



AIAS SYMPOSIUM  
**NARRATIVE SELVES**  
IN ART AND THE EVERYDAY



AARHUS  
UNIVERSITY

AARHUS INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDIES

# THURSDAY, MAY 12

09.45 – 10.15: Registration and coffee

10.15 – 10.30: Welcome by Morten Kyndrup, AIAS Director and  
Introduction by Mari Hatavara, AIAS-COFUND Fellow

**Panel I** Chair: Stefan Iversen

10.30 – 11.00: Anneke Sools: Construction Future Selves: Imagining, Writing and  
Sharing 'Everyday Fiction'

11.00 – 11.30: Bronwen Thomas: Living in the Now: Real-time Narratives of the  
Self on Twitter

11.30 – 12.00: Maria Mäkelä: Voicebook: Quasi-literary Life-storying in Social  
Media

12.00 – 13.00: Lunch, AIAS Hall

**Panel II** Chair: Jarmila Mildorf

13.00 – 13.30: Rita Charon: How to Listen to the Talk of Pain

13.30 – 14.00: Jarkko Toikkanen: Experience and Ekphrasis in Wordsworth's  
'Slumber'

14.00 – 14.30: Mikko Keskinen: Narrative Selves amid Library Shelves: Mediation  
and Demediation in *S.* by Doug Dorst and J.J. Abrams

14.30 – 15.00: Coffee break

**Panel III** Chair: Maria Mäkelä

15.00 – 15.30: Daniel D. Hutto: Re-Authoring Narrative Therapy: Opening the  
Way for Future Developments

15.30 – 16.00: Matti Hyvärinen: The Remains of the Narrative Self

16.00 – 16.30: Richard Walsh: The Centre for Narrative Gravity: Narrative and  
the Philosophy of Selfhood after Dennett

18.00 – : Dinner at Restaurant MellemRum, Fredens Torv 2, 8000 Aarhus C  
(for speakers only)

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# FRIDAY, MAY 13

- Panel IV**      Chair: Jarkko Toikkanen
- 10.00 – 10.30: Molly Andrews: 'How Quickly History Disappears': The Search for an Authentic East German Identity
- 10.30 – 11.00: Jarmila Mildorf: Autobiography, the Literary and the Everyday in Paul Auster's *Report from the Interior*
- 11.00 – 11.30: Stefan Iversen: Narratives in Interaction: Obama's Selves
- 11.30 – 13.00: Lunch
- Panel V**      Chair: Bronwen Thomas
- 13.00 – 13.30: Greger Andersson: To Read or not to Read the Minds of Characters
- 13.30 – 14.00: Mari Hatavara: Representing the Political Self vis-à-vis Others. Embedded Minds in Online Interviews of Finnish Politicians.
- 14.00 – 14.30: Henrik Skov Nielsen: Invention and Convention: Free Indirect Discourse In and Outside Fiction
- 14.30 – 14.45: Mari Hatavara: Summing up
- 14.45 – 15.15: Coffee break
- 15.15 – 17.00: Round table discussion (for speakers only): room 203. Chair: Mari Hatavara; First discussant: Hanna Rautajoki.
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# ABSTRACTS

## PANEL I

**Anneke Sools**

University of Twente, the Netherland

### **'Constructing future selves: imagining, writing and sharing 'everyday fiction'**

In this paper I reflect on the narrative genre *Letter from the Future*, which offers a method for constructing desired, future selves. Future selves are by necessity fictional, because they are about the not-yet-happened. However, future selves are at the same time grounded in the actual, i.e. in everyday beliefs, concerns and experiences of writers. Future selves can be conceptualised as future oriented possible selves. In psychological theory, possible selves are considered to serve two main functions, e.g. motivating current behaviour and providing the evaluative and interpretive context for the present self. Possible selves are assumed to operate incidentally, as a matter of course, in everyday life. In its written, explicitly invited form, the construction of possible, future selves moves between art and everyday life. Drawing upon recent research featuring the *FutureNowExperience* workshop in which participants write and share Letters from the Future, various constraints to the construction of desired, future selves will be considered. Finally, I will reflect on the normative position informing this research, in light of Kenneth Gergen's recent call for a future forming science.

