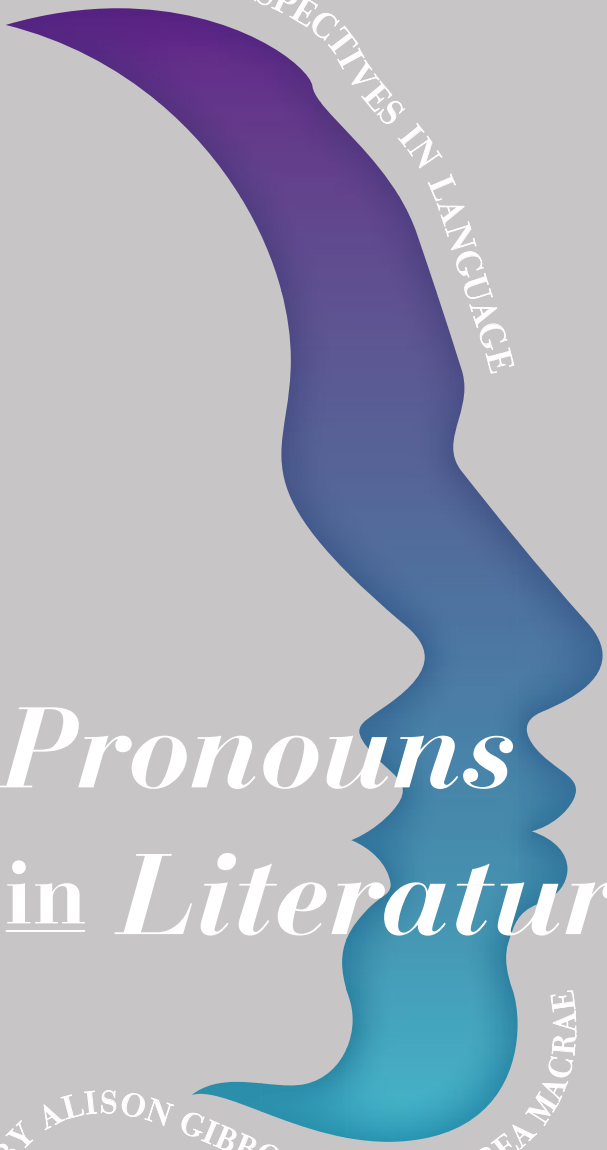
POSITIONS AND PERSPECTIVES IN LANGUAGE



Pronouns in *Literature*

EDITED BY ALISON GIBBONS AND ANDREA MACRAE

Pronouns in Literature

'Jakobson taught us to think of pronouns as shifters, but the case-studies and theoretical reflections assembled in this volume makes it clearer than ever how very shifty they are. Read these essays to see how much hinges on them in plays, poems and prose narratives both natural and unnatural. *They* matter; *she, he, it* matters; *I, you, we* matter.'

—Brian McHale, *The Ohio State University, USA and Editor of Poetics Today*

'This work masterfully evidences the centrality of personal pronouns in positioning and engaging readers. It foregrounds the ethical and poetical implications of these amazingly dynamic tools which can both challenge social world views and remap genre boundaries. Reading this work will offer innovative theoretical directions in which to explore this fascinating territory.'

—Sandrine Sorlin, *Professor of English Language and Linguistics, Aix-Marseille University, France*

'Pronouns play a key part in models of narrative and discourse processing; yet, *Pronouns in Literature: Positions and Perspectives in Language* is the first volume to make them an object of careful attention in their own right. Through a multidisciplinary set of studies, the volume brings into focus the ways in which genres, stylistic effects, and ontological tensions can be shaped by pronoun choice, pushing scholars to home in more closely on these small but powerful words.'

—Chantelle Warner, *Associate Professor, University of Arizona, USA*

'*Pronouns in Literature: Positions and Perspectives in Language* is an impressive collection which both showcases the liveliest current scholarship in this area and establishes exciting new pathways for future research. The variety of perspectives it proposes is dazzlingly rich, both in terms of the range of text types covered, and the interdisciplinary ways in which they are tackled. The pronouns themselves are versatile and dynamic, ambiguous and ever-shifting. This stimulating, superbly edited volume will be a lodestone for all those fascinated by the power of pronouns to shape the way that we (which may or may not include you) read.'

—Joe Bray, *Professor, University of Sheffield, UK*

'This collection makes an extremely important contribution to our understanding of the roles of pronouns in literary texts. It contains a huge number of important insights from a wide range of world-leading experts. It is not only essential reading for researchers investigating pronouns and how they are used. It is a must-read for anybody with an interest in language, literature and how we produce, experience and respond to texts.'

—Billy Clark, *Associate Professor in English Language and Linguistics, Middlesex University, UK*

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Pronouns in Literature

Positions and Perspectives in Language

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Stories: Causality and the Nature of Modern Narrative (1997). He is the co-author of *Narrative Theory: Core Concepts and Critical Debates* (2012) and editor of *Narrative Beginnings* (2008) and *Narrative Dynamics: Essays on Plot, Time, Closure and Frames* (2002). He is completing a theoretical study of narrative beginnings, middles, and endings.

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Positions and Perspectives on Pronouns in Literature: The State of the Subject

Alison Gibbons and Andrea Macrae

1.1 Introduction: Pronouns in Literature

Pronouns in Literature: Positions and Perspectives in Language advances understanding of the role of pronouns in literary contexts. It brings together an international and interdisciplinary group of scholars, including world-leading experts, and offers cutting-edge insights into the functions and effects of pronouns in literary texts. The book engages with a breadth of text-types, including poetry, drama, and prose from different periods and regions, in English and in translation. It progresses recent interest in and accounts of narrative voices and articulations of perspective, by addressing an area which has, historically and canonically, been less well attended to and explored.

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This chapter serves both as an introduction to the volume and an up-to-date review of the study of pronouns in literature. Firstly, we briefly discuss the kinds of effects to which pronouns contribute in literary contexts. In doing so, we hope to illustrate their interpretative significance and begin to reveal the complex network of functions pronouns can play a part in. This complexity leads us into the necessarily diverse array of scholarship which has begun to engage with and analyse this functioning over the last 100 years. The next section of the introduction, Sect. 1.2, provides a historical overview of this scholarship, and outlines the latest developments and innovations in research into pronouns across a range of disciplines (including psychology, cognitive studies, stylistics, linguistics, narratology, and literary criticism). Finally, in Sect. 1.3, the chapter introduces the structural logic of the volume, providing a brief summary of each contribution and highlighting the themes arching through the chapters.

Pronouns play a powerful and essential role in several interconnected literary features and their related effects. Perhaps most significantly, pronoun use is a fundamental part of the construction and manipulation of narratorial or poetic voices (or voices of speakers, in drama). In fiction, for example, *I*, *you*, *we*, *they*, *she*, *he*, *it*, etc. are used delineate a narrator's subject position in relation to objects/others. In effect, the pronoun simultaneously determines, designates, identifies, refers to and (re-) affirms a particular narratorial role and perceptual locus. Accordingly, it influences readers' perceptions of the positions of other characters and/or things in relation to that narrator's role and locus.

Across literary text-types, pronouns are a key part of generating rhetorical structures of positioning, interaction and address within and across the diegetic and extradiegetic levels of narrative (to use Genette's terminology), or different text-worlds (to use Text World Theory conceptualisations). A narratorial voice often works as a focalising 'window'—a particular, positioned perspective on fictional worlds. The reader's processing and perception of the fictional world is mediated, and to some extent manipulated, by the nature of this positioned perspective. Pronouns thereby contribute to readers' narrative comprehension and dynamic conceptual world-building (Emmott 1997; Gavins 2007). Partly through the focalising function of a particular pronoun-designated

position, the reader may be led to identify with, or in other ways relate to, that position. Pronouns can therefore affect readers' empathetic, emotional and ideological relations with and responses to narratorial, poetic and other speaking voices and characters in literature.

Many aspects of these literary features and effects have received critical attention across a range of disciplines within literary study. Little of this literary critical and theoretical scholarship, however, has addressed the role of pronouns, specifically, in generating these features and effects. The chapters in this volume are rooted in the interconnected fields of stylistics, cognitive poetics, narratology, rhetoric and theoretical, applied and empirical linguistics. Some also draw on aspects of literary pragmatics and corpus stylistics. As this book demonstrates, and as the next section explains, contemporary stylistic and narratological scholarship offers the most advanced tools for investigating the positions and perspectives created by pronouns, and drawing out and developing new insights into their effects on readerly interpretation and experience.

1.2 The State of the Subject

The theoretical foundations of this book include work on pronouns in linguistic theory and work on the role of pronouns within literary features across a range of literary and cognitive narratological publications. Linguistic theory on the referential and deictic functioning of pronouns began with Jespersen (1924) and Bühler (1934) in the first half of the twentieth century, and was picked up Jakobson in his key 1956 paper (published in 1971). Deictic theory of pronouns was then significantly developed in the latter half of the twentieth century by Benveniste (1971 [1966]) Lyons (1977), Jarvella and Klein (1982), Rauh (1983) and Fludernik (1991), all of whom draw explicitly on those key early works.

Much of this linguistic work is focused on deixis as a whole: attention to pronouns tends to occur only in sections, though often as part of key theoretical arguments explicating deixis more broadly. Jakobson's category of 'shifters' is a case in point, as captured by Fludernik's (1991) discussion. Fludernik addresses some theoretical entanglements within the concepts of shifters and shifting, tracing the evolution of the concepts

from Jespersen and Jakobson, via Burk's rendering of Peirce's indexical symbols, to Benveniste's alignment of the 'shifter' function with personal pronouns. This becomes a discussion of deixis at large, during which she illustrates "the asymmetry between the first and the second person" and demonstrates that "deictic categories as well as empathy processes operate on a scale model of expansion from the realm of speaker's locus of subjectivity to that of the addressee and of a third person" (1991: 222). Fludernik's essay reflects the manner in which key advances on the use and functioning of pronouns are often deeply embroiled within discussions of deixis.

Literary narratology has tended to approach pronoun use from a different angle, though the timeline of attention is not dissimilar. The questions of 'who sees' and 'who speaks', and the relationship between them, was most explicitly raised by Genette (1980). These questions, bound up with concepts of voice, perspective and focalisation, were further explored, delineated and reformulated by Bal (1997 [1985]), Chatman (1980 [1978], 1990), Genette (1988), Margolin (1986/1987, 1991) and Rimmon-Kenan (2002 [1983]). In all of this work, discussion of pronoun use is prominent. At the same time as Gisa Rauh was putting together *Essays on Deixis* (1983), Ann Banfield was publishing *Unspeakable Sentences: Narration and Representation in the Language of Fiction* (1982), a seminal and controversial work addressing voice, narration and the relative markedness and functioning of first- and second-person modes, to which Fludernik's (1993) *The Fictions of Language and the Languages of Fiction: The Linguistic Representation of Speech and Consciousness* is in some ways a response.

The 1994 issue of *Style* (volume 28, issue 3), edited by Fludernik, presented a turn in the literary narratological discussion. The journal focussed on second-person narratives, though its exploration of odd address, multiple narrators and the like inevitably involved intertwined analysis of first person and other forms. In doing so, it brought pronoun use into the foreground, panning outward to related broader questions of focalisation. A cotemporaneous interest developed, from an experiential perspective, in 'natural' and 'unnatural' narrative situations (Fludernik 1996; Richardson 2006; Hansen et al. 2011; Alber et al. 2013; and, from a different angle, McHale 1987) and, relatedly, apostrophic and interactive

narratives (Kacandes 1993, 1994, 2001; Ryan 2001), with Hühn et al.'s (2009) collection somewhat tying these interests together. While Kacandes, McHale and Ryan give specific attention to pronouns within this wave of narrative theory, many of the other contributing theorists, though often discussing the likes of second-person narration and multi-person narration, let pronouns fall back into the background of a bigger picture of experimental narratives and experiential narratology.

Straddling linguistic and literary study, two major edited collections arose in 1995: Green's *New Essays in Deixis: Discourse, Narrative, Literature* and *Deixis in Narrative: A Cognitive Scientific Perspective*, edited by Duchan et al. Green's collection explores deixis in narrative, and includes influential work on the function of pronouns in constructing the narrating voice in fiction and the poetic persona in poetry. Duchan et al. add cognitive and computational insight to the foundational linguistic theory of deixis, developing it in relation to deictic functioning within literature. Building directly on the original work of Bühler (particularly his concept of *deixis am phantasma*), the early chapters in Duchan et al. represent formative thinking on deictic shifting (with a further iteration of Jespersen's 'shifters'), and related aspects such as deictic fields and edge-work, in literary contexts. This heritage directly informs cognitive-poetic discussions of pronouns in literature.

Partly following Emmott's (1997) work on the role of pronouns in narrative comprehension, Stockwell (2000, 2002) addresses the deictic functioning of pronouns in literature within his category of perceptual deixis, and his augmentation of Duchan et al.'s concept of deictic shifting. McIntyre (2006) in turn further advances this work in applying it to drama, and Gavins (2007; following Werth 1999) reorients deictic work on pronouns in her development of Text World Theory (see also Gibbons 2012; Giovanelli 2013). Herman (2002) draws upon the ideas of Duchan et al. and related cognitive narratology to expand the theory of deixis in literary narrative, and, significantly, to build on the seminal issue of *Style* by extrapolating different functions of *you*.

Recent empirical investigations into the role of pronouns in comprehension of texts, in comprehension of perspective and in evocation of reader empathy, amongst other areas—presenting complex and sometimes contrasting conflicting conclusions—can be found in Brunyé et al.

(2009, 2011), Macrae (2016), Rall and Harris (2000), Sanford and Emmott (2012), Van Peer and Chatman (2001), Whiteley (2011), and in a relatively rare exploration of deixis in poetry by Jeffries (2008). Developments in empirical research methods (e.g. Busselle and Bilandzic 2009) and cognitive and experiential theories of literary reading (e.g. Burke 2010; Popova 2015; Harrison 2017) promise further advancement in insights in readers' experiences of pronouns in literature.

Two other approaches to pronoun use in literary and non-literary texts warrant mention. Valuable work continues in the study of pronouns, specifically, in non-literary discourse types. Wales' (1996) *Personal Pronouns in Present-day English* provides an analysis of aspects of pronoun use in everyday spoken and written discourse, while Gardelle and Sorlin's collection *The Pragmatics of Personal Pronouns* presents pragmatic and socio-linguistic approaches to pronoun use in predominantly non-literary texts. Other pragmatic work on aspects of perspective in literary texts, addressing pronoun use to a smaller extent, includes Sell (1991) and Black (2005). Lastly, and most recently, with developments in computational corpus software, work within corpus stylistics which in part explores pronoun use is coming to the fore, including Demjen (2015), Mahlberg (2013) and Murphy (2015).

This section has provided an overview of the theoretical foundations of the essays in this book, and the research context within which it sits. The next section outlines the chapters of this volume and the contributions each makes to the advancement of scholarship on pronouns in literature.

1.3 Positions and Perspectives in This Volume

This volume charts the functions and effects of pronouns in literary contexts. It starts with explorations of the first-person pronoun in drama and poetry, and moves into studies concerning the subject dynamics of *I*, *you*, and other forms of odd-address in contemporary prose, before focusing on brief second-person passages in fiction. The book then reflects on the way in which linguistic structures might simultaneously disperse focalisation between two subjects. Next, plural modes of narration such as *We*-, *They*- and polyvocal narratives are discussed. Having considered each of

these pronominal narrative modes in turn, the volume lastly debates the functional constraints of pronouns in fictional contexts. In this section, we briefly spotlight each chapter and the advancement to knowledge that each contributor offers to the study of pronouns in literature.

In her contribution (Chap. 2), Katie Wales—author of the seminal book *Personal Pronouns in Present-Day English* (1996)—delivers a rhetorical stylistic analysis of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Wales concentrates on the first-person pronoun *I* as used in scenes involving the ghost of Hamlet's father in Act I of the play. Her analysis shows that whilst the pronouns *thou, he*, and *it* are employed apostrophically to address the ghost, they problematise and 'other' it; when the ghost finally does speak, the powerful use of first-person *I* and *me*—used in prosopopoeia; that is, as a rhetorical strategy which personifies an inanimate object by giving it the ability to speak—finally and dramatically reveal the true identity of the ghost. Overall, Wales' chapter develops the study of pronoun usage in early modern drama particularly since, whilst the pronouns *thou* and *you* (as instances of narrative apostrophe) have been the subject of many influential studies, *I* has been hitherto neglected.

Marcello Giovanelli (in Chap. 3) is also interested in first-person pronouns. His chapter explores *I* and *We* in two poems—'I, Too' and 'Youth'—by the twentieth century poet Langston Hughes, whose work he contextualises as part of the Harlem Renaissance cultural movement. His approach employs the cognitive-poetic framework of Text World Theory (Werth 1999; Gavins 2007), which uses the text-as-world metaphor to explain the ways in which readers construct mental representations. Building on work in his monograph *Text World Theory and Keats' Poetry* (2013), Giovanelli demonstrates that the Text World Theory concept of enactors (Emmott 1997)—the cognitive realisations of various different indices of a referent (e.g. past, present, and future selves of a single character)—enables readers to track and update their understanding of characters across a text. Moreover, because Giovanelli frames Hughes' two poems as examples of cross-writing, his analysis of the poems' enactors further accounts for the potentially different interpretations of adult and child readerships.

Both Andrea Macrae and Alison Gibbons explore pronouns in contemporary fiction, considering how they position readers and the

interpretive affect and effects which result from such positionings. Macrae (Chap. 4) considers how pronominal positionings can reflect agency and complicity within postcolonial narratives of trauma. Macrae's chapter, which uses Zoë Wicomb's historiographic, post-apartheid novel *David's Story* (2001) as its case study, therefore has an ethico-political dimension. In Chap. 5, Gibbons also considers metafictional strategies but in the context of autofiction, a genre that distorts the ontological boundaries between autobiography and fiction. Gibbons' work has consistently explored how textual and stylistic features negotiate and blur the ontological divide between reality and virtuality and her monograph *Multimodality, Cognition, and Experimental Literature* (2012) is particularly interested in the effect of pronouns—alongside demonstratives, paratexts, and images—in multimodal contexts on world creation. In this volume, and concentrating on Ben Lerner's *10:04* (2014), Gibbons develops what she calls a "Cognitive-Stylistic Model of Autonarration" to account for the devices, centrally including pronouns, which trouble the distinction between fact and fiction in contemporary autofictions.

Chapter 6 by Joshua Parker and Chap. 7 by Helen de Hoop and Kim Schreurs both pay attention to diffusions of focalisation and narration. Parker draws on Genette's narratological model of ontological levels (1980, 1988). In doing so, he hones in on the way in which narrative uses of *you* can function metaleptically; that is, to address a *you* who exists on a conventionally distinct narrative level (e.g. a narrator in the fiction appears to speak to a reader in reality). Rather than focusing on sustained cases of second-person fiction, Parker offers an original approach to *you* by considering its impact when it appears in the introductions, intermittent passages, and conclusions of fictions that are otherwise predominantly written in traditional third- or first-person narration.

Helen de Hoop—who edited the *Journal of Literary Semantics*' special issue on 'Person and Perspective in Language and Literature' (Volume 43, Issue 2; see Hogeweg et al. 2014)—has previously explored the use of second-person pronouns in literature using quantitative analysis (de Hoop and Hogeweg 2014). De Hoop and Schreurs, in their collaborative contribution to this volume, investigate genitive constructions, which articulate a linguistic relationship of possession (or close association) between two nouns (e.g. *our* friend). To do so, they employ both corpus

and experimental methods to discover the effect of genitive constructions on shifts in perspective and on readers' narrative engagement.

The chapters in the latter half of the volume—by Jan Alber, Catherine Emmott, Monika Fludernik, and Marina Grishakova—all focus on plurality of voice in narration. In Chap. 8, Alber—a leading figure in the study of pronoun use in unnatural narratives (see Alber 2015, 2016; Alber et al. 2013)—deals with the rather rare phenomenon of third-person plural narration. His chapter demonstrates that *they*-narratives can work to emphasise the relationships between individual characters and larger social groups and, although not inherently ideological, can consequently articulate a social world-view. Emmott's contribution (Chap. 9) also links pronouns and narrative voice to depictions of social structures. Whilst Emmott's previous research advanced knowledge about the cognitive-psychological processing of pronouns (1997; Sanford and Emmott 2012), in this volume she explores the role of pronouns in expressing issues of neglect and alienation in *we*-narration.

Monika Fludernik's books *The Fictions of Language and the Languages of Fiction* (1993) and *Towards a "Natural" Narratology* (1996) pioneered the study of pronouns in literature, and her articles on second-person fictions initiated stylistic and narratological examinations into narrative pronouns in experimental writing. In Chap. 10, Fludernik explores the heterogeneity of *we*-narration, specifically the tension between inclusive and exclusive *we*, generality and individuality, shared and individual experience. Following in Chap. 11, Marina Grishakova—whose research has explored the representation of unnatural or "virtual" voices (2011) and the textual constructions of authors in fiction (2012)—connects polyvocal forms of narration (extended subjectivity, *we*-narration and what Grishakova refers to as "liminal deixis") to readers' active world-making processes. In doing so, she argues that the poetics of pronouns can be used to question political and social categories.

Henrik Skov Nielsen, in Chap. 12, also poses questions. These centre on the workings of pronouns in literary contexts *vs*. non-fictional conversational discourse. Nielsen—whose research has previously centred on unnatural narratives and fictionality (2011, 2014, 2016; Nielsen et al. 2015)—takes a rhetorical perspective on pronouns, contending that literary discourse should be understood as invented. This position leads

Nielsen to provocatively argue that pronouns in literature are processed differently to pronouns in non-literary discourse due to the contextual assumption of fictionality that readers bring to literary texts.

Finally, in his postscript, Brian Richardson traces literary experiments in pronoun usages as well as the development of critical approaches to pronouns in literature. He reviews the volume as a whole, highlighting the scholarly advancements made by the collection and deftly drawing out key themes connecting the chapters. One such theme relates to the use of pronouns in unnatural narratives, an area of research that Richardson pioneered, first with his monograph *Unnatural Voices: Extreme Narration in Modern and Contemporary Fiction* (2006) and more recently in *Unnatural Narrative: Theory, History, and Practice* (2015). Other themes include the relationship of pronouns to questions of fictionality and metafictionality, the reception of pronouns in literature by readers, shifts of pronominal perspective, and the ways in which pronouns can underline ethical questions about subjective relationships—between the self and others, inclusivity and exclusivity, society and alienation.

Ultimately, this book advances understanding of the workings of pronouns in literary contexts in relation to these aforementioned themes as well as across genres (drama, poetry and prose). The chapters in *Pronouns in Literature*—by Wales, Giovanelli, Macrae, Gibbons, Parker, de Hoop and Schreurs, Alber, Emmott, Fludernik, Grishakova, Nielsen, and Richardson—demonstrate the diversity of approaches in cutting-edge research into the effects of pronouns, and also reveal that pronouns in literature have diverse effects. Pronouns are a flexible facet of language and the perspectives on pronouns in literature offered in this volume reveal their unique character.

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2

"I Am Thy Father's Spirit": The First-Person Pronoun and the Rhetoric of Identity in *Hamlet*

Katie Wales

2.1 Introduction

The discourse pronouns *thou* and *you* have been much discussed and analysed in literature of earlier periods in English, especially in the genre of drama, following Brown and Gilman's influential study in 1972 [1960] (see, for example, Wales 1983; Calvo 1992; Adamson 2001). These pronouns, and particularly *thou*, have also been the focus of studies of lyric poetry, with its characteristic use of apostrophe (see notably Culler 2001). However, there has been very little stylistic or pragmatic interest in the first-person pronoun *I,* although its use in memoir and autobiography is all pervasive, and its rhetorical function as *prosopopoeia* is well-known in poetry and children's fiction, for example.

In this chapter I shall try to tease out the relationship between *I* and its rhetorical function as a sign of prosopopoeia in drama, since in Elizabethan drama in particular, prosopopoeia and also apostrophe are notably salient. I shall use the scenes involving the Ghost in Act I of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

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as my theatre of analysis. Although the relationship between Hamlet and the Ghost has been much discussed through the ages, like the play itself as a whole, and the dramaturgy of the Ghost's presentation much praised (e.g. as "truly spectacular" in Pearlman 2002: 72; see also Greenblatt 2001: 156–157), stylistic attention to it has been scant. Nash (1989) offers a promising discourse analysis of Act I of the play in terms of the building up of tension, but strangely only deals with the first scene, so does not get as far as even the Ghost or Hamlet's appearances. As we shall see, however, just as Shakespeare's presentation of the Ghost is far from conventional in the revenge-drama tradition, so his use of the prosopopoeic-*I* throws into relief contemporary schemas of ghost discourse and ontology, based on both medieval and classical beliefs. His use of *I* also acts as a plot device and stylistic means of suspense; and more generally foregrounds the very nature of first-person reference and its relations to subjectivity and person-hood. However, the presentation of the Ghost also throws into relief the inter-connectedness of *I* with other pronouns of address and reference.

2.2 Prosopopoeia Dissected

Both prosopopoeia and apostrophe are traditionally seen as extensions of personification, or metaphorical anthropomorphism, in which an inanimate entity is given human attributes, or an entity and human are blended. In a rhetorical, rather than conventional conversational dyad, a human can address an object (with *thou* or *you*); and an object can respond (with *I*). Both *personification* and *prosopopoeia* (from the Greek) literally mean "face-making". Hillis Miller's definition of prosopopoeia echoes this etymology: "the ascription to entities that are not really alive first of a *name,* then of a face, and finally … of a voice" (1990: 5; original emphasis). (For a discussion of definitions, see Wales 2015: 96–97). I would argue that "voice" is the primary marker or token: so *I* and prosopopoeia exist in a symbiotic relationship, just as *you/thou* for apostrophe. The *I* speaks to activate its being, to signal its existence, just as apostrophe, in positing the possibility of a reply, implies the power of speech in an object (Garber 1987: 137).

"Voice" is essential to drama: as text-world theorists would argue (e.g. Gavins 2007) characters "speak" textually to each other in their text-world, which is activated in reading by readers in the real world; and in performance by actors to each other to an overhearing audience in the discourse world. Actors literally "speak" their roles, and indirectly speak to the audience: the character-*I* is overlaid by or blended with an actor-*I* (see also McConachie 2008: 42–43). While the character-*I* remains the same, the actor-*I,* the theatrical "deictic centre" in Gavins' terms (2007: 86), varies from production to production, decade to decade, century to century. It is the rich oral dimension that distinguishes drama from the novel, and from most of modern poetry, but many stylistic and linguistic studies of drama have tended to avoid performance issues.

In a rare study of the semiotics of the pronoun *I* some twenty-five years ago, Urban (1981) would seem at the outset to offer a promising approach to analysing the rich functions of *I* in both actual and theatrical discourse, especially since he does distinguish a "theatrical-*I*". Ultimately, though, his argument is too narrowly focussed. His emphasis is on anaphoric reference, not usually seen as a property of *I;* so we can distinguish degrees of anaphoric reference in (my examples):

> He said: "I am thy father's spirit" (direct speech)
> "I am thy father's spirit" (free direct speech or Urban's "dequotative")
> Ghost: "I am thy father's spirit" (Urban's "theatrical")

This last example, however, presupposes the stage directions of a printed text, to which the *I* can refer back; a truly "theatrical" *I* must be exophoric (Halliday and Hasan 1976), mimicking the normal discourse role of the pronoun. Interestingly, Urban introduces a theatrical image into his account of basic anaphora: "Anaphoric 'I' is metaphorical in that the speaker is suggesting that he is to be understood as 'like an I' […] [it] entails a kind of play acting on the part of the speaker of the utterance, who regards himself as momentarily taking on the role of the third-person referent" (1981: 35).

When Urban finally acknowledges the physical theatre, he does so in order to keep distinct his "anaphoric" (sic), that is, his textual *I* from the "indexical referential" *I* "of the individual playing the role" (1981: 37). In

practice, however, the distinction becomes hard to maintain. As he himself goes on to admit, many actors become so immersed in their role as to take on the properties of their character: indeed, it is usually expected of them in naturalistic theatre. So their voice becomes the voice of the character, as in ventriloquism, or as in trance medium discourse: the actor "im-person-ates" (see Wales 2009: 351). I shall return to further implications of this for *Hamlet's* Ghost below. Moreover, drama offers a further idiosyncratic kind of intrusion, or blurring of discourse and text worlds: when the author becomes an actor becoming a character. So there is the theatrical story that Shakespeare himself played the Ghost, his voice blended with the character's (Bevington 2011: 28). Garber (1987: 71–72) cannot resist the punch-line: "thus [Shakespeare is] becoming his own ghost-writer" (1987: 71–72).[1]

Without explicitly mentioning prosopopoeia, one of Urban's conclusions is that "virtually anything can be construed as a speaker […]. The discourse 'I' can […] be any being or entity, imaginary or not, capable as being reported as a speaker" (1981: 28–29). For the Greek and Roman rhetoricians, prosopopoeia was similarly uncircumscribed. Indeed, it could be used to represent an absent person as present and speaking, just as apostrophe could be a vocative address to an absentee. Apostrophe originated in an orator's literally "turning away" from his immediate audience to address some other person, who could be physically present. Moreover, both prosopopoeia and apostrophe could be used with reference to the dead, either speaking or being addressed: a truly cosmic power. As Quintilian stated, quoted in Greenblatt, "it is allowable even to bring down the gods from heaven and evoke the dead" (2001: 251). Greenblatt himself aptly adds that prosopopoeia is "the rhetorical device that lies behind all haunting" (2001: 251), perhaps echoing Paul de Man, who defines prosopopoeia as "the fiction of the voice-from-beyond-the-grave" (1984; cited Garber 1987: 137). So Aeneas converses with his dead father in the Underworld in Virgil's *Aeneid*; and ghosts of the dead seeking revenge for their murders are carried over from Greek and Senecan plays via translations into the Elizabethan, into a tradition upon which Shakespeare draws in *Hamlet:* e.g. Thomas Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* (1587). (See Moorman (1906) for an extensive account of this tradition.)

This wider compass of both prosopopoeia and apostrophe raises a critical question, however. If absentees can speak or be addressed, then to what extent are the figures to be seen as metaphors, as mere rhetorical devices? And to what extent also are conversations with the dead simply a matter of literary licence? There are clearly philosophical and ontological implications of the dead being able to speak, and the matter has indeed been much debated over the centuries. For Shakespeare and his audience there was a complex set of belief systems and schemas concerning ghosts from a wide variety of sources, and overlapping with those, schemas involving witchcraft, magic, superstition, necromancy and demonic possession. There is no doubt that for many people ghosts were real. The spotlight then is on what it meant to be a ghost and what it meant to "speak". Shakespeare could indeed have simply taken the convention of ghost-speak for granted, as his literary predecessors had done; but as we shall see from an analysis of the first Act, *Hamlet* problematises the convention: Shakespeare is manipulating linguistic ambiguities for textual effects of plot and suspense. As a result, the very notion of an *I* is also foregrounded and problematised, raising issues of "animate-ness"; "person-hood"; "person-ality"; "subjectivity"; "identity"; "im-person-ation", as well as "voice" itself.

2.3 *Hamlet* Act 1: The Ghost Dis-membered

As many critics have noted, the ghost in *Hamlet* is not the conventional Prologue-ghost who appears before the action proper: he/it is integrated into the structure of the play and provides the motivation for its action (see, for example, Moorman 1906; Wells 1991; Pearlman 2002). Yet we might want to agree with Greenblatt that in the first Act "it[sic] appears in [just] three scenes and speaks in only two" (2001: 3). However, these three scenes are artfully constructed to create suspense; and the Ghost's delayed moment of speaking mirrors the play's theme of delay in action. Scene i (with the Ghost) is followed by scenes ii and iii (without); but the Ghost's pervasive influence is felt in the account to Hamlet in scene ii of the facts of the apparition. Scenes iv and v (with the Ghost) lead to the climax of Act I, as Hamlet and the Ghost take centre stage and the Ghost at last begins to speak. Moreover, in the three Ghost scenes there are three

main addresses or apostrophes, each one more powerful than its predecessor; and in scene v the Ghost's 85 lines of speech more than outnumber Hamlet's 11 lines in his presence. Indeed, as Dover Wilson argues (1930: x), 550 lines out of the 850 lines of the first Act are concerned with the Ghost—nearly 65%. Clustered and interwoven within these lines are significant (pro-)nominal references, hinting at possible identities; and the apparent contradictions of these references enrich the characterisation of the Ghost even before it/he begins to speak.

The play begins (Act I i) *in medias res,* and with an interrogative pronoun. "*Who*'s there?" asks Barnardo, the sentinel on the guard's platform of Elsinore.[2] In retrospect this conventional formula is steeped in dramatic irony, as the identity of the apparition that has already appeared even before the play has begun, and which will appear again, is itself interrogated. The first reference is also embedded in a question:

> *Marcellus:* What, has this *thing* appeared again tonight?

Marcellus is simply not able to describe clearly what he has seen, since the thing itself is "incapable of being precisely described" (this is one of the *Oxford English Dictionary*'s definitions of 'thing', and this quotation the dictionary's earliest example for this definition). Clearly also it is not natural, and there are connotations of horror: in Marcellus's next speech it is *this dreaded sight* and *this apparition*. So too in *Julius Caesar* (IV iii), when the Ghost of Caesar appears to Brutus:

> I think it is the weakness of mine eyes
> That shapes this *monstrous apparition.*
> *It* comes upon me. Art *thou* any *thing?*

Horatio later emphasises its potential for disrupting the natural order; at the same time intensifying the baleful atmosphere of this first scene. Not only does "*it* harrow [him] with fear and wonder", but also bodes "some strange eruption to our state". Elsewhere in Shakespeare's plays *thing* can have a contemptuous connotation of "base thing" or "creature" (Crystal and Crystal 2002: 448), which cannot be ruled out for Marcellus here.

