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Second-person narrative as a test case for narratology

The limits of realism
This essay will concentrate on three related issues that connect with second-person fiction. I will start by reprinting and (re)analyzing the narrative typology presented in my “Second Person Fiction,” which attempts to revise and mediate between the Genettean and Stanzelian models. The diversity and indeterminacy of second-person writing will be illustrated by a number of examples from very different sectors of the typology. I shall argue that second-person fiction does not correlate with a specific “narrative situation,” and that the category “person” does not constitute a theoretically meaningful concept. A second area for investigation will be the typical ways in which second-person fiction can be said to undermine realist narrative parameters and frames. As a consequence second-person fiction helps to deconstruct standard categories of narratological enquiry. Illustrations of this point will be taken from Gabriel Josipovici’s novel Contre-jour (1986) and from selected short stories. The third topic that I will treat here relates to the function of second-person story telling, particularly as regards the historical situating of second-person discourse as a typically postmodernist kind of écriture. The transgressive and subversive aspects of second-person texts as outlined in the second section seem to identify second-person fiction as a predominantly “postmodernist” mode of writing, yet—depending on one’s definition of (post)modernism—more traditionally modernist aspects of second-person fiction and perhaps more radical indications of an ideological appropriation of the second-person technique suggest a much wider frame of application. It is in this context that one will have to reconsider the all-important question of what difference it makes, a question that will, by a “vicus of recirculation,” take us back to the starting point of this issue, to Brian Richardson’s attempts to grapple with the incidence of grammatical person in its combinatory diversity.

In “Second Person Fiction” I proposed a revision (see figure 1, below) of Franz K. Stanzel’s category “person” (first versus third) and of Gérard Genette’s dichotomy of hetero- versus homodiegesis. Stanzel’s category, it will be remembered, is based on a binary opposition of the (non)coincidence of “realms of
existence," whereas in Genette’s model the defining criterion is whether or not the narrator is an actant on the story level of the narrative. My revision was designed to accommodate the full range of observable varieties of second-person texts.

Genette (Nouveau discours du récit 92-93; Narrative Discourse Revisited 133-34) had suggested that second-person writing was part of heterodiegesis, a claim which ignores the overwhelming number of second-person texts in which the narrator as well as the narratee participate in the actions recounted on the *histoire* level. Nor can Stanzel’s model deal with the occurrence of second-person texts in the teller-mode half of the typological circle although he provides an invaluable suggestion about the unmarkedness of the category “person” within reflector-mode narrative where *s/he* and *I* can be observed to alternate without serious disruption of the ontological frame. In my own model I proposed that the use of the second-person pronoun in reflector-mode texts (in “noncommunicative narrative,” as I call it) likewise operates in an unmarked (adeictic) fashion whereas in teller-mode texts the deictic properties of person remain in full force. For the teller-mode realm (which I have dubbed “communicative narrative”) I then expanded Genette’s terminology to distinguish, primarily, between narratives in which participants on the communicative level (narrators, narratees) also function as protagonists (the homocommunicative realm) and those in which the world of the narration is disjoined from that of the fictional world (the heterocommunicative realm). Like Stanzel, however, I conceptualize these categories as scales or clines with possible intermediate both-and areas such as peripheral second-person texts (in which the protagonist is the character referred to by means of the second-person pronoun, and the narrator—designated by a first-person pronoun—functions as an uncomprehending witness of the events) or “we” narratives (in which narrator and narratee coparticipate in the story). The term “communicative” in “noncommunicative narrative” and “homo/heterocommunicative narrative” respectively refers to the communicative circuit between a narrator (or teller figure in Stanzel’s typology) and the immediate addressee or narratee who is at the receiving or interactive end of that communicational frame. Homocommunicative texts share realms of identities between the personae on the communicative level and the fictional personae: that is to say, either the narrator or the narratee or both are also characters in the fiction. Heterocommunicative texts, on the other hand, completely separate the realms of plot agents (characters) and interactants on the communicative level (narrators and narratees). The term “homoconative narrative” in figure 1 has been coined to characterize a story setup in which the narratee is also a character, but the narrator—“I” of that text is not. The narrator in such fiction is therefore heterodiegetic in Genette’s terminology. As in Stanzel’s model, the communicative level (Stanzel’s teller mode) is logically constituted by the reader’s construction of teller-narratee interaction on the basis of a series of data triggering a communicational “frame” (somebody is talking to somebody else):
Figure 1

(A) Narrative with a Communicative Level (Teller Mode)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>homcommunicative narrative</th>
<th>heterocommunicative narrative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I + he/she</td>
<td>I + you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I + you</td>
<td>you + he/she</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>homodiegetic</th>
<th>homoconative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>peripheral homodiegetic (first person narrative)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(including we narratives of exclusive we)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mann, Doctor Faustus</td>
<td>peripheral homo- (i.e. auto)diegetic narrative with you protagonist: Grass, Katz und Maus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>both narrator and addressee share realms of existence with story world we-narratives White, Nocturnes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>addressee as character (narrator only explicit or implicit address function) Parley, &quot;House of Ecstasy&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>authorial-figural continuum possible, too: Calvino, If on a Winter's Night a Traveller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>peripheral you (in relation to a third person protagonist) not found, but possible in principle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>heterocommunicative you you only protagonist, not addressee Butor, Modification; (authorial-figural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>narrational level existentially divorced from story level; authorial and authorial-figural third person (Fielding, Tom Jones; Joyce, Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(B) Narrative with No Communicative Level

(reflector narrative and neutral narrative)
e.g., Ernest J. Gaines, "The Sky is Gray" (first person); Jean Muno, Le Joker; Jay McInerney, Bright Lights, Big City (second person); Faulkner, “Was” in Go Down, Moses (third person)
the first-person pronoun refers to the narrator; the second-person pronoun or second-person verbal conjugation in languages such as German, Russian, or Spanish or the imperative is used in the function of allocution. Additional indices of a communicative level include evaluative or cognitive features or both; these establish zero focalization in the story.4

The scale of forms in figure 1, which is not necessarily ordered in one and only one possible direction, basically allows for easy moves from first to third, first to second, second to third, or third to first- or second-person narrative. Second-person narrative comes to be situated in the overlapping area between homo- and heterocommunicative narrative since the narrator and narratee both can share in the same "realm of existence" or reside on different narrative levels. (The extradiegetic narrator can be situated on the enunciational discourse level, the "you" protagonist on the intradiegetic level of the story.) Put differently, the narratee can or cannot function as an addressee on the communicational level (besides being a protagonist on the story level), and there are also second-person texts that are entirely heterocommunicative and extradiegetic, operating much on the lines of an authorial third-person narrator "who" tells the story of a "you" with whom "he" (the narrator’s "I") shares neither a fictional past nor a fictional present of allocution.

The scale between homo- and heterocommunicative forms in figure 1 is in principle two-dimensional since it reflects both the ontological continua5 (actants becoming interlocutors on the level of narration) and the resultant focalizations that realistically result from these. Authorial-figural continua (Stanzel, A Theory of Narrative 198-99; 7.1.106) can be observed in second- as well as third-person texts and even in second-person texts where the narratee functions as a notable addressee on the communicative level (Calvino’s If on a Winter’s Night a Traveler). An examination of a number of different types of second-person texts will demonstrate the model’s adequacy.

Homocommunicative second-person fiction has the narrator or the narratee or both share the levels of both discourse and story. The text may be purely homoconative if only the narratee is an actant (and the narrator merely a voice on the communicative level), as is the case in Italo Calvino’s If on a Winter’s Night a Traveler (1979). Since this text employs much allocution in the form of imperatives directed at the “you” protagonist, there is no doubt about the existence of a narrative voice (the text definitely has a communicative level), but this narrator function does not acquire concise shape either on the discourse or the story level. Calvino reuses this setup in less spectacular fashion in the story “Un re in ascolto [A King Listens].” At the beginning of that tale, the king is given instructions by an unnamed “I” on how to behave on the throne. However, later in the story these invocations to the king become increasingly more reflectoral to the extent that one starts to see the world from within the king’s mind, reinterpreting the address function as possibly one of self-exhortation and self-address. This reading is confirmed at the very end of the tale when the episode
of being a king turns out to have been but a dream. "Un re in ascolto" therefore subtly moves from a quasi-authorial and hortatory discourse to an increasingly focalized presentation of the "you" protagonist's experiences, and in the course of this internalization deconstructs the initially verisimilar quasi-realistic underpinnings of the story.

An example of heterocommunicative second-person fiction is Michel Butor's *La modification* [A Change of Heart] (1957), which is to be situated on the authorial-figural continuum. The text has neither a narrator's experiencing self (i.e., the narrative is heterodiegetic in Genette's terms) nor a "conative self" for the addressee (i.e., there are no distinctly allocutive or exhortatory clauses: the "vous" is not being "talked to"). One does, however, have ample exposure to the "you" protagonist's narrated experiencing self, and there are some muted indications of a narratorial (omniscient) frame in the background. A more typically authorial (though not particularly evaluative) text is Rex Stout's *How Like a God* (1929), in which the *you* sections (written in the past tense) sometimes present the protagonist's actions from an after-the-fact point of view. No first-person pronoun occurs in the text, though, and it remains unclear whether these after-the-fact evaluations do not correspond to the protagonist's self-critical thoughts as his life flashes by him prior to the murder he commits (in the final third-person section of the novel). Stout's second-person text therefore easily assumes the aura of an internal memory monologue in the second person and—like dramatic monologues—appears to develop in a direction away from second-person fiction proper. As in Carlos Fuentes's *Il muerte de Artemio Cruz* [The Death of Artemio Cruz] (1962), there are numerous such internal self-narrations in the second-person form in Latin-American writing, whereas—to my knowledge—the type is comparatively rare in French and English fiction. Rita Gnutzmann in "La novela hispanoamericana" has presented some fifteen such novels, and Francisco Ynduráin ("La novela desde la secunda persona") has noted a couple of others by Spanish authors. Since these novels contain only segments of second-person fiction and are therefore framed within a first- or third-person narrative, these sections (given a suitable environment) are then easily naturalized as interior monologues in the second person.

