

JOSHUA PARKER
Universität Salzburg*



 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5645-8115>



Making Unstrange: Theory and Second-Person Fiction

Abstract

Russian Formalism's suggestion that artistic literature makes the familiar strange finds echoes in today's theories of "unnatural narrative." "Naturalization" of seemingly strange texts understands uncanny literary effects as based on qualities of "natural" spoken language. Sifting through structuralist, pre-structuralist, and psychoanalytic musings on second-person fiction or similar effects in interpersonal relations, all largely neglected as studies of second-person narrative were popularized among theorists and critics over the past thirty years, this article theorizes readers' 'realization' or 'virtualization' of second-person address, narratorial apostrophe, and second-person protagonists. One reason we have no agreed-upon, comprehensive chart explaining second-person address's variable effects on various readers (with an appreciative nod to Sandrine Sorlin), is not that no such chart is impossible — but simply that any such chart would be complex. Such projects might be nuanced by earlier thoughts focused on more general theories of psychology, phenomenology, and human exchanges. This requires more reflection on the functions, formulations, and *effects* of second-person narrative, but also more thinking about its *affects*.

second-person fiction, psychoanalytic theory, literary semiotics, deictic theory, phenomenology

* Universität Salzburg, English and American Studies
Erzabt-Klotz-Straße 1, 5020 Salzburg, Austria
e-mail: joshua.parker@plus.ac.at

Certain words are alive, active, living — they are entirely in the present, the same present as you. [I]t feels as if they are being written as you read them, that your eyes upon the page are perhaps even making them appear, in any case, certain sentences do not feel in the least bit separate from you or from the moment in time when you are reading them. You feel they wouldn't exist without your seeing them. Like they wouldn't exist without you. And isn't the opposite true too — that the pages you read bring you to life? [...] Just one sentence, and there you are, part of something that has been part of you since the beginning [...] the source, yes, you can feel it thrumming and surging, and it's such a relief, to feel you are made of much more than just yourself [...].

Claire-Louise Bennett (2022: 121–22)

Words do not have meanings; people have meanings for words.

Nelson Francis (1967: 119)

Realization and virtualization — case of “you” narratives¹

“No discipline but grammar, outside mathematics, has a theoretical seed with such longevity” (Auroux 1999: 4-5). We owe grammatical person's numerical classifications to Greek grammarians. Classification differs across Indo-European languages, but grammatical person generally pertains. For Arab grammarians, first person *al-mutakallimu* is ‘who speaks’; second person *al-muhatabu*, is ‘who is addressed’; third person *al-ya'ibu* is ‘who is absent’ (Benveniste 1966: 228). Pronouns are words which substitute — indicating semantic positions without necessarily figuralizing the entities holding those positions themselves. Pronouns abstract dialogic positions, rendering subjects — and subjectivity itself — abstract. ‘Open,’ ‘empty,’ they situate interlocutors, objects, groups, and persons in fixed relationships.

We “crave meaning and crave for it,” bidding “the world talk to (with) us” (Chénétier 1978: 86), projecting stories from visual and aural information, imagining deities in planets,

¹ Portions of this article appeared in different form in *Ecrire son lecteur: L'évolution de la deuxième personne* (2012), Omniscryptum, Riga. All translations are my own.

butterflies in Rorschach tests. Meaning fleeting, we find it difficult not to impose meaning, making familiar formats of those less familiar. Narrative meaning depends on actants and patients, the acting and acted-upon. There are only, Nick Carraway imagined, “the pursued, the pursuing, the busy, and the tired” (Fitzgerald 1925: 81). We make sense of stories by finding *our* positions within them. Making sense of second-person narratives may leave us busy or tired, but *implicates* us. Second-persons texts or passages of second-person address surprise, delight, or confuse. Often deliberately subversive, they tease borders between readers and authors, speakers and listeners. No single theory answers to each function of second-person use, literary or in spoken every-day use.² In a single text, ‘you’ can create divergent effects. ‘You’'s functions suggest shifting relationships between readers, narrators, and fictional characters.³

Pre-structuralist linguists imagined we ‘realize’ an utterance as applying to *us*, actively co-constructing an utterance’s sense and intent. Each of ‘realization’ is unique. Each reader is unique. ‘Realization,’ an act somewhere between hearing or reading and mentally reacting, is normally done fairly quickly. Realization of an utterance is ‘done’ reflexively, or interrupted to be ‘completed’ later. Realization has the brevity of reflex, takes time to read a text all the way through, or takes a lifetime. An utterance can be realized once or a thousand times, but perhaps never twice quite the same way. Each utterance’s ‘realization’ sets previous realizations in new contexts, suggesting our most recent realization is perhaps the ‘true,’ ‘complete’ realization — that *this* realization is *the* sense of an utterance. Like the hero of Proust’s *À la recherche*, ‘realizing’ utterances of diegetic characters more or less ‘profoundly’ or resonatingly, we imagine an utterance’s ‘true,’ ‘complete’ sense as the most true to some sense originally formulated by its speaker.

