

CFP

8&9 JUNE 2024

ONLINE EVENT

‘Silenced Voices and Erased Agencies in Victorian Life and Victorian Fiction’

There has been an important scholarly turn to studies in silence and erasure since at least the 1970s by those eager to uncover hidden, marginalised, and underrepresented voices of the past. UK Research and Innovation currently list Hidden Histories as an area of investment and support. The Victorians were particularly concerned with matters of voice and agency. Throughout the nineteenth century, numerous reforms were introduced to grant more rights and autonomy to women, children, animals, and those considered insane. These concerns inevitably found their way into Victorian fiction. Drawing on numerous advancements in the understanding of the human mind and psychology as a discipline, as well as emerging social and cultural anxieties regarding empire, the Victorians created new methods of representing marginalised groups, their voices and their silences. From literal refusals to speak, to blank spaces, to monstrous figures, these works of fiction ask us to consider methods of communication that were adopted when restrictions were placed on the speakable.

This study day wishes to contribute to the robust conversations regarding voice, silence, and agency that are very much relevant today. It is the hope of the hosts that participants will leave with a better understanding of the institutions and mechanisms that worked in tandem to regulate and control marginalised voices and agencies in the Victorian era. We also hope to encourage participants to re-evaluate the idea of silence as strictly an absence, specifically an absence of agency.

We invite papers on topics including, but not limited to:

- Is there a difference between silence and the absence of words?
- Forgotten texts, particularly by women writers
- Marginalised groups in the Victorian era
- Insanity, the madhouse and human agency
- Non-human agencies: animals, nature, and the monstrous
- Presentation of silence in textual form and its interpretation
- Hidden or erased sexualities and genders
- Colonial relations and race
- Silence as a tool of communication
- Trauma, psychology, and silence
- Implicature
- Unspeakability/ Unnarratability
- Masculine adjudication over female voice
- Illness and disability
- Hierarchies and power imbalances
- Victorian soundscapes: technological advances and amplified voices/sounds
- The relationship between genre and types of silence



A VPFA STUDY DAY

This will be an online Study Day (spread over two days to allow for speakers from different time zones). We invite proposals for papers of 15-20 minutes in length, panels (please send abstracts in one email), and also 10-minute Flash Papers that outline an ongoing or future research project. Please send abstract proposals of 200-300 words accompanied by a short bio to Rebecca Hamilton (r.hamilton1.21@abdn.ac.uk) by Monday 22nd January, 2024.