

rhetorical tropes and figures that appear systematically within the technique are summarised. This section stresses the continuity and importance of the technique and the problems associated with its study which are linked to the fact that often the obvious, for example the problem of *person* considered as (purely) grammatical or not,<sup>4</sup> is the most difficult to talk about.

The thesis ends with a chapter that outlines and elaborates on what was discussed so far and compares the four narrative examples expanding on some of the major assumptions mentioned only briefly along the way and listing the final conclusions regarding the poetic value and rhetorical impact of the second person in fiction. *Because of You: Understanding Second-Person Storytelling* aims to show the potential of employing the narrative *you* in a text and improve its understanding. By doing so it aspires to draw some conclusions on what it is about the second-person perspective that makes it so appealing and intriguing for readers and writers alike, despite being discouraging at times.

## THEORY

Attempts to theorise the second-person narrative technique have so far proved ill advised due to the nature of the research object, which is too resilient and broad to be classified as a genre. Given that the second-person narrative technique participates in different genres involving numerous employments, functions and characteristics, it is hard to formulate a summary (theory) based on a single example that would reflect the mode as a whole. Another obstacle to the theorising process is the binary thinking of traditional theorists (and their successors) that bases thoughts and assumptions on pairs of oppositions that can only show the second person as a special case, an experimental and exceptional narrative phenomenon.

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4 | Émile Benveniste. *Problèmes de linguistique générale I*. (Paris: Gallimard, 1966) 226.

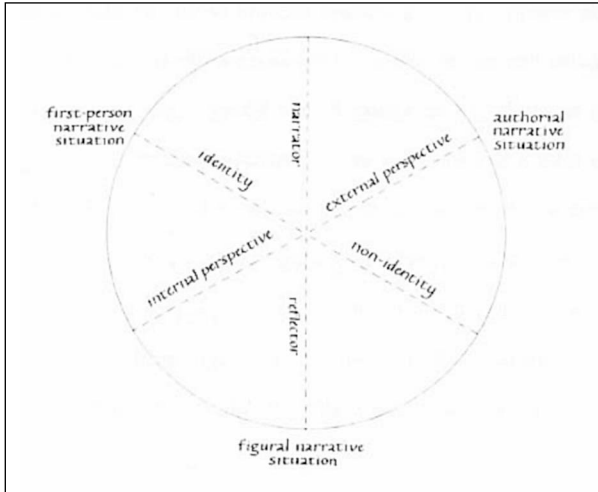
It is striking that major theorists such as Gérard Genette and Franz Stanzel play down the second person as a narrative mode, devoting just a few lines to it. Though Genette deals with many of the issues related to the second-person narrative mode and even acknowledges the problem of distance within the narrative (problem with the self over time, perspective, point of view within storytelling), he fails to examine it in connection with the second-person technique, since his study focuses on first- and third-person narratives only, handling the second person as a special case that appears to be an exception. Where he focuses on the opposition between *diegesis* and *mimesis* (*telling* and *showing*), second-person narratives remain unmentioned and are omitted from his triadic notional model, based on the concepts of distance, point of view and person.

This is because Genette's theory is based on dichotomies, such as that of *hetero-* and *homodiegesis*, which are not applicable to second-person narratives that are treated in his work as a special form, a sub-category of *heterodiegesis*. Genette fails to cover the numerous other cases of second-person texts in which, for example, the narrator as well as the narratee participate in the actions recounted at the level of plot and which therefore cannot be defined as *heterodiegetic*. The theorist prefers the terms *heterodiegetic* and *homodiegetic* rather than *person* to determine the position of the narrator in the narration, which depicts clearly that narrative voices tend to designate the roles within the narrative and are strongly associated with pronouns, functioning as placeholders. Consequently, Genette's terminology addresses the relatedness or even identification/tautology of the experiencing and narrating self rather than that particular persona per se. When writing about the second person, his theoretical assumption tends to refer to an elaboration or expansion of the *intradiegetic* narrator, thus undermining and reducing the phenomenon.

