

Victorian Lives and Minds: Scientific Culture in the Nineteenth Century

The nineteenth century is widely seen as a period of accelerated differentiation in the sciences with many concepts and disciplines first taking the distinct shapes in which we still use and know them today. Biology, physiology, psychology, sociology, anthropology and the science of language were perhaps the most prominent of a plethora of developing sciences inquiring into the complex dynamics between 'life', 'mind' and 'culture' and thus in the last instance, one might argue, into the question of what it is and means to be human.

On the one hand, such enquiries were often motivated by a strong interest in definition and measurability, which led to the institution of ideas like 'the normal' and found expression, for example, in statistics and the classification of specific 'types' of people, often aided by forms of visual representation such as composite photography among others. The notion of culture, in its turn, was equally stratified into 'the best which has been thought and said', popular and mass culture – distinctions which could readily underpin other kinds of classifications. On the other hand, this interest in structures, hierarchies and norms was widely informed by an equally strong awareness of contingency, variability and the irreducibility of life and mind, as it had been promoted, for instance, by evolutionary theory. Culture, on this account, was likewise seen to be premised on changeable practices of cultivation, causing it to proliferate in form and change over time.

Thus, focussing on the interplay between genesis and structure, the title of this section, 'Victorian lives and minds', is meant to refer to an emergent 'subject' in the double sense of this term, being formed at the points of intersection between 'nature', 'culture' and the ways in which these concepts themselves were used, defined, circulated and discussed through equally emergent vocabularies and technologies. We would like to invite papers to engage in an interdisciplinary conversation on Victorian texts of all kinds, centred on the question of how scientific knowledge was engendered, represented, negotiated and distributed through various practices, media and symbolic forms. Finally, in an attempt to look beyond the nineteenth century, the panel also welcomes reflections on the legacy and afterlife of Victorian thought and work in the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries.

Topics of interest include, but are not limited to:

- Literary engagements with science
- Effects of the emerging sciences on the definitions of the author, of literature, of culture
- Intersections of science and aesthetics
- Negotiations of what it means to be human in Victorian literature and culture
- Neo-Victorian adaptations of Victorian discourses on science
- Logics of discovery and justification
- The relation between feelings, emotions and knowledge
- Human-animal relations
- Scientific orthodoxies and heterodoxies
- Scientific vocabularies
- Epistemology and ontology
- Empiricisms and idealisms
- Science and gender
- Science and education
- Science and biopolitics
- Emerging sciences, emerging media
- Evolution and cybernetics
- Ethics and agency
- Notions of 'nature' and 'culture' in the nineteenth century and beyond

Please send proposals (no more than 250 words) for 30-minute papers to

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