An example of peripheral second-person fiction—that is, of a story whose "you" protagonist is described from the noncentral perspective of an "I" (a narrator-protagonist)—is Oriana Fallaci's *Un uomo* [A Man] (1979). In this novel the narrator, Oriana Fallaci, tells the story of Alekos Panagoulis from his attempted assassination of the Greek dictator Papadopoulos to his (Panagoulis's) murder a few years later. Panagoulis is consistently referred to by means of "you." This story is clearly Panagoulis's not Fallaci's, who has heard most of it from Panagoulis's mouth or from other sources. Fallaci's reaction to Panagoulis is typically one of admiration tinged with horror: admiration for his courage and willingness to suffer for his ideas; horror at his monomania and ruthlessness. In spite of all her rationalizations, Fallaci-the-narrator, even from her privileged
position as confidante and lover of her “subject,” still presents Panagoulis from the peripheral perspective of an uncomprehending sympathizer. Her peripherality does not relate to her lack of intelligence (the prototypical peripheral narrator being inferior to the grand man whose life he writes, a strategy that surfaces ironically even in “Bartleby the Scrivener”) but to her common sense and “normality” (representing the moral standards of the audience). In fact, the novel thematizes precisely that: Panagoulis’s excesses and superhuman resources of resistance and persistence, which are a measure both of his heroic stature (genius) and of his satanic qualities, are contrasted with the “normal” perspective of Oriana Fallaci and as a consequence they acquire the cast of insanity, irresponsibility, and fanaticism.

Peripherality, however, does not constitute a concept that is self-explanatory and unequivocally determinable. Whereas the case is quite clear for Fallaci’s novel, or—in the third-person realm—for, say, Thomas Mann’s Doktor Faustus, one may start to wonder already with “Bartleby the Scrivener” (is this tale only ostensibly about Bartleby the incomprehensible and really about his employer, the narrator?) or Moby-Dick (is this primarily a tale about Ahab and the White Whale or after all about Ishmael’s adventures at sea?). In the second-person realm, Günter Grass’s Katz und Maus [Cat and Mouse] (1961) and Jane Rule’s This Is Not for You (1970) both illustrate the same problem: in Katz und Maus the “point” is, possibly, the narrator’s guilt at being perhaps responsible for the death of his friend Joachim Malke; and in This Is Not for You, the ostensible reason for the epistolary discourse (which is not reciprocated) is precisely the narrator’s urge to confess her guilt at having messed up her own life as well as the addressee’s, Esther’s. Peripherality as a narrative concept therefore only makes sense as an intermediary area on a scale, and one definitely has to allow for its possible ambiguity and indeterminacy.

Finally, I want to document the existence of reflector-mode narration (i.e., noncommunicative narrative in my schema) in the second person. Much writing about passages such as the following assume that the “you” is the “narrator,” presumably employing the term in the Boothian sense of a Jamesian “center of consciousness.” Since the narrator, by definition, occupies the deictic position of the “I” and the addressee the deictic position of the “you,” you can only refer to the narrator in passages of self-address in which an “I” splits into two voices that interact dialogically. Such is not the case in the Diego passages of Virgil Suarez’s Latin Jazz (1989) where no first-person pronouns occur (except in the quoted dialogue):

Getting out of the car and advancing toward the entrance, no longer do you feel the itch in your nose. This stuff’s a killer. Check the tie knot on the side mirror. Didn’t get cut shaving, a miracle. In a hurry you went from Pilar’s to your parents’ and found the house empty. Your grandfather must have gone out somewhere, he usually stays at home to catch the news. Certainly he must be excited about the break-in. (2.37)
This is the first Diego section of the novel. From Diego’s impressions of what he sees, we move straight into his thoughts (rendered in free indirect discourse), revealing to us his obsession with the fact that his wife has just deserted him. One is therefore inclined to continue with a reading in internal focalization, taking the flashbacks as Diego’s memory of what he has just done before coming to work. Because of the present tense, the “you” narrative loses a good deal of its narratorial and allocutive qualities, backgrounding, that is, both the narrator’s function of narration (which usually consists in a telling after the fact) and the effect of address or allocation inherent in the use of you. (“You walk down the street” has a reduced allocutive effect since the addressee is hard put to construct a factual scenario that will apply to his or her immediate situation. This kind of writing indeed asks the addressee to project imaginatively a scenario that is therefore inherently fictional and less dependent on the addressee’s self-identification, which allocation brings into play.) Where the Diego passage still has some hints of extradiegetic management (one may wonder whether Diego is likely to recall his visit to his parents or not), the following paragraph from Jay McInerney’s *Bright Lights, Big City* (1984) clearly concentrates on the protagonist’s flow of experience, but—owing to the many verbs of consciousness—it, too, still preserves a residual perspective of zero focalization:

It’s five-twenty and raining when you leave the bar. You walk down to the Times Square subway station. You pass signs for GIRLS, GIRLS, GIRLS, and one that says YOUNG BOYS. Then, in a stationery store, DON’T FORGET MOTHER’S DAY. The rain starts coming down harder. You wonder if you own an umbrella. You’ve left so many in taxis. Usually, by the time the first raindrop hits the street, there are men on every corner selling umbrellas. Where do they come from, you have often wondered, and where do they go when it’s not raining? You imagine these umbrella peddlers huddled around powerful radios waiting for the very latest from the National Weather Service, or maybe sleeping in dingy hotel rooms with their arms hugging out the windows, ready to wake at the first touch of precipitation. Maybe they have a deal with the taxi companies, you think, to pick up all the left-behind umbrellas for next to nothing. The city’s economy is made up of strange, subterranean circuits that are as mysterious to you as the grids of wire and pipe under the streets. At the moment, though, you see no umbrella vendors whatsoever. (86)

In the following passage from Joyce Carol Oates’s “The Seduction,” the narrative disappears entirely behind the thoughts of the protagonist “you.” Here the reflector-mode is fully developed:

You look over your shoulder to see who is following you.

But there is no one. You continue to walk more quickly. At a corner you pause, as if without calculation, and again glance behind you—still you see no one, nothing.

Yet he is in the air around you, almost visible. You must resist the impulse to swipe at the air around your head; as if driving away gnats, which you cannot quite see. You are terrified of someone noticing you, remarking upon your agitation. It is a frightening thing to be on a street like this without a companion; a man alone, however conventionally and handsomely he is dressed, is vulnerable to any stranger’s eyes. (70)
As Stanzel (168-70) has illustrated so beautifully, reflector-mode narratives can be determined best at the very beginning of texts where they immediately establish a deictic center (Banfield 151-67) on the part of the protagonist and relate all deictic expressions to that deictic center. One therefore usually encounters familiarizing articles, referential items relating to the subjectivity of the focalizer, and expressions of subjectivity at the very beginning of reflector-mode texts. This immediate descent into the protagonist’s psyche occurs with particular frequency at the beginning of short stories, and this strategy applies to second-person texts just as much as to others. Note, for instance, Frederick Barthelme’s “Moon Deluxe” (or any of the other second-person texts in the collection of the same title), Robyn Sarah’s “Wrong Number,” or Rumer Godden’s “You Need to Go Upstairs.” Here is the beginning of “Moon Deluxe”:

You’re stuck in traffic on the way home from work, counting blue cars, and when a blue-metallic Jetta pulls alongside, you count it—twenty-eight. You’ve seen the driver on other evenings; she looks strikingly like a young man—big, with dark, almost red hair clipped tight around her head. Her clear fingernails move slowly, like gears, on the black steering wheel. She watches you, expressionless, for a long second, then deliberately opens her mouth and circles her lips with the wet tip of her tongue. You look away, then back. Suddenly her lane moves ahead—two, three, four cars go by. You roll down the window and stick your head out, trying to see where she is, but she’s gone. The car in front of you signals to change lanes. All the cars in your lane are moving into the other lane. There must be a wreck ahead, so you punch your blinker. You straighten your arm out the window, hoping to get in behind a van that has come up beside you, and you wait, trying to remember what the woman looked like.

As has been observed, many second-person texts start out with a passage of what initially appears to be a generalized or “generic” (Margolin) “you,” a “you” with which the reader in the role of “(any)one” can identify, but the text then proceeds to conjure up a very specific “you” with a specific sex, job, husband or wife, address, interests, and so on, so that the reader has to realize that the “you” must be an other, a or the protagonist. I have discussed this process in relation to Hawthorne’s “The Haunted Mind” in the introduction to this issue, and it has, for instance, been noted several times with respect to If on a Winter’s Night a Traveler (Phelan 141-56; Kacandes 143-46). There are, however, some texts in which the generalized reading (“you” equals “one”), in the form of a very specific reader role, persists despite the narrowing of reference, and it does so because in these texts the desired effect is precisely to make the reader feel personally responsible, personally caught in the discourse and exposed to its political thrust. Max Frisch’s “Burleske”—the narrative prose sketch from which his famous play Biedermann und die Brandstifter developed—is written in the second person, and it describes the bourgeois mentality to a T. Readers will necessarily find themselves caught in the recognition of their own fear of criminal elements and their reluctance to be judged afraid, illiberal, “bourgeois.” Likewise, in Jamaica Kincaid’s A Small Place (1988) the “you,” which appears to refer to a specific North-American woman tourist arriving in Antigua, begins to shoulder...
the guilt of Western society towards the colonial subject and implicitly becomes an object of identification for the real reader, who—as in Frisch’s tale—is asked to feel guilty, to recognize him- or herself in the negative image. Even better than third-person (or first-person) reflector-mode narrative, the “you” second-person texts with a reflector character can induce the hypnotic quality of complete identification by a maximal bid for readerly empathy on the discourse level in terms of the generalized “you”—a “you” that initially keeps the communicational level well in view—and it can even make this generic meaning reemerge, turning fiction again into virtual facticity or “applicability.” In *A Small Place* the reader starts out with the generic you of the guide-book discourse and is pulled into an identification with the woman tourist, whose background and current experience are sketched in ever more specific terms, thereby signaling that she is no longer just “anyone” (and therefore no longer the virtual reader in his or her real-world identity) but has turned into a fictional character. However, at the end of the second-person passage and throughout the continuation of the text in the mode of didactic and hortatory discourse, the you reassumes its generic function as you-equals-“anyone,” and the real reader is even explicitly addressed qua reader and citizen of a formerly imperialist nation.

