

Section A		
Institution: Durham University		
Unit of Assessment: 27 - English Language and Literature		
Title of case study: New Perspectives on Hearing Voices: Literary Illuminations of Auditory Hallucination		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: Between 2012 and 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Angela Woods	Associate Professor of Medical Humanities, English Studies	2010 – Present
Patricia Waugh	Professor of English Studies	1989 – Present
Corinne Saunders	Professor of English Studies	1993 – Present
Marco Bernini	Assistant Professor of Cognitive Literary Studies	2018 – Present
	Postdoctoral Research Fellow	2012 – 2018
John Foxwell	Postdoctoral Research and Engagement Fellow (Writers' Inner Voices), English Studies	2018 – 2020
Period when the claimed impact occurred: Between 2015 and 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
Section B		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>Through pioneering, interdisciplinary and cross-sector collaborations, literary and medical humanities researchers at Durham University have challenged the dominant perception of voice-hearing as a symptom of pathology, reframing it as a meaningful part of human experience. Research engaging different literary periods, genres and theoretical traditions has deepened awareness of the variety of voice-hearing experiences and their relationship to creativity, memory, inner speech and cognition. This work has changed public perceptions of voice-hearing while also generating new understandings of literary and creative processes. Its beneficiaries are the voice-hearing community (voice-hearers, clinicians and carers), professional and aspiring writers, and the general public.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>Hearing voices in the absence of any speaker – what psychiatry terms an auditory hallucination – is widely regarded as a symptom of severe mental disorder. The prevailing view in clinical as well as popular cultural contexts is that voice-hearing is by definition pathological, distressing and dangerous. Research conducted by Marco Bernini, John Foxwell, Corinne Saunders, Patricia Waugh and Angela Woods has challenged this assumption. Through the analysis of literary texts spanning the medieval to modern periods (including by authors known to have heard voices) as well as the experiences of contemporary writers, readers and voice-hearers, their work illuminates the phenomenological complexity of voice-hearing and its relationship to inner speech, memory, creativity and other cognitive and affective processes.</p> <p>This impact case study does not directly continue but significantly extends the work of Waugh and Woods in “New Approaches to Psychosis: Literary Thinking in Clinical and Cultural Contexts” (REF2014 UDur-UoA29-REF3b-CS3). Waugh, an eminent critic and literary theorist specialising in modernism, worked with Woods, a medical humanities and cultural theory specialist in English Studies, to develop new interdisciplinary methodologies that promote reciprocal exchange between the clinical, scientific and humanities disciplines, with particular application to voice-hearing. These underpinned the development of the</p>		

Hearing the Voice project, funded by the Wellcome Trust in 2012 and 2015, to demonstrate the transformative potential of collaborative and critical medical humanities approaches to complex areas of clinical concern and practice.

Co-directed by Woods, Hearing the Voice utilises a variety of disciplinary perspectives and methodologies to develop more nuanced understandings of the experience of hearing voices. New research underpinning the impacts reported here begins with Woods's empirical medical humanities study of voice-hearing, which shed new light on the characterful, bodily and affective qualities of these experiences [R6]. Waugh has analysed voice-hearing in the lives and work of modern and contemporary writers, including Virginia Woolf and Muriel Spark, generating new insights into the relationship between inner voices, memory, trauma and literary experimentation [R5]. Saunders, a specialist in medieval literature and history of ideas, has investigated voice-hearing in the writing and culture of the Middle Ages. Her work shows that this very different thought-world is of special interest because it takes for granted the possibility of the supernatural and its theories of medicine and psychology offer powerful explanatory models for hallucinatory experience [R4]. Bernini has developed new cognitive narratological models of verbal hallucination with particular reference to the work of Samuel Beckett [R2]. Bernini, Foxwell and Woods have collaborated in conducting empirical research into the voices heard by writers and readers [R1, R3].

