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Dialogical Functions of You-Narration in Auto/Biography: Anne Harich's *"Wenn ich das gewußt hätte…": Erinnerungen an Wolfgang Harich* (2007)

Abstract

Ever since the 1970s, if not before, second-person narration has been used as an alternative storytelling format in auto/biography to expand the narrative possibilities of engaging with one's own or someone else's life. The second-person pronoun can support the author's project of self-exploration while also offering a means for self-distancing. When someone else's story is addressed to that person, this raises questions concerning the epistemics of the narrated events as well as the teller's storytelling rights and authority.

This article explores the use of you-narration in an auto/biographical text by Anne Harich about her dead husband, Marxist philosopher Wolfgang Harich. The second-person narrative form is shown to serve various functions, ranging from creating an imaginary dialogue with the dead to expressing the author's personal feelings about and perspectives on the life she lived with her husband. The analysis shows how Anne Harich, in imagining a conversation with her husband, vents her own pent-up frustration and points to her ambivalent attitude towards her marriage. The *you*-narrative parts fictionalize the otherwise non-fictional account and show that one needs to distinguish between the aspects of address at the level of the communication between narrator and narratee and reference in the story world of the you-narration.

second-person narration, autobiography, biography, imaginary dialogue, fictionalization, narratology

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Introduction

You-narration in written narratives is often claimed to create a special communicative situation that involves readers somewhat more than usual (Fludernik 1993; Kacandes 2001; Parker 2012; Mildorf 2016). David Herman's (1994) concept of "double deixis", for example, accounts for the ways in which the pronoun *you* can become a shifting and hence indeterminate signifier whose function it is, among other things, to offer a projection screen for readers by including direct or, as Herman has it, "vertical", address to them. This article looks at another function of *you*-narration, namely that of creating a dialogue in the narrated story world which readers are tacitly invited to bear witness to. As I shall demonstrate in my analysis, the boundaries between *you*-narration proper, i.e., where a story or anecdote is addressed to the person who experienced the event, and the function of *you* as an address pronoun in a (mock) dialogical set-up are porous in this text and lead to interesting effects of both distancing and involvement.

My case study is a literary biography: Anne (in full: Marianne) Harich's story about the life and work of her husband, Wolfgang Harich, who was an important but also controversial Marxist philosopher in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR). With his continued demand for a revival of Stalinist Marxism, Harich brought the SED regime against himself and was imprisoned for ten years as a revisionist state enemy in 1957 (Rauh 2021: 189). Later, his invectives against the "renaissance" of Nietzsche scholarship in East Germany and his numerous official complaints about his lack of recognition in academic circles in the GDR made him increasingly unpopular among fellow scholars and led to his isolation (Rauh 2021: 190; see also Heyer 2016).

That is also the time when Anne Harich met her future husband, not fully realising who he was and what consequences this would have for her own life with him. Anne's book, aptly entitled *Wenn ich das gewußt hätte...* ('If I had only known...'), is also an autobiographical text since the author reflects on her life with her husband, what it meant to her, how it made her feel and still makes her feel at the moment of remembering. One can consider the book as following a long tradition of life writing by women set in motion by, for example, Dame Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe, Margaret Cavendish, or Ann Bradstreet, who were often also closely associated with famous men (see Mason 1980). Like other life writing by women, Anne Harich's text is also marked by what Mary G. Mason identifies as a constant

element in this subgenre: a "sort of evolution and delineation of an identity by way of alterity" (Mason 1980: 231). Anne, too, writes about how she had to accommodate to being the wife of Wolfgang Harich. The fact that she was his fourth wife and twenty years his junior, but also her different social background and education — he was a scholar from a bourgeois family while she came from the working class and was a hospital nurse before they married — significantly contributed to a power imbalance in their relationship. This led to tensions, which Anne also describes in her text.

However, since the book is mainly about her husband, the self-reflexive part is interwoven with her husband's life story in a kind of frame narrative, much of which is cast in either first or second person. In its overall structure, the book thus incorporates first-, second- and third-person narrative parts, alongside excerpts from Wolfgang Harich's letters (those he wrote and those he received), quotes from recorded lectures and some of his publications, as well as a selection of Anne Harich's diary entries. This collage, in resting on narrative multi-voicedness and therefore on multiple perspectives, offers fascinating insights into both Harich the scholar and the husband, but also into Anne's attempt at retrospectively making sense of this complex and, if one may say so, difficult man, whom she spent nine years of her life with before he died in 1995.

