

in different language systems. Since the second person has proven to be more of a grammatical issue than a personal reference, a more *linguistic/translation* oriented approach would serve an understanding of the technique better in terms of form and adaptability and clarify issues such as the possible roles of a second-person form and how additional information such as gender and number are conveyed in languages that lack formal variation or declination.

Another interesting field for expansion would be the recent blossoming of second-person publications and the popularisation of the technique as well as its association with and proximity to non-fiction forms and other media. From the 1980s onwards we observe increasing numbers of second-person narratives appearing mainly in the Anglophone world for reasons that are worth examining. This phenomenon could be studied in the context of a general shift in the social codes and communication schemes that have developed. Of course, the fact that in English the second person is reflected only in the general form *you* increases the occasions on which the *you* can be used and the references it can have, leading to a wider use of the pronoun as a storytelling technique, as with, for example, the impersonal *man*-syntax in German.

LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

It should be borne in mind that this study has a number of limitations, mainly reflecting the selection of texts for the close-reading section. Several second-person narratives could not be read in the original. Thus, although they might have offered further grounds for investigation, the fact that they could be reviewed only in translation which meant that I was unable to focus on the employment of the second person in the language in which they were originally written, led me to eliminate them from the final selection. Italo Calvino's popular *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore* is such an example; I had to keep it out of the second-person text corpus not only due to my limited knowledge of Italian that prevented me from

analysing and fully understanding the employment of the technique in the novel, but also due its theme and structure that would have shifted the focus of the study more towards the reader and reader response theory and the question of his/her identification with the narrative *you*.

The latter omission reveals another important limitation of this thesis. The case-by-case approach in the process of unravelling the enigma of the second-person technique suggests that the quest for understanding it would only be complete when all texts thus written would have been taken into account. Of course, it would be impossible to analyse every text written in the second person, so although I attempted to select some good examples in terms of complexity and richness, the topic is only covered in part; there are many themes and elaborations reflected in other texts that must go unmentioned here. Instead, my study offers an investigation of the technique that emphasises the rhetorical and poetic implications arising from the use of the second person in each text, highlighting some key variations of the phenomenon while omitting long references to other possible aspects and themes that are not directly linked to the second-person technique.

Therefore, the analysis of each text provided here should not be understood as a close-reading review of these works generally but, specifically, as a critical approach to their narrative technique and the impact of the latter. Regarding the limitations, it is interesting to note the challenges that I encountered during this study. The most serious was the process of selecting the *right* texts for the thesis. During my years of work, the texts I had to read to make a final choice were hard to come by due to availability and the problems with publishers mentioned at the outset. Moreover, my own critical reading remained challenging as I was forcing myself to resist the inviting power of the *you* and to maintain a critical approach towards the text in front of me.

The impact of the technique on me as a reader made a distanced critical approach extremely hard, but was in itself an important piece of evidence proving at first hand the appealing character of

second-person narratives and the engaging relationship they build with the reader. Reading *La Modification*, *Spiegelgeschichte*, *Un homme qui dort* and *Kindheitsmuster* often had a hypnotic effect, inviting multiple readings so as to explore the texts from different angles, readings that were always challenged by the double role I had to take on, that of reader and that of critic.

There were insufficient secondary sources and critical reviews and a lack of theoretical input addressing the enigma of the second-person technique in a similar way to the approach taken by this thesis, that is: not as an experimental case, a novelty or an exception, but as a technique used consistently throughout time to address certain narrative themes and occasions. This posed a problem at the beginning, in the sense that there was no starting point, but on the other hand, it has proven of benefit to the study and its substantial character as it led me to review aspects that are often neglected as too obvious, imbedded as axiomatic. This drove the study increasingly to focus on the texts and to find in them answers to the questions that provoked the thesis in the first place.

Trying to find the words to conclude this book on second-person storytelling, I realise even now the broad range of possible expansions and implications this topic could have and how many themes and issues of narratology could be discussed in relation to each example written in the second person. In the quest for unravelling the enigma of second-person storytelling and aspiring to improve its understanding, this project contributed most regarding its relation to the first person and highlighting the narrative occasions and necessities in which the *you* is more appropriate because either the first person is unavailable or impossible or, referring to the last example of *Spiegelgeschichte*, transformed and reversed. It is indeed fascinating that this *you-centric* study in the end revealed as much about the *I* as well.

As for why authors tend to use the second-person technique only once, the answer has been given by the themes and situations that we have seen narrated in the examples of the second part. Though everyday stories, the ones reflected in the narratives of Wolf, Butor,

Perec and Aichinger involve an uncommon parameter in their plot which requires a compelling though fascinating and rich narrative mode to be expressed and represented, most often calling for an active reading in which the reader is supposed to mine information, references, hints and tricks so as to understand and enjoy the reading better. Understanding the second-person technique has proven to be related to an understanding of writing and creating through its self-reflexive character.

Witnessing infinity in the limits of language and representation, the second-person technique reclaims its enigma each time an aspect of it is brought into focus and explained. This may be quite a challenge for academic research, but it is fascinating for literature itself and for what it stands for in our lives, our positioning in the world, our self-perception and the opening of infinite possibilities in the process of writing in terms of creation, re-creation and representation. This seemingly small gesture from the authors, a minor tactic to employ the second person to tell a story, does have a major impact on the richness and rhetoric of the narrative and keeps reminding the readers of their place in the literary interaction and of its eternal and inexhaustible character. *Because of You* the limits of telling are never reached, and the same holds true for the reading experience.

This is quite a reason to love (or hate) second-person storytelling.