

Special Issue

Omnia Sunt Communia: Reading the Early Modern Commons (1450–1850)

Message from the Guest Editor

In the late 1990s and the early 2000s, early modern literature scholars and historians have confronted the same dilemma. Back then, literature only used to represent itself, but now, in trying to describe or even to explain the “early modern period” through cultural objects, we may be granting them a level of representativity they never had. It is, however, to some extent obvious that most of the people who witnessed the first wave of capitalist modernization (a process that lasted until the early nineteenth century in some countries) were not “early modern” at all. What was the impact of communal practices on the development of liberal ideologies and institutions? How can we reassess early modern culture as something other than an incipient—and somewhat embryonic—anticipation of the value system that we will later call modern? Is it possible to read the literary national canon, or even to rebuild it, in the light of an all-encompassing culture of the commons?

Guest Editor

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