One of the main manifestations of the reflector mode—its purest form, so to speak—is the interior monologue, the rendering of a character’s (or a group of characters’16) mind(s) as if tape-recording their thoughts. The status of interior-monologue novels has been much at issue between Stanzel and Cohn. Whereas Stanzel contends that it can be regarded as the non plus ultra of figural narrative (and hence of the reflector mode), Cohn argues that the interior monologue cannot be placed on the typological circle (except, perhaps, in its unmediated center) since it lacks narrative transmission and is (even if implicitly quoted) internal discourse: discourse of the characters that is apparently rendered in verbatim fashion. (Compare Cohn, “Encirclement” 169-70, commenting on Stanzel 270.) The hinge on which Cohn’s argument turns is the verisimilitude of quoted discourse. To the extent that any kind of speech (and, particularly, thought) representation creatively generates (rather than transcribes) linguistic material meant to evoke a protagonist’s speech performance or thought processes, interior monologue is the most artificial technique imaginable, as Cohn herself would be the first to point out. The interiority of the interior monologue is therefore a meaning effect: it is a representation, mimetically evoking a process of internal thinking, mediated in and through language.17 One can (but need not) align the linguistic mediation of internal thought processes with the mediation operative in reflector-mode narrative even if that type of narrative evokes minimal event structures, whereas interior monologue does not: this would be Stanzel’s position. For Cohn the interior monologue, as direct discourse, even if internal direct discourse, approaches the nonnarrative status of the dramatic monologue.
Direct interior monologue qua direct discourse is by definition expressed "in the first person." (In its stream of consciousness forms, which evoke a subverbal or preverbal state of consciousness, there are, however, no pronouns at all, and there are no finite verb forms either.) To the extent that the interior monologue employs first-person forms, therefore, its status as quoted but apparently unmediated discourse seems assured. One now, however, has a number of texts that make extensive use of second-person interior monologue. Such fiction, although it relies on the everyday-mode of internal self-exhortation (observable in one’s own talking to oneself), radicalizes this technique by extending it to the entire monologue in a manner as artificial as the genre of the interior monologue itself. Second-person interior monologue therefore foregrounds its mediacy, fictionality, or, if you will, narrativity,¹⁸ and in doing so, it clinches the argument for including interior monologues with reflector-mode narrative.

A wonderful example of such a second-person interior monologue is Samuel Beckett’s minidrama That Time, noted by Gnutzmann (101-02):

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or that time alone on your back in the sand and no vows to break the peace when was that an earlier time a later time before she came after she went or both before she came after she was gone and you back in the old scene wherever it might be might have been the same old scene before as then then as after with the rat or the wheat the yellowing ears or that time in the sand the glider passing over that time you went back soon after long after . . .
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(393)

One can observe immediately how this is meant to suggest rambling memory and thought—a male equivalent to Molly Bloom’s well-known monologue—and how the you really refers to the thinker, the mind. The fact that this text was written as a work for the theater does not in any way alter its narrativity: on stage a head is projected which opens its eyes and even smiles, and the voice proceeds from elsewhere, the implication of the mise en scène being that we overhear the thinking of the head, not addresses to the head. (This state is made clear by the subject of the discourse: one person’s memories.)

There do, however, exist other (first-person) interior monologues that use self-address extensively, splitting the monologizing self into a dialogic contest of self-incriminatory voices. Arguing for the narrativity of the interior monologue (in its first- as well as second-person forms) necessarily involves a definition of narrativity that defies the age-old criterion of agenthood or the necessary presence of a chain of events for the constitution of narrative. For the latter reason Chatman’s story-versus-discourse dichotomy as a necessary minimal condition for narrative texts becomes questionable since this dichotomy presupposes the presence of a recuperable plot (otherwise there can be no rearrangement of this story’s action). I will not at present go into this problem, but merely note that I am elsewhere proposing a radical redefinition of narrativity as based on the constitution of (human) experientiality.¹⁹ Experientiality can, but need not, reside in agency; it is sufficiently grounded in active consciousness, observation, perception, and reflective speculation. If the portrayal of consciousness can
correlate with experientiality, then the interior-monologue novel can easily be part of reflector-mode narrative; in fact, it constitutes the most radical manifestation of fictional experientiality.

In tracing the diversity of second-person forms as in the above, I have already noted that important aspects of second-person fiction cannot be properly dealt with even within the typology of figure 1 because they question the very coordinates by means of which the narratological categories that I use have been defined. Besides the very diversity of second-person forms, one also has to pay attention to the instability within individual second-person texts. Second-person fiction (typically) plays with the multifunctionality of the second-person pronoun (you as address, as generic “one,” or you as self-address, etc.) and with the reader’s attempt at constructing a situation for the discourse, at naturalizing the disparities within the text. Such play with the ambiguity of the second person typically occurs at the beginning of texts, where—as we have noted—the reader appears to be addressed in person or as a generalized “you.” At the end of texts one may also suddenly encounter a shift into a different frame: one discovers, for instance, that the addressee and protagonist is dead (although she or he appeared to be the recipient of the narrator’s allocution); that this addressee-protagonist does not “really” exist, that he or she has merely been fantasized by the speaker; or one encounters narratives of internal focalization where the text suddenly acquires an addressee and then destroys the previous illusion of immediacy.²⁰

Since examples for how second-person texts initially create a complex field of potential deictic significance to the reader and then eliminate these scenarios in favor of one frame (usually by reducing you to a referential item designating the protagonist) have been noted at length, I will provide examples here of the interesting twists one encounters at the very end of some second-person stories. I have documented such a case in “Second Person Fiction” by the example of Joyce Carol Oates’s “You,” where the “you” protagonist, the actress Madeline, emerges as the addressee of her daughter’s discourse, and—in the final scene of the tale—one may (or may not) conclude that the entire discourse took place in the daughter’s mind while she was waiting for her mother’s arrival at the airport. Cortázar’s “Graffiti”—in this issue discussed by Irene Kacandes—can serve as another example. The (male) “you” protagonist appears to be addressed, if at all, by an unnamed authorial-omniscient “I,” but at the end of the story, this unnamed narrator suddenly emerges as the voice of the woman whom the “you” protagonist had so foolhardily involved in political criminality and used to refer to earlier as “she.” This structure that is reminiscent of the uncanniness of a Moebius strip forces one to reinterpret the enunciatory ground of the tale, and it therefore radically undermines a stable realistic reading of the events (which are quite explicitly metaphorical in any case).

A third example of such a structure is Ron Butlin’s “The Tilting Room.” In this story “you” and “I” together share a room that has crooked corners and
in which everything is askew, but they no longer notice this until Janice arrives and puts everything in order, making the crookedness of the tilting room visible again. The “I” is a woman, and the “you” sleeps with Janice, which the “I” condones. The “I” then tells a bedtime story to the “you.” In this story the “you” enters a room at a party, and Janice tells him that he has become a father, a piece of news he obviously does not enjoy. There follows a hallucinatory sequence in which the “you” watches a young girl petting with a boy and growing older fast as she looks at him (the “you”) watching her. When the vision ends with the “you” trying to reestablish contact with Janice, the previous scene turns out to have been a nightmare. The narrator “I” then announces that she will tell another story to the “you,” starting by quoting the first two paragraphs of “The Tilting Room.” Here the story ends, repeating itself apparently in a mise-en-abîme effect of story within story. The story’s “I,” the jealous lover—now dead perhaps?—interferes with the “you’s” life with Janice like a ghost’s haunting the “you’s” mind with guilt. Is the tilting room a metaphor for the “you’s” tilting mind imperfectly set straight by Janice?

All these examples illustrate how the referent of you and particularly the situation of enunciation in these stories lend themselves to being reinterpreted and radically revised. The intention is not merely to provide a metanarrative statement on the fictionality of fiction; in each and every case the break with a realist frame relates to serious issues portrayed in the story, particularly with the mental strain of guilty conscience (in “Graffiti”), a fraught mother-daughter relationship (in “You”), and a haunting (in “The Tilting Room”). This psychological “explanation” does not entirely resolve the illogicality of the narrative structure in these texts, but it provides an objective correlative for them that helps to evade an exclusively metafictional reading of the text. The undermining of realist reading conventions primarily relates to the enunciatory situation (the situation in which the narrator addresses the narratee-cum-protagonist), the very existence of a narrating voice and of the “you” (is the “you” merely a fantasized “you”?), and to the metaleptic transgression of existential narrative levels (the protagonist’s becoming an extrafictional narratee, a protagonist’s becoming the narrator).

This discussion leads into the next section of this article, in which I want to outline how second-person texts radically question the realist reading strategies used to naturalize (postmodernist) oddities in general and, more specifically, how these texts put into doubt the very categories of narrative theory since these, too, closely relate to a realist scenario.

2.

