

Distinguished International Visiting Fellowship 2013
Karen Harvey
'A Social History of Mary Toft's World: Power, Family and the Body'



As part of its international research collaboration, the ARC Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions funds outstanding international scholars in the field to visit one or more of the Australian nodes for a period of between four weeks and two months, to work with members of the Centre on a research program of their choice. Visitors are invited to present their work in lectures or symposia, where they will receive feedback from and engage in discussion with members of the Centre, promoting collaborative research.

Karen Harvey, from the University of Sheffield, was awarded a Distinguished International Visiting Fellowship in 2013, which she shared with Michael Braddick, also of Sheffield. She spent six weeks working with the Centre at the University of Adelaide.

Karen read Politics and Modern History at Manchester University, before moving to Royal Holloway, University of London where she gained an MA in Women's History and later her PhD. She subsequently worked on the project 'Women, Work and the Industrial Revolution, 1760-1840' at Manchester University, was then appointed to the AHRB Centre for the Study of the Domestic Interior (at the Royal College of Art, the Victoria and Albert Museum, and Royal Holloway), before joining the history department at the University of Sheffield in 2003. Karen has held fellowships at the Clark Library, UCLA, the Huntington Library and the Australian Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions. Her research on eighteenth-century Britain has been funded by the AHRC, the British Academy, The Wellcome Trust and The Pasold Research Fund. Since joining the department at Sheffield, Karen has been awarded a Senate Award for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (in 2007), has worked hard to establish interdisciplinary research links within the University and has developed a number of important partnerships with public groups and organizations. She is also currently Academic in Residence at Bank Street Arts.

Karen reflects on her time with the Centre below, outlining the highlights, benefits, and outcomes of her Visiting Fellowship.

My research project at the CHE, University of Adelaide, was 'A Social History of Mary Toft's World: Power, Family and the Body'. The work re-examines the case of the notorious hoax of 1726, in which Mary Toft pretended to undergo the repeated monstrous births of rabbits over several weeks. Whilst historians have tended to examine this from the perspective of medical history and the doctors in particular, my project seeks to locate Mary Toft herself in a wider social context.

Two elements of this project in particular were progressed during the Fellowship. First, a principal part of this project is to use the three confessions taken from Toft in order to reconstruct her feelings and experiences of the hoax. Colleagues at Adelaide – in particular Merridee Bailey - were extremely helpful in suggesting and discussing appropriate readings in the history of emotions and the body. Second, the research situates the hoax in a criminal/legal (rather than medical) context. Here, David Lemmings was instrumental in advancing my understanding of the case. Important conversations on this research were also had with Katie Barclay (on eighteenth-century family), Francois Soyer (on the monstrous and sexuality) and Claire Walker (on women). The CHE at Adelaide therefore provided a very fruitful context for my research.

More generally, I engaged with a wider community of scholars by giving three papers to the Centre. In November 2013 I presented work to the University of Sydney on the main subject of my Fellowship, the case of Mary Toft. The discussion, mostly with colleagues from the English Department, helped me develop my thinking on language and metaphor in particular. I gave a related paper at the University of Adelaide in December 2013. There, the discussion enabled me to situate my own research on a case study in a much broader context of politics and crime. A third paper, to the University of Adelaide, discussed departmental strategies in public engagement and the role of the 'academic in residence'.

The visit has contributed to or generated a number of publications. The research papers to Sydney and Adelaide will be published as part of a future book, *The Impostress Rabbit-Breeder: Mary Toft and Eighteenth-Century England* (contracted to Oxford University Press, submission June 2016). The paper to the University of Adelaide on public engagement forms part of a journal article, to be submitted in 2015. I will also contribute a jointly-written chapter to Merridee Bailey, David Lemmings and Claire Walker (eds), *A Cultural History of the Emotions in the Baroque and Enlightenment Age (1600-1780)*, vol. 4 of *A Cultural History of the Emotions* (Bloomsbury), titled 'In private: the individual and the domestic community'.

I would like to make special mention of the sterling work of Merridee Bailey (as acting Director during the initial absence of David Lemmings), David Lemmings (as Director) and Janet Hart (as Administrator) and which made the visit such a pleasure.

Overall, the academics at the University of Adelaide provided a hospitable, informed and critical community in which my research project flourished.