Our interpretation of utterances also depends on our mental image of a second co-utterer.⁴ In texts with ‘narratorial address’ followed by ‘pure narration,’ our ‘realization’ of a second co-speaker fluctuates. To identify, Theresa De Laurentis writes, is to be actively involved “as a subject in a process, a series of relations;” a process materially supported by “specific practices — textual, discursive, behavioral — in which each relation is inscribed” (De Laurentis 1986). Turn by turn, reading, we’re implicated in textual relationships while reading. And simultaneously not implicated. Erasure by which “we render ourselves available to something other than ourselves” (Ricoeur 1990: 198) renders us ‘other.’

Charles Peirce called this “the relationship of the sign to the interpretant” (Peirce 1955: 12). ‘Realizing’ an utterance, we ‘virtualize’ its utterer. An utterance implicates *us* in a given moment; in turn, we ‘virtualize’ its utterer. Any utterance implies what Peirce called “the third.” No sign becomes a word until the moment it becomes a triad of thirdness (Sheriff 198: 69). This ‘third,’ taking temporal space, has no existence without action (Hartshorne, Weiss, and Burks 1958 vol. 5: 436).

² Linguistic analysis repeatedly suggests little, if any, difference between literary use of second-person address and daily spoken-language use (Gast, Deringer, Haas & Rudolf 2015).

³ Lois Oppenheim notes that in second-person narration, a reader’s identification oscillates between self-identification, identification with the implied reader/narrative audience, with the narrator, and with a fictional character.

⁴ “Theory of Mind” of second co-utterers; how readers imagine mental processes of second co-utterers (Zunshine).

David Herman's doubly deictic *you* prompts our participation in discourse, being "in some sense a more primitive notion than that of discourse participant" (Herman 2002: 366). For readers, textual roles are more fundamental than any specific figures playing them. With 'subjective identification,' we identify with 'the same' (trait, quality, etc. as us) (Ricoeur 1990). Identification approximates what we perceive in an 'other' and that which we imagine ourselves to be.

Compare 'realization *via* the other' (a loss of alterity between ourselves and some other implied listener) with a type of identification imagined by Kaja Silverman. For Silverman, identification can take either of two forms, depending on us. Either we recognize an other's alterity, or try to break it down, convincing ourselves we can somehow reduce its alterity. In texts targeting two listeners, we 'realize' an utterance — taking the position of this imagined secondary reader, so as to maintain our relationship with the speaker. Silverman suggests such disruptions of alterity are difficult to maintain (narration continues, 'you' returning to its anaphoric sense). But during the "rare moments" it is sustained, identification with this other results in jubilation: we establish "such an intimate imaginary relation with the ideal image or other as to believe [ourselves] to be ideal" (Silverman 1996: 71). Maintained alterity with a secondary listener, Silverman describes less explicitly. Identification *with* alterity, she writes, is "specific to the condition of love, in the most profound and generous sense of that word," implying "an imaginary alignment with bodily coordinates which cannot be assimilated to one's own" (Silverman 1996: 71).

Silverman describes how we idealize the other: "Identification always follows close on the heels of idealization because idealisation refers back to the subject's bodily ego." Through idealization, we posit "an object as capable of filling the void at the heart of [our] psyche, which puts in [us] a definitionally identificatory relation to it" (Silverman 1996: 70). 'You' protagonists (like any protagonists) fill a lack in ourselves, which we perceive as part of our own self, or else as an other, sharing an alignment of physical coordinates which are not assimilatable (Silverman 1996: 70). Silverman cites Freud, for whom our perception of the other as an extension of oneself is "idiopathic," symptomatic of our attempts to integrate the other. A similar relationship without loss of alterity is "heteropathic," resulting in our "impoverishment" or "diminution." "Diminution" of self follows our loss of narcissistic tendencies previously hiding desires for the other (or urges to integrate the other) because of our own inherent sense of lack (Silverman 1996: 70).

Authors have, more or less, three types of relationships with their idea of readers or audiences: they can reject readers; attempt to integrate a reader; or leave notions of reader and audience 'open,' noting readers' presence in a tissue of textual relationships without defining readers' presence. Readers' 'narcissistic' identification with textual figures depends on idealization. Idealization results from our perception of an other as an object belonging to us, an extension of ourselves (Lacan 1966, Séminaire 1). 'Realization' via an 'other' sets the other as part of oneself. The more we lose our sense of alterity, the more we seek assurances the other *is* object, rather than *subject*, alternating, back and forth.

Lacan sets this in contrast with passive idealization: our perception of the other as a subject, independent of oneself. Here, the other is not entirely reified, yet we at no point lose our alterity from it. Such passive idealization, like Erich Fromm's "symbiotic union," which Fromm opposes to "activated love": a union implying the preservation of integrity, or individuality (Fromm 1968: 37), is fairly common in literary texts. In imagining

fictional characters, we imagine the actions they undertake as results of their own desires. We construct mental images of characters from descriptions of their actions (Zunshine 2003: 271–272).

We ‘realize’ second-person address as addressing ourselves. Or ‘virtualize’ it. Virtualization occurs whenever we do not feel directly targeted by an utterance. Virtualization constructs, in our imagination, the figure of another listener, real or potential, more or less stable. Subjectivity alone is suggested, a rhetorical position more than any character or figure, yet we tend to imagine a character or figure in order to understand ‘its’ subjectivity.

