

IASEMS



Italian Association
of Shakespearean and
Early Modern Studies

Forms and Discourses of Spirituality and Materialism

The Sixteenth IASEMS Conference
Tuscia University (Viterbo), 29-30 September 2025
Convenors: Alba Graziano and the IASEMS Executive Board

The Sixteenth IASEMS Conference in Viterbo, Tuscia University, 29-30 September 2025, aims to connect with some distinctive features of the Tuscia region while revisiting classical key themes of the English (and European) Renaissance. Viterbo's own religious, mystical, and architectural dimensions provide a rich starting point. Such multifarious inception stems from the Popes' presence in the city and from more authentically spiritual historic mystical figures, such as the patron saint, Rosa of Viterbo, but also from the region's baroque artistic and musical heritage, imbued with ecstasy and sensuality, and its villas and gardens, models which inspired the English eighteenth-century landscape garden, while rooted in the spiritual tradition of the medieval *hortus conclusus* and its symbolism.

The conference aims to explore the themes of spirituality and materialism in early modern and Restoration literature, considering them as both opposite and coexisting dimensions (as suggested by Mario Praz in *Gusto neoclassico*, 1940) and encouraging investigations into the expressive forms and discourses of the period emphasising their clash and intersections. Two emblematic fields will serve as interpretative keys: religious literature, including poetry, devotional and homiletic texts, and drama from the early modern period to the Restoration, which calls attention to the material production of culture, the physicality of performance arts, and the pragmatics of its semiotic codes.

The conference will include a **graduate session** devoted to PhD students and researchers who have obtained their doctorate within the past 5 years. Perspective candidates should specify their intention to participate in the graduate session when submitting their proposal.

Suggested topics include but are not limited to:

- religious poetry: asceticism or mystical passion?
- women and spirituality
- spirituality in popular literature: non-literary genres
- rhetoric in preaching and religious narratives
- the high and the low in critical and aesthetic thinking
- epicureanism and libertinism
- discourses of wit between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries
- staging the body: the physicality of performance
- the theatricality of religious ceremonies: rituals and symbolic objects
- the garden: physical/sensory and mental/spiritual space
- excess and spectacle in the baroque: violence and *trompe-l'œil*
- sacred and secular music
- critical deconstructions of the spirituality/materialism dualism

We welcome proposals for twenty-minute papers (maximum). Please send a 500-word abstract and 200-word curriculum vitae by **24 February 2025** to: info@iasems.org

Notification of acceptance will be sent by **10 March 2025**.

Selected papers will be included in a volume/journal issue edited by the conference convenor with the support of the IASEMS Executive Board.