



Image: Peter Paul Rubens, *Rubens, Helena Fourment, and Their Son Frans*, c. 1635. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Speech/less in the Early Modern World

23-24 April 2026

Harrods Room, Emmanuel College, University of Cambridge

Day One: Thursday 23 April 2026

9.00am *Registration opens*

9.45am **INTRODUCTION**

10.00am **PANEL 1 – NAVIGATING SPEECHLESSNESS**

Fróði Markan Jones (University of Cambridge), “‘You speak truly, and remember what I already said’”: The Last Will and Testament of Julien de Casaux’

Ella Foschia (University of Cambridge), ‘The Cult of Saints as a Non-Verbal Form of Speech in the Kalmar Union (1450-1523)’

11.00am *Break*

11.30am **PANEL 2 – SPEAKING IN EMPIRES**

Tiéphaine Thomason (University of Cambridge), ‘Losing One’s Tongue: Linguistic Proficiency and Speechlessness through Displacement in the Eighteenth-Century French Empire’

Emily Stevenson (University of Oxford), ‘Speech and Speechlessness in Early Modern Indigenous Language Lists’

Anna Freed (Norfolk Record Office), ‘Indigenous American Conceptions of Speechlessness and Signed Speech’

1.00pm *Lunch*

2.00pm **PANEL 3 – SILENT LITERARY VOICES**

Jessica Weiss-Bahia (University of Oxford), ‘Choreographing Silence, Risking Speech: Henrietta Maria in Performance’

Erin Weinberg (University of Manitoba), “‘My grief, no heart, my thoughts no tongue can tell’”: Objects Speaking for Silenced Subjects in The Spanish Tragedy’

Stephen Guy-Bray (University of British Columbia), ‘Voice to Text’

3.30pm *Break*

4.00pm **KEYNOTE PRESENTATION**

Rosamund Oates (Manchester Metropolitan University), 'Silent Histories: Deafness, Speech and Consent in Early Modern England'

Day Two: Friday 24 April 2026

9.00am **PANEL 4 – SPEECH DEVELOPMENT AND DISABILITY**

Suchitra Chatterjee (University of Brighton), 'Speech/less in the Early Modern World: Silence, Presence, and an Autistic Lens'

Olivia Formby (University of Cambridge), '(Not) Speaking and Going: Speech Development and Regression in Early Modern Childhood'

Michaela Kästl (University of Tübingen), '(In)accessible Paths to Confirmation: Deafness and Speechlessness in Religious Rites of Passage, c. 1730-1830'

10.30am *Break*

11.00am **PANEL 5 – NON-CONFORMING SPEECH**

Debra Parish (University of Queensland), 'Speech and Silence in the Female Visionary Performance: England 1640-1660'

Baiyu Andrew Song (Wycliffe College, Toronto), 'Pulsing in silence: Baptist women's congregational experience in the eighteenth century'

Rimliya Telkenaroglu (McGill University), "'The dead may be raised, the dumb speak, and the unclean spirit cast out...': Inner Voice and Divine Possession in Early Quakerism'

12.30pm *Lunch*

1.30pm **PANEL 6 – SPEECH ABSENT OR LOST**

Charlotte Holmes (Independent Researcher), "'Without any Probability of Relief": John Ross of Arnage and the Experience of Deafness in Early Modern Scotland'

Elizabeth Foyster (University of Cambridge), 'Ill health and speechlessness in early modern Britain'

Jade Jesty (University of Cambridge), "'Through deaffness and ake of his bones": Experiencing trauma and sensory loss during the British Civil Wars, 1642-1685'

3.00pm **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Places are limited at this in-person event. Registration is essential.

Please register by 12 April 2026: forms.gle/k9Xnz4gVFhe2Syez9

All queries are very welcome to the convenor Dr Olivia Formby: speechless2026@gmail.com

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