

## The Research Institute for Literature and Cultural History

### 2022/23 RILCH Seminar Programme

## Down syndrome in Neo-Victorianism: Victims, villains and the problem of 'intelligence'

Dr Helen Davies, University of Wolverhampton

Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2022 @ 5.30pm, via Teams

This seminar explores the representation of Down syndrome in neo-Victorianism. Although the genre of neo-Victorian fiction has tended to be celebrated for its inclusivity, progressive politics and broad commitment to social justice (Kohlke 2008; Heilmann and Llewellyn 2010), Dr Davies argues that there is an 'aesthetic nervousness' (Quayson 2007) when it comes to depicting characters with Down syndrome. Noting that characters with Down syndrome frequently feature in neo-Victorian crime fiction, Dr Davies examines several examples to demonstrate that neo-Victorianism's metatextuality can raise challenging questions about 'knowledge' and 'intelligence' that are particularly loaded in the context of representing learning disabilities.



**Dr Helen Davies** is Senior Lecturer in English Literature at University of Wolverhampton. She is the author of *Gender and Ventriloquism: Passionate Puppets* (2012) and *Neo-Victorian Freakery: The Cultural Afterlife of the Victorian Freak Show* (2015) and is currently writing a book about Down syndrome in neo-Victorianism.

Please register to attend this event [here](#).