PERSONIFICATION ACROSS DISCIPLINES

SEPTEMBER 17-19 | DURHAM UNIVERSITY
Map of Durham University

All talks will take place in the Calman Learning Centre (pictured right).

Calman Learning Centre
Durham University
Stockton Rd
Durham
DH1 3LE
About the Conference

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 agentive 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. Keynote speakers include H. Porter Abbott (University of California, Santa Barbara) Guillaume Dumas (Institut Pasteur), Nev Jones (University of South Florida) and Ann Taves (University of California, Santa Barbara).

The Organising Committee:

Marco Bernini (Cognitive Literary Studies)
Angela Woods (Medical Humanities)
Ben Alderson-Day (Psychology)
Peter Garratt (Literary Studies)

Acknowledgements:

‘Personification Across Disciplines’ is organised by Hearing the Voice. Thanks to Wellcome Trust funding, the conference is free to attend.

CONFERENCE WEBSITE:
www.padonline.org

CONFERENCE HASHTAG:
#personification2018
### Conference Timetable

**MONDAY 17 SEPTEMBER**

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| 9.30-10.45 | **Keynote Lecture (1)**  
*Guiding Presences and the Emergence of New Revelation*  
Professor Ann Taves  
Professor of Religious Studies  
University of California, Santa Barbara |
| 10.45-11.15 | Refreshment Break                                                      |
| 11.15-12.45 | Session 1                                                                 |
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Voices in Psychosis Study |
| 2.2 | Reading                                                                |
| 2.3 | Realities: Estranged, Projected, Escaped                               |
| 2.4 | Puppetry                                                               |
| 15.15-15.45 | Refreshment Break                                                      |
| 15.45-17.45 | Session 3                                                                 |
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| 3.2 | Nineteenth-Century Culture                                             |
| 3.3 | Social Agents and Weird States                                         |
| 3.4 | Puppetry                                                               |
| 17.45-18.30 | Wine Reception                                                          |
| 18.30-19.30 | **Hellblade: Senua’s Sacrifice**  
*A conversation with Tameem Antoniades, Ninja Theory* |
| 19.30 | Close                                                                  |
TUESDAY 18 SEPTEMBER

9.00-10:15  Keynote Lecture (2)
Characters are/are not Persons & some consequences of this non/distinction
Professor Porter Abbott
Department of English
University of California, Santa Barbara

10.15-10.45  Refreshment Break

10.45-12.45  Session 4
4.1 Characters and Intentionality
4.2 Anthropomorphism
4.3 Tracking Agency and Identity
4.4 Personification as a Non-anthropocentric Gesture in Literary Modernism

12.45-13.45  Lunch

13.45-15.00  Keynote Lecture (3)
Powers and Seductions of Personification: Voices and Altered Perception Across the Psy Disciplines and Medical Humanities
Dr Nev Jones
Assistant Professor
Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute
University of South Florida

15.00-15.30  Refreshment Break

15.30-17.30  Session 5
5.1 Nature and Environment
5.2 Narratives
5.3 Felt Presences and Personification

17.30  Close

19.00-22.30  Conference Dinner
WEDNESDAY 19 SEPTEMBER

9.00-10:15  Keynote Lecture (4)  
*Building ladders across the scales of personification: from brains in social interaction to genes in human evolution*  
Dr Guillaume Dumas  
Research fellow of the Human Genetics and Cognitive Functions Laboratory  
Institut Pasteur

10.15-10.45  Refreshment Break

10.45-12.45  Session 6  
6.1  AI & Intentionality  
6.2  Imaginary Companions  
6.3  Personalisation in Medicine  
6.4  Relating to Distressing Voices: What is Necessary or Sufficient to Generate Positive Change

12.45-13.45  Lunch

13.45-15.15  Session 7  
7.1  Tulpas and Otherkin  
7.2  Language and Voices  
7.3  Embodiment

15.15-15.45  Refreshment Break

15.45-17.15  Session 8  
8.1  Clinical Concerns  
8.2  Science Fiction  
8.3  Virtues and Vanities

17.15-18.00  Roundtable

18.00  Conference Close
H. Porter Abbott is Research Professor Emeritus in English at the University of California, Santa Barbara. His publications include two books on Samuel Beckett, The Fiction of Samuel Beckett (1973) and Beckett Writing Beckett (1996); Diary Fiction: Writing as Action (1984); The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative (2002, 2008); and Real Mysteries: Narrative and the Unknowable (2013). He has also edited On the Origin of Fictions: Interdisciplinary Perspectives (2001). His on-going research includes the representation of madness, authorial intention, emplotment, fictionality, the unnarratable, reading narrative gaps, and the evolutionary emergence of narrative.