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**Bronwen Thomas**

Bournemouth University, UK

### **'Living in the Now: real-time narratives of the self on Twitter'**

Uri Margolin (1999) has argued that contemporary culture is characterised by a preference for stories that relate not what has happened, but what is happening, and that place the emphasis on telling the story 'as you live'. This is nowhere more evident than on social media which constantly reiterates the need to update stories in 'real time'. Meanwhile, John Fiske's (1987) concept of 'nowness' in television has been extended to social media (Page 2011; Thomas 2014) to account for the ways in which the sharing of stories in real time can produce a powerful sense of engagement for followers, bringing them back time and again for updates on even the most trivial of events. This paper will focus on Twitter and

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how both real and fictional accounts manage to convey the 'nowness' of individuals' everyday experiences. The paper will detail some of the ways in which this sense of 'nowness' is conveyed, as well as focusing on the affective responses of followers. It will also examine critiques (Basar, Coupland and Obrist 2015) which question whether the preoccupation with the 'extreme present' results in an inability to look at life as a meaningful story, and turns lives into a mere series of tasks.

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**Maria Mäkelä**

University of Tampere, FI

**'Voicebook: quasi-literary life-storying in social media'**

"What's on your mind?" Facebook's status prompt is, essentially, the question of a psychoanalyst. Life-storying discourses in social media represent a theoretically fertile middle ground between artistic intentionality and spontaneous narrativization. Status updates thrive on simultaneity and the uneventfulness of the everyday, yet providing a narrative environment for careful life-storying through image-word-combinations, ellipses and third person narration. As in different art forms, so also within a social media platform the possibilities of the medium mark its limitations, and genuine artistry of the medium is needed in converting the limitations to expressive potential. In my talk, I will compare a small sample of Facebook status updates with (1) quotes from canonical epistolary novels, where individual experience is both communicated and incommunicable; (2) third person consciousness representation of realist novels and their thematization of boredom, iterative nature of experience, and lack of agency; and (3) contemporary present-tense novels that blur the boundary between first- and third-person narration, thus wrestling with narrative-philosophical problems such as intentionality and immediacy. My point is to use narrative fiction as a methodological lens through which we will be able to focus on the problems of expressive and experiential voice in social media updates. A quasi-literary reading of Facebook voices reveals their artistic potential: social media provides us with an inexhaustible platform for the configurations of tellability, intentionality, expressivity, temporal experience, and the textualization of the mind.

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## PANEL II

**Rita Charon**

Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, USA

### ‘How to Listen to the Talk of Pain’

I want to think about oral narratives as told and heard in the clinic—doctors’ offices, emergency rooms, hospital wards, house calls. Complex literary questions are raised in these high-stakes conversations between relative strangers. The patient has to find the language to first represent and then convey bodily sensations and the meanings tentatively attached to them. Slippery and often unavailable, the *expression* of this language of pain, of suffering, of doubt, of fear is often, perhaps typically, unequal to its task. Concurrently, the *reception* by the listener of what is conveyed by the patient is similarly unequal to its challenge. Although I disagree with Elaine Scarry’s statement of wholesale failure on this front when she asserts that there *is* no language for pain, I realize the lengths to which clinicians and patients must travel in order that the patient’s corporeal and affective experience be communicated in some way from the one who experiences it to the one who has to diagnose the problem and help to solve it in some way. I’ve been teaching clinicians close reading and creative writing in an effort to improve their power of listening to their patients and receiving what they convey. If the listener knows the power of features of narrativity—temporality, spatiality, metaphor, narrative situation, desire—he or she might value the message-carrying capacity of all that the patient emits, whether in words, silences, gestures, or bodily signs. By respecting the integrity and epistemic wealth of the patient’s language, the clinician might be less likely to be trapped into prematurely categorizing the patient’s utterances into restricted diagnostic categories and more likely to at least wonder what all this might represent and mean. And then, perhaps, there is the beginning of telling and listening about pain.