Un narrateur intradiégétique, narrataire intradiégétique, et le récit des Grioux ou de Bixiou ne s'adresse pas au lecteur de *Manon Lescaut* ou de la *Maison Nucingen*, mais bien au seul M. de Renoncourt, aux seuls Finot,

Courtüre et Blondet, que désignent seuls les marques de “deuxième personne” éventuellement présentes dans le texte, tout comme celles qu’on trouvera dans un roman par lettres ne peuvent désigner que le correspondant épistolaire. Nous, lecteurs, ne pouvons pas plus nous identifier à ces narrataires fictifs que ces narrateurs intradiégétiques ne peuvent s’adresser à nous, ni même supposer notre existence.<sup>5</sup>

Franz Stanzel based his theory on the realms of existence, and he offered an elaborated depiction of the narrative issues puzzling readers and theorists with his famous typological circle (*Typenkreis*). Here again, the second-person narrative cannot be correctly positioned, because of the broad character of the second-person technique and the potential inherent in the pronoun to take over several roles and functions in the discourse. However, even taking into account this drawback, Stanzel’s concept, pictured in a theoretical circle, is more applicable to the second-person technique than Genette’s since it implies the notion of gradation.



5 | Gérard Genette, *Figures III*. (Paris: Édition du Seuil, 1972) 265.

Like Genette, Stanzel classifies literature in terms of binary opposites, with the second person failing to fit in. Second-person fiction involves dual narrative personae with double qualities – both figural and authorial – and therefore should always be treated on a case-by-case basis. The same is true for the narrative perspective: it is not quite clear where examples such as Perec's *Un homme qui dort* should be located, that may portray the internal perspective of the narrated, but present it as if it were external. Stanzel's typological circle is not applicable to second-person narratives as a whole as it doesn't depict their cohesive elements. However valuable it may be for the study of second-person storytelling as a reflection of the *Other*, he defines second-person narrative more as a self-dramatised *I*, a negation of the first-person narrator constellation that relates to other narrative modes:

Der Ich-Erzähler von J.D. Salingers *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden Caulfield, steht als Hauptfigur der Erzählung mitten in der fiktionalen Welt, die der Roman darstellt. Die Identität der Seinsbereiche des Erzählers und der übrigen Charaktere ist also unzweifelhaft gegeben, sie bleibt auch aufrecht angesichts der Neigung dieses Ich- Erzählers, sich mit seinem Anliegen direkt an den Leser zu wenden.<sup>6</sup>

Stanzel uses the term *Transponierungsziel*<sup>7</sup> to describe the modifying process that an *extrovertierter* (probably second-person) narrator creates between the two main poles: the first-person narrator of the events and the more distanced narrator who is at a remove from the narrated incidents and dramatic time. The gap between these two narrative territories could be covered by the second-person mode, but for Stanzel it designates one of the major properties of the original text as a basic story in the author's mind. According to Stanzel, it should not be considered an open slot for an additional narrative

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6 | Franz K. Stanzel, *Theorie des Erzählens*. 1979. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2001) 82.

7 | Stanzel (1979/2001), 83.

mode but rather a literary achievement, viewed as an exceptional narrative performance of an elevated and remarkable narrative style.

By converting the dramatised *I*, as Stanzel describes second-person narrators, into a third-person narrator, the experience and the inner world of the hero can be projected without discontinuities in the appropriate mode. Consequently, whereas Stanzel reveals the narrative territory covered by the second-person transgressive form, he avoids describing it in words and thus fails to cover the second-person phenomenon in his theoretical work. Of course, the reason why both theorists didn't devote more analysis or thought to the second-person phenomenon is the period during which they wrote their essays. At that time, second-person texts were only beginning to appear on the literary scene with the works of Butor and Aichinger, which were still viewed as exceptional and experimental cases of fiction.

[...] der Zusammenhang zwischen Erlebnis und Erzählung, der durch die Identität der Seinsbereiche des Erzählers und der dargestellten Wirklichkeit gegeben ist, ohne schwerwiegende Eingriffe in das Sinngefüge des Romans nicht gelöst werden kann. Eine Transponierung der Ich-Erzählung in eine Er-Erzählung würde aber die Lösung dieses Zusammenhangs voraussetzen.<sup>8</sup>

As the second-person narrative came to enjoy increasing popularity especially in the Anglophone world after the 1950s, recent theorists, principally Monika Fludernik, Brian Richardson and Irene Kacandes, approached the narrative phenomenon more systematically than their predecessors. However, their work emphasised very specific issues such as reader identification and the transgressive character of literature, restricting their view to the experimental aspect of the technique and missing vital parts of its rhetorical and poetic sense.

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8 | Stanzel (1979/2001), 83.

