

The uncommon elaborations on common themes can be summarised as follows: in Wolf, a narrator is writing her autobiography but, alienated from her past, chooses the third person to do so as well as the second for presenting the reflection inherent in the narrating; in Butor, a man on a train reflects on a decision he has made though ultimately reverses, so that his entire journey is actually in vain unless he announces his intention to transform this experience into book form, namely the one we readers have in our hand; in Perec, a student, following the examples of other narrative heroes confronted with the same problem of indifference, experiments with social detachment with the guidance of a voice-over narrator until he realises the uselessness of the experiment. In Aichinger, a mysterious voice narrates to a dying woman her life episodes in reverse. The narration covers, in this order, the moments from her burial until her birth, thus affecting their meaning and how they relate. The voice speaks that which is reflected in a distorted mirror, while the hospital staff interrupt the narrative by announcing the woman's progression towards death.

Second-person stories call for an active reading stimulated by the inviting, almost engaging, force of the narrative *you* and one that reflects on multiple meanings and patterns simultaneously. A study of this technique could variously expand on these. In this thesis I have tried to stay as close as possible to the text and to narratology, aiming to demonstrate a clear understanding of the narrative mode without any admixture of other interpretations or disciplines. In the chapter that follows I will explain the method I have employed to complete this study.

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology I followed for this study was inductive and experimental: I developed it “from scratch”, starting from the basics. As both theory and criticism on the topic were limited in volume and scope and sometimes misleading in being too technical or one-

sided, I had to undertake consistent research starting with the fundamental components of the term in order to comprehend first what the pronoun and second person meant in terms of grammar and rhetoric and second in my aim to contribute to the understanding of second-person storytelling and narratology. After turning to second-person texts and having reviewed the employment of the technique throughout the history of literature, I selected four examples on the basis of which I would discuss and analyse the phenomenon aspiring to drawing more generic conclusions.

The resulting selection of second-person texts revealed an intriguing diversity in both theme and structure as well as genre classification. As my focus was less on (traditional) theory and more on the texts themselves, the methodological question shifted towards selecting interesting examples for this study. Looking into the history of the technique, my main observation proved to be that the technique, though used consistently throughout the history of storytelling, enjoyed a popularisation and increasing attention during the post-war period after the 1950s. I therefore decided to choose texts from that more recent period, assuming they would present aspects of the technique in a more striking way that would also justify the popularisation as such. Hopefully they would also enable me to make more generic or collective assumptions about the entire group of second-person texts, as they were composed more recently yet embodied elements from earlier texts in which intertextual relations could be spotted.

The texts were selected to involve a clear second-person narrative level of transgressive and self-reflexive character, representing for me *pure* second-person storytelling, without any first-person singular narrative in the traditional sense. Examples such as Günter Grass's *Katz und Maus* would not qualify for this study because the second person is clearly used to address a narrative persona in the fictional world, thus implying a stable meaning and reference for the second person, with a first-person narrative level present. Rather I have tried to focus my research on texts that through complex rhetorical schemes and structures emphasise the ambiguity of the

technique and its potential, elaborating on the *ambiguity* of the *you* and offering significant narrative depth. Consequently, the quest for an understanding of the essentials of the technique within a close reading of the texts started with a text that presented a second-person narrative level in a comparative way, coexisting in the narrative with a third-person and a first-person plural narrative. Wolf's *Kindheitsmuster* offered a remarkable example with which to begin this comparative analysis.

Michel Butor proved even more attractive, since his is the text that triggered the second-person discussion among the theorists of the fifties and sixties and demonstrated the total employment of the technique in a narrative. *Un homme qui dort* involved a striking *tu* designating a narrative figure per se and representing a unique manifestation of intertextuality that is a key feature of the technique. Aichinger's *Spiegelgeschichte* is the earliest narrative in this thesis and the most symbolic. The way it employs the technique to present the story of a dying woman in reverse, including events taking place after her death and ending with her birth, represents a total reversal of all narrative conditions and the dominance of a mysterious voice that designates this entire process of reversal. Aichinger's novel enabled me to explore the limits of language and representation in a setting where an enigmatic voice dominates the discourse using the *du*, reversing the quest of investigating the second-person reference to that of aspiring to understand and identify where this *du* comes from.

At the end of my study, aiming to provide answers and draw conclusions that would benefit an overview of second-person storytelling as a whole, I tried to understand the case studies as intertexts. Given that these examples involve elements of awareness and thus belong to a kind of group of similar literary texts, experimenting as they do with the technique and commenting on the process of writing, my final observations were more focused on specifying and clarifying their contribution to the development of the phenomenon as a whole. Finally, this approach helped me define the three main ways in which the second person is employed in narrative: as a means of reflecting *apostrophe* and multiple addressees; as a way to adopt a

middle distance in special narrative circumstances; and as a mode to convey an ambiguous figure that invites multiple interpretations and readings.

## OBSERVATIONS REGARDING THE FIRST PART

The objectives of the first part of the study were the clarification of the fundamental properties of second-person storytelling; that is, to emphasise those elements that may appear too obvious or even too simple to be considered part of an academic study of storytelling. These include the categories of person, pronoun and the historic development of the technique. Using this approach, the thesis has arrived at the following conclusions:

- Person is the deictic category that defines the role of the participant in the speech situation (according to linguists). Fundamentally, the second person refers to the addressee in the speech act.
- One way to express person and personal reference is by use of pronouns. The way a pronoun functions in the discourse defines its grammatical classification: the second-person pronoun refers to the addressee in a speech situation but does not necessarily refer to a specific person. Hence the pronoun can be more of a placeholder than a personal reference in the communication process. The narrative implications of this are that if a pronoun is used instead of a noun, this indeterminacy of the placeholder pronoun contributes to narrative elements such as the verisimilitude of dialogue and a sense of ambiguity.
- The second-person pronoun is linked to attributes that are better understood when reviewed in comparison with the other personal pronouns. The second and first person reflect the category of person, whereas the third person stands for the absent agent, reflecting the *non-person*.  
Between first and second person, the second person designates the more objective pole, which the first person aspires to within