You-Narration in Autobiography

The use of the second-person pronoun in autobiographical texts can be found at least as early as the writings of Christa Wolf, who incorporates autobiographical details and partial you-narration in her experimental novel/autobiography *Kindheitsmuster* (1976), and Nathalie Sarraute, who engages in a dialogue with herself in her autobiography *Enfance* (1983). Second-person narration has since featured steadily, albeit perhaps not extensively, in the genre. According to Müller (2009: paragraph 50), both Wolf and Sarraute spearheaded a change in the genre from the 1970s onwards by employing the second-person pronoun, a change which generally attests to how authors have sought to find new forms of (self-)expression. In connection with Wolf's text, Iliopoulou (2019) argues that "the second-person voice enables the division of the self into two sub-selves: one testifying, the other evaluating the testimony" (103). The function of distancing oneself from one's own persona is also pointed to by Irene Kacandes (2001). Especially in autobiographical texts about traumatic life experiences, *you*-narration may serve as a kind of "intrapsychic witnessing", Kacandes (2001: 97) argues, a communion with oneself that nevertheless keeps that very self at bay.

More recent examples of autobiographical texts written as *you*-narration include Paul Auster's *Winter Journal* (2012) and *Report from the Interior* (2013) or Neil Patrick Harris's ludic *Choose Your Own Autobiography* (2014). In such autobiographical texts, Sandrine Sorlin maintains, the "flexible nature of the second-person pronoun makes it the ideal pronoun to establish the right distance with the topic under description, while at the same time encouraging the participation of the readers" (Sorlin 2022: 38). By contrast, I argued elsewhere (Mildorf 2019) in connection with a discussion of Auster's *Report from the Interior* that the literary playfulness of *you*-narration may seemingly offer resonance and construct a façade for readers' involvement while at the same time effectively maintaining and glossing over the author's ultimate distance. What is perhaps at stake here is what Paul De Man called the "double motion" in autobiography studies, namely "the necessity to escape from

the tropology of the subject and the equally inevitable reinscription of this necessity within a specular model of cognition" (De Man 1979: 923). Put differently, while we need to acknowledge that the 'subject' presented to us in an autobiographical text is no longer the 'same' person as the real-life author, the genre still invites readers to think of this subject as such and offers it up to their judgment and evaluation. In the present example, things are further complicated as the text offers two 'subjects': Anne Harich and her husband.

In my discussion of Anne Harich's text, I will focus especially on the parts written in *you*-narration, in which Anne directly addresses Wolfgang and relates incidents of his life to him. In narratological terms, the *you*-narrative in this book is "homo-communicative" because there is an existential link between the communicative level and the story level of the text (Fludernik 1993: 224). Harich is the addressee or recipient as well as the protagonist of the stories and anecdotes told. The narrative furthermore oscillates between *homo-* or *autodiegetic* parts, in which Anne as the narrator is also a participant in the story world, and *heterodiegetic* parts, written in the third person, where only Harich is the protagonist. Those latter parts, in which Anne relates moments which she simply could not have participated in because she did not know Harich at that time, are particularly interesting because they show a degree of fictionalization not untypical of biographical writing. As we shall see, the passages in *you*-narration also use fictionalization because Anne Harich creates an "imaginary" conversation with her dead husband.

The discussion turns to the potential effects this narrative technique has on readers and reflects on possible motivations Anne Harich may have had in choosing this technique. To avoid confusion, Anne Harich is referred to simply as "Anne" in the discussion and Wolfgang Harich as "Harich", the way Anne herself refers to her husband throughout much of the third-person narrative account in the book. References to Anne's book simply include page numbers; all English translations of the German quotations are made by the author of this article.

Imaginary Dialogue with the Dead

The first stretch of second-person narration already occurs in the second paragraph of the book. Anne Harich begins with a general reflection on people like her former husband who passionately dedicate their lives to important causes and manage to make a lasting impression on others, either by fascinating or repelling them (9). She then tells the reader how she went back to the block of flats where she lived with Harich, albeit in separate apartments, and how, standing there, she was overcome by vivid memories: "vertraute Bilder entstehen" (9, 'well-known images emerge in my mind'). She 'tells' Harich in second-person narration how neighbours scolded him for shutting the front door too noisily and about several other such encounters, what he looked like when he went out for a walk and how he received visitors in his study (9–11). Interestingly, the chosen tense throughout this introductory part is simple present, thus creating a sense of immediacy, as if Anne wishes to underline the vividness of the memories that came to her mind at that moment and that undoubtedly came back to her when she was writing the book. In a way, this opening *you*-narrative is reminiscent of similar forms of *you*-narration in conversational storytelling, where the first-person account meshes with the story addressed to the interlocutor, and the function of the *you*-narrative is to convey a sense of shared experience rather than merely one's own personal experience (see Mildorf 2016). In this connection, it is also important to note that

the passages in *you*-narration only relate moments in Harich's life that Anne herself witnessed or participated in. That is, the epistemic restrictions of conversational *you*-narration are also adhered to.

