

Observation and Experiments as Forms of Writing: Describing, Registering, Recording and New Scientific Genres in Early Modern Europe

Paris, École normale supérieure, salle Pasteur

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9.00-17.30

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Organisation:

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Domenico Bertoloni Meli (History and Philosophy of Science, Indiana University), will be a visiting professor in May 2015 at the École Normale Supérieure. He is well known for his works on science and mechanism (*Thinking with Objects: the Transformation of Mechanics in the Seventeenth Century*, 2006) or anatomy and medicine (*Mechanism, Experiment, Disease: Marcello Malpighi and Seventeenth-Century Anatomy*, 2011). His stay in Paris will be an opportunity for us to organise a workshop on observations and experiments as forms of writing.

Little systematic attention has been devoted to compare the actual forms of registering and recording experimental results and observations in various disciplines. Recent research by Gianna Pomata has indeed helped us to identify the rise of a new literary genre during the modern period, different from ancient practices: the collections of *Observationes*. Numerous historical investigations have stressed the remarkable complexity of early modern experimental practices and methodologies and the close relationship between experimental philosophy and Baconian natural histories (Peter Anstey). But, in the absence of a more general framework and of more sophisticated notions of “observations” and “experiments”, such historical investigations have remained, so far, isolated and confined to their disciplinary boundaries.

Our workshop will try to show in what ways these new forms of registering and recording experience, observations and experiments have shaped new forms and genres of scientific writing in various disciplines. We will explore various forms as they appear in the

scientific practices in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, whether in physics, medicine, anatomy, chemistry, botanic, meteorology, geography, magic or even mathematics. We will be particularly interested in collaborative forms of writings (casebooks, notebooks, measurements, weather-charts, medical collections of recipes and observations, humanist natural histories and cosmographies, instrumental observations, queries for the elaboration of natural histories).

Programme:

Session du matin

09.00-10.00 : Catherine Goldstein (CNRS, Institut de mathématiques de Jussieu-Paris Rive Gauche) et Sophie Roux (ENS), « Observations et expériences comme formes d'écriture : un bilan historiographique »

10.00-11.00 : Arianna Borrelli (Technische Universität Berlin), « The rare and the dense: experiment description as operational definition of the properties of air »

11.00-11.30 : Pause

11.30-12.30 : Koen Vermeir (CNRS, SPHERE), « Experience, memory and belief: a 17th century Dutch manuscript of "Ondervindingen" »

Session de l'après-midi

14.00-15.00 : Domenico Bertoloni Meli (Indiana University), « Visualizing Disease and the Dutch Tradition of *Observationes* »

15.00-15.30 : Pause

15.30-16.30 : Claire Crignon (Université Paris IV Sorbonne), « Le rôle de l'observation dans les manuscrits médicaux de John Locke ».