Eine besonders auffällige Konstellation ist die Du-Erzählung, in der die Geschichte einer Leserfigur geschildert wird. Im Deutschen ist diese Variante des Figurenverhältnisses zwischen Erzählebene und Geschichteebene eher selten, während in der englischsprachigen Literatur und in den romanischen Sprachen eine Vielzahl von Werken dieser Machart existiert.<sup>9</sup>

Up to this point, second-person theory, while reflecting on a larger number of texts and richer in examples than the older theorists, could be characterised as a rather multi-generic discipline that mixed methods and schools and focused above all on determining the pronoun's reference. This paradoxical attempt is in vain, however, because it contradicts the shifting nature of reference made possible by the pronoun. Recent views also tend to search for ways in which to apply existing theory; as a result, new theories tend to propose neologisms rather than produce fresh, innovative and more elaborate readings of the texts themselves. Despite these problems and potential flaws, this project appreciates the conclusions drawn in theory so far, expanding on them in order to enhance an understanding of the second-person narrative technique and present it in the most precise and enlightening way.

Monika Fludernik combines aspects of the theories of Stanzel and Genette and develops her own account of second-person storytelling. She radicalises the dichotomy between *homodiegetic* and *heterodiegetic* fiction (Genette), complicates the (non)-coincidence of the realms of existence between narrator and narratee (Stanzel), and finally proposes mapping the area of narrative *you*-s by expanding them from a narratological object of study to a communicational one. Her approach may be seen as an attempt at bridging the two incompatible methodologies of Genette and Stanzel.

Fludernik's observations on second-person narrative are based on the transgressive case of Italo Calvino's *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore* but they refer also, among other texts, to Ilse Ai-

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**9** | Monika Fludernik, *Erzähltheorie: eine Einführung*. (Darmstadt: WBG, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2010) 42f.

chinger's experimental *Spiegelgeschichte*. Fludernik classifies both texts as experimental narratives of postmodern literature (*Experimente mit Personalpronomina in postmoderner Literatur*), the sense of which isn't restricted to the fictional use of the second-person pronoun but includes other pronouns (used even less frequently) as well. After acknowledging the morphological diversity of the second person, Fludernik's major contribution is her insight that the second person should be regarded as a territory in which to expect not only second-person grammatical forms. Her argument regarding second-person variants and equivalents echoes a grammatical approach that will be discussed later and that is based on languages such as German and Italian where second-person forms can be substituted in function by other pronominal forms like *Sie* or *Lei*. It also implies the understanding of the second-person storytelling technique in a broader sense than as a grammatical phenomenon emphasising more its properties and characteristics.

Nevertheless address remains the central irreplaceable characteristic constituent of so-called second person fiction. The term second person fiction in fact needs to be revealed as a misnomer of major proportions. What is called second person fiction does not in any way have to employ a second person pronoun in reference to the protagonist. What it needs to employ is a pronoun of address, and in some languages such a pronoun can be in the third person (e.g. the German "polite" *Sie*, a third person plural form, or the Italian *Lei*, a third person singular). [...] The addressee function of the pronoun is crucial in structuring the make-up of second person fiction because it combines a "conative" (Jakobson 1958) level of address, there must be an addressor, an I (implicit or explicit), and hence a narrator, and this narrator can be a mere enunciator or also a protagonist sharing the *you's* fictional existence on the story level.<sup>10</sup>

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**10** | Monika Fludernik, "Second Person Fiction: Narrative You as Addressee And/Or Protagonist". In *Arbeiten aus Anglistik und Amerikanistik* 18/2 (1993) 219.

Fludernik classifies second-person fiction cases in three groups according to the function of address: first, “explicit address *you* or means of imperatives;” second, “the addressee as actant,” where the addressee is an intradiegetic narratee though not as in the Genettian metaleptic mode; and third, “the non-address function,” where the second person appears in reference to a fictional protagonist, designating a narrator divorced from the fictional *you*, described by Stanzel as a reflector narrative situation in the second person where the sense of an experiencing self dominates.<sup>11</sup> Fludernik refuses the metaleptic function of the pronoun, at least in its Genettian sense in the second class of second-person texts, with the argument that it signals a situation of verisimilar identity between the addressed *you* and the protagonist *you*.

Apparently, her ideas relate more closely to the teller and reflector dichotomy that Stanzel introduced, indicating that the communicative level of the function of address is more dominant in second-person fiction than any other. Consequently, according to Fludernik, the narrative *you* can function precisely like a narrative *I* or *he/she* in the reflector-(al) mode, whereas in the teller mode *you*, the protagonist can have a similar relationship with the addressee as is the case in traditional first-person (*homodiegetic*) narratives.