The reference to conversational settings is not too far-fetched if one considers the comment with which Anne finishes this opening passage. She writes:

> Ja, ich rede sehr oft mit Dir, wenn ich allein bin, und das Bedürfnis über Dich zu erzählen läßt mich nicht ruhen. Ich will aber zur Ruhe kommen, setz Dich hin, sei still und laß mich ausreden! Du weißt genau, ich kann es nicht leiden, wenn Du mir ins Wort fällst! Jetzt bin ich dran. (11)

> Yes, I often talk to you when I'm alone, and the urge to write about you doesn't let me find peace and quiet. Still, I want to become tranquil, so sit down, be quiet and allow me to finish what I want to say. You know exactly that I hate it when you cut me off while I'm talking! Now it's my turn.

Anne describes how she keeps talking to her husband even though he is dead. She even conjures up a conversational situation in which she assigns the role of quiet listener to him. This as well as her adamant comment that it is now her turn to speak are slightly comical in view of the facts that talking was what this couple spent most of their married life doing and that Harich dominated much of their conversation. At least this is the impression one forms when reading Anne's book, where she repeatedly comments on his penchant for giving monological talks. In her imagined conversation, by contrast, she is now the one taking the lead and shutting her husband up.

She also introduces topics that he may perhaps not have wanted her to bring out into the open and actually does object to in this imagined scenario. Thus, another stretch of *you*-narration begins with the words: "Was siehst Du mich so an? Du meinst, es ist hart, was ich über uns erzähle?" (17; 'Why are you looking at me like this? You think it's harsh what I am telling about us?'). Anne not only imagines Harich listening to her but also reacting to what she says. In this case, the implicit reaction consists in a non-verbal expression of his surprise at or even disapproval of the content of her narrative. After all, she has just frankly told the reader about the difficulties the couple faced at the beginning of their marriage because Harich could not connect to Anne's children from her first marriage and treated them with condescension. Time and again, such 'taboo' topics are brought to the surface, as I will discuss in more detail below.

At other moments, Anne uses narrative formulae typical of conversational storytelling such as 'Do you remember': "Weißt Du noch…" (38) or "…erinnerst Du Dich?" (39). There are also many examples of meta-communication, i.e., communication about the communicative acts performed in a conversation (Ruesch & Bateson 1951), and meta-narrative comments, for example:

> Von Deinem Großvater Wyneken bin ich jetzt doch ganz schön abgewichen, Du kennst ja meine Schwäche, ich springe von einem Thema zum anderen, und das kannst Du nicht leiden, doch das geht nun mal nicht anders, ich will versuchen, Dich zu verstehen, das habe ich doch am Anfang gesagt, und ich will auch ein bißchen mit Dir reden. Es bleibt nicht aus, auch über anderes nachzudenken. (265)

> Now I've lost track of your grandfather Wyneken, you know my weakness, I jump from one topic to another, and you hate that, but it can't be done any other way, I want to try and understand you, I said that in the beginning, and I also want to talk to you a little bit. Inevitably, I can't help thinking about other things as well.

Anne comments on her own deficiencies in telling a coherent life story, but then goes on to defend her manner of jumping from one topic to another because this is simply how things come to her mind. With her meta-narrative comment, she implicitly offers a rationale for her storytelling style and thus not only deflects Harich's imagined criticism but potentially also the reader's. She also signals a degree of control over her narrative even though she seemingly only follows her thoughts.

Ultimately such conversational formulae and instances of meta-communication also support the picture of a face-to-face conversation in readers' minds. One begins to imagine how Anne sits there with Harich, talking to him about their life together but also about his life experiences long before they met. Readers are tacitly assigned the role of witnesses in this scenario. It is as if we listen in on their conversation or rather, on Anne's testimony of their married life and, by extension through the additional written resources mentioned above, her testimony of his many fights against the waning of Marxist thought and against his own academic obliteration in the GDR.

