

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910450468003321
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Titolo	Before imagination [[electronic resource]] : embodied thought from Montaigne to Rousseau // John D. Lyons
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Stanford, Cal., : Stanford University Press, 2005
ISBN	0-8047-6757-2 1-4237-4949-9
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (302 p.)
Disciplina	840.9/384
Soggetti	French literature - 16th century - History and criticism French literature - 17th century - History and criticism French literature - 18th century - History and criticism Imagination in literature Philosophy, French - 16th century Philosophy, French - 17th century Philosophy, French - 18th century Imagination (Philosophy) Electronic books.
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Bibliographic Level Mode of Issuance: Monograph
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references (p. 257-278) and index.
Nota di contenuto	Frontmatter -- Contents -- Preface -- Acknowledgments -- Introduction -- One. The Return of Stoic Imagination -- Two. Self-Cultivation and Religious Meditation -- Three. Picturing Ourselves in the World: Pascal's Pensées -- Four. The Imagination of Loss -- Five. From Imagination to Significance: The Novel from Scudéry to Lafayette -- Six. How the Ancients Modernized Imagination -- Conclusion -- Notes preface -- Bibliography -- Index
Sommario/riassunto	Before imagination became the transcendent and creative faculty promoted by the Romantics, it was for something quite different. Not reserved to a privileged few, imagination was instead considered a universal ability that each person could direct in practical ways. To imagine something meant to form in the mind a replica of a thing—its taste, its sound, and other physical attributes. At the end of the

Renaissance, there was a movement to encourage individuals to develop their ability to imagine vividly. Within their private mental space, a space of embodied, sensual thought, they could meditate, pray, or philosophize. Gradually, confidence in the self-directed imagination fell out of favor and was replaced by the belief that the few—an elite of writers and teachers—should control the imagination of the many. This book seeks to understand what imagination meant in early modern Europe, particularly in early modern France, before the Romantic era gave the term its modern meaning. The author explores the themes surrounding early modern notions of imagination (including hostility to imagination) through the writings of such figures as Descartes, Montaigne, François de Sales, Pascal, the Marquise de Sévigné, Madame de Lafayette, and Fénelon.