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**Jarkko Toikkanen**

University of Tampere, FI

### Experience and Ekphrasis in Wordsworth’s ‘Slumber’

There has been no shortage of debate on William Wordsworth’s ‘A slumber did my spirit seal’ since the 1940s. I divide influential readings of the poem into two interpretive positions – ‘shock’ and ‘non-shock’ readings – and examine the poem through the concept of experience and the rhetorical device of ekphrasis. I argue

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that experience is not to be reduced into an interpretive position as there always remains an excess of experience, something that is not part of the interpretation and cannot be exhausted by making another. In the readings of 'Slumber', it is the empty space between the poem's two stanzas that often appears to attract this excess. I apply ekphrasis to discuss the images the readers have seen in reading the poem, how they have gone on to describe them in their own words, and what the effect of the empty space has been. I claim that interpretive positions such as the 'shock' and 'non-shock' readings of 'Slumber' can be viewed as ekphrases in which the reader verbally describes the images of the poem with a particular aim and so takes side. In doing so, the reader reduces experience into an interpretive position and closes off the reading process subjectively into a private sphere that may or may not have public clout in the rhetorical contest between opposing positions. Studying the device of ekphrasis shows how reading understood as inter-medial experience, keenly affected by empty space in 'Slumber', maintains and disrupts this sense of subjective closure both in art and the everyday.

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### **Mikko Keskinen**

University of Jyväskylä, FI

This paper focuses on the various forms of mediating and interpreting minds within the book-object and the possibility of its demediation in the experimental novel *S.* (2013) by Doug Dorst and J.J. Abrams. *S.* consists of the mystery novel *The Ship of Theseus* by the fictional author V.M. Straka, two college students' exchange of handwritten notes on that volume's margins, and a variety of loose materials inserted between its pages. Attempts to make sense and communicate inform *S.* in its entirety. The protagonist of *The Ship of Theseus* suffers from amnesia and tries to find out his true identity, including his name. The life and death of the fictional author Straka are likewise mysteries, which the two college students, Eric and Jen, set out to solve in their reciprocal annotations. By the same gesture, the two students (who never meet in person), read each other's minds inevitably inscribed in their notes. And, finally, the actual reader is to make sense of the whole package, complete with an abundance of loose printed matters tucked between (apparently specific) pages of the bound book. These documents include maps, postcards, photocopied articles, telegrams, napkins, handwritten letters, a compass/decoder ring, among others. As *S.* seems like a 3-D trompe-l'œil of the mundane, an experimental attempt to produce a deceivingly realistic facsimile of a maltreated library book-object, its discursive practices also rely on familiar forms. For instance, the exchanged notes hark back to epistolary practices, both actual

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and fictional, as well as to marginalia, both ancient and modern. However, to treat a printed book as a writing surface or as a document folder not only enhances its “mixed-media” nature but also, to use Garrett Stewart’s term, demediate it. This kind of repurposing cancels at least some of the message transmission functions or abilities of the print medium, making both the book and the minds represented more difficult to read— if not illegible.

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## PANEL III

### Daniel D. Hutto

Universities of Wollongong & Hertfordshire, Australia

#### **‘Re-Authoring Narrative Therapy: Opening the Way for Future Developments’**

Narrative practices have the potential to play a robust part in strategies for self-managing psychosocial wellbeing. Narrative therapy in particular seeks to empower groups and individuals, providing them with the resources and skills needed for positively improving their own wellbeing and coping with a wide range of life challenges. However, narrative therapy is in need of a philosophical update and some theoretical fine-tuning. By re-authoring some key elements of narrative therapy’s official narrative, the therapy itself will be afforded new possibilities for development and wider uptake. This paper provides a first pass analysis of some features of narrative therapy’s self understanding that invite and require clarification or adjustment so that it can best benefit from new thinking in philosophy and the cognitive sciences.