Anne not only expressly mentions that she wrote this book because she wanted to bring back the moments that were important to her, but also because she wanted to understand the past and 'how things were with you' ("wie das war mit Dir", 11). Furthermore, she claims at a later point in the book that her main motive for writing this auto/biography was to document the controversies Harich had been involved in, most notably the one concerning Friedrich Nietzsche (245), whom Harich rejected on the grounds that he considered him a thinker paving the way to Nazism in Germany and whose popularization he made every effort to prevent in East German academic circles. Anne mentions her surprise on discovering letters she did not know about (245, 269), letters Harich had written to the authorities and political leaders in order to complain about the growing acceptance of Nietzschean thought and, conversely, the decline of Marxist principles in the GDR. In fact, Anne quotes many of these letters and responses to them verbatim, thus also using her book as a treasure trove for hitherto partially unpublished historical materials.

We can see here two main motivations: one is to offer an intimate account of Harich the man and husband; the other is to shed new light on Harich's difficult and hotly debated political position and to exonerate him retrospectively by exposing and discrediting his opponents (for further discussions about Harich, see the contributions in Heyer 2016). The purpose of the interludes cast in *you*-narration seems to be to offer a frame for these different trajectories, connecting points where readers can pause and once again become aware of their own positions as witnesses. The dialogue that is created between Anne and her late husband reminds one of literary-historiographical and philosophical traditions such as imaginary dialogues of the dead, where famous dead people are imagined in conversation with one another (Keener 1973), and other forms of imaginary dialogical writing (see Kinzel & Mildorf 2012, 2014). One key characteristic of such dialogues is that they allow their authors to juxtapose different viewpoints and to enact, if only fictitiously, a debate.

Interestingly, Harich himself used the dialogue form or, more precisely, the (fictional) interview as a mode of writing for his reflections about Nicolai Hartmann (Harich 2004; reprinted as Harich & Forster 2018). Possibly, Anne followed this model. However, unlike Harich, Anne does not give her 'interlocutor' an actual speaking position. Harich's imagined reactions, also verbal ones, are rendered indirectly. For example:

> Du meinst, ich schweife wieder einmal ab? Ja, ja, Du mit Deinem "wieder"! [...] Ich bitte Dich, laß mich abschweifen! Ich übertreibe? Nein, bestimmt nicht, und wenn? Ich sehe die Dinge heute so, und dabei bleibt es! (158)

> You think I am going off at a tangent again? Oh, yes, you and your "again"! [...] Please, just let me go off at a tangent. I exaggerate? No, certainly not, and if, so what? This is how I see things today, and that's that.'

As the main speaker in this imaginary dialogue, Anne retains absolute control over the trajectory of the 'conversation', and she allows herself to contradict her husband and to override his 'interjections'. This suggests an interesting communicative dynamic, and one begins to wonder what the real conversations between Harich and his wife must have been like. Is Anne possibly compensating here for years of having to listen to Harich's monologues and endless stories? Her own comments on her conversations with her husband are contradictory: on the one hand, she repeatedly emphasizes how much she enjoyed talking and listening to him (252, 361); on the other hand, she also mentions several times how out of place she felt during their conversations, how tired it made her to listen to Harich's stories (36) and endless complaints and how she felt she no longer had a life of her own (159, 279). This brings me to another function the *you*-narrative apparently has in this auto/biography, namely to give the author room for self-expression in relation to the husband she can no longer address in person.

You-Address and Emotional Self-Expressivity

Reading this auto/biography, one forms the impression that its main purpose is to give Anne an opportunity to finally get a word in edgewise. She imaginatively conjures up a conversation that she dominates and that offers her a platform to elaborate her own perspective on Harich's life. This perspective is full of conflicting sentiments. Anne talks about how much she loved and still loves her husband, how much she misses him and tries to bring him back in her memories by engaging in this imaginary conversation. At the same time, she writes about her disillusionment on discovering that her life with Harich was not what she had imagined it would be, that he behaved badly towards her because he also mistrusted her (23). She mentions arguments they had and how he made her feel angry and sad (229). Quite early in the book, she already takes stock of her marriage in a rather resigned tone:

> Nach und nach beruhigten sich die hohen Wogen Deiner Über-Ängste vor mir und vor Eingriffen in Deine Welt, und mit der Zeit suchte und fand Gemütliches und Inniges darin seinen Platz. Nur, mein Lieber, im nachhinein war das alles viel zu wenig, mir hätte mehr zugestanden! Nein, nein, ich sag ja nichts mehr. (23)

> By and by, the towering waves of your overly strong feeling of being scared of me and of intrusions into your world subsided, and gradually something cosy and hearty sought and found its place there. However, my dear, in retrospect all of this was not enough, I would have deserved more! No, no, I'm not going to say anymore.