Interestingly, the *OED*'s earliest reference for *thing* referring to an inanimate object is not till 1689; but the definition there of an

inanimate object as a "being without life or consciousness" raises questions about the ontological status of a ghost, which, if the spirit of a dead person, in this sense is clearly non-animate and lacking personhood. Not surprisingly then, Marcellus, Barnardo and Horatio repeatedly refer to the Ghost as *it* both before and after the stage direction *Enter Ghost.* Both the Ghost and Horatio are urged to speak, but the Ghost is dumb:

Marcellus: Thou art a scholar; speak to *it,* Horatio […]
Barnardo: *It* would be spoke to.
Marcellus: Speak to *it*, Horatio.
Horatio: *What* art *thou* that usurp'st this time of night […]
…By heaven I charge *thee* speak.
Marcellus: *It* is offended […]
Horatio: Stay! Speak, speak. I charge *thee* speak. *[Exit Ghost]*
Marcellus: *'Tis* gone and will not answer

Notably Horatio here uses *thou,* the conventional form of general address and apostrophe in Shakespeare's time (Hope 2003: 78), but which was also a salient feature of address to super-natural phenomena of all kinds, whether spirits, devils or angels (Wales 1996: 77). Lavater ([1570] 1572), in his *Ghosts and Spirits Walking by Night,* a work well known in its time, advises his reader not to worry if confronted by some spirit stirring and "rumbl[ing]", but to say "boldly […] get *thee* hence […] *thou* has nothing to do with me" (Dover Wilson and Yardley 1930: 192, my emphasis). As Dover Wilson himself also notes (1930: xxi), Marcellus' comment that Horatio is a "scholar" reflects the belief that spirits and devils should be addressed in Latin. Indeed, Horatio's two addresses in this scene, and Hamlet's own address in scene iv below, suggest also the traditional *discretio spirituum,* the interrogation of spirits by scholars (see Greenblatt 2001: 210).

That the Ghost moves infers animat-ion, like an animal; but he/it has also an embodied form, apparently human: "fair and warlike" (Horatio), identifiable to them all specifically both in clothes and in facial expression. It was a long-held belief that a man's clothes were viewed as part of his person-ality, so would comprise part of the distinctive features believed to be retained by the spirit or soul after death (Schmitt 1998: 25). This

ghost is not the conventional revenge-ghost, wrapped in a generic winding-sheet (cf. Moorman 1906: 93–94), but person-alised, and so prone to masculine reference:

Marcellus: Is *it* not like the King?
Horatio: As thou art to thyself.
Such was the very armour *he* had on,
When *he* the ambitious Norway combated;
So frowned *he* once […]
Marcellus: Thus twice before […]
With martial stalk hath *he* gone by our watch […]

Horatio's *he* clearly refers to the dead King; Marcellus subconsciously perhaps now identifies him with the Ghost. The vacillation of the pronouns emphasises their uncertainty as to whether the Ghost is non-human or human and masculine.

When the Ghost appears again, however, their fear makes them revert to incorporeality in their reference and address:

Horatio: But soft, behold, lo, where *it* comes again!
I'll cross *it*, though *it* blast me. Stay *illusion.* [*It spreads his arms*][3]

Horatio may simply wish to cross the Ghost's path, but his possible making of the sign of the cross raises the new possibility that its/his identity can be doubted, that it/he is actually a devil or evil spirit, hence superhuman, and I return to this below. Horatio's second attempt at an address is longer than his first and more incantatory, an adjuration or conjuration rather than apostrophe, but with again the repetition of the imperative *speak.* There is an almost hysterical sense of urgency: to speak would confirm its existence and its real identity. Any doubts would be allayed by the Ghost's self-identification—wouldn't they?

If *thou* hast any sound or use of voice,
Speak to me.
If there be any good thing to be done
That may to *thee* do ease and grace to me,
Speak to me.

If *thou* art privy to *thy* country's fate […]
O *speak!*
Or if *thou* hast uphoarded in *thy* life
Extorted treasure in the womb of earth,
For which, they say, *you spirits* oft walk in death,
[The cock crows]
Speak of it. Stay and *speak.* Stop *it* Marcellus […]
Marcellus: *'Tis* gone […]
Barnardo: *It was about to speak* when the cock crew.
Horatio: And then *it* started like a guilty *thing* […]

Horatio's direct address to the Ghost and his conversations with the guards that follow it until the end of the scene raise a whole range of possibilities about the characteristics of *spirits* that were clearly part of popular ghost-lore, suggested by clauses such as "they say" [twice]; "I have heard"; "so have I heard"; "some say": that they could be ominously prophetic; that they came back to search for buried treasure; that they feared the cock-crow of dawn, et cetera. Horatio's first consideration is that the Ghost might in fact be dumb, unable to speak, like Banquo's Ghost in *Macbeth*, but at the end of the scene he surmises that the Ghost has the wrong audience: "This spirit dumb to us, will speak to him" i.e. Hamlet. It was a common belief, in fact, that ghosts only spoke of their own accord to the person with whom they really wished to communicate (Stoll 1960: 211); and certainly not to a group, even though, as in this play, there could be clear witnesses.

If, however, as Horatio suggests here, the Ghost had "any sound or use of voice", how could this be so? To be em-bodied is to presuppose the power of speech: but after the throat-rattle of death would the voice-box survive? Would a spirit sound different from his/its living counterpart? The audience is left in suspense at this moment, precisely because the ghost does not speak. Certainly, it was a common belief that the Bible proved that God and his angels could speak, without mouths and tongues (Schmitt 1998: 201); and that after death the soul could find the power to speak, without the help of the body (Greenblatt 2001: 117); or could speak from the stomach in a kind of ventriloquism (Schmitt 1998: 201).

The tension created by the Ghost's appearance and questions about its/his identity is suspended while the action moves from the eerie battlements

to the warmth of the celebrations for Claudius's marriage to his dead brother's wife Gertrude (I iii). But at the end of the scene, Hamlet, now alone and bitterly contemplating his mother's hasty re-marriage, is engaged by Horatio and the guards all eager to tell him what they have seen. In an exchange full of dramatic irony the subject of the Ghost is introduced by an artful pronominal link:

Hamlet: *'A* [he] was a man, take *him* for all in all,
I shall not look upon *his like* again.
Horatio: My lord, I think I saw *him* yesternight.

Grammatically anaphoric, Horatio's *him* is also an audacious blend, in Fauconnier and Turner's terms (2002), of ontological spaces, of this world and the next. I shall return to this issue below.

In his companions' account to Hamlet, and in his own quick-fire cross-examination of them, the pronouns *he* and *it* oscillate widely; combined with the felicitous grammatical ambiguity of *his* (with inanimate or masculine reference), the pronominal usages reinforce the impression of their wavering between belief and non-belief.

Horatio: […] *A figure like your father* […]
Appears before them […] Thrice *he* walked […]
The *apparition* comes. I knew your father.
These hands are not more like […]
Hamlet: Did you not speak to *it*? […]
Horatio: But answer made *it* none. Yet once methought
It lifted up *it* [its] head and did address
Itself to motion like as *it* would speak […]
Hamlet: Then saw you not *his* face?
Horatio: O yes, my lord. *He* wore *his* beaver up.
Hamlet: What, looked *he* frowning? […]
And fixed *his* eyes upon you? […]
[…] Stayed *it* long? […]
His beard was grizzled, no? […]
Perchance *'t* will walk again […]
Hamlet: If *it assume* my noble father's *person,*
I'll speak to *it* […]

Hamlet's soliloquy at the end of the scene confirms his doubts:

> *My father's spirit*-in arms? All is not well.
> I doubt [fear] some foul play […]

Once again suspense is created, as the audience waits for further revelations, visual and verbal.

Act I iv is dominated by Hamlet's own dramatic inquisition of the Ghost, raising again conflicting possibilities of identity, of a good or bad spirit. It is prefaced by an apostrophe, a plea for holy protection: "Angels and ministers of grace defend us!" and echoes Brutus's address to Caesar's ghost (*Julius Caesar* IV iii): "Art *thou* some god, some angel, or some devil".

> Be *thou* a spirit of health or goblin damned,
> Bring with *thee* airs from heaven or blasts from hell
> Be *thy intents wicked or charitable,*
> *Thou* com'st in such a questionable [i.e. inviting interrogation] shape,
> That I will speak to *thee* […]

Yet he decides:

> I'll call *thee* Hamlet,
> King, father, royal Dane […]

It is as if, in a kind of baptism, he can will the apparition to be his father. His string of rapid questions demands answers ("Say, why is this? Wherefore? What should we do?") but the Ghost responds only in gestures and movement. This is enough to raise the possibility again that it/he means harm, tempting Hamlet away, as evil spirits were wont to do, to "assume some other horrible form" (Horatio) and make him mad. Certainly the Protestant and Catholic churches alike in this period tended to regard ghosts as demons disguised (Rockwell 1981: 43; Warner 2006: 132). An evil spirit could have "assumed" the form of Hamlet's father, taken possession, im-personated him, his voice ventriloquised in this sense. Interestingly, George Puttenham (1936 [1589]) in his *Arte of*

English Poesie called the whole figure of prosopopoeia itself a type of impersonation. With this possibility raised, the pronoun of reference amongst the group reverts to *it*, not *he*:

Horatio:	*It* beckons you to go away with *it,*
	As if *it* some impartment did desire
	To you alone.
Marcellus:	Look with what courteous action
	It waves you to a more removed ground.
	But do not go with *it* […]
Hamlet:	*It* will not speak. Then I will follow *it* […]
	It waves me forth again. I'll follow *it* […]
	It waves me still. Go on; I'll follow *thee.*

2.4 I Am Thy Father's Spirit

Act I v finally resolves the suspense, for Hamlet and for the audience. In exasperation on the battlements alone with the Ghost he cries: "Whither wilt *thou* lead me? Speak; I'll go no further."

Dramatically and succinctly the Ghost speaks: in one short imperative that comprises just one metrical foot: "Mark *me*". This is no animal cry, no squeaking or gibbering that Horatio has referred to in scene I, but articulate language articulated in a human voice: hence "personal, animate and expressive" (Connor 2014: 7, 17). The first-person pronoun re-animates the Ghost, even though he/it has already materialised: *loquor, ergo sum,* "I speak, therefore I am" (Lyons 1982: 104). The *I* is thus a metonym for his self-hood; and the dramatic "*I* am thy father's spirit" proclaims and confirms his identity explicitly.

For the actor on stage, corporeal though he is, there are interesting possibilities in the degree of masculinity and humanity to be conveyed. The more normal the articulation the more the audience might assume the Ghost's (male) ordinariness. The more ghost-ly, the greater the possible connotation of the super-natural. Certainly the Ghost's whole discourse might provide prosodic and phonetic hints in this direction. In his long speech of self-presentation describing his own murder and bodily

decay, three lines are metrically incomplete, with only two or three main stresses instead of the expected five, as if he is having trouble drawing breath ("To those of mine / / /"; "And prey on garbage / / /"; "All my smooth body / / /"). The frequent use of voiceless and voiced fricatives suggests a prosody of an unnerving unearthly noise or hiss:

> […] fast in fires,
> Till the foul crimes […]
> Are burnt […]
> […] freeze thy young blood
> […] like stars start from their spheres […]
> The serpent that did sting thy father's life […]
> That swift as quicksilver […]
> Most lazarlike with vile and loathsome crust

One line reveals foregrounded three-fold repetition of just one adjective, beginning with a glottal fricative, uttered from the back of the throat, and prefaced by a groaning interjectory "O": "O, horrible! O, horrible! Most horrible!"[4] Garber's expressive description of a ghost is dramatically embodied by the Ghost here: "an articulation of the disarticlated and inarticulate" (1987: 15).

What this line and others in his discourse also reveal is that the impassioned Ghost has feelings: of anger, revulsion and pity. He has a personality. He also has a memory: of how he was murdered. The speaking *I* is also a thinking *I,* the locus of subjectivity, defined by Fludernik as the "true sense of self and of emotion and thought" (1993: 432). It was certainly a common theological belief that the soul was capable of feeling, hence suffering the tortures of hell or purgatory (Schmitt 1998: 196–197). As such, he arouses pity in Hamlet the listener, and is a focus of sympathy: "Alas, poor *ghost*".

Moreover, the *I* in being uttered is a particular kind of deictic centre, involving time and space, blurring ontological boundaries and blending two specific text worlds: the world to which young Hamlet belongs and to which the Ghost has returned from the past at that moment in time ("I am"); and the world, a "prison house", beyond the grave, invoked by the Ghost to which he must return in the immediate future, at daybreak

"to fast in fires" for a "certain term". Whilst many critics have debated the kind of world to which the Ghost now belongs in a post-Reformation era when Purgatory technically had no place (e.g. Moorman 1905–1906; Greenblatt 2001), nonetheless the metaphysical ambiguities raised by the text reconfirm the complexity of Shakespeare's presentation of the Ghost overall.

"*It* is an honest ghost" Hamlet concludes to his friends after the Ghost has gone. The prosopopoeic *I* speaks the truth; and hence the Ghost is the enactor who precipitates the play's action of revenge. All would appear to be resolved; yet, despite this, Hamlet's doubts as to the Ghost's identity return, complicating the action, and doubt and certainty alternate: "The *spirit* that I have seen / May be a devil…" (II ii); "I'll take the *ghost's* word for a thousand pound" (III ii).

To Hamlet alone has the Ghost spoken and revealed his identity. It is not, however, his identity we the audience must doubt, despite the many potential selves his gradual presentation has raised, but Hamlet's own, which is crucial for the rest of the play. Both Hamlet and the Ghost together nicely illustrate Lyons's dictum that "one's personal identity is created and continually restructured by one's use of language": what he calls "locutionary subjectivism" (1982: 105). Viewed from another perspective the unusual conversational dyad between the Ghost and Hamlet, symbolised in the *I* and the *thou*, is entirely appropriate for a play in which, as a whole, as Herman states, the canonical speech situation is hardly the norm anyway: throughout, "situations in which speaking is guarded, secretive, ambiguous or mad and hearing illegitimate, clandestine, restricted or manipulated are pervasive" (1995: 35).

2.5 Conclusion

It is a truth universally acknowledged that *Hamlet* is a play about delay; and in Act I the delay is built into the dramaturgy, helping to create the sense of a powerful supernatural presence. Shakespeare's handling of the discourses involving the Ghost highlights the suspense. I have tried to show by a detailed analysis how the use of the pronouns *thou, he* and *it* both enrich the character of the Ghost yet at the same time problematise

it. The prosopopoeic-*I* is tantalisingly delayed until scene v, and in consequence also the Ghost's claim to his true identity. Shakespeare has already by this scene raised metaphysical questions by drawing on traditional cultural and literary schemas of ghostliness, but the prosopopoeic-*I* compounds these: the ghost is the catalyst for the fundamental issues of person-hood, person-ality, self-hood and subjectivity.

Notes

1. It must also be noted that within the play the Ghost is played by another actor, the Player King, Act III, ii, in the embedded mime or dumbshow of *The Mousetrap*. The Ghost's unwillingness to speak until the third scene of Act I can be seen to anticipate this.
2. All quotations from *Hamlet* are taken from the Signet Classic edition (1963), based on the Second Quarto and the First Folio. Quotations from other Shakespeare plays are taken from the Cambridge Text of John Dover Wilson (1987). The italics of pronouns and noun phrases are my own and are intended to highlight significant vacillations of identity.
3. In Shakespeare's time, *it spreads his [sic] arms* would have been grammatically correct, since *his* was an archaic form of the 'neuter' possessive. See further Adamson (2001: 214–215).
4. Bate and Rasmussen (2008: 189–193) have a section on staging the Ghost which could be further developed from the perspective of the phonetics of performance in different productions. For example, in one production in 1965 the ghost resembled a "Dalek" (p. 191), but no notes are provided on the voice quality, disappointingly. In a 2004 production the Ghost's mouth was "contorted into a silent scream"; and he "hawks up his speeches in an agonised vomit of vengefulness" (p. 193).

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3

"We Have Tomorrow Bright Before Us Like a Flame": Pronouns, Enactors, and Cross-Writing in *The Dream Keeper and Other Poems*

Marcello Giovanelli

3.1 Introduction

Langston Hughes (1902–1967) was a renowned and celebrated twentieth-century African-American poet who contributed significant literary outputs in the cultural movement known as the Harlem Renaissance. He also published poetry for children including *The Dream Keeper and Other Poems* (Hughes 1932/1994). Literary scholars regard this collection as an early example of cross-writing, a genre that communicates to both adult and child readerships. Critical commentary on the collection frequently concentrates both on its representation of children and its quality of dual-voice. This chapter draws on these literary-critical concerns to explore Hughes' use of first-person pronouns in order to demonstrate how ambiguous, dual referents are an important stylistic feature of Hughes' status as an early cross-writer. In this chapter, I refer to work within cognitive linguistics to frame my discussion of pronouns and pronoun use. More specifically, I use Text World Theory (Werth 1999; Gavins 2007) and its

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notion of the text-world enactor to provide cognitive poetic analyses of two of Hughes' poems from *The Dream Keeper*: 'I, Too' and 'Youth'.

This chapter begins with a brief overview both of Hughes as a poet and of the Harlem Renaissance, placing *The Dream Keeper* within the context of what was an important historical, cultural and literary movement. I then sketch out a working definition of cross-writing, a term that has received a great deal of recent critical attention in the field of children's literary studies. In the remainder of the chapter, I undertake a Text World Theory analysis of my chosen poems to show how drawing on the notion of the enactor can offer a rigorous and principled way of exploring pronoun patterning in the poems.

3.2 The Harlem Renaissance, Hughes and *The Dream Keeper*

The Harlem Renaissance had its origins as a cultural movement in the northern migration of African-Americans from southern states between 1920 and 1930. Although migration took people to various cities on the north-eastern coast, a large African-American community was established in the Harlem area of New York City. The movement has been largely characterised as reinventing black cultural identity through artistic and intellectual engagement with historical narratives, and with the establishing of an African-American literary tradition that drew on and celebrated folk culture, political debate and the vernacular as legitimate forms of expression (Chaney 2007; Hutchison 2007). Langston Hughes is generally viewed as an integral part of the Harlem Renaissance both as a thinker and a poet, and his writing shows a deep interest in some of its central concerns: aesthetics, politics, the vernacular tradition and the socially-oriented focus of literature, and in particular poetry. According to Sanders (2007: 107), Hughes was the "veritable icon of the Harlem Renaissance", a binding force whose own unswerving commitment towards equality and the promotion of a shared collective identity meant that he was keen to break down perceived barriers amongst communities and to draw readers from different backgrounds and generations towards the shared pleasures of literature.

The *Dream-Keeper* was not a new collection of Hughes' verse. Following a request from a children's librarian for a selection of poetry that would

appeal to young readers, Hughes selected fifty-nine poems from his first poetry collection, *The Weary Blues* (1926), and from material that had previously been published in journals and magazines. *The Dream Keeper* was originally published by Alfred Knopf in 1932 and then later re-issued by the same publisher in 1994 with revised accompanying illustrations and some additional poems (for full details, see Ostrom 2002: 105–106). Literary critics have discussed Hughes' wide ranging portrayal of the human spirit (Johnson 2003), his belief in the child as the centre of cultural re-invention in the Harlem Renaissance and as visionary and agent of social change (Capshaw Smith 2011). The collection is viewed as promoting both a strong cultural identity (Hogan 2004) and cross-generational dialogue (Tracy 2002; Anatol 2007).

3.3 Cross-writing

Cross-over fiction is generally defined as either fiction primarily written for adults that is read by children, or fiction that is primarily written for children that is read by adults (Beckett 2009). Whereas cross-reading is the act of what Falconer (2009: 368) calls "crossing a boundary", a reader's deliberate repositioning of the self to engage with literature that was meant for a different age group, cross-writing is a consciously crafted attempt by a writer to address both children and adults in the same text. For some critics, the concept of cross-writing involves explicit attention in varying degrees to this double audience. For example, Shavit argues that, in cross-writing, the child is simply a "pseudo-addressee" (2009: 71) while the real implied reader is an adult one. Similarly, Wall (1991: 35) suggests that cross-writing may involve either "double address", speaking to a child and adult readership at different points, or "dual address" (rare in her opinion) whereby children and adults are simultaneous narratees. However, the adult-child distinction is questionable (see for example Rudd 2010 on why a static notion of a 'child reader' is problematic) and might be better replaced by Gubar's (2013) notion of kinship that emphasises continuities between adult and child readers and takes a more fluid stance to readerly identity; we can after all read as an adult and as a child.

In this chapter, I acknowledge this problematic notion of identity and readership by instead framing my analysis within the definition proposed

by Knoepflmacher and Myers (1997). Treating cross-writing as a genre that explicitly sets up its parameters to force a kind of interplay between readerly identities, Knoepflmacher and Myers argue that cross-writing is always "a dialogic mix of older and younger voices" that invites readers to engage in a "colloquy between past and present selves" (1997: vii).

3.4 Text World Theory and Pronouns

Text World Theory is a cognitive discourse grammar that offers a coherent apparatus for analysing both context and text. Text World Theory scholars work within a framework of three conceptual levels. First, discourse participants communicate within the parameters of the discourse-world, "the immediate situation which surrounds human beings as they communicate with one another" (Gavins 2007: 9). Participants may share the same discourse-world (as in face-to-face communication) or, as in the case of the majority of written discourse, the discourse-world may be split between participants who are separated in time and/or space. Through their interaction, participants create text-worlds, rich mental representations of the discourse itself. Text-worlds are set up deictically through world-building elements (aspects of time, place and characters) and developed through function-advancing propositions (actions and events that drive the narrative and modify the contents of the initial world). All text-worlds are fleshed out through inferencing and have varying degrees of richness as a result of a reader's background knowledge, experience and emotional state at the time of reading.

Text World Theory deals with the vast mass of knowledge a reader might have by proposing a principle of text-drivenness (Werth 1999: 103), which accounts for the fact that only knowledge specifically activated by word choices in the text becomes salient in the discourse-world and may be used to develop a text-world. The final level in the model involves any subsequent number of world-switches (Gavins 2007: 48) where a shift in time or place, the introduction of a different narrative point of view, or any instances of metaphor, negation, or hypotheticals re-configure attention away from the initial text-world.

Within the parameters of Text World Theory, pronouns are integral aspects of text-world creation and maintenance in so far as they are used to signal important entities in the text-world, and are likely to refer back to previously introduced noun phrases in a process known as "reference-chaining" (Werth 1999: 158). Personal pronouns are an important part of the model since they are used almost exclusively to refer to characters in the text-world or in any subsequent world-switches. Updating Werth's work, Gavins (2007) adopts Emmott's notion of the enactor (Emmott 1997: 188), replacing Werth's term character (and associated phrases), as a more explicit way of understanding entities as present, past and future conceptual realisations of a given referent. In this way, Text World Theory is well placed to explore how characterisation develops as a result of the various kinds of world-building and instances of world-switches that take place. As Stockwell (2009: 147–152) notes, part of the experience of tracing the development of a character across a literary text involves keeping track of how a composite version is built up through the various enactors that appear across different text-worlds. The enactors that are created through world-switches are therefore a fundamental way in which we track characters across discourse.

3.5 Analysis

In the following section, I use the Text World Theory model to analyse the use of pronouns in two of Hughes' poems.

3.5.1 *I*-Enactors in 'I, Too'

'I, Too' first appeared in *Survey Graphic* in 1925. Its echoes of Walt Whitman's *Song of Myself* have been noted (Ostrom 2002). The poem consists of eighteen lines and is reprinted below in full (lines numbers have been added).

I, Too

I, too, sing America. [1]

I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,
I'll be at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.

Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed—

I, too, am America.

Gavins (2007: 64) argues that discourse-world participants will inevitably identify with text-world enactors to some degree. Participants may do this by allocating a particular role to an enactor, or by aligning the enactor to a particular discourse-world entity. In 'I, Too', the use of the first-person pronoun "I" might suggest to some readers that the discourse-world participant Langston Hughes and the speaking voice of the text-world are closely related. In this way, the poem has the potential to be read as autobiographical and a reader might make close connections between the contents and sentiments expressed in the poem and Hughes' own stance as a writer and historical figure in the Harlem Renaissance. As Semino (1995: 147) notes, where there is considerable extra-textual detail to support equating the speaker with the poet, readers often assume an autobiographical element to first-person verse (for further discussion of pronouns and the autofictional dimension of literature, see Gibbons, this volume).

Alternatively, it is possible for a reader to view the poem's voice as a more general persona created by Hughes and speaking on behalf of an individual or a group, or, by projecting oneself into the poem's text-worlds,

imagine "I" as a version of oneself. Interestingly, these are common stances adopted by readers discussing the poem on online reading fora, personal websites and blogs. For example, here are three responses.

1. The poem describes […] how each person has their own right and shouldn't be discriminated. ('Terence' 2014)
2. I chose [this poem] because of the clear, uplifting feelings of hope and inner strength from the narrator, despite the poem being set in times of racial segregation in America. I have such admiration for the narrator and his self-assurance, and think we can all look up to characters like him when we are in need of a confidence boost and optimism in our daily lives. ('Lisa' 2014)
3. I am America because I give it flavor. I am America because my ancestors labored in building the country into what it is today. (Ward 2014)

The readers provide alternative interpretations of "I". Reader 1 reads the speaking voice as a general commentator on moral and ethical issues. Reader 2 emphasises the *I*-enactor's words as an influence on her own life, suggesting a universal attraction and status as a motivational figure. She uses the first-person plural pronoun "we" to stress what she perceives as the inspirational effect the speaker's words may have on many people. Reader 3, however, aligns herself with the *I*-enactor on a more personal level, drawing on her own sense of self-identity, and projecting herself into the poem as an articulator of "I am America". Overall, these responses demonstrate that the pronoun "I" is what Fludernik (1995: 100) terms a "radically ambiguous" discourse strategy in that it offers the strong potential to be interpreted in different ways.

Cognitive linguistics more generally draws attention to how, in the absence of an establishing noun phrase, the use of a pronoun implies a greater conceptual closeness between the speaker and the entity to which it refers. Van Hoek (2003) uses Langacker's stage model (Langacker 1995) to demonstrate how the pronoun *I* marks the speaker both as the subjective viewer of discourse (the off-stage region) and as an object of attention (the on-stage region). *I* thus "signals that the person on whom the speaker

and addressee are now focusing their attention is the same as the speaker" (van Hoek 2003: 174). In text-world terms, this can account for a closely felt connection between discourse-world and text-world entities.

Second- and third-person personal pronouns can be conceived similarly. *You* operates in the same way as *I* but refers to the addressee rather than the speaker. The use of *He* places a concept of a person as the object of attention but assumes that the person is also a salient part of the mental context that forms the off-stage region in which the discourse takes place. Pronouns are therefore a sign of greater accessibility (Ariel 1990) and can imply a strong sense of conceptual proximity (for further discussion in relation to poetic effects, see Giovanelli 2014).

'I, Too' has a single first-person reflector, maintained across its eighteen lines. The opening of the poem is filtered through a subjective conceptualisation of events; in Text World Theory terms, the opening text-world is therefore strictly an epistemic-modal world (Gavins 2007: 132), containing an enactor of the speaking voice. In the first line there is, however, no further world-building information (location and time are not specified), and there is initially only a single function-advancing proposition, the remainder of the clause, 'sing America'. Although one of the prominent features of the poem is its repetition of the pronoun *I*, which is part of its overall cohesion, a Text World Theory analysis of the poem reveals a complexity in the distribution of different enactors that are realised through subsequent world-switches. In this way, I would argue that the reader is led through a series of different versions of *I*, all of which help to contribute to the reader's sense of a composite character at the end of the poem. These different conceptualisations of enactors across world-switches can support a reading of cross-writing as a type of colloquy. The remainder of my analysis will therefore concentrate on how these different enactors are established and tracked in the poem.

I start by labelling the enactor in the initial text-world E1. This initial text-world is developed through a further clause, "I am the darker brother", which adds minimal further information to our knowledge of the enactor. In line 3, another function-advancing proposition, "They send me to eat", introduces further text-world enactors, referred to through the use of a third-person plural pronoun. The prepositional phrase "in the kitchen" also alters the deictic parameters of the poem by

spatially relocating the reader's attention. This initiates a world-switch, where a new world develops and is foregrounded for as long as it is textually maintained. The syntactic patterning of the main clause "They send me", subordinate complement clause "to eat in the kitchen" and subordinate clause "When company comes" foregrounds the agency of "They" and emphasises the relative passiveness of the poem's speaker. This lack of agency contrasts with the pattern established in the first two lines of the poem where the *I*-enactor is the subject at the head of the clause and the first word in the verse line. The world-switch also builds a distinct distance between "I" and "They". This new text-world has the world-building elements of location (the kitchen) and an *I*-enactor and the reader has to reconceptualise "I" as a different enactor (E2), temporally remote from the initial text-world.

This text-world continues to be developed through further function-advancing propositions. In contrast to the foregrounded lack of agency exhibited by E1 in line 3, E2 is now the subject and agent at the head of three clauses that complete the second verse paragraph. Furthermore, the verbs "laugh", "eat", and "grow", are positively oriented. The final two explicitly refer to growth and the development of the self, both central thematic concerns in children's literature (Lukens 1982; Stephens 1992). From a cognitive linguistic perspective, the concept of physical growth is underpinned by the conceptual metaphor GOOD IS UP (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), which in turn affords another metaphor GROWING UP IS GOOD that is used to conceptualise mental and spiritual maturity in terms of upwards growth (see Trites 2014 for a detailed study of the concept of growth in children's and adolescent literature from a cognitive literary perspective).

Reading 'I, Too' as a cross-written poem therefore invites different interpretations of the growth metaphor. Reading E2 as the speaking voice of a child means conceptualizing growth in largely physical as well as mental and emotional terms; the adult E2 may also be interpreted as such of course and the notion of growth is also relatable to the journey of a culture towards equality and acceptance. Indeed, it seems to me that E2 offers the potential to be interpreted as adult or child speaker in an emerging interplay of voices of past and present selves: the adult understands the metaphorical growth of cultural identity; the child is represented as an enactor in a more literal sense and as a future agent of change in being

an alternative version of the "darker brother", E1. Of course, as a reader, I am drawing on my own discourse-world knowledge of Hughes and the Harlem Renaissance to account for my reading of this section of the poem. Nevertheless, the point remains that the growth metaphor centred around E2 functions as a contrast between past and future text-world 'I' enactors in the poem.

More complex world-building occurs in the third verse paragraph where a further world-switch is initiated by the single line "Tomorrow". Here, the world-building elements are another *I*-enactor (E3), "the table" and an immediately conceived temporal frame triggered by the adverbial "Tomorrow". The use of the definite article "the" in "the table" suggests that this may well be the same physical location as in the previous verse paragraph, since generally the use of a definite article introduces an entity that is already in our awareness. A similar patterning of clauses occurs: the main clause "I'll sit at the table" precedes a subordinate clause "When company comes". In this instance, however, the *I*-enactor is given clausal prominence and grammatical agency.

In this switched-world, an instance of negation, "Nobody'll dare" creates further world complexity. Text-world theorists have taken a particular interest in negation, viewing it as a prototypical kind of textual attractor (see Gavins 2013; Giovanelli 2013; Hidalgo Downing 2000; Nahajec 2009). In broad terms, negation is a type of comparison between a real situation that lacks some element and an imaginary situation that contains it (Lawler 2010). Text-world theorists draw on this notion by viewing negation as the process by which some text-world aspect is conceptualised as present but then is pushed into the background in favour of its negative counterpart, which maintains conceptual prominence through being grammatically or lexically marked for negation (see Givón 1993). In this instance, the use of the negative indefinite pronoun "Nobody" means that somebody daring (i.e. the positive counterpart) must first be conceptualised before it is backgrounded in favour of the negative counterpart. Here the complexity of the world-switch is magnified by the fact that '"Eat in the kitchen"' is presented with a reporting clause as direct speech and so—according to the principles of Text World Theory—it involves another world-switch since the deictic parameters of the text-world are now reconfigured from the point of view of the

unnamed enactor uttering those words. Arguably, the instance of direct speech is itself embedded in a modal world if we view "dare" as a modal verb (e.g. in Palmer 2001). The negated switch therefore means that the reader navigates movement across three world boundaries with the unnamed entity speaking to another *I*-enactor (E4) of the speaker before all of this is backgrounded as part of the overarching negation.

There are some very clear conceptual effects generated by the combined use of negation and pronouns in this part of the poem. First, the effects of moving fairly rapidly across world edges is likely to be keenly felt by the reader. This edgework (Giovanelli 2013: 95–97; Stockwell 2009: 123–127) is foregrounded through the very clear conceptual leaps the reader makes in tracking the two enactors across the several world-switches that exist between them; E4 in the modal-world consequently appears to be conceptually very distant to E1/E2. Second, the use of negation both draws attention to the backgrounded status of the positive counterpart and also highlights the fact that discourse-world expectations have been defeated. As Werth (1999: 251) argues:

> You cannot […] negate something unless there is good reason to expect the opposite to be the case. The explanation for this is perfectly commonsensical: to deny the existence or presence of an entity, you have to mention it. The very act of denying brings it into focus.

In this instance in 'I, too', the expectation is that the *I*-enactor (E3) in the text-world will be similarly displaced. Yet here, the negation works to suggest a brighter future, also evident in the world-builder "tomorrow", which conceptually suggests a soon-to-be time that is not quite the present. Thus, the negation explicitly reminds us of the current status of affairs, which serves to imply that although societal change is close, it is not yet possible for progress to be made. Interestingly, the distal "Then" used along with "Tomorrow" to frame the entire verse paragraph supports a reading of this section of the poem as looking to the future whilst also acknowledging the reality of the present.

The final part of the poem maintains the opposition between *I*- and *they*-enactors. The text-world introduced by "Tomorrow" is retained since the spatial and temporal parameters remain the same, and the

reference-chain extends back to the "They" of the previous verse paragraph who are now ashamed by the attributes shown by the *I*-enactor. Read in this way, the *I*-enactor exists as a further updating of E3. We can also equate the verb "see" as synonymous with 'understand', drawing on the fact that we often conceptualise our understanding of knowledge through metaphors of perception such as 'see' and 'feel' so as to give an abstract entity or some kind of knowledge a more concrete and experiential quality (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; and see Gavins 2007: 82).