In order to overcome possible overlaps in terminology Monika Fludernik, expanding on Genette, introduces the terms *homo-communicative* and *heterocommunicative* to depict the relationship between story and level of communication in fiction, arranging the categories accordingly as central or peripheral depending on the grade of involvement that narrators and addressees have in the narrated stories.<sup>12</sup> A flaw in Fludernik’s mapping model arises from the sorting out of the narrative examples, because many of the case examples fail to qualify as *pure* second-person narratives. Rather, they depict types of pseudo-oral narratives, involving characters that are partially produced and originated by *apostrophe*.

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**11** | Fludernik (1993), 220f.

**12** | Fludernik (1993), 223f.



It appears also that the process of inventing slots for these “special” cases to fit into her theory leads to an excessive map of *homocommunicative* and *heterocommunicative* narratives, which could be significantly reduced.<sup>13</sup> Her account is further unsettled by the fact that not all second-person narratives should be thought of as experimental; Fludernik’s theory is selective and fails to cover all second-person texts. As an example, apart from experimental examples, second-person narratives may also present common, linear plots, for example in autobiographies or other non-metatextual narratives with an ordinary and familiar structure.<sup>14</sup>

Irene Kacandes, the second major second-person theorist, introduces the term “talk fiction” and emphasises the apostrophe rhetoric of second-person storytelling. She contributes to the theorisation of second-person narratives with complementary observations deriving from other socially-oriented disciplines such as psychology. Kacandes connects talk-fiction with trauma and “narrative memory” inscribed in the language of testimony. Consequently, narratives in her theory are seen as “statements” depicting past experiences with which the subjects of thought are dealing. Important is the fact that she recognises the process of distancing as key to understanding the use of the second person in autobiography since it enables this productive interaction with the past. What Kacandes calls “intrapsychic witnessing,” referring to a form of self-talk where the character acts as witness to his or her own experience, provides a particularly elucidating reading strategy for second-person autobiographies or autobiographical narratives involving traumatic experiences.<sup>15</sup>

**13** | Rolf Reitan, “Theorizing Second-Person Narratives: A Backwater Project?”. In *Strange Voices in Narrative Fiction*. Eds. Per Krogh Hansen, Stefan Iversen, Henrik Skov Nielsen and Rolf Reitan. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011) 152-154.

**14** | Fludernik (2010), 43.

**15** | Irene Kacandes, *Talk Fiction: Literature and the Talk Explosion (Frontiers of Narrative)*. (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2001) 97.

Kacandes discusses Christa Wolf's *Kindheitsmuster* in detail, a key text for the study of the second-person technique in this project. However, she emphasises a psychological rather than a narratological or poetic perspective as she interprets the employment of the second-person technique as part of the healing process, in this case when dealing with a guilty past:

These novels concern themselves with the stage directly prior to witnessing to trauma, prior to the creation of the story of what happened to the self, when the mind heals by consciously incorporating the traumatic memory into existing mental schemas [...] reader co-witnesses deduce the infliction of trauma by the main evidence of the unintegrated psyche of the respective protagonists. The overwhelming task of integrating the self is at heart of Christa Wolf's *Patterns of Childhood*. [...] The interrogative self who is trying to figure out the relationship of her adult self to the child's psyche is addressed directly as "you". [...] To be a *Mensch* would be to be able to remember, to be able to conduct a dialogue by creating an interlocutor, a "you" with whom to witness to what happened.<sup>16</sup>

Such an approach is very focused on the theme of the War and the traumatic past and it could not apply to other texts, not to mention the fact that it doesn't suggest a rhetoric or narratological analysis on the text itself, though it is based on the way the author uses the pronouns. Brian Richardson, the third major second-person theorist, labels second-person texts in storytelling "unnatural voices." He defines "pure" second-person fiction (with protagonists completely designated by the second-person pronoun) and classifies it further into three groups involving standard, hypothetical/subjunctive and autotelic forms.<sup>17</sup>

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**16** | Kacandes (2001), 101.

**17** | Brian Richardson, *Unnatural Voices: Extreme Narration in Modern and Contemporary Fiction*. (Columbus: The Ohio University Press, 2006) 18.

