

Early Career International Research Fellowship 2016

Rebecca Tierney-Hynes

'The Afterlife of Genre'



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.

Rebecca Tierney-Hynes held an Early Career International Research Fellowship in 2016 and travelled to Australia to work with the Centre for a period of six weeks. Rebecca completed a PhD at the University of Toronto and is now an Associate Professor in English Language and Literature at the University of Waterloo. Her research interests focus on eighteenth-century theories of reading, audience response and genre, and the relationship of these theories to the history of emotion. Rebecca's publications include *Novel Minds: Philosophers and Romance Readers, 1680–1740* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), a number of journal articles and a forthcoming (2018) special issue of *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* on 'The Novel as Theory' (co-edited with Kathleen Lubey). She is currently working on a book about comedy and the history of emotion in the early eighteenth century.

Rebecca reflects on her time as an Early Career Research Fellow with CHE, below.

My time working with the vibrant community of scholars associated with the ARC Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions was immensely rewarding and inspiring. Conversations at CHE conferences and collaboratories, as well as informal discussions with scholars across disciplines and career stages, have contributed invaluable to my current work in eighteenth-century emotions history. A paper I gave at The University of Melbourne node will soon appear in a Palgrave Macmillan collection titled *Public Interiors: Intimacy and Celebrity in Eighteenth-Century Literary Culture*, and the short paper I presented at the [‘Moving Minds: Converting Cognition and Emotion in History’](#) conference at Macquarie University in Sydney has since been expanded to form a key chapter of my book project on eighteenth-century comedy and emotion. The collaboratory at UWA in March 2016, [‘Emotions, Materiality and Transformations in the Colonial Contact Zone’](#) helped me to think particularly about how objects and emotions traverse boundaries in encounter narratives. And last, the paper I gave on Henry Fielding at UWA has been greatly refined as a result both of the thoughtful engagement of my audience and helpful conversations with Professor Bob White and Professor Andrew Lynch. At UWA, I met a terrific international community of scholars working in England, the US and Sweden, as well as in Australia. These cross-disciplinary connections, both personal and professional, have enriched my work and allowed me to continue to collaborate with members of the CHE community as part of the ‘Humours of the Past’ network, based at Durham University and Newcastle University, and as a speaker at the University of York’s Centre for Eighteenth Century Studies.

My primary goal as a fellow of CHE was to contribute to the Centre’s exploration of the history of early modern emotion in Europe. My project investigated the relationship of literary genre to theories of emotion and the constitution of the self in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The book project I worked on at CHE, tentatively titled ‘Funny Feelings: Eighteenth-Century Comedy and the History of Emotion’, argues, broadly, that eighteenth-century philosophies of feeling emerge out of theories of audience response.

Laughter, a phenomenon that unites the psychological and physiological, was said to be provoked by pleasure or physical pain, ridicule or joy, the abstractions of comedy or a wound to the spleen. Laughter thus provides a nexus for discussions of the concrete impact of emotion in the early modern period. These theories of laughter suggest that literature and emotion were mutually implicated in a fashion we now find difficult to grasp. The gradual sentimentalising of laughter, at least in theory, over the course of the eighteenth century disarticulates it from physiological explanations. The concrete pressures of laughter within and upon the body are replaced, I argue, by a model of the abstract mimicry of emotion among characters on the comic stage as well as between actors and audiences. This mimicry is encapsulated in the key eighteenth-century terms, ‘sympathy’ and ‘affectation.’ While sympathy was cultivated as a kind of moral emotional mimicry, affectation was decried as a venial brand of hypocrisy. But both are defined by an imitative

drive. Both psychological operations suggest that, paradoxically, we come to be our individual selves by means of imitating others. These terms anchor the central conundrum of eighteenth-century psychology: How is the self created? How can we locate the individual in a Lockean system that proposes replication as the most fundamental psychic operation? Comedy and comic theory in the late seventeenth century began to develop a model of the imitative psyche that, above all other empiricist concepts, pervades modern psychology. Laughter, both alienating and contagious, is a seventeenth-century flashpoint for discussions of the imitative mind.

At CHE, I pursued this larger investigation in papers specifically on Susanna Centlivre's mimic characters and on Henry Fielding's comic theory. I presented 'Feigning Feeling: Susanna Centlivre's Imitative Comedy' at the 'Moving Minds' conference, which was also a CHE methods collaboratory. I gave the paper, 'Fielding's Farcical Accidents', at UWA. In addition, I workshopped a paper on Fielding and the politics of emotion, 'Farcical Politics: Fielding's Public Emotion', at The University of Melbourne.

The support of staff members Pam Bond and Katrina Tap made my time in Australia especially productive. Conversations with Stephanie Trigg, Gillian Russell, Jane Davidson, Grace Moore, Stephen Gaukroger, Andrew Lynch and Bob White, as well as a wonderful international group of postdocs, research fellows and graduate students have been influential, inspiring new avenues of investigation and expanding my thinking about the history of emotion. I hope to follow this productive and rewarding fellowship with ongoing collaborations. At the University of Waterloo, my colleague and I are submitting a funding application this fall to develop a small international conference that I hope will include some CHE members; I plan to join the 'Humours of the Past' network for a conference in Durham in the fall of 2017; and I hope to attend conferences with CHE associates in the future.