Broadly speaking, narrative theories proposed by Genette, Stanzel, Seymour Chatman, Mieke Bal, Gerald Prince, Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, Helmut
Bonheim, and Susan S. Lanser rely on narrative parameters that reflect typically realist assumptions about narrative. This is not to say that these theories cannot deal with departures from the realist mode; on the contrary, fantastic and postmodernist kinds of writing are easily categorized in terms of infractions of the narratological rules of selection and combination. The realist presuppositions specifically touch on prototypical ways of storytelling: few and far between are the theories that allow for narrative without a narrator; rare the theory that accommodates noncanonical types of storytelling (in the present tense, simultaneous narration, second-person narrative) on a par with canonical first- or third-person past-tense texts. As Nilli Diengott has noted (“Mimetic Language Game” and “Narrative Level”), both Stanzel’s and Genette’s basic categories are constructed with a realist framework in mind. This is not necessarily a point of criticism: a majority of texts do operate on realistic grounds, and it is therefore important to analyze these narratives within the framework of the mimetic presuppositions that they invoke. The solution, theoretically at least, does not lie in the complete abandoning of realist parameters and categories but in the integration of realist parameters within an encompassing theoretical model that can treat the realist case as the special instance of prototypical storytelling without, at the same time, promoting the realist mode to a position of theoretical centrality. I am elsewhere attempting to provide just such a new theoretical model (Towards a “Natural” Narratology) and will therefore here concentrate on the problems with the standard categories, particularly as they emerge from an analysis of second-person fiction.

Chatman’s fundamental definition of narrativity is based on the story-versus-discourse dichotomy, the fact that all narrative is a mediation of an underlying story that the narrative medium (discourse) projects from its discursivity. This discourse—whether verbal, filmic, or dramatic—pulls together the classic elements of a rearrangement of the story chronology, the narrational mediation and evaluation by the text’s enunciator, its address features, including the entire range of choices about focalization, voice, mood, person, and so on. (Since the latter categories overlap between various systems, this is naturally not meant as a discrete and exhaustive list.)

Second-person texts frequently undermine this story-discourse dichotomy by the very nonnaturalness of their design, telling the narratee’s or addressee’s story. Whereas the typical story-telling mode allows the reader to sit back and enjoy a narrative of another’s tribulations (Weinrich, ch. 3), hence instituting a basic existential and differential gap between the story and its reception, second-person texts (even if only initially) breach this convention of distance, seemingly involving the real reader within the textual world. By doing so, they not only break the frame of narration (consisting of discrete levels within a model of communicative circuits) and violate the boundaries of narrative levels (see below), but they additionally foreground the processual and creative nature of storytelling: the “you’s” experiences are explicitly projected from the discourse
and are attributed to the "you," without—in many cases—any evidence relating to the story world. Or, to put it differently, second-person texts in which the narrator does not share the "you's" story experience (purely homoconative texts) openly, metafictionally, invent the addressee's experience, and this condition becomes especially obvious for narratives in the "subjunctive" mode (Richardson 319-20), where the imperative engenders story matter by enunciational fiat. Second-person writing of this kind therefore turns out to be radically antihistoric and contrafactual.23

The collapse of the story-discourse distinction becomes most apparent in second-person texts written in the present tense and in the second-person imperative ("subjunctive") mode. To the extent that texts such as Lorrie Moore's stories from *Self-Help* posit a fictional situation that invites the collusion of the reader in being read as a vignette of speculative projection—in being read, that is, as a quite candid invention of an imaginative situation—these stories are both more openly fictional in comparison with "normal" fiction, and less so. On the other hand, the invention is here openly signaled by recurring linguistic devices, not merely presupposed in the frame (the fact of a text's being a novel for instance). On the other hand, on account of the implicit involvement of the reader in the situation as a generalized "you" ("you" equals "one"), for whom this very predicament might become virtual reality, such projected scenes appear to be less removed from real-life experience and therefore less "fictional."

I will illustrate this characteristic dissolution of fundamental narratological categories, which relates to the questions raised by second-person texts, on the example of an especially interesting novel, Josipovici's *Contre-jour: A Triptych after Pierre Bonnard* (1986). Josipovici, a leading British postmodernist and experimentalist, in *Contre-jour* presents a fantasy of Pierre Bonnard's marital situation, a fantasy that has only a restricted factual basis.24 The two major parts of the novel (part 3 consists of a brief letter) represent sustained apostrophes (I am using the word advisedly) of the daughter to her mother (part 1) and the mother to her daughter (part 2). What initially appears to be the evocation of the daughter's fraught relationship with her mother—and therefore a second-person narrative describing the mother's actions in the past—soon collapses as a trustworthy account of any "realistic" experience on the daughter's part. It soon emerges that the narrative discourse is directed not to the "present" mother by letter or maybe telephone, but to a mother who is dead (29-32): in fact, the discourse must postdate the mother's death by at least ten years since the father, too, has meanwhile died (16-17). The apostrophe to the mother is therefore an entirely fantasized one, and the narrative of the daughter's visit to the mother "yesterday" (with which the book opens) really has to be read as a projected memory of such a visit. As the text proceeds, however, this factual status of memory is further undermined. It appears that the daughter is herself mentally disturbed, a recognition that somewhat impairs the credibility of her earlier accusations of pathological behavior directed at the mother. The discourse, one
now finds, is uttered by her talking to her own mirror image in the window of her flat in town (15, 55). Towards the end of part 1 inconsistencies in the daughter’s version of the past obtrude themselves on the reader: the daughter accuses the mother of remaining unresponsive on the phone, but she does this herself in a “present-day” scene when she refuses to talk to her cousin Alex (27, 69-70). More damning still, Alex is said to have been to her flat before but in the final pages of part 1 asks to be allowed to see where the daughter lives (63-65, 69). From these inconsistencies one must conclude that the daughter’s “past” is perhaps as invented as the so-called memories of her mother’s failings: that she is extrapolating her own pathological problems by inventing a miserable childhood and blaming it on the mother.

Perhaps it wasn’t really like that though. Perhaps it was always only my fault. Perhaps I merely overreacted to a common complaint, to what they call a fact of life. Perhaps none of it happened as I so vividly remember it, perhaps there was never any sense on your part of wanting to be rid of me, only my inordinate desire for more love than anyone could be expected to give, even to their child, and then my guilt at sensing that I was asking for more than you could give. Or perhaps the guilt had to do with my wanting to escape you both, which I tried to assuage by inventing this story of your rejection of me. I don’t know. We act and then we try to interpret those acts, but the interpretations are only perhaps further acts, which themselves call out for later interpretation. Whatever the truth of the matter is, that day, like all the other days I ever passed in your company, I felt as if I was not wanted and did not belong. As if you barely noticed me when I was there and would forget me the moment I was gone. (42-43)

In fact, except for the biological necessity of motherhood, it remains quite uncertain whether the daughter ever had a mother and a childhood even faintly resembling the one that she dramatizes in her monologue. In spite of these radical questions, however, the pathos in these lines betrays a depth of anguish that is difficult to simply ignore in an effort to explain the daughter’s lies as merely pathological invention.

In this setup, then, the story-discourse distinction, despite the past-tense narration for the “remembered” childhood scenes, is seriously undermined: the story, such as we get it, increasingly discloses itself as fabulation on the discourse level. It cannot claim prior existence to, or independent validity from, the narratorial enunciation. Of course, if it were not for the narration (or enunciation) of David Copperfield or Tess of the D’Urbervilles, we would not know the story of David or of Tess either. The story is always a construction from the perspective of the discourse. However, in the realist story-telling tradition, the act of enunciation appears to be mediatory, a signifying, whereas the discourse of Contre-jour, qua dramatic monologue, tells a story only incidentally, foregrounding enunciation over story. Contre-jour is, of course, written in the form of a dramatic monologue; but the same disparity between story and enunciation appears in all second-person fiction that is modeled on instructional discourse:
Arrive in some town around three, having been on the road since seven, and cruise the main street, which is also Route Whatever-It-Is, and vote on the motel you want. The wife favors a discreet back-from-the-road look, but not bungalows; the kids go for a pool (essential), color TV (optional), and Magic Fingers (fun). Vote with the majority, pull in, and walk to the office. Your legs unbend weirdly, after all that sitting behind the wheel. A sticker on the door says the place is run by "The Plummers," so this is Mrs. Plummer behind the desk. Fifty-fiveish, tight silver curls with traces of copper, face motherly but for the brightness of the lipstick and the sharpness of the sizing-up glance. In half a second she nails you: family man, no trouble. Sweet tough wise old scares Mrs. Plummer. (Updike 40)

Whereas the realist text and even simultaneous present-tense narrative somehow appears to be "pure story," the imperative mode foregrounds enunciation over story, highlighting the constructedness and processual engendering of a story on the make, a story that is no longer "past" but pure potentiality in an indefinite present or future (modal will is very common in second-person texts of indefinite reach). The second-person pronoun increases this effect since it operates as a signal of enunciation, in Banfield's model even as a negative index of narration (Banfield 150-51). Present-tense narration, in and by itself, does not fully explain the meaning effects of second-person fiction. Whereas the locus and situation of first-person present-tense narrative frequently remains deliberately vague (Cohn, "I doze and I wake"), second-person fiction—on account of the second-person pronoun and the use of the imperative—provides a much more well-defined point of enunciation even though the precise (fictional) situation of utterance may remain equally in limbo.