‘Realization’ or ‘virtualization’ during reading is temporal, ephemeral. Our interpretations of ‘you,’ conscious or unconscious, take place in real time. Realization and virtualization can be more or less automatic, unconscious reflexes. Or, stepping back, we take time to decide, consciously or not, if we are directly or indirectly addressed by an utterance. ‘You’ tends to conserve its address function, whatever unmarked forms it assumes in contemporary English (Hyman 2004; Gast, Deringer, Haas & Rudolf 2015). Complications in second-person use appear as we realize the figure ‘addressed’ as an other — a fictional other, an abstract or generic figure whose role we share. Forms of generic ‘you’ “presuppose a certain degree of solidarity between speech participants — the willingness to share a perspective” (Gast, Deringer, Haas & Rudolf 2015: 152).

Proust suggested we read *ourselves* while reading. Second-person texts manifest the ‘natural’ process of reading any text. ‘You’ underlines ‘our’ position. And that of a speaker or narrator. ‘Our’ presence marks the other’s presence. Barthes underlined this as regards ‘narrative communication’:

Signs of the narrator initially seem more visible and numerous than those of the reader [...] in reality, [signs of the reader] are simply trickier than [signs of the narrator]; each time the narrator, ceasing to ‘represent’, reports known facts of which the reader is ignorant, there is produced, by a deficiency of signification, a sign of the reader, since it would make no sense for a narrator to be giving this information himself. (Barthes 1977: 38–39)

‘You’ clarifies utterances normally more obscured.

We become tense, curious when we are unable to identify ‘you’’s target. ‘You’ remains, as Benveniste described, an intrinsically unstable signifier. ‘You’ holds our interest by its range of *possibilities* of target. But nature abhors a vacuum. We abhor an empty signifier. ‘You’ bookmarks *something* for us, as we wait for particular characteristics to appear.

Mark Currie suggested discernment of our own existence depends on our subjectivity. Subjectivity affords us an orientation while reading, just as it allows us to orientate ourselves in physical life. Subjectivity is constructed and maintained through our sense of identity, defined and established by our relationship with others or with other imagined *figures*. We have no perception of our own proper existence without some perception of an other, and perceive the other as being outside ourselves (Laclau and Mouffe 1985). With two means of identification with this other, we share subjectivity with the other while maintaining alterity; or: little by little, alterity fading, the other seems an extension of ourselves (Hayakawa 1964: 141). In texts soliciting ‘subjective identification’ rather than ‘narcissistic identification,’ our identification, unstable, tends to be short-term, often resurfacing later on in the reading process.

Realization of the pronoun ‘you’ depends on the extent to which we sense ourselves set in relation with its implied speaker. This relationship is easily, even casually (or cloyingly) evoked in a text’s opening passages, but difficult to sustain. ‘You’s character traits appear: physical characteristics, habits, ways of acting, personal reflections on a past, social class, or environment we don’t share. ‘You,’ often perceived at the opening of a text as direct address, is quickly understood as referring to a fictional other: its address function becomes latent without being completely extinguished. In texts keeping ‘you’ to name a protagonist across the entire text (present-tense examples including Michel Butor’s *La Modification* [1957], Italo Calvino’s *Se una notte d’inverno un viaggiatore* [1979], or Jay McInerney’s *Bright Lights, Big City* [1984]), our realization, if activated at all, theorists have again and again argued, cannot be sustained. Our realization fades into the background of our experience, dissipating, while maintaining a subtle draw, eliciting a certain familiar fondness for such works’ protagonists.

It’s tempting, in imagining such dynamics, to recall Martin Buber’s work on relationships implied by the intimate second-person pronoun. Subjectivity shared by two beings with no loss of alterity is, for Buber, an event taking place each time we say ‘you’ to address an other. In Buber’s estimation, this relational event is not durable. Each being with whom we put ourself in relation and whom is addressed with ‘you’ must, at one moment or another, be reified to become a ‘him,’ ‘her,’ ‘them,’ ‘that,’ or ‘it.’

We approach an other as a being in a relational ‘event’; or as a ‘that’ to observe, experience, or use. Imagining the other as a subject requires alterity. Reifying this other implies an essential belief that the other is an extension of ourselves.

‘You’ as ‘relation’ and ‘event’

For Buber, ‘event,’ the fundamental base of human consciousness, is our ‘original state’ (previous to our conception of self). Our conceptions of ‘it’ or ‘me’ proceed from ‘events.’ However much histories of individuals and that of humanity diverge, Buber writes, they concord in a marked increase of our perception of ‘it,’ our reification of the other (Buber 1969: 63). Assembling presumptive information from the world, our own or any textual world, we imagine ‘things’ or figures, experiencing less ‘events of relationship.’

“Things” for Buber are beings or objects with perceptible character traits. Things are, via traits, ‘experienceable.’ In ‘I-it’ relationships, we experience ‘things.’ But Buber notes that in ‘I-thou’ relationships, we cannot place any specific traits of the other facing us. Blind to them, without perceiving character traits, we do not “experience” an other, but put ourselves “in relation” to an other.

