

International Partner Investigator

François Soyer



The ARC Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions is committed to creating and enhancing international collaboration. Partner Investigators are researchers whose work focuses on emotions in Europe in the time period 1100 to 1800, and who are based at institutions outside Australia.

François Soyer is an Associate Professor of Late Medieval and Early Modern History at the University of Southampton. He became a Partner Investigator in 2016 and visited Australia in August, spending approximately four weeks working with members of the Centre across three different nodes.

François is interested in the history of the kingdoms of Spain and Portugal (and their respective overseas empires) during the late medieval and early modern period (1450–1750). His research focuses on the history of anti-Semitism and anti-Semitic propaganda, the history of the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions, the history of gender and sexuality and the history of the censorship of art in the early modern Iberian and Hispanic worlds. He completed a PhD at the University of Cambridge in 2007 and was the recipient of a Leverhulme Trust Study Abroad Studentship, as well as a CHE Postdoctoral Research Fellowship (2012–2015). His recent publications include: *Popularizing Anti-Semitism in Early Modern Spain and its Empire: Francisco de Torrejoncillo and the Centinela Contra Judíos (1674)* (Brill, 2014) and *Ambiguous Gender in Early Modern Spain and Portugal: Inquisitors, Doctors and the Transgression of Gender norms* (Brill, 2012), in addition to articles in *The Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, *The Journal of Religious History* and the *Journal of Early Modern Studies*. He is currently writing a short book on the life and trial of Maria Duran, a Catalan woman, cross-dresser and lesbian who was arrested and prosecuted by the Portuguese Inquisition in 1741–1744.

François reflects on his visit to the Centre, below.

My visit to the ARC Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions (CHE) in August 2016 was extremely beneficial to my research on fear, hate and the marginalisation of minorities in late medieval and early modern Europe. I was based at CHE's node at The University of Sydney (USyd) and made shorter visits to the nodes at The University of Western Australia (UWA) and The University of Adelaide (UAdel). At each node I presented a seminar paper, 'The Affective Politics of Fear in Early Modern Spain: The Recycling of an Anti-Semitic Conspiracy Theory into an Anti-Muslim One' (12 August 2016, UWA; 19 August 2016, UAdel; 24 August 2016, USyd). While in Perth I also presented a public lecture titled 'Anger, Envy and Hatred: "Jewish Emotions" in Early Modern European Anti-Semitic Polemics' (10 August 2016).

The seminar paper examined how the study of emotions can help us understand the appeal of conspiracy theories and how they are exploited by governments and elite institutions to provoke fear and forge collective identities. It focused on a particular conspiracy theory in early modern Spain: that of a vengeful Muslim doctor known as *el vengador* who systemically murdered Christian patients. I argued that the myth was in fact a clumsy recycling of a well-established anti-Semitic myth and that it also built upon existing anxieties about medical treatment. Discussions with CHE colleagues at all three nodes enabled me to get a better grasp on the concept of emotional narratives and the cultural politics of emotions. Thanks to their input, I have since published the following open access article: 'The Recycling of an Anti-Semitic Conspiracy Theory into an Anti-Morisco One in Early Modern Spain: The Myth of El Vengador, the Serial-Killer Doctor', *eHumanista/Conversos* 4 (2016): 233–55. Available at https://www.academia.edu/28931435/Open_Access_The_Recycling_of_an_Anti-Semitic_Conspiracy_Theory_into_an_anti-Morisco_one_in_Early_Modern_Spain_The_Myth_of_El_Vengador_the_Serial-Killer_Doctor_eHumanista_Conversos_4_2016_pp._233-255 and also, http://www.ehumanista.ucsb.edu/sites/secure.lsit.ucsb.edu.span.d7_eh/files/sitefiles/convursos/volume4/14%20ehumconv4.soyer.pdf

The public lecture I gave in Perth examined the role played by emotions in how the figure of the Jew was perceived and represented by early modern anti-Semitic polemicists. I argued that we urgently need to re-examine and nuance the existing perception of the early modern period as one of bland continuity with the medieval period in European anti-Jewish and anti-Semitic polemics and discourse. With the advent of the printing press, a new type of vernacular polemical literature appeared in early modern Europe alongside the older conversionist literature. The history of emotions can provide a conceptual framework that will help us to understand how and why the discourse of anti-Jewish hatred was altered and adapted by authors from Protestant northern Germany to Catholic Portugal to target their new readers. This paper has since been refined and an expanded version was presented as the Montefiori Lecture, which the Parkes Institute for Jewish/non-Jewish relations at the

University of Southampton invited me to present on Tuesday 14 February 2017. See:

<https://parkesinstituteblog.wordpress.com/2017/02/03/parkes-montefiore-lecture-2017/>