

Winner of the 2015 Article Prize

Rebecca Lemon (USC), “Compulsory Conviviality in Early Modern England,” *English Literary Renaissance* 43, no. 3 (September 2013): 381-414.

The PCCBS Essay Prize Committee for 2015 is delighted to make its biannual award to Rebecca Lemon (USC) for her sparkling and important essay “Compulsory Conviviality in Early Modern England” published in the journal *English Literary Renaissance*.

What could be more pleasant than raising a drink and making a toast to the health of a friend? Well, in a virtuoso piece of literary history Lemon takes the practice of toasting, or ‘healthing’ as it was known, and shows that it was once reviled. Impressively moving between a rich field of texts and genres, including pamphlets, plays, and poems, Lemon recovers a fascinating debate in which ‘healthing’ controversial enough to be banned under the Protectorate and to have a royal proclamation issued against it by Charles II. Toasting was then associated with (imagine this!) Dutch excess, it was considered a dangerous and unhealthy form of binge drinking frequently satirized on stage. And yet, between the 1630s and 1650s Cavalier poets began to rehabilitate the practice as a quintessentially English bonding ritual, one used to manufacture and cement friendships. Rather than a rule of moderation, excessive conviviality became compulsory and was even used to help form new political solidarities as the country was tearing itself apart. Elegant and even funny the committee found the essay an exemplary piece of interdisciplinary scholarship. It commends the way in which the reading of a particular historical practice was used to tell us a much larger story about the emerging forms of civil society.

Finally, amongst the many outstanding essays the committee read it would like to make honorable mention to Radhika Natarjan’s ‘Performing Multiculturalism: The Commonwealth Arts Festival of 1965’ recently published by the *Journal of British Studies*. Its extensive archival work recovered the history of a largely forgotten festival and in doing so deftly resituated the history of multiculturalism in an imperial context. It is a terrific piece of work and all the more impressive as the first essay of an early career scholar.

Article Prize Committee: Susan Amussen (UC Merced), Lisa Cody (Claremont McKenna), James Vernon (UC Berkeley)