Buber describes our experience of an ‘it’ as our aesthetic pleasure of an object. Gérard Genette describes aesthetic pleasure as based on our perception of an object’s “properties” (as contrasted to “*connaissance*” of the object, our “concepts” of the object) (Genette 2002: 42–43). An object’s “properties” or characteristic traits recall Wayne Booth’s distinction between “the pure aesthetic” of “objectivity” and the lesser aesthetic of “sympathy” which literary ‘you’ often seems to invoke. Genette cites Kant (1985), for whom an unidentified object is a pure sensible event (Genette 2002: 42–43). Identification renders an event as object — an ‘it.’ For Buber, non-identification, non-perception of characteristic traits, precedes identification. Buber’s assertion finds echoes in several cognitive philosophers, who suspect that events, in our perception, are more fundamental than things (Simons 2003).

In literature the question seems less complicated. We approach representations of a spacio-temporal world. How to move into it? First, we imagine a Theory of Mind guiding some subject's actions in a text.⁵ We imagine characters with subjectivity, to some extent private. Our awareness of their subjectivity arrives after our consciousness of our own subjectivity — which, for Lacan, is necessary for assuming our own subjectivity *as* subjectivity (i.e., Lacan's mirror stage). Our consciousness of any other's subjectivity remains, meanwhile, unstable.

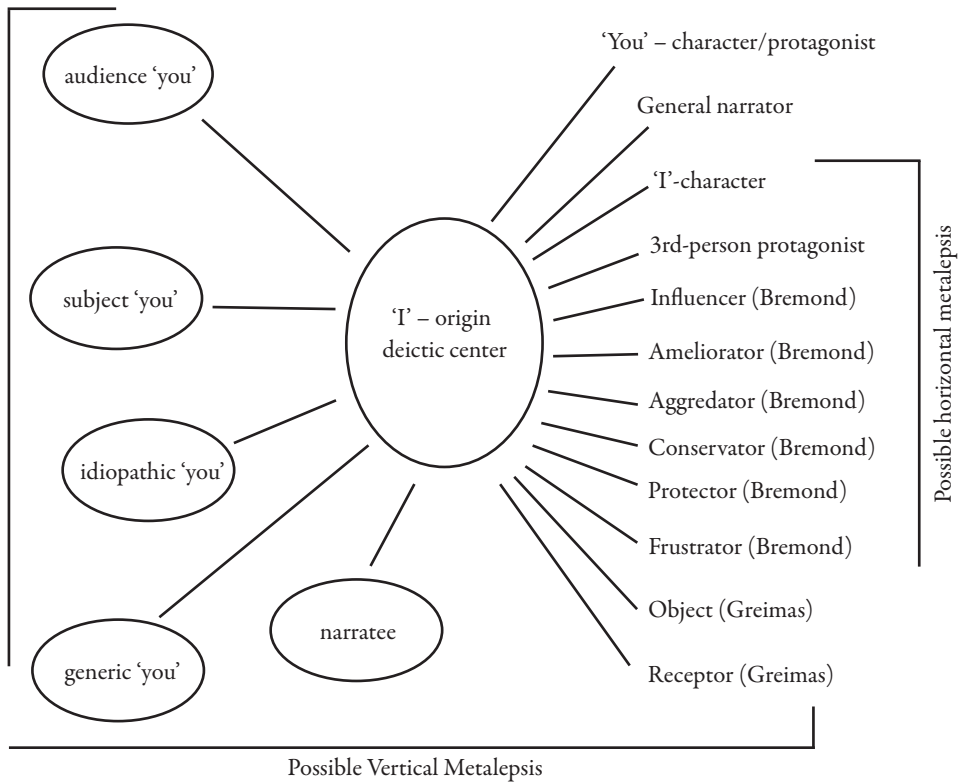
Any moment we are conscious of an other's subjectivity, the other is no object, but an event, only arriving one single time (Ricoeur 1983: 139). Our recognition of an event *as* event renders the event an object. Virtualizing an event, we recognize a *thing*, at which point we are no longer obliged to modify our own subjectivity. We see (textual) figures as objects by recalling elements from other (textual) figures already recognized as objects. This abstraction of a (textual) object's characteristics allows us to group objects for immediate recognition, skipping over the event requiring us to imagine their subjectivity. Grouping a (textual) object with others entails noting its shared characteristics with other textual objects. Setting aside differing characteristics or qualities an object might have, our conception of a 'group' of objects calls forth a symbol, imaginary, largely devoided of conflicting characteristics.⁶ In Melville's *Moby-Dick*, Ishmael, narrator, need not recount his situation at each introduction of a section of text featuring his I-protagonist (the figure of his former self in the past of the digesis). Our meeting with Ishmael is set, sustained, even as 'Ishmael's' persona fluctuates within the diegetic action. We have a symbol of 'Ishmael' — the pronoun 'I' — representing 'him' as a textual object we watch while maintaining our own subjectivity. We recognize 'him' as an object — even after our first experience of 'Ishmael,' which indicated our relationship with 'Ishmael,' our own textual subjectivity and subjective stance. 'You's double function in English, based on two sememes, an amalgamation of the Old English Anglo-Saxon intimate, singular 'thu/thou' and the plural or formal 'eow/yow/you,' suggests *two* figures with a single word, without arousing much confusion on our part.

