

**Extended Deadline, February 23, 2018.**



# PAD 2018



## Personification Across Disciplines

**An interdisciplinary conference at Durham University, September 17 – 19, 2018**

### Call for Papers:

Humans have a flair for attributing intentions, traits, agency, emotions and mental states to beings or things – either real or imagined. Whether anthropomorphising natural or abstract shapes, playing with imaginary companions, (re) constructing fictional characters and dialoguing with gods or hallucinatory presences, the attribution of an agentic mentality to human and non-human targets appears both natural and meaningful to our everyday life. The personification of inanimate, non-human, virtual or absent objects or entities seems at the core of human cognition, yet remains in many respects mysterious. To what extent is personification a conscious process whereby we extend intersubjective and narrative relations? When does this capacity emerge? What are its cognitive underpinnings and what are its effects? Is there a continuum to be traced between these different cognitive, narrative, religious and hallucinatory experiences?

Our conference aims to explore personifying dynamics and experiences through a variety of disciplines, methods and perspectives. Although the complexity and ubiquity of these phenomena call for a multi-disciplinary approach, to date the topic has been mainly investigated only within the boundaries of specific fields and problems. For instance, a recent wave of cognitive studies on the psychology of anthropomorphism has set forth new hypotheses about its nature and function; fresh theoretical speculations have been produced by philosophers about the relation between the attribution of agency in voice-hearing and broader mechanisms of social cognition; other studies have investigated empathy with non-human interfaces; and cognitive literary approaches have been focusing on how we construct a frame for fictional consciousnesses.

However, these different levels and modalities of personification have never been brought into dialogue. This is the scope of our interdisciplinary conference. By bringing together keynotes and scholars from cognitive psychology, neuroscience, philosophy of mind, phenomenology, linguistics, narratology, literary studies, anthropology, and beyond, we hope to create a network for further collaborative exploration of these phenomena and to establish theoretical ground towards a shared study the human flair for personification.

Please send us your abstracts (250-300 words) for a 20min presentation, including a short bio-note (150 words) by the **EXTENDED DEADLINE February 23, 2018**. We encourage interdisciplinary approaches, co-presentations, and performative modes of delivery. We also welcome pre-formed panels, for which we ask an additional panel description (150 words). Please fill the Google Form with your proposal and details at [padonline.org](http://padonline.org)

### Keynotes:

H. PORTER ABBOTT (UCSB)  
GUILLAUME DUMAS (I\_Pasteur)  
NEV JONES (U\_South Florida)  
TANYA LUHRMANN (U\_Stanford)  
MARJORIE TAYLOR (U\_Oregon)



Christoph Niemann, *Sunday Sketches*

You will be notified of your acceptance no later than **March 16, 2018**.

**Topic may address, but are not limited to:**

- AGENCY AND PERSONIFICATION
- ANTHROPOMORPHISM
- ATTRIBUTION OF INTENTIONALITY
- FELT PRESENCES
- FICTIONAL MINDS
- IMAGINARY COMPANIONS
- INTERSUBJECTIVITY
- NARRATIVE AND PERSONIFICATION
- PERSONIFICATION AND COMMUNICATIVE FRAMEWORKS
- PERSONIFICATION OF GODS AND DEITIES
- PERSONIFICATION OF VALUES AND ABSTRACT CONCEPTS
- SOCIAL COGNITION AND PERSONIFICATION
- THE CHARACTERFUL QUALITIES OF VOICES AND VISIONS
- TRAIT-ATTRIBUTION AND CHARACTERIZATION OF PERSONS
- ZOOMORPHISM

Thanks to Wellcome Trust funding, the conference is **free to attend**. College accommodation will be available to registered participants at a discounted rate and up to **5 accommodation bursaries will be available for postgraduate researchers**. If you would like to be considered for an accommodation bursary please indicate this when you submit your abstract.

'Personification Across Disciplines' is organised by the Hearing the Voice Project and funded by the Wellcome Trust. The Organising Committee, chaired by Marco Bernini, includes Ben Alderson-Day, Felicity Deamer, Peter Garratt, Mary Robson and Angela Woods.

For any questions, please write to [personification2018@gmail.com](mailto:personification2018@gmail.com)

For information about the 'Hearing the Voice' project, visit <http://hearingthevoice.org>

Conference hashtag: #personification2018