The final line of the poem is more ambiguous. One the one hand, the *I*-enactor of the final line can be read as an updated version of E3. The fact that there is a near echo in the lines "I am/I, too, am…" supports such a reading, and would provide continuity from the temporal change in line 8. Yet in this reading, readers never return to the initial text-world of the poem and the *I*-enactor remains in the second of the two main switched worlds. Alternatively, the deliberate construction of the poem into single lines of verse at the beginning and end could be read as signalling a shift back to a previous *I*-enactor and a return to the initial text-world of E1. Indeed there are syntactic echoes in the first and last lines of the poem and the shift back to the present tense in the final line that make this a plausible reading. In fact in my own initial reading, I did instinctively re-align the *I*-enactor with E1 in order to give a sense of completion to the poem. In doing so, I re-read both the opening and closing lines of verse as a framing device, marked by the shift from a verb of action, "sing", to a more confident state of being, "am", and consequently revised my numbering of the enactors as follows:

E1 "**I**, too, sing America"/"**I** am the darker brother"/"**I**, too, am America"
E2 "They send **me** to eat in the kitchen"
E3 "**I**'ll sit at the table"/"They'll see how beautiful **I** am"
E4 "Nobody'll dare say to **me**".

Overall then, a broad world diagram of 'I, Too', based on this second reading, is shown in Fig. 3.1.

This reading of the poem updates the *I*-enactor to determine an enactor that is foregrounded in the final verse line as an agent of social change.

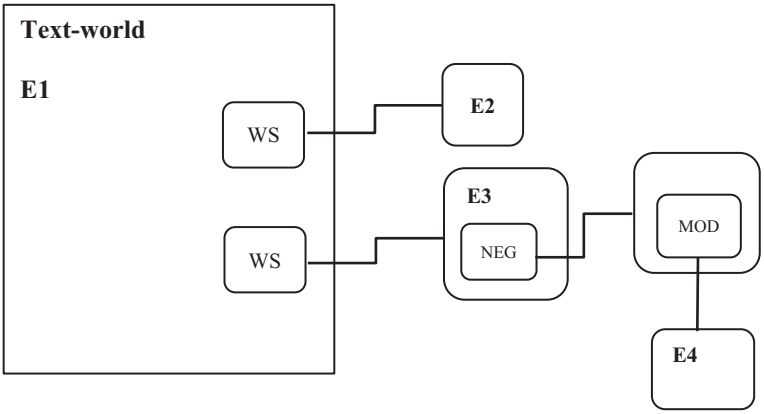

Fig. 3.1 Broad text-world diagram for 'I, Too'

This composite enactor is defined through its relationship to other *I*-enactors that are presented in the multiple text-worlds, and which "enrich" (Stockwell 2009: 149) our mental representation of the poem's enactor at the very end. Indeed, read in this way, the poem not only projects a narrative of individual and cultural growth, but also activates its central message to its readership through the various world-switches and enactors of the speaking voice. The fact that these voices can both be read either as adult and child speakers draws attention to the importance of cross-generational dialogue, and mark the poem as one that gives emphasis to different participant roles: adults as inspiration for children; and children themselves as torchbearers for change in the not-too-distant future. The voices are therefore an explicit enactment of what Knoepflmacher and Myers (1997: viii), in their discussion of cross-writing, refer to as "traffic between phases of life".

3.5.2 *We*-Enactors in 'Youth'

The second poem analysed in this chapter was originally published by Hughes in *Crisis* in 1924, under its original title 'Poem' (again line numbers have been added).

Youth

We have tomorrow [1]
Bright before us
Like a flame.

Yesterday
A night-gone thing, [5]
A sun-down name.

And dawn-today
Broad arch above the road we came.

We march!

Like 'I, Too', the poem has a constant first-person reflector but in this poem Hughes uses the plural subject pronoun "we". The poem therefore opens with an epistemic modal-world with a *we*-enactor (again I will call this E1). The text-worlds of 'Youth' are largely undeveloped and fleeting in contrast to the more richly defined worlds of 'I, Too'.

In the first verse paragraph, the text-world begins in the present but shifts to the future through the use of the noun phrase, "tomorrow". Although "tomorrow" is positioned as the object of the clause, conceptualised as a possession of the *we*-enactor and therefore part of a function-advancing proposition, it initiates a world-switch since in Text World Theory, noun phrases relating to time have world-building potential (see Lahey 2006). The world-switch, however, is a fleeting one since the text-world of "tomorrow" is never fully realised. Instead, "Bright before us" operates to emphasise the quality of having, and the simile "like a flame" creates a further fleeting world-switch to a world where a flame is burning. This world is subsequently offered as analogous to the opportunity that the *we*-enactor identifies (my own reading draws on the common symbolic use of a flame as hope). Equally, there is no explicit *we*-enactor textually realised in the fleeting world-switch.

A pattern of minimal world-building continues in the second verse paragraph. "Yesterday" also cues a fleeting world-switch, and is followed by two further noun phrases in apposition. As before, the modifiers "night-gone" and "sun-down" offer world-building potential in so far as

they relate to time, but rely on a great deal of inferencing on the part of the reader to flesh out the text-world. The head nouns "name" and "thing" are both general and indefinite; their presentation here, I would argue, is to downplay the importance of the past in contrast to the future and present. Equally, there is no additional *we*-enactor.

The penultimate verse paragraph is situated in the same initial text-world as the beginning of the poem and adds more world-building elements, "broad arch" and "the road". However, the use of the past tense in "we came" cues a further fleeting temporal world-switch, which does include an additional, but undeveloped, *we*-enactor, E2. The shift in tense sets a contrast between text-worlds and between the enactors in those worlds. The fleeting world-switch ensures that the past is backgrounded and the emphasis remains on the initial text-world of the present, evident in the present tense of the final line of the poem "We march", which projects the *we*-enactor on a forwards trajectory. A broad world diagram of the poem is shown in Fig. 3.2.

My discussion reveals that there are some important similarities between 'Youth' and 'I, Too' as well as some key differences that can be highlighted through an analysis of text-worlds and enactors. The focus on

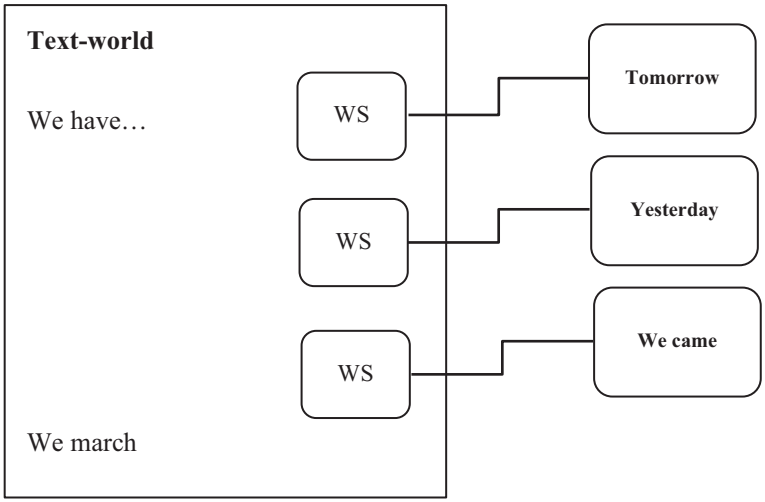

Fig. 3.2 Broad text-world diagram for 'Youth'

time in both poems is evident in the way in which movement across temporal world-switches, even in the fleeting worlds of 'Youth', are foregrounded as important. Equally, both poems are clearly concerned with growth, and draw on orientational and growth metaphors. Both poems also appear to draw on the metaphor PROGRESS IS MOVEMENT TO A DESTINATION (Kövecses 2003) in their representations of physical and spiritual movement.

There are, however, fewer enactors in 'Youth' and there is less edgework for the reader to do in navigating the worlds of the poem; the fleeting world-switches mean that the poem appears to be less concerned than 'I, Too' with providing a narrative of enactors, and more focused on emphasising the present and the future. Indeed, in 1958, Hughes added an additional two lines to the poem that draw attention to his forward-looking message of solidarity. In his essay *Children's Poetry*, he explains his decision (Hughes 1958: 147–148):

> To help us all remember what America is, and how its future belongs to us all, recently I added two new lines to an old poem of mine—the last two lines help us to remember to walk together
>
> We march!
> Americans together,
> We march!

'I, Too' and 'Youth' differ in their representation of enactors. I have discussed some of the conceptual effects of the first-person *I* in my analysis of 'I, Too'; I end this section with some consideration of Hughes' decision to use the first-person plural pronoun *we* in 'Youth'. Richardson notes that the first-person plural pronoun "can grow or shrink to accommodate very different sized groups" (2006: 14). This coheres with Langacker's explanation of the difference between *I* and *we* in terms of delimitation, the degree or scope of projection that a linguistic expression holds (Langacker 2007). Langacker argues that, in contrast to *I*, which designates an individual person, *we* typically designates a group of two or more people. The meaning of *we* in any given context may be delimited to designate the size of the group. For example, depending on the context,

the utterance "we should talk" could designate two friends (high delimitation), a larger group (mid delimitation), or, if making a general comment, the whole of humankind (low delimitation). The latter example tends to be used in a more impersonal way since it does not select a specific individual or group of individuals for attention (Langacker 2007: 178–180).

The referent of the *we*-enactor in 'Youth' is ambiguous precisely because it is difficult to ascertain the degree to which (if at all) the pronoun is delimited. Arguably, reading "we" with a low degree of delimitation might project a more generic (adult) *we* that offers a more panoramic vision of cultural growth and progress in relation to the subject matter of the poem. On the other hand, reading "we" with a greater degree of delimitation to refer to a child *we* consequently makes the reader's role in the text-world more explicit; the effect is to encourage the child reader to identify more with the text-world enactor. Interestingly, the fact that Hughes later revised the poem and changed its title to explicitly draw attention to its focus on the young is also revealing. Indeed, the different effects of engaging with the title itself are also worthy of consideration. To read the title 'Youth' at the level of the discourse-world would mean that the term is most likely understood as a salient contextual entity, informing the reader about the poem but playing no explicit part in world-building. To read the title at the level of the text-world, however, means treating 'Youth' as a world-builder in its own right, deliberately incorporating the enactor of a young person into the initial text-world, and reducing ambiguity of reference. This latter reading clearly offers greater potential for delimiting the scope of "we", and for associating the *we*-enactor with a younger implied discourse-world participant.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that using the Text World Theory notion of the enactor can support an analysis of how mental representations are formed across discourse, and specifically how pronoun patterns operate in the two poems I have analysed from *The Dream Keeper*. Drawing on insights from cognitive linguistics, I have demonstrated how an analysis

of the poems using Text World Theory account for some of the ambiguities in respect of the claims by literary scholars that Hughes' work is an early example of cross-writing. Specifically, Text World Theory offers a rigorous, principled way of understanding enactors, proximity, and the ways in which characters are tracked and updated across a text. I have shown how each poem relies on either a complex process of tracking and updating ('I, Too') or a focus on limited world-switches that maintain the initial text-world as the primary focus of attention ('Youth') for its conceptual effects.

In examining Hughes as a cross-writer, this chapter has also highlighted some issues relating to the problematic notion of adult and child readers, which I have suggested might be more helpfully understood as the interplay of ambiguously presented and largely connected voices split across generational time and space. Of course, my own readings of the poems are also influenced by my own discourse-world knowledge about Langston Hughes and the Harlem Renaissance, and by my own willingness to examine the notion of cross-writing through positioning myself in relation to the poems. As Falconer (2009: 370) argues in her discussion of cross-writing:

> Not only are the texts themselves often generically hybrid, but readers are hybridising different readerly identities when they 'cross over' to reading a book that was intended, at least ostensibly, for some other and elsewhere.

Finally, and in the spirit of *The Dream Keeper*, I have demonstrated the importance of the first-person pronoun in conveying what academic and non-academic readers have argued is the essence of Hughes' concerns in the collection. In his writing, Hughes presents and projects voices that are engaged in dialogue with their readers, and with enactors of themselves and their culture across various text-world representations. These voices are central to the Harlem Renaissance, offering a vision of progress and a distinctive call for social change.

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4

Positioning the Reader in Post-Apartheid Literature of Trauma: *I* and *You* in Zoë Wicomb's *David's Story*

Andrea Macrae

4.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates the interpretative significance of the pronouns *I* and *you* in Zoë Wicomb's novel *David's Story* (2001). I explore the ways Wicomb uses these pronouns to create a complex reading experience which evokes reflection on one's own agency and complicity within colonial and postcolonial oppression and trauma. The novel presents the narrator's telling of the story of David, a Griqua resistance fighter troubled by his racial status at the end of apartheid, seeking reassurance via exploration of his ancestral roots and racial identity in the writing of his biography. Central to the novel's historiographic theme is David's reluctance to acknowledge the significance of his comrade and lover, Dulcie, to his story and to the dawn of the New South Africa. The narrative revolves around the self-conscious struggle of the unnamed female narrator, as amanuensis and fictive author of the text, to recover the trace of Dulcie from David's words, to "patch together" (2001: 78) a character and return

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her to the text, without becoming complicit in further suppression and deferral of the 'reality' of Dulcie.

Wicomb's text is a historiographic, archival endeavour, which is deeply rooted in, but goes beyond, the context of apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. The recuperative portrayal of Dulcie addresses the silencing of intersectional trauma—unspoken misogynist and racial violence inflicted upon women—here in the context of racial oppression and guerrilla warfare. The novel is also overtly self-reflexive, regularly confronting the act of authorship and the responsibility of imaginative representation. Most critics of this text have investigated the ways in which the historiographic and metafictional strands are strategically intertwined to address the ethical tension in the entangled relationships between representation and subjugation, between recuperation and violation, and between inscription and erasure in the context of the post-apartheid novel (c.f. Attridge 2005; Baiada 2008; Coetzee 2010; Daymond 2002; Driver 2001, 2010; Robolin 2006; Samuelson 2007; van der Vlies 2010).

These issues have primarily been explored in relation to the role and responsibility of the authorial figure, specifically. However, as Driver (2010) notes, in both her critical and creative practice Wicomb advocates a model of reading in which the reader follows the signposts the text provides to tease out its own internal contradictions and paradoxes, to perform a readerly intervention which "penetrates and unsettles the authority of the text" (Driver 2010: 524). Attwell and Easton write that Wicomb's work "sustains a productive dialogue between the practices of fiction and literary theory—theory drawn from the major movements of structuralism and poststructuralism, certainly, but also from the applied linguistics that Wicomb has studied and taught in the course of her academic life. Her writing is especially sensitive to the grammar of person, to positionality and modes of address" (2010: 520). I argue that it is specifically Wicomb's manipulation of person, positionality and address that is the textual force behind the historiography, metafictionality and unsettled authority of the text, and that the role and responsibility of the reader, particularly, in relation to that positioning, is central to the text's concerns.

This manipulation of person and positionality is manifest in the instability of the novel's *I*. The *I*-narration is predominantly anchored with the

pseudo-authorial narrator. The narrative moves away from the primary perspective of the narrator, however, when focalising the story through other characters in passages comprised largely of free indirect thought (FIT). The experiences and feelings of David's wife, Sally, and his mother-in-law, Ouma Sarie, are mostly presented through their idiosyncratic manners of expression, as if in their own voices, seemingly in the style of free direct thought (FDT). There are, however, occasional nominal or third-person references to them, which re-anchor the locus of focalisation out of the viewpoint of the characters and back to the narrator's position. While this focalising practice isn't unusual, it does, in this context, contribute to the impression of the motility of the narrative voice, and, as will be discussed below (Sect. 4.3), to the text's problematisation of authorship, authenticity and representation. Additionally, the absence of quotations marks throughout the novel makes it difficult for the reader to identify the focaliser, identify speech, attribute speech to a speaker, and so identify the referents of pronouns *within* speech. Furthermore, occasionally the narrative mode shifts to second-person narration. The continual slippage and confusion of pronoun reference perpetually disorients and shifts the reader in her relation to the text, the characters and the story.

This chapter firstly investigates the autofictional and metafictional aspects of the narratorial *I* and the ways in which the narrator explicitly brings both the story, and the act and responsibility for creation of the story, into question. I then explore how the free indirect thought and free direct speech impact on the reader's ability to track pronoun reference, and the ways this contributes to the problematisation of the reader's relation to the text. The second half of the chapter analyses passages of second-person narration, and the way this deictic positioning implicates the reader in certain behaviours and roles. The chapter argues that it is this slippage of pronoun reference and roles—of person and position—which creates the self-conscious authorial and moral struggle of the text; which withholds cohesion and closure, withholds moral authority, and implicates both writer and reader as agents bound up in the ethical paradox of representation. It is this struggle and slippage which make the text, in the words of Attridge, "one of the most original, powerful and important South African novels of the post-apartheid era" (2005: 160).

4.2 The Autofictional and Metanarrational *I*

From the outset, *David's Story* explores issues of 'who speaks', and the complexities of elision, recuperation and responsibility involved in authorship and narrativisation. The title establishes the story as David's, yet the narrator's opening words, within her 'Preface', are "This is and is not David's story. […] He has […] written some fragments […] all of which I have managed to include one way or another—but he was unwilling or unable to flesh out the narrative" (2001: 1). This tension over who owns, constructs and determines the narrative—David or the narrator—runs throughout the novel. The narrator reports David's occasional editorial demands, such as the instruction, at one point, that all references to a special relationship between himself and Dulcie be removed (137). He intermittently "wants to acknowledge and maintain control over his progeny even if it is fathered from a distance" (140). However, the narrator also tells us that David often takes only a cursory glance over her drafts (140), and that he wanted someone else to write his story partially so that "it would no longer belong to him" (1). Each gesture he makes to disown the text places the story more firmly into the narrator's hands, and at a further remove from verifiable 'fact' within this fictional world. His ambivalence over the text undermines the truth and reliability of these kinds of biographical discourses that lie at the source of History, and leaves the reader uncertain of the nature of the text she is reading.

The narrator's relationship to the story is equally, if differently, problematic. The 'Preface' is the first of many ways in which the text exhibits the characteristics of autofiction (Gibbons, this volume). Though the narrator is unnamed, she is a female writer of Griqua descent, just like Wicomb. The narration involves implicit and explicit direct address to the reader, including rhetorical questions, such as "Who, dear reader, would have the patience with this kind of thing?" (136), and passages of second-person narration (see Sects. 4.4 and 4.5). The title *David's Story* encapsulates the novel's self-reflexive positioning at the boundary between the real (a biography) and the fictional (a story). The text incorporates newspaper articles (61, 77, 151), diaries (41) and other historical texts (32, 34), extracts from other fictional and non-fictional works within

epigraphs, and multiple references to Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1988) in particular (e.g. 19, 199).

The first-person narration conflates the narrative level of the telling and that of the story told, so that the discourse of the book *David's Story* becomes the telling of the creation of David's story. The narrator asserts editorial privileges, forewarning the reader, for example, "I took liberties with the text and revised considerably some sections that [David] had […] approved", under pressure from "an anxious publisher" (3). A significant proportion of the text is metanarrative commentary on the process of narrativising David's story, such as "This is no place to start. But let us not claim a beginning for this mixed-up tale" (8–9), and "although I have made numerous inferences from that last page [of David's notes], I do not quite know how to represent it" (135). The narrator openly falters in her role, admitting "This is […] a weight that I cannot carry. That no amanuensis should have to carry" (151), later saying "I no longer know which story I am trying to write" (201), and finally "I do not acknowledge this scrambled thing as mine" (213). These metanarrative comments give the impression that the *I*-narrator is the real author, and in turn strengthen the impression of David as equally real.

The narrative *I* is, nonetheless, a textual construct. The encouraged superimposition of Wicomb onto the *I* is a false, illusory identification. Though strengthening the illusion of the reality of the *I* in some ways, the metanarrative commentary also, paradoxically, works to expose this illusion, pushing the ontological status of the text and its narrator further into fictionality. For example, in the last pages of her narration, the narrator not only disowns her text, but sees it disappear before her. She finds that sections have been mysteriously deleted from her screen (211) and ultimately witnesses it being more permanently and violently destroyed, telling us "I shriek as a bullet explodes into the back of the computer. Its memory leaks in a silver puddle onto the desk, and the shrapnel of sorry words scuttle out. […] The words escape me" (211–212). However, the physical reality of the text the reader is reading when encountering these pages testifies to the 'survival' of the story. This undermines the direct association between the "sorry words" referred to and the words being read, reaffirming the fictionality of the discourse of the text, and in turn the fictionality of its central voice, the *I*-narrator.

4.3 Disorienting Free Forms: Free Indirect Thought and Free Direct Speech

The problematisation of the *I* reaches its climax at the close of the novel. However, the positioning of the narrative viewpoint shifts and turns in other ways throughout the text, creating other ontological tensions. The narrative is dominated by first-person narration in which the narrator relays to the reader her conversations with David. Intermingled with this direct disclosure, though, are many sections of third-person narration, including a historical narrative and intermittent foci on events in the lives of Ouma Sarie, Sally and David. These sections frequently slip, without signal, from third-person narrative description into free indirect thought (FIT) focalising through the viewpoint of the character. The unsignalled transitions obstruct the reader's comprehension, pronoun attribution and positioning. The FIT also arguably involves free *direct* elements, confusing things further. Leech and Short (2007: 270–271) give the following examples to illustrate of the characteristics of FDT and FIT:

> Does she still love me? (FDT)
> Did she still love him? (FIT)

Both modes present the character's thoughts 'verbatim'—in their own manner of expression. Both lack a reporting clause (e.g. 'He wondered') and quotation marks. The key distinction in moving from FDT to FIT is the backshift in tense and the shift from first to third person. As both of these features are also traits of third-person past tense narration, within third-person past tense narration it is often only idiosyncrasies of expression which allow readers to distinguish between a narrator's thoughts and FIT expressing the thoughts of a character. The reader must do careful inferencing work to attribute the thoughts to a particular character with any confidence. Furthermore, although when focalising through characters such as Sally and Ouma Sarie the narrative stays in the third person (referring to them from the narrator's position, as 'she' or by name), the other conventional feature of FIT, the backshifted tense, is not always present. This can have implications for the reader's ability to follow the focalisation and reference.

The novel opens with an instance of precisely this confusion of focalisation, beginning (after the preface) with narration focalised through Ouma Sarie (5):

> Ouma Sarie has hobbled down the hill bold as you please, […] but the world had changed, it was mos the New South Africa, and she'd just ask, just say plainly, Listen, I hear you people put in a new foyer, jazzed up the whole place […], and I've come to have a look. This is also my place: for fifty years I worked here in this Grand Logan Hotel, […] not a single day off and all the girls under me just so sharp-sharp. And scraping together her palms in a dry rustle by way of showing the sharpness of her girls, that's just what she said to the woman with the cropped blonde hair. Which is now something, 'cause how often do you think you're going to say one thing and it comes out the other side as something quite different […] The woman said politely, You go ahead Mrs. Meintjies, and we shall be most interested to hear your verdict on the blah blah big-words. Still very nice she was, and left Ouma Sarie in the hallway to inspect at her leisure the renovations […].

The text quickly shifts into FIT, almost immediately involving a section of *hypothetical* free direct speech (FDS), beginning "Listen". Reporting clauses, "she'd just ask, just ask plainly," introduce the speech, and the person deixis within the speech is anchored with Ouma Sarie, i.e. her first-person reference to herself and second-person address, "you people". The following third-person references to "her palms" and "her girls" signal a shift back out of FDS to narratorial focalisation again. The words introduced initially as what Ouma Sarie *would* "just ask" are later revealed to be what she then *did* say, prompting some revision of their ontological status within the storyworld. From Sarie's spoken words, the reader can then perceive her style of expression (most notably her dialect and style of metaphors). This enables readers to infer that similar expressions in the surrounding narration are also likely to be presentation of her thinking, rather than the narrator's.

The text then moves into a conversational present tense style (with "Which is now something"), and asks a rhetorical question ("how often do you think…"), referring to a general "you" (this "you" being presumably in relation to Ouma Sarie's speaking *I*, rather than the narrator).

Interestingly, the second instance of speech seems to 'slip' modes (Leech and Short 2007: 272). It starts as FDS, clearly signalled with an introductory reporting clause, "The woman said politely", then, (like Ouma Sarie's speech,) begins with a capitalised word, and the words are reported seemingly verbatim. Half way through the sentence, though, the presentation slips out of the woman's speech in FDS and into Ouma Sarie's paraphrase in FIT, with "blah blah big-words" ending the sentence. The unmarked transition wrong-foots the reader's tracking of voices, and reveals, on this opening page, that the usual signals and arrangements of positionality cannot be relied upon in this text.

The slippage between third-person narration and a mix of FDS and FIT (with elements of FDT) disorients the reader, shifting her back and forth between an observing focal point outside of the storyworld character, potentially from a narrative level ontologically 'higher', and a focal point inside the character's consciousness. FDS and FIT can work to create rich characterisation and the mimetic illusion of a fully-fledged 'real' person. However, the narrator later dismantles the reader's suspension of disbelief regarding the character of Ouma Sarie. The narrator begins what she introduces as an "imitation of Ouma Sarie" (202), seemingly in spoken reply to David. However, this "imitation" develops into a passage of narration almost a page in length in exactly the style which we have previously read and been taught to recognise as Ouma Sarie's expression. This narration trails off with an ellipsis when, we are told, "David interrupts with a clearing of the throat. Okay, he says, that will do for the mother-in-law-jokes. How are you getting on with Dulcie?" (203). At this juncture, late in the novel, the voice of Ouma Sarie is revealed to have been the narrator's invention. This serves to expose the fictionality of that character (and suggests the fictionality of other similarly voiced characters—it is not insignificant that David mentions Dulcie), to strengthen the impression of David and the narrator as real in contrast, and to add to the portrayal of the narrator as author.

On several occasions, new sections (following a line break) open with this kind of confusing mix of FDS and FIT. The new section involves the voices of characters different to those in the preceding section, yet gives no signal of the shift in context. For example, following on from a section

in which the narrator has been describing Dulcie, after a line break, the new section begins (19–20):

> A windbroek, that's what you are, what you've always been, that's why you mess around with kaffirs, his father shouted, taken in by kaffir talk.
>
> He had had enough of the fellow's stubbornness, his madness, really. God had seen fit to bless him with one son only, a son who has since turned out to be no blessing at all. A moffie and a windbroek.
>
> David patted his trousers foolishly as if to beat down pockets of air that turned him into a windbroek.

The reader has to try to ascertain, with every clause, whether the phrasing is more likely to be that of the narrator-character or that of another character, and, if it is more likely to be another character's voice, whether the words are speech or a mix of FDT and FIT. In this extract, only once the reader reaches "his father shouted" will she most likely retrospectively identify the preceding words as speech, and only by the repetition of 'kaffir' is she able to infer that the words following the reporting clause are likely to be a continuation of that speech. The next line opens with "He", but the referent is initially unclear, and "the fellow" offers no deictic relation and therefore no resolution. The references to a "son" in the following sentence, though, allow the reader to infer that the "he" being referred to at this point is the "father" mentioned in the first sentence. The pattern of insults suggests that these three sentences are likely to be FIT, focalising through the father's perspective, but for the third-person references to the father himself from the narrator's position. Only in the last sentence is David revealed to be the 'windbroek' in question, the speaker revealed to be *his* father, and the relevance to the story made clearer.

This use of *you* in these already deictically ambiguous section-openings (e.g. 181, 199) adds to the reader's disorientation. The cues that the reader needs in order to identify words as the storyworld-internal speech of one character addressing another, rather than the narrator directly addressing the reader, are often withheld a little. This withholding lasts just long enough for the reader to experience a confronting jolt of momentary identification with the position of the *you*-addressee. There

are several other uses of *you* in the text which cannot be ultimately resolved as character-address, where the reader's position as the *you*-addressee is less fleeting and more troubling. These uses of *you* are the focus of the rest of this chapter.

4.4 *You* and Dulcie

The figuring forth of Dulcie constitutes the central problematic paradox within the narrator's task, and one in which she involves *you*. Just over halfway through the text, the narrator explicitly asks David "how does the truth relate to the gaps in the story?", to which he just "shakes his head" (140). The narrator only "overstep[s] the role of amanuensis" (141) in her attempts to tease out and present more of the truth hidden behind his words, the hiddenness exposed precisely by these gaps in his discourse. Just as she notes and includes David's self-authored "few introductory paragraphs to sections" (1), so too does she note and include "the gaps, the ready-made absences", for which, she admits, she is, "in a sense, grateful […] so that [she does] not have to invent them" (2). It is these gaps which provide the narrator with signposts to some truth in the text, and give her space to read and write—to co-construct—its potential meanings. The gaps David leaves require her to creatively flesh them out herself to reach for some sort of sense. The narrator's writing process, though, provides a model of reading: her reading of David's story, to produce *David's Story*, mirrors the co-constructive imaginative engagement she elicits from the reader, as her addressee, in reading and trying to make sense of the novel. It is in the co-realisation and inscription of Dulcie, and its ethical entailments, that the narrator most explicitly involves the reader as *you*.

David and his amanuensis both perform elision and inscription of Dulcie, but in different ways, and with different ethical consequences. David offers inferences about Dulcie, only to disown them. Exasperated, the narrator exclaims (78, 80):

> Dulcie is surrounded by a mystique that I am determined to crush with facts […] necessary details from which to patch together a character […] But

> David will not answer such questions […] Her story is of no relevance to his own, he says weakly, but he has betrayed the belief that some trace of hers is needed for his to make sense; he has already betrayed the desire to lose her story within his. So I persist. […] Since there is little to go by other than disconnected images […] I must put things together as best I can, invent […].

The narrator, in the way she approaches reading into David's story, becomes the *writer* of *David's Story*, the status of which—as fact (within the world of the story) or fiction—is thus explicitly problematised. Though she repeatedly decides she must continue—that, one way or another, Dulcie needs to be heard—her self-reflexivity in the act of invention makes overt, and leaves unresolved, the postcolonial anxiety of speaking for the silenced. Dulcie embodies the problems of re-presentation of real sexual subjugation and historical erasure. Whilst training to fight as a guerrilla against apartheid, Dulcie, like David's wife, Sally, was raped by senior comrades, who portrayed the act as part of the conditioning for warfare. Further to rape, Dulcie suffers sexual torture, also at the hands of comrades, towards the end of apartheid. Though the causal connection goes unacknowledged by David, in his refusal to acknowledge her suffering, he does find himself revealing the reasons: "she's grown too big for her boots and they've had enough of her. She must give up her power, hand over her uniform, make way for the big men. But this is not enough. She knows too much; […] She must—and he stops abruptly," the narrator reports (204).

The real historical basis of the text here is stressed by Driver, in her afterword to the novel's US edition, in which she cites evidence of the enactment and the censorship of sexual abuse in military training (2001: 239). Robolin (2006) corroborates, drawing attention to the extent of and political drives behind the censorship, discussing President Mbeki's move "to strike from the public record the disturbing details of the ANC camps" (313). The New South Africa prioritised racial harmony over a more open and nuanced acknowledgement of the racial and also class- and gender-based violence committed during apartheid. A 'Special Hearing on Women' within the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was latterly campaigned for in response to the silencing of reports of gender-based violence within the commission's work (Deb 2009;

Schaffer and Smith 2004). The TRC report for the hearing (1998: 297) states:

> President Thabo Mbeki acknowledged that men in the camps had committed "gender-specific offences" against their woman comrades. He said that the perpetrators had been punished, but did not describe either the offences or the punishment in any detail. In the light of these silences, Commissioner Hlengiwe Mkhize remarked that 'the submission fail[ed] women'.

Driver reports that "few women, and no active female combatants, came forth to testify" to the TRC, and that Seroke, a TRC Commissioner and also chair of the Commission for Gender Equality in South Africa, said of these hearings that, although there were several "gruesome stories of sexual torture and violence", the hearings "only began to scratch the surface" of the horror (2001: 239). Graybill discusses the blackmail of women combatants who did try to testify to being sexually tortured by male comrades, torture including being "made to disrobe in front of male warders, [and] fondled by doctors and police officers who proceeded to apply electric shocks to their nipples and vaginas" (2002: 105).

Driver also writes of the reality of "a partial prototype" for Dulcie, an ANC activist called "Dulcie September, […] whose murder […] still remains officially unresolved" (2001: 252). The potentially real basis of the character of Dulcie intensifies the ethical ramifications of narrative portrayal. As these critics recognise, Dulcie's fictional figuration is not only necessarily overwhelmed by symbolic potential, but a direct deferral of the real, a *distancing* of authenticity, the subject inevitably reduced, replaced, and erased. Wicomb's novel confronts how far such representation can engage with and challenge the master narrative of cultural memory whilst resisting further repetition of the elision of the voice needing and deserving to be heard.

In the attempt to re-inscribe the flesh, the body, of Dulcie into the text, the narrator must re-inscribe the torture inflicted upon her body. Higgins and Silver (1991) discuss the process of recuperating and reinscribing—"rereading"—rape into narratives in which it has been silenced, left out and made "unreadable" (3). They assert, "the act of rereading rape involves more than listening to silences; it requires restoring rape to the

literal, to the body: restoring […] the physical, sexual violation. […] [It] necessitates a conscious critical act of reading the violence and the sexuality back into texts where it has been deflected, either by the text itself or by the critics" (4). The narrator re-inscribes the violation into David's text and this act of re-inscription both others and subjugates Dulcie. The torture described is not rape, for, as her torturers claim, "rape will teach her nothing, leave nothing; rape's too good for her kind" (178). Rather, it is intimate sexual torture. The sessions take place in Dulcie's bedroom, which they quietly enter at night. When she hears them, "she arranges herself on her back with her eyes open, her hands folded behind her head" (81), waiting in terror. The narrator writes of men in "black tracksuits" (179), one "waving the electrodes as another took off her nightclothes" (178).

In reading the violence against Dulcie between the lines of David's story, and recuperating it in her act of writing it back into his text, the narrator addresses the reality which David finds unspeakable, that he later confirms but that he ultimately cannot bear to acknowledge, that which necessitates Dulcie's erasure from memory, from his story, from history. But the act of recuperation necessarily repeats this violence. The narrator, having claimed responsibility for the imaginative conceptualisation of Dulcie, must do the same for the violation she inscribes. The metanarrative framing of this act does not and cannot mitigate that violation; rather, through it, Wicomb seeks to confront the inevitability of the repeated violation within the restorative endeavour.

At the same time, the narrator evokes in readers a conscious awareness of their part in this repetition. The torturing of Dulcie and the scars on her body are described in great detail, inviting vivid imaginative visualisation. One of the narrative strands of the novel thematises the Western voyeuristic gaze upon the sexualised, oppressed, racial other, through the story of Saartje Baartman—a Griqua woman transported to Europe in 1810, her steatopygous body exposed and exhibited for scientific observation and barely disguised titillation. With questionable consent, the biologist Cuvier published drawings of her genitalia. David, "outrage[d] on Baartman's behalf", imagines readers looking at her exposed parts: the narrator reports "It was the shame in print, in perpetuity, the thought of the reader turning to that page, that refreshed David's outrage" (33). The

act of passive witnessing, or worse—proactive visualisation—is explicitly associated with complicit voyeurism and exploitation.

