

Early Career International Research Fellowship 2017

Toria Johnson

**‘She “spake the same wordes in anger”’: Emotion and Defamation in
Community and Courtroom’**



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.

Toria Johnson held an Early Career International Research Fellowship in 2017 and travelled to Australia to work with the Centre for a period of one month at The University of Adelaide node. Toria is a Lecturer in Early Modern English Literature at the University of Birmingham and was previously a Teaching Fellow in Renaissance Literature at the University of St Andrews, where she also completed her PhD in English. Her research examines the impact of the Reformation on early modern English emotional culture, focusing on the role of pity and compassion in English understandings of subjectivity and ‘social’ emotion. She is the co-editor, with Rachel E. Holmes (CRASSH, University of Cambridge), of a Special Issue of *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, ‘In Pursuit of Truth: Law and Emotion in Early Modern Europe’ (January, 2018), and has contributed essays to *Compassion in Early Modern Europe 1500–1700*, edited by Katherine Ibbett and Kristine Steenbergh (forthcoming), and *Shakespeare and Emotion*, edited by Katharine Craik (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2020).

Toria comments on her time as an Early Career Research Fellow with CHE, below.

I joined the ARC Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions for four weeks, from 17 August to 17 September 2017, as an Early Career International Research Fellow. I was based at The University of Adelaide node.

I am especially grateful to Jacquie Bennett, who organised my stay with remarkable efficiency, and to Wendy Norman, who designed a wonderful poster to publicise the paper I gave at the Centre.

My fellowship allowed me to focus my attention on two main projects. The first of these is a Special Issue of *Forum for Modern Language Studies* that I am currently editing, entitled 'In Pursuit of Truth: Law and Emotion in Early Modern Europe'. This volume, to which I have also contributed a co-written introduction and an original article, takes a transnational approach to the study of law, literature and the history of emotions in early modern Europe, and brings together internationally recognised scholars working in the US, the UK and Europe. My time in Adelaide afforded me the space and time to complete my own essay, and to complete the research necessary for the co-written introduction. The issue is now in press, and will be published in January 2018. Having dedicated time to work on this project was absolutely invaluable.

While in Australia I was also able to work on my monograph, entitled '*Piteous Overthrows*': *Pity and Identity in Early Modern English Drama*. This book explores the early modern English relationship with emotion through a single emotion – pity – and argues that the dramatic representation of pity (pity itself being an inherently transactional, social emotion) reveals compelling evidence of a social culture built specifically around emotion. The book argues that the impact of this emotional landscape – which is itself a recurring topic in contemporary drama – played a major role in early modern English identity formation, informing how people thought about themselves and their communities.

A central aim of this book is to provide conclusive evidence that imaginative material is vitally important to the broader history of emotions, and that both literary materials and literary criticism offer new insights into the experience and expression of emotional humanity. Broadly speaking, this monograph is a piece of literary criticism that, through its emphasis on theatrical pity, seeks to insert itself into the existing discourse surrounding the 'history' of emotions. While in Adelaide I had the opportunity to present material from the first chapter of this book in a work-in-progress session, in a paper entitled, "'To feel what wretches feel": Reformation and the Re-naming of English Compassion'. Conversations about this material, with members of CHE in Adelaide including Merridee Bailey, Abaigéal Warfield, Amy Milka, Carly Osborn, Katie Barclay, Claire Walker and David Lemmings were extremely valuable in pushing this work in new directions: their input has really helped to clarify the larger aims of the monograph.

During my fellowship I was also able to attend the final CHE Change Program collaboratory, 'News Reporting and Emotions, 1100–2017'. This was a truly wonderful conference – expertly organised by Abaigéal Warfield and Amy Milka – that demonstrated the Centre's commitment to interdisciplinarity. Though I would never have identified 'news' as a particular research interest of mine, I found the proceedings extremely thought provoking. Questions about 'reporting' in particular resonated with my own research interests in early modern drama, where information is constantly being reported. Having the opportunity to hear new work from Una McIlvenna was a real highlight. I was only sorry that I didn't get an opportunity to meet more members of other CHE nodes at the collaboratory.

One of my long-term aims at the University of Birmingham is to develop an undergraduate course in emotions studies, and Katie Barclay very kindly took the time to discuss her own experiences teaching similar material at an undergraduate level. Her insights have proven extremely useful in my on-going teaching plans. Merridee Bailey was especially welcoming throughout my fellowship, and was very generous with her time, and in sharing her own research. I am hopeful that we will be able to develop some of these more casual research conversations into future collaborations on 'unfashionable virtues'.

These conversations, and indeed all of the more casual discussions I was able to have in Adelaide, have had a huge impact on me. It was especially helpful to have this time at this point in my career, as I am increasingly considering the potential contribution of literary studies to the broader history of emotions. My only regret is that I wasn't able to stay longer! Nonetheless, I'm very grateful for what turned out to be a very influential period of research.