

The Violence of Silence: Overlooked Holocaust Histories

University College Dublin, 23-24 January 2026

The dynamics of memory and remembrance of the Holocaust have passed through different phases. Some aspects have been transmitted, while others have been systematically overlooked, misrepresented, or silenced on national, transnational and international levels. Recollection and omission go hand in hand. Societies concentrate on certain events, highlight particular details, and interpret data to foster a specific image of the past and its memory. Events, details, and data which are not in line with official narratives can be omitted on purpose or (un)consciously forgotten.

In occupied Europe, silence could mean survival for persecuted individuals. Yet more often, silence served as a form of complicity with power structures, fostering persecution. Such structures were implemented not only through overt acts of violence but also through the passive acquiescence, or silence, of ordinary citizens who looked away and benefited from systemic violence in both its extreme and everyday manifestations (e.g., Goldhagen, 1997; Forti, 2012; Rothberg, 2019).

The Violence of Silence conference explores the conscious and unconscious mechanisms through which silence functions as a transnational tool of exclusion, distortion, and, ultimately, continued violence. It sheds light on the silenced or marginalised dimensions of Holocaust history and memory, and examines literary works that instead, deepen and extend official narratives while challenging the rhetorical and political limits of transnational slogans such as "Never forget" and "Never again" (e.g., Knittel, 2015; Subotić, 2019; Pisanty, 2020; Vice, 2020). It brings together scholars working on how silence operates as a site of violence and how the acknowledgement of silence functions as a form of healing. It considers the role of literature in encouraging readers to break cycles of forgetting and in offering non-canonical images for cultivating new forms of memory, justice, and solidarity today.

As Nicholas Tavuchis and Judith Hermann argue, to put things on record is the prelude to reconciliation (i.e., Tavuchis, 1991; Hermann 1992 and 2023); conversely, the absence of recognition of silenced voices limits our understanding of the Holocaust and obscures its reverberations in contemporary forms of marginalisation, exclusion, and persecution. This conference, therefore, also looks at how injustice connects historical and contemporary contexts, and how diverse modes of implication frequently converge and overlap, often through complex, multidimensional forms of remembering and forgetting (e.g., Rothberg 2009; Erll, 2022; Mihai, 2022; Bartolini and Bellin, 2024).

[Sue Vice](#) (University of Sheffield) is a leading scholar in Holocaust culture who has variously addressed the core themes to be explored in this conference. In the past twenty five years, she has extensively researched testimonial writing as well as addressed new forms of literature problematising the (self-)representation of both victims and perpetrators, and their memory-loss associated with dementia and trauma. We are, therefore, thrilled to confirm that she will be delivering the keynote talk and joining us in person to deepen the discussion among panel members.

Abstracts addressing, but not limited to, the following areas are welcome:

- Testimonial literature that addresses the violence of silence;
- Texts that were ignored or marginalised because they challenged dominant Holocaust narratives at the time of publication;
- Recent literary works that revisit the Holocaust through neglected themes or silenced experiences;
- Intergenerational literature that challenges the limitations of inherited narratives and proposes multidimensional approaches to remembering and forgetting.

While academic and community discussions are central to *The Violence of Silence* conference, so too is experiencing the literature under analysis; literary works are, of course, written to be read and performed. The conference will feature a semi-staged performance of an excerpt from *Such Creatures* by the award-winning Canadian playwright, Judith Thompson. To establish important conversations with writers about themes of violence, silence, and the Holocaust, Judith Thompson will join us for a Q&A session after the performance.

The conference, kindly sponsored by the Humanities Institute at UCD, will be held in person at UCD to facilitate interaction among panellists, and streamed online to allow for wider attendance. Travel grants are available for PhD students, early career researchers and independent researchers who do not have access to institutional funding.

Please send your title, abstract for a 20-minute paper (max 250 words), and short bio (max 100 words) to theviolenceofsilenceconference@gmail.com by **22 August**. Please make it clear in your email whether you wish to be considered for a travel grant.

Dr Mara Josi (University College Dublin)

Dr Lindsay Thistle (Wilfrid Laurier University)