The reader's conscious awareness of her conceptual re-enactment in the act of reading is evoked in the ways *you* occurs and operates within a key torture scene (178):

> Dulcie believes that there comes a time when physical pain presses the body into another place, where all is not forgotten, but where you imagine it relocated in an unfamiliar landscape of, say, bright green grassland cradled in frilly mountains. In such a storybook place the body performs the expected—quivers, writhes, shudders, flails, squirms, stretches—but you observe it from a distance. It is just a matter of being patient. Of enduring.

In 'Setting, Intertextuality and the Resurrection of the Postcolonial Author' (2005), Wicomb discusses the loaded use of first-, second- and third-person pronouns in articulating the self and other. The second-person pronoun in the above extract simultaneously evokes the reader's conceptual identification with the addressee designated as *you* and also alienation, with the awareness that *you* functions both generally and specifically, and can and does refer to almost infinite others. Use of *you* inherently creates tensions—the reader is at once conceptually pulled into and pushed out of this position.

Such tensions work in tandem here with the explicit positioning of that "you" observing Dulcie's torture from a safe distance, in "a storybook place". The position of the "you" here is, however, also occupied by Dulcie herself, as she conceptually projects out of her body, a body which thus becomes disowned and de-gendered, "*the* body" (my emphasis), which then "performs", independent of Dulcie's sentient agency and feeling. Dulcie, with/as "you", observes the torture from a distance. Thus, the pronoun positions the reader as both observer of and at one with the tortured Dulcie. Though there is much in the co-textual language to support one or another interpretation of the referential value of the second-person pronoun—in its general sense in some places, as directly implicating the reader in others, and as Dulcie's self-address in others (e.g., "the recitation transports you into yet another space. Keeping on

the move, like any good guerrilla")—the reference(s) cannot be conclusively resolved.

The next instance of *you* is a few paragraphs later (179):

> She thinks she recognizes some of the voices, but recognition hovers just beyond consciousness. She hallucinates, turns them into friends, family, comrades. […] Never again does she try to identify them. That is where death lies.
>
> Why don't you take off your balaclavas, show yourselves, she said the first time. Won't that teach me something?

The sentences up until "That is where death lies", like the instances of FIT described in Sect. 4.3, lack the conventional backshift in tense, but are in the third person. The explicit thought-reporting clauses here, however, e.g. "She thinks", seemingly anchor the description primarily in the narrator's perspective and voice. The torturers are referred to as "them". The next paragraph, though, involves direct address, using "you". Without speech marks, the phrase could initially be interpreted as further narration by the pseudo-authorial narrator, and the "you" as direct address to the reader. It is only when the reader reaches the reporting clause "she said", which reveals the words to be the direct speech of Dulcie addressing her torturers, that the reference can be confidently resolved. For most readers this "you" is not likely to be interpreted as apostrophic (Herman 2002: 341–371), not least as the reference to balaclavas quickly obfuscates this inference. However, the text's slippage in positioning voice and reference, combined with the dominance, throughout the novel, of the narrator's metacompositional divulgence to the reader, may encourage the reader to at least consider the apostrophic potential of this reference—that is, to consider how the "you" makes sense as and could be a direct address to the reader.

The Baartman narrative helps to create the conditions for this consideration here. A nearby preceding paragraph has described the body "being held under a blindingly bright light, […] clarity conferred by the gaze of others" (178). The reader is a concealed, gazing other, seeing "from a storybook place", indeed holding and reading a storybook, imaginatively visualising and conceptually re-enacting the torture. The reader is positioned as akin to Cuvier's readers who pore over the intimate diagrams of Baartman.

These uses of the second-person pronoun prompt the reader to self-consciously shift between the positions of distant reader-voyeur, to present reader-torturer, to Dulcie herself, at once subject and object. This deictic positioning is "scalar or gradient (*more or less*) rather than binary (*either/or*)" [original emphasis], and unsettled: "the narrative *you* resists being assigned an exact or determinate position on the continuum" (Herman 2002: 350). The linguistic manipulation foregrounds the reader's roles and responsibilities in the subject and object positions in this postcolonial oppression and recuperation. The engagement of the reader, so carefully manipulated by Wicomb, in rendering Dulcie forth, imaginatively speaks to an international form of complicity in oppression by passivity, and an international political and ethical obligation to engage with and take some responsibility for this inhumanity.

4.5 *You* At and Beyond the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

A further passage involving "you" follows David's failed attempts to write "truth" (136):

> Truth, I gather, is a word that cannot be written. He has changed it into the palindrome of Cape Flats speech—TRURT, TRURT, TRURT, TRURT […] He has […] tried to decline it.
>
> trurt, oh trurt, of the trurt to the trurt, trurt, by, with, from the trurt
>
> But there is no one to ask. You pass by the austere figures sitting erect in their chairs, but their faces dissolve with the first movement of your lips. You hold up a board on which the question is written, but the disembarking figures that file past the door do not read it; their guarded eyelids drop like shutters. You find the place where the questions are asked, a vast sports hall with no windows, flooded in electric light. Your words break down into letters that bounce about the hall, chasing each other until they fall plop though baskets jutting out from the walls […]. There are rumours that if you go at midnight, as the clock strikes twelve, you can slip the words into the silent seconds between the strikes of the gong, but you do not believe this; you cannot see how they will not drown in the din.

The site of 'truth' evoked here, by the vast, harshly lit halls, the dissolving words, and the secretion of words in silence, is that of the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It is here that "you" are placed. The failure to write 'truth' echoes Antjie Krog's words in *Country of My Skull*, her journalistic novel exploring the commission's hearings: "The word 'Truth' still trips the tongue… Even when I type it, it ends up as either *turth* or *trth*" (1998: 36). The reader is positioned as one giving testimony, seeking truth but also unable to articulate the request for that truth, and overwhelmed by both the silence and the din. "You" are positioned alongside both the victims and the perpetrators of violations under apartheid to which the commission was designed to bear witness. Even within this specific context, however, the deictic potential of *you* gives it the power to reach across national boundaries and inscribe and incorporate all the *you*s of an international readership. The doubly deictic functioning of *you* positions the reader as both a singular addressee and one of a collective—that is, of a readership *being led towards* a collective consciousness of the paradoxical problems and possibilities of giving testimony and bearing witness in narrativising racial and gendered oppression.

Though texts such as *David's Story* focuses attention on African nations' internal problems, after and apart from (as far as is possible) the colonial oppressor, the addressee of *David's Story* is not solely local. The varied intertextual references, not least the many epigraphs, situate the text and its readership within an international literary context, while the South African words and acronyms are explained in a glossary to mitigate the alienation of a non-African reader and guide any *you* into this diasporic postcolonial discourse. The deictic *you* positions the reader inside and outside the text, and inside and outside the nation. The reader shifts on a scale between complicit witness and active agent in the dynamic realisation of the text and of its treatment and voicing of Dulcie. The text's pronoun use prompts simultaneous readerly identification with and self-conscious othering from its voices. Its fragmentary incoherence, its layerings of fictionality and its self-reflexivity enable it to resist imposing an ethical stance whilst necessitating an ethical engagement. It is these textual strategies which create, as Driver discusses, "the dynamic relation

between writer and reader that Wicomb's texts are intent on producing" (2010: 538):

> Submission to the illusion of reality that political authority produces is a crucial aspect of what is generally considered to be citizenship, but readerly submission to an illusion of reality and to authorial authority over a text is impossible when fictional texts turn reflexively on themselves in a display of their textuality. […] The I-you relation is crucial in Wicomb's thinking […]. Utterance is, in effect, a shared text, created through a process of interlocution rather than being simply the product of speaking. Wicomb's […] writing is intent on 'keeping alive a reader (without whom the notion of a story that is ultimately written cannot be realized) and who therefore exists in a symbiotic rather than hierarchical relationship with the author' [Wicomb 2005: 149–150]. If any notion of authority persists in Wicomb's writing, it resides only provisionally in the act of reading; the writer continually hands authority over to the reader, having educated the reader, as it were, through irony and paradox. Irony and paradox lay bare the ideological entanglement, complicity, the ambiguous claims of reality- and history-effect, and the compromises involved in establishing any meaning at all.

Wicomb's novel requires the reader to proactively and self-consciously engage with the text in such a way as to resist the authority of both the text and its author, to resist the impulse to impose closure and coherence, and to take collaborative responsibility for the inferences she draws and the interpretations she derives. Wicomb's metanarrativity and linguistic play, and the paradoxes, ironies and intertextual flux thereby created, impel the reader to intervene in the text and so take part in an ethical engagement—and take up an ethical position—in cultural narratives of representation.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has shown how Wicomb's pronoun use elicits a positioning of the reader which requires a conscious engagement with the ethics of the acts of narrativisation, sense-making, recovery and imaginative actualisation involved in the reading process. Focusing on the act and

experience of reading and/as writing *David's Story*, and the linguistic and ethical positioning involved in the *I*s and the *you*s of the text, this chapter has addressed the novel's unsettling of authorial and historical socio-political discourses, the (de/re-)situating of the reader, and the implications for a transnational readership within Wicomb's efforts to engender increased political understanding and engagement.

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5

Autonarration, *I*, and Odd Address in Ben Lerner's Autofictional Novel *10:04*

Alison Gibbons

5.1 Introduction: Autofiction and Narrative Pronouns

In Ben Lerner's (2014) novel *10:04*, the central character, Ben, watches the video installation *The Clock* by Christian Marclay (2010). *The Clock* is a real work of video montage, splicing together filmic scenes referencing the time. Crucially, *The Clock* runs for 24 hours and is synched with real time. When—in *The Clock*—the audience see the clock tower in *Back to the Future* struck by lightning at precisely 10:04 pm, sending Marty McFly back to the future, it is 10:04 pm. *The Clock* received widespread praise and Lerner's character Ben is aware of its description as "the ultimate collapse of fictional time into real time, a work designed to obliterate the distance between art and life, fantasy and reality" (Lerner 2014: 54). Lerner's explanation of *The Clock*'s ontological distortions also stands as a fitting account of *10:04* as a work of contemporary autofiction, a hybrid literary genre distorting reality and textuality by conflating

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the authorial signature of the self (*auto-*) with a character (*-fiction*). Lerner's use of pronouns and what I herein term 'autonarration' are central to this effect.

Coined by French novelist and critic Serge Doubrovsky, who used it as a generic descriptor on the cover of his novel *Fils* (1977), 'autofiction' originally designated Doubrovsky's own writing as well as an emergent literary trend in 1970s France. Given its genealogy, it is perhaps unsurprising that autofiction has received most attention in French criticism. It has since grown in popularity, with both autofiction and related criticism appearing in English. Defined narrowly, autofictional texts may be identified as fiction (to a greater or lesser degree) and the central character shares the name of the author. Examples include: Chris Kraus' (1998) *I Love Dick*, Dave Eggers' (2001) *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*, Frédéric Beigbeder's (2004) *Windows on the World*, and Karl Ove Knausgaard's *My Struggle* series (2013 [2009]—forthcoming). A broader definition allows for other forms in which the central character does not take the author's name (e.g. at all, a variation, or they remain nameless), for instance: *Every Day Is for the Thief* by Teju Cole (2014 [2007]), *Shanghai Dancing* by Brian Castro (2008), *Kapow!* by Adam Thirlwell (2015) and *The Wallcreeper* by Nell Zink (2015).

In strict autofiction, the author-character is the narrating first-person *I* of the fiction. The use of pronouns is therefore of central importance. However, whilst many scholars mention the narrative *I* of autofiction, a rigorous exploration of autofiction's narrative voice has not previously been undertaken. Instead, autofiction is usually referenced as a genre and used to give context for the literary criticism of a work; alternatively, its mention is a way to relate fictional events to an author's life. More recently, autofiction has been discussed as a genre that expresses distinctively contemporary concerns in the way it represents and questions selfhood, ontology, truth and memory. Indeed, I have elsewhere described contemporary autofiction as metamodern (a paradigm of the post-postmodern) (Gibbons 2017; see also Gibbons 2016; Sturgeon 2014).

Focusing on Ben Lerner's *10:04*, this chapter investigates the stylistic composition of autofiction, with particular emphasis on pronoun usage. I begin in section two by contextualising the novel in relation to Genette's (1993 [1991]) judgement of autofiction and Lejeune's (1989) tabular

mapping of fiction and autobiography. In section three, I outline a cognitive-stylistic model of autofiction. Following this—in sections four, five, six, and seven—I undertake stylistic analysis of pronoun usage in *10:04* considering, in turn, first-person and third-person (auto-)narration, second-person address, and the impact of intertextuality on the referential value of pronouns. Ultimately, this chapter breaks new ground for the study of autofiction in English—itself a nascent area of scholarly attention—by providing a replicable, text-driven account of the linguistic style and narrative voice of autofiction. My account is grounded in cognitive stylistics and consequently, the chapter also advances knowledge about readerly interpretation of autofiction and autonarrational devices.

5.2 The (Dis)Honesty of Autofiction and Its Phantasmatic Pact

"We sat and watched the traffic and I am kidding and I am not kidding when I say that I intuited an alien intelligence, felt subject to a succession of images, sensations, memories, and affects that did not, properly speaking, belong to me" (Lerner 2014: 3). So writes Ben Lerner, on the opening page of *10:04*. Such a statement is an apt beginning to a work of contemporary autofiction: Ben Lerner's first-person narrator, Ben, experiences perceptions and emotions that he feels unable to claim as his own: he negates such ownership using the syntactic negator "not" ("did not… belong to me") whilst qualifying the negation with the adverbial phrase "properly speaking". The qualification covertly suggests an improper, less legitimate tenure. The "alien intelligence" felt by this first-person narrator is also recognised in the stylistic parallelism when the narrator categorically asserts his insincerity before directly negating it: "I am kidding and I am not kidding".

Lerner's paradoxical statement is somewhat evocative of the words of Genette in his attempt to formulate the 'voice' of autofiction. Doing so, Genette dismisses autofiction as "contradictory", both in its generic title, 'autofiction', "and the proposition it designates: 'It is I and it is not I'" (1993 [1991]: 77). What bothers Genette is "the intentional contradictory

pact of autofiction ('I, the author, am going to tell you a story of which I am the hero but which never happened to me')" (76). Part of the problem for Genette seems to be that whilst the act of calling the character by the author's name implies that the work evokes referential reality, the referential gesture is undercut by the generic classification of the work as fiction.

Diagrammatically mapping the voice relations of autofiction (see Fig. 5.1), Genette argues: the relationship between author and character is judicial (the author is semantically responsible for the hero); between narrator and character, it is syntactic (usually based on the linguistic use of first-person *I* to conflate speaker with subject); and the relationship between author and narrator is pragmatic because, he says, it "symbolizes the author's serious commitment with regard to her narrative assertions" (1993 [1991]: 78).

For Genette, A-N is the central relation concerned with the veracity of the narrative. The relation between author and narrator directly impacts the fact- or fictionality of the text and the perceived authenticity of the Author-Narrator-Character. It is on these grounds of truth-value that Genette distinguishes between "true" and "false autofictions" and speaks of "veiled autobiographies" (77), the implication being that autofiction is unethical and a disingenuous genre.

Following Genette, we could say that in Lerner's impossible parallelism "I am kidding and I am not kidding", even the narrator's protestation of truth is duplicitous. That is, the cognitive foregrounding triggered by negation in "I am not kidding" serves to emphasise the narrator's fabrication, the act of kidding, in order to deny it. However, the uncannily

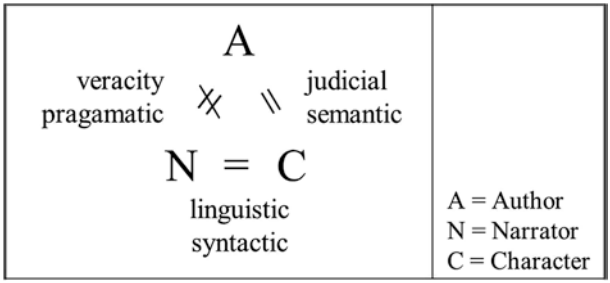

Fig. 5.1 Genette's voice relations for autofiction

experienced "images, sensations, memories and affects" to which the narrator refers are "the ability to perceive polarized light; a conflation of taste and touch as salt was rubbed into the suction cups; a terror localized in my extremities, bypassing the brain completely" (2014: 3). Prior to this statement, Ben has eaten "an outrageously expensive meal in Chelsea that included baby octopuses" (3) and the successive phenomena are embodied attributions as the narrator appears to experience the sensual impressions of an octopus. Humans, for instance, cannot distinguish polarised light, but an octopus can. In interview, Lerner comments that the character Ben is experiencing "inklings of orders of perception beyond his individual body" (Lin 2015). Lerner's statement therefore is not merely a witty, ironic quip that separates yet blurs author and narrator-character. It is not about deception but, just like autofiction, it is about empathic projection and vicarious experience.

Phillipe Lejeune's (1989) earlier but now seminal structural categorisation of autobiography is perhaps a more sympathetic model of autofiction, particularly since Lejeune's theorisation intimates the relational quality of autofiction. That is, it implies that autofiction evokes a network of subjectivities, connecting real writers, fictional writer-characters, fictionalised readers, and real readers. Lejeune charts the onomastic correspondence between author, narrator, and character with a novel's assertion to be fictional or autobiographical (see Fig. 5.2).

Protagonist's name / Pact	≠ author's name	indeterminate naming / no name	= Author's name
Fictional	NOVEL	NOVEL	
Unclear status	NOVEL	indeterminate	AUTOBIOGRAPHY
Autobiographical		AUTOBIOGRAPHY	AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Fig. 5.2 Lejeune's chart of fictional and autobiographical pacts

The blackened squares represent the fact that Lejeune cannot recall a novel which acknowledges its own fictionality and in which author and character have the same name, though he adds: "Nothing would prevent such a thing from existing, and it is perhaps an internal contradiction from which some interesting effects could be drawn" (1989: 18). Lejeune goes on to posit that works that cannot be defined as either autobiography or fiction but are rather "one *in relation* to the other" evoke a "double blow, or rather double vision—double writing" (27; original emphasis). Such works open up an "autobiographical space" (27) that is not underwritten by the autobiographical pact that the named protagonist is self-identical with the author. Rather, the pact between author and reader which underwrites autofiction is "phantasmatic": readers are invited to "read novels not only as fictions referring to a truth of 'human nature,' but also as revealing *phantasms* of the individual" (27; original emphasis). These phantasms exist in a network with one another: in autofiction, the author figure (as a character) is not the author her/himself, but rather a textual counterpart that offers an illusion of being the real author. Despite writing earlier than Genette then, Lejeune conceives of the opposition between fact and fiction less rigidly (and, consequently, of autofiction less disdainfully). Whilst autobiography is (supposedly) factually truthful, the phantasmatic pact allows autofiction not to be fact as such but to express at least a form of subjective truth.

Lejeune's work is an important foundation for a cognitive-stylistic account of autofiction because he explicitly recognises the interplay between textual features (such as voice relations), paratextual signals (such as compositional descriptors, like 'a novel'), and the interpretative role of the reader. In his words, his thinking is grounded "on the global level of *publication*, of the implicit or explicit contract proposed by the *author* to the *reader*, a contract which determines the mode of reading of the text and engenders the effects which, attributed to the text, seem to us to define it as autobiography" (1989: 29; original emphasis). Furthermore, he claims that "readers have become accustomed to feel the presence of the author (of his unconscious) even behind productions that do not seem autobiographical, so much have phantasmatic pacts created new habits of reading" (29).

This certainly seems to be the case with Ben Lerner's *10:04*. Offering a précis of *10:04* as part of her interview with Lerner, Witt compares Ben the

character's relationship with his (fictional) best female friend Alex to Lerner's own real-world marital status (2015). Similarly, Barnes writes (2015: 331):

> How much of this personal material is factually accurate remains, of course, Lerner's business. There are clear differences—the real Ben has been married for some years—but there is enough overlap elsewhere in the book to suggest that […] the book might not be entirely fantastical.

Witt's and Barnes' comments demonstrate the evocation of the phantasmatic pact. As readers, it is not our business what is and what is not true with regards to the author's actual personal life. Nevertheless, both Witt and Barnes were compelled by curiosity; the autobiographical dimension is clearly a seductive force.

My consideration of *10:04* is not concerned with isolating truth from invention. I take a cognitive-stylistic approach that seeks to marry textual dynamics with readerly cognition. Readers could, of course, conduct their own research, fact-checking Lerner's relationship to his self-named character in *10:04*, but even then, it would be impossible to verify each and every narrative detail. Autofiction deliberately blurs fact and fiction and the act of reading it therefore requires phantasmatic interpretation and imagination. I focus on the stylistic devices that Lerner exploits to produce such ontological blurring and resultantly generate the phantasmatic pact between writer and readers. These stylistic devices are compiled in the cognitive-stylistic model of autonarration, introduced in the next section.

5.3 The Style of Autofiction: Autonarration

A starting point for considering the stylistic composition of autofiction is Doubrovsky's own claims about the genre, compiled by Gasparini (2008) into a ten-part list and presented in English by Ferreira Meyers (2013: 25–26):

1. onomastic identity of the author and the hero-narrator;
2. the subtitle: "novel";

3. primacy of the narrative;
4. search for an original form;
5. a type of writing with "immediate verbalisation";
6. reconfiguration of linear time;
7. wide use of the present tense;
8. a commitment to tell only "strictly real facts and events";
9. the urge to "prove its truth";
10. a strategy to grip the reader.

This list has several failings. Firstly, it suffers from prescriptiveness, but this is true of any act of registering generic features. More disconcertingly, it serves foremost to characterise Doubrovsky's *own* autofictional practice (Vilain 2010; discussed in English in Ferreira Meyers 2013: 26). Ferreira Meyers also criticises it for overlooking intertextuality (2013: 26). Finally, the list does not suffice as a stylistic account of autofiction either, despite Dyx's claim that "it is above all on a stylistic basis that Doubrovsky differentiates autofiction from autobiography" (2017: 161). Many of the list's features (namely 3, 8, 9, and 10) can only be judged subjectively (not stylistically) by readers and/or critics alike. Furthermore, point 10—"a strategy to grip the reader"—is ambiguous to the point of uselessness. I propose instead a text-driven account of the compositional features of autofiction: the cognitive-stylistic model of autonarration.

I use the term 'autonarration' deliberately in order to distinguish autofiction as a literary genre from autonarration as a series of stylistic features. It is therefore worth mentioning that the term 'autonarration' has been used previously. Rajan (1998) employs it to account for the inclusion of autobiographical elements in writing from the romantic period. Summarising her conception, she explains, "a specific form of this larger discourse [Romanticism and its use of personalised, historicised *I*], autonarration involves not simply the author's entry into the text through the first-person pronoun, but a sustained rewriting in fictional form of events from the author's life" (1998: 221). Toth (2006) uncouples Rajan's concept from Romanticism by subsequently applying 'autonarration' to Hemingway's writing. Rajan's and Toth's use of 'autonarration' more or less corresponds to the generic use of 'autofiction': indeed, Rajan refers to it as a "genre" (1998: 231). Thus, whilst Rajan emphasises the use of the

first-person pronoun, she does not produce a stylistic explanation of autofictional narration. Likewise, although Rajan does, as we shall see, offer some brief remarks about readerly interpretations, these lack cognitive foundations and are not developed in response to specific textual devices.

Schmitt (2014) also uses '-narration' in place of autofiction as a genre descriptor. Like Genette (1993 [1991]), Schmitt considers 'autofiction' problematic since it implies that we must read such texts as either fact, which he sees as misleading, or as fiction, in which case it is uncoupled from ethics due to the loss of referential value. Unlike Genette though, Schmitt's objection is with the name rather than the genre *per se*. Thus, he suggests renaming it as "self-narration" (Schmitt 2014: 129). Precisely because Schmitt's solution is only appellative, it too disappoints. For one thing, the genre itself remains unchanged, with the additional drawback that 'self-narration' could also encapsulate any writing about the self (with or without requiring referential reality) that uses linguistic devices considered characteristic of fictional writing. Thus, autobiography (however slippery a term that may be) could also classify as self-narration. Moreover, since Schmitt does not explicate the formal features of self-narration, we are no closer to knowing how autofiction blurs the boundaries between fact and fiction. My cognitive-stylistic model of autonarration therefore pioneers a text-driven approach to autofiction.

The model is structured using three fields from the cognitive-stylistic framework of deixis (see Gibbons and Whiteley 2018: 162–174; Stockwell 2002: 41–57). Deictic expressions rely on embodied cognition because their reference is defined by context. The referent of pronouns, which are part of the perceptual deictic field (concerned with subjective participants), can shift, for instance. Thus when, throughout this chapter, I've used the first-person pronoun *I*, as my reader(s) you will have interpreted it to represent Alison Gibbons, the named author and writing subject. However, if I write that, in interview, Ben Lerner says "I'm aware of narrating certain experiences" (Lin 2015), you do not continue to connect Lerner's "*I*" to me. Instead, you reorient your interpretation in relation to the deictic centre of the discourse. Lerner's "*I*" therefore has self-reflexive reference; it signals Ben Lerner.

The cognitive-stylistic account of deixis is particularly valuable for the autonarrational model since it includes two dimensions of discourse

deixis, expressions that refer to the discourse from which they emanate: compositional deixis encodes literary genre, while textual deixis metatextually foregrounds the text itself.

Cognitive-Stylistic Model of Autonarration

1. Perceptual Deixis:
   (a) onomastic identity of author and narrator-character (e.g. they share a name);
   (b) narration usually, though not always and not always consistently, occurs in first-person;
   (c) direct address to the reader of fiction.

2. Composition Deixis:
   (a) paratextual signals of fictionality (e.g. the descriptor 'a novel');
   (b) textual signals that trouble the status of the text as fictional (e.g. blending fictionalised elements with real verifiable details).

3. Textual Deixis:
   (a) metatextual references;
   (b) references to the act of writing as a process;
   (c) references to other authors;
   (d) references to related acts of publishing/marketing novels;
   (e) intertextual references to real-world artefacts: e.g. newspaper articles or to novels, stories, poems, including those published by the author.

I have not explicitly included temporal or spatial deixis in this model since these fields are not exploited consistently in autonarration. I would, nevertheless, agree (with Doubrovsky and Gasparini, above) that many autofictions reconfigure linear time. Spatio-temporality should, therefore, be determined by text-driven analysis.

Aspects of the model—namely the onomastic correspondence between author and narrator-character and discussions of fictionality—reinforce critically-agreed features of autofiction, developing them in relation to textual devices. In what follows, I analyse the autonarrational strategies of *10:04*.

5.4 First-Person Autonarration and Phantasmatic *I*

Ben Lerner is an American poet and novelist. His award-winning debut *Leaving the Atocha Station* (2011a) was loosely autofictional, featuring a self-absorbed narrator called Adam Gordan whose experiences as a Fulbright scholar in Madrid mirror the author's own. *10:04* is Lerner's second book and is autofiction in a stricter sense: paratextual signals explicitly describe it as "A Novel" and there is an onomastic correspondence between author Ben Lerner and his central narrating character, Ben. In the opening, Ben looks out over the city of New York from the high line. Whilst doing so, the narrator experiences the paradoxical empathic sensation of both being himself but also being another (an octopus), intuiting "an alien intelligence" as he put it (Lerner 2014: 3). The narrator, it turns out, "was saying these things out loud to the agent" (4). At dinner prior to this moment, a literary agent has offered Ben "a "strong six-figure" advance" (4) for a novel to be developed out of a short story he published in *The New Yorker*.

Such textual deictic references reoccur throughout *10:04*, with Ben the narrator discussing the authorial choices and writing process behind his second novel. Moreover, *The New Yorker* story in question, 'The Golden Vanity' (2012), is published as the second chapter (of four) in *10:04*. Part of one of Ben Lerner's poems ('The Dark Threw Patches Down Upon Me Also') similarly appears in the third chapter (2014: 172–176) which is purportedly written by the narrator on a residency in Marfa, Texas—a residency which, not incidentally, Lerner also undertook and which the originally published poem foregrounds through its spatio-temporal attribution "Marfa, June 2011" and the line "I am an alien here with a residency" (2011b).

Textual deixis therefore foregrounds not only that Ben the narrator-character is a novelist—as he says, "I was a published author" (2014: 11)—but also that his works match those of Ben Lerner, the real-world author. This is the sort of doubled reference to which Lejeune referred. Lerner the author and Ben the character exist for readers as overlapping but ultimately irreconcilable phantasms of the authorial figure. In

autofiction, the matches and mismatches between authors and their corresponding narrator-characters are significant. Rajan writes that the "fact that the author is and is not represented by [the] textual surrogate has significant consequences for the reading process" (1998: 222). Reading autofiction thereby "involves a series of (mis)recognitions in which we cannot be quite sure of the relationship between textuality and reality. These misrecognitions generate a series of complex intertextual relationships between what is and what could be" (1998: 222). In *10:04,* intertextual relationships are generated between the narrative of the novel and the reader's construction of Ben Lerner's real life (based on extra-textual knowledge) as well as between *10:04* and the texts by Lerner that are referenced or included in the novel.

Discussing his inclusion in *10:04* of 'The Golden Vanity' and 'The Dark Threw Patches Down Upon Me Also', Lerner seems aware of this interplay: "the story and the poem are obviously changed by being placed in the novel, so in a sense they are no longer the works that preceded the novel. […] they're recontextualized […] and, while they're materially identical—every word is the same—they're utterly transformed. Like a world to come" (Lin 2015). Lerner's closing simile here echoes *10:04*'s epigraph which recounts a Hassidic story in which "the world to come" mirrors the world in the present: "Everything will be as it is now, just a little different" (Lerner 2014). As in Christian Marclay's *The Clock*, the intertextual relationships and ontological oscillations of *10:04* create, on one hand, convergence between fiction and reality leading to the illusion of the autobiographical; on the other hand, divergences that accentuate fictionality.

Given such doubled ontological reference, it is perhaps no surprise that in *10:04*, the second novel Ben (the character) is writing is "another novel about fraudulence" (2014: 119), "a novel about deception" (137), in which the "the author tries to falsify his archive" (118). It might consequently be tempting to agree with Genette's assessment of autofiction as dishonest. However, Lerner argues: "the self referentiality of my novel is a way of exploring how fiction functions in our real lives—for good and for ill—not as a way of mocking fiction's inability to make contact with anything outside itself" (Lin 2015). Lerner's textual deictic strategies are central in this respect because they highlight the interplay between fiction and reality and thus generate the phantasmatic pact underwriting autofiction.

Ben the author and Ben the character are both phantasms since both are cognitive constructs: although there is a real Ben Lerner who actually wrote *10:04*, readers can only access an extra-textual counterpart they imagine. This extra-textual Lerner cannot be blended seamlessly with Ben the textual 'I' of the novel because of known differences between them in autobiographical terms (such as marital status). Reading Ben as a phantasm of Lerner demonstrates not that autofiction is dishonest or that identity is a textual construct; rather, both fiction and identities are social, relational experiences. By reading novels, we connect to the lives and selves of others and precariously experience the veracity of fiction.

5.5 Third-Person Autonarration: *He* as *I* and Acts of Misremembrance

At the end of the first chapter, the narrator talks about writing *The New Yorker* story 'The Golden Vanity'. Like *10:04*, the story is autofictional and "would involve a series of transpositions" (2014: 54) of narrative events already described in Chapter 1 of the novel. For instance, the narrator claims, "I would change the names: Alex would become Liza" (2014: 54) and "the protagonist—a version of myself: I'd call him 'the author'" (55). These statements concern the perceptual deictics of the story, prompting readers, as they read the second chapter, to construe the characters as what Fauconnier and Turner (2002) have called conceptual blends: The third-person 'author'/'he' blends with Ben the narrator-character and the reader's extra-textual author construct; Liza is blended with Alex; and so on. Thus, despite the shift from first- to third-person, the second chapter continues to be styled as autonarration.

In third-person, then, the second chapter ends: "he realized: I do remember the drive, the view, stroking Liza's hair, the incommunicable beauty destined to disappear. I remember it, which means it never happened" (2014: 81). This is one of several episodes in *10:04* in which the reality of memory is called into question. Moving into the first-person consciousness of "the author", the use of emphatic "do" in "I do remember" stresses the veracity of the memory, whilst the definite article ("the drive", "the view") implies the vivid certainty with which the narrator

recalls the experience. Despite this, and in another phrase reminiscent of Genette's frustration, "it never happened".

Later in the novel, the narrator muses about the experience of crossing Manhattan Bridge (2014: 134–135):

> Whenever I walked across Manhattan Bridge, I remembered myself as having crossed the Brooklyn Bridge. This is because you can see the latter from the former, and because the latter is far from beautiful. I looked back over my shoulder at lower Manhattan and saw the gleaming, rippled steel of the new Frank Gehry building, saw it as a standing wave […] But by the time I arrived in Brooklyn to meet Alex, I was starting to misremember crossing in the third person, as if I had somehow watched myself walking beneath the Brooklyn Bridge's Aeolian cables.

The narrator describes a fracturing between reality and remembered experience. Interestingly, the clause "I remembered myself" uses the first-person as both subject and object of the proposition. Considering the relationship between real-world author and narrator, Rajan argues that authors create "subversions of themselves referred to by the pronoun 'I'" (1998: 221). This is not unique to autonarration, though: as this clause demonstrates, the division of the self into subversions can be an effect of co-referential pronouns as well as a perceptual deictic split between a narrating-*I* and a narrated-*I*. Drawing on Lakoff's (1996) study of conceptual metaphor and selfhood, Emmott has argued that co-referential pronouns "actually denote different sets of properties rather than signalling identical notions" (2002: 156). Co-referentiality in *10:04* creates a distinction between 'I' and 'myself', splitting the self both linguistically and metaphorically. The split is furthered in perceptual deictic terms in the next sentence when the narrator introduces second-person *you* ("you can see the latter from the former") which appears to function both self-reflexively as well as in a generalised manner to readers. Through the course of the passage, the disassociation described by the narrator takes effect stylistically: it starts with first-person *I*, then splits the self into a narrating- and narrated-*I* through co-referentiality, before the ambiguous (self-reflexive and generalised) second-person *you* creates further perceptual distance between the narratorial voice and the perceptual subject of the narrative.