Characters Are/Are Not Persons & Some Consequences of this Non/Distinction

It is a truth almost universally acknowledged among narratologists that characters are “ontologically incomplete” (e.g., Dolezel 1998, Margolin 2005, Eder et al 2010, Recher 2010). And, certainly, as presumptive persons, they are incomplete. But as characters, they have a completeness that is beyond the reach of persons. Characters are artifacts in a made world (as we were once supposed to be), limited to the finished, published, narrative containers from which we decode them. Their completeness is a condition that comes with their fictionality, a quality that persons also do not have. In addition, it is their status as characters that can, at times, make them complete as types (Mrs. Havisham, Becky Sharp, Pamela).

From this perspective, it is persons who are ontologically incomplete insofar as they are emergent ingredients of an emergent world that is itself incomplete. This world is a sphere of unlimited complexity and unlimited possibilities of change. In this actual world, persons are at any moment infinitely researchable and therefore complete knowledge of them is infinitely deferred. Moreover, their complexity of being is subject to unpredictable change. By contrast, any unpredictability of characters works only once, in a first reading or viewing, each surprising turn recursively incorporated into the final completeness of their ontology as characters. In these terms, both the literary trope and the natural practice of personification are almost always a rendering as character rather than as a more ontologically incomplete person. In this presentation, I will pursue the implications of this distinction between characters and persons insofar as it is useful in understanding both the design and impact of fictional narratives.
Building Ladders Across the Scales of Personification: from Brains in Social Interaction to Genes in Human Evolution

The interdisciplinary endeavour of cognitive science has been encompassing the study of many scales in both space, time, and fields. This talk will illustrate how building “ladders” between scales provides alternatives heuristics to understand how we come up to understand others. We will start by the interactive turn taken recently by social neuroscience, discussing how the study of human-human and human-machine interaction demonstrate how low-level sensorimotor coordination with others not only shapes our individual mind but also how we infer high-level intentions to them. We will finish with recent analyses of the phylogeny of the primate nervous system, including archaic hominids such as Neanderthal and Denisovan, and discuss how genetics at evolutionary time scale questions the singularity of the human brain and the emergence of social skills like language.
Nev Jones is an assistant professor of mental health law and policy at the University of South Florida, affiliate faculty of the Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute and (affiliate) clinical assistant professor of psychiatry at the Yale University School of Medicine. A community psychologist by training, her work has spanned critical perspectives on the sociopolitics of psychiatric discourse, the phenomenology of psychosis, and the social and cultural determinants of mental health, disability and healing. Prior to moving into psychology, she studied continental philosophy for 8 years, including a stint as a Japanese Ministry of Science and Education postgraduate fellow in philosophy at the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture in Nagoya.

**Powers and Seductions of Personification: Voices and Altered Perception Across the Psy Disciplines and Medical Humanities**

Over the past twenty years, both psychiatry and the medical humanities have arguably pivoted from a core framing of psychotic phenomena as ‘ununderstandable’ to understandable, a shift at least in part tied to the ‘normalization’ of such experiences qua personified (and personifiable) voices, entitative or characterological manifestations of extreme states, and inimically ‘human’ continuua errors of thinking and feeling. This talk will begin with an exploration of the ways in which these normalized forms have been conceptualized and enacted through new wave clinical interventions, including virtual reality and other forms of simulation, moving on to consider the fraught psychopolitics at play, as well as casualties, occlusions and unintended consequences.
Ann Taves is a professor of religious studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. She is a former President of the American Academy of Religion (2010). She holds the chair of Catholic Studies at UCSB. Ann is especially known for her work Religious Experience Reconsidered, stressing the importance of the findings and theoretical foundations of cognitive science for modern religionists.

