Belgium)

"The Science of Man and Race thought in Seventeenth-Century French Travel Narratives"

Although the eighteenth century is generally regarded as the moment when the "natural history of man" emerged—most notably with Buffon (Doron, 2016)—the classification of different types of humans predates this period, as evidenced by 17th-century travel accounts. For example, travelers' descriptions of Amerindian populations in the Americas are generally framed in comparison with other populations (European, African, etc.), thereby revealing a classificatory tendency that distinguishes different kinds of humans, akin to what can be observed in the classification of animal and plant species. François Bernier, a traveler who spent ten years in India, is the author of the famous « Nouvelle division de la terre par les hommes qui l'habitent » (1684), which distinguishes four "species" or "races" of humans on earth. Although some scholars dispute whether Bernier uses the term "race" here in its modern sense, it is undeniable that this text bears witness to an attempt to classify the human species analogous to that applied to other living species. However, this classification of populations is very often intertwined with a discourse of racial discrimination that draws on the scientific models of the period—namely, chiefly those of climate and generation. This paper aims to examine the entanglement between the science of man and racial thought by drawing on a corpus of French travelers who journeyed to the Americas (Léry, Lescarbot) and to Eastern countries (Bernier, Tavernier, Challe) from the late sixteenth century to the early eighteenth century.

Andromeda Baindridge (English Ph.D. candidate at Tufts University, early modern English intellectual culture)

"'I fear no vizards, nor bugbears': Horror and Community Healing in A Yorkshire Tragedy"

This investigation will suggest that early modern English horror played an important role in community healing. Whilst it is impossible to draw direct comparisons between modern and early modern notions of therapy and mental health, it bears mentioning that in the 16th and 17th centuries, many believed that the mind and body were equally susceptible to illness and imbalance. Several early modern literary genres discuss and prescribe treatments for certain mental ailments. Treatments for melancholy, for example, appear to have included reading, praying, and watching comedies. This raises an important question: if a particular dramatic genre was used to treat a particular type of mental illness, is it possible that other dramatic genres might have been used to treat other types of mental illness? In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, sustained exposure horror has been shown to alleviate certain mental health disorders like anxiety and PTSD. Is it possible that early modern horror might have had a similar effect on its audience? My project will draw from Descartes' *Passions of the Soul* to suggest that attending plays like *A Yorkshire Tragedy* might have offered audience members an opportunity to process fearful feelings in a safe and supportive environment.

Panel 3

Roundtable (organizer: Helena Taylor, project PI and Associate Professor of French and Comparative Literature at the University of Exeter)¹

“Women and Communities of Knowledge in Early Modern Europe: Methods and Challenges”, organized by Helena Taylor with the members of the Cultures of Philosophy project, University of Exeter: Felicity Henderson, Floris Verhaart Catherine Evans, Carlotta Moro.

This roundtable will attend to diverse forms of collective and community knowledge making in seventeenth-century Europe, by spotlighting women. Drawing on case studies from Italy, England, France and the Dutch Republic, our focus will be primarily methodological, addressing three historiographical challenges: 1) uncovering women's participation in intellectual circles when sources are scant, lost, or elliptical (for instance, seventeenth-century Sicilian Academies); or when women's participation was formally prohibited (the London Royal Society). 2) Recovering instances of interdisciplinary knowledge making and the shaping of communities of learning that have been overlooked or neglected as such and in which women played a key role, such as through Mary Astell's involvement with girls' schools in England; within Italian mixed-gender *ridotti* (savant spaces) hosted and sustained by women invested in theology; and via collective publications, such as literary periodicals (namely the French *Mercur Galant*). 3) Negotiating the distinction between historiographical hierarchies of learning and those espoused at the time via a case study from the Dutch Republic on how learned and literary networks were represented differently. We seek to interrogate disciplines of knowing, bridge literary and intellectual culture, explore inclusive historiographies that foreground marginalized voices, and offer a comparative, transnational perspective on communities of knowledge.

Felicity Henderson (Senior Lecturer in Archives and Material Culture at the University of Exeter, Senior Researcher on the Cultures of Philosophy project)

“Reporting women's knowledge and expertise at the early Royal Society”

Much recent research by historians of science has shown that London's early modern scientific community extended beyond the fellowship of the Royal Society, and even beyond the mathematicians, instrument-makers and laboratory-assistants who worked alongside them (Bennett and Higgitt 2019; Henderson 2019; van Trijp 2021). Yet the Royal Society as an institution, and early-modern science in general, is still seen as a masculine preserve. This paper will discuss the ways in which women's knowledge, expertise,

¹ This roundtable will be delivered by the project team for the ERC-awarded, UKRI-funded project, '[Cultures of Philosophy: Women Writing Knowledge in Early Modern Europe](#)' at the University of Exeter. [Awarded as an ERC Starting Grant and now funded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) under the UK government's Horizon Europe funding guarantee [grant number EP/Y006372/1]

and lived experience was occasionally made visible at the Royal Society. When were women consulted, and by whom? Can their own voices be recovered, or if not, how were their stories re-told by male narrators? Drawing on the Society's archive of early letters and papers, we can identify ways in which women did contribute to early institutional science, albeit in a highly circumscribed way. This short case study adds to our broader understanding of how information travelled in and out of specific knowledge communities, and how the voices of outsiders may have influenced early modern scientific narratives.

Floris Verhaart (postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Exeter. Affiliated with the ERC/UKRI project *Cultures of Philosophy: Women Writing Knowledge in Early Modern Europe*)

“The Reception of Anna Maria van Schurman’s Ideas on Science and the Arts in Germany: From Polymath to Religious Thinker”

In chapter four of her autobiography, the *Eukleria* (1673), Anna Maria van Schurman (1607-78) discussed her ideas on human knowledge acquired through science and the arts as opposed to divine knowledge obtained through study of the Bible and God's grace. During her lifetime Van Schurman had become an intellectual superstar, but in 1669 she broke with the Reformed Church to join the separatist religious group led by Jean de Labadie (1610-74). Her views on human and divine knowledge unleashed an important but largely overlooked polemic in the Holy Roman Empire in the 1670s and 1680s focused on the question to what extent Van Schurman had rejected science and the arts as mere vanity compared to God's wisdom. Participants in the debate included many prominent and mostly Lutheran scholars, such as Johannes Gabriel Drechsler (1645-77), Wilhelm Mechow (1654-1712), Jacobus Thomasius (1622-84). I will argue that this polemic shaped the posthumous persona of Van Schurman in two highly impactful and long-lasting ways. First, it played an important role in turning her image from a versatile polymath and artist into fundamentally a religious thinker and writer. Second, it helped German Lutheran thinkers negotiate the religious differences between Van Schurman, a member of the Reformed and later Labadist church, and their own views. The debate thus constitutes an important step in the fashioning of Van Schurman into an important figure for German Lutheran Pietism later on in the eighteenth century.