Thus, despite the return of the first-person, by the end of the passage, the narrator begins to "misremember crossing in the third person".

At this point, two images are included with the captions "*Our world*" and "*The world to come*" (2014: 135; original emphasis). Despite the differing captions, the images are identical: a man stands on Brooklyn Bridge and looks across the water. Significantly, this man is not Ben Lerner: he *is* a third person, not Ben Lerner the author, nor Ben the narrator whom readers are likely to have imagined based on the author photograph on the book's dust-jacket. Whilst the images highlight a disjunction between fiction and reality then, the captions emphasise the illusion that *10:04*, as a work of autofiction, proffers. In its use of first-person plural "*Our*", the former caption both suggests the social nature of experiential reality and emphasises the illusion that the real reader and Ben Lerner (both textual and real) share ontological territory.

The potential intensity of an imagined experience ("it never happened") and the marked contrast between the figure in the photographs and Ben Lerner are implicit ruminations on the relationship between fiction and reality. Just as in the epigraph, the present ("*Our world*") and "*The world to come*" appear the same, yet Lerner insists they differ in some indistinguishable way. In interview, Lerner claims that if his real-life experience is transposed into one of his fictions, "those stories—not the experiences themselves—might become material for art" (Lin 2015). Real-world experience does differ from fiction, but once the moment is gone, how reality and fiction differ is indistinguishable. Memories, like fiction, are no longer actual, however close to reality they seem. They become stories through which we understand ourselves and others, just as fiction is a way to understand ourselves and our world.

5.6 Odd Second-Person Address: Referencing the Reader

The next aspect of *10:04* to be discussed is Lerner's use of second-person address. Second-person *you* as apostrophic address to the reader is infrequent in *10:04*. When it does occur, it is consequently startling and the

emotive effect is forceful. In the first chapter, Ben introduces his relationship with Alex. They are friends but it is a close relationship and they often share the details of their more intimate or emotional life events with one another whilst walking around the city (2014: 8):

> Which meant we'd eat a lunch in silence or idle talk, only for me to learn on the subsequent walk home that her mother had been diagnosed in a later stage. You might have seen us walking on Atlantic, tears streaming down her face, my arm around her shoulder, but our gazes straight ahead; or perhaps you've seen me during one of my increasingly frequent lacrimal events being comforted in kind while we moved across the Brooklyn Bridge, less a couple than conjoined.

Apostrophic second-person directly addresses the reader. On the surface, it appears to suggest that the narrative is verifiable. The epistemic modal "might" and adverb "perhaps" allow for possibility or doubt, but ultimately "you", the apostrophically addressed reader, *could* have seen Ben Lerner in real life in New York (after all, he lives in Brooklyn). There is also, however, a deeper autonarrational doubling in Lerner's use of "you". Just as Ben, the narrating-*I*, is not the real Ben Lerner, the apostrophically addressed "you" is not the real reader, but an implied reader (Booth 1983). This phantasm or textual counterpart of the reader thus demonstrates that readers' experiences of *10:04*, however visceral, are similarly only subjectively true; they too are stories.

Ben and Alex are also walking together at the end of *10:04*. This time, New York's streets are in darkness, with much of the city having lost power because of the force of Hurricane Sandy (2014: 236–237):

> It was getting cold. We saw a bright glow to the east among the dark towers of the Financial District, like the eye-shine of some animal. Later we would learn it was Goldman Sachs, see photographs in which one of the few illuminated buildings in the skyline was the investment banking firm, an image I'd use for the cover of my book—not the one I was contracted to write about fraudulence, but the one I've written in its place for you, to you, on the very edge of fiction.

Second-person apostrophic address to readers occurs alongside textual deictic references to *10:04* both as a novel and as a material object that real readers hold in their hands. These stylistic features serve to blend the narrative "I" at this point with the reader's extra-textual conception of the author. Moreover, the oppositional structure (e.g. *not X but Y*) implies that Lerner does not consider *10:04* to be fraudulent, dishonest. Contrastingly, *10:04* is honest precisely because it is a literary work of autofiction. Sitting "on the very edge of fiction", Lerner has written it "for you, to you". Discussing "not the one I was contracted to write about fraudulence, but the one I've written in its place for you, to you, on the very edge of fiction", Lin compliments Lerner: "I like how that sentence can apply to the narrator describing *10:04* from within the fiction or you, Ben Lerner, describing your novel from the outside"; Lerner replies "Yeah. The edge of fiction flickers" (Lin 2015). The perceptual deictic dynamics in this passage, the phantasmatic *I*s and *you*s, alongside textual deictic framing of *10:04* as the book being read by readers, double the ontological reference of *10:04*. A mixture of fiction and reality—at its very edges—is the closest we can get to authentic truth.

5.7 Intertextual *I* and Collective Second-Person Plural

The novel ends with the first-person narrator acknowledging his readers, which Lerner refers to earlier in the novel as "a collective person, a still uninhabited second person plural to whom all the arts, even in their most intimate registers, were nevertheless addressed" (2014: 108). Fittingly, the narrator does this through imagination and intertextually appropriating Walt Whitman (2014: 240):

> Sitting at a small table looking through our reflection in the window onto Flatbush Avenue, I will begin to remember our walk in the third person, as if I'd seen it from the Manhattan Bridge, but, at the time of writing, as I lean against the chain-link fence intended to stop jumpers, I am looking back at the totaled city in the second person plural. I know it's hard to understand / I am with you, and I know how it is.

Readers will recognise Whitman's words because Ben explains, on his residency in Marfa in Chapter four of *10:04*, that the "only book" he brought with him was "the Library of America edition of Whitman" (Lerner 2014: 167). Whitman, Ben thinks, "is always projecting himself: 'I am with you, you men and women of a generation, or ever so many generations hence; / I project myself—also I return—I am with you, and know how it is'" (2014: 168). These lines come from Whitman's poem 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry' (from *Leaves of Grass*), the name of which creates its own intertextual relationship with Ben's bridge-crossings in *10:04*. Furthermore, in their reference to projection and to the empathic connection implied in the phrase "I am with you", Whitman's words fittingly frame Lerner's autofictional project by highlighting the imaginative projection of subjectivities in fiction and their relationality.

Katz (2016) has traced the relationship between Lerner's two novels, *10:04* and *Leaving the Atocha Station*, and poetry, commenting particularly on the importance of Whitman. Katz reveals that the second quoted line from Whitman (starting "I project…") "is quite simply not to be found" in the Library of America edition that Ben claims to be reading; this, Katz explains, is because "Whitman edited it out of the final 'deathbed' edition of *Leaves of Grass*—the one used by the Library of America" (2016: 15). Katz therefore concludes that "*10:04* ends with a line which was retrospectively made to fade out from the future it imagines"; Whitman erased the line from the poem only for Lerner to reinsert it "into an edition of Whitman in which it doesn't exist" (2016: 15). As such, Katz views Lerner's intertextual play with Whitman in *10:04* as another metaphor for the same-yet-different "world to come".

Katz' interpretation is astute yet he overlooks one small but important detail. By focusing on the effect of Lerner's intertextual echo on the ontology of Whitman's poem, Katz neglects the corresponding same-yet-different "world to come" observable in Lerner's closing words themselves. Significantly, in *10:04*'s ending, there *is* a difference: Whitman's words are not quoted verbatim by Lerner. Whitman wrote "I am with you, and know how it is"; Lerner writes "I am with you, and *I* know how it is" (2014: 240; my emphasis). Whilst the first "I" was written originally by Whitman, the second is Lerner's addition. Thus, whilst the two first-person pronouns appear to be co-referential, they in fact have differing

originating reference points, though Lerner of course also participates in the first, through his appropriation and adoption of Whitman's words and—by extension—subject position. Speaking of Whitman's inability to write memoir, Ben decides that if Whitman "presented a picture of irreducible individuality, he would lose his ability to be 'Walt Whitman, a cosmos'—his 'I' would belong to an empirical person rather than constituting a pronoun in which readers of the future could participate" (2014: 168). Just as Lerner participates in Whitman's "I", readers can participate in Lerner's through their imagination as they read *10:04*. Similarly, they can accept the perceptual positioning of the second-person, but in the knowledge that even an apostrophic "you" is implied and collective: it embraces all potential readers. In *10:04*, and perhaps most clear in Lerner's final intertextual phrase, Lerner refuses to write a narrative-*I* that is empirically Ben Lerner the author. Whatever truth may be present in *10:04*, it is not autobiographical, but autofictional.

5.8 Conclusion

The starting point of this chapter was the premise that the study of autofiction has neglected the stylistic features that create what Lejeune saw as the genre's "double blow, or rather double vision—double writing" (1989: 27). The effect of this doubling, Lejeune claims, is akin to stereography, a process that fools the eye into seeing a 3-dimensional image from the combination of a pair of 2-dimensional images. My analysis, focusing on the deictic fields outlined in the cognitive-stylistic model of autonarration, explicates the textual dynamics that generate autofiction's stereoscopic effect. Overlaps and conflicts between intertextual artefacts, as well as between phantasms of author (using first- and third-person narration) and reader (using apostrophic *you*) create doubled ontological reference points, auto– and –fiction. These are then conceptually blended even whilst they exist in tension (double-vision) in readers' imaginative experiences of autofiction.

10:04 exhibits features in each field of the cognitive-stylistic model of autonarration. In terms of compositional deixis, *10:04* announces itself paratextually as a work of fiction, whilst textual deictic devices ground a

reading of the narrator-character as the authorial figure. In the perceptual field, there is an onomastic correspondence across author-narrator-character voice relations. Considering pronouns, although the novel is predominantly written in first-person, it also makes use of third-person in the second chapter. However, it does so in a way that sustains autonarration whilst suggesting the role that fiction plays in our self-conceptions. Lerner also uses second-person address to the reader: on one hand, this creates the illusion that the narratorial *I* and real reader share ontological territory; on the other, it strengthens the phantasmatic pact.

The perceptual dynamics constructed by Lerner in *10:04* ultimately suggest the honest value of fiction as a social experiential phenomenon: people tell each other stories. Indeed, Lerner claims, "My concern is how we live fictions, how fictions have real effects, become facts in that sense, and how our experience of the world changes depending on its arrangement into one narrative or another" (Lin 2015). Correspondingly, when watching Christian Marclay's *The Clock*, Ben rejects the academic celebration of it as creating the "ultimate collapse" by instead reconceiving of it as an ontological flicker between fiction and reality and relocating it in personal experience: "I watched time in *The Clock*, but wasn't in it, or I was experiencing time as such, not just having experiences through it" (2014: 54). Velasco describes *The Clock* as offering "a weird kind of realism" (2011: 201); perhaps this is also true of autofictions and Lerner's *10:04*. The '*I*'s, '*he*'s, and '*you*'s of *10:04* are not real, they are phantasms of the real.

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6

Placements and Functions of Brief Second-Person Passages in Fiction

Joshua Parker

6.1 Introduction

Personal pronouns reference subjects or objects, real or fictional, to whom we attribute physical and psychological identities, while shaping our perceptions of those subjects' or objects' identities and attributes as such references are being made. These two functions of pronouns overlap, Ricœur imagined, each borrowing from the other for smooth operation (1990: 68–69). Following a wave of experimental novels from the 1950s to 1980s, fiction with extended use of *you* designating a fictional protagonist began to be termed 'second-person fiction'. The use of 'you', indefinite or otherwise, perhaps always invites readers to assume the position of that 'you' to some degree (Morrissette 1965; McHale 1985; Fludernik 1994; Herman 1994: 378). Yet, it was sometimes suggested, as Eric De Haard (2006) writes, that fictions with extended use of second-person seemed "to leave too little flexibility for the reader to bring nuances to his [or her] identification." While describing second-person narration as the

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most useful any time an author wished to describe "a veritable progress of consciousness", Michel Butor suggested that pronominal functions in a literary text need not limit themselves to first-, second-, or third-person, but can "evolve, permutate, simplify or complexify, thicken or tighten" over the course of a narrative (1964: 72). Brief passages or "islands" (Butor 1964: 67) of second-person are often less immediately surprising or marked than texts with *you*-protagonists, and are extremely effective literary devices. This chapter focuses on otherwise traditional third- or first-person narration's brief, fluctuating shifts into second-person, suggesting their placement in contemporary fiction has become relatively standardised in the past thirty years. Drawing on Genette's model of narrative ontological levels (1980, 1988), it surveys the points where they appear most often, with various effects.

"Islands" of second-person address are common in recent U.S. fictions' opening lines, where they are used to suggest experiences shared by readers and narrators to draw readers in, or to suggest readers themselves have a hand in producing a plot. They often shift focalisation between episodes of action or setting. In conclusions, passages of second-person address can be used to address previously invisible, undefined narratees. This can have the effect of reframing speech situations and upending readers' initial understanding of the narrative situation in sudden metaleptic sweeps, suggesting our own involvement in diegetic situations we had till now only passively observed.

Contemporary fiction shows frequent instances of the "impersonal", "generalized" *you* (Herman 2002: 331–371) or, as Eric Hyman (2005) has dubbed it, the "indefinite" *you*, a form of the pronoun *you* "neither singular nor plural, nor both, nor even neither, but *indefinite*, and a fourth grammatical gender, not masculine nor feminine nor even neuter but *indefinite*." It can denote the speaker him- or herself, a specific listener or narratee, or "indefinitely nearly everybody or anybody […] very often denoting some overlap of two or more grammatical persons." An indefinite *you*'s "meanings, references, or interpretations […] sometimes change within the utterance", leaving it "fluid, even unstable, dynamic in both its speaker's intent and its hearers' interpretation" (Hyman 2005: 163). Hyman takes an example from the early twentieth-century writings of Ralph Ellison (1986: 158–159):

> […] while one midtown restaurant would make you welcome, in another (located in Greenwich Village, Harlem's twin symbol of Manhattan's freedom), the waiters would go through the polite motions of seating you but then fill your food with salt. And to make certain you got the message, they would enact a rite of exorcism in which the glasses and the crockery, now hopelessly contaminated by your touch, were enfolded in a napkin and smithereened in the fireplace […] Or again, after arriving at a Central Park West apartment building to deliver a music manuscript for the Tuskegee composer William L. Dawson, you encountered a doorman with a European accent who was so rude that you were tempted to break his nose.

The indefinite *you* here is general—*you* might be anyone. Still, it is anything but 'impersonal'. It clearly refers specifically to a certain set of Americans and finally (at the end of this passage) more specifically to Ellison himself. Even as its reference shifts (or is clarified), it remains anaphoric. All these *you*s share a common point of view, of focalisation going back to the first. Hyman finds an increasing frequency of the indefinite *you* in spoken and informal contemporary U.S. English, imagining, from his corpus, that the form may even be on its way to becoming the unmarked use of the pronoun.

Western literature holds a long tradition of introductory narratorial apostrophe in literature. But, unlike traditional apostrophe's "dear reader" or "pray imagine yourselves in her situation" (Cleland 1753: 60), contemporary fiction's apostrophe often addresses subjects who aren't necessarily characters, readers or narratees, but co-enunciatory participants whose identities are being actively formed in our minds as we read. The following sections offer a typology of such *you*s in recent standard fiction, where they increasingly appear to introduce or conclude narrative episodes, or occur intermittently to suggest multiple perspectives and shifting subjectivities.

6.2 You in Introductions

American short stories increasingly commonly open with *skaz*, an oral tone quickly dropped after the first few lines. A story by James Ferry, for example, opens with "I suppose you've heard that […]" (35). An introduction

by E.L. Doctorow offers a similar formula: "They're nothing new, you can read about the leather man for instance, a hundred years ago making his circuit through Westchester, Connecticut" (67). The *you* disappears for the rest of the text, but the seed idea is planted that we are (or someone is) listening to a voice telling a story directly, in real time. Such passages are more than ornamental framing instruments. They formally indicate a narrator's presence, even if he or she remains anonymous or undeveloped. McHale (1985) and Fludernik (1994) both suggest that repetition of the word *you*, even when clearly not referring to a reader or narratee, tends to lead readers into the text by the force of the communicative act it suggests. If short, unrepeated passages such as these might be seen as doing the same, what better place for them to appear than at the start?

In second-person fictions with *you*-protagonists like those of Michel Butor's *Second Thoughts* (1957), Italo Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler* (1979), or Jay McInerney's *Bright Lights, Big City* (1984), *you* offers readers a slight, momentary blurring of the line between diegesis and extratext, before quickly naturalising itself as referring to a diegetic protagonist. Texts employing only brief passages of second-person narration produce quite different effects. In them, an indefinite *you* often appears in the first paragraph, reappearing only episodically or not at all. Donald Justice's 'The Artificial Moonlight', a story otherwise in third-person, begins "From the screen porch of their apartment you could see, strung out across the bay, the colored lights of the neighborhood sailing club" (132). Here, *you* leaves both narrator and narratee ambiguous figures, with a familiar tone (and a precise point of focalisation: *someone* observes the scene from the porch—but who is the observer seeing precisely what 'we' see?). Focalisation established, the focalising subject is secondary, remaining, for at least a few lines, ambiguous or transparent.

This point of focalisation isn't always held by a passive viewer. Mark Richard's 'Her Favorite Story' (1989: 13) opens with:

> In Indian, this place is called Where Lightning Takes Tall Walks. I figure that to be about right […] Long-legged stretches of bone-white light come kicking through the treetops of the tallest shortleaf pines, ripping limbs and splitting crowns. When they leave past, your ears are ringing from the thundershots and there is the smell about of electric-seared sap. It is a

> heart-racer to have this happen around you in the day, and at night you still have coming to you the cracking hiss and branching swish in the whole dark of crowns falling so heavy unseen and so close they push air past your face and the ground bounces you up on your toes.

Richard's *you* is affected—violently—by the tale's diegetic environment before any proper characters are introduced at all. Although we may read the *you* as anaphoric to the *I* preceding it, without specific traits or characteristics beyond the most basically human or animal, *you* here is no character, no narrator, but a diegetic position we (virtually) experience before following the narrator on to meet the diegetic characters. First-person narration, quickly adopted for the rest of Justice's and Richard's short stories, like third-person narration, Ricœur (1990) asserts, only acquires complete signification once readers transfer self-identification into a different pronominal register. To imagine something can be felt or experienced means admitting this feeling or experience is potentially attributable to oneself (Ricœur 1990: 53). Readers' virtual 'experience' of the diegetic world may leave them better prepared to invest in or empathise with subsequently introduced diegetic characters in the self-same environment.

When the diegetic world is more entirely foreign to readers, an opening indefinite *you* can suggest shared virtual experiences where no real ones could possibly exist. Brian Aldiss's 'Poor Little Warrior!' opens "Claude Ford knew exactly how it was to hunt a brontosaurus. You crawled heedlessly through the grass beneath the willows, through the little primitive flowers with petals as green and brown as a football field, through the beauty-lotion mud. You peered out at the creature sprawling among the reeds, its body as graceful as a sock full of sand" (1958: 125). Aldiss's *you* is both an anaphoric reference to "Claude Ford" and indefinite, familiarising us with an environment we can't but *must* be familiar with in order to follow the narrative—and in order to follow Claude Ford through it. This is true whether or not one reads the passage as free indirect discourse. The discourse, whether a narrator's or Ford's own interior monologue, doesn't show Ford himself crawling "heedlessly through the grass beneath the willows", but instead puts 'us' in the grass beneath the willows from the perspective of someone—perhaps anyone—crawling through the environment.

But, as any reader knows, to read is to discover a shared membership between an author and yourself, a possible fraternity (Bobin 1994). An indefinite *you* can also suggest experiences or sensations shared by narrators and readers, or readers and characters, establishing connections between them on this basis, before character traits or behaviours readers may potentially share, idealise, or reify are elaborated. Often a single use of *you* in a text's opening lines is in the conditional (e.g. 'you would'), suggesting regular, habitual events observed by a generalised *you*, an anonymous member of the community in which the tale unfolds.

"To be sixteen on a July Saturday was heaven" opens James Ellis Thomas's 'The Saturday Morning Car Wash Club', followed by "You'd see guys who hadn't caught a weather report in years strolling around like businessmen, on their way to trade chat" (2000: 66). Chuck Palahniuk's 'Brinksmanship' opens with "In this one bar, you couldn't set your beer bottle on the table or cockroaches would climb up the label and drown themselves. Anytime you set down a beer, you'd have a dead cockroach in your next mouthful" (2004: 216). In such cases, the "you" is set in the diegesis, as observer or even as actant, until the plot shifts into first-person and this figure becomes incarnated by a specific character-narrator.

'Islands' or sections of indefinite *you* can suggest readers' collaboration with a character-narrator more closely. Paul Golding's *The Abomination* (2000) opens with present tense first-person narration, as its character-narrator cruises for dates in a London club. His evening over, he returns home, describes his domestic habits in the first person, then returns to the club. First-person narration now shifts into second-person as Golding's narrator sketches methods for seducing other club-goers: "When a man passes by you […] he generally moves unaccompanied, and is of courtly demeanour, and he lowers his eyes even as he sizes you up from the ground on which you stand" (12), the character-narrator intones, seemingly settling back to guide "you" on 'your' progress through the club. The narrator denigrates one passing man, turning 'your' gaze away to another ("say this one, him now") who "you" watch, as he in turn examines "your tattoo, if you have one, or your brand, if you've gone that far, or your smoking hand, if you still smoke, or a vein down your arm, or the line of your shoulder, the texture of your skin" (12). The traits of this *you* remain open, while various men in the club take on more precise characteristics ("he is polite […] discreet" [12]). Meanwhile, the narrator

underlines the actions described as still hypothetical ("Now let us imagine that he [the man] wishes to take matters one step further" [13]). Next, he issues imperative prescriptions: "So do it. Now. And smile. And don't look sarcastic. And remember that just possibly, remotely, maybe, if you could see yourself from where, and as, you are now, you too might want to love you. And relax" 'Your' response follows: "Which, of course, you don't. You can't". Possible reasons are elaborated: "It may be late and you may be drunk and may still, marginally, be drugged" (14). The narrator suggests possibilities for 'your' responsive actions, prescribed by what 'you' see in the club ("your vision has swerved towards the action, admit it" [18]) or how we interpret what we see ("And remind yourself […] And think […]" [16]), asks, "So what do you do next?" (19), or orders: "Come on, get out. You've had enough" (16). The ten-page passage oscillates between generic and specific situations, commentary and injunctions, leaving *you* open at certain moments and more defined in others. Its conclusion describes 'your' past experiences ("In your time, after all, you've seen […] such scenes, such spectacles, […] but to watch it now […] feels nostalgic" [19]), suggesting interior monologue. But Golding calls this itself into question as if the *you* and the narrator, both in the diegesis, are having a discussion: "And you can tell me to grow up […] but I am here to tell you […]" (20). It's an *I* who exits Golding's club to become the tale's protagonist, leaving this *you* figure behind him in the nightclub. But, if only for one evening early in the narrative, we've been encouraged to visualise and experience the protagonist's situation as *ours*.

6.3 Split or Multiple Identities and Changes of Focalisation on Intermittent Uses of *You*

Use of *you* can also suggest the collective point of view of a group of characters. Arthur Phillips' *Prague* opens with a description of a café where five characters, all expatriates, are introduced (2002: 5):

> Five young expatriates hunch around an undersized cafe table: a moment of total insignificance, and not without a powerful whiff of cliché. Unless

> you were one of them. Then this meaningless, overdrawn moment may (then or later) seem to be somehow the summation of both an era and your own youth, your undeniably defining afternoon (though you can hardly say that aloud without making a joke of it).

The passage suggests one of the characters at the cafe table will be revealed as the protagonist of a Bildungsroman, or at least as an individualised focaliser who will make sense of the scene. Instead, Phillips's *you* quickly disappears, returning only intermittently in brief passages, as plotlines continue with an ambiguous narrator's descriptions and focalisation becomes, turn by turn, multiple or variable, shifting among or between the five of them. Readers may attempt to identify a single protagonist among the assembled figures, but Phillips thwarts them, focusing attention not on a single expatriate, but on a general, romanticised experience of expatriation. It follows, in subsequent passages of second-person narration, that we may not know which character is present at certain moments of action. *You* might be any one of them. as the narrator directs "you" to "[a]sk Imre Horvath, in your youthful and tipsy excitement, something as pretentious as the meaning of life or his purpose on this earth […] Strive to understand this little country where you are passing a few jet-lagged days before hitting the vistas of Vienna and the parties of Prague" (129–130). When the *you* reappears twenty pages later, it is now not used to indicate the point of view of an expatriate, but of a Budapestian who has, for the first time, become a focalising character, joining his view with that of the expats. From this point on, *you* might include expats and locals, as in the passage "On the last evening of March, it would be another week before you'd be tempted to take your evening drink on the patio […] you could find very few places more pleasant to sit alone and have a coffee than the Gerbeaud, unless you were bothered by the unmistakable prevalence of noisy Americans having conversations like this one: […]" (344–345). In contrast to Butor's, Calvino's or McInerney's second-person narrations, in which *you* is an ever-more specified figure, the scope of Phillips's *you* widens. *You* is each of the central (and even some diverse minor) characters, without ever being any one of them.

You can also mark more standard switches in focalisation. Alice Munro's 'Open Secrets' (1995) presents a tragic event across several episodes with

multiple and shifting focalisation, including that of a town's mothers and that of their daughters. The story opens with three pages of external focalisation. Then comes a brief section using *you* in reference to the town's mothers: "Having children changed you. It gave you the necessary stake in being grown-up, so that certain parts of you—old parts—could be altogether eliminated and abandoned. Jobs, marriage didn't quite do it—just made you act as if you'd forgotten things" (132). This is followed by a section of third-person narration with internal focalisation limited to one of the mothers, Maureen (132). Next, use of *you* introduces a change of focalisation, referring to the town's daughters, who are going camping: "On Sunday mornings you always had to do that hike, dopey as you were from trying to stay awake all night and half sick from smoking smuggled cigarettes" (134). After these two brief passages of second-person narration, Munro's focalisation settles on just one of the daughters, now through third-person narration. As focalisation then returns to one of the mothers, Munro again moves back into the second person: "People in Carstairs were just growing out of the habit of calling lawyers Lawyer So-and-So, just as you would always call a doctor by his title […] his expression was shrewd and absent-minded—you could never be sure which" (137). These *you*s ease readers through radical shifts of focalisation, and suggest the reader shares a new character's point of view on children, Sunday mornings, or lawyers, etc. As Maureen imagines a scene her daughter may be experiencing, questions and commands (from a campfire-side game of Truth or Dare) appear in the second person: "take off your pajama top and show your boobs; eat a cigarette butt […] Do you hate your mother? […] Have you ever lied?" (139). In 'Open Secrets', *you* opens and closes passages moving between definite (identifiable) and indefinite (unidentifiable or group) focalisers, encompassing the reader within these shifting perspectives as the narration explores the different subjectivities and secrets held by the different groups of characters.

Shifts into second-person narration can also function to suggest vying subjectivities within a single protagonist. ZZ Packer's 'Drinking Coffee Elsewhere' presents a young woman from lower-income Baltimore, enrolled at a prestigious New England university, as an unstable character-narrator oscillating between two facets of a developing identity. Second-person *skaz* with an indefinite *you* marks the story's opening scene as the

protagonist rejects her upper middle-class classmates, then as she describes her work in the university's kitchen. It reappears as she describes her past life in Baltimore, then in the denouement, as she leaves the university to move back home. *You* therefore tends to mark changes of episode in this story, but also shifting facets of the protagonist's social position, an important theme, as Packer's protagonist struggles to reconcile two separate audiences. For the white, educated, middle-class audience to whom she is asked to described her studies and life as a student (her psychoanalyst and the university's dean), she accounts for herself without use of the second-person. But, describing the work she does outside class, she shifts into using the indefinite *you*: "you wouldn't believe what people could do with food until you worked in a dish room. […] They liked to fill glasses with food, then seal them, airtight, onto their trays. If you tried to prize them off, milk, Worcestershire sauce, peas, chunks of bread vomited onto your dish-room uniform" (2000: 161). The protagonist returns to her academic life with a first-person narrative voice. Then, as she recalls her childhood in the streets of Baltimore, the indefinite *you* reappears: "On Greenmount Avenue you could read schoolbooks—that was understandable. The government and your teachers forced you to read them. But anything else was anti-social. It meant you'd rather submit to the words of some white dude than shoot the breeze with your neighbors" (162). The *you* works in a university kitchen, lives on Greenmount Avenue, and wouldn't know where to find a magazine like the one publishing Packer's story. The readership it implies seemingly remains to be created, and Packer's indefinite *you* seems to reach toward it, desirous to address an audience whose real existence is in doubt.

6.4 *You* in Conclusions

'Islands' of second-person narration often establish the situation of enunciation by sketching the narrator, narratee and diegesis 'openly' before the narrative proper is set in motion. Such texts begin with something like 'Imagine, if you will, the following situation:' or, more poetically, as in a Welsh short story by Robin Llywelyn: "I am no expert at drawing pictures but this one is quite simple. All you need is a blue sea and a yellow

sun. You need to see the docks, of course […]" (2001: 296). Such passages position *you* not only as the observer of a scene's creation, but in the role of co-creator, as in the opening lines of Russell Banks's 'Sarah Cole: A Type of Love Story': "Here is the scene. You can put it in the present, even though it took place ten years ago, because nothing that matters to the story depends on when it took place, and you can put it in Concord, New Hampshire […]" (2007: 1). A narrator suggests a narratee's role in the construction of a narrative, details of which remain unconfigured. Emphasis placed on the reader's (or narratee's) participation in the tale's creation is an effect more dramatically marked, however, when the enunciatory situation is only unveiled at the narrative's conclusion, reminding us that our co-construction of the narrative is a process we have been unwittingly involved in all along.

Introductory narratorial apostrophe, echoed in the narrative's conclusion, is linked to oral convention and has literary precedents traceable back at least as far as the fourteenth century (Fludernik 1996), but it is not rare in contemporary fiction. A third-person fiction by Maile Meloy, for example, opens: "If you're white, and you're not rich or poor but somewhere in the middle, it's hard to have worse luck than to be born a girl on a ranch. It doesn't matter if your dad's the foreman or the rancher—you're still a ranch girl, and you've been dealt a bad hand" (2000: 230). Meloy's narrator addresses a narratee first in the conditional ("if you're white"), then more precisely ("not rich or poor", then "a ranch girl"). Once this situation is defined, the subject enters into 'her' role of a third-person protagonist, to live her diegetic life without further second-person commentary. The story's conclusion, however, echoes this initial indefinite *you*, now as free indirect discourse: "Suzy lays out the tarot cards on the kitchen table. The cards say, Go on, go away. But, she thinks, out there in the world you get old. Here you can always be a ranch girl" (234). This *you* stylistically mimics the placement of classic concluding narratorial apostrophe ('dear reader'), but with a twist. While still clearly focused on a diegetic protagonist's consciousness, with its anaphoric echo of the indefinite *you* in the story's introduction, it evokes, too, the reader's now more fully-developed understanding of the story world's rules and limitations, and thus the reader's potentially deeper identification with the protagonist's position.

Alice Munro's 'Tell Me Yes or No' (1974) questions the ontological status of the character/narratee designated as 'you' in closing. Its introduction, "I persistently imagine you dead. You told me that you loved me years ago" (106), indicates a specific narratee, whether dead or alive. Narration continues in the first-person, the character-narrator pausing from time to time to address her narratee again, each time specifying 'you' in more detail (e.g. "I did not know you well […]. You were older than most of us, you had come back to university as a graduate student, from the real world of work and war" [107]). In Munro's last paragraph, the situation of enunciation is revealed: "I invented you, as far as my purposes go. I invented loving you, and I invented your death" (124). The narratee is revealed to be an invention of the narrator's imagination, and readers' attention moves from the story to its teller. It isn't a 'true' story that produced a narrator's sentiments. Instead, sentiments moved her to fashion a story openly highlighted as fictional, and she isn't writing to a living or dead lover, but for herself—and/or for us.

Robert Coover's 'The Leper's Helix' (1969) unfolds a similar concluding shift of readers' attention from diegesis to extradiegesis. Describing a dying leper's trek across a sun-beaten desert, the story is predominantly written using the first person plural *we*, but in the final paragraph the first person singular tends to be added in as well, as in "Our hands, my hands" and "We lie, I lie". There is a different distinction between participants and pronoun designations in the concluding lines, though: "Under the desert sun. We wait, as he [the leper] waited for us, for you […] What terrible game will *you* play with *us*? me" (145; emphasis in the original). Having followed Coover's leper to the end of his trail, we now have the narrator underlining our own role in having pulled him on, across the desert or across the page, through our desire to see the leper move toward his goal. Readers retrospectively recognise themselves as having been engaged as eager, scopophiliac (or even blood-thirsty) narratees, and as existing at two narrative levels at once. Coover's closing metaleptic direct address suggests our newly-outlined role in the diegesis as a character and potential victim of its plot's template. Meanwhile, his "me" works like a camera pulling out from the scene to enlarge our view of the narrative landscape more broadly. At the very moment readers are implicated as both the source of desire that has moved the story forward and as a

potential diegetic character themselves, this sudden "me" simultaneously directs our attention toward the figure of an *author* as creator of the text's 'game'. Highlighting our readerly desire as being an active extradiegetic driver of the plot's temporal unfolding, then calling us as potential diegetic players into an extended scenario unfolding under the desert sun, the boundaries between textual levels are metaleptically crossed, as Coover's closing line finally beckons us to look for a glimpse of an extratextual hand beside our own, moving and having moved us on both levels.

Denis Johnson's 'Car Crash While Hitchhiking' (1992a) follows a character-narrator through a series of events over which he has little control. From the start, the hitchhiking *I*-protagonist takes, quite literally, a back seat to other characters, as the short story opens: "A salesman who shared his liquor and steered while sleeping […] A Cherokee filled with bourbon […] A VW no more than a bubble of hashish fumes, captained by a college student […] And a family from Marshalltown who head-onned and killed forever a man driving west out of Bethany, Missouri […]" (3). The character-narrator finds himself at the mercy of these other characters' various itineraries, destinies and catastrophic actions. Having emphasised his powerlessness, at the story's end he underlines his role as narrator, exposing an awareness of his audience: "And you, you ridiculous people, you expect me to help you" (6). 'Our' relationship to the narrator is defined once the narrative itself is complete. With his sudden nod to the passive, helpless role we have played here, we realise we have, in a sense, been looking for a narrator's guidance, or 'help', in making sense of these otherwise seemingly chaotic trajectories through the story space, and are put on alert for future signs of his guiding presence.