Guiding Presences and the Emergence of New Revelation

In the context of pretend play, inner-voice dialogues, fiction, drama, and online games, the presence of imagined others is often explicitly cultivated, forthrightly enacted, and skillfully managed. In relation to these activities, people provide accounts of presences that seem very real to them. In Euro-American contexts, people may find the seeming reality of such presences startling, but neither they nor others typically find them problematic. They “know” that they created, enacted, or otherwise brought them to life and thus that they are not “real.” In some cases, however, people not only conclude that the presences are real but that they are being guided by them to bring forth new revelation. This talk will consider three such figures – Joseph Smith, Carl Jung, and Helen Schucman – each of whom received what they viewed as new revelation from an ostensible other – the Lord, the Spirit of the Age, and the Voice of God’s Son — who guided the emergence of new psycho-spiritual paths (Mormonism, Analytic Psychology, and A Course in Miracles). Viewing the process of emergence from both insider and outsider points of view, we will consider how they and others came to view these presences as active guides and how we might interpret these presences from a naturalistic point of view.
1.1 Law and Ethics
Leo Colman (Hunter College, City University of New York)
A Personal Anthropology: Corporate Personhood, Law, and Religious Thought
Maks Del Mar (Queen Mary University of London)
Personification and Characterisation in Legal Thought
Liz McKinnell (Durham University)
Miscarriage, bereavement, and personhood

1.2 Empathetic Personification of Animals
Ronan Mac Dubhghaill (The Production Lab)
Poetic empathy and co-identification between humans and animal life
Emily Rapp Black (Author)
Animals as Characters: Anthropomorphism 2.0
Andrew Hendy (The Mary Wallopers)
Personification and empathy-building in folk song

1.3 Psychedelic Experiences
David Dupuis (Durham University)
Would gringos become animists? Encounters with the plants in a shamanic center of the Peruvian Amazon
Tehseen Noorani (Durham University)
Learning from Psychedelics: The Limits of Personification
David Rodriguez (Stony Brook University)
“Beyond Beyond Unexpected:” Psychedelics and Literary Realism
2.1 Personification in Psychosis: Preliminary Findings from the Voices in Psychosis Study

Angela Woods (Durham University)
First encounters: Voices coming into consciousness for users of Early Intervention in Psychosis services

Pete Moseley (Durham University)
Voices, spirits and guides: a comparison of clinical and non-clinical voice-hearing and personification

Ben Alderson-Day (Durham University)
“Green doesn’t speak”: Three case studies of personified voices from the Voices in Psychosis study

2.2 Reading

Pascal Nicklas (University Medical Center Mainz/Johannes Guttenberg University)
Fictional Minds and Modes of Immersion

Airlie Rose (Amherst College)
A Tale of Two Voices: Identity and Personality Voices During Reading and Writing

Ben Morgan (Worcester College, Oxford University)
Beyond Personification: Heidegger’s Practice of Reading in Context

2.3 Realities: Estranged, Projected, Escaped

Anna Ciaunica (UCL)
Estranged from Oneself, Estranged from the Others? Investigating Depersonalization and Self-Other Mirroring

Jon Carey (University of York) and Julie Bagwash (York St John University)
Projected Reality: Mermaids and Monsters

Michael Flexer (University of Exeter)
Getting out of our minds: a semiotic escape from personhood

2.4 Puppetry

David Naphthine and Ali McCaw
Personification, Puppets & Story
SESSION 3 | 15.45-17.45

3.1 Similes and Metaphors

Craig Bourne and Emily Caddick Bourne (University of Hertfordshire)
*Personification Without Impossible Context*

Asher Albo (Tel-Aviv University)
*Genealogy of personification of god in the Jewish pre-modern literature*

Gábor Simon (Eötvös Loránd University)
*Exploring the field between personification and metonymy - an empirical study*

Barbara Dancygier (University of British Columbia)
*Emotion embodied: simile and personification*

3.2 Nineteenth-Century Culture

April Urban (Purdue University)
*Animating Material Hierarchy: The Implied Agency of Natural Selection in Darwin*

Roberto Limentani (Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales)
*The composite portrait of an epistemic entity. E.B. Tylor and the primitive*

Asa Jansson (Durham University)
*From Familiar to Bizarre: Changing Narratives of Personification of Voices in Nineteenth-Century Psychiatry*