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### Matti Hyvärinen

University of Tampere, FI

#### **‘The remains of the narrative self’**

“Narrative self” is a much more comprehensive concept than “narrated self” in the sense of a self written down in the form of finished autobiography or fictional text. Equally, the mere instance of the “narrating I” does not contain the layered aspect of the self reflectively containing past experience. Mark Freeman’s idea of the essentially interpretative character of human existence with the consequent need for constant narrative work offers a good point of departure for elaborating the distinctively narrative nature of the self. In my paper, I discuss the narrative self of two dementia patients, introduced in Ryoko Watanabe in her dissertation “Listening to voices of dementia” (2016). A Japanese occupational therapist tries to activate two ladies to participate in simple physical exercises with the help of story-

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telling and dramatic scenes. The women are already incapable of composing coherent storylines themselves. However, the therapist is able to evoke positive emotional reactions and active responses to training using something I call dramatic positioning. The roles offered to act as a mother, a farmer selling her products, a pupil at the schoolyard, and so on, activate the women to take emotionally part in the joint storytelling and in the exercises. These results, based so far on a very limited material, suggest that the final remaining functions of the narrative self are not connected to the telling of a complete or continuous story of one's life (MacIntyre), or even to evaluation (Hydén) or experientiality, but to relevant past positions of life, and to the active interactional positioning (Bamberg, Deppe-mann) during the therapy sessions. Positioning, therefore, appears to be the central and remaining function of the narrative self.

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**Richard Walsh**

University of York, UK

### **The Centre for Narrative Gravity: Narrative and the Philosophy of Selfhood after Dennett**

When Daniel Dennett coined the phrase “centre of narrative gravity” in the course of his deflationary account of selfhood, he brought together a metaphor from the domain of physics and some version of the concept of narrative in a way that has proved suggestive, or provocative, in part because neither component is very clearly theorized. Reading Dennett retrospectively, through the prism of several responses to the idea (direct and indirect, from philosophical and psychological perspectives) I propose to press a little harder upon the questions posed by the underspecification of Dennett's idea. I am interested in the force of the “centre of gravity” metaphor as applied to selfhood, and in the sense in which narrative's role can be understood in relation to that metaphor. Ultimately, however, I am less concerned with the adequacy of Dennett's phrase to the range of things we might want the notion of “self” to mean, than with the possible implications for the concept of narrative itself. Narrative already had some currency as a way of conceptualizing selfhood before Dennett got hold of it, but my claim is that his specific formulation, and the responses it has prompted, invite theoretical reflections upon narrative that go beyond Dennett's own premises, and even beyond some of the assumptions that Dennett and his critics share.

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## PANEL IV

**Molly Andrews**

University of East London, UK

### **‘How Quickly History Disappears’: The Search for an Authentic East German Identity**

In the twenty-five years since the fall of the Berlin Wall, there has developed an international market for the representation of East German history, exemplified by films such as “The Lives of Others (*Das Leben der Anderen*)” which in 2006 won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film, grossing \$77 million in its first year of release. And yet this history is a most contested one - not recognisable to many who lived as citizens of East Germany for many years. Using data gathered in a longitudinal project with a small group of leading East German activists between 1992 and 2012, this paper will explore reactions to these representations of East German history, questioning whose history is being represented by whom and for whom.

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**Jarmila Mildorf**

University of Paderborn, DE

### **‘Autobiography, the Literary and the Everyday in Paul Auster’s *Report from the Interior*’**

The literary and the everyday intersect in intriguing ways in Paul Auster’s autobiographical text *Report from the Interior*, which is a companion piece to the earlier *Winter Journal*. While the latter took into focus Auster’s body, his ailments and his physical experiences of the world, the *Report* sets out to delineate Auster’s intellectual development. It does so by retracing (pop)cultural artefacts that influenced Auster’s mind as a child and adolescent. Thus, the book features lengthy plot summaries of books, films, and TV shows, as well as descriptions of music, toys, food, sports and their stars, to name but a few. Moreover, Auster’s life is contextualized as the text references historical moments and political issues. Readers’ expectations of an introspective stance and a personal and idiosyncratic view of the author’s (special) life (Smith and Watson 2010) is thus thwarted to a certain degree since the *Report* in fact ‘exteriorizes’ his inner life and thus turns it into a common experience that many people growing up under similar circumstances in the 1950s may recognize and identify with. The seemingly personal is offered on the surface of the text but always immediately recedes into the background again. The book’s narrative technique is pertinent in this regard. Auster employs