A narrator intervenes similarly in Johnson's 'Dundun' (1992b), the first six pages of which are almost entirely comprised of direct speech in dialogues between psychopathic, sociopathic, or simply addled and confused characters. The character-narrator maintains exclusive focalisation, using first-person narration while keeping his personal opinions on the unraveling situation to a minimum. The story's conclusion, in contrast, foregrounds the narrator's role more overtly (1992b: 51):

> […] Dundun beat a man almost to death with a tire iron right on the street in Austin, Texas, for which he'll someday have to answer, but now he is, I

> think, in the state prison in Colorado. Will you believe me when I tell you there was kindness in his heart? His left hand didn't know what his right hand was doing. It was only that certain important connections had been burned through. If I opened up your head and ran a hot soldering iron around in your brain, I might turn you into someone like that.

The narrator offers his own opinion (with "I think"), then addresses the reader (using "you") with a question in which he both defends Dundun but also arguably brings his own judgement into question, and evokes readers' own consideration of what they believe. This is followed with two sentences which could reasonably be read as the narrator's opinion, rather than fact—opinion which again defends Dundun. The last sentence of the paragraph is more startling, in its direct address of the reader again, but also its hypothetical, vivid violence, through which the narrator effectively renders the reader like Dundun. Largely obscured until now as an almost powerless actor in the diegesis, Johnson's "I" suddenly suggests he might reach, potentially violently, into an extratextual reality, reasserting his position as narrator, and a narrator focused on a physical and hypothetically accessible, if indefinite, reader. Threatening to breach the lines between Genette's diegesis, extradiegesis and extratextual worlds, Johnson's conclusion also highlights the metaphorical sense of this breach: having made us witnesses to the violence his tale depicts, by our very reading of the tale, the author has already shifted our consciousness and understanding of certain human situations, perhaps even rewired our thinking.

6.5 Conclusion

Whether they are literary characters, narrators, or narratees, the textual figures referred to by pronouns in literature are, Greimas wrote, morphemes, 'organised, through syntactic relationships, into univocal enunciations' (1970: 188–189), to which Ricœur suggests we mentally refer while reading, conceptually shaping their subjectivity, and our own, as we do so. As a symbolic marker of recognition of another's subjectivity, the pronoun *you*'s 'empty sign' (Benveniste 1966: 254) is often metaleptic in

itself in literary texts, crossing an essential boundary: that between two self-imagined subjects on ontologically distinct narrative levels.

Through decades of experimentation stretching the boundaries and conventions of literary communication, the placements of the second-person pronoun have in our own time now formed patterns by and large regular and formulaic, if not yet widely recognised as formal rhetorical conventions. *You* commonly appears in narratives' opening passages, in shifts between focalising characters and scenes of diegetic action, and in conclusions. Drawing readers into unfamiliar situations, marking shifting focalisation, or destabilising previously-established narrative situations, it is increasingly indefinite in its form as a pronoun, but its placements in contemporary literary fiction have become fairly standardised.

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7

On the Interpretive Effects of Double Perspective in Genitive Constructions

Helen de Hoop and Kim Schreurs

7.1 Introduction

The question we address in this chapter is whether the use of genitive constructions such as *her husband*, in which both the possessor and the possessed may refer to characters in a literary story, affects readers' degree of identification or empathy with one of the two characters or their immersion in the story. We report on a corpus analysis of a poly-perspective novel that seems to make use of this construction in a meaningful way, as well as on a reading experiment that was conducted in order to test our hypothesis on the relation between the genitive construction and the shift in perspective elicited by the use of this construction. The results of the experiment indicate that the genitive construction indeed gives rise to a shift in perspective, which may in turn affect readers' narrative engagement.

Entering other people's minds when reading a novel is a literary experience, and language provides the tools by which this is accomplished.

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A necessary condition for identification with a character is to take that character's perspective (called *focalisation*, cf. Genette 1980; Rimmon-Kenan 1983), to enter their mind, to see what they see, feel what they feel, think what they think. De Graaf et al. (2012) report on two experiments in which participants read a story that was told from the perspective of either one of two characters. They found that overall readers identify more with the character from whose perspective the story is told than with the other one. One of the linguistic tools they used to manipulate perspective was the use of a first-person pronoun (*I*, *me*) for the 'focalising' character and a third-person pronoun such as *he* or a full noun phrase such as *the man* for the other one.

Pronouns are known to play a crucial role in readers' mental simulation and their identification with a character in a story. It has been found that first- and second-person pronouns trigger readers to take an internal perspective and therefore cause greater identification or empathy with a character than third-person pronouns, which trigger an external perspective (e.g., Brunyé et al. 2009, 2011; Sanford and Emmott 2012; Sato and Bergen 2013). Hartung et al. (2016) found that first-person stories lead to higher immersion in the story than third-person stories, as measured in a questionnaire completed after reading. Surprisingly however, arousal, measured by electrodermal activity, was higher for the third-person than for the first-person stories. Hartung et al. explain the latter finding by assuming that taking a third-person pronoun perspective might be more complex, leading to processing difficulties, which is then measured as higher arousal. The reason that a third-person perspective is assumed to be more complex is that for a first-person perspective, the reader only needs to take the perspective of one character, the *I*-narrator, whereas a third-person story potentially requires the reader to take multiple perspectives. Hartung et al. (2016: 15) argue that the increased processing demands on the reader of a third-person story compared to a first-person story may also be an explanation for their lower immersion.

Since focalisation need not remain fixed (it can shift among several focalisers throughout a story, cf. Rimmon-Kenan 1983: 78), this raises the question: which linguistic factors convey focalisation? Several linguistic factors are known to influence focalisation; for instance, type of referential expression (naming, pronouns versus full noun phrases, first-person

versus third-person), type of predicate (perception verbs, cognitive verbs, emotion verbs), and literary techniques such as the use of free indirect discourse (cf. Rimmon-Kenan 1983; Hogeweg et al. 2014; Macrae, this volume).

Consider the following fragment from the short story 'Signs and Symbols' (1948) by Nabokov (1995: 599), discussed by Levie and Wildschut (2014) (our emphasis):

> *She* waited for *her* husband to open *his* umbrella and then took *his* arm. *He* kept clearing *his* throat in a special resonant way *he* had when *he* was upset.

The two sentences contain eight (italicised) pronouns, of which the first two refer to the woman (*she*, *her*) and the remaining six (*his, his, he, his, he, he*) to the man. Despite this quantitative difference in favour of the man, Levie and Wildschut (2014: 97–98) argue that the above passage takes the woman's perspective. According to them, one crucial trigger for the woman's focalisation in the excerpt is the use of the genitive construction *her husband* in the first sentence. Indeed, if the first sentence had been *She waited for him to open his umbrella*, or *His wife waited for him to open his umbrella*, this would have rather indicated the man's focalisation. Compare sentences (1) and (2):

1. She waited for her husband to open his umbrella.
2. His wife waited for him to open his umbrella.

The use of the genitive construction, *her husband* in (1) or *his wife* in (2), appears to have a particular effect on focalisation, as indicated by the shift in perspective between the two sentences. Sentences (1) and (2) describe the same situation featuring the same two participants, a man and a woman. In both sentences, the woman functions as the grammatical subject of *waited*, whereas the man is the agent of *open his umbrella*. There is a clear difference in focalisation between (1) and (2). The genitive construction *her husband* in (1) seems to trigger the woman's focalisation, while the genitive construction *his wife* in (2) seems to trigger the man's focalisation. This is not merely due to the use of a possessive pronoun, since the genitive construction *his umbrella* does not

shift the perspective to the man's in (1) (neither do *his arm* and *his throat* in the story fragment above). Yet, the genitive construction *his wife* or *her husband*, which involves what we will tentatively call a 'double perspective', does seem to trigger a shift to the possessor's perspective. That is to say, the genitive noun phrase *her husband* refers to a man, but we may see him through the eyes of the woman who is referred to by the possessive pronoun *her*. Of course, we do not want to claim (and neither do Levie and Wildschut 2014) that the genitive construction *her husband* all by itself triggers the woman's focalisation, but it does seem to affect it. The present study focuses on this interpretive effect of a genitive construction in which both the possessive pronoun and the noun refer to main characters in a story.

Genitive constructions are constructions such as *the boy's mother* or *the name of the song*, in which there is a relation between the 'possessor' (the boy and the song, respectively) and the 'possessed' (the mother and the name). Both English and Dutch have two types of genitive constructions, one in which the possessor precedes the possessed (*the boy's mother*) and one in which it is the other way around (*the name of the song*). Independently of which type of genitive construction is used, the construction as a whole always refers to the possessed. For example, *the boy's mother* refers to the mother, which becomes clear when we replace *the boy's mother* by a personal pronoun: *The boy's mother is ill* becomes *She is ill* (and not *He is ill*). Similarly, when we replace *the name of the song* in the sentence *I like the name of the song*, we get the sentence *I like it*. Clearly, in this sentence, *it* refers to the name of the song, not to the song itself. When the possessor is expressed by means of a pronoun, usually there is a preference for the construction in which the possessor precedes the possessed (Rosenbach 2008; van Bergen 2011). Thus, speakers of English and Dutch use *his mother* rather than *the mother of his/him*, and *its name* rather than *the name of it*. Pronouns are considered more prominent than nouns cross-linguistically, in the sense that their referents are usually more prominent or salient in the discourse or text (Givón 1983; Comrie 1989; de Swart 2007; Vogels 2014). Also, linguistic elements that have prominent referents often precede items with less prominent referents. For example, noun phrases that refer to animate (human) entities often precede the ones referring to inanimate entities (things), and

pronouns indeed often precede full noun phrases (cf. van Bergen 2011). We can thus assume that the pronominal possessor *her* is conceptually very prominent in a genitive construction such as *her husband*, even though the construction ultimately refers to the possessed (i.e., the husband). The presence of two potential focalisers in this type of genitive construction gives rise to what we have called a 'double perspective', where one potential focaliser (the possessed) is syntactically foregrounded, while the other one (the possessor) is conceptually foregrounded. This may lead to a shift in focalisation, from the perspective of the possessed to the perspective of the possessor.

The use of a pronominal genitive construction such as *her husband*, instead of a single perspective expression such as *the man*, in a story may have an effect on readers' degree of identification or empathy with the man (which we hypothesise will decrease), or alternatively the degree of identification or empathy with the woman (which we hypothesise will increase), or possibly both.

In the remainder of the article we focus on Dutch. Section 7.2 examines the use of this type of genitive construction and its potential effects in the novel *Menuet* (1955) by the Flemish writer Louis Paul Boon. Our hypothesis on the effect of the use of such a genitive construction in a story is further tested in an experiment reported in Sect. 7.3. Section 7.4 presents our conclusion.

7.2 A Corpus Study on the Use of Referential Expressions

Levie and Wildschut point out that the most striking feature of Nabokov's story 'Signs and Symbols' "is unarguably its lack of names of the main characters, who are only denoted by personal pronouns, indefinite descriptions, and lexical expressions referring to their relationships" (2014: 90). This striking feature of Nabokov's story also holds for Louis Paul Boon's novel *Menuet* (van Dalen-Oskam 2013). Louis Paul Boon, a Flemish writer with international fame, was an innovative novelist (van den Oever 2008), and *Menuet* is one of his most famous novels (Muyres 1999).

Menuet is a poly-perspective novel that consists of three parts, each of which is told by a different first-person narrator, through whose eyes we perceive more or less the same events three times (Postma-Nelemans 1974). The first part is told by a man, the second part by a girl, and the third part by a woman, the man's wife. The girl helps the woman in the house after school. The man notes the following (in which the first pronoun *zij*, 'she' in English, refers to the girl) (Boon 1955b: 15, 2011: 87)[1]:

> Zij deed de kleine onbelangrijke werken die in elk ander huishouden de vrouw doet, terwijl mijn vrouw het werk deed dat ik eigenlijk had moeten uitvoeren. Zij was zeer energiek, mijn vrouw.[2]
>
> She did those small, unimportant chores which in every other household are done by the wife, while my wife did the jobs which I ought to have done. She was very energetic, my wife.

The above passage gives the man's perspective: he offers a comparison between the girl and his wife. Right at the beginning of the story, it becomes clear that the man feels physically attracted to the young girl (and young girls in general), but not (at all) to his wife (who is, according to him, 26 years old, according to the girl 25 years old, but in fact, according to herself, 23 years old[3]), even though he does seem to love her (Muyres 1999: 89). The man's perception of the contrast between the girl and the woman is clearly reflected in the following description in the beginning of the story (in which the first pronoun *zij*, 'she', translated to *her* in the English version, again refers to the girl) (Boon 1955b: 16, 2011: 88):

> Zij was nog niet gevuld van vlees, zij had de nog platte dijen van het onvolwassen meisje, en de broek hoog daartussen was immer smetteloos blank. Bij mijn vrouw waren de broeken steeds ranzig, steeds bevlekt, en tussen de spleet der dijen bruin aan het worden.
>
> Her body still lacked flesh, she still had the flat thighs of a girl not fully grown, and the panties high between them are always immaculately white. My wife's panties were always rancid, stained, and slightly brownish where the thighs joined.

It goes without saying that such a description of the woman expresses a certain degree of disgust or aversion, and it may easily evoke such feelings in the readers as well.

As for their personalities, there is an opposition between the woman on the one hand, who is characterised as social, communicative, ambitious, energetic, but also naïve and superficial, and the man and the girl on the other hand. The man and the girl both seem more intelligent than the woman, but they are presented as outsiders in society. Whereas the man seems unhappy and depressed, the girl is not unhappy, but rather curious, cynical, and a little sadistic (cf. Muyres 1999). In the third part, when the reader finally gets to see the woman's point of view, it becomes clear that she is not superficial at all. She does not understand her husband, but painfully realises that she still loves him, despite the fact that he does not seem interested in her (which he is, in fact, more than she believes) and despite the fact that he makes her feel desperate. She is lonely, even more so than the man and the girl. She notices that the man and the girl are attracted to each other, and she believes them to be one of a kind, which might be less the case than she assumes.

Muyres (1999: 93) concludes that only at the end of the story does it become clear that the man and the girl (the *I*-narrators of the first two parts of the book) have constructed an image of the woman that does not match with who she really is. It turns out that they never knew or understood her properly. This is also the conclusion of Postma-Nelemans (1974: 120). Not all professional readers, such as critics or scholars, reach this conclusion, however. De Rover (1975) admits that he does not sympathise with the woman at all, and he wonders whether this is just a matter of a difference in taste (between him and Postma-Nelemans 1974), or whether *Menuet* actually intended such an effect of mixed feelings towards the woman. The latter is more plausible, given Boon's stature as a novelist (van den Oever 2008), and we believe that the effect may be partially caused by the types of referential expressions that Boon has used to refer to the three characters throughout the three parts of the book.

We noted the frequent use of the genitive construction *my wife* in the first part of the novel, while the genitive construction *my husband* was not as frequent in the third part. In order to investigate the distribution of referential expressions in the novel in more detail, we carried out a corpus study. We manually collected all expressions in *Menuet* that referred to either the man, the woman, the girl, or to a combination of these three

characters. We annotated these for type of reference (man, woman, girl, or a combination of these) and type of expression (personal pronoun, possessive pronoun, noun). Genitive expressions containing two of the main characters were counted twice. For example, *my wife* was annotated as (1) referring to the man by a first-person possessive pronoun, and (2) referring to the woman by a full noun phrase.

All referential expressions were collected and annotated by the two authors individually, after which the results were compared, and any differences in annotation were discussed and resolved. We found 3273 referential expressions, 1098 of which (33.5%) refer exclusively to the man, 1257 (38.4%) exclusively to the woman, and 809 (24.7%) exclusively to the girl. The remaining 3.3% of the referential expressions we annotated refer to combinations of the three referents (expressed for example by *we* or *they*), 59 (1.8%) to the man and woman together, 39 (1.2%) to the man and girl together, 8 (0.2%) to the woman and girl together, and 3 (0.1%) to all three of them together.

We will now focus on the three single referents only (the man, the woman, the girl), and see how they are referred to: either by a first-person pronoun, a third-person pronoun, a full noun phrase, or otherwise (i.e. a second-person pronoun in reported direct speech). Clearly, in part 1 the man is the narrator and will refer to himself with a first-person pronoun, while the other two characters are referred to by third-person expressions. The same holds for part 2 in which the girl is first-person, and in part 3 where the woman is the first-person narrator. Table 7.1 presents the results of type of referential expressions for the three referents.

These data are also illustrated in Fig. 7.1 below (without the category 'other type of reference').

Clearly, although the absolute number of references to the woman exceeds the number of references to the man, the man is more often

Table 7.1 Type of reference to the man, woman and girl in *Menuet*

	First-person pronoun	Third-person pronoun	Noun phrase	Other
Man	688	396	11	3
Woman	592	593	65	7
Girl	513	239	46	11

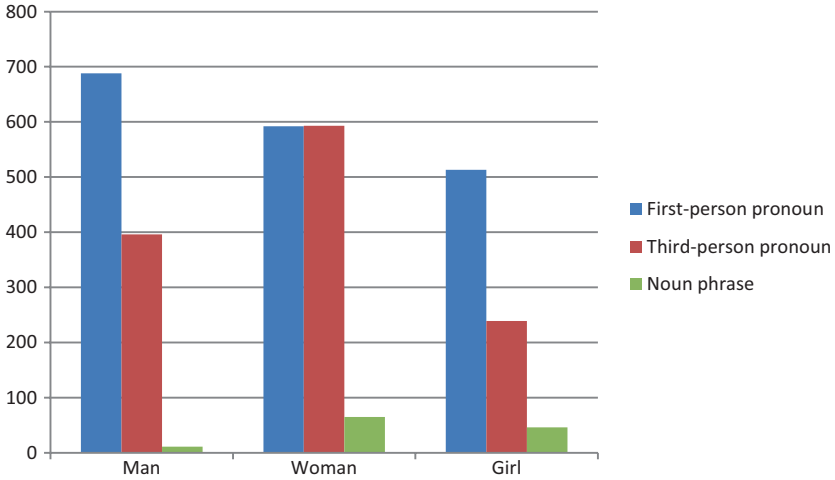

Fig. 7.1 Type of reference to the man, woman and girl in *Menuet*

Table 7.2 Use of genitive constructions with a double perspective

	Part 1 (man)	Part two (girl)	Part three (woman)
My wife	53		
His wife		3	
Her husband		4	
My husband			3

referred to by a first-person pronoun. The woman is referred to by a third-person pronoun (in parts 1 and 2) as often as with first-person pronoun (in part 3 of the story).

Let us now consider the use of the genitive constructions *my wife* in part 1, *her husband* and *his wife* in part 2, and *my husband* in part 3. Note that the girl never occurs in such a genitive construction, neither as possessor nor as possessed. Instead, both the man and the woman usually refer to her as *the girl*. Table 7.2 shows the use of genitive constructions that involve a double perspective.

On the basis of these data, we conclude that the novel is mostly about the woman, but that the man is the main focaliser. The reader sees the woman mostly through his eyes, which explains the mixed feelings towards the woman until the end of the story.

7.3 An Experimental Study on the Effect of the Genitive Construction in a Literary Story

In this section, we introduce the experimental study that we conducted to find out whether the use of a genitive construction such as *her husband* affects readers' narrative engagement.

7.3.1 Methodology

To examine whether an effect of the use of a double perspective genitive construction can also be found in other stories, we set up an experiment. Specifically for this experiment, the second author wrote a short literary story of almost 3000 words (a little over four pages). In the story, a man and a woman are on a trip to save their marriage. They have been together for over fifteen years, and for years tried to become parents, but did not succeed because of the infertility of the man. Before the trip, the woman had an affair with the man's best friend, but the man wants to forget this episode. They spend two nice weeks together and the last couple of days of their trip they spend on a mountain, where they are the only visitors. Here, the man incidentally discovers that his wife is still seeing her lover, by whom she is pregnant, and that she is planning to leave her husband after their trip. Rather than a new start, she apparently considers their journey together a farewell trip. The next day, when the woman stumbles and almost falls over the edge of the mountain, her husband grabs her arms to save her, but then pushes her away from him and she falls to her death.

The story is a third-person narrative with two main characters, a man and a woman. No names are used to refer to either of them. Instead, singular third-person pronouns (*he, him, his*, *she*, *her, hers*) are used to refer to them individually and plural third-person pronouns (*they*, *them*, *their*) to refer to them jointly. In addition, the neutral version of the story contains 34 occurrences of the noun phrase *de man*, 'the man', while in the manipulated version of the story these 34 items are replaced by the genitive construction *haar man*, 'her husband'. The expressions *de vrouw*

'the woman' and *zijn vrouw*, 'his wife', do not occur. The two versions of the story are thus completely identical, except for the use of the single perspective construction *de man*, 'the man', versus the double perspective construction *haar man*, 'her husband'. Although there are two main characters, the story is mainly told from the perspective of the man. The manipulation (the use of the genitive construction *haar man,* 'her husband', instead of *de man,* 'the man') is intended to shift the perspective towards the woman, i.e., either to increase identification or empathy with the woman, or to decrease identification or empathy with the man.

120 people participated in the experiment. The participants were recruited via SONA, the online research participation system at the Radboud University Nijmegen. Age varied between 18 and 52, with an average of 22.5. 28 of them, almost 25%, were male (average age 22.3) and the other 92 were female (average age 22.6). All participants were highly educated and Dutch was their native language. We excluded people who were current or former language students or who had taken courses in literature because they might have been familiar with reading experiments. The participants received €5 for their participation.

The questionnaire consisted of 11 questions measuring empathy, sympathy and identification with the man, as well as the same 11 questions for empathy, sympathy and identification with the woman (with three or four questions per concept). Additionally, eight questions about the reading experience were asked in order to measure narrative engagement. Narrative engagement refers to the experience of the narrative reading experiment as a whole, including dimensions such as "transportation into the narrative world" (de Graaf 2010: 25). As de Graaf (2010: 25) points out, narrative engagement can also account for high attention to a story even without identification with one of its characters. All of these questions were presented as statements, which the participants had to rate on a 7-point rating scale, ranging from 'completely disagree' to 'completely agree'. Finally, there were four open questions on the content of the story to check whether participants had read and understood the story well. The questionnaire consisted of questions that were used and validated in previous research (de Graaf 2010; Kuijpers et al. 2014).

We constructed two versions of the questionnaire. In one version the questions concerning the man were asked first, followed by the questions

about the woman. In the other version, the questions about the woman were presented before the ones about the man. The questions about the reading experience were always asked last. The study used a between-subject design with two conditions. 60 participants read the manipulated version containing *haar man*, 'her husband'. The other 60 read the neutral version containing *de man*, 'the man'. In each group, 30 participants received one version of the questionnaire and the other half the other one. All four groups consisted of 7 male participants and 23 female participants.

The participants were randomly assigned one version of the story and one version of the questionnaire, although we made sure we had the same number of male participants per version. They were instructed to read in the manner in which they would normally read. After participants finished reading, the story was taken away so that they could not look at it again while filling out the questionnaire. No more than 4 participants participated at the same time. Depending on the reading speed of the participant, the whole experiment took between 15 and 25 minutes. The participants did not know that there were different versions of the story and they did not guess the goal of the study. They were all able to answer the content questions at the end of the questionnaire correctly. No participants were removed from the dataset.

7.3.2 Results

A principal axis factor analysis with oblimin rotation was conducted on all 30 items. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis and was well above the minimum of 0.5 (Field 2013), KMO = .781. An initial analysis revealed four tenable factors, together accounting for 53.0% of the variance. Two items were removed based on their low communalities and an additional 10 items were removed because they cross-loaded on another factor. A final analysis on the remaining 18 items revealed a four factor solution, accounting for 59.31% of the total variance.

Table 7.3 shows the factor loadings after rotation. The items clustering on the same factor suggest that factor 1 represents empathy with the male

Table 7.3 Summary of factor and reliability analysis

Rotated factor loadings				
	1	2	3	4
I empathized with the man	**.834**	.266	.159	.302
I sympathized with the man	**.776**	.132	.101	.173
While I was reading, I pictured what it would be like for the man to experience what was described	**.754**	.137	.123	.256
During reading I imagined what it would be like to be in the position of the man	**.749**	.205	.186	.406
I felt sorry for the man	**.649**			.113
During reading I felt sad when the man felt sad	**.622**	.170	.300	.278
While I was reading the story, I forgot my daily affairs	.169	**.871**	.115	−.105
When I read the story, my thoughts were only with the story		**.858**		−.148
During reading, I did not think for a while about the things that had been on my mind lately	.195	**.767**	.100	−.140
During reading, I was fully concentrated on the story	.177	**.725**		
I empathized with the woman			**.832**	.111
While I was reading, I pictured what it would be like for the woman to experience what was described	.229	.114	**.791**	.195
I sympathized with the woman			**.721**	
During reading I imagined what it would be like to be in the position of the woman	.163	.119	**.701**	.107
During reading I felt sad when the woman felt sad	.103		**.651**	.192
When I had been reading for a while, it seemed as if I had become the woman in my thoughts	.196		**.633**	.271
During reading I made a connection between the story and myself	.321	−.163	.299	**.940**
The story reminded me of my own experiences in life	.209			**.740**
Eigenvalues				
% of variance	24.388	15.604	13.725	5.592
Cronbach's α	.866	.878	.866	.821

Table 7.4 Means and standard deviations (between brackets) for empathy, narrative engagement and text-to-self connection

	Non-genitive version	Genitive version
Empathy with man[a]	4.98 (1.16)	5.19 (.80)
Empathy with woman[a]	3.16 (.93)	3.34 (1.18)
Narrative engagement[b]	5.33 (1.16)[c]	4.97 (1.22)
Text-to-self connection[d]	2.93 (1.63)	3.28 (1.73)

[a]1 = very low empathy, 7 = very high empathy
[b]1 = very low engagement, 7 = very high engagement
[c]Indicates marginal significance
[d]1 = very weak connection, 7 = very strong connection

character, factor 2 represents narrative engagement, factor 3 represents empathy with the female character and factor 4 represents text-to-self connection. All factors had high reliabilities (Cronbach's $\alpha > .82$).

To test our hypothesis on the effect of the genitive construction, we analysed whether the use of a genitive construction evoking double perspective had an effect on the empathy or identification with either the male character or female character. In addition, we tested whether the manipulation had affected the degree of narrative engagement and of text-to-self connection. Table 7.4 shows descriptive statistics for each condition.

Independent t-tests showed no effect of double perspective on empathy with the male character ($t(118) = 1.20$, $p = .23$, two-tailed) nor on empathy with the female character ($t(118) = .93$, $p = .35$, two-tailed). Analysis of the effect of double perspective on text-to-self connection also revealed no effect ($t(118) = 1.11$, $p = .27$, two-tailed). However, a marginally significant effect of double perspective on the degree of narrative engagement was found ($t(118) = 1.64$, $p = .105$, two-tailed), such that engagement in the non-genitive version of our story ($M = 5.33$, $SD = 1.16$) was slightly higher than in the genitive version ($M = 4.97$, $SD = 1.22$).

7.3.3 Discussion

We expected that the use of the genitive construction *her husband* instead of *the man* in the manipulated version of the story would cause a shift in perspective from the man towards the woman, thereby resulting in more

empathy with the woman or less empathy with the man. The results did not confirm our hypothesis. There was no effect of the double perspective manipulation on either the degree of empathy with the man or with the woman. Overall, the man was found to be more sympathetic than the woman, and readers clearly empathised much more with him than with her. The discrepancy readers experienced in the moral conduct between the man (good) and the woman (bad) was surprisingly high, especially given the fact that the man eventually kills his wife in the story. This moral dichotomy between the man and the woman in the eyes of the readers might have overruled potential marginal shifts in the degree of identification or empathy with either of them.

We did, however, find a marginally significant effect of the manipulation on readers' narrative engagement with (or transportation or immersion in) the story, in the sense that the use of the genitive construction resulted in a lower narrative engagement. We hypothesised that the use of the genitive construction *her husband* would trigger a transitory shift to the woman's perspective, while the story was mainly written from the man's perspective. The effect of the genitive construction on narrative engagement that we found can be explained as a consequence of this shift in perspective. As pointed out in the introduction, Hartung et al. (2016) argued that the increased processing difficulties of a third-person story compared to a first-person story may explain the lower immersion. Similarly, a double perspective construction may lead to processing difficulties compared to a single perspective construction, which could then result in lower immersion. We believe there is yet another explanation for our findings. Previous literature has suggested that the moral conduct of a character not only influences readers' degree of empathy with the character but also their transportation into the story. In particular, an experimental study by de Graaf and Hustinx (2015) showed that readers of a story with a sympathetic main character experienced more narrative engagement with the story than readers of stories with a neutral or unsympathetic one. Since readers of our story clearly disliked the woman and empathised more with the man, the shift in perspective towards the unsympathetic woman elicited by the use of the genitive construction can explain their lower immersion in the story as a whole.

7.4 Conclusion

A genitive construction such as *her husband* in which both the possessor and the possessed are main characters in a literary story may evoke a double perspective, or more accurately, a shift in perspective from the possessed to the possessor, i.e. from the husband's perspective to the wife's perspective. In this paper, we conducted a corpus study and a reading experiment to investigate this suggestion. On the basis of our corpus study of Boon's novel *Menuet*, we concluded that the use of such a genitive construction may indeed influence readers' degree of identification or empathy with these characters. We carried out an experiment to test our hypothesis that the use of such a genitive construction evoking double perspective either decreases identification or empathy with the possessed or increases identification or empathy with the possessor. Although our main hypothesis was not confirmed, we did find an effect of the use of the genitive construction on narrative engagement or immersion in the story. This result is in accordance with de Graaf and Hustinx' (2015) findings that unsympathetic protagonists decrease the degree of narrative engagement. In our experiment, readers found one of the two characters in the story unsympathetic and therefore the shift in perspective towards this character, as elicited by the genitive construction, can explain readers' lower engagement with the story.

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Notes

1. The examples in this section are taken from *Menuet* (1955) and the English translations from *Minuet*, Adrienne Dixon's translation. The page numbers refer to the page numbers in the editions we have used, Boon (1955a, b).

2. Note that in Dutch, the nouns *man* 'man' and *vrouw* 'woman' are ambiguous between the readings 'man' and 'husband' and between 'woman' and 'wife'. The possessive pronoun *mijn* 'my' disambiguates the phrase, hence the noun *vrouw* in *mijn vrouw* is translated as 'wife'.
3. These are the ages as mentioned in the first edition. In later editions, the differences in the woman's age as perceived by the three narrators were believed to be a mistake of the author, and were therefore corrected (Postma-Nelemans 1974: 36).

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8

They-Narratives

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8.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the forms and functions of third-person plural narration—a rather rare phenomenon in fictional narratives. I begin by relating *they*-narratives to the standard narratological categories developed by Franz K. Stanzel (1984) and Gérard Genette (1988) as well as the more recent typologies of *you*-narratives (Margolin 1994; Fludernik 1994a, b, 2011; Richardson 2006; Alber 2016) and *we*-narratives (Margolin 1996, 2000; Marcus 2008a, b, c; Richardson 2006, 2015; Alber 2015). In addition, I discuss *you*-, *we*-, and *they*-narratives in relation to the category of the unnatural, i.e., the representation of physical, logical, or human impossibilities (Alber 2016: 25–26).

I begin by developing a bird's-eye view on the relations between *they*-narratives and other prose manifestations of narrative along the lines of Franco Moretti's "distant reading", which "allows you to focus on […] systems" (2000: 57) rather than individual texts. In a second step, I will

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look at and compare the extensive *they*-passages in D.H. Lawrence's 'Things' (1928), Georges Perec's *Les choses: une histoire des années soixante* (1965), Ursula Le Guin's 'The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas' (1973), and Maxine Swann's *Flower Children* (2007). The chapter seeks to shed new light on the neglected literary phenomenon of *they*-narratives by revealing and proposing a number of reasons why a narrative might consistently refer to characters in the third-person plural (rather than single out individual storyworld inhabitants). In order to achieve this goal, this chapter addresses the underlying ideologies of *they*-narratives.

8.2 Theory: A Distant Reading of *They*-Narratives

In recent years, postclassical narratologists have become more and more interested in phenomena such as 'odd' pronominal use in *you*-, *we*-, and *they*-narratives, which are not discussed by traditional theorists such as Stanzel and Genette. Stanzel (1984) distinguishes between the following three narrative situations: the first-person narrative situation, which combines a character-narrator with the internal (or limited) perspective and the teller mode; the authorial narrative situation, which features a third-person narrator as well as the external (or omniscient) perspective and the teller mode; and the figural narrative situation, which combines a (barely perceptible or covert) third-person narrator with the internal (or limited) perspective: such cases foreground the thoughts and feelings of one or several reflector-characters.

In contrast to Stanzel's three prototypical narrative situations, Genette's taxonomy is based on the cross-tabulation of heterodiegetic and homodiegetic forms of narration and three types of focalisation (1988: 121; see also 1980: 189–194, 245). Homodiegetic (or first-person) narrators exist within the same ("homo") fictional realm ("diegesis") as the characters, while heterodiegetic (or third-person) narrators exist in a different ("hetero") fictional world ("diegesis"). Focalisation concerns the restriction of the information provided by the narrator. In cases of internal focalisation, the narrative concentrates on thoughts and feelings; in cases of external

focalisation, the narrative restricts itself to behaviour, action, and settings; and zero focalisation is the equivalent of narratorial "omniscience" (Genette 1980: 189), i.e. what Stanzel calls the external perspective.

You-narratives transcend these traditional typologies—at least to a certain degree. They are reflector-mode narratives in which a covert narrative voice somewhat inexplicably addresses the central protagonist in the second-person singular, and tells this character a story that happened to him or her (see Fludernik 1994a, b, 2011; Richardson 2006: 17–36; Alber 2016: 84–87). *You*-narratives hover ambivalently between first- and third-person narration. Jay McInerney's novel *Bright Lights, Big City* (1984), for example, begins as follows (1984: 1; my emphasis):

> *You* are not the kind of guy who would be at a place like this at this time of the morning. But here *you* are, and *you* cannot say that the terrain is entirely unfamiliar, although the details are fuzzy. *You* are at a nightclub talking to a girl with a shaved head. The club is either Heartbreak or the Lizard Lounge. All might come clear if *you* could just slip into the bathroom and do a little more Bolivian Marching Powder. Then again, it might not.