Carlotta Moro (Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the University of Exeter. Affiliated with the ERC/UKRI project *Cultures of Philosophy: Women Writing Knowledge in Early Modern Europe*)

“Lucrezia Marinella’s Feminist Theology Between Doctrine and Devotion”

While the history of early modern philosophy is being transformed by the recovery of contributions penned by women, this process has proceeded far more unevenly in the case of their often-concomitant engagement with theology, even when literary studies have witnessed a surge of critical interest in female-authored devotional writings. Bringing together these disciplines, I will explore the porous boundaries between literature, philosophical enquiry, and theological discourse in the works of the Venetian Lucrezia Marinella (ca.1571/9-1653). A central contention of my paper will be that Marinella, working within a post-Tridentine cultural context that rendered the publication of a stand-alone theological treatise by a woman both unlikely and potentially perilous, strategically dispersed theological arguments across a range of more decorous devotional genres (including poetic commentaries and saints' lives in prose and verse), forming a coherent system of thought in the process. Extending critical attention to Marinella's neglected sacred corpus, this paper will simultaneously build on and challenge insights from the growing body of scholarship that relies solely on her “lay” treatises, *La nobiltà et l'eccellenza delle donne* (1600) and *Essortationi alle donne* (1645). I will examine the ways in which Marinella obliquely constructs a theological-philosophical edifice steeped in Neoplatonism, and I will show how her lives of saints can be read allegorically as demonstrations and elucidations of her own theoretical apparatus. I shall further argue that her system serves as a form of feminist activism, advancing a feminised conception of the divine, the Holy Spirit, contemplative happiness, and wisdom.

Catherine Evans (Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the University of Exeter, affiliated with *CultPhil* project)

Session 2 11h-12h30

Giuseppe Pignatelli (post-doc researcher, Laboratoire SPHERE (CNRS/Université Paris Cité)

“All that glitters is gold. Philosophy, science, and the ideology of clarity in the *Journal des sçavans* (1688-1710)”

In a short text from the late 1680s, entitled *Spongia Exprobationum*, Leibniz noted that we should praise the “the zeal that the new philosophers put in expressing themselves clearly and distinctly and in explaining everything mechanically and by resorting to experiments” (A VI, 4A, 735). Nonetheless, he added, we should refrain from pretending that this approach to knowledge and explanation is the only valid one. Not everything can be studied that way. Accordingly, concluded Leibniz, we should not mock Scholastic philosophers for employing so obscure and non-mechanical notions like that of ‘substantial form.’ In these lines, Leibniz presented the then widespread Cartesian categories of ‘clarity and distinctness’ in a somewhat unusual way. He pictured them as the spreading socio-linguistic code of mechanical philosophy, and emphasised the dynamics of intellectual intolerance connected to its indiscriminate usage in philosophy and science. The paper deepens this Leibnizian insight into these two flagship notions of Cartesianism by surveying how they were employed by reviewers of the *Journal des sçavans* between ca. 1688-1710. In these documents, the appeal to clarity was often mixed with a judgemental attitude by the reviewer towards the nationality of authors, their intellectual interests, and the pedigree of their philosophical equipment.

Roslyn Lee Hammers (Honorary Associate Professor in the Department of Art History at the University of Hong Kong)

“Knowing Salt: Visualizing its Production in Eighteenth-Century China and France”

During the eighteenth century, scholars in Qing China and Enlightenment France revitalized the representations of the procedures necessary to produce salt. In both cases, this entails depictions of the workers and their equipment as they harvest salt, imagery accompanied by commentary. These texts indicate disparate motivations central to the projects. As the Chinese salt harvesters and their French colleagues participate in some of the same activities and use nearly interchangeable tools, the representations at times appear similar. However, these similarities are superficial. Using a comparative approach to evaluate the implications of these representations, this paper situates the Chinese and French images within their respective historical context. The paper begins with the imperially-commissioned *Pictures of the Production of Salt* (or the *Ao Bo Tu* 熬波圖, literally the *Pictures of Boiling Waves*), to thresh out the appeal this genre held for the Qianlong emperor. It then turns to a consideration of the representations of the paludiers in the *Encyclopédie* of Diderot and d’Alembert. The discussion explores the motivations for the production of knowledge of salt harvesting and their impact on the visual representations of associated labor.

Lukáš Lička (Researcher at the Institute of Philosophy of the Czech Academy of Sciences in Prague)

“Conservative Textual Trends in Sixteenth- Century Optics: Georg Hartmann and the Continuity of the Peckhamist Tradition”

Sixteenth-century optics is often described in terms of rupture and innovation driven by technological advances in lens and mirror production and anatomical discoveries. This paper focuses instead on textual practices, arguing that a considerable portion of optical knowledge continued to be mediated through established authorities, albeit in a material context transformed by print. Despite growing interest among readers and editors in mathematically sophisticated works by Alhacen and Witelo, John Peckham’s *Perspectiva communis* retained its status as a key optical textbook, with a number of printed editions only matched by those of Euclid’s optical texts.

The continuing appeal of the *Perspectiva communis* is demonstrated by several sixteenth-century attempts to reshape this medieval text, including Conrad Tockler’s revision in Leipzig (1503, in manuscript) and Pedro Ciruelo’s reconfiguration, printed in Alcalá (1516). The paper examines the most successful of these

revisions: Georg Hartmann's *editio emendata et repurgata*, printed in Nuremberg in 1542. I argue that this redaction remains textually traditional, with many interpolations drawn from other medieval optical works. With five reprints, Hartmann's redaction reflects the sustained relevance of the Peckhamist tradition within the sixteenth-century optics.

Panel 5

Aurélie Griffin (Senior Lecturer, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle (PRISMES (research unit) / IHRIM, ENS-Lyon)

"Mary Wroth, Isabella Whitney, and Poetic Medicine"

One of the earliest printed female poets in England, Isabella Whitney frequently, almost obsessively wrote about health in her second poetry collection, *A Sweet Nosegay* (London, 1573). Her epistle to the reader purports to maintain one's good health, while proclaiming its inability to cure actual illnesses and referring the reader to "Sir Medicus" in such cases. Based on the Senecan sentences of Hugh Plat's *Flowers of Philosophy* (1572), which she adapts to her own purposes, Whitney's poems consistently literalize the trope of flowers as moral lessons to offer the reader a practical art of living as maintaining both physical and spiritual health. Her insistence on herbs and flowers, as well as on the actions of plucking and gathering those into a "nosegay" designed to cure the London air of its pestilence, carve a legitimate space for her authorship that accommodates the facets of her identity as a "gentlewoman, maid and servant" (as the title of the recent edition of her poems by Shannon Miller reminds us). This paper will examine the tight rope Whitney navigates between the literal and the figurative to experiment with poetry's ability to sustain health for both her readers and herself.

