

Winner of the 2014 Graduate Prize

Karin Amundsen (USC), “Upon Uncertain Hope of Gain’: Alchemy and Empire in Tudor England”

Amundsen’s original and insightful analysis of the interrelatedness of two forms of Tudor thought – the alchemical and the imperial – prompts a rethinking of the intellectual and material underpinnings of England’s expansion. Offering a sophisticated and nuanced, yet admirably clear discussion of the role of alchemy in providing the language in which empire could be spoken, Amundsen draws on an impressive range of primary and secondary sources, moving with ease between the histories of Continental metallurgy, English currency, and maritime exploration. She offers a rare integration of material and intellectual histories, revealing both the implications and enacting of competing ideas and interpretations. Beautifully composed, Amundsen’s paper takes us on many different journeys, never losing sight of the very real consequences of the journeys taken by Englishmen abroad.

2014 Graduate Prize Committee members: Jordanna Bailkin, Amy Woodson-Bolton, and Lisa Cody