

Valentina Pugliano (University of Oxford/IHR)

### **Venetian Apothecaries and the Mundane Art of List-making: Circulating Natural Knowledge In Ephemeral Writing**

List-making and note-taking have recently claimed the attention of historians as practices in which early modern virtuosi, scholars, and students engaged daily to improve their learning as well as tackle the increasing number of textual facts at their disposal. So far, there has been a tendency among historians of science to analyse notes and lists as a prelude to the composition of a greater opus, either as part of the transition from manuscript draft to printed volume, or as building blocks paving the way to novel classificatory systems. In the main, this was not the case for the numerous lists exchanged by sixteenth-century naturalists. These were practical pieces of paper that simply chronicled ownership and movement of objects; they could show up as an afterthought on the reverse side of a letter, in shorthand on a blank page of a recipe book, or be copied neatly in scribal hand in the scholar's notebook. They were working notes functioning in a manuscript world that smoothly intersected with that of commerce, with the artisan's shop and its daily activities. Alongside physicians, apothecaries constituted the largest group of aficionados of natural history in the Republic of Venice and were known for their hands-on approach to the study of nature. Their lists came in different forms and served different purposes: waybills of medicinal ingredients; lists of *desiderata* for uncommon specimens; lists to collect on paper what could not be had and, conversely, catalogues to consult the cabinets of both the apothecary and his correspondents. Taking these forgotten scribbles as my sources, I will try to reconstruct list-making as a textual technology that as essential for the basic transmission of things and data, was usually taken for granted by its users and employed as an ordinary mechanical tool. So I will reconstruct the transitory and uncertain lives of natural historical lists, ephemeral creations that invite a redefinition of the idea itself of scientific text.