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*you*-narration as a means of self-address throughout while at the same time keeping himself at a distance (see also Parker 2011/2012). Oftentimes the *you* may also be seen as helping to create a projection screen for readers' own memories of the past and of life experiences they may have shared with Auster. The second-person address becomes particularly important in the third part, where Auster stages his 'rediscovery' of himself as a young man, lover and artist through letters he once wrote to his ex-wife during their lengthy courtship. It is here that the literary qualities of the narrative frame text and the embedded epistolary writing create a strong sense of Auster's "posture" (Meizoz 2007) as an author.

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### **Stefan Iversen**

Aarhus University, DK

#### **'Narratives in Interaction: Obama's selves'**

The proliferation of personal narratives in contemporary political rhetoric has recently drawn attention from the social sciences with important work done on relationships between everyday life and the political (Andrews 2007, 2014), and on mobilizing social activity through narrative (Polletta 2007). This paper draws on rhetorical criticism in that it looks at the way narratives work in what Hauser calls "the use of symbols to induce social action" (Hauser 2002, 3). The focus is on what may be called narrative rhetoric (Iversen 2014). The starting point is the observation that when narratives are used as persuasive devices, often the persuasive power emanates not so much from one (or another) singular narrative but rather from combinations of more or less explicitly connected narratives. Such is the case in Obama's rhetoric. Acknowledged (or lamented) for its usage of life story material, the rhetoric of Obama has in several studies been shown to rely heavily on Obama's own personal history. This paper will supplement these investigations into Obama's use of autobiographical matter and techniques with readings of how he combines the story of his own self with stories of the selves of others. Such instances of narratives in interaction will be analyzed in Obama's 2009 speech on health care reform, given to Congress and in the strategies surrounding what became the most widely shared image of Obama's victory at the 2012 elections.

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**Greger Andersson**

Örebro University, SE

**'To Read or Not to Read the Minds of Characters'**

In my paper, I will discuss Alan Palmer's attribution theory, according to which narrators, characters, and readers attribute states of mind to others and to themselves, and David Herman's claim that fictional minds, and readers' experiences of fictional minds, are not of a different kind than real minds and the experience of real minds. My perspective will be that of a separatist position in narratology. I use the word separatist to refer to scholars who criticize common versions of narratology for typically talking about fiction as feigned information. This, the argument goes, might result in an undue focus on assumed "items and occurrences" in a "world", instead of attention to those motifs that make up a meaningful literary composition. The question I am concerned with is how a separatist approach to fiction, if it were accepted, would affect our understanding of readers' assumed construction of characters' minds. When discussing this issue I refer to passages from the book of Genesis and First and Second Samuel in the Hebrew Bible where characters attribute intentions to other characters or where interpreters claim to be able to read the characters' minds. The biblical texts have been chosen because of the many manifestations of what I from my perspective regard as problematic interpretations. My suggestion is that such problematic interpretations can be explained, in line with a separatist approach, by the fact that some interpreters confuse different interpretative frames and hence oscillate between reading characters as historical persons and as motifs in a literary composition.