You-narratives are clearly unnatural; in nonfictional discourse we cannot tell our addressees in great detail what they experience, think, or feel, thus second-person narratives only exist in the world of fiction (Alber 2016: 84–87). *You*-narratives thus radicalise tendencies inherent in language, and widen the scope of what is possible in the world of fiction by moving beyond standard human limitations.

We-narratives are narrated in the first-person plural. It is either the case that a homodiegetic narrator speaks for a whole group, or readers are presented with the group's collective narrative (Marcus 2008a, b, c; Fludernik 2011, this volume; Alber 2015; Richardson 2015; Emmott, this volume). In *we*-narratives, "multiple agents are subsumed under the heading of shared worldviews, assumptions, intentions, or thought processes. Either the speaker speaks for him- or herself and somebody else or we listen to a collective voice, which consists of several speakers at the same time" (Alber 2015: 213). Some fictional *we*-narratives (such as John Barth's *Sabbatical: A Romance* [1982]) operate within realist or mimetic boundaries (like factual ones), but there are also those that disorient our

readerly expectations (like Joan Chase's *During the Reign of the Queen of Persia* [1983]) and unnatural ones that move beyond real-world possibilities (like Agota Kristof's *Le grand cahier* [1986]).

They-narratives are stories in which a narrator extensively groups characters together in larger units (groups or collectives) by using the third-person plural (instead of *he*, *she*, or the individual figures' proper names). This narrative strategy draws our attention to collectives; it foregrounds issues of group membership: the question of who belongs to which unit becomes pertinent. Among other things, the pronoun *they* may serve to stress the connections and interrelations between two or more characters. The narrator's decision to extensively use the third-person plural is noteworthy because it creates a distance between the narrator and the narrated group. We are thus urged to investigate the relationship between the narrator and the group referred to as *they* in greater detail. The motivation behind this narrative strategy might be a sense of a distinct group identity which the narrator (potentially comfortably) does not share, dislike for the members of the group or the group's goals, or the (perhaps suppressed) desire to belong to the group after all.

Furthermore, the prolonged use of *they* introduces an *us* vs. *them* mentality to the narrative: one group of people (usually the narrator who seeks complicity in the reader) is seen as being different from (and often superior to) the group referred to as *they*. Sometimes this narrative technique may lead to the radical depersonalisation of the characters: the figures are then no longer seen as individual beings; rather, they are reduced to dehumanised members, e.g. of a mob or a group of nameless victims. It should thus come as no surprise that historiographic accounts of crowds (as in the various examples discussed by Rudé 1964) constitute the non-fictional counterpart of fictional *they*-narratives. Indeed, as Monika Fludernik has shown, "in historical writing, collectives predominantly figure in the form of third-person plural subjects (*The Greeks repelled the Persians at Salamis*)" (in print). In fictional narratives, the third-person plural pronoun sometimes refers to different groups within the same text. In such cases, one has to address the question of why this is so and/or what the respective groups that are subsumed under the heading of *they* have in common.

They-narratives are surprising, odd, or strange because the use of the third-person plural is not common as a narrative technique. However, there is nothing unnatural about a narrator's use of *they*. This technique does not involve physical, logical, or human impossibilities of any kind. In the words of Brian Richardson, "'they' narration rarely loses its basis in realism, though as such a narration continues it seems odder and odder that the narrator doesn't refer to the characters individually" (2015: 200).

They-narratives do not make up a narrative situation of their own. Extended *they*-passages could theoretically be used in all of Stanzel's narrative situations, and they could also involve all types of focalisation in the sense of Genette. However, the following patterns emerged during my analyses: most of my examples feature a third-person narrator. There is in fact only one *they*-narrative (namely *Flower Children*) in which the narrator turns out to be a homodiegetic speaker and thus inhabitant of the storyworld after all. Also, even though I would have expected most *they*-narratives to be restricted to external focalisation, the narratives of my corpus turned out to be much more flexible with regard to focalisation. Since the use of *they* (instead of *he* or *she*) is based on an active choice, *they*-narratives presuppose a human consciousness behind the narrative discourse. Even if the narrator at first appears to be only a covert describer (as in *Les choses*, for instance), it is usually the case that he or she becomes more overt and actively comments on or evaluates the characters during the course of the narrative.

8.3 Analysis: Close Readings of *They*-Narratives

This section explores extensive *they*-passages in fiction. In turn, I discuss D.H. Lawrence's 'Things' (1928), Georges Perec's *Les choses: une histoire des années soixante* (1965), Ursula Le Guin's 'The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas' (1973), and Maxine Swann's *Flower Children* (2007).

8.3.1 Dismantling Idealism: The *Us* vs. *Them* Mentality of Lawrence's 'Things'

D.H. Lawrence's 'Things' is a *they*-narrative about Erasmus and Valerie Melville, a twentieth-century idealist couple from New England. The Melvilles dream of a better world: they are highly critical of "greed, pain, and sorrow" (Lawrence 1955: 846), and they share "a mutual love of beauty, and an inclination towards 'Indian thought'" (844). Because they love Europe, they decide to move to Paris. The story opens as follows (844; my emphasis):

> *They* were true idealists from New England. […] Several years before the war, *they* met and married. […] *They* both had little money. […] The two idealists, who were married in New Haven, sailed at once to Paris: Paris of the old days. *They* had a studio apartment on the Boulevard Montparnasse, and *they* became real Parisians, in the old delightful sense, not in the modern, vulgar. […] *They* both painted but not desperately. Art had not taken them by the throat, and *they* did not take Art by the throat. *They* painted: that's all. *They* knew people—nice people, if possible, though one had to take them mixed. And *they* were happy.

The Melvilles do not seem to find what they are looking for and so they move to Italy, and ultimately back to the United States. The heterodiegetic narrator describes their sojourn in Italy as follows (845–846):

> And in Italy, much more than in Paris, they felt they could thrill to the teachings of the Buddha. They entered the swelling stream of modern Buddhistic emotion, and they read the books, and they practised meditation, and they deliberately set themselves to eliminate from their won souls greed, pain, and sorrow. They did not realise—yet—that Buddha's very eagerness to free himself from pain and sorrow is in itself a sort of greed.

In this *they*-narrative, the third-person plural pronoun serves to stigmatise and belittle the two characters as idealist dreamers, who are foolish enough to want to make the world a better place. The narrator consistently mocks and ridicules their common project and sense of communion. In addition, he has access to the Melvilles' thoughts and feelings.

When they begin to dislike Italy, for instance, the narrator informs the readers (846–847) that

> […] they subsided with a slow rustle back to the earth again. But they made no outcry. They were again 'disappointed'. But they never admitted it. 'Indian thought' had let them down. But they never complained. Even to one another, they never said a word.

The narrator does not like the two characters; he satirises their life-style throughout the narrative.

The narrator is particularly critical of the Melvilles' hypocrisy regarding material things. On the one hand, they claim to only care about "the inner urge of the spirit", and stigmatise others as being "materialistic" (847). On the other hand, they become more and more materialist themselves as they buy splendid but slightly shabby furniture in large quantities (848):

> They had become tense, fierce, hunters of 'things' for their home. While their souls were climbing up to the sun of old European culture or old Indian thought, their passions were running horizontally, clutching at 'things'. Of course they did not buy the things for the things' sakes, but for the sake of 'beauty'.

Towards the end of the short story, Erasmus takes up an academic job in the United States but since they cannot find an appropriate apartment, "the several van-loads" of "adorable and irreplaceable 'things'" (849) have to remain "in warehouse" (850). The Melvilles can only remember "the old soul", i.e., the idealism of the past, but "they had not felt any influx of new soul on the Californian coast" (851).

From this point onwards, the third-person plural pronoun is used less and less frequently. While Valerie is obsessed with her 'things', Erasmus knows that "the job was upon him" (852). The narrator describes the new situation in the following words: "he was in the cage: but it was safe inside. And she, evidently, was her real self at last" (853). In addition, the narrator highlights the "rat-like" features of Erasmus: "he glowered at her like a cornered rat. One almost expected to see a

rat's whiskers twitching at the sides of the sharp nose" (853). The movement from *they* to *he* and *she* in the final third of Lawrence's narrative goes hand in hand with "a progressive dismantling of idealism" (Coroneos and Tate 2001: 118). The pronoun *they* disappears once the two characters are revealed as egocentric materialists, whose new motto is "Europe's the mayonnaise all right, but America supplies the good old lobster" (Lawrence 1955: 853).

The narrator of 'Things' begins by setting up an *us* vs. *them* dichotomy by using the first-person plural possessive: he repeatedly (and disparagingly) calls the Melvilles "our idealists" (Lawrence 1955: 845–846) or "our two idealists" (845), thus implicating the reader in the supposedly superior group that looks down on them. The narrator is not only misanthropic but also a decided anti-idealist. As the following passage illustrates, he despises all humans, but idealists in particular (845; original italics):

> It seems as if human beings must set their claws in *something*. […] A 'full and beautiful life' means a tight attachment to *something*—at least, it is so for all idealists—or else a certain boredom supervenes. […] Finding nothing, the vine can only trail, half-fulfilled, upon the ground. […] And human beings are all vines. But especially the idealist. He is a vine, and he needs to clutch and climb.

In 'Things', the third-person plural pronoun serves to create a distance between (the allegedly enlightened) *us* and (the foolishly idealistic) *them*. The narrator seeks to depersonalise and degrade the characters to such a degree that he even deprives them of their human features by describing one of them as "rat-like" (852) and also as having "claws" (845).

8.3.2 How Consumerism Can Turn People into Lifeless Objects: Perec's *Les choses*

Perec's *Les choses* (1965) is set in France in the 1960s, and deals with a young couple Jêrome (24 years old) and Sylvie (22 years old). They both begin to work in the market research industry. The heterodiegetic narrator

describes the new life style of Jêrome and Sylvie in *they*-form as follows (Perec 1965: 38–39; my emphasis and translation):

> *Ils* changeaient, *ils* devenaient autres. […] *Ils* faisaient attention à la manière dont les autres étaient habillés; *ils* remarquaient aux devantures les meubles, les bibelots, les cravates; *ils* rêvaient devant les annonces des agents immobiliers.
>
> [*They* were changing, *they* were developing into other people. […] *They* were paying attention to the way in which others were dressed; *they* were commenting on furniture, hotchpotch, and ties in shop-windows; *they* were dreaming in front of advertisements of estate agents.]

The passage uses the *imparfait* (as opposed to the *passé composé* or *passé simple*), which signals that the characters performed the described actions repeatedly. Also, in the words of Day, Jêrome and Sylvie are "mentioned almost exclusively in tandem, forming a unit in which their personal identities never come into play" (1989: 250). Day sees them as "hypothetical characters" that "have no other function than to represent a social class" (1989: 250). I would take this interpretation one step further by arguing that the depersonalising *they* foregrounds the process through which the two characters turn themselves into lifeless commodities on account of their life-style as market researchers in the context of the developing capitalist phenomenon of consumerism in the 1960s. The novel thematises the problem that the accumulation of material goods takes up so much time that one cannot actually enjoy them.

The narrator seems to be a covert one, i.e., one who restricts himself to behaviour and action (external focalisation) throughout the text. Upon closer inspection, however, we realise that the novel also contains internally focalised passages. At one point, for example, Jêrome and Sylvie fantasise about a new apartment in which the flow of time would come to rest during a long day in the month of May ("ce serait le début d'une longue journée de mai" [Perec 1965: 15]). Here we learn what they *would* do in such a situation (in the *conditionnel*) (1965: 15; my emphasis):

> Ils *décachetteraient* leur courrier, ils *ouvriraient* les journaux. Ils *allumeraient* une première cigarette. Ils *sortiraient*. Leur travail ne les *retiendrait* que quelques heures, le matin.

> [They *would rip open* their post, they *would open* the newspapers. They *would light* a first cigarette. They *would go out*. Their work *would* only *restrain* them for a couple of hours in the morning.]

The narrator has access to the thoughts and feelings of the characters: he informs us about their dreams and wishes. These fantasies are part of the consumerist project: in order to be able to afford a nicer apartment, one simply has to work more. At the same time, these dreams are interesting from the perspective of market researchers: it would be ideal to have access to people's interiority in order to develop better marketing strategies.

At other times, the narrator evaluates the behaviour of the characters. It is almost as if he was yet another market researcher developing consumer profiles. Howard Becker is astute to point out that the novel "resembles an ethnographic description of a culture or way of life, of shared understandings and routine activities undertaken in accord with them" (2001: 66). When Jêrome and Sylvie deviate from their regular standards of perfection (regarding work or their behaviour as consumers), the narrator becomes more overt and severely critiques them by using unfavourable adjectives. For instance, he describes a chaotic phase in their lives, what he calls "leure vie cahotante", as follows (Perec 1965: 78):

> Ils dépensaient en six heures ce qu'ils avaient mis trois jours à gagner; ils empruntaient souvent; ils mangeaient des frites infâmes, fumaient ensemble leur dernière cigarette, cherchaient parfois pendant deux heures un ticket de métro, […], écoutaient des disques usés, voyageaient en stop, et restaient, encore assez fréquemment, cinq ou six semaines sans changer de draps.
>
> [They were spending during six hours what had taken them three days to earn; they were borrowing frequently; they were eating repellent chips, smoking their last cigarette together, sometimes looking for a metro ticket for two hours, […] listening to used records, hitchhiking, and remaining, more and more frequently, five or six weeks without changing the linen.]

This kind of life style is not desirable from the perspective of economic growth based on consumption. That is to say, even the subjective fantasies

of the characters and the narrator's evaluations ultimately support the consumerism of the 1960s. All the characters, and even the narrator, argue that an increase in the consumption of goods (and thus the creation of 'good' consumers, i.e., people who like to consume) will create a sound economy. In *Les choses*, only the implied author can be associated with a position outside the ideology of consumerism: the fundamental unhappiness of the characters indicates that their overall approach or life style is problematic.

In this context, it is worth noting that it is difficult to distinguish between Jêrome and Sylvie and other members of their group: they lack distinguishing features and are all, in a sense, interchangeable. As Day has shown, the pronoun *they* ("ils") extends from the couple to the larger social unit of which they are a part ("le groupe"); and this group includes "other people in the market research industry who have similar social positions as Jêrome and Sylvie and even extends to all lower management employees who can be characterised as *technocrats*" (1989: 250; italics in original).

Les choses presents an accumulation of consumerist agents ranging from Jêrome and Sylvie to the larger group of market researchers and even the narrator. The use of the depersonalising pronoun *they* relates to the way in which the narrator deals with the characters: he observes and evaluates them in the manner of a market researcher. At the same time, however, the pronoun *they* accentuates that Jêrome and Sylvie (like other members of their group) turn themselves into lifeless commodities through their jobs.

8.3.3 To Which Group Do We Belong? Le Guin's 'The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas'

Compared to Lawrence's 'Things' and Perec's *Les choses*, Le Guin's self-reflexive *they*-narrative 'The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas' functions completely differently. Here, we witness a narrator in the process of making up a seemingly perfect utopian city, and we as readers are implicated in the creation of this fictional universe. The heterodiegetic narrator, who clearly does not live in Omelas, describes the beginning of

the "Festival of Summer" in the city, which is "bright-towered by the sea" (Le Guin 1973: 9). Music and happiness are everywhere, and the citizens of Omelas are described as "mature, intelligent, passionate adults" (17). Interestingly, the narrator consistently uses the third-person plural to refer to the storyworld inhabitants (16; my emphasis):

> *They* were not simple folk, […] though *they* were happy. […] *They* did not use swords, or keep slaves. *They* were not barbarians. […] [A]s *they* did without monarchy and slavery, so *they* also got on without the stock exchange, the advertisement, the secret police, and the bomb. […] These were not simple folk, no dulcet shepherds, noble savages, bland utopians.

At the beginning, the narrator singles out smaller societal units or groups that play a role in the context of the summer festival (such as "old people", "grave master workmen", "merry women", "children", and "horses" [10–12]), but then moves on to the people of Omelas as a whole.

We gradually begin to realise that the narrator is not describing the inhabitants of a pre-existing city; rather, we witness the process of inventing Omelas and its citizens. Suddenly, she informs us about gaps in her knowledge about the place: "I *do not know* the rules and laws of their society, but I *suspect*, that they were singularly few" (15; my italics). Later, the narrator exclaims: "O miracle, I wish I could describe it better. I wish I could convince you" (17). She then invites us as readers to fill in the gaps of her imagination: "Perhaps it would be best if you imagined it as your own fancy bids, assuming it will rise to the occasion, for certainly I cannot suit you all" (17). The motto of this collective vision is "as you like it" (18); and we are told that "if an orgy would help, don't hesitate" (19). From this point onwards, the narrator also sometimes tells us what to imagine: "let them [the beautiful nudes] join the processions. Let tambourines be struck above the copulations […], and […] let the offspring of these delightful rituals be beloved and looked after by all" (19–20).

After we have become collaborators of the narrator's imaginings, we learn that there is one thing about Omelas that is not perfect or utopian: a child is sitting "in a basement under one of the beautiful public buildings" (23). This child receives a little bit of water as well as "a half-

bowl of corn meal and grease a day" (26). Furthermore, we are told that "it is so thin there are no calves to its legs; its belly protrudes. […] Its buttocks and thighs are a mass of festered sores, as it sits in its own excrement continually" (26). Since the representation of this child prisoner involves various indeterminacies, we as readers are again forced to participate in the process of making things up. The factual statement "in the room a child is sitting", for instance, is followed by optional features: "it could be a boy or a girl" (24). Also, we are told (in a factual manner) that "it is feeble-minded", but then another indeterminacy follows: "perhaps it was born defective or perhaps it has become imbecile through fear, malnutrition, and neglect" (24; see also Knapp 1985: 77).

What is the connection between the happy people of Omelas and the suffering child? The narrator explains (Le Guin 1973: 16–17; my emphasis):

> […] *they* all know it is there, all the people of Omelas. *Some of them* have come to see it, *others* are content merely to know it is there. *They* all know that it has to be there. *Some of them* understand why, and *some* do not, but *they all* understand that *their* happiness, the beauty of *their* city, the tenderness of *their* friendships, the health of *their* children, the wisdom of *their* scholars, the skill of *their* makers, even the abundance of *their* harvest and the kindly weathers of *their* skies, depend wholly on this child's abominable misery.

Towards the end of the short story, the third-person plural pronoun is used to refer to a different group, namely "the ones who walk away from Omelas" (32). Some of the inhabitants cannot accept the brutal "terms" (28) of the city—i.e., what Knapp calls "the promise of mass bliss in exchange for a unique torment" (1985: 76)—and react as follows (Le Guin 1973: 31–32; my emphasis):

> *These people* go out into the street, and walk down the street alone. *They* keep walking, and walk straight out of the city of Omelas, through the beautiful gates. *They* keep walking across the farmlands of Omelas. […] *They* go on. *They* leave Omelas, *they* walk ahead into the darkness, and *they* do not come back.

What is the point of the extensive use of *they* in Le Guin's narrative? And what about the fact that the pronoun is used for two different groups of people (namely those who stay and those who leave)? To begin with, the wide-ranging presence of the third-person plural pronoun draws our attention to the significance of groups or larger units. The narrative urges us to ponder the question of which group we as readers belong to, i.e., the ones who would walk away from Omelas (on moral grounds) or those who would stay there (because it seems to be enjoyable to live there). At first glance, the narrator's use of *they* to refer to the inhabitants of Omelas creates a distance between the invented characters and the narrator and his complicit audience. However, by stating that "*they* were not less complex than *us*" (16; my emphasis), she suggests that the two groups also have certain features in common: we might ultimately not be too different from the citizens of Omelas.

Indeed, the sneaky or perhaps even diabolical narrator manages to lure her readers into the joint creation of a seemingly wonderful city that is dominated by sunshine, beauty, bliss, harmony, nakedness, public copulations, and moderate drug use. We are invited to provide additional information about the imagined world and, occasionally, she also tells us what to imagine. Once we have joined the proposed collective mental operations, we suddenly receive information concerning the city's set-up that does not make any sense at all. Why should "all the prosperity and beauty and delight of Omelas […] wither and be destroyed" (28) if the imprisoned child was released? Knapp also writes that the bargain on which the city rests "violates not only decency but logic. Why […] should a child's suffering lead to anyone's happiness?" (1985: 79).

The narrative operates in the manner of ideologies that promise harmony and bliss to a specific group (in this case, the inhabitants of Omelas). Le Guin's short story plays with the possibility that many of its readers enjoy belonging to the selected few or chosen elite. Indeed, as Lakoff and Turner have shown, the cultural model of the Great Chain involves the idea that "higher forms of being dominate lower forms of being by virtue of their higher natures. […] The Great Chain is a description not merely of what hierarchies happen to *exist* in the world but, further, of what the hierarchies in the world *should be*" (1989: 210; italics in original). In addition, "as a chain of dominance, it can become

a chain of subjugation" (1989: 213). In many readers, the enjoyable feeling of belonging to the elite (the happy citizens of Omelas) will trump their moral conscience. In other cases, however, moral considerations and the absurdity of the arrangement in Omelas will gain the upper hand.

The narrator's use of *they* for the ones who leave Omelas is supposed to stigmatise them as bizarre radicals who do not value the city's blissful lifestyle: the narrator even states explicitly that the behaviour of these people "is quite incredible" (Le Guin 1973: 31). However, the text as a whole seems to suggest that this is the only appropriate course of action. Unfortunately, when we as readers think further, and address the question of how our western life-style (outside Le Guin's thought experiment) depends on the suffering of others, a different picture concerning our group membership emerges. Our wealth and safety depends on exploited 'third-world' workers, imprisoned criminals, drowning refugees, starving children in Africa, suffering animals in slaughterhouses, and so forth (see also Bennett 2005: 66). Many of us suppress this kind of knowledge because it is truly enjoyable to belong to the selected few who are lucky enough to live in a wealthy western democracy. From this perspective, most of us belong to the first group designated by *they*, namely the ones who stay in Omelas. It is fair to say that in this sense, *we* (the western readers) are very much like *them*, i.e., the inhabitants of Omelas.

8.3.4 Swann's *Flower Children*: The Interplay Between Identity and Difference

Flower Children, my final example, deals with four children who grow up in Virginia in the 1970s. They live in some kind of rural utopia in the context of a hippie family. Their father "lights his farts with matches on the stairs", and likes to talk about "Nixon, wind power, nuclear power, Vietnam, fecal patterns, sea thermal energy, the est training, civil rights" (Swann 2007: 7). The parents "grow pot in the garden", and take their children "to protests" and "to concerts sometimes" (8). The parents and their friends regularly take off their clothes, and the children "memorize the sizes of the breasts and the shapes of the penises of all their parents' friends and discuss this later among themselves" (9). The babysitter plays

strip poker with her friends, and the father talks freely about "women he's been with, how they make love, what he prefers or doesn't prefer" (10). The novel begins by describing these flower children in *they*-form (1–2; my emphasis):

> *They*'re free to run anywhere *they* like whenever *they* like, so *they* do. The land falls away from *their* small house on the hill along a prickly path […]. *They* aren't sure where *their* own land stops and someone else's begins, but it doesn't matter, *they*'re told: It doesn't matter! Go where you please!

As Richardson (2015) has shown, the representation of joint behavioural patterns and joint mental or emotional processing—as in "they nod, nod, nod", "they're mortified", "they think", or "they grow hesitant with worry" (Swann 2007: 8–13)—sometimes leads to rather "unusual locutions" (Richardson 2015: 209).

In *Flower Children*, the use of *they* concerns the interplay between identity and difference. The third-person plural highlights the sense of collectivity or togetherness the children's parents aim for through their upbringing: they want to "create a new world—one that has no relation to the world they have known—in which nothing is lied about, whispered about, and nothing is ever concealed" (Swann 2007: 6). But the children also sometimes feel excluded from the rest of society—in particular when they perceive a sense of difference between themselves and other children at school. At one point, for example, they realise that "the other children in the schoolyard are whispering themselves into wild confusion about their bodies and sex and babies being born" (12). The flower children are thus (12–13):

> […] mortified by what they know and have seen. They're sure that if they mention one word, the other children will go home and tell their parents who will tell their teachers who will be horrified and disgusted and push them away. But they also think that they should be punished. They should be shaken, beaten, for what they've seen.

The flower children do not only feel different: they also feel guilty of the additional knowledge they possess.

In the novel's final chapter, we are told that the flower children "have gone away, to college and the world", but "their mother has kept the house, has kept their old things, in the closets, in boxes" (202). They come home frequently, and when they "look at one another", they discover "in each other their own gestures" (209). Also, they come home, and "then they go away again" (203).

At the very end, there is a sudden shift to a first-person narrator. One of the flower children ends the novel by stating: "for I was one of those children and now, hands in my pockets, whistling a little tune, I pick myself up and stroll away" (211). Despite this *Bildungsroman*-like closure, this first-person narrator notably talks about the past by using the *they*-form (rather than the *we*-form). Although the narrator acknowledges the significance of her upbringing through her story, she can now—as an adult—distance herself from the group she used to belong to. *Flower Children* illustrates that humans like to belong to a larger whole. At the same time, however, this larger whole should allow for group-internal variation, and the development of one's own specific identity and subjectivity.

8.4 Conclusion

They-narratives are a rare but interesting literary phenomenon. Such narratives urge us to zoom in on the relationship between individuals and groups as well as between larger social units. My analyses show that the third-person plural pronoun in narration can have varying effects. Like all narrative strategies, the use of *they* is not intrinsically tied up with a certain ideology or world view. Nevertheless, it is important to address the ideology or world view in the context of which this technique is used.

The overt narrator of Lawrence's 'Things', for instance, uses the *they*-form to stigmatise the Melvilles as mistaken idealists. His discourse is in fact a good example of the kind of strict binary thinking that leads to the building of walls. 'Things' operates on the basis of a radical separation of two societal groups. Compared to 'Things', the narrator of Perec's *Les choses* is much more covert: he behaves like a market researcher who develops a consumer profile of Jêrome and Sylvie, the two main

characters, who both work in the market research industry. The depersonalising *they* has to do with the 'cold' work of a statistician but it is also expressive of the ways in which the characters gradually turn themselves into commodities. The implied author of this *they*-narrative is highly critical of the overarching commodity fetishism in France in the 1960s.

Le Guin uses the third-person plural pronoun to refer to two different groups of people, namely the ones who stay and the ones who walk away from the imagined city of Omelas (where society's overall happiness depends upon the suffering of a child). We as readers are urged to think about the question of which group we would belong to. While most readers would presumably immediately respond that they would leave the seemingly perfect city, our behaviour in the real world is a slightly different matter: we as western readers tend to suppress the fact that our wealth and security depends on much suffering. Hence, our situation is not that different from the one in the invented Omelas after all.

In *Flower Children*, finally, the third-person plural concerns the interplay between identity and difference. The first-person narrator uses the *they*-form to distance herself from her upbringing and the collective unity between herself and her three siblings. However, this sense of dissociation is obviously very different from the *us* vs. *them* mentality in Lawrence's 'Things.'

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9

The Observing *We* in Literary Representations of Neglect and Social Alienation: Types of Narrator Involvement in Janice Galloway's 'Scenes from the Life No. 26: The Community and the Senior Citizen' and Jon McGregor's *Even the Dogs*

Catherine Emmott

9.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I examine how *we*-narration is used to powerfully convey unusual perspectives on neglect and social alienation in two literary texts, Janice Galloway's (1992) short story 'Scenes from the life no. 26: The community and the senior citizen' and Jon McGregor's (2010) novel *Even the Dogs*. In both these texts, there is an observing *we* who narrates events and whose response to the main action is central to the story, contributing to disturbing portrayals of modern social life. However, in Galloway's story, the observing *we* is voyeuristic, witnessing an old woman's neglected state of health and apparent drug overdose. The *we*-narrator

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does not personally know the woman or her background and seems to have little empathy for her. The *we*-narration has a potentially unsettling effect as it suggests a range of responses including curiosity and repulsion, which the reader may engage with and/or resist. By contrast, in Jon McGregor's novel *Even the Dogs*, the pronoun *we* is used for a group which is personally involved in the action, this group comprising the ghosts of several dead drug addicts who watch over the corpse of a man they have known who has apparently died of (self-)neglect. In this case, the observing *we* participates in the action, following the corpse from its discovery to its cremation, providing knowledge of his life, questioning how his death occurred and showing an unfulfilled wish for a grand memorial. In McGregor's story, the *we*-group provide an empathetic view of the central dead character's life and of the marginalised lifestyle of both him and the *we*-group themselves. Again this may be unsettling for the reader, but in this case because of the shared knowledge and assumptions of the *we*-group about living in extreme poverty and experiencing social alienation. Neither text makes an explicit political comment, but both are particularly effective in revealing the bleaker aspects of modern social life. In this chapter, I examine how the *we*-narration styles in both texts reveal the shock and brutality of life and death on the margins of society, but offer different views of social alienation due to the degree of narrator involvement and the different witnessing perspectives presented.

9.2 Fourth Wall Voyeurism and Uninvolved Observation: *We*-Narration in Janice Galloway's 'Scenes from the Life No. 26: The Community and the Senior Citizen'

In Janice Galloway's 'Scenes from the life no. 26: The community and the senior citizen', the *we*-narrator provides an uneasy view into the privacy of an old woman's[1] life, observing her (without her awareness) with curiosity but without much or any apparent interest in her welfare. There may be some justification for this act of observation since the main action

is portrayed as if being on a stage,[2] which implies that the observing *we*-narrator is in the audience role, hence licensing voyeurism. Nevertheless, there are aspects of the *we*-narration that seem unsettling[3] in several respects. Firstly, the depiction of the old woman is extremely disturbing, including graphic descriptions of her neglected state of health (1992: 48) and presenting a very detailed account of her taking a drug overdose, including numbered step-by-step instructions on how to keep swallowing the pills (1992: 57). Secondly, the *we*-narrator appears at times to be physically entering the private space of the elderly protagonist—the text itself uses the word "intrusion" (1992: 55). This physical movement may give the impression of crossing the imaginary fourth wall between the audience and the story world, as if actually entering the main scene rather than just observing it from a distance and at a different ontological level. Thirdly, the *we*-narrator's responses do not seem to be particularly empathetic and at points the *we*-narrator quite explicitly withdraws from involvement and responsibility. Fourthly, this puts the reader in the difficult position of aligning with a *we*-narrator who is not fully empathetic, or resisting the lack of involvement, or a combination of both.

The basic structure of the story is as follows. The story begins with a detailed description of a living room which is suggestive of a set description (the room is a "three-sided box" (1992: 46)). Two characters are introduced, a health visitor and an old woman (both role labels are fully capitalised in the original text, as might be found in a play script). The *we*-narrator is an onlooker and provides a detailed (half page) description of the old woman's state of health and her appearance. She is "thin; tortuously thin" (1992: 48) and her appearance has clearly been neglected. The text then shifts between descriptions of the scene (presumably the focalisations of the *we*-narrator) and occasional explicit *we*-narrator comments, plus some dialogue (in play script form) between the health visitor and the old woman. The conversation seems (from the final exchanges that we are presented with) to consist of pleasantries on the part of the health visitor as the two drink tea together. The old woman is either silent or very minimally responsive to questions about how she is, not admitting that there is anything wrong, although both her general appearance and her relative lack of conversational response belie this. In particular, her

struggle to smile is described in detail (e.g. as a "grimace" (1992: 49)). After the health visitor leaves, the old woman's public persona slips. The *we*-narrator continues to watch as the old woman tidies her flat, bathes, and makes further preparations, described with some ominous hints.[4] The old woman then consumes a whole bottle of pills and lies flat on the floor, presumably having taken an overdose. The story ends with the old woman lying there waiting for the drugs to take effect.

Throughout these events, the *we*-narrator's response is a central part of Galloway's text. The use of *we*, whether interpreted as including or excluding the reader, naturally pulls the reader into the act of viewing (Margolin 2001: 242). As this *we* has no described characteristics apart from the ability to observe and comment, there are no personal properties of the *we* to block the audience's identification (Marcus 2008: 8), other than a possible difference in opinion in evaluating the events. The responses of the *we* are multi-sensory, potentially facilitating the reader's embodied response to the scene, which may increase narrative immersion (in addition to seeing and hearing, the *we*-narrator feels coldness (1992: 52), appears to smell vomit (53) and can move to get a closer or more distant view (52–53)) (see Sanford and Emmott 2012 for a discussion of embodiment theories in relation to reading).

On the first introduction of the old woman, the directive "Feel free" can be seen as an invitation to the reader to be involved in the *we*-narrator's observations (1992: 47; my emphasis):

> Yes, there is someone in the companion chair now *we* look. *Feel free*; she cannot know *we* are watching.

The *we*-narrator's response is initially relatively detached. While the health visitor is present, the *we*-narrator's comments are largely concerned with description. There are also occasional inferences drawn from the scene (e.g. for a black and white picture, "We may assume a wedding photograph" (46)). In addition, there are critical evaluations. The old woman is described rather unsympathetically as having "certainly let herself go" (48). Also, the *we*-narrator comments rather sarcastically on the health visitor's prompt exit, saying that "we begin to appreciate the artistry […] in this professional and crafted leavetaking" (51).

After the health visitor's exit, however, the situation develops from the previous view of the old woman's public persona to a more private and harrowing representation of her. For the remainder of the story, the *we*-narrator both describes the old woman's actions and comments on the *we*-narrator's own emotional involvement. As the woman temporarily composes herself, there is at first a physical move towards her on the part of the *we*-narrator ("Now we advance" (52)), which seems to transgress ordinary audience viewing in a theatre, unless this is equivalent to a filmic zoom.[5]

As the woman's state again worsens, with breathing difficulties and retching over the sink, initially the response of the *we*-narrator seems empathetic (1992: 52; my emphasis):

> […] *we* feel [the effects of the water] and the pulsing at her temples—reaching to know what is wrong. *Some of us* go further.