A second narratological distinction that is radically affected in second-person texts is that between the various levels of discourse within the communicational structure of narrative. In particular, characters, unless they are also first-person narrators, are usually conceived of as existing on a different (and lower) ontological plane from that of the narrative discourse. Whereas the divide is an unbridgeable one in the case of third-person fiction except by way of rhetorical apostrophe of the narrator to his character, in first-person narrative narrator and characters can share a common past, but the narrator can still only address his dramatis personae on the level of discourse if they, too, acquire an existence beyond the story past in the here-and-now of the enunciational present. (This is the case in much epistolary discourse.) The narratological model does not apply with equal felicity to oral story telling, however. Everyday conversational story telling already puts the customary narratological dichotomies to grief. Not only do we frequently tell of the experience of our common acquaintances who necessarily share a world with us, thus allowing for a very fuzzy demarcation line between the world of the teller and that of the told; in narratives of personal experience, moreover, the current addressee is especially likely to have been involved in the story that is being told to him or her. Second-person fiction, which appears to be a prima facie fictional, nonnatural form of story telling, enhances the options already available to conversational narrative and extends the boundaries of the nonrealistically possible in emphatic ways. Harangues
directed at a fictional character are one such strategy that exploits an already entirely fictional process and defamiliarizes it by applying it to a second-person protagonist rather than a familiar addressee as in a third- (or first-) person text:

Look at you. Walking out of that empty post office with the gait of someone who had somewhere to go. Can you see it now? Do you remember? It was the day you acquired the Taste. See the way you walked? Head up, long stride. As though you had someplace to go. As though these are the days and this is the place where anybody has anywhere to go. Get factual, Raymond. Read a book. Three-day beard, filthy corduroys, tape-bound tennis shoes. And what on earth made you smile that wisp of a smile you wore, with those eyebrows leaning into each other, chevron-style? You were trying to look inspired, maybe? Or sure of yourself? What was the effect you were attempting? Why would you do that? Nobody down here in the "Flatlands" cares about you sensitive types. (McKnight 175)

Second-person texts, by putting the narratee on the agenda, therefore query narratology’s privileging of the narrator as the locus of the story-discourse distinction, and that already from the ontology of the communicative model itself. Moreover, second-person texts are much more radical destroyers of the model of narrative levels in that they additionally reach out to the reader roles projected by the text and invite active participation and even identification by real readers. Again, second-person narrative in this context extends or reapplies a familiar technique. Some traditional narratives come close to evoking the real reader’s empathy by using a conspiratorial “we” and “us,” especially in gnomic commentary on “our” human predicament. First-person texts used to be more prone to involving a real audience since the fictionality of the (quasi) autobiography (Stanzel 111-13, 209-14) tended to be signaled in the frame rather than the text or at least was not immediately revealed in the novel itself. (Quasi)autobiography, that is to say, already displays a discourse of telling one’s personal experiences to a real audience among which the reader may want to include herself. However, such setups are carefully circumscribed in accordance with realist models of address, as they occur in contexts where one has a well-defined teller (intra- or extrafictional narrator). Second-person fiction extends this basically realistic scenario to the reflector mode and thereby, paradoxically, involves the reader in much more radical fashion. Although second-person texts clearly have a fictional speaker, whose addressee one may in principle more easily resist to identify with, the latent generic meaning of you makes complete distancing more difficult. You is typically ambiguous in its applications to self and other and to a definite or indefinite reading.29

You begin your journey on so high an elevation that your destination is already in sight—a city that you have visited many times and that, moreover, is indicated on a traveler’s map you have carefully folded up to take along with you. You are a lover of maps, and you have already committed this map to memory, but you bring it with you just the same. (Oates, “Journey” 182)
Here the imaginative scene cannot work unless one is initially willing to adopt the “you’s” experience as potentially one’s own, and the constitution of the story therefore operates on a level superior, rather than inferior, to the enunciation, the discourse or narration.

Narrative levels, as I have argued, are quite openly aspects of a realistic story-telling frame. If the story telling that is being performed works according to an oral model, a number of theoretically suspect options become perfectly viable. Once one allows for the (faintly conceivable) possibility of telling a narratee’s story—with the noted models of courtroom evidence, loss of memory, guidebook texts, or interior monologue in the second person—once one has found a realist pretext for second-person narrative, that is, the narratological categories no longer interfere. What happens in the majority of second-person texts, however, is not a clear imitation of a real-world story-telling situation in the second person, but a play with the nonnatural use of you for the purpose of story telling and a subsequent naturalization of this oddity by means of half-realist frame projection. Such naturalizations include the option of claiming that the character is telling the story to himself in the second person, an explanation proffered for Butor’s novel as well as for *The Death of Artemio Cruz* (Gnutzmann 100) and for Rex Stout’s *How Like a God*. Another naturalization (which supplies a motivation for the narrational act) shows up in the apostrophic mode. Apostrophe may be addressed to a dead lover, as a means of venting one’s grief, coming to terms with the relationship, or a wishful attempt to relive past happiness (Edmund White’s *Nocturnes for the King of Naples*; Oriana Fallaci’s *Un uomo*). Josipovici’s *Contre-jour* in both parts 1 and 2 thematizes such intense emotional involvement between mother and daughter, who apparently try to come to terms with their failed attempts at communication. A third variant can be detected in the instructional register as, for instance, in texts like Pam Houston’s “How to Talk to a Hunter” and the Lorrie Moore stories, where the specific fictional scenarios can at least superficially pretend to a general validity or applicability for (women) readers. That reading does not naturalize the text as “story” but as self-help literature.

In Josipovici’s *Contre-jour* narrative levels are deconstructed less on account of a deliberate (postmodern) infringement of realist parameters than as a consequence of the radical ontological ambiguities in the text. As we noted above, in part 1 the daughter appears to be addressing the mother as a real person until we find out that she is dead or maybe does not even exist except as a figment of the daughter’s imagination. In part 2, where the mother addresses the daughter, it becomes increasingly clear that the daughter never existed (“Oh my daughter./ Whom I never had” [99]) and that the mother must be quite insane since she knows she does not have a daughter yet continues to write letters to her and threatens to visit her at her flat (of which she has no address). The pleas directed towards the (imagined) daughter are part of a first-person narrative, in which the mother functions as an unreliable narrator and in the course of which
the father (the painter) implicitly acquires heroic stature for his kindness, long-suffering patience, and faithfulness to his wife. The mother’s discourse unwittingly reveals what he has to put up with. A typical passage of the couple’s interaction is the following:

“I don’t need anyone,” I said. “If I can talk to my daughter. If she will talk to me then that is all I want.”

“But if that isn’t possible?”

“Why? Why shouldn’t it be possible?”

“If she’s not there,” he said, “If she’s left the country. If she doesn’t want to speak to you.”

“It’s based on a misunderstanding,” I said. “Her not wanting to speak to me is based solely on a misunderstanding. If I can get to see her I will be able to sort it all out.”

“But you don’t know where she is anymore,” he said.

I hate that kind of conversation.

“You’re trying to humour me,” I said.

“No,” he said.

“She doesn’t exist,” I said. “You know she doesn’t.”

In part 2 it remains quite unclear what the relation between the two discourses (the first-person narrative and the mother-daughter discourse) really is. On the surface of it, the first-person narrative is part of the dramatic monologue directed at the daughter; yet the mother cannot be addressing this daughter (who does not exist) except in an apostrophic mode in her own mind. Or, does this apostrophic discourse represent the text of the mother’s letters to her daughter that are discussed in her dialogues with the husband? In so far as the daughter’s childhood as a past evaporates as soon as the daughter becomes a “mere” fantasy of the mother’s present delusions, the narrative levels become entirely homogenized. The example demonstrates not only a tendency to deconstruct a real separation of narrative levels (though second-person fiction usually retains the distinction between extra- and intradiegetic person); it also illustrates that the entire concept of narrative levels and narrative embedding is based on a realistic story-telling frame in the absence of which—when “realistic” readings break down—the concept of narrative level ceases to be viable. If no situation of enunciation can be discerned in the text or if no consistent story (protagonists, setting) transpires, the usefulness of the story-discourse distinction evaporates. Since the story exists only as a construction of the signified on the basis of the text qua narration, a text without a discernible story or without a discernible teller ceases to be definable as mediated story.31

In the case of Contre-jour the issue is much complicated by the fact that a realistic situation of enunciation or narration cannot be elicited easily from the text. The vagueness of narrational circumstance is a general feature of much narrative, even of the entirely realistic persuasion, and affects texts written
exclusively in the present tense more than it does others. (Compare Cohn, "I doze and I wake.") Since the "you" addressees in second-person fiction are all too frequently dead or imagined, there cannot be any really convincing situation of actual address. The situation may also be left pending (as in Fallaci’s *Un uomo* or Gloria Naylor’s *Mama Day*, where explanations are provided at the end of the novel), or it may remain vague (as in Alexandros Papadimagantis’s story "Around the Lagoon"). In *Contre-jour*, as I have noted, the dramatic monologues of parts 1 and 2 are both entirely ambiguous, with the monologic reading the most "realistic" possible explanation of the observable inconsistencies. There is, however, yet another twist to this text. In addition to the complications noted above, the relation between parts 1 and 2 of the text remains also unresolved. Thus—without for the moment taking part 3 into consideration—it is possible (it comes first in the text) to read the mother’s discourse in part 2 as an invention or projection by the daughter. After all, if she is imagining her mother’s acts of unkindness every night, she can transfer her fantasies to the mother’s perspective. Conversely, if one starts with part 2, the daughter does not exist, and so part 1 must be the mother’s projection of the daughter’s mind inventing her childhood and accusing the mother.

