



Vagrant lives and colonial mobility, New Zealand and Australia, 1840s-1890s

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My book, *Vagrant Lives in Colonial Australasia, 1840-1920*, seeks to place the stories of people who became vagrants at the centre of the narrative about colonial mobility. Along the way, it also explores the many intersections between gender, 'race'/ethnicity, class, age, and sexuality which are now deeply ingrained in social and cultural historical analysis. The question is to what extent these categories inform and shape our thinking about vagrancy and its prosecution: what does the data tell us, and what surprises are there?

I want to bring the history of vagrancy to the forefront of our thinking about how these different categories work in relation to the prosecution of vagrants. Writing about a much earlier period in England, A. L. Beier described vagrants as 'masterless men', but also examined 'fragmented families', such as the 'unstable' family groups on the road in the early modern period. Vagrancy is most often individualised because of the nature of prosecutions, but there are hints of homeless families in the colonies, children without parents left to fend for themselves, and also the kinds of 'dangerous liaisons' that remind us of the array of vagrant identities.

This paper complicates our readings of vagrant identities to uncover the array of vagrant lives in the period, at the same time as it draws upon mobilities scholarship to understand vagrancy in time and place.

Details

Tuesday 18 October 2022, 4:30PM

Centre for Arabic and Islamic Studies (CAIS) Al-Falasi Theatre

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