Justyna Rogińska (Assistant Professor at the Institute for the History of Science of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw, Poland)

"Christina Kirch (1697–1782) and the Visibility of Women's Astronomical Observations in the Eighteenth Century"

Several obituaries published after the death of Christina Kirch (1697–1782), daughter of Gottfried Kirch (1639–1710), astronomer of the Royal Prussian Society of Sciences, noted that she devoted herself to astronomy from a young age and achieved a level of expertise that earned recognition from her contemporaries. The paper aims to assess the extent to which she was recognized in the 18th century as a woman actively engaged in astronomical studies. It examines evidence of her work in printed sources, including recorded results of astronomical observations, references to the conduct of such observations, and mentions indicating her involvement in astronomy. Moreover, the paper seeks to reconstruct Christina Kirch's interactions with members of the Academy of Sciences in Berlin. From 1742 onward, she was responsible for preparing calendar manuscripts for Silesia under this institution's publishing monopoly. Drawing on these activities, along with other factors, such as the recognition of her family's achievements and her contacts with foreign astronomers, the paper argues that she enjoyed a degree of visibility within certain scholarly circles.

Angélique Thébert (Associate Professor of Philosophy at Nantes University and a member of the *Centre Atlantique de Philosophie*)

"Locke on Midwives and Women's Knowledge in Maternity Care. Who knows?"

In his *Midwifery Notes*, the physician John Locke gives some advices to avoid miscarriages and complications during pregnancy and childbirth. As a promoter of a non-interventionalist expectant medicine, he recommends that one does not interfere with "the course of Nature". At first sight, this method favours a sexist epistemology: for, if pregnancy and childbirth are for the most part the "works of nature", then the "teeming women" who keep the pregnant woman company, as well as the "meddling" midwives, should withdraw. Moreover, Locke's opinion about midwives seems to be a case of epistemic injustice, since no epistemic credit is given to their practical knowledge. However, Locke does not encourage to turn to the more formal and theoretical knowledge of specialised physicians either. So, does medical practice only consist in a *laissez-faire*?

I suggest that once Locke's notes are related to his criticism of epistemic authoritarianism, they can be read as promoting women (patient)'s autonomy and self-trust. Indeed, when he recommends that the "course of Nature" be trusted, Locke actually paves the way to an obstetrical medicine that is more woman-centred and attentive to the embodied knowledge of pregnant women.

Panel 6

Matthijs Jonker (Assistant Professor Early Modern Art History, Utrecht University, Netherlands)

"A stolen treasure: the vicissitudes of the Indigenous images from Francisco Hernández's expedition (1571-1577)"

Recent scholarship is increasingly paying attention to the fact that much of the knowledge published by Europeans about the natural world of other continents in the early modern period was actually translated and appropriated from Indigenous people. Much less is known, however, about the role of images in these processes. In this talk I focus on the vicissitudes of the images produced by Indigenous artists working for the scientific expedition of Francisco Hernández in the 1570s in Mexico. In six years they produced more than 4,000 paintings of Mexican natural history. Although these paintings were, unfortunately, destroyed in the 1671 fire in the Escorial in Madrid, many had by then been copied by European artists, and more than 700 were reworked as woodcuts for the *Tesoro messicano* published by the Accademia dei Lincei in the seventeenth century. By analyzing two of the *Tesoro messicano's* paratextual images – the frontispiece and a headpiece of a Mexican landscape – I show how the Indigenous paintings were transformed and appropriated, first by the Spanish King Philip II and later by the Lincei. I argue that in the process these images lost their epistemic force and value, as they were repurposed for propagandistic and aesthetic uses.

Daria D. Novgorodova (Senior Research Fellow of the Fersman Mineralogical Museum of the Russian Academy of Sciences)

"The Materiality of a Collection within the Boundaries of an Academic Discipline and a Scientific Museum"

My paper examines the conceptual transformation of the first academic mineral collection in Russia, the Mineral cabinet of St. Petersburg Kunstkamera (1714-1836, now this is the Fersman Mineralogical museum of the Russian academy of sciences), during the 18th and early 19th centuries, as part of the formation of the scientific discipline of mineralogy and the state institution of the scientific museum. Throughout the 18th century, the Mineralogical Cabinet's collection was constantly being reframed until at the beginning of the 19th century it acquired the characteristics of a state scientific academic mineralogical museum, which persist to this day not only in Russia but throughout the world.

My research interests focus on the early items of the collection (works of art and mineral specimens with curious forms, the sports of Nature). Although these objects became "mute objects" in the scientific collection, having lost their original cultural significance, been redefined and re-described, by virtue of their physical presence in the collection, they retain all the complexity of the history of the development of mineralogical knowledge, successfully overcoming the disciplinary and institutional constraints of an academic mineralogical museum.

Antonia Belli (PhD Candidate, University College London (UCL), Pre-Doctoral Fellow, Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max Plank Institut für Kunstgeschichte)

"Decay, Duration and the Chemical Arts: Painters and Pharmacists in Seventeenth-Century Rome"

In early seventeenth century Rome, a circle of pharmacists and artists belonging to the Dutch community became increasingly interested in the issue of decay, and on its opposite: duration. In 1612, the doctor Pietro Castelli (1570-1661) published a pamphlet called *On the duration of medicaments*. A polemic against medical authorities, this text was a defence of those pharmacists that made and sold chemical remedies.

These medicines, unlike those of the Galenic tradition, did not spoil, or rot, but maintained their qualities unchanged for many years. As evidence, Castelli cited not only famous apothecaries in the city but also artworks visible around Rome. If paintings made with pigments bought from apothecaries could withstand time and tragedy, like the frescoes in the burned church of San Giovanni in Laterano, why would medicines made with the same materials and techniques be any different? At the same time, painters were engaging with pigments in a new way: through their chemical virtues, colours themselves could instil endurance into an image. My presentation will explore how this community of pharmacists, artists and collectors started to rethink the relationship between pharmacy, painting and collecting, theorising the maintenance of the body as the maintenance of a work of art.

Session 3 : 14h-15h30

Panel 7

Zoltan Tomko (PhD candidate at the University of Szeged, Hungary)

“Intellectual Landscapes: The Networks of Giovanni Michele Bruto”

Giovanni Michele Bruto (1517–1592), a Venetian humanist with heterodox beliefs and an accomplished historian of the 16th century, remains largely overlooked in current studies of early modern humanism. One of the reasons for his relative obscurity is that, of his two most important works, only the politically sensitive anti-Medici *History of Florence* (Lyon, 1562) was published in his lifetime. The originally anti-Habsburg *History of Hungary* was printed only in the second half of the 19th century, based on two fragmentary manuscripts, while a third, more complete manuscript was discovered only recently. Yet his two published books of letters (Lyon, 1561; Cracow, 1583) reveal that he was deeply embedded in significant networks of humanists, ranging from Spain and France to as far as Transylvania and Poland.

In this paper, I map Bruto’s intellectual landscapes across 16th-century Europe based on his extant correspondence, consisting of roughly 150 letters. In considering Bruto’s networks and analyzing his position in the Republic of Letters, I examine how and why he became so obscure after his death and continues to be excluded from the humanistic and historiographical canon.