There is no way of resolving these matters between the two parts alone, and both readings allow for a story-within-story interpretation of a sick mind projecting its own pathology onto the invented figure of the other, vicariously reworking her guilt and sublimating her aggressions. The two parts are symmetrical and self-reflexive, which is suggested already in the book’s title *Contre-jour*. There are two paintings by Pierre Bonnard that have the phrase “contre-jour” ("against the light") in their titles: the painting of a young nude seen against the light and the face of an older woman in a hat. These may well represent mother and daughter. To me, the significance of the title, however, appears to lie less in an allusion to these paintings than in the idea of perspective: of how story elements rearrange themselves in the subjective retellings by mother and daughter (see also Imhof 262). Thus, in the daughter’s version of the story, the mother seems to tyrannize the father with her obsessive bathing and her refusals to leave her bed. Yet, in the mother’s version of events, the painter initially emerges as a monster who persecutes his wife even into the bathroom, obsessively needing to paint (or draw) her and allowing her no private life at all (85). Moreover, the mother’s pathology seems to be brought on as much by her inability (or unwillingness\textsuperscript{32}) to have children as by his incessant persecution of her. It is only when the mother’s insane behavior emerges in part 2 (tearing up her husband’s canvas, leaving cryptic notes for him, antagonizing his friends, disappearing into the bathroom at the slightest provocation, and especially writing letters to a nonexistent daughter) that the positive evaluation of the father that had already been projected by the daughter’s discourse in part 1 reasserts itself to the detriment of the mother’s credibility and our sympathies for her.
It is therefore fitting that part 3 provides us with however brief a glimpse of the painter’s perspective. Part 3 consists of a letter that one “Charles” writes to “Robert,” telling him of his wife’s death and mentioning Alex, his nephew’s wife, who will take care of him. This corroborates the existence of Alex—whose fictional existence might have been doubted otherwise—and it significantly fails to mention a daughter, therefore leading one to endorse part 2 as constitutive of fictional “reality.” Part 3 additionally affects the text’s interpretation from an intertextual direction since the text of Charles’s letter to Robert echoes almost verbatim the letter that the historical Pierre Bonnard wrote to his long-time friend Henri Matisse on the death of his wife Martha (Terrasse 105). Bonnard, too, did not have any children, a point which extratextually clinches the reading I have presented above. One does well to note, however, that such a reading goes against the grain of the text, introducing arguments from extratextual material (no problem in and by itself) and leveling all contradictions and paradoxes into one consistent explanation of the textual evidence that optimizes reliable data and marginalizes irreconcilable evidence as pathological, delusional, or fantasized material. Such a reading therefore violates the very spirit of Contre-jour, which lies in the presentation of irresolvable contradiction between perspectives. If we as inveterate seekers after realistic scenarios trespass by rewriting this text into a “mere” juxtaposition of unreliable discourses and constructing a detective’s probabilistic evaluation of “how it really was” (to pun on Ranke), then this interpretation demonstrates less truth about the text than it exposes the reader’s need to create sense at all costs even at the expense of irresponsibly reducing the complexity of the text.33

This observation takes me to the final point about realistic story-telling parameters. In texts like Contre-jour the very existence (on a fictional level) of the characters of the “story” and the very existence of a narrating or enunciatory discourse can be at issue. Second-person fiction particularly lends itself to such rigorous and radical deconstructions and therefore helps to question the narratological necessity or primariness of categories like story and discourse, the narrator figure, the system of interlocking narrative and communicatory levels, and the basic (realistic) presupposition that enunciators and characters exist (physically) on some level of the fictional world. The solution to such radical self-doubt is not, however, to scrap narratological categories per se, but to integrate them within a mimetically motivated reading model that encompasses the realistic standard case but equally allows for nonmimetic and antimimetic discourses. The latter, as Contre-jour documents with great plausibility, need not be “postmodernist” in the customary sense of that term: namely, “playful” and “infractionsary.” On the contrary, a text like Contre-jour demonstrates forcefully that quasi-realistic interpretations can survive the most resolutely nonrealistic fiction. What Contre-jour achieves for the reader is not a playful disassembling of a story that ends in a general refusal to signify or in a lack of meaningful connectedness. On the contrary, one’s immersion in the contradic-
tions that I have here outlined will more likely tend to relate to one's concern for a filial and marital relationship threatened by pathological tensions involving all three parties. Even more importantly, the affective quality of the text resides not in an ironic distancing from whatever "story" or intimation of stories there is, but in one's serious Betroffenheit at the anguish that emerges from the however fictive constellations of insanity, despair (at being unloved), jealousy, guilt, loving kindness, and obsessive desire for love. This gamut of emotions and their range and depth win out over any existential or realistic skepticism. In this manner Contre-jour manages to be a triumph of human psychology while, at the same time, it constitutes a climax of unreality or antirealism in the formal realm.

This analysis of Contre-jour, which contains second-person narrative but is not an exclusive example of it, was meant to outline some general issues in narrative theory, issues that affect the theoretical placing of second-person fiction within current typologies and which not only touch on, but are indeed raised by, experimental writing of the kind to which Contre-jour belongs. The argument therefore did not attempt to present Contre-jour as a typical instance of second-person fiction, but to outline a number of theoretical propositions on the basis of a text that is particularly complex. These propositions suggest a critical reevaluation of standard narratological typologies and explain how the limitations of current models have resulted in the marginalization of second-person texts within the traditional paradigms.

3.

I have here reached a suitable point for the final remarks on second-person fiction that are designed to get beyond formal and particularly narratological concerns to ask what second-person texts are attempting to do and how they differ from more mundane story-telling modes. In contrast to the standard account of second-person fiction as a (stale) postmodernist device serving the designs of a self-reflexive language game in experimental texts, I am here arguing for the vitality, significance, and seriousness of second-person texts. In particular, as I will outline below, second-person narrative can, and frequently does, correlate with great emotional depth since the dialogic relationship it puts at its very center allows for an in-depth treatment of human relationships, especially of relationships fraught with intense emotional rifts and tensions.

What I will be trying to do in the following is not to explain the use of the second person in narrative as invariably producing a certain specific scenario or a number of very specific meaning effects, but to indicate the potential usefulness of the second-person form for a variety of purposes even if these purposes can also be served by other entirely different means. The usefulness of second-person narrative, as I see it, relates in a large measure to its deictic qualities and to its
pragmatic connotations. Second-person fiction radicalizes—as all written language, and especially literature, tends to do—tendencies inherent in the language itself, and it does so usually for a purpose, as the consequence of deliberate choice. This latter point should not be overlooked or ignored. The decision to employ the second person in a narrative text is (still) a highly self-conscious one, much more self-conscious and fraught with significance than the choice between the first- or third-person form. Although much ink has been spilled on the choice between first and third-person fiction—in a lively debate including contributions by Booth, Cohn, and Stanzel—results from that scholarly exchange have very much concentrated on the “realistic” properties of homo- and heterodiegetic narrative such as they relate, in particular, to focalization and problems of knowledge. Writers’ choices of pronouns demonstrably relate to their desire, for instance, to avail themselves of the “unreliable narrator” option; to exploit the drama and irony that attach to the tensions between the naive experiencing “I” and the usually wiser and more clear-sighted narrating self of the first-person protagonist (Stanzel 207-10). Or the choice of the third-person mode connects with a writer’s need to play the historian, to move between widely disparate locales, indulge in philosophical or moral reflections tendered from the privileged position of the raconteur of quasi-divine attributes. These are all, in the final analysis, criteria of narrative realism: if one has a first-person narrator recounting his or her own past experiences, then the narrative is tied down with a personal viewpoint, frame of knowledge, physical manifestation within a verisimilar societal environment. This frame may prove shackling to what one wants to do, but it may also reveal itself as an asset if handled with subtlety as in Kazuo Ishiguro’s *The Remains of the Day* (1989). From this realist perspective, first-person writing is much more restrictive, a marked option, so to speak, whereas third-person texts can do practically anything (in the area of focalization) except provide the typical kind of retrospective self-evaluation and self-knowledge of first-person fiction (the dynamics between the narrating and experiencing selves in Stanzel’s model) or reproduce the classic case of unreliable narrative, where the narrator gives himself or herself (and others) away.

The above fairly precise differentiation between first- and third-person texts is of course much too neat to work generally, and it pays no attention to the peculiar status of the category “person” within reflector-mode narrative or present-tense narration. Cohn, who has asked some searching questions about the significance of person in the realms of history versus fiction (biography and fictional autobiography versus history and third-person fiction?), has recently extended her enquiry to texts written in the present tense (“I doze and I wake”), arguing that first-person present-tense texts are especially nonnatural in their structure and design, usually hedging and obliterating the issue of their own production: that is to say, deliberately unwriting the circumstances under which they could be enunciated or indited. Although I personally find it hard to put a figure on the degree of nonnaturalness involved, I would tend to agree that
first-person present-tense texts may be harder to imagine being produced under realistic circumstances. (Note that such texts cannot be interpreted as interior monologues.) For equivalent third-person texts, voyeuristic and observational models exist in real life even if, as I would argue, these models do not at all correspond with the matter of standard third-person present-tense fiction.

The analysis is really much complicated by the fact that most present-tense narratives, of whatever person, are reflector-mode texts—with neutral mode coming in second place—and therefore entirely lack an enunciatory level of clauses like "I am telling you this" or "in describing events of this nature one must of course realize. . . ." The question therefore needs to be resuscitated here with renewed rigor now that one has the second person for comparison as well. With respect to reflectoral fiction, as we have seen, Stanzel and Cohn have taken opposing views. Stanzel argued that the category "person" is neutralized in the reflector realm (227-29) whereas Cohn had pointed out with some justification that Stanzel's examples from the "Calypso" episode of *Ulysses* did not necessarily illustrate such neutralization ("Encirclement" 166-69).

Two caveats are in order at this point. One is the fact, so convincingly underlined in Richardson's paper in this issue of *Style*, that the combination of different persons within one text and the raison d'être for such alternation have been ignored by much criticism and that it is high time this aspect was introduced into the debate. The second, even more important caveat concerns one's natural tendency to see matters in terms of dichotomies. Introducing second-person texts into the discussion will, first of all, I hope, overcome the entrenched lines of the first- versus third-person debates. I have also insisted on the variety and diversity of second-person forms, a factor that should additionally make one cautious regarding large theoretical claims.

Despite these caveats I have, alas, come down on one side of the fence as regards the position of person within the reflectoral mode, where, I maintain, the (deictic) category of person and the deictic properties of tense lose their oppositional quality and become largely neutralized. Like Stanzel, I would document this neutralization on the example of texts that alternate between different grammatical persons, but my illustrations would come from novels such as Beckett's *Company* or John McGahern's *The Dark*, where the same protagonist is referred to by means of alternating first-, second- and third-person anaphora. Second-person fiction is, however, least affected by this neutralization because the second-person pronoun in its generic or generalized usage—which constitutes its major opening gambit, successfully steering the reader into the fictional world so oddly represented by the second person—always relies on the submerged deictic significance of the original address function of this pronoun, even where that deictic significance is then channeled into an enhancement of the reflectoral quality of the text.

