

My Narrator and I:

Crafting Authorial Identity in Fiction

An Assertion:

All books have an author; the reader's understanding of the relationship between author and text is a narrative element as malleable as plot or character, called "Authorial Identity."

The Project:

Explore the craft moves an author can make to establish (or mask) authorial identity through writing six standalone fiction stories which each involve "Eric."

Applications:

Through this creative study, we can begin to understand the relationship between authors and text across modes of media. This is particularly useful in marketing, where text is used to sell. How does a very product (via quality, presentation etc.) construct a consumer's understanding of the creator? How does that understanding help, or obstruct, sales? How can we manipulate a consumer's understanding via the product?

Findings:

1. Authorial identity, like other craft elements such as character, setting, and plot, has an infinite number of permutations in fiction.
2. One important means by which authorial identity is constructed is through a reader's understanding of the narrator occasion for being—why is a particular narrator telling this story?
3. Readers often seek to discover the "inspiration" for stories, as if assuming that a story is informed by real life; authors can manipulate this.

Narrative Positionings:

- First person "Eric" in a fictional (impossible) genre story.
- Third person narrator following "Eric."
- Third person narrator following "Ericka"
- Eric, the writer, writing about reasons why he might fudge the truth in formal nonfiction.
- Eric as antagonist.
- Infinite possibilities?

Themes explored:

- Loneliness
- Insecurity
- Belonging
- Masculine Identity
- Storytelling

Excerpt from "The Monster Under His Bed":

In the dark and on his back, staring at the ceiling, he asked the monster, "What happens after middle school?"

From under his bed the monster said, "You go to high school, Eric."

"And what happens after high school?" Eric asked.

"Work or college. Your choice."

"And what then?"

"Well, you die."