Fraser Riddell (Durham University/University of St Andrews)
*Lafcadio Hearn’s Ceramic Skins: Victorian Sciences of Mind, Non-Human Objects and Tactile Personification*

3.3 Social Agents and Weird States

Vaughan Bell (UCL/Maudsley Hospital)
*Making sense of anomalous social agents in psychosis*

Marc Andersen (Aarhus University)
*Sensory experiences of supernatural agents*

Quinton Deeley (Kings College London)
*Experimental Modelling of Revelatory Experiences and Possession States with Suggestion and Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging*

Christopher Timmermann (Imperial College London)
*Brain activity, phenomenology and the sensed presence phenomenon*

3.4 Puppetry

David Napthine and Ali McCaw
*Personification, Puppets & Story*
4.1 Characters and Intentionality

Rachel Slavny (Goldsmiths, University of London)
*Individual differences in the intentionality bias*

Nathalie Schwering (Johannes Gutenberg University)
*Judging Me, Judging You: Possibilities and Perils of Interacting with Literary Characters*

Siim Sorokin (University of Tartu)
*Characters perceived as other people: significance of common sense making in digitally communicated televisual engagement*

Laura Lucia Rossi (University of Leeds)
*Literary indeterminacy and personification in narrative texts*

4.2 Anthropomorphism

Marija Grech (University of Malta)
*Rethinking the Value of Anthropomorphism*

Gabriela Bezerra de Melo Daly (University of St Andrews)
*Animalcentric personification: The case of chimpanzees in Japanese primatology*

Jon Hegglund (Washington State University)
*Alien Expressions: Language, Faciality, and Anthropomorphism*

Clyde Ancarno (King’s College London)
*Anthropomorphism in discourse about animals*
4.3 Tracking Agency and Identity

Vilius Dranseika (Kaunas University of Technology)
On the Ambiguity of ‘the Same Person’

Marco Bernini (Durham University)
Towards a Theory of Elanification: Three Modest Proposals on Agency Combustion, Temporal Layering and Narrative Generators

Peter Garratt (Durham University)
The Pathetic Fallacy Revisited

John Foxwell (Durham University)
‘I won’t be involved in this fictional plot’: Characters’ Agency and Authors’ Intentions

4.4 Personification as a Non-anthropocentric Gesture in Literary Modernism

Laura Oulanne (University of Helsinki/Justus Liebig University, Giessen)
Feeling with Parks

Anna Ovaska (University of Helsinki/Justus Liebig University, Giessen)
Extended Fictional Minds

Marlene Karlsson Marcussen (University of Southern Denmark)
Vibrant Houses
5.1 Nature and Environment

Anna Kirsch (Durham University)
*Personification and Environmental Value: Transforming Environmentalism into Moral and Ethical Narratives in Crime Fiction*

Susannah Crockford (Ghent University)
*Personifying Geo-Agentic Relationships: ethnographic perspectives on social engagements with Mother Earth*

Jenny Wedgbury (Queen Mary University London)
*The Lost City: How do we learn from spaces and places that no longer exist? An exploration of London’s genius loci and sites of emotional heritage*

Caroline Hickman (University of Bath)
*How can we talk meaningfully about things we can barely start to imagine?*

5.2 Narratives

Sarah-Helena Van den Brande (Ghent University) and Max van Duijn (Leiden University)
*Personification and the narrativization of causality: modern theory, ancient practice*

Marzia Beltrami (Durham University)
*“I’m Not There”: Re-Constructing Bob Dylan Through Multiple Storylines*

Brad Jackson (University of British Columbia)
*The Mind Personified: Personification as a Figurative Form for Conceptual Framing in Narratives*

Naomi Rokotnitz (University of Oxford)
*How Personification Helps us Differentiate the Artificial from the Sincere*

5.3 Felt Presences and Personification

Jamie Moffatt (Durham University)
*Predictors of Felt Presence Experiences*

Kaja Mitrenga (Durham University)
*‘Felt presence’ experiences in extreme and endurance sport*

Joe Barnby (King’s College London)
*Spirits, shadows, and a sense of presence - novel measurement and phenomenological evidence of the ‘sensed presence’ experience*
6.1 AI & Intentionality