Anne uses the imagined address to Harich to complain about her married life, which now, looking back, still appears insufficient to her (see also 220). The hedge at the end, 'No, no, I'm not going to say anymore' is interesting as it suggests that Anne possibly has qualms about giving away her innermost feelings of discontent in the context of this auto/biography. Within the imagined dialogical set-up, it implies Harich's negative reaction to such criticism, which of course he can no longer voice in real life, but which Anne still accommodates towards in her verbal 'response'.

The subjunctive form in "hätte" points to an instance of "sideshadowing" (Morson 1998), i.e., an implicit story about what could or should have been but actually was not. Sideshadowing may indicate a moment of regret about lost opportunities, as can be seen in the following example:

> …ich wäre auch so gern mal mit ihm im Wald spazierengegangen oder im See geschwommen oder im Winter Ski gelaufen oder im Sommer mit dem Fahrrad gefahren, solche einfachen aber schönen Dinge hätte ich mir dazugewünscht. Doch nichts davon! Nicht mit einem Wolfgang Harich! Immer nur zu Hause, und dann Lukács, Lukács, Lukács, oder Hager, Höpcke, Schirmer. (220)

> …I would have loved to go for a walk through the woods with him or to swim in the lake or to go skiing in winter or cycling in summer, I would have liked to have such simple but nice things as well. But none of that! Not with a Wolfgang Harich! We were always at home, and then it was Lukács, Lukács, Lukács, or Hager, Höpcke, Schirmer.

There are many such instances throughout the book where Anne vents her disappointment, disillusionment, regrets, anger, etc., both in the third-person narrative parts and in her 'conversation' with Harich. As she writes at some other point, she would like to 'tell everything' ("Am liebsten würde ich alles erzählen!", 30) because she felt hurt by Harich's behaviour towards her. She repeatedly also challenges Harich directly, as if they were having a marital row there and then: "Weißt Du überhaupt, wie das ist, wenn man Ablehnung spürt, weil man täglich einer ganz gewöhnlichen Arbeit nachgeht?" (30; 'Do you actually know what it's like to feel rejected because one has a rather common job?'). She calls Harich out for having made her jealous by telling her with great admiration about his former wives and lovers (29); she criticizes him for having made her give up her job as a hospital nurse as well as other spare-time activities such as learning French just so she could be there for him only (14, 159). Later in the book, she repeatedly mentions financial difficulties because Harich lived on a very small pension as an invalid (312).

Conveniently, he cannot talk back, or can do so only insofar as Anne lets him do it within the imaginary dialogue. Ironically, elsewhere in the book she writes with indignation about the fact that the author Günter de Bruyn discredited Harich in an article after Harich was already dead and that Harich could therefore not respond to this criticism (304). However, her own writing is not dissimilar to de Bruyn's in this regard. Reading

this diatribe against Harich, one begins to think that perhaps one purpose of the book is for Anne to vent her pent-up frustration of many years. This stands in stark contrast to her claim that she wishes to understand him better with hindsight and to offer a more rounded picture in view of the criticism he had incurred on himself.

Indeed, Anne uses especially the *you*-narration parts to attempt interpretations of Harich's character and to delineate retrospectively what it was that caused him so much trouble. However, these descriptions do not necessarily shed a more positive light on him. On the contrary, they rather paint the picture of a tragic character whose flaw it was not to recognize his own position and to assess incorrectly how others perceived him. She writes, for example:

> Würdest Du mir zustimmen, wie ich mir Deine Autoritätshörigkeit, aus der sich letztlich Deine Wortgläubigkeit genährt hat, zu erklären versuche? Und mir ist, als brauchtest Du, der selbst in sich autoritär ist, die Autorität ein Leben lang, als suchtest Du sie immer, die vorbildliche, um Dich geistig mit ihr und an ihr messen zu können [...]. Dann standest Du der anderen Autorität gegenüber, die aus der Arbeiterklasse entstanden war und deren Führung Du bejahtest, die Dir Achtung abverlangte und die Du in Deiner Begeisterung idealisiertest. Mit dieser Autorität aber beginnt in Deinem Leben eine Erfahrung, auf die Dich niemand vorbereitet hat. (262–263)