Jacques Joseph (Assistant Professor at the Department of Philosophy and History of Science, Faculty of Science, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic)

“Giordano /Bruno / Latour: On bonds and networks”

Bonds play a prominent role in Giordano Bruno’s conception of magic. In contrast with his Neoplatonic predecessors, he views these bonds of sympathy not as static reflections of a universal cosmic order but rather as connections that the things perpetually establish and re-establish between themselves in various ways. In the current paper, I want to propose an experimental reading that draws parallels between Brunian magic and Bruno Latour’s Actor Network Theory. Although the contexts differ, Latour’s networks also serve as the foundation of a relational ontology that cuts across all usual distinctions. In such a context, the magus (not unlike the scientist) cunningly uses his knowledge of bonds in order to operate change. Despite (or maybe in virtue of) its anachronistic nature, the proposed exercise might provide us with a fresh perspective on the person of the magus – one which could be more easily relatable and not just relegated to a radically foreign worldview that we can only study from a distance but never fully understand.

Nikola Piperkov (PhD, Art History, Researcher associated with SHAF (Société de l’Histoire de l’Art français), GRHAM (Groupe de Recherche en Histoire de l’Art Moderne), IANLS (International Association for Neo-Latin Studies), ЦММ – БТМ (Centre for Medieval Studies at St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo) and CNRS (French National Centre for Scientific Research), UMR 5190 LARHRA.

“Mercury and Psyche in imperial Prague: alchemical paintings and occult engravings from the collection of Rudolf II (1575–1612)”

During the reign of Rudolf II (1575–1612), Prague became the notorious alchemical capital of Early-Modern Europe. Being himself a practitioner of the Great Work, the German emperor not only sponsored, but also provided safe haven for the philosophic speculations and laboratory experiments of prominent specialists in the fields of magic, esoterism, hermeticism, alchemy and all the “arts” leading to physical *poiēsis* or elemental *metamorphosis*. To no surprise, Rudolfian Prague became the epicentre of an unparalleled intellectual production, where occult symbology, alchemical iconography and the figure of Mercury – the planet of creation and philosopher of elemental knowledge – were not censured or persecuted. On the contrary, they became the everyday practice of painters and engravers working for, in collaboration with or near the imperial collection, such as Bartholomaeus Spranger (1546–1611), Hans von Aachen (1552–1615), Johann Theodor de Bry (1561–1623) and the quite mysterious Simon Novellanus (act. ca. 1560–1590). This communication will concentrate on the occurrence of Apuleius’s story of Mercury and Psyche, its alchemical interpretation and its iconographic rendering by court artists and engravers around the 1600s. It will show that visual artists from that time consciously imbedded alchemical ideas into their compositions and referred to chemical compounds via well-designed visual allegories sometimes even more elaborate than the textual production of Hradčany. Using a “figurative code”, where complex occult notions were hidden in plain sight by means of symbolic colours and shapes, they gave to the story of Mercury and Psyche an unprecedented iconographic depth and transformed one of the most prestigious subjects of Renaissance Art History into a scientific enigma.

Panel 8

"Transcription across Media: Material Re-Arrangements and Epistemic Agents in Early Modern Europe" (Organizer: Francesco Pigato)

Knowledge is not only circulated in space and time, but also across different media. This circulation involves a nexus of practices, such as commentary, translation, critique, rearrangement (in textual, material, and performative contexts) which further enable the transmission of knowledge in time and space. However, material and textual transformations converge: the passage to a new medium requires a material as well as a discursive reorganization of the original content. The panel approaches these media as materialised supports for discursive practices, anchoring those practices in tangible forms of cultural production. To address this aspect of the circulation of knowledge in early modernity, in this panel we use “transcription” as a heuristic category to analyse how transmedial passages produce new knowledge as well as reproducing the source material. At the same time, we do not treat these transfers as neutral: precisely because they are productive, they also entail risks – marginalising peripheral positions, misrecognising what counts as knowledge under ideological pressures, and circulating normative assumptions on the basis of a precarious, still-emerging notion of what can count as “valid” knowledge. Each paper of this panel analyses practices of transcription in concrete settings, to reveal what is preserved, erased, and added on in these transformations.

Francesco Pigato (PhD candidate in History and Philosophy of Science, University Ca’Foscari, Venice, Italy)

“Imitated elsewhere, it has been received with great praise”. The Fabrication of Knowledge through reviews, excerpts, and letters in 17th c. journals”

The *Giornale de’ Letterati* (Rome, 1668-1683) is one of the first scientific journals published in Europe. Like the *Journal des Savants* and the *Philosophical Transactions*, it contains a variety of texts, with book reviews as the most represented category, followed by excerpts of other journals, and published letters. Framing these textual forms as the result of a process of transcription, this paper analyses the type of knowledge that they produce while giving semblance of a simple reproduction of the original contents. Indeed, book reviews published on the *Giornale* work both as summaries and as critical texts, and the same goes for excerpts both from the *Journal des Savants* and the *Philosophical Transactions*. By critically analysing the type of information which is singled out for praise or blame, it is possible to uncover the evaluation parameters on which these practices of reviewing rested. Furthermore, this shows that these texts were the site in which the criteria of acceptable scientific practices were implicitly negotiated. Thanks to this approach, I

will point out that in spite of its apparent epistemic marginality, the *Giornale* produced a high degree of connection for the Italian public to the European scientific discourse of the time.

Timm Schmitz (PhD candidate in the Department of Art History within the Research Training Group 2945 “Knowing – Believing – Asserting” at Ruhr Universität Bochum, Germany)

“La difficulté des arts si profonds et si peu connus” : Epistemic Friction and Textual Practice in 1660s Paris Art Criticism”

In 1660s Paris, an influx of Venetian and other paintings from Europe’s major centres of artistic production confronted the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture with a panorama of competing pictorial ideals. My paper approaches this constellation as a catalyst of epistemic and transcriptive practices, granting the paintings in the royal collections a form of agency insofar as they compel dispute and art-literary containment. The analysis foregrounds the reciprocal relation between images and texts: within this cultural assemblage, writings on art – e.g. protocols of art theoretical debates, artist’s journals, or satirical poems – emerges as a practice in its own right, one that stores, reproduces, and mediates other practices (collecting, displaying, collective viewing, debating). These textual practices feed back into subsequent engagements with images: Transcription, accordingly, is treated not as a neutral transfer but as a productive operation that reorganises knowledge as it circulates across media. To render contrasting regimes of evidence tangible – while accounting for varying degrees of normative intervention – two transcriptive models will be compared: (1) the institutionally framed, protocol-driven *Conférences* (1668), methodologically authorised by procedures borrowed from the natural sciences (autopsy, analysis, dissection), a transfer that generates epistemic friction as painterly practice resists assimilation to quasi-scientific norms; and (2) Paul Fréart de Chantelou’s *Journal du cavalier Bernin en France* (1665 –), which stages contingency yet turns narrative sequence into a vehicle of epistemic organisation and normative framing. The comparison maps how transcriptive practices produce and order art-theoretical knowledge, seeking to grasp an intrinsically elusive practice.

