**PROPOSED SEMINARS FOR EHESS, May 2015**

1. **A comparative history of honour and dishonour in the Cape and Australian colonies, c.1750-1850**

This seminar will discuss some of the methodological and conceptual issues involved in the writing of a book which I am editing with Penny Russell of the University of Sydney entitled *Honourable Intentions? Violence and Virtue in Australian and Cape Colonies, c 1750 to 1850*. The book compares the significance and strategic use of ideas of honour in two colonial societies, the Cape Colony and the early British settlements in Australia, between 1750 and 1850. For the Cape Colony, this was a period of transition between Dutch and British rule, when new forces from the Atlantic and Indian Ocean worlds were brought by army officers and troops, administrators and settlers, all products of turbulent revolutionary movements and colonial warfare. During this time of flux, concepts of honour and status were radically reconstructed. In the newly created Australian colonies of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, British military authorities struggled to find honour in the indignity of exile, in the dispossession of indigenous people whose physical prowess they despised, or in the infliction of ignominy, shame and ritualised humiliation upon convict bodies. In both regions swirled a free, and often transient, population of emigrants and sojourners, sailors and soldiers, merchants and traders, slaves and convicts, with diverse backgrounds and transnational experiences.

How, when and why did ‘honour’ matter in such societies as these? The contributors to this book explore the transmutations and yet resilience of concepts of honour in an often unfamiliar and always changing world, in the face of radical challenges posed by commercialisation, democratisation and the experiences of colonisation. The idea of honour itself was in transition in Western societies during this period, from its traditional elitist association with pedigree and nobility to a more democratised notion of personal integrity. Discourses of honour continued to celebrate physical courage and personal violence in forms not necessarily sanctioned by authorities; but increasingly they also came into conflict with notions of fair dealing, respect and rectitude that seemed to point a different moral path. Settler violence, indigenous resistance, the social confusions of colonial societies and the emergence of democratic institutions were sometimes decried and sometimes extolled in the name of honour. Investigating contested ideas of honour, their adaptive resilience and coercive force in a changing world, the chapters in this book significantly extend the knowledge base of scholarship on honour cultures, masculinity, violence, settler colonialism and the ideology of empire.

1. **Cape Town as an Indian Ocean slave port**

This is an article I am writing for a special issue of the *Journal of Southern African Studies*, entitled ‘Cape Town and Durban from an Indian Ocean perspective’. The most immediate and visible connection of early colonial Cape Town to the Indian Ocean world lay in its sizeable slave population. This paper will examine new data from household inventories to enumerate the Indian Ocean origins of slaves imported into the town in more precise ways than has previously been possible. It will then consider the impact on the nature and experience of slavery of the shift from slave trading in South and Southeast Asia to the African coast in the later 18th and 19th centuries. Throughout comparisons are made with slavery and unfree labour systems in other Indian Ocean port cities such as Batavia, Colombo and Port Louis.

1. **Insult and identity in the late 18th century Cape Colony**

This is a paper I am writing based on my research into the Cape civil court cases of the late 18th century. The extensive collection of civil cases from the Dutch East India Company period preserved in the Cape archives reveals much about the ways in which men and women of the colony perceived themselves in relation to those with whom they came into daily contact. Cases were brought to the Council of Justice when disputes arose that led to conflict, either physical or verbal. This paper will examine the nature of verbal conflict and will focus especially on insults. What were considered to be insulting words and why? How did insults reveal gendered, ethnic and status attitudes amongst the diverse population of settlers, soldiers, sailors, slaves and indigenous people in this burgeoning colonial society where status and respectability were critical in asserting social identity?   
  
The paper will draw on the rich tradition of European cultural historical approaches and examine how they may be adapted or challenged when applied to a colonial context.

1. **Gender and the European colonial town**

This seminar will discuss the issues arising from contributions to the *Routledge History Handbook of Gender and the Urban Experience* (due for publication in 2016). I am editing the section on ‘Gender in the European Colonial Town’ and will be writing an introductory essay which will draw together the contributions on recent developments in gendered urban histories in colonial North and Latin America, Africa, Asia and Australasia.   
  
This highly international *Handbook* will draw upon the extensive conversations engendered by the research and collaboration of the Gender in the European Town Network, not only about the changing dynamics of gender and towns over time, but also about the challenges posed in writing a comparative European history that extends beyond the Anglo-Franco-German axis to incorporate explicitly the Nordic region, thus raising questions both about the complexities of pan-European gendered ideals (and how and where these were intersected and/or modified by local or national norms), and about the nature of the European town itself. It also examines the impact of these ideas and their interpretation in the colonial diaspora and investigates the interplay of urban experience within and between metropole and former colonial regions   
  
A particular focus will be the impact of European ideas, practices and structures on urban communities that emerged in European colonies. Drawing on recent rich work in North and Latin America, Africa, South and Southeast Asia and Australasia, the book will consider how far gendered patterns were retained and how far they were challenged or transformed in the context of very different power structures in these regions. Interactions of immigrants, indigenous people, transient migrants, and unfree slaves, convicts, indentured and wage labourers in the colonial heyday of the 18th-early 20th centuries are central to these issues.

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