Standard second person narration oscillates between third and first person perspectives, with each narrative usually settling toward one or the other, while repeatedly if briefly seeming to include the reader as the object of the discourse. Hypothetical second person texts fuse a heterodiegetic depiction of an ever more specific individual with an imagined future of the reader, thus merging a third person perspective with a hypothetical “you” that is the virtual equivalent of “one”. Autotelic texts have the greatest share of direct address to the actual reader and superimpose this onto a fictional character designated by “you” that tends to be treated from an external perspective as if in the third person. This intensifies one of the most fascinating features of second person narrative: the way the narrative “you” is alternately opposed to and fused with the reader – both the contracted and the actual reader.<sup>18</sup>

Richardson succeeds in theorising second-person texts without delegating them to sub-cases of the other two pronouns, acknowledging the uniqueness of the form which for him can be described as “playful ... transgressive, and illuminating,” “always conscious of its unusual own status and often disguis[ing] itself, playing on the boundaries of other narrative voices.”<sup>19</sup> Richardson’s method of mapping narrative cases distinguishes the narrative examples from other second-person narratives that employ the pronoun only at the level of narration. His method is inductive and informative though based on delimiting the field and emphasising any deviations he observed, always classifying the cases starting from a structural/pronominal interpretation of the second-person pronoun.<sup>20</sup>

It should be noted that my account enumerates tendencies rather than stipulates invariant conditions; this is because second person narration is an extremely protean form, and its very essence is to eschew a fixed essence.<sup>21</sup>

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**18** | Richardson (2006), 32f.

**19** | Richardson (2006), 23.

**20** | Reitan (2011), 151.

**21** | Richardson (2006), 19.

Richardson's labelling of second-person narrative as "unnatural" in contrast to so-called "natural" narratives is disturbing. He claims that the employment of the second person "defamiliarizes"<sup>22</sup> the narrative whereas arguably the very opposite happens: second-person address evokes an oral, everyday, familiar tone in the discourse and therefore functions more likely as a hypnotising voice. Richardson's evaluation could be considered as supporting an argument that second-person narrative employment is a popular ploy. Such an implication is unfair to the literary properties of second-person narratives and is completely contrary to the perspective adopted by the present project which attempts to show how "natural" and fundamental this narrative mode is for certain literary occasions.

Building on the groundwork of traditional and post-traditional theorists, increasing numbers of readings of second-person fictions have been undertaken; they form a palimpsest of ideas and testify to the long-lasting discussion of the enigma of the second person in the field of literature and narratology. Other theorists like Steven Cohan and Linda Shires refer only to specific novels when discussing second-person narratives in their theoretical analyses of narrative fiction. Cohan and Shires use Calvino's second-person novel to expose "the limitations of classifying agents according to pronouns, for [- as they argue -] pronouns in narration refer for their antecedents to the characters performing the action being narrated," avoiding any generic overview of the technique.<sup>23</sup>

The fact that theory fails to reflect the evolution and continuous presence of the phenomenon in the history of literature or its significant appearances in non-epic forms such as the *lyrisches du* in poetry and the *monologue* in drama, led the project to a more inductive approach that aspires to drawing concepts and conclusions on second-person storytelling based on its primary sources, the texts themselves. Starting from an understanding of the fundamentals of

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**22** | Richardson (2006), 28.

**23** | Steven Cohan and Linda M. Shires, *Telling Stories: A Theoretical Analysis of Narrative Fiction*. (London and New York: Routledge, 1998) 92.

grammar (person/pronoun), rhetoric and storytelling, this project aims to show how second-person narrative has developed over time and it introduces some of its qualities that appear consistently through time and that define the technique.

Acknowledging the above is a vital point that is missing from narratological and second-person research. Monika Fludernik is the only exception; she has dealt with the second-person narrative form extensively, taking into account the history of second-person storytelling and forming a theoretical model. Though the latter is problematic, it represents a significant contribution to the matter. Furthermore, in terms of studies and research, scholars have treated the second-person phenomenon mostly from a linguistic point of view, as a secondary feature in studies focussing on other topics or on the authors' work as a whole, or as a case study in studies focussing on single authors and works. This project aims to contribute to the present state of research and, by further reviewing the case studies, provide assumptions and conclusions that would benefit the discussion of second-person storytelling as a whole in narratology.

The enigma of second-person storytelling will not be solved in this project. This would be impossible given its resilience and versatility as expressed in different narratives. However, it will be better understood in terms of its appealing and intriguing aspects that make readers love or hate it and authors use it almost always only once.

## PERSON

To understand the essentials of the second-person narrative technique and its dynamics, we first need to focus on the fundamental category of *person*. We thus aim to clarify its grammatical meaning and reference, and we aspire to conclude which aspect of the person is dominant. Does second-person storytelling reflect the grammatical choice of composing a text using second-person grammatical