

Save the Date: April 10-11, 2009
3rd Annual Comparative Literature
Graduate Student Conference

AVATARS:
PERSONAE, HETERONYMS, PSEUDONYMS



"Every individual human being, one may say, carries within him, potentially and prescriptively, an ideal man, the archetype of a human being, and it is his life's task to be, through all his changing manifestations, in harmony with the unchanging unity of this ideal."

- Friedrich Schiller, *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1795)

Who can see us? How do we make ourselves visible, or readable, to the world at large? How do we portray or define ourselves— to ourselves?

The Sanskrit word "avatara" means "descent"; an avatar, in Hindu theology, embodies the descent of a deity from a higher to a lower realm. The term has recently been repurposed for use in online interaction and gaming— notably in the popular online multi-player environment Second Life— itself marking a kind of descent from the hieratic realm of theology into the de-divinized world of the Internet. The virtualization of certain areas of our societies has provided new fora for experimenting with and reflecting on the images we construct and project, the personae we mimic and adopt, and the ways in which we interact with each other. That said, virtual culture may merely highlight issues that have emerged in different forms through visual art and literature both transnationally and transtemporally: for example, the use of gender-altering pseudonyms as a method of alternative self-representation; the adoption of myriad personae as a tool in artistic creation and performance; and the veneration of icons both religious and social.

The third annual Comparative Literature Graduate Student Conference at Stanford University will trace the various descents, ascents, descendants and ascendancies of the avatar, as well as the various representational iterations of alternate or constructed personae, such as pseudonyms.

We invite you to join us on
April 10 from 5:00pm-6:30pm and April 11 from 9:30am-6:30pm

Meals and refreshments will be provided

Please continue reading for a list of events

Friday, April 10

Welcome: Russell Berman, *Walter A. Haas Professor in the Humanities, Chair of Dept. of Comparative Literature, Professor of German Studies and Comparative Literature*

Joint Keynote Presentation:

Matteo Bittanti, *Stanford Humanities Lab, Stanford University and California College of the Arts*

"WYSIWYG. Avatars, Doppelgänger, Performers."

Saturday, April 11

Graduate Panels that include:

"Heteronymy and Marginalia: Alberto Caeiro's Presence in Fernando Pessoa's Personal Library"
Patricio Ferrari, Universidade de Lisboa

"The Poetic Address and the Loophole Addressee"
Leeore Schnairsohn, Princeton

"Reflections on the Romantic Self: Stendhal between Henri Beyle and Fiction"
Matthew Amos, New York University

"The Writer and the Masks: Pantomime as a Trope in Symbolist Literature"
Elisa Segnini, University of Toronto

"T.E. Lawrence, René Char, Anti-Romantic War Heroes"
Melanie Conroy, Stanford University

"The Mask as Mirror: The Citizen and the City as Avatars in *Watchmen*"
Michael Buckley, California State University, Long Beach

"Mouchette.org: From Avatar to Mythical Figure"
Paule Mackrous, Université du Québec

"Was it Fin de Siècle Trickstery? Masks and Masques in Paul Laurence Dunbar and Abdallah Al-Nadim"
Aladdin Mahmoud, Ohio State University

"The Virtual Orient: Translation, Orientalism and the West's Imagination of the East"
Phrae Chittiphalangsri, University College London

"'Gender Trouble' in Mademoiselle de Maupin"
Cosana Eram, Stanford University

"Camping with La Baker"
Kristin Adele Graves, Yale University

Closing Panel featuring:

Roland Greene, *Prof. of English & Comparative Literature; Chair, Division of Literatures, Cultures & Languages*
"In Search of the Early Modern Poetic Persona"

David Palumbo-Liu, *Professor of Comparative Literature*
"The Other Guy's Shoes--Why We Should Not Be the Same"

Henry Lowood, *Curator for History of Science & Technology Collections and Film & Media Collections*
"Memento Mori: The Death (or Deletion) of Avatars"