As regards second-person texts in the teller mode, their deictic properties are even more strongly in evidence both for their marked nature and their
immediate affective quality. Thus you (like the present tense) is one of the attention-inducing features of the discussing mode in Weinrich’s model: you always alerts the current listener to pay attention since he or she may be directly called upon to react. You, especially in languages with a familiar nondistanced you form, additionally tends to stimulate an aura of intimacy or closeness, adding even further to the effect of involvement and Betroffenheit.

On the basis of these deictic givens one can, I hope, demonstrate a number of potential exploitations of the second person although these potential tendencies of use can be combined and need not result in any one specific thematic transformation. After all, the technique is used in quite a number of second-person texts with little inherent appropriateness to the topic of the story, and this condition becomes obvious most clearly in the analysis of texts that alternate between first-, second- and third-person mode. Some of these provide a very strong impression of “mere” experimenting with the pronominal choices (McGahern’s The Dark; Josipovici, “Second Person Looking Out”) although the foregrounding of different perspectives that are inherently contradictory and repetitive might constitute just such a motivation even for the “experimental” use of pronominal alternation.

Among the more apparent deictic qualities of you that cry out for application to a fictional context, one can note the involving, dialogic function of you. Not only does this use lend itself to invoking direct reader participation in the text, thus fittingly reflecting a postmodernist aesthetics according to which it is the reader who produces the text; this use also allows the thematization of troubled relationships of a variety of kinds in which the “you” text’s apostrophic quality correlates with the enactment of emotional tensions between the partners, foregrounding the see-saw of mutual attraction and repulsion, outgoing affection, and inhibiting domination in such relationships. One of the most impressive examples of such thematic exploitation occurs in the rendering of the mother-daughter relationship, a topic prominent in much feminist fiction and well represented among second-person texts. Moore’s Self-Help thematizes the issue repeatedly, and one can also note Oates’s “You” and Daphne Patai’s “On Your Fifty-Fifth Birthday.” Relationships between lovers naturally constitute another obvious subject matter, both in the heterosexual (Naylor’s Mama Day) and in the homosexual realm (Rule’s This is Not for You; White’s Nocturnes for the King of Naples). Such applications of the apostrophic and dialogic connotations of the second person are usually set in a dynamic “I” versus “you” structure and sometimes involve tensions on the level of address as well as merely on the level of past experience. Whereas first- and third-person accounts of love relationships invariably privilege the perspective of the active or passive party—depending on whether the protagonist seeks out a relationship or finds herself caught in one—second-person texts manage to bridge the confining limitations of this unitary perspective by representing precisely the elusive, interactive, and processual quality of love relationships and reflecting the shifting perspectives of
mutual empathy, the inevitable barriers to ideal oneness, concomitant alienation, misinterpretation, strategic self-projection, or incorrect self-assessment, all experiences that typically result in the well-known uncertainties and abysses of love affairs. Patterns of relationships, the inevitable clash of expectations between partners, the semiotics of significant gestures and utterance are easily foregrounded in the second-person mode. It is no coincidence that the situation of women trying to guess what their lover's next move might be recurs in second-person stories: the situation can be found in Houston's "How to Talk to a Hunter," Margaret Gibson's "Leaving," or in the Moore texts.

Tense and implicating relationships, however, need not be sexual ones at all, as is illustrated by the mother-daughter theme. Kincaid's A Small Place, for instance, extends the mechanism of involvement and confrontation to the subject of the post-colonial relationship between Antigua and its former imperial master, Great Britain, implicating the West in general as practicing post-colonial imperialism by means of tourism and trade. Kincaid's accusation comes across all the more forcibly for projecting the figure of a harmless woman tourist as her addressee and protagonist. This figure's blindness to the injustices of history and her insensitivity to her own complicity with persisting structures of imperialist discrimination is skillfully balanced with a sympathetic understanding for the woman's—and, by implication, the reader's—need for untroubled vacationing in aesthetic surroundings, escaping the bleakness of the civilized world and of the imprisoning demands of the United States workplace, which is ruled by the iron laws of free-market economy. It is precisely by this initial empathy with the poor work slave from New York that the Western reader will be led to reevaluate his or her own uncritical espousal of the blandishments of untroubled exotic holidays and will start to recognize the deleterious functions of the aesthetic sublime within their far-from-harmless political and economic contexts.

Even second-person texts that do not openly indulge in reader provocation can operate in fairly critical ways through the mere subject matter of the story. This is certainly the case with Max Frisch's "Burleske," which provides an analysis of "the" bourgeois susceptibility both to succumb to intimidation and, at the same time, to reinterpret one's cowardice as broadminded liberality. Tom Wolfe's "No Door," likewise, contains a sizable amount of social criticism and is also steeped in self-irony: involvement on the part of the reader therefore inevitably results in a critical awareness of the contradictions between a writer's ideal exposure to life in the raw and the harsh realities of surviving in the garret that are little conducive on the whole to the aesthetic and artistic broadening of one's mind supposedly acquired by the lack of comfort and riches.

These political uses of the second-person pronoun that, I have argued, rely on the tension between (sometimes provocative) address and the empathetic or involving use of the generic you (you as "one") can also derive from the inherent ambiguity of reference that you exhibits in so many contexts. Thus, the deliberate play with the generic reading in second-person texts that keeps the reader
wondering whether or not the story is talking about his own experience or merely describing a fictive situation that he need not feel concerned about contributes decisively to the effects of tension and self-distancing outlined above. Ambiguity and empathy frequently combine, too, in the strategic use of second person for the purpose of presenting atypical situations or relationships. A noted tendency of gay and lesbian texts is to employ nonstandard pronouns, including invented nongendered options such as June Arnold’s na, Monique Wittig’s on (in L’Opopoñax) or j/e (in Le corps lesbien). Arnold’s use of na in The cook and the carpenter, however, probably outdoes even the most ambitious second-person texts such as White’s Nocturnes for the King of Naples, withholding crucial gender information until almost the very end of the book. The radical ambiguity of the second-person pronoun whose gender can be left unspecified for a considerable length of text nevertheless makes it an ideal tool in the attempt to win a heterosexual public over to an understanding of homosexual relations.

Empathy for “odd” characters is, however, a much more far-reaching phenomenon. Calvino’s “Un re in ascolto,” for example, traces the protagonist’s wish-fulfilling dream of being a king into its nightmarish “realities” of megalomania, imprisonment within royal conventions, and complete powerlessness, a state aptly symbolized by the king’s reliance on the sense of hearing for his orientation. Oriana Fallaci’s Un uomo in even more radical fashion entrances us with the mind of the self-divided genius Panagoulis. The narrator’s inescapable fascination with Panagoulis and her abhorrence at his fanaticism mirror the reader’s likely intellectual involvement with, and distancing from, Panagoulis’s ideas. It is difficult to escape the hold Panagoulis gains over one despite the fact that his initial status as a political terrorist appears only faintly promising to his later transformation into a hero in the fight for liberty and freedom of speech. Panagoulis’s force derives precisely from the gigantomania of his genius, which the narrator and the reader are likely to qualify as irresponsible insanity; and yet Panagoulis’s superhuman resistance to, and conquest over, repressive measures including fake execution, gruelling torture, and imprisonment under subhuman conditions—a conquest in which we vicariously participate by means of the you form of the narrative—eventually manages to deconstruct any easy attributions of reason and insanity, heroism and terrorism, responsible or irresponsible political action, nor does it allow us the escape into individualism: Panagoulis may have been a man torn by his own split personality, attracting disaster in equal measure as he distributed anguish to those that became involved with him, but the political and moral relevance of the questions Fallaci raises in the book is not reducible to this simple personal level of psychohistory. Other texts that employ the second person to describe fairly unusual situations are Peter Bowman’s war novel Beach Red (1945) and Michael Zéraffa’s prison utopia L’histoire (1964).

A perhaps final and most radical use of the second person is also a development from the referential ambiguities of the pronoun but really relates to the
deliberate undermining of realistic story-telling frames in much second-person fiction. Since I devoted ample space to this aspect earlier in this essay, I will here merely recall the issue. I have above illustrated the deconstruction of "realism" in Josipovici's novel *Contre-jour*. Texts that are more consistently written as second-person texts demonstrate comparable narratological radicality, as for instance Gupta's *The Glassblower's Breath* (1993) or Oates's "You." I have argued above that such strategies are not necessarily identifiable as marks of postmodern playfulness. Indeed, all the previous uses of the second person that I have here noted are decidedly political or ideological in one way or another. This estimate certainly conforms with the markedness of second-person writing. Second-person writing is a technique that "sticks out" and therefore attracts to itself an interest in its very form and in its possible significance. To the extent that the second-person form is seen as a *technique* rather than a medium for the conveyance of specific meanings and objective correlative, it increasingly allows itself to be used as a "mere" formal option for the sake of variety, originality, or spectacle. As second-person texts become more and more common, their markedness also decreases apace and, particularly in the realm of the second-person reflectorial short story, this point of conventional inconspicuousness has now very nearly been reached.

It will be fitting to conclude this paper, and the special issue, by insisting again on the complexity and diversity of second-person narration, a complexity to which even revised narratological typologies such as my own manage to do little justice even if I may have managed to at least illustrate some of the variety of this form. It is to be hoped that this special issue may stimulate further interest in second-person texts and, by provoking disagreement and an attempt to refute theses presented in these papers, trigger a lively debate that will unearth many more texts and lead to a deeper and more refined understanding of the how and the why of second-person narrative. If I read the significance of second-person fiction aright, the analysis of second-person texts enables us to stand in a crossroads of narratological pathways leading to vistas we are barely glimpsing at the moment. Whatever may lie beyond our present horizons, even the limited perspectives currently afforded by second-person fiction should suffice for our immediate sustenance. And if you need any more food for thought, there are still some other second-person texts out there, somewhere.

