

'Nature, Cavendish, and Women of the North'.

Abstract:

In this presentation, I engage with three women writers to spell out their contributions to the development of novel ideas of nature in seventeenth-century Europe. I will focus specifically on works of a poetical nature, in order to better understand how genres enabled authors to investigate philosophical ideas from different perspectives and thereby generate new insights. Beginning with Margaret Cavendish and her reflections on plant and animal sentience in *Poems, and Fancies*, I then turn northwards to the psalms of the Danish-Norwegian Dorothe Engelbretsdatter and the Danish Elisabeth Pedersdatter Heeboe, who each in their own way reconsider nature from more ethical and non-anthropocentric standpoints. By examining poetical works—a genre in which most women authors of the period wrote—we discover alternative means of producing philosophical ideas.