Anthea Ziermann (PhD candidate at the Department of English Literature within the Research Training Group 2945 “Knowing – Believing – Asserting” at Ruhr-University Bochum, Germany)

“Tis all one/To be a witch as to be counted one” - Theatre as a participant in the early modern English discourse on magic and the occult”

The appearance of occult practices and powers on the early modern stage was, while it did have a sensationalist appeal, an act of participation in the very active negotiation of magic and the occult in early modern English society. Far from consisting solely of academic papers and elite demonologies, discourse included folklore narratives, remnants of pagan belief systems, influences from continental Europe, political and jurisdictional developments, oral circulation of knowledge and news, and many more written, spoken, drawn, painted, acted, and staged elements.

This paper will explore this dynamic in two directions: the witch stereotype as a form of shared storytelling, tracing how it is constructed by various different media and involved parties, and the figure of the academic magus that is formed in relation to and in dialogue with elite treatises on astronomy, alchemy, demonology, and magic. In both cases, the main focus will be the role of the stage within these transmedial discourses. My approach is going to look at staging as a practice of transcription, consisting of deconstruction and reassembly as well as compilation and arrangement of content from various media. It is crucial to note the spatiotemporal dimension of theatrical staging by taking into account the material arrangements on stage and the way they represent a practice-based awareness of the represented events, and the material dimension which requires considering the subject-object relations shown on stage.

« **Imagining nature. The impact of natural philosophy in moral and politics in the Early modern period** » (organizer: Karine Durin)

The objective of the panel is to examine the various forms of textual and conceptual mobility of natural philosophy beyond its original field and corpus by studying the shifts in the concept of nature toward the fields of politics and medicine. Those transformations of natural philosophy introduced new questions. This panel aims to critically explore how natural philosophy impacts moral and political philosophy, considering its importance beyond purely scientific boundaries. The research hypothesis asserts that these conceptual developments played a role in broadening the scope of natural philosophy during this era, as established traditions were reconsidered in response to contemporary debates. The three presentations aim to emphasize the connection between knowledge reform and societal reform, bringing together the history of knowledge and intellectual history with social history.

Kaarlo Havu (University Researcher at the University of Helsinki, Department of History, Centre for Intellectual History, Finland)

Between moral and natural philosophies; Rhetoric as the art of imagination in around 1600

This paper examines why and how rhetoric came to be defined as the art of imagination in the late sixteenth century. In classical antiquity, *ars rhetorica* was not typically associated with imagination, and even in the early sixteenth century such a definition remained uncommon. Yet from the later sixteenth century onward, several authors – including the Spanish physician Juan de Huarte (1529–88), Bishop Antonio Zara (1574–1621), Pierre Charron (1541–1603), and Francis Bacon (1561–1626) – explicitly defined rhetoric as the art of imagination.

Several developments contributed to this shift. First, it became increasingly common to link particular arts and sciences to distinct faculties of the soul. Second, the definition reflects growing engagement with Greek sources in which imagination was described as the faculty through which the emotions could be moved. Third, certain traditions, most notably the Jesuits, approached rhetoric in visual rather than strictly argumentative terms. Defining rhetoric as the art of imagination could serve different purposes. It could elevate rhetoric by emphasizing how imaginative activity activated reasoning. But it could also, in a Platonic vein, function as a critique of eloquence that produced mere representations rather than truth.

Gennaro Schiano (Assistant Professor of Spanish Literature at the University of Naples Federico II, Italy)

“Natural Philosophy and the Crisis of Nobility: Knowledge, Virtue, and Social Order in Alonso de Fuentes’s *Suma de filosofía natural* (1547)”

This paper proposes to analyse Alonso de Fuentes’s *Suma de filosofía natural* (Seville, 1547) as a privileged laboratory for observing the transformation of natural philosophy into a device for moral and political reflection in the early modern period. Far from being a simple scientific compendium, the dialogue constructs a model of knowledge that directly shapes the definition of virtue, nobility, social hierarchies, and the public value of culture.

The starting point is the work’s pedagogical and divulgative programme: to make the *dulces secretos* of nature accessible in the vernacular. This project is not merely educational; it produces a genuine redefinition of the social function of knowledge. In the *Suma*, natural philosophy becomes the criterion by which the moral quality of the nobility and its political legitimacy are measured. The scientific ignorance of the ruling classes is presented as a sign of ethical decline and as a major cause of the crisis in the exemplary function of the aristocracy. In this respect, the dialogue fully participates in the humanistic debate on nobility, while reinterpreting it through the centrality of natural knowledge.

A decisive element in this operation is the text’s multi-layered structure. Whereas in the scientific disquisitions knowledge appears as universally shared and free from cultural boundaries, in the sections labelled *argumentos* an explicit reflection on contemporary society emerges. Here the critique of an idle and ignorant nobility, the opposition between useful knowledge and chivalric fiction, and the comparison between the Italian and the Andalusian contexts turn natural philosophy into an instrument for moral reform and for the redefinition of civic values.

Karine Durin (Professor, Department of Hispanic Studies, Nantes University, CRINI)

“Reform of Knowledge from the Earth. Connecting Natural philosophy and Agriculture in Pre-Modern Spain”

Carolus Clusius and Konrad Gessner are examples of knowledge acquired through practical study in the field. They remind us that the Iberian Peninsula was a crossroads for scientific exchanges and decisive encounters for travelers and renowned European botanists all along the XVIth century. This peninsular area thus became a kind of laboratory for naturalistic experiments. Despite this strong foundation, the events that shaped everyday life in Spain during the second half of the 16th century are rarely considered in their pure factuality when the intellectual and literary debates of the period in question are examined. This paper aims to study a mode of knowledge construction based on a principle of eclectic connections, characteristic of the period in question.

More specifically, it addresses the way in which a reform of knowledge was envisaged at the turn of the 16th century, based on pressing practical concerns, giving rise to intense debates that were conveyed to the crown in the form of opinions and advices (*arbitrios*). These debates reflect the heterogeneity of the actors involved: doctors, lawyers, and rich farmers. The writings that remain accessible to us today reveal concerns about wealth production, the depletion of natural resources, and the impoverishment of peasants. Some doctors addressed the peasant problem, a topic that has not yet been sufficiently studied. In addition, it also gave rise to a pastoral imagination that had remained confined to idealistic and utopian interpretations for too long. But how did questions focused on the peasant world find direct resonance in projects to reform natural philosophy, while at the same time the pastoral imagination embraced them in the literary sphere? For this reason, the focus of this paper is the two-way dissemination of knowledge and ideas about nature in the field of practice, particularly agriculture. Such an approach proposes to broaden the strict framework of scholarly humanism to address the question of its social permeation. This issue is part of the panel's broader theme, which examines the dissemination of natural philosophy to show its expanding ramifications.

