

***Imperfect Creatures* Wins Sixth Annual Robert Lowry Patten Award**  
**Rice University, Houston, 21 November 2017**

The editors of *SEL Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* are pleased to announce that the sixth annual Robert Lowry Patten Award, this year for the most outstanding recent contribution to British literary studies of the Restoration and Eighteenth Century, will go to *Imperfect Creatures: Vermin, Literature, and the Sciences of Life, 1600–1740* by Lucinda Cole, Visiting Associate Professor of English at the University of Illinois. Out of a daunting field of 170 qualifying publications, the judges for the 2017 award selected *Imperfect Creatures*, published by the University of Michigan Press, praising it as “one of the very best books in our field this year” and “such a pleasure to read that scholars and students will not be able to put it down.” The judges went on to say:

“Lucinda Cole’s *Imperfect Creatures* is a stunning contribution to the burgeoning field of animal studies. It is also far more than that. This book not only provides readers with a thematic rundown of neglected ‘creatures of putrefaction,’ through innovative close readings of vermin-infested literary texts, but it also presents a compelling argument about ‘the parasitical monsters that emerge as symptoms of our bloody diets and fermented imaginations’ in the period. Cole brilliantly combines seventeenth- and eighteenth-century history, philosophy, literature, culture, and agriculture in an interdisciplinary framework. Her book illuminates conceptions of early modern human life, and its aspirations to superior moral and physical godliness, as it’s defined in relation to fleas, curs, rats, worms and other vermin. *Imperfect Creatures* is therefore a provocative study in the best sense of the word, whether it’s discussing Rochester’s sexualized, canine-inflected poetry or Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe’s food hoarding. Cole provides brilliant analysis, wide-ranging argument, and moving details. It may come as little surprise that an original, exceptionally well-researched book on infestations, crowds, hordes, and swarms would be compelling reading. What is rather more unexpected is just how beautiful a book this is, both in its argument about the value of reading early modern texts ‘beneath the grain,’ and in its exceptionally detail-rich and well-turned sentences. Lucinda Cole’s book deserves to be deeply read and widely cited. It’s also poised to be pored over and perfectly enjoyed.”

The judges for this year’s contest were Jenny Davidson, Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University; George E. Haggerty, Distinguished Professor and Chair of the English Department at the University of California, Riverside; and Devoney Looser, Professor of English at Arizona State University.

The award, created in honor of the over forty-year distinguished scholarly and pedagogical career of Professor Robert Lowry Patten at Rice University, will be officially presented to Professor Cole at a ceremony and reception hosted by *SEL Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* to be held in New York during the annual Modern Language Association Convention. *SEL* is a quarterly journal publishing scholarly articles on English literature and an omnibus review in each issue of recent studies in the field. For nearly thirty of his years at Rice, Professor Patten served as either editor or publisher and executive editor of the journal.

Professor Cole, upon learning of the judges’ decision, observed, “It is a genuine honor to receive the Robert Lowry Patten award from *Studies in English Literature*. Under the editorship of Bob Patten and beyond, *SEL* has shaped our discipline for over half a century.”

Previous winners have been Thomas Lockwood, Professor of English at the University of Washington; Simon Goldhill, Professor of Greek Literature and Culture and Fellow and Director of Studies in Classics at King's College, University of Cambridge; Leah Price, Francis Lee Higginson Professor of English Literature at Harvard University; Peter de Bolla, Professor of Cultural History and Aesthetics and Director of the Cambridge Concepts Lab at King's College, University of Cambridge; and the editorial team behind *Benjamin Disraeli Letters: 1868, Vol. 10*: Michel W. Pharand, Ellen L. Hawman, Mary S. Millar, Sandra den Otter, and M. G. Wiebe.

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