Nat Riley (Durham University)
*Versions of Pygmalion: Personification in Richard Powers’ Galatea 2.2*

Simona Micali (University of Siena)
*Uncanny Personifications: Artificial Beings in Fictional Imagination*

Antonia Eisenkoeck (Goldsmiths College, London)
*Differences in the Intentionality Bias when Judging Human and Robotic Action*

Kanta Dihal (University of Cambridge)
*‘What happens to me if I fail your test?’ Narratives of Artificial Intelligences as Persons*

6.2 Imaginary Companions

James Marley (Loyola University Chicago)
*Michael and Pierre: Engaging with the Imaginary Companion of a Person with Schizophrenia*

Paige Davis (University of Huddersfield)
*Adult Report of Imaginary Companion Play in Childhood and its Relation to Concurrent Prodromal Symptom Report*

Charles Fernyhough (Durham University)
*Children, voice-hearing and imaginary friends*

6.3 Personalisation in Medicine

Will Viney (Goldsmiths, University of London)
*Personalised and Personified Medicine in the Era of Postgenomics*

Celia Lury (University of Warwick)
*Branding: Personalisation and Personification*

Antonia Walford and Ana Gross (University of Warwick)
*Echo-Chambers and the Social (Dis)Orders of Digital Personalisation*
SESSION 6 (CONT.)

6.4 Relating to Distressing Voices: What is Necessary Or Sufficient to Generate Positive Change

Tom Craig (King’s College London)
_Hear what I say for a change: the AVATAR clinical trial_

Tom Ward (King’s College London)
_AVATAR therapy in action_

Rufus May (Royal Bolton Hospital)
_Engaging with voices_

Mark Hayward (Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust/University of Sussex)
_Don’t react - choose how to relate to distressing voices: An introduction to Relating Therapy_

SESSION 7 | 13.45-15.15

7.1 Tulpas and Otherkin

Jim Davies (Carleton University)
_The Automatization/Prototype Theory of Autonomy of Imagined Characters_

Elizabeth Fein (Duquesne University)
_Speaking of Dragons: Personification of Selfways among Therians and Otherkin_

Samuel Vissiere (McGill University)
_Imagined Other Minds in Cognition and Culture: the Social Rehearsal Hypothesis_

7.2 Language and Voices

Paul Sullivan (University of Bradford)
_Calibrating Chronotopes to the Shifting Ground of ‘Unbalanced’ and ‘Balanced’ Personhood_

Martin Edwardes (King’s College London)
_Things Do Things to Things: Social calculus, agentive grammar and the beginnings of language_

7.3 Embodiment

Linda Aloysius (Central Saint Martins, UAL)
_(Im)personification as Art-Political Combat in the making of New Model Army_

Botsa Katara (Durham University)
_Prosthesis, Personification and the Body_

Alex Hodge (Durham University)
_Personification, Agency, and Anthropomorphism in Athlemaphilic Attachment_
8.1 Clinical Concerns

Elena Glotova (Umeå University)
*Misophonia, Miss O’Phonia or Rage without a Name: Personification in Narratives of Decreased Sound Tolerance*

Fiona Malpass (Freelance)
*An object of intervention, personified on the page: Exploring the attributions and representations of people in distress in clinical notes*

Seamus Barker (University of Sydney)
*The personification of responsibility for chronic pain - in scientific, legal, medical, economic and cultural fields - or actants operationalising discourse*

8.2 Personification as a Non-anthropocentric Gesture in Literary Modernism

Alessandro Grilli (Pisa University)
*Heroines in the Making: Updating Patterns of Monster-Fighting Heroism from Mythology to Popular Culture*

Louise Nuttall (University of Huddersfield)
*Cognitive grammar and uncanny mind attribution in science fiction*

Olly Teregulova (Durham University)
*What is it Like to be an Atom?: The Personification of Objectivity in H. G. Wells’s Short Stories*

8.3 Virtues and Vanities

Charlotte Potter (University of Sussex)
*“The dear companion of my soul” or “too cold a companion”?: Personified forms of virginity in The Changeling and All’s Well that Ends Well*

Arthur Rose (Durham University)
*Breathe Personified*

Cosimo Franco Manni (King’s College London)
*Personification in Ethics: the Case of the Cardinal Virtues*