3. References to the research

- [R1] Alderson-Day, Ben, **Marco Bernini**, Charles Fernyhough. Uncharted features and dynamics of reading: Voices, characters, and crossing of experiences. *Consciousness and Cognition* 49 (2017): 98-109. DOI: 10.1016/j.concog.2017.01.003.
- [R2] **Bernini, Marco**. Affording Innerscapes: Dreams, Introspective Imagery and the Narrative Exploration of Personal Geographies. *Frontiers of Narrative Studies* 4.2 (2018): 291-311. DOI: 10.1515/fns-2018-0024.
- [R3] **Foxwell, John**, Ben Alderson-Day, Charles Fernyhough and **Angela Woods**. 'I've learned to treat my characters like people': Varieties of agency and interaction in writers' experience of their characters' voices. *Consciousness and Cognition* 2020. DOI: 10.1016/j.concog.2020.102901.
- [R4] **Saunders, Corinne** and Hilary Powell, eds. *Visions and Voice-Hearing in Medieval and Early Modern Contexts*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.
- [R5] **Waugh, Patricia**. Muriel Spark's 'informed air': the auditory imagination and the voices of fiction. *Textual Practice* 32(9) (2018): 1633–1658. DOI: 10.1080/0950236X.2018.1533171.
- [R6] **Woods, Angela**, Nev Jones, Ben Alderson-Day, Felicity Callard, Charles Fernyhough. Experiences of Hearing Voices: Analysis of a Novel Phenomenological Survey. *The Lancet Psychiatry* 2 (2015): 323-331. DOI: 10.1016/S2215-0366(15)00006-1.

Evidence of quality

This research was all conducted as part of the Hearing the Voice project, awarded the prize for 'Best Research' in the AHRC/Wellcome Trust 2020 Medical Humanities Awards, and funded by two major grants: (i) Fernyhough, Charles, Angela Woods, Corinne Saunders, Patricia Waugh et al. 'Hearing the Voice.' GBP1,000,708 Wellcome Trust Strategic Award 2012-2015 098455/Z/12/Z (ii) Fernyhough, Charles, Angela Woods, Ben Alderson Day, Chris Cook, Corinne Saunders and Patricia Waugh. 'Hearing the Voice 2.' GBP2,939,890 Wellcome Trust Collaborative Award 2015-2020 108720/Z/15/Z (Wellcome's largest project award to date in the Humanities and Social Sciences). All outputs were peer reviewed: R1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 appear in internationally leading journals; R4 is an edited volume published by a leading publisher in the discipline. R 4, 5 and 6 are submitted in REF2 (R6 in UOA 4).

4. Details of the impact

Hearing the Voice research conducted by members of the Department of English Studies has changed people's perceptions of hearing voices. Without questioning the very real distress that is sometimes associated with auditory hallucination, it has challenged the idea that voice-

hearing is only ever a symptom of mental illness, highlighting different types of voice-hearing, their changing interpretation across time and cultural context, and their relationship to other aspects of creative and 'inner' experience. These insights have in turn demonstrated the value of literature and literary thinking to understanding human experience more broadly, providing a meaningful model for connections between humanities research and clinical practice. Through major exhibitions and public event programmes, a five-year collaboration with the Edinburgh International Book Festival (EIBF), and a suite of resources oriented towards voice-hearers, literary and medical humanities research has altered and deepened understandings of voice-hearing in three groups: (i) members of the voice-hearing community, including people who hear voices, their allies and carers, mental health professionals, and representatives of the international Hearing Voices Movement, (ii) professional and aspiring writers, and (iii) members of the general public.

Influencing Public Audiences

Hearing Voices: Suffering Inspiration and the Everyday, the world's first major exhibition on voice-hearing, was held at Durham's Palace Green Library between 5 November 2016 and 26 February 2017. The exhibition was co-curated by Woods (academic lead), Saunders, Waugh, and Bernini, who also delivered an extensive series of public lectures, symposia and podcast interviews. The underpinning research thus fed directly into gallery and virtual exhibits, which engaged approximately 6,000 visitors, and into the accompanying events programme in which 730 people participated [E1]. 27% of surveyed visitors self-identified as having personal experience of voice-hearing and 46% had a professional interest in the topic. (800 members of the voice-hearing community further engaged with sections of *Hearing Voices* when it toured to the World Hearing Voices Congress in Boston, USA (2017), The Hague (2018) and Montréal (2019) [E2].) 92% of *Hearing Voices* audiences rated the exhibition as either 'excellent' or 'good' and 86% reported that it had transformed their understanding of voice-hearing, giving them more empathy with voice-hearers and reducing stigma by challenging the idea that hearing voices is always a sign of mental illness. These statements from visitors are typical: (a) 'I am within the NHS and I think the idea of hearing voices not being pathological is very interesting. I will be looking into it further and in my interactions with patients in the future, maybe finding all sorts of explanations' (b) 'I was pleasantly surprised to learn that there are famous writers that were voice-hearers and that their creativity and work was partly due to the voices that they heard. When I shared this information to our hearing voices group they were just as amazed as I was. Virginia Woolf and Charles Dickens: both literary artists, both voice-hearers!' [E1].