Session 3

Panel 10

Victor D. Boantza (Associate Professor in the Program for the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine at the University of Minnesota, USA)

“The Qualitative Grammar of Nature: Attempts to Reconcile Mechanism and Experimentalism in the Scientific Revolution”

Likening the study of nature to the act of reading was a common early modern metaphor that drew on parallels between the book of God and the book nature, Scripture and Creation. “This grand book, the universe,” Galileo famously stated in 1623, “is written in the language of mathematics, and its characters are triangles, circles, and other geometric figures.” Though less known, the use of linguistic and lexical imagery in seventeenth-century experimental philosophy was no less important and evocative. I here examine several such instances: Francis Bacon’s *Abecedarium novum naturae*, part of his unfinished Great Instauration; Walter Charleton’s Epicurean-Gassendist *Physiologia* (1654); and Boyle’s claim in the early 1660s that God created the world such that “each Page in the great Volume of Nature is full of real *Hieroglyphicks*, where ... Things stand for Words, and their Qualities for Letters.” A lifelong proponent of the mechanical philosophy, Boyle was keenly aware of the epistemological gap between mechanistic abstractions and embodied experimental reality. Boyle developed a working hypothesis, albeit subordinated to a mechanistic alphabet, in which key “hieroglyphs” represented empirically robust qualities and states of matter like fluidity, heat, fermentation, gravity, etc. Contextualizing and linking these examples illuminates the intricate relations between metaphysics, natural history, and experimentalism during the Scientific Revolution.

Gábor Almási (PhD, Momentum MSCA fellow, Academy of Sciences, Budapest)

“The Origin of Quantifications (Statistics) in the Social Sciences”

Where does (social) statistics come from? Does it have an origin history? Is it the inheritance of the Enlightenment, as still many believe? Or is it the product of the early modern bureaucratic state (e.g. Colbert)? If not, has it anything to do with the Renaissance? Can we show any inverse relation between the importance of virtue and numbers? And is it legitimate to see it as a product of European culture at all? In my paper, I will be looking for answers to these questions. I will start with a hardly known book from 1581 by Pseudo-Froumentau, *Le secret des finances de France*, and link the new fashion of quantification to mercantile and reason-of-state political thinking as much in political administration as in some political authors like Bodin, Botero, and some Venetians. I will then point out how Bacon brought this tradition a step further and how it evolved into political arithmetic in the footsteps of Bacon, like in William Petty. Some preliminary conclusions will be however put into question by important Medieval (counter)examples, taken from Venice, Rome, and especially Florence. The most embarrassing is the statistics in the *Cronica of Giovanni Villani*. This book, among others, forces us to rethink some of the traditional clusters that break human past into comprehensible chronological units. But it also offers a new perspective for Renaissance intellectual history.

Sergio Orozco Echeverri (Professor of History and Philosophy of Science at the Universidad de Antioquia, Colombia)

“Synchronising Nature: Iberian Almanacs and the Temporal Structuring of Colonial America”

This paper examines how Iberian almanacs structured the relationship between nature, authority, and historical expectation in early modern Spanish America. In order to do so, I read almanacs as practical instruments—low-visibility technology—that coordinated astronomical calculation, calendrical order, medical regimen, agricultural instruction, and sacred chronology within a single portable format that attempted to reflect the cosmos. Sixteenth-century Iberian almanacs differed from other European traditions in that they fixed astronomical reference points in the Peninsula while providing conversion rules for use anywhere on the globe. As these works travelled to the Americas, they supplied tools for calculating latitude and longitude, casting movable feasts, organising agricultural labour, and interpreting meteorological change. In doing so, they synchronised natural, civil, and religious time across vast territories. This synchronisation was not neutral. By embedding American environments within Iberian cosmography, Christian chronologies, and eschatological projections, almanacs helped frame the Americas as abundant, extractable, uncivilised, and providentially integrated into universal history. At the same time, Nahuatl and Andean almanacs demonstrate that Indigenous and mestizo authors adopted and reworked this format. They inserted local pharmacopoeias, agricultural practices, and genealogies into Julian–Gregorian structures, negotiating inclusion within a temporal architecture whose basic parameters remained Iberian, European. I argue that colonial environmental transformation must therefore be understood not only as material exploitation, but as the outcome of asymmetrical temporal coordination.

Panel 11

Melike Çakan (Post-Doctoral Researcher, University of Helsinki, Centre For Intellectual Research)

“Policing of Society: Defining Useful Knowledge in Philosophical Transactions”

Piotr Chmiel (PhD in history, associated with Faculty “Artes Liberales”, University of Warsaw, Poland)

« A humble diplomat’s gout. Narrative of suffering by Marcantonio Donini: a 16th -century Venetian secretary”

In line with a number of early modern sources – followed by recent historiography (R. Porter, G.S. Rousseau, S. Jones) – gout has been known as a disease of prestige, typical for unhealthy lifestyle of men of highest rank of the society and associated with excessive consumption of pleasures. Not surprisingly then, goat was not rare among diplomats of the epoch, serving not only for their self-fashioning but also as a truly diplomatic illness that could be a useful excuse for not performing some of their activities (M. Williams). Against this background, the paper will analyse a particularly detailed (and sometimes embarrassing) description of symptoms of gout and ways of its treatment presented by Marcantonio Donini (or rather his alter ego: Signor Marc’Antonio), a former secretary of Venetian missions abroad, in

an unpublished dialogue. Donini depicts himself as a humble servant of the Most Serene Republic who had to endure hardships of frequent travels in the service of Venice throughout his life, marked by increasing suffering from gout, work-related frustration, and conflicts with superiors. In this context, it will be reflected how Donini's uncommon narrative on gout could uphold his subaltern yet subversive self-presentation as a Venetian agent abroad.

Philippe-Alexandre Goncalves (PhD in Comparative Literature (University of Lille and Faculdade de Letras, Porto))

“Producing and Governing Knowledge in the Age of the Counter-Reformation: The Venerable English College in Rome (1579–1798) within European Catholic Networks”

Founded in 1579, the Venerable English College in Rome stands at the very heart of the Counter-Reformation project, functioning both as an institutional tool and as a privileged observatory of early modern Catholic knowledge. Preserved *in situ* until the late eighteenth century, its archives constitute an exceptional corpus for studying the production, circulation, and regulation of knowledge within early modern Europe. This paper examines the College as a strategic hub within European Catholic intellectual networks, linking Rome to English and Welsh territories as well as to broader Italian, French, and Iberian contexts. Far from being merely a clerical training institution, the College emerges as a site where theological, pedagogical, administrative, and diplomatic forms of knowledge were produced and coordinated in response to confessional conflict and exile. By focusing on archival practices, correspondence, and institutional mechanisms, the paper highlights how the Counter-Reformation shaped specific regimes of knowledge, based on controlled mobility, textual circulation, and the management of information. The Venerable English College thus appears as a central source for understanding early modern disciplines of knowledge, offering a transnational and European perspective on the intellectual culture of the Counter-Reformation.