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**Mari Hatavara**

Aarhus Institute of Advanced Studies, DK

**'Representing the Political Self vis-à-vis Others. Embedded Minds in Online Interviews of Finnish Politicians'**

Recently, the narratological interest in the modes of mind representation in non-fictional environments has grown significantly, and interviews have proven fertile material for analysis. This paper studies how politicians construct their political identity in interviews. The special emphasis is on the ways politicians represent and attribute the minds of others in their interviews in order to support their own position and their own claims. The cases range from attributing intentions to other politicians to resorting to stereotypes as "people, who", and to embedded stories of fictional characters used as exempla. Attributing intentions, feelings and desires, even direct thoughts, to others is an important means to reason for and to

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vindicate one's own opinions. "We" and "they" with different points of reference are used abundantly, as are hypothetical narratives and the disnarrated. Linguistically informed narratological analysis reveals the discursive and narrative strategies used to make sense of and to communicate ideas of democracy and the intentions of the parties involved. It also demonstrates that the interviewees take liberties in the mind representation traditionally associated with fiction: they, for example, use verbs of consciousness and hypothetical direct thought quotations from others.

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**Henrik Skov Nielsen**

Aarhus University, DK

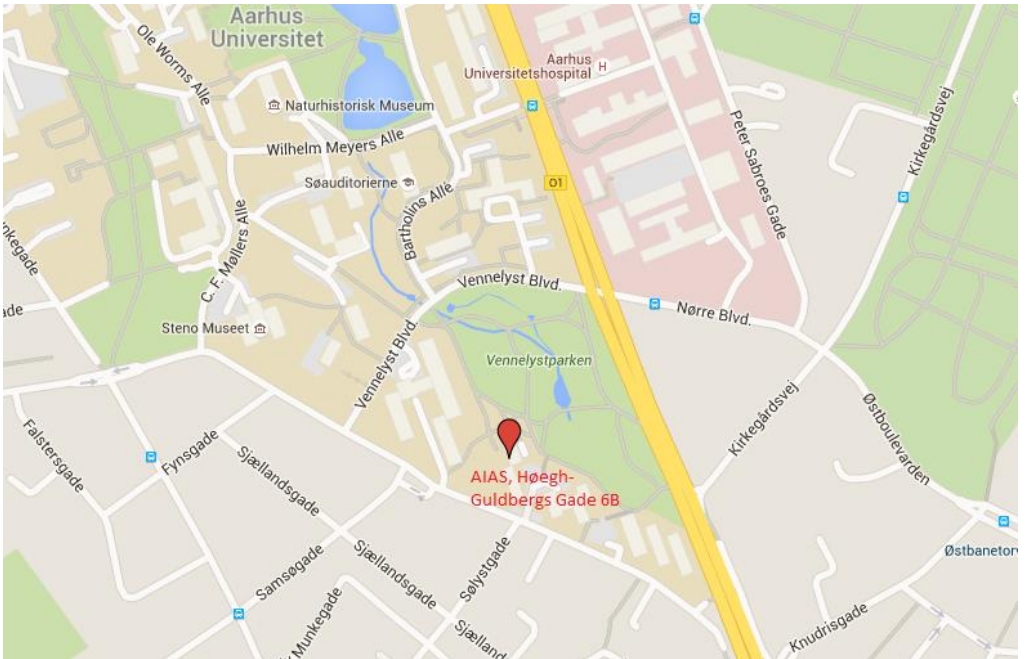
**'Invention and convention: Free indirect discourse in and outside fiction'**

The overall framework for this paper is the idea that fictional discourse is a discourse talking about states of affairs given and taken as invented. This means among many things that fictional voice very often is not unisonous. More specifically, in the paper I investigate the concept of free indirect discourse by means of a concept of fictionality defined as intentionally signaled invention in communication. Fictionality always entails invention but cannot be limited to the genre of fiction which has to do with convention rather than ontology. Contrary to frequent claims in theory, I want to make the case that FID is commonly used in everyday discourse outside generic fiction. It also exists in first, second, and third person forms. If we examine FID as an expression of intentionally signaled invention in communication we can distinguish between the question: Is FID exclusive to fiction? And the very different question: does it always signal fictionality? I argue that FID is a means by which a narrative can foreground its locally or globally invented nature and examine some of its consequences and effects.

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# NOTES:

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Mari Hatavara, Professor, AIAS Fellow

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