Transforming writers' approaches to their work

Writers' understandings of voice-hearing, their artistic outputs and creative practice were also transformed through engagement with the research showcased in the exhibition. Gillian Allnutt, winner of the Queen's Medal for Poetry, produced *Colloquy*, a collection of twenty poems, short essays and interviews inspired by *Hearing Voices* and the project as a whole [E3]. Writer David Napthine's participation in *Hearing Voices* led to a radio play *The World is Never Quiet*, described by those who attended the rehearsed reading as 'a brilliant piece that did a huge amount to depict – with sensitivity and accuracy – the multifarious experience of hearing voices' [E4]. Napthine was also instrumental to *Hearing the Voice* being adopted as the theme of the 2019 Writing on Air festival, broadcast to approximately 3,000 listeners in March 2019 [E5]. His partnership with Foxwell resulted in a series of 12 workshops for creative writing groups in the North-East of England, as well as a full-day workshop on 'Creative Voices' attended by 44 writers, showing how research into inner voices and 'literary voice-hearing' could directly transform creative writing practice. Over 80% of the writers who participated said that the workshops changed both how they approached their work and how they think about creative writing. This led to new published works for at least two participants [E6].

Creative ways of working with the Edinburgh International Book Festival (EIBF)

The phenomenological complexity of voices and their relevance to creativity has also been at the heart of an ongoing collaboration between Hearing the Voice and the Edinburgh International Book Festival, the largest and among the world's most respected literary festivals. In 2014, Woods' and Waugh's underpinning research was explored through *Conversations with Ourselves*, a programme of panel discussions attended by 1,756 people, 69% of whom felt their attitude to voice-hearing changed as a consequence [E7]. An empirical study of the role of inner voices in literary creativity was also launched in 2014: questionnaires about the experience of inner voices were completed by 100 Festival writers and 30 participated in in-depth interviews. Festival Director Nick Barley has said combining engagement with research 'represents a paradigm shift for the Edinburgh International Book Festival: a new system for developing discussion events that go beyond the simple fact of books published, to focus on how and why reading and writing affects the way we think and behave' [E7]. Results of the Writers' Inner Voices study attracted significant national attention: preliminary findings were reported in *The Guardian* and a series of high-profile broadcasts [E7]. They were followed by a second empirical study, led by Bernini, of 1,566 readers' experience of inner voices, with findings also reported in *The Guardian* and *The Independent* [E7]. Strong public interest in this research on writers' and readers' experience of inner voices led to further collaboration in the 2018 EIBF. A temporary exhibition on the theme of *Literary Voices* was visited by 250 writers and members of the general public, whose feedback indicates that highlighting links between voice-hearing and literary creativity succeeded in de-pathologising voices and reducing stigma: 'I think I had been maybe guilty of thinking about voice-hearing as being something that's an affliction rather than as a kind of a bonus or something out of which creative practice might come. So I think that is the biggest change in my thinking' [E8]. A further 116 people participated in intensive workshops on characters' voices reflecting their engagement with Bernini's research on the experience of reading [E8].

Enhancing clinical practice and improving quality of life for voice-hearers

Instead of perpetuating and policing distinctions between 'healthy and creative' and 'pathological' voices, Hearing the Voice researchers have used their work in literary studies and medical humanities to offer clinicians and voice-hearers new ways to understand voice-hearing experiences. Since 2013, Woods has delivered intensive modules in Rutgers University's Doctorate in Clinical Social Work. Clinical social workers surveyed in 2017 all reported that the training would change the way they work with people who hear voices, providing them with 'new ways to talk to my AVH [voice-hearing] clients' [E9]. One trainee remarked that the course supported them 'to see individuals as their own story and not a label or diagnosis'; another said it will 'help me to understand the narrative approach to recovery in schizophrenia' [E9].

