

PROLOGUE

The writing of this dissertation was occasioned by a constellation of contradictory aspects: the existence of various fascinating texts written in the second person, each a unique and remarkable work of art, combined with a general lack of understanding of second-person novels on the part of critics and theorists not to mention publishers who tend to treat second-person texts either with extreme doubt and suspicion or, on the contrary, believing in their success irrespective of the quality of the book. Subsequently, the aim of this project is to clarify aspects of second-person storytelling as an enigmatic literary phenomenon associated with a narrative technique that has certain key properties and is appropriate on certain narrative occasions.

It hopes to further support the understanding of this technique by focussing on the grammatical, poetic and rhetorical implications that accompany it and to clarify elements that are often overlooked. These elements may appear obvious to deal with at the very beginning, since they are related to fundamental categories of storytelling and language like, for example, person and pronoun, but they are nonetheless still complicated, especially when used in fictional narratives. This overview aspires to shed light on what the second person stands for in storytelling.

My dissertation, entitled *Because of You: Understanding Second-Person Storytelling*, approaches second-person narratives not as a group that needs to be classified as a genre, but as separate narratives that each feature the same technique but with different poetic and rhetorical connotations. The project is not a theoretical attempt aspiring to culminate in a strict definition of what the second-person narrative technique is. Rather it approaches the technique in an inductive way: observations on the texts themselves form the basis for assumptions and any conclusions are the stronger for it as they are drawn with regard to the enigmatic and poetic character of the technique, aiming to clarify its essential elements and rhetorical tropes that are used in numerous ways within a particular narrative.