Panel 12

Samuel Tchorek-Bentall (PhD candidate in Political Thought and Intellectual History at Trinity College, Cambridge, UK)

“Natural Necessity as the Cause of Human Sociability: The History of an Idea”

The model of human sociability most prominent in the late-medieval and early-modern periods was formulated by Thomas Aquinas and Ptolemy of Lucca in the *De regimine principum*. According to Aquinas, what made humans more sociable than any other animal was the weakness of their bodies — deprived of natural defences such as fangs, fur, and claws, they were compelled to live in the ‘society of many’. Modern scholars agree that this un-Aristotelian theory of human sociability has its roots in the Augustinian view of politics as a *remedium peccati*. As I demonstrate in my paper, however, we can gain a clearer understanding of Aquinas and Ptolemy's model by investigating its principal sources: not Augustine's *De civitate Dei*, but the zoological works of Aristotle and Albert the Great, as well as the naturalistic psychology of Avicenna's *De anima*. Once we do so, we can also better understand how the most influential theorists of sociability in the early modern period, including Francisco Suárez, Juan de Mariana, Johannes Althusius, and Hugo Grotius, came to accept that what brought people together was not the *telos* of the virtuous life — as Aristotle, followed by all civic humanists from Leonardo Bruni onwards, had claimed — but biological necessity: *naturalis necessitas*.

Pierre Tchekhoff (PhD in History, Associate lecturer, University of Lille, France)

“Grimoires and the written word: Occult knowledge, Learned magic and witchcraft iconography in Early modern art”

Building upon a recent discourse from the recent exhibition at the Musée d'histoire de Nantes on witchcraft imagery, this proposal for a conference aims to explore the significance of magical characters and the written word in early modern depictions of magic. Throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, artists like Salvator Rosa created multiple scenes of magic, drawing inspiration from learned magic practices and

demonological discourse. These artworks were intended for an erudite audience who could appreciate the complex structure and variety of the rituals depicted by the artist. Grimoires serve as a crucial element in these artworks, subtly alluding to renowned books like the *Clavicula Salomonis*, while illustrating the acquisition and use of magical knowledge. In the realm of witchcraft imagery, we often encounter talismans and parchment sheets adorned with similar symbols and pentacles. This is also particularly evident in depictions of classical sorceresses, such as Medea and Circe, as can be seen in the paintings of Francesco Furini. The goal of this paper is to analyse these artworks and explore their potential for reintroduction into the study of the history of magic. We will explore how they connect the viewer's own occult knowledge by merging multiple occult domains, such as the *ars notoria*, Solomonic magic, and alchemy. Finally, how do the characters and words written on paper in these artworks represent the relationship between their *magister* and the natural, spiritual or demonic forces they are trying to manipulate. This will provide a new viewpoint on the aesthetic interpretation of the occult. Finally, as an early career researcher, this candidate would like to apply for financial support from the organizers of Scientae 2026 to attend this conference.

Silvana Magni (Geologist , PhD candidate in Philosophy of Science at the University of Plzeň, Czech Republic)

“From Research Programmes to Research Traditions: Explaining the Acceptance of Plate Tectonics”

This paper examines the acceptance of plate tectonics as a case study for understanding how scientific theories gain acceptance within a scientific community. Drawing on the philosophical frameworks of Imre Lakatos and Larry Laudan, it argues that the rise of plate tectonics was not the result of a sudden revolutionary break, but of a gradual process of theoretical development and problem-solving success. From a Lakatosian perspective, plate tectonics emerged as a progressive research programme, marked by the stability of its core assumptions and the refinement of auxiliary hypotheses in response to empirical anomalies. From a Laudanian perspective, its dominance is explained by its superior ability to solve a wide range of empirical and conceptual problems compared to competing fixist models. By distinguishing between theory development and theory acceptance, the paper shows how these frameworks illuminate complementary aspects of scientific change. The case of plate tectonics thus supports an account of scientific progress grounded in continuity, integration of evidence, and increasing problem-solving effectiveness rather than abrupt paradigm replacement.

Friday, June 12th

Jim Bennett Lecture : Introduction by Stefano Gulizia

Keynote Lecture 9h30 - 11h00

Charlotta Forss (Södertörn University, Stockholm, Suède)

“Health in the cold north: early modern conceptions of climate and identity from a Nordic perspective”

11h30-13h30

Panel 1

“Pedagogical modes of transmission of Euclid’s *Elements* in early modern Europe” (Organizer: Angela Axworthy)

General description of the panel: Euclid’s *Elements*, a Greek treatise of elementary geometry and arithmetic from the third century BC, constituted the standard source for the teaching of geometry in Europe since the late middle ages and, by the sixteenth century, came to be regarded as the indispensable introduction to all branches of mathematics. Following its first appearance in print in 1482, the *Elements* was continuously edited, commented and adapted in print, mostly by professors of mathematics, many of whom presented their work as responding to the needs of students and, more broadly, of anyone wishing to learn mathematics. Their efforts to render Euclid’s text more adapted to pedagogical purposes often reflected changes taking place in early modern Europe in teaching programmes, in mathematical concepts and methods, as in the contexts of dissemination of mathematical knowledge and in the social status of their audience. This panel intends to discuss some of the means through which early modern commentators of Euclid attempted to render the content of the *Elements* more accessible to new students of mathematics.

This panel will be held by members of the ANR-DFG project *Euclid in the Modern Age: A History of Cross-Cultural Transmissions, Translations and Transformations of the Elements* (SPHère-CNRS & BUW/IZWT).

Angela Axworthy (Bergische Universität Wuppertal / IZWT)

“The pedagogical adaptation of Euclid’s *Elements* by José Zaragoza (1627-1679)”

The Spanish Jesuit professor of mathematics José Zaragoza (1627-1679) taught mathematics at the Colegio Imperial of Madrid from 1670. During his lectureship, he published several works in Latin and Spanish proposing a pedagogical adaptation of Euclid’s *Elements* (Books I-VI and XI-XII), in particular the *Geometria practica Euclidis Problemata continens* in 1672 and the *Euclides novo antiquus singulari methodo* in 1673. In these works, the text of the *Elements* was deeply condensed, restructured and reshaped to better suit the needs of students of geometry. In particular, problems and theorems were taught separately, according to the division between practical and theoretical geometry, and the extensive content of Euclid’s axiomatically-ordered chain of proofs was synthesized in a small number of thematically-arranged propositions, reformulated and enriched with useful information for the benefit of beginners. This talk will analyze the content and structure of Zaragoza’s adaptation of the *Elements* to see how Euclid’s geometrical books were reshaped to serve students of mathematics. Focusing in particular on the *Geometria practica Euclidis*, it will analyse the practical approach to Euclid’s problems adopted by Zaragoza and its function in his pedagogical programme.