Oral speech is always, in a sense, first-person. If no 'I' is explicitly voiced, it's present, implicitly prefacing any phrase we utter ("*I see that ... I saw that ... I note that ...*"). Monika Fludernik imagines 'natural [oral] narration' as a template for written narratives, supposing readers 'naturalize' or 'narrativize' written text, rendering it correspondent to a 'natural' situation of oral narration with an implicit, inferred enunciating 'I' (Fludernik 1996). We look for the 'I-origin' to situate our own stance in understanding narratives. Pronouns do not indicate precise figures, but figures' positions in relation to other figures.

Following Greimas (Sonesson 1998), text is plastic discourse. For Fludernik, text *is* discourse, requiring three poles (teller, listener, that which is told). It is by nature unstable.

⁵ "[O]ur attribution of intentional motivations to the other allows us to understand many of the other's behaviors" (Petitot 2004: 87).

⁶ Greek *symbolon* "token, watchword, sign by which one infers; ticket, a permit, licence."



Instable Deictic Center

The 'I-origin' (deictic center) is the 'I' of a story's utterance, implicit or explicit (as an overt or covert narrator). To the right, a 'general narrator' is 'I's' pastiche of homo-narratological diegetic figures, a summary of related experiences, attributes, habitual actions. The 'I-origin' is not a diegetic character, nor a narrator, but a bridge between them. The I-character/protagonist, Genette's homodiegetic or autodiegetic narrator, allows differentiation between I-actors from narrators, as we construe twin 'I's in any autodiegetic/homodiegetic narrative, "homo- and heterodiegetic" being a logical impossibility:

[...] the basis for the homo-/hetero- distinction is participation of the narrator in the events he recounts. But participation is mimetic — only a person, a unified being can participate; a narrator, a mere uttering instance, an agent of the narrative, by definition cannot participate in the events he utters. All narrators are therefore extradiegetic. It follows, then, that narrators as narrators cannot participate, and the term heterodiegetic is a contradiction. Homodiegetic, however, applies to a character, a personlike entity, and is thus not part of a typology of narrators. (Diengott 1987: 533)

We cannot deny special relationships (as we perceive them) between first-person narrators and diegetic I-actors, the narrator's persona in the diegesis. This relationship is based (as we perceive it) on the narrator's seeming identification with the I-actor. This offers illusions

that all that separates these two 'I's is a temporal border. A telling narrator is the later self of the I-protagonist described. But the pronoun 'I,' performing two independent narratological roles, can only be imagined as schismatic.

We use the terms 'narrator' and 'I-protagonist/character' to describe 'first-person narrative.' This simplifies their most common use. But there are a vast range of possibilities of 'I.' In "A damsel with a dulcimer in a vision once I saw," there's the I-origin (the 'I' recounting the vision on some occasion for some purpose); the 'I' recalling the vision; and the 'I' who saw or sees a damsel (Coleridge 1816). Generic 'you' is likewise in a floating position: "Weave a circle round him thrice, And close your eyes with holy dread" (Coleridge 1816). Fludernik suggests generic 'you' doesn't really refer to a protagonist, but to a generic figure in a world of shared, agreed-upon experiences. It is the most open position on the schema, marking a discourse position rather than any particular participant. Authors and readers 'fill' this position with a more or less precise figure, sometimes occluded, sometimes clear. Generic 'you' shows that participation in discourse counts more than any specific participant.⁷

We can also distinguish between a 'you' subject, with separate subjectivity from the deictic center, and ideopathic 'you,' where a narrator seems more concerned as to our opinions, to the point that the deictic center (and the narrator's stance) seems affected by the author's notions of *our* subjectivity.

Diegetic characters, represented to the right of the schema, are shown in all their possible roles laid out by Greimas and Bremond, each of which can be addressed by 'I' with narrative apostrophe, or from which the 'I'/deictic center can measure various stances of identification or alterity (the most common occurrence of this being free indirect discourse).

We realize no single position on the schema indefinitely. 'You's address function is not durable. *Our* textual position, even at moments in which we seem directly addressed, slides to the intratextual level, as we view these positions (including our own former position) from the outside. Positions on the schema are where we set figures encountered while reading — or set our own subjective position. We are rarely stuck long in one position. 'You' protagonists appearing throughout a text are finally read as 'he' or 'she.' As noted by early second-person critics like Butor (1957) Eco (1994), with 'he' or 'she,' we realize a diegetic character either through narcissistic or subjective identification. 'You,' addressed to the same diegetic figure, can also address us. Double deixis is not just an utterance from the deictic center addressing two positions simultaneously, but the effect of our positions being co-inhabited (in our imagination) by a textual figure and by *ourselves*.

