

GENDER AND ALIENS

Durham University, 7th-10th January 2019

Call for Papers



The Emperor and the Court Lady, from 'Nüshi zhen' (Admonitions of the Instructress to the Court Ladies), text composed by Zhang Hua (c.AD 232-300); 6th-8th century
(C) The Trustees of the British Museum



God casts out Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, in the 'Old English Hexateuch' London, British Library, Cotton Claudius B.iv, f. 6v, 11th century
(C) British Library

In recent years discourse around 'aliens', as migrants living in modern nation-states, has been highly polarised, and the status of people who are technically termed legal or illegal aliens by the governments of those states has often been hotly contested. It is evident from studies of the past, however, that the movement of people is not a recent phenomenon: in the medieval west, one of the Latin terms applied to such people was *alieni* ('foreigners', or 'strangers'), and it is clear from the surviving evidence that there were many people in the Middle Ages who could be, and indeed were, identified as aliens. This conference aims to stimulate debate about the ways in which gender intersected with and related to the idea of such aliens – and, more broadly, alienation – in the medieval world. Social, political and religious attitudes to aliens and the alienated were not constant over the centuries from c. 400 to c. 1500, and nor were they uniform across the whole world. Some foreigners, as aliens, might end up integrated into the societies they entered; others might find themselves marginalised, lonely or alone; or oppressed, as outlaws, outcasts, or slaves. Gender might exacerbate or mitigate this, depending on time, place and context. Authors or artists depicting parts of the world far from and alien to their own often filled them with people or beings not like them, demonstrating the imaginative power of alterity, while the reactions of those who encountered people from distant places and observed or participated in their customs could include recognition of similarity as well as difference. Foreigners were also not the only people who might find themselves alienated from, or within, certain societies or cultures: the medieval world included many marginalised groups. The issues of aliens and alienation may be differently construed in the modern world, but they are certainly not new. The relationship of gender to these topics is complex, variable and significant.

The conference aims to enable discussion of these issues as they relate to the whole medieval world from c. 400 to c. 1500. The organisers welcome proposals for papers on any topic related to gender and aliens or alienation, broadly construed, and encourage submissions relating to the world beyond Europe. Papers might consider issues such as:

- refugees, immigrants, emigrants
- inclusion and exclusion
- alterity and difference
- outlaws, the law, legality
- marginalised or disenfranchised groups
- non-normative bodies, illness, disability
- acculturation
- imagined geographies
- borders and frontiers
- ethnicity and identity
- slavery and slaves

In addition to sessions of papers, the conference will also include a poster session. Proposals for a 20-minute paper or for a poster can be submitted at <https://tinyurl.com/gms2019submit> by **September 30th 2018**. The conference organisers are also happy to consider proposals for other kinds of presentation: please contact the organisers at gmsconference2019@gmail.com to discuss these. Some travel bursaries will be available for students and unwaged delegates to attend this conference: please see <http://medievalgender.co.uk/> for details.