

**REPORT**

**'Cultures of Exclusion in the Early Modern World, 1600-1800: Enemies and Strangers'**

**University of Warwick, 18-19 May 2017**



The early modern period was an age of social and political change, which profoundly affected men's and women's sociable interactions. This two-day interdisciplinary conference set out to explore the different ways in which social relationships were theorised and constructed. Using the idea of 'cultures of exclusion' as its starting point, the aim of the conference was to investigate how sociability was understood and negotiated in the period 1600-1800, and why certain groups and individuals were excluded from particular social interactions and spaces.

On 18-19 May 55 researchers from Britain, Europe, North America and Australia gathered at the University of Warwick to discuss these issues from a multi-disciplinary perspective. The event, which was organised by Naomi Pullin (History) and Kathryn Woods (History), brought together historians, literary scholars, intellectual historians, medical historians and linguistic scholars to illuminate the complex interplay between social inclusion and exclusion during this period.

The first day of the conference on 18<sup>th</sup> May began with two parallel sessions, which explored an array of themes in relation to exclusionary cultures: from isolation and othering within the family, to how early modern male and female authors used 'languages' of exclusion in fiction or when documenting their own experiences. This was followed by an early career networking event and the keynote lecture from Professor Garthine Walker (Cardiff University). Walker introduced us to the changing spectre of rape trials in the eighteenth century. Using records from the Old Bailey criminal court in London, she traced the competing narratives between victim and perpetrator within the courtroom, arguing that the culture of modern 'victim blaming' began with new legal procedures in the 1780s and 1790s, especially the introduction of defence lawyers. This served to exclude women from the courtroom and shows how the study of rape trials sits uncertainly with 'civility discourses' so often regarded as a characteristic of this period.

## **Cultures of Exclusion**

Conference Report

The second day of the conference on 19<sup>th</sup> May consisted of three parallel sessions. Here papers explored vagabonds and rogues in literary and historical documents; the boundaries between religious tolerance and intolerance; witchcraft, demonology and spiritual healing; appearance and the regulation of female bodies; and a session on the ways in which states and churches 'policed' social order.

Through fruitful discussion, 'Cultures of Exclusion' was able to shed new light on key aspects of early modern sociability and 'polite' culture, foregrounding the different ways in which gender, domestic and social circumstances, nationality, appearance and political and religious affiliation created competing hierarchies of inclusion and exclusion. Over the two days we heard a whole range of ways in which underlying changes in society, culture, the law and family created new types of exclusionary behaviour. But perhaps what struck us most from the discussions were the continuities: we saw that many of the groups excluded in the early modern period continue to face challenges and stigma in modern society. This confirmed to us that in creating spaces of inclusion, societies almost always create a parallel culture of marginalisation and isolation.

The conference was a great success and we received positive feedback from the delegates both during and after the event. It was also well-attended by members of Warwick University (especially from the History Department), many of whom generously offered to chair sessions. Live tweeting was also provided by some delegates during the day, and a permanent tweet archive is available at:

<https://storify.com/EMexclusion/cultures-of-exclusion-in-the-early-modern-world-16>.

We would like to acknowledge the generous support of Warwick's Humanities Research Centre and the Warwick History Department, especially the assistance of Sue Rae and Sheilagh Holmes, as well as our other sponsors: the European History Research Centre, the British Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies and the Royal Historical Society. This generous funding enabling us to offer free registration and travel grants to early career and PhD researchers attending the conference. The success of the event has encouraged us to consider further collaboration with some of the delegates in the future.

For full programme details and further information please visit the conference website: <http://culturesofexclusion.wordpress.com/>

**By Naomi Pullin (History, Warwick) and Kathryn Woods (History, Warwick)**