'You,' spattered across paragraphs, pages, or dozens or hundreds of pages, 'realized' or not, helps us identify a deictic center. Texts employing apostrophe or brief passages of you-

⁷ As Gast, Deringer, Haas, and Rudolf write, in "[Sofia] Malamud's (2012: 8) words, '[t]he addressee of an imaginary context is simply the (soul of the) addressee of the actual speech context placed in somebody else's shoes.' This means that, in a way, the addressee is no longer herself. *You* establishes a link to the a [a set of referents containing; *inter alia*, a], but a maps herself to some other referent *a'*, a forward. [...] The addressee — or her soul [...] — need not be transferred to any other human being; the only condition of well-formedness [...] is that [...] the addressee is" what Gast, Deringer, Haas, and Rudolf call "a forward" (Gast, Deringer, Haas & Rudolf 2015: 160). Through this figure of 'a forward,' which is neither the narratee nor the reader himself, readers attribute properties to themselves "adopting an attitude *de se* with respect to these properties," allowing readerly empathy to emerge (Gast, Deringer, Haas & Rudolf 2015: 161).

address are precisely those which can avoid 'you's being fixed. Such texts can 1) constantly change the co-utterer's position; 2) allow time to pass between each address to the 'you' (Fludernik 1996); 3) or allow a deictic center to glide because of our unstable relationship with it during the course of our reading.

'You' address function — other relevant approaches

Fludernik divided fictional second-person use into three modes: hortative, reflectoral, and subjunctive. The latter, creating a hypothetical, 'fictional' situation becoming increasingly specific, 'projects' a protagonist who is progressively distinct from readers or narratees (Fludernik 1996: 226). These divisions are more precise than those she formulated in 1993 (Fludernik 1993: 221–222), following Genette's distinction between story and discourse: 1) address function to a 'generalized' co-utterer or to an extradiegetic narrator; 2) combination of the address function to an intradiegetic narratee, with indications of a diegetic character defined as 'existential'; 3) 'you' making reference to a fictional protagonist, where 'you' camouflages a subjective deictic center, taking the place of an 'I' in an immediate narrative experience. The latter includes texts like *La Modification*, *Bright Lights*, *Big City*, and George Perec's *Un Homme qui dort* (1967). Fludernik finds these less interesting, a sort of false enunciatory situation, merely camouflaging a deictic center, leaving 'you's address function "latent." Fludernik's more minute divisions categorize second-person forms according to possible prototypes: conversational storytelling, *skaz*, letter writing, or dramatic monologue.

Other critics had enumerated types of 'you' in literary texts with non-literary models. Bruce Morrisette distinguished guidebook 'you,' cookbook 'you,' journalistic 'you,' advertising 'you,' and courtroom 'you.' Inspired by *La Modification*, Morrisette mentions Anglophone authors who had already employed these forms (Browning, Faulkner, Hemingway). Like Fludernik, he imagines instances of 'you' as always having a "rhetorical cast" which can not be set aside even when used in a "narrative mode." Here, 'you' is a rhetorical figure allowing narrators to generalize, moralize, or judge. Morrisette's work is marked by the idea that these uses of 'you' come from non-literary influences (Morrisette 1965).

Studies of second person use proliferated in the 1980s, as critics turned from the nouveau roman toward American literature. Most mark efforts to establish how fictions with 'you' protagonists function in comparison to texts with third-person protagonists. Mary Francis Hopkins's and Leon Perkins's work is typical, posing questions about a point of view indicated by a narrative entirely in second person. Hopkins and Perkins (1981) did not exclude narratives with first-person narrators from their category of second-person narration. Their categories depend on the degree of focalization of the diegetic character indicated by 'you,' largely ignoring questions of 'you's address function. For Hopkins and Perkins, 'you' in second-person literature is not metaleptic, as it always refers (at least in retrospect, as we read on) to a diegetic character. Their study excludes narrative apostrophe to the narratee or reader.

Ann Jefferson, touching on questions of second person in her work on the nouveau roman, made personal observations, among the first underlining that second person is essentially a form of address which remains a form of address under no matter what circumstances it is used (Jefferson 1980). Jefferson analyzed reasons for the emergence of second-person narration as it related to questions posed by the nouveau roman and France's literary

climate in the 1950s: a crisis of fictional discourse and fictions incapability of transmitting realist truth. She underlined an inherent instability in the use of *vous* to replace a diegetic character. Jefferson suggested second-person narrative alienates us from the plot. Normally, according to Jefferson, we identify (consciously or unconsciously) with a narrator, the voice of a narrator, or, in its absence, with a focalizer (a point of view presented by an implied narrator). Second-person narration impedes this identification, forcing us to situate ourselves outside the text. The innovation here is our unstable identification.

A similar approach appears in the work of Pierre Gault. Like Jefferson, Gault takes a position contrary to that of Hopkins and Perkins. ‘You’ is foremost a direct address to *us*. Gault finds this address impedes our identification with a textual character (for Jefferson, it is mainly identification with the narrator which is impeded, for Gault, identification with a diegetic character is hindered). When ‘you’ receives character traits or undertakes diegetic actions, it generates our identification in the same way we tend to identify with third-person protagonists. Gault suggests narrators need an other to establish themselves as speakers. ‘You’ serves as this other. Yet the more precise ‘you’s actions or characteristics become, the more difficult it is for us to identify with its position. Gault infers that the more we virtualize this other, the more we realize the utterer’s position. Our identification is always instable. Gault describes this instability as the inscription or non-inscription of ourselves in the text — movements toward absorption or stepping back. At first, the narrator’s subjectivity depends on alterity from the other (‘you’), but finally, repetitively, requires reification of the other. This reification dissuades us from identifying with this other (Gault 1975).