> Would you agree about how I try to explain your need to be under some authority, which ultimately also fed into your blind belief in words? And it seems to me that you, who are yourself authoritarian, needed an authority throughout your entire life, as if you searched for it all the time, a model of an authority to compete with and to measure yourself against intellectually [...]. Then you suddenly faced this other authority, the one that had emerged from the working class and whose leadership you acknowledged, an authority which made you bow your head to it and which you idealized in your enthusiasm. This authority, however, starts a new experience in your life that no-one prepared you for. (262)

In trying to explain how Harich's enthusiasm for the political authority he subdued himself to was not mutual and did not correspond to that authority's perception of Harich, Anne inadvertently also criticizes Harich's own authoritarian streak. Moreover, she suggests that, despite his intelligence, he failed to see the truth, namely that he was never going to fit in on account of his own bourgeois background and upbringing.

Especially in the second half of the book, Anne recounts many instances of situations when she already sensed that Harich was being duped by others while he failed to see through that. This interpretation of Harich's life, lucid as it is, indicates that Anne herself may be telling this life story to finally gain one-upmanship over Harich, to verbalize the resentment she felt towards him precisely because she also did not match or fully appreciate his bourgeois background. A good example for this is her angry comment about Thomas Mann's novel *Der Zauberberg* (*The Magic Mountain*), which her husband had urged her to read but she could not connect to: "Verärgert stecke ich den Zauberberg zurück ins Regal und denke: elitärer Pinkel! Schreibst für den Bildungsbürger und gibst an dabei" (244; 'Angrily, I put *The Magic Mountain* back on its shelf, thinking: elitist prig! You write for the educated bourgeois and show off in doing so'). One cannot avert the feeling that she is here addressing her own husband by proxy, as it were, voicing her resentment against a so-

cial class she felt excluded from. Overall, Anne's contradictory assessments of Harich and of their relationship point to 'unfinished' business, which the auto/biography is perhaps meant to bring to a close.

Conclusion

Anne Harich's auto/biography about her late husband Wolfgang is perhaps not a prototypical example of *you*-narration since it also contains other narrative forms and text types. However, it is precisely the juxtaposition of the *you*-narration parts with those other parts that foregrounds the special functions that *you*-narration assumes in this text. From a narratological perspective, as Fludernik (1993) points out, one needs to distinguish between two aspects related to *you*-narration: the address function, which need not always be present, and the use of the second-person pronoun as a reference for the protagonist of the story. Anne Harich's auto/biography is complicated in that the *you*-narrative parts actually are a mixture of *you*-narration proper, where Anne tells her husband about shared moments in their life, and an imaginary dialogue between her and her husband that entails the storytelling moment. The storyworld is thus extended in two directions, incorporating both the lived past and an imagined present.

The imagined 'conversation' fictionalizes the account, although one begins to wonder whether it is modelled on similar conversations the couple really had or whether Anne here creates for herself a communicative space in which she can control the thrust and topics of the conversation. As I showed, the imaginary dialogue contains many features one can find in actual conversational discourse, such as certain storytelling formulae and metacommunication. Concerning the *you*-narration proper, this also means that it is similar to *you*--narration in conversational settings: it is subject to the epistemic restrictions in place there and serves the purpose of exchanging shared rather than merely personal past experiences. In the *you*-narrative parts, Anne also limits herself to moments she witnessed. Her third-person accounts, by contrast, reach further back in time and recount Harich's life before he met and married Anne.

Looking at the various functions of *you*-narration in this book, one can say that it first and foremost allows Anne to relate to her husband one more time across the boundaries of death and to enter a 'conversation' with him, even if only in her mind and on paper. We saw how Anne uses those parts to offer her perspective and interpretations on the past, often in a critical or even plaintive way. Whether deliberately or unself-consciously, she paints a picture of her husband that is not only positive, and thus she seems to vent her own frustration and resentment. As I discuss elsewhere (Mildorf 2022), such 'vindictiveness' in taking stock of one's own and closely related people's lives is not uncommon but inevitably raises ethical questions. After all, Harich is unable to react to Anne's accusations and criticism. Ultimately, the onus is placed on readers to either accept this side of the story or to take what is told with a grain of salt. Or we could adopt a more detached perspective in De Man's sense by acknowledging the textual constructedness of both Anne and her husband as 'subjects' in this multi-layered auto/biography.

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