Further impacts on clinicians and clinical practice have been achieved at an international scale through a new online resource, *Understanding Voices* (understandingvoices.com, UV), produced in partnership with voice-hearers and representatives from leading NHS Trusts and mental health charities. The website, which extends to over 100 pages and was launched to an audience of 200 voice-hearers, family members and health professionals in September 2019, presents accessible literary and historical accounts of voice-hearing alongside psychological and neuroscientific research, information about therapies and practical resources for living with voices. In the first full year of its use, UV has had over 16,500 unique users from 140 different countries in all continents excluding Antarctica, for a total of 23,763 sessions. The Quick Read PDFs summarising core parts of the site have been downloaded approximately 2,500 times [E10]. UV is also recommended as a resource for further information on hearing voices by leading mental health charities Rethink, Mind and the Hearing Voices Network.

UV is having significant impacts on clinical and voice-hearing communities. In February and March 2020, over 130 mental health practitioners attended two UV training events in Glasgow and London. Entitled 'Knowledge is Power' and co-facilitated by Rachel Waddingham (Chair of the English Hearing Voices Network) the sessions demonstrated how

the website can be used in clinical practice to empower voice-hearers to overcome self-stigma. 50 mental health professionals were recruited from these events to take part in a longitudinal evaluation of UV aimed at assessing its impact on therapeutic practice over a three-month period. Despite disruption from the Covid-19 pandemic, 26 practitioners completed the evaluation. Of these, 92% reported that UV enhanced their clinical practice by improving their knowledge and confidence in working with people who hear voices, helping with psychoeducation and normalisation, increasing empathy with voice-hearers, and providing practical resources to share with clients [E6]. One clinician remarked, 'I always leave the website feeling a little more competent, a little more confident that I've learned something new.' Another said that UV 'will now always be my "go to" for info re voice-hearing. I like that I can recommend [it] to my patients and I know the website will be normalising and not stigmatising for them.'

Voice-hearers and their families also reported that UV improved both their understanding of hearing voices and their quality of life by improving the way they live with these experiences [E10]. In a survey of 84 website visitors, 92% of respondents said that, after using UV, they had more positive ways of understanding and interpreting voices, with many voice-hearers remarking that the personal narratives, literary and historical accounts of voice-hearing on the site changed negative views of their own experience and enhanced their understanding of voice phenomenology: 'I believed something must be "wrong" with me for hearing voices. The UV workshop and website gave me more confidence and understanding not only of my own experiences, but also others, as it clarified that hearing voices is not necessarily always simply 'hearing' voices in a literal sense- it includes so much more, such as sensations etc, and there are so many different emotions that come with it.' [E10]. Another website visitor said: 'I really like the historical section. Very useful for showing people and their families that there have been loads of voice-hearers throughout the ages and it's not a catastrophe'. In addition, 84% of survey respondents reported that using UV increased their knowledge of practical coping strategies, and 90% said that it improved their understanding of where to go to find sources of support [E10]. The insights of literary and medical humanities researchers played a critical role in the success of UV in engaging stakeholders, illuminating the complexity and hermeneutic significance of voice-hearing experiences, extending understanding and reducing stigma.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[E1] *Hearing Voices: Suffering Inspiration and the Everyday* Evaluation Report produced by Victoria Patton and Angela Woods with contributions from Emma Hamlett (November 2017, 68pp).

[E2] *Communities and Collectives* Evaluation Report produced by Victoria Patton and Rebecca Doggwiler (November 2018, 10pp).

[E3] Gillian Allnutt, Introduction to *Colloquy* (manuscript finished November 2019).

[E4] Written audience feedback from the rehearsed reading at Durham Town Hall January 26 2018.

[E5] Testimonial from *Writing on Air* Festival Director Peter Spafford.

[E6] *Writers' Inner Voices* evaluation report by John Foxwell and Rebecca Doggwiler, 2020.

[E7] *Writers' and Readers' Inner Voices: A collaboration with Edinburgh International Book Festival, 2014-18* (Evidence Dossier).

[E8] *Literary Voices* Evaluation Report produced by Victoria Patton (November 2018, 10pp)

[E9] Rutgers University's Doctorate in Clinical Social Work Module evaluation from questionnaires.

[E10] *Understanding Voices* Evaluation Report by Victoria Patton (November 2020, 35pp).