Such instability is essential in Brian McHale’s essay on Pynchon’s *Gravity’s Rainbow* (1985), where ‘you,’ clearly no direct address to readers, “figures” an act of communication, automatically drawing us “into the text,” like moths to a light. Aside from our automatic sense of being addressed, McHale underlines Pynchon’s inherent ambiguity of second-person use. ‘You’ indeterminate, we are driven to identify the figure it represents. Pynchon’s world escaping mimeticism, ‘you’ provokes our automatic ‘realization,’ impeding identification of the figure to which it refers. McHale broke instances of ‘you’ into five “identities,” according to their relationship between utterer and co-utterer: utterer to the narratee; utterer to a diegetic character; diegetic character to another diegetic character; interior monologue of a diegetic character or of a narrator; “colloquial ‘you’” replacing ‘one’ (generic ‘you’). McHale imagined these as diverse targets of a single utterance, different roles suggested by ‘you.’ McHale suggested that first- and third-person fictions employ similar uses of second person.

Like McHale, Darlene Hantzis (1988) underlined ‘you’s indeterminate character as opposed to first- and third-person pronouns. ‘You’ glides freely between three referants: a diegetic character, a narrator addressing himself with interior monologue, and a narratee. ‘You’ cues all three. Hantzis does not note (as David Herman will six years later [1994]) that ‘you’ cues all three simultaneously. ‘You’s intrinsically indeterminate occurrences can be defined. Hantzis sees each appearance of ‘you’ in a text as figuralizing, virtualizing an utterer. Hantzis suggests second-person use ultimately undermines textual authority and autonomous subjectivity.

Specific categories of ‘you’ aside, Fludernik organizes a continuum treating ‘you’s uses, based on a hybrid of Genette’s levels and Franz Karl Stanzel’s modes, to account for

paradoxes in second-person fiction (1994), taking realist fiction as a prototypical case. Second-person texts are, for Fludernik, “non-natural” compared to first- or third-person texts, with few parallels in oral narration. Fludernik includes them in her continuum not as exceptions to a rule, but as logical extensions of narrative levels. Her continuum articulates two systems, each consisting of two poles. On one side, Genette’s model of auto- and heterodiegetic narrators; on the other, Fludernik’s own model (based on Stanzel’s) of communicative narratives (teller-mode texts with an active address function), and non-communicative narratives (reflector-mode texts in which ‘you’ is adeictic, its address function latent). Genette’s distinction between homo/auto- or heterodiegetic (the presence or absence of an ‘I-actor’) is applied to narratees (whether ‘you’ is auto/homodiegetic or heterodiegetic). Fludernik’s “communicative” describes the extradiegesis. Like a narrator who’s extradiegetic or diegetic in first-person fiction, ‘you’ exists on the diegetic, or the extradiegetic level. Or both. In “homoconative narrative,” narratees become diegetic characters, while narrators do not. In heterocommunicative second-person texts, diegetic ‘you’ is occluded from the extradiegesis. Fludernik makes scarce distinctions between ‘I-actors,’ ‘you-actors’ or ‘you-narratees’ — these all form a single entity existing on both levels at once (1994). If her schema has a weak point, it is the impossibility of ‘I’s’ existence on the diegetic level without having an extradiegetic position. Unsettlingly, Fludernik suggests ‘you’ can exist uniquely on the diegetic level while a narrator exists uniquely in the extradiegesis. We might imagine, rather, that we “naturalize” a text by imagining a narrator and narratee on the same level — even if this means that, for example in *La Modification*, the speaker addressing Leon is Leon’s own diegetic conscience. A separate narrator has no existence except as an implied author.

Fludernik sets aside texts with no communicative level (1996). These include texts in “reflector mode” (present-tense), in first, second, and third person. Fludernik argues for the absence of a narrator. Certain cases (which might be interpreted as narratorial commentary, addressed to a diegetic narratee by a diegetic narrator, a second ‘conscience’) Fludernik classifies as free indirect discourse. She resolves the question “where is the narrator in the present-tense reflector mode?” with the answer that *no* narrator exists, leaving text noncommunicative, ignoring the possibility that the reflector mode itself presents an enunciatory situation on the diegetic level, allowing us to situate ourselves on the extratextual level. In such cases, we would be the only figure on this level, observers of an enunciatory situation describing diegetic action. This way of seeing the situation would allow the integration of second-person reflector mode narratives with her continuum as heterocommunicative with an implicit ‘I,’ a ‘you-narratee,’ and a ‘you-actor,’ both on the same diegetic level. In such cases, we would be in a singular position of overhearing: in which the overhearing is simultaneous to the action, or even creating the action, like oral narration of a football match in real time, but with direct addresses to the players by the speaker. Fludernik instead sticks to ideas of free indirect discourse and interior monologue.

Fludernik introduced her continuum by insisting second-person fictions do not correspond to any specific narrative situation by default. “Person” is a concept with no substantive theoretical sense. Second-person fiction, undermining parameters of realist narratives, is typically postmodernist because it is transgressive. Her schema, like the models it takes as a basis, holds no space for hybrids or gradations between narrative levels. Divisions on her continuum are strict — we can place entire texts on the continuum, but not specific

examples or instances of second-person use. Fludernik suggests reasons for new positionings of narrators and narratees, labeling them in their globality. Yet our comprehension of narrative levels changes over the course of reading. Fludernik's model hints at, then largely abandons nuance, the back-and-forth, hybrids of form and function suggested in her earlier articles.