Catherine Goldstein (Director of research, emerita, CNRS, IMJ-PRG, Sorbonne Université, Université Paris Cité)

“Euclidean arithmetic and the pedagogy of numbers”

While early-modern geometry teaching was often based on the first six books of Euclid's *Elements*, dealing with plane geometry, arithmetic teaching seems to have been limited to the usual operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, and extraction of roots) and therefore to have remained indifferent to the theoretical results of the Euclidean arithmetical books. However, several mathematicians undertook to include in their textbooks at least some number-theoretical results and methods drawn from the *Elements*, emphasizing the novelty and the pedagogical qualities of their approach. Some of them chose to give an explicitly numerical form to Euclidean theorems, others approached them as a recreation, a refined entertainment. Still others completely rewrote and reorganised the Euclidean arithmetical corpus, in particular to promote their algebra. In doing so, they incorporated other traditions and contributed to a broad expansion and restructuring of Euclidean teachings. The talk will illustrate these different cases and the justifications provided by the authors, and discuss what they reveal about the changing status of numbers and of their study for the new audiences of early-modern Europe.

Mia Joskowicz (PhD candidate, Tel Aviv University / SPHère-CNRS)

“Pointed Lessons: Dotted Lines in Early Modern Editions of Euclid’s Elements”

Early modern printed editions of Euclid's *Elements* developed a rich and varied diagrammatic language. In this presentation, I examine one such practice, the use of dotted lines, and show how it functioned as a flexible diagrammatic device across sixteenth- and seventeenth-century printed editions of the *Elements*. Dotted lines served a range of didactic purposes, including supporting explanation, guiding the reading of diagrams and distinguishing auxiliary, hypothetical or exemplary elements within demonstrations of mathematical propositions. The study traces the diverse functions that dotted lines fulfilled in the editions of the *Elements* and in a set of parallel mathematical, scientific and technical books. It shows how these varied uses were shaped by pedagogical aims and changing and widening audiences, alongside the material conditions introduced by print and broader shifts in intellectual priorities and mathematical practice. The study draws on a large-scale, systematic survey of dozens of editions, combining automatic extraction and classification of diagrams with close visual and contextual reading. By reconstructing the dotted-line practices within and around the *Elements* traditions, this presentation maps the terrain of their uses and further suggests that didactically oriented diagrammatic practices such as dotted lines supported, and perhaps even contributed to, changing understandings of mathematical notions.

Peter-Maximilian Schmidt (doctoral student in History of Mathematics at the University Paris-Cité, as part of the Franco-German ANR-DFG project EUCLIDES)

“A perpendicular, just like a wall”: Military engineers and skillfull pedagogues”* (*online)

Around the turn of the 18th century, the staunch advocate of the Euclidian method, Manuel de Azevedo Fortes, is teaching at military schools around Lisbon. In his courses on the Elements he showed a remarkable ability to adapt the geometric subject matter to the needs of his audience, be it teaching to engineers (as in his class at the Royal School for Fortification from 1720) or to nobility (as in his late "Logica Racional, Geométrica e Analítica" from 1744). In my presentation, I wish to provide some glimpses into the way Euclid was adapted for varied occupational and social groups by Fortes and his contemporaries during the first half of the 18th century, adducing evidence from both manuscripts and printed books originating around Lisbon and Rio de Janeiro.

Panel 2

“Interrogating Collaboration and Consensus in Seventeenth-Century Science” (Organizer : Niall Dilucia (ERC-NOTCOM project).

Niall Dilucia (postdoctoral fellow in the history of the philosophy of science at the CNRS and Maison Française d'Oxford)

“It is a glory to arrive at probability’: debating the moon and the limits of. Collaborative knowledge in seventeenth-century Europe”

In the seventeenth century, as natural philosophers came to terms with the possibilities of enhanced knowledge of the Heavens provided by more powerful telescopes and Copernicanism, an interesting question repeatedly arose: what exactly can we know about the moon? In works ranging from Christopher Huygens’ *Cosmotheoros* (1698) to Francis Godwin’s *The Man in the Moone* (1638) a long line of astronomical and natural philosophical thinking was invoked to argue for, if not absolute consensus, then a majority opinion on the nature of the moon; its similarity to the Earth; and the possibility of lunar extraterrestrial life. In my talk, I survey a variety of seventeenth-century texts that incorporate astronomical discoveries, new mathematical work, and epistemological argument to pose three questions: how far did seventeenth-century natural philosophers believe certain knowledge about the nature of the moon, based on the collective mathematical and astronomical knowledge of the last two centuries, was possible? What do the socio-political ambitions behind these natural philosophers’ depictions of the moon indicate about the social idealism that motivated early modern scientific collaboration? How did natural philosophers use literary techniques to encourage greater interest in the results of early modern astronomical collaboration?

Úna Faller (PhD student, attached to the ERC project ‘NOTCOM’/IRHIM)

“A Bitter Drinke Dr Lower prescribed Betty when she had the Green sickness”: Situating Lady Johanna St. John’s Medical Manuscript Collection within Early Modern Knowledge Networks”

Lady Johanna St. John’s manuscript recipe collection, dated to 1680, contains over 800 remedies for ailments as wide-reaching as green sickness, toothache, animal bites, and rickets. Through reading her manuscript, St. John emerges as a capable and organised medical practitioner, employing mineral, herbal and animal products to treat her household, as was expected of an early modern noble woman.

Beyond these characteristics, her manuscript occupies an important space in the ecosystem of collaboration that characterises this period, as it contains references to over 150 individuals, including some of the leading public figures of the day, such as Robert Boyle, Thomas Willis, Kenelm Digby, and Richard Lower. These individuals appear as either the ‘donor’ of a recipe, or as a ‘recipient’ of a remedy, and some names reoccur with great frequency.

Using a digital TEI edition of St. John’s manuscript created as part of my doctoral research, this paper investigates the nature of these relationships solidifies St. John’s position as an important node in emerging networks of seventeenth-century medical knowledge. It also seeks to address the omission of early modern women from studies pertaining to seventeenth-century scientific developments, often resulting from a dearth of printed material attributable to contemporary women.

Michael Jarworzyn (postdoctoral researcher (CNRS) at the Maison Française d’Oxford)

“The Early Modern Metaphysics of Scientific Consensus”

This paper outlines three different (and relatively overlooked) strands in the history of the development of metaphysics as a discipline, focusing in particular on the early modern German-speaking context. Drawing on various thinkers in the Cartesian and Eclectic traditions – including followers and opponents of Johann Christoph Sturm (1635-1703) and Christian Thomasius (1655-1728) - it identifies the following: i) metaphysics as the philosophical systematisation of common language; ii) metaphysics as the (unwitting) science of common errors; iii) metaphysics as the science of axioms abstracted from experience. Each of these conceptions of metaphysics, the paper argues, could be taken in a negative or positive way regarding the usefulness or value of metaphysics. Most interestingly for the purposes of the paper are cases where a view that was initially intended to be dismissive of metaphysics by one thinker was rehabilitated by another, if only to understand human psychology and its weaknesses. Metaphysics based on our common language or common notions thus sometimes came to be taught as an erroneous but necessary way of grasping the world or ourselves: a projection, but an inevitable part of our human condition. This inevitability allowed metaphysics to underpin the attainment of scientific consensus even as it lost its claims to really be about the wider world.