Notes

1 Stanzel's teller mode combines narratives with a discernible teller figure (i.e., narrator, narratorial presence) from first- and third-person texts into one basic category. The teller mode therefore correlates with the presence of an extradiegetic narrator.

2 Stanzel's reflector mode corresponds to Genette's internal focalization. It has an empirical basis in that reflector-mode narration correlates with a series of linguistic signals (which, to a great extent, overlap with Ann Banfield's signals of deictic center in her "RST")
[Represented Speech and Thought] of *Unspeakable Sentences*). Compare Stanzel (164-70) and Banfield (151-67). Banfield’s RST is the equivalent of free indirect discourse for the representation of consciousness.

3 For the notion of “frame” compare Roger C. Schank and Robert P. Abelson.

4 For an extensive list of such features and their narratorial functions see Ansgar Nünning.

5 In narratives telling a story that happened in the past, there is an existential and temporal continuity between the experiencing self of the character (for a definition see note 8 below) and the narrating self of the narrator or the conative self of the narratee on the communicative level.

6 On Stanzel’s typological circle the authorial-figural continuum is that area between the authorial and the figural narrative situations where the narrator (teller figure) starts to refine himself out of existence and where, at the same time, the presentation of the story from the protagonist’s perspective increases measurably. Instances of texts locatable on the authorial-figural continuum are Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* and Henry James’s *The Ambassadors*. In Genette’s framework, one would have a simultaneous presence of zero focalization with an increasing proportion of internal focalization. This combination also occurs in many second-person texts.

7 Unlike many readings of this novel, I mean to insist on the remnants of zero focalization besides the obvious preponderance of internal focalization throughout the text.

8 This is Stanzel’s term, within first-person narrative, for the narrator’s past self, which corresponds to the story-protagonist (100-04, 200-07).

9 For the term “memory monologue” compare Dorrit Cohn (*Transparent Minds* 247-55). Such interior monologues consist mostly in memories of the protagonist rather than current speculations or plans for the future, for instance.

10 Explicitly quoted interior monologues, in so far as they can realistically be interpreted as “direct discourse,” would seem to be an extended quotation from a character’s mind and not narration in its own right. When interior monologues occur in unquoted form or in a montage-like setup (as in Virgil Suarez’s and Rex Stout’s novels), their status as “direct representation” of consciousness may become doubtful. The Suarez passages contain forthright narrative clauses (see the example below) that make it very difficult to read the discourse as one that Diego addresses to himself in a verbatim fashion. However, in the Rex Stout novel, the protagonist, it may be argued, has his entire life flash before him in the crucial moments before he kills the woman who keeps him in emotional bondage, and one then tends to “explain away” the unrealistically “written” nature of the second-person segments as the author’s license to expand the delineation of the character’s internal direct discourse into a full-fledged *récit*, which the character could not by any means have uttered to himself in such a form. Linguistically speaking, the second-person section of *How Like a God* cannot be interior monologue, but narrative recuperations of the third- versus second-person juxtaposition in that novel have full justification in arguing for the implicit semantic embedding of the second-person segments on a higher interpretative level of the text.

11 Rather than using long passages of *you* monologues, French and English texts tend to have infrequent lapses into an occasional *you* form in passages of interior monologue or free indirect discourse. Compare, for example, the use of *tu* in Nathalie Sarraute’s *Le planétarium* [The Planetary] or that of *you* in Nadine Gordimer’s *The Conservationist*.

12 Artemio Cruz is on his death-bed and reviews his life; Juan spends Christmas Eve in a restaurant and waxes nostalgic (Julio Cortázar, 62: *A Model Kit*); and the protagonist of
Miguel Delibes's *Parábola del naufrago* [A Parable of Shipwreck] conducts dialogues with himself in front of the mirror.

13 For a more extensive discussion of the issue of the central protagonist see Dieter Meindl.

14 “Hey, you” immediately triggers self-identification on the part of the addressee, whereas a more generalized you in the meaning of “one” leaves a wide margin of (non)identification.

15 Briefly, in “Burleske” the “you” invites a stranger to come and stay in his (her?) house, ignoring all indications that this person must be one of the arsonists wanted by the police.

16 See Faulkner’s *As I Lay Dying* or Virginia Woolf’s *The Waves*.

17 It is here assumed that consciousness can be both reflective and nonreflective, both verbal and nonverbal. The term “interior monologue” is used in its widest application, including all forms of stream of consciousness except for those manifesting shifted referential expressions and tenses (and therefore definable in terms of free indirect discourse).

18 For an argument aligning narrativity and fictionality, see chapter 1 of my *Towards a “Natural” Narratology*. My use of the term “narrativity” corresponds with Gerald Prince’s “narrativehood” since he defines “narrativity” on a scale of good versus bad narrative (1-4). See also Philip Sturgess’s “narrativity” (22-27), which seems to be a synonym of Paul Ricoeur’s *intrigue* (translated as “plot” in *Time and Narrative* 64-70).

19 See, for a brief presentation, my *Fictions of Language* (ch. 9) and *Towards a “Natural” Narratology* (ch. 1).

20 This is the case, for instance, in Sunetra Gupta’s brilliant novel *The Glassblower’s Breath* (1993).

21 Compare, for an excessive categorization of these, Werner Wolf’s *Ästhetische Illusion*.

22 The term is here used to denote the establishment of a “frame” (cf. Schank and Abelson).

23 Quite a few imperative texts start out with an initial “imaginez” as a guideline for the reader. See Samuel Beckett’s *Imagination Dead Imagine*, Jean Thibaudeau’s *Imaginez la nuit*, or Valéry Larbaud’s early “Mon plus secret conseil.”

24 In *Contre-jour* the implication is that Mrs. Bonnard was quite insane, which is not borne out by the biographical material I have looked at. Professor Josipovici himself (personal communication) admitted to having invented the daughter. The recurrent bath scenes, on the other hand, have some basis in Mrs. Bonnard’s obsession with taking a bath and in the historical fact of her husband’s obsession with painting her in this setting (Imhof 260).

25 Compare Pam Houston’s “How To Talk to a Hunter” or Alberto Vanasco’s *Sin embargo Juan vivía* [And Juan Lived After All]. For a text employing the conditional tense see Marguerite Duras’s *La maladie de la mort* [The Sickness Unto Death].

26 See, for instance, the beginning of Leonard Cohen’s *Beautiful Losers* (quoted and discussed in Nischik 265). Whereas empathetic apostrophe to the character has been a fairly common device even in realist narrative, the inverse address of a character to his (her) author or narrator seems to have been invented by postmodernist writing. See, for instance, Flann O’Brien’s *At Swim-Two-Birds* or Raymond Federman’s *Double or Nothing* (discussed by Marcel Cornis-Pope in this collection).

27 It is no coincidence that pseudooral types of narrative (skaz) almost consistently have a teller figure who personally knows the protagonists or lives in the same town or village and
knows the stories from hearsay (see Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* for a noted example).

28 The term is here used to refer to fictional autobiography: for instance, *David Copperfield, Moll Flanders*, and so forth.

29 See my "Pronouns of Address" and the examples given in Bolinger.

30 Compare the work by Bruce Morrissette, Mary Frances Hopkins and Leon Perkins, Richardson, and Fludernik ("Second Person Fiction").

31 Standard theories of narrative tend to deal with such problems in terms of "infraction" of their (realist) narrative parameters, inventing special terms for these such as *metalepsis*. (See also Chatman, *Story and Discourse* 250-51.) Such a strategy is very useful on the background of a fairly realistic, stable scenario, but it ceases to be convincing if several parameters are infringed such that no stable realistic scenario can serve as a backdrop to a local deviation.

32 The text is contradictory on this point, including both a scene at the doctor's where the mother is told she cannot have children (100) and an avowal that she has always been afraid of children and the responsibility they involve (104-05). It is unclear which of these scenes is "only" imaginary. The second explanation would tie in with the daughter's accusations in part 1, but then, of course, the daughter did not exist in the first place. The mother may easily fantasize about sterility as an excuse for not wanting children. On the other hand, the father's solicitude and kindness can be argued to derive from his compassion for his barren wife, who feels guilty at being unable to provide the children he so wishes for.

33 For an instructive parallel in the interpretation of nonsense poetry see McHale.

34 One of those untranslatable German concepts, denoting the feeling of being touched or affected by something, of realizing that somebody else's plight "concerns me too."

35 The term "unreliable" is here used in its Boothian definition as relating to a teller or narrator (158). Characters can of course also unwittingly demonstrate their stupidity, untruthfulness, and so on by means of the dramatic monologue or their stream of consciousness (interior monologue). The term "unreliable" has also been applied to the authorial narrator by Graham Martin, but this use does not correspond to the standard definition of the term. Hence my categorization of unreliability as a feature of first-person narrative.

36 Compare the unreliable Thady of Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent*.

37 See Cohn's "Signposts of Fictionality" and "Fictional versus Historical Lives."

38 This mode corresponds to Genette's "focalization externe." On the neutral narrative situation see Ulrich Broich.

39 Such an enhancement may come about either through the added identificatory energies triggered by the initial generic reading of the *you* or, for instance, through its quality of self-address.

40 Banfield regards *you* as a marked signal of discourse or communication (150-51).

41 See also Christopher Isherwood's *A Single Man* (1964), which briefly experiments with *it* narrative (compare my "Pronouns of Address").

42 Pierre Silvain's utopia *Les eoliennes* (1971) also comes to mind in connection with odd fictional situations. It is a text written entirely in the *nous* ("we") form.
Works Cited