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Maybe narrative, Genette imagined, as opposed to discourse, is "already a thing of the past, which we must hurry to consider in its retreat, before it completely disappears from our horizon" (Genette 1966: 69). Half a century later, narrative seems in no hurry to retreat. But often in contemporary fiction, it admits to being a part of discourse, in a movement more evolutionary than revolutionary. A reader *as* protagonist is, in essence, the same metaleptic effect as that of Sterne's or Calvino's experiments with confusing diegesis, extradiegesis and extratext, stretched across several narrative borders rather than one at a time. 'You'-narratees being fictional to the degree that they differ from flesh-and-blood readers, 'you-narration' or 'second-person fiction' might be distinguished less by its use of pronouns, than by the fact that it *might* be nonfictional in certain circumstances of reading. Like travel guides or recipes, it presents itself as theoretically realizable. Sometimes passages of you-narration *are* realized by flesh-and-blood readers, rendering fiction 'true,' even if only for an instant.

Across the late twentieth century and into the twenty-first, metaleptic manoeuvres have not limited themselves to crossing a single narratological border, but cross several, and more and more commonly. The diegesis is a corridor continuously crossed by utterances from the artistic pole toward multiple destinations, as we switch positions to 'realize' the text, often quite rapidly in the course of reading. To render this compatible in a text with numerous characters and figures addressing readers in diverse ways, we group these figures, creating an amalgamated textual speaker. Concentration is pushed to its limits when we are required to set ourselves in relation with two deictic centers simultaneously — we have a tendency to group these deictic centers together. As co-utterers, we cannot set ourselves in relation to two deictic centers at once. But a generic co-enunciatory *position* is capable. Generic 'you' in English can address us directly, personally, and generally, largely without provoking cognitive over-load.

Pronouns pass in and out of fashion.⁸ In doing so, they create audiences and co-enunciatory positions previously unavailable. An ideal co-utterer's position is underlined more than that of any actual co-utterer or reader.⁹ But co-enunciatory positions marked by 'you' are today both (implicitly) precise and (more explicitly) open. 'Thou' having disappeared from literary English, new forms of intimacy with readers take its place. Whatever tones they take — cajoling, begging, menacing — all were tones for which 'thou' was previously used. Of all ways of simulating dialogue with readers, generic 'you' is today the most frequently employed (Hyman 2004). It is more 'empty' than eighteenth-century 'polite you,' no longer indicating social position or status, an open co-enunciatory position.

⁸ Note, for example, an increase in the frequency of 'we' in the US press in the months following September 11, 2001, even in otherwise largely 'objective' reporting.

⁹ "Doubly deictic *you* suggests that discourse participation is in some sense a more primitive notion than that of discourse participant" (Herman 2002: 366).

There was drift and fusion of co-enunciators in English in the time of Sterne's generation of authors fond of apostrophe. But in Sterne's period, co-enunciators were generally defined.¹⁰ Contemporary 'you's co-enunciatory target is often less explicitly defined. It is a target more *felt* by readers (and *constructed* by readers according to what they feel) than it is explained or defined by the text itself.¹¹

Why so much 'you' in contemporary fiction? Why such demands that we *be* something in a text? Such literature prospers in a time when we can be what we want, or even all things we want to be. In theoretically classless societies, where any social position is open, any co-enunciatory position open to all of us, 'realizable' by each or any of us. Here, fiction admits that fabula, that of which it 'speaks,' is always constructed by utterances and co-utterances.

"The history of the individual, like that of humanity, much as they deviate from each other, concord in that both mark a continuous growth of the world of 'It'" (Buber 1969: 63). As our potential for communicating without physical presence increases, stories' creators and co-utterers, either present at the moment of story-telling or imaginary, each half, like a severed starfish, regenerates the missing part from itself. 'You's, as "open signifiers" (Benveniste 1966: 254), 'forwards,' mediators, or go-betweens, indicate rhetorical stances of narrators and audiences — suggesting wide ranges and continua of both, marking an image of an other, and of our relationship to this other.

'You,' by nature, crosses a fundamental border between two realms — between two subjects. In 'dialogical texts,' authors confer subjectivity to something absent, which does not exist or does not yet exist, much as "[s]tone-age humans did not clearly distinguish image from reality; for them, painting an animal brought the animal within reach" (Janson 1970: 15). Just so, authors draw *us* within reach, or set themselves within *our* reach. With unworldly, metaleptic greetings from another realm, narrative apostrophe and 'second-person' passages of texts show that any text's 'story' lies somewhere in-between.

¹⁰ Through the narratee's actual responses to the narrator, as in Sterne, but much more often by pre- or post-definition in narratorial address (you, Madam or Sir, reader, etc.).

¹¹ Literature's "iconic signs [...] constitute an organization of signifiers which do not serve to designate a signified object, but instead designate instructions for the production of the signified [...] The text [and our idea of the implied reader] owes its presence in our minds to our own reactions" (Iser 1978: 65).

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