The *we*-narrator is here revealed as somewhat disparate, by the expression "Some of us", but elsewhere appears to be unified—this could relate to different levels of engagement of an audience.[6] At this point, there is a sudden dramatic change of perspective. There is a "flickering" and "Flashing" (52) that had previously occurred when the whole scene came into view at the start of the story. The text provides an italicised paragraph which suddenly and without explanation moves the action away from the *we*-narrator's vantage point, apparently revealing the old woman's actions in the bathroom and bedroom. This seems to be an instantaneous contextual frame switch (Emmott 1997: 154), a "cut" from one spatial context to another, possibly also with a temporal shift here. It is unclear whether the old woman has suddenly moved between locations or whether we are viewing a different version of the character at a different point in time (a different enactor, Emmott 1997). Either way, this non-realistic change of context provides an even more private view of the old woman. The description of her in this italicised paragraph is horrific and exposes her underlying physical deterioration, describing her as "*a jumble of bones weeping on a bedstead: vomiting*" (1992: 53, Galloway's italics). At this point, the *we*-narrator's empathy disappears and is reflected by a physical movement away from the scene, an instantaneous contextual

frame switch in the opposite direction (1992: 53; Galloway's capitals, my emphasis):

> But this is revolting. *Our* empathy snaps back. A thick whiff of nausea, a blink or two, and *we* are relieved to find the shock has jolted *us* out of the kitchen and back to *our* vantage point in the living room. There, reassuringly on the right again, is the OLD WOMAN buttressed at the sink.

There is some psychological evidence for linking emotions with physical movements in embodiment research (see Sanford and Emmott 2012), so reading about the earlier movement towards the old woman and the sudden jolt away from her here may quite effectively convey this emotional response to the reader.

For the remainder of the text, the *we*-narrator's response is deliberately less involved. As the old woman runs water in what the *we*-narrator infers to be "an off-stage bath", the *we*-narrator listens but limits engagement (53; my emphasis):

> But one door still retains its secret. […] Curiosity makes *us* stay as she crosses the floor and enters through it. [The *we*-narrator hears the sounds of a bath running.] Still, it does not do to be too interested; *we* have learned that from experience.

As the *we*-narrator waits and looks around the room, it becomes apparent that there is an emergency intercom on the wall, presumably linked to a caretaker. There is clear relief for the *we*-narrator as this lessens any sense of responsibility (54; my emphasis):

> It is all more containable now, and *we* can afford a little sentimental soft-focus.

Nevertheless, it becomes obvious that something is about to happen, as the old woman appears to be preparing her home and getting her pills ready. The sense of a performance is indicated by further direct references to a stage/set ("a newly-cleared stage with this single prop [the packet of pills]" (55); "The set is ready" (56)). As she further steels herself and takes

the pills, the emphasis is on the viewer's response to the "performance" (57) (whether interested or bored) rather than to the awful event being portrayed (56, 57; my emphasis):

> [As the old woman prepares to take the pills] she is making *us* wait. Second after second—almost five minutes. It would be easy to let attention wander, cast around the room, but what is there to see?
>
> [After the repetitive taking of the pills] It takes about four minutes in all, not a long performance, and manages to retain interest throughout.

The final words of the *we*-narrator, as the old woman lies waiting for the drugs to take effect, are devoid of empathy (57; my emphasis):

> Let her wait on. *We* have other things to do.

In the second half of this story, from the point at which the *we*-narrator's empathy is described as snapping back (53), there is no empathetic engagement on the part of the *we*-narrator with the woman. If this is really a staged performance, then the character is presumably fictional for the *we*-narrator, as the character is anyway for the real reader—hence, that might suggest that there is no real need for empathy. However, audiences and readers are likely to become (at least partially) immersed in the action and (up to a point[7]) see the old lady as if she is real—hence, in spite of the references to the stage and a performance, readers may feel uncomfortable about the *we*-narrator's lack of emotional involvement at the close of the story, particularly when the *we* reference encourages the reader to align with the narrator. Throughout this story, the observing *we*-narrator may serve to defamiliarise (Shklovsky 1965) the real life response of some people to the suffering of the elderly, showing the unwillingness to get too involved with those older people not known personally and a sense of relief when the responsibility is taken by others. Although the sub-title of the story is "The community and the senior citizen", there seems to be little effective community involvement[8] and the term "senior citizen" seems to be rather more respectful (perhaps implying citizenship of a community) than the main narrative's designation "OLD WOMAN".

9.3 Vigil for a Dead Friend and Involved Observation: *We*-Narration in Jon McGregor's *Even the Dogs*

In Jon McGregor's novel *Even the Dogs* (2010), the observing *we*-narrator is part of the main story, rather than the separate audience of Galloway's text. There is a distinct difference in the degree of involvement of the narrator, since this *we*-narrator has shared knowledge of the general circumstances of the community being observed, personal memories and a direct interest. This personal involvement is contrasted with the more impersonal view of professionals in the story.

The *we*-narrator represents a loose group of onlooking ghosts who were associates of the main dead man, Robert. In life, these associates were homeless people and drug addicts. The story is structured around five chapters, each showing a stage in the handling of Robert's corpse from the police discovery of the body to the funeral and cremation, including the investigation of his death by the police, doctors and coroner. Throughout the story, the ghostly *we*-group follow these professionals, watching their work and waiting with Robert's body, trying to fulfil the role of personal mourners but failing to give him a grand commemoration. The professionals themselves are also involved in an act of observation since they study Robert's body and circumstances from a very different forensic perspective, providing a more distant and impersonal scientific view of what has happened.

In this text, the *we*-narrator is explicitly mentioned intermittently, describing the vigil, pondering over Robert's death and remembering. This main *we*-narration has been described as "choral" (Ganteau 2013, 2014: 91). There are distinctive features of this *we*-voice in these passages that might be regarded as choral, such as the use of repetition and parallel grammatical structures in the examples below (2010: 57, 81):

> We've got the time.
> We've got all the time in the world.
>
> And how long must we wait.[9] How long have we waited already. For something to happen. For someone to come. For some fucking thing to change.

Some of these key words, expressions and ideas are also repeated not only within these *we*-narrator passages but across them, like the repeated refrain of a chorus (e.g. the word "wait[ed]" and the expression "We've got all the time in the world" (e.g. 60)). On occasions there seems to be a lack of ellipsis of *we* (e.g. "We sit and we look" (60) rather than "We sit and look") which might be regarded as foregrounding "we" and also providing a rhythmic effect. However, this stylistic feature is variable (e.g. "we sit and stand and lie" (84) has different use of the pronoun than "we sit and we stand and we lean" (88) although both have "and" repetition).

The *we*-narrator also narrates the handling of the body by the professionals. Some of these passages primarily consist of third-person sentences (which are presumably the focalisations of the *we*-narrator), with the *we*-group sometimes not only explicitly describing their own actual or desired acts of moving, looking, etc. ("We press close in around them. We want to see. We want to touch." (122) and occasionally adding their own thoughts and personal comments explicitly (e.g. after the washing of Robert's corpse, "Nearest he's come to a bath in years" (130)) There is also third-person narrative description of the lives of the individual characters comprising the *we* and details of Robert's past life, but again some of these passages seem to be the focalisations of the *we*, as indicated by occasional mentions of the *we* seeing these events or remembering them. This means that rather more of the narrative might be regarded as being derived from the *we*-narrators than if only the explicit pronoun *we* references are considered. Some of the narrative, however, remains rather ambiguous in terms of who is narrating. Some passages could derive from a separate narrator and some could be the thoughts of individual characters.

The identity of the *we*-voice is also ambiguous.[10] In the opening scenes, the text identifies who the *we*-group are seeing (e.g. "We see Heather", "We see Mike", "We see Danny" (2)) rather than identifying the *we*-focaliser. This seems to suggest that the *we*-narrator is someone other than these characters, but eventually it becomes clear that the *we*-narrator is seeing living enactors of the characters (Emmott 1997), (i.e. earlier versions of these characters) comprising the ghostly *we*-group. This is ontologically odd because they are sometimes apparently watching themselves

involved in events before they died and became ghosts. There is occasional naming of the characters in the *we*-group (2010: 8, 105, 157–159), but the composition of the group is not fully clear[11] and is changing (e.g. "There are more of us now" (3)). Although we are not told that these characters are dead until later in the book (157–159), we can infer this from their ghostly behaviour and there are hints (e.g. "What's happened to us" (71)).

The properties of the *we*-group are never discussed explicitly, but readers witness their characteristics. They see, hear and have knowledge, memories and opinions. However, it becomes clear that they cannot be seen or heard by any of the living characters that they watch. Like Galloway's *we*-narrator, they are represented as moving towards and away from entities to show interest or repulsion, such as when Robert's corpse is being examined in the post-mortem (121–160). Some commentators (e.g. Skloot 2010) have described these ghosts as omniscient, but they are certainly not all-knowing (the book is full of their questions (e.g. 175) and they repeatedly mention "gaps" (e.g. 86) and lack of knowledge (e.g. "we don't even know his name" (87), "Some things we don't know yet" (2010: 127)). In certain respects, their perspective is unusually wide-ranging (e.g. they see Robert with his young wife Yvonne now, even though they have never met Yvonne (this unusual perspective is highlighted by the *we*-narrator's comment "We see things differently now" (9)). However, their vantage point seems to be linked largely to where they are waiting and who they can follow at any particular point.

One of the key features of the text is the fact that the *we* references occur alongside references to the *they*-professionals. All the five chapters describing the handling of Robert's corpse open with an institutional *they*[12] from which readers have to infer the professionals involved (e.g. the opening sentence, "They break down the door at the end of December and carry the body away" (1). Substantial sections of the text describe the actions of these professionals as the *we*-ghosts look on, including the extremely detailed post-mortem mentioned above. Rather than setting up a critical "us and them" negative opposition for these police, forensic, and court investigators, the text describes the professionalism of these particular officials and their care for the corpse. However, the irony of the

greater care in death than in life is pointed out[13] ("No one ever did that for him when he was alive" (173; see also 133, 189)).

The professional *they*-characters have no direct knowledge of Robert (he remains unidentified to them until near the end of the book). Their engagement with his corpse is impersonally but professionally functional rather than personally involved. The narrative juxtaposes the official scientific gaze of the professionals against the on-looking personal view of those who knew the man, showing how these different views complement each other, although neither gives a full picture and together they are not conclusive about the cause of Robert's death. The scientific observations of the post-mortem are able to reveal the fragment of metal (possibly shrapnel) in ex-soldier Robert's brain that could have caused the agonising headaches that may have led to his drinking and eventual marriage breakdown (138–139, 155–156). Nevertheless, many of the questions about what happened to him at the time of his death remain unanswered and clearly concern the *we*-characters (e.g. 175). Although the investigation of Robert's death seems to be extremely thorough, some points seem largely beyond the court's observance (e.g. "how he came to be living in quite the degree of self-neglect and squalor that he did, and why those around him felt this to be acceptable" (190) and the *we*-group are aware of the limits of the court's investigation and the official remit generally (194, my emphasis):

> It's what is it outside the remit of the court. Isn't it always. Aren't *we* always outside the remit.

In contrast with the professionalism of the officials handling Robert's body and the investigation of his death, the narrative seems to be more critical of the dealings with social service providers, although McGregor has commented when interviewed[14] that this is a reflection of the service users' unwillingness to engage fully with these providers rather than being intended as a criticism of the people doing this type of work. The individual living characters mock the institutional *we* forms of these characters and echo words like "shall", suggesting supposed choice for what are administrative requirements (2010: 67; my emphasis) (see Wales's (1996:

67) discussion of medical *we* in relation to how *we* can be used in care-taking situations):

> Let's just go through this form together *shall we*. Let's identify your needs and your goals […] Let's talk about your risk behaviours before *we* start thinking about treatment *shall we*.
>
> *Shall we* indeed. *Shall we* bollocks like there's a choice.

Even the ghosts in their vigil echo the wording of the therapy groups, temporarily superimposing this discourse style on their own situation and projecting this type of therapy talk in imaginary *you*-address (101; my emphasis):

> The whole lot of *us* here in a circle around him [Robert's body]. *We* need like a facilitator or something. Is there anything *you*'d like to share with the group. How does that make *yo*u feel.

Although the *we*-group have some special properties as ghosts, there is a continuum with their past lives of poverty and drug addiction. In both their former lives and their ghost lives, they wait. Their waiting is now of unnatural length (e.g. "days and weeks" (2010: 160) with Robert's body in the mortuary), but this mirrors the lengthy and repeated waiting of this marginalised group in real life (mirrored by the repeated use of the word "wait(ing)" in the text (e.g. 103)) and explicit links are made with this real-life waiting (85; my emphasis):

> Another place where *we* know how to sit and wait. Don't *we* all. Been there enough.

Invisibility is another key feature of spectral existence and reflects their metaphorical invisibility in their former lives as a marginalised group (4; my emphasis):

> *They* don't see *us*, as *we* crowd and push around *them*. Of course *they* don't. How could *they*. But *we*'re used to that. *We*'ve been used to that for a long time, even before. Before this.

In addition, the group seems unable to act decisively and of their own accord, simply following the professionals and asking repeated questions (e.g. "What do we do now. Where do we go" (164); "What else can we do" (173)).

At times these comments switch to *you* form as they become a general comment on the shared lifestyle of this alienated social class. Commenting on the fact that Robert may have been waiting on the floor for help, the *we*-ghosts observe (58; my emphasis):

> [Waiting] is something else *we* know about. Lying on the ground [description of needing help]. Which is when *you*'re most invisible of all.

There is also shared knowledge of their former lifestyle, allowing empathy as they watch over their former selves. In commenting on Danny (as a living enactor), they observe that he is "Desperate now in a way only we can know" (49).

The description of the impersonal but professional care of Robert's body contrasts with the more empathetic involvement of the *we*-group watching over Robert's body who have personal knowledge of his life and his lifestyle. The personal involvement of the *we*-group is highlighted by their desire to memorialise him. Repeatedly, they imagine elaborate commemoration scenarios, which are clearly signalled as counterfactual, e.g. by the use of if-structures, as shown in the example below. Some of these imagined rituals are presented as quasi-mythical events, but are partially mixed with swearing and limited familiarity with this genre (as shown in the example below by both the word-finding difficulty with "flagon" and the question about the breastplate) (40–41; my emphasis):

> Or *if we* lived by the sea, *if we* were fucking Vikings or something, *we*'d put him in a boat and send him out on the water all ablaze and that. [Description of a supposed Viking ceremony with intermittent swearing and difficulty arriving at the term "flagon".] A what is it a breastplate.

Some deontic modal expressions ("shouldn't", "should") are used to convey the expected social conventions, but the reality is that the *we*-group are unable to act, either in their ghostly incarnations, due to their

insubstantial forms, or as their former selves, due to the pressures and pre-occupations of their drug-addicted lifestyle (151; my emphasis):

> He *shouldn't* be here. *We shouldn't* be here. He *should* be in some fucking what some funeral house […].

Some epistemic modals ("could") are also used to signal possibilities that (from our knowledge of this narrative world) readers can assume not to be possibilities (188; my emphasis):

> And *we could* be heaving him up on *our* own shoulders but *we*'re too late for that now. *We could* be throwing flowers and blowing trumpets and singing low mournful songs […].

The presentation style is polyphonic and in the descriptions there is a parody of British social conventions that seem incompatible with the lifestyles of these marginalised characters, such as the mention of sandwiches with foregrounding (by means of sentence fragmentation) of the way they are cut into little triangles. This suggests the unlikeliness of their actually performing these ceremonies, even before this is explicitly signalled as nonsense ("bollocks") (150; my emphasis):

> *We* sit around talking in low voices, looking at him […] someone else comes out the kitchen with plates of sandwiches, sliced ham and cucumber and cottage cheese. *Cut into little triangles*. […] *Do we bollocks*

The ghostly *we*-group display a sense of conscience, group cohesion and unremitting involvement with Robert's body that the individual living enactors of this *we*-group fail to achieve in their real world existences. The descriptions of the individual characters when still alive show disagreements and arguments with Robert. They have had a loosely organised general support system for him, "an understanding" (31) that Robert allowed his house to be used for them to meet and take drugs in exchange for food and protection (30–31). However, this is not infallible since it fails him before his death, when his daughter and his associates forget to

bring food round to him because they are too preoccupied with their own needs and priorities. The harsh reality of this neglectful situation makes it impossible for Danny, one of Robert's former associates, to know how to break the news to Robert's daughter, Laura. Danny's knowledge about finding Robert's rotting corpse conflicts with the polite sentiments normally expressed to a bereaved relative. The normal expressions of sympathy become unutterable since they are clearly lies, with these unuttered societal condolences fusing into Danny's swearing (17):

> Tell her what, he died peacefully […] but in the end there weren't nothing to be done. He didn't suffer. Couldn't tell her that. Didn't know much about it but knew it weren't nothing like that. He had all his friends around him when fuck.

Danny in his individual living enactor form rejects society's conventional expressions, as the *we*-group (presumably including Danny's spirit) are also unable to carry through their grand memorialising plans.

Ultimately, at his funeral, the still-living relatives and friends are absent and the *we*-ghosts can only watch the proceedings inadequately without their physical presence being noted. The vicar asks the institutional pallbearers to stay for the service since no-one from the family and friends is apparently there. As the funeral service proceeds, ironically, the *we* in "We are gathered here today" (189) is addressed to the institutional *they* characters for whom Robert was personally unknown, ("men who barely know his name" (188)) not to the invisible *we*-group who have known Robert personally or any of his living relatives.

9.4 Conclusion

These two stories provide different perspectives on how *we*-narration can be used to show different types of involvement in socially challenging situations, ranging from an unwillingness to get involved on the part of Galloway's *we*-narrator to a more empathetic involved *we*-narrator in McGregor's novel.

In Galloway's short story 'Scenes from the life no. 26: The community and the senior citizen', the *we*-narrator's emotions vary from curiosity and interest to repulsion and apparent boredom, but there is little empathy. The *we*-narrator's response could be viewed as an act of audience spectatorship, but, taken as a social comment, it could also be interpreted as reflecting the unwillingness of members of a "community" to engage with the elderly living alone. The potentially inclusive form of the *we* pronoun may sometimes prompt the reader to align with the views of the *we*-narrator, but on other occasions the reader may feel a need to resist the views being expressed (see Richardson 2006).

The *we*-narrator in McGregor's *Even the Dogs* is, by contrast, an involved narrator. This ghostly *we*-group performs a wake for their dead friend. They are unable to perform a grand memorial, but the *we*-group are nevertheless personally involved, allow Robert's memory to live on in their own minds, keep questioning how he died, and provide an ethical comment on what should be done. This idealised representation of the connection of the characters with the dead man needs to be tempered by the reality of these characters' real lives since their living enactors are all absent when he dies of (self-)neglect. This can be taken as reflecting the complex disjunction between expressed memorial sentiments following bereavement and the reality of personal relationships during a lifetime. In this narrative, the ghostly *we*-voice gains much of its richness from the additional descriptions of the past enactors of the individual characters who comprise the *we* and the contrasts with the impersonal involvement of the *they*-professionals.

Overall, the observing *we*-narrator provides a vehicle for channelling our response in Galloway's text, as we react to a shocking scene of neglect through the eyes of the voyeuristic uninvolved *we*-narrator. In McGregor's text, by contrast, the *we*-narrator has a more involved stance and gives the reader an insight into the lifestyle of those experiencing neglect and alienation. Both these texts are non-realistic, with "unnatural voices" (Richardson 2006), but they are nevertheless extremely effective in displaying some of the shortcomings of modern society.

Notes

1. The character is referred to as the "OLD WOMAN" (in capitals) throughout the main narrative, except where she subsequently becomes "MRS MAULE" (again in capitals).
2. In addition to features of a play script (capitals for participant designations and some passages of dialogue in play script form embedded in the narrative), stage-related words are used such as "off-stage" (53), "prop" (55) and "performance" (57). Galloway has commented in an interview in relation to this and her other "Scenes" stories: "this was partly playing with what a play might be, what a play might not be […] The idea of writing a play that couldn't possibly be a play" (Galloway 2006: 20).
3. Jackson (2004: 14) describes the effect of this text as "astonishingly disconcerting".
4. For example, she clears the kitchen of everything, including simply throwing her plate in the bin, as if there is no longer a need for these items (52). When she leaves the bathroom, we are told that the cabinet and room "have served their purpose" (55). There appears to be a specific objective underlying her actions since "Her meticulousness suggests planning; preparations made for a specific moment […] the moment is come" (54–55).
5. The nature of the viewing situation is unclear. The *we* is said to be observing a stage, although some critics have described the presentation style as cinematic (e.g. Jackson 2004: 15). There is an indication that there is control of how the scene is mediated towards the start of the story, "Someone increases the volume further" (48), which is perhaps more likely in a cinema setting than for a stage production.
6. See Jobert's (2016) discussion of how such linguistic constructions can represent a sub-group within the *we*.
7. This illusion may be challenged by the stage set-up and by the fact that this supposedly frail old lady suddenly herself clears the stage of the armchair and settee for the final "performance", a postmodernist contradiction (e.g. McHale 1987).
8. No-one else except the health visitor appears in the story and she does not seem to make any effective contribution to the old woman's welfare.
9. The punctuation (in this and other examples) is given as in the original text. The novel is printed in this edition without question marks.

10. Alexander (2013: 740) believes that this voice is "difficult to locate or identify with any precision".
11. Laura is mentioned as being part of the *we*-group on page 8, but this *we*-group reference relates to the previously-living enactors of the ghosts—since Laura is alive at the end of the story it seems unlikely that she is one of the *we*-ghosts. Mike's status is rather unclear—he is part of the group in life and seems to be either part of the ghostly *we*-group or at least has direct contact with them. Mike is in a coma for part of the narrative so his consciousness may be displaced in ghostly form, but he is not dead.
12. See Sanford et al. (2008) for a psychological study of institutional "they".
13. McGregor discusses this point in an interview (Edwards 2010: 242).
14. Interview with Jon McGregor (Edwards 2010: 238).

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10

Let Us Tell You Our Story: *We*-Narration and Its Pronominal Peculiarities

Monika Fludernik

10.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on pronouns in narratives, specifically on pronouns referring to narrator personae on the discourse level and protagonists on the plot level. I have for many years worked on 'odd' pronominal choices in narrative (Fludernik 1993, 1994a, b, c, 1995, 1996), but did not look at *we*-narratives: Margolin (1996, 2000, 2001), Richardson (1994, 2006, 2011, 2015) and Marcus (2008a, b, c) were already doing excellent analyses of this mode of narration.

My major interest lay in second-person narratives with their variegated forms and modes, where the referent of *you* could be only a protagonist, or a protagonist and a current discourse addressee; and where the narrator (the *I*) could be overt or covert, and—if overt—could be both a mere narrator, but also a protagonist on the plot level (Fludernik 2011a). Interestingly, though there are many texts in which both *I* and *you* are

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protagonists (what I have called I-and-you stories), the use of the pronoun *we* in longer continuous passages does not seem to be at all common (Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day*, 1989 [1988], for instance, has a couple of *we*-sections); what one often finds are single intermittent *we*-clauses or sentences, as in the following passage from Stuart Dybek's 'We Didn't' (1994: 88). I have underlined first-person plural forms and contrasted them with first and second-person singulars (in bold):

> Without saying anything, we turned from the group, as unconsciously as we'd joined them, and walked off across the sand, stopping only long enough at the spot where we had lain together like lovers in order to stuff the rest of our gear into a beach bag, to gather our shoes, and for **me** to find my wallet and kick sand over the forlorn, deflated-looking Trojan that **you** pretended not to notice. **I** was grateful for that.

We-narratives are properly texts in which *we* is used consistently to refer to the plural protagonists (and, possibly, speakers or writers).

More recently, I have become interested in plural subjects and the collective mind, focusing on the representation of group consciousness (Fludernik 2014; see also Palmer 2005, 2008, 2010a, b, c; Sommer 2009; Alders 2015a, b; Alders and von Contzen 2015; von Contzen and Alders 2015; Lagoni 2016) and on *we*-narratives (Fludernik, in print). In this connection, I also noted that *they*-narration, for instance in Georges Perec's *Les Choses* and D. H. Lawrence's 'Things', is as rare as *we*-passages in I-and-you texts (see Alber, this volume). The present chapter is designed to complement Fludernik (in print) by focusing in more detail on the linguistic oddities arising from *we*-narration. These oddities link both to the discourse level (who is speaking?) and the story level (who is among the protagonists?). Moreover, they relate to the problems of collective action and identity in groups that are not necessarily acting in unison at one particular moment in a specific setting, but are constituted as a group through external circumstances, ethnicity, a particular event whose impact renders them to be perceived as belonging together, or on the basis of other extraneous features. Thus, Tara Shea Nesbit's *we*-narrative *The Wives of Los Alamos* (2015 [2014]) depicts a group of women who only acquire a shared identity

through their husbands' connection with the atomic bomb. Likewise, the *we* in *12 Million Black Voices* (Wright 1988 [1941]) or *Two Thousand Seasons* (Armah 1973) refers to an ideal ethnic identity that spans centuries and therefore only literally becomes an agentive group at some points of that history, and with very different protagonists participating in events since they are widely separated in time. A third aspect that I address is the tension that arises between the general and the particular and how it gives rise to linguistic oddities that would not be acceptable in factual *we*-narratives, where the *we*-groups tend to coincide both spatially and temporally in shared agency.

There are six further sections to this chapter. Section 10.2 introduces readers unfamiliar with *we*-texts to the pronominal or referential specificities of *we*-narration, particularly to inclusive and exclusive *we*. Section 10.3 focuses on the speakers and writers of *we*-narratives, especially on the lack of clarity concerning who is speaking or writing. I next turn to the question of the scope of *we* on the story level (Sect. 10.4), and continue with an analysis of the tension between individual and collective experience in Sect. 10.5. The penultimate section is devoted to the innovative use of linguistic collocations in situations where individual and collective agency fail to coincide completely and subtle rifts appear in the homogeneity of the group. Section 10.7 provides a summary.

10.2 The Mechanics of *We*-Narration

The pronoun *we* has no clear referent. Unlike *I* or *he/she*, where one particular person is indicated, *we*—in analogy with *you* and *they*—provides reference for a number of different applications. Similarly, in *you*-narrative—in English—the addressee can be: (a) a single person or entity; (b) a plural entity or group (e.g. a company; a lecture room full of listeners); and (c) 'anyone' and hence also you, the current reader. In an analogous manner, *we* in *we*-narrative tends to be ambiguous between several possible referents. Thus, *inclusive we* can refer to *I* and *you*, i.e. the narrator and his/her addressee, both single; but the narrator and/or addressee may also be groups. *We* can be used by a single speaker who is, say, the representative of a union in addressing the boss as representative of the

company, meaning *we* vs. *you* (exclusive *we*); but *we* may also inclusively signal shared aims (e.g. 'we must cooperate to avoid the company going bankrupt').

Exclusive we (*I* + *they*) does not need to oppose itself to a *you* (whether individual or collective) in narratives since the focus can be on the events which were experienced collectively (I call this the *experiencing we* in contrast to the *narrating we* on the discourse level—in analogy to F. K. Stanzel's *experiencing self* and *narrating self* distinction for first-person narrative). To the extent that there is an overt narrative function, however, an addressee is *always implied*. However, that narratee may remain inexplicit and could therefore be a text-internal single or plural interlocutor on the discourse level, or a single/plural extradiegetic reader: possibly the reader as the ideal recipient, but also a very general 'we' as in '*we* French' or '*we* women' or '*we* humans'. One can, thus, distinguish the pattern described in Table 10.1. Besides the inherent ambiguity (which, naturally, exists more obviously in written texts, where the situation of narration is not always clearly spelled out), an additional source of inconsistency may arise from the link between the discourse and plot levels where the speaker's (or speakers') *we* may, but need not, coincide precisely with the *we*-referent on the story level: in collective storytelling, the speaker(s) may not entirely agree with the *we*-protagonists. (For instance, the collective voice may be uttered by five protagonists but the actions referred to by *we* may have been performed by, say, eight people.)

The narrator of a *we*-narrative may be a single individual reporting the adventures of the group during an outing, and this singular authorship (in a written text) may remain inexplicit so that the reader does not find out who is telling the story—a collective or one person in the group. We are conventionally predisposed to see narration as a singular act of utterance or composition, but—given the often virtual scenarios of fiction—

Table 10.1 Exclusive and inclusive *we*

WE	Exclusive	Inclusive
Discourse level	I + (s/he/they)	I (+ s/he/they) + you (+ s/he/they)
Story level	I + (s/he/they)	I (+ s/he/they) + you (+ s/he/they)

this assumption cannot be taken for granted. While in real life, a group of writers may co-author a book (where one assumes chapters were written by individuals and the whole text then revised by the others in team), in fiction one can perfectly well imagine one collective voice of narration, especially when the text does not have an explicit narratorial *I*. *The Virgin Suicides* (2002 [1993]) by Jeffrey Eugenides is a good example: we neither know who is writing the account that we are reading nor do we have a clear conception of who exactly is included among the *we* on the story level (Marcus 2008c: 3; Richardson 2006: 52; Maxey 2015: 5–6). *The Virgin Suicides* takes me immediately into the next section where the ambiguities of speaker reference are discussed.

10.3 Who Is This *We* Speaking to Us?

In conversational narratives that include performances of cooperative storytelling, the speakers or narrators are physically and vocally present. There is therefore no doubt about the reference of *we* on the discourse level. However, when one looks at the transcripts in more detail, one notices that communal narration is rarely collective; i.e. the two speakers do not in fact utter their report *unisono*, in a duet, if you will; they usually narrate in alternation, sometimes intercepting each other to modify or clarify what has just been said. (Discourse analysis has provided numerous studies on this point: Quasthoff 1980; Mandelbaum 1987; Bochner and Ellis 1995; Norrick 1997, 2004: 101–104, 2005; Szczepek 2000; Goodwin and Goodwin 2004; McLean 2016.) Though it is therefore patent *who* the narrators are, the discourse tends to be realised as the *I* + *s/he* mode in alternation between husband and wife. In addition, the referent of *we* on the story level may include additional persons, as, for instance, the aunt or the son and daughter of the couple, and it may at times exclude one of the present speakers (imagine the husband talking about how "we" all enthused about a recent film while the wife was in the kitchen getting coffee ready). Even in such simple situations, therefore, the referential and discourse-related constellations of *we*-narration are variable, though in any one situation the involved persons tend to be specified in the context.

When one turns to written *we*-narratives, the question of who is speaking and writing is often a puzzle, though there are also texts where the case is quite unequivocal. For instance, in John Barth's *Sabbatical* (1984 [1982]), the *we* are the couple on the boat (at the story level), and eventually it emerges that the text has been composed by the wife; however, this model of an *we* = *I* + *he* mode is frequently disrupted since the narrative also shifts from *we*-narration to third-person narrative, with passages that relate what Susan (the wife) does or thinks in a third-person referential frame (e.g., "Steadying the tiller […] *she* sheets in the main [sail] … Specs on, Fenwick leans out from a stanchion…"—1984 [1982]: 21; my emphasis).

Maxine Swann's novel *Flower Children* (2007) in its *we*-sections (the novel also has substantial *they*-sections) is also a disguised first-person novel written from Maeve's point of view about the experience of herself and her three siblings. However, though the first-person singular pronoun appears frequently in the second chapter of the novel, the reader initially does not know who is narrating; one gradually realises that the narrator must be the second-oldest daughter and it is only later that one learns Maeve's name (in an extended third-person section).

Most literary *we*-narratives, however, follow the pattern of the anonymous narratorial persona because the narrative discourse rarely foregrounds an overt act of narration and almost never thematises metanarrative or metafictional aspects (for extensive lists of *we*-texts see Richardson 2006: 141–142; Fludernik 2011a: 129–135). This is true also of some stories about communal experience like Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily' (1950 [1930]) and Pierre Silvain's *Les Eoliennes* (1971). In both cases the writer, whether a single or plural narrator, remains obscure. We may intuit the narrator of Faulkner's story to be a stereotypical gossip from the focus of the narration, but we may also be getting a (fictional) collective voice presenting the town's thoughts and opinions about Emily. Likewise, in *Les Eoliennes*, with its very covert narrator, there does not appear to be any clue to determining who (singular or plural) is responsible for this account. As such, Bekhta (forthcoming-a, b) takes the position that only *we*-narratives with a communal *we*-narrator are properly *we*-narratives. While it stands to reason that the town folk in Faulkner's story cannot be individually denominated, in *Les Eoliennes*, the vagueness

of the fictional world also includes the very hazy conception that one gains about the protagonists in terms of their number and indeed previous history. This takes me on to the next section with its focus on the referential ambiguities on the story level.

10.4 *We* vs. John or Alice: The Story Level of *We*-Narratives

This section starts by considering a novel whose referential ambiguities concern both the story and the discourse levels since the assumed scope of the group in the story determines who might or might not be the narrator(s). Joan Chase's *During the Reign of the Queen of Persia* (1985 [1983]) embraces references to either four or two and sometimes three children. There are four girls living on the farm of their grandmother ("Gram", Lil Bradley, now Lil Krauss): Celia and Jenny, daughters of "Uncle Dan" and Libby; and Katie and Anne, orphaned children of Libby's sister Grace, who was married to Neil (1985: 50). The appellation "Our Uncle Dan" (2) seems to suggest that the narratorial *we* consists of Katie and Anne. Yet at other points in the text Katie and Anne are named from the perspective of a *we* who can only then be Celia and Jenny (103, 108, 200), and it must be this latter *we* that is responsible for calling Katie's mother "Aunt Grace" (62). Conversely, the *we* must again be Katie and Anne when Celia and Jenny are explicitly named as agents (212–213). The shifts between these perspectives are often so fast and so subtle that the reader may be forgiven for simply taking "we" to be the four girls or any twosome or threesome among them.

Alber (2015: 219) and Richardson (2006: 51) argue that the "we" (all four girls) is juxtaposed with third-person narrative (*Celia said*), but fail to observe the oscillation between "we" (four) and "we" (two). Observe, for instance, the following sequence in which a visit from Katie's and Anne's father Neil is recounted (Chase 1985: 103–104; my emphasis):

> But now the Hudson is in the drive and *we* know that Neil who is real to *us* [all four?] is back. This time he has come because Aunt Grace [→ we = Celia and Jenny?] called him after she came back from the

> Cleveland Clinic. […] Though Gram still hates Neil […] [s]he just goes right on plowing through whatever she has to do, […] her struggle with time and the rest of *us* [all four? the whole family?], until she can get away. *We* [all four?] want to be like Gram, who says whenever anyone crosses her, "I know better," her lower lip stuck out a mile. When *we* are grown up and have been through everything, *we*'ll be like that. *We*'ll order kittens drowned by the bagful. Then at night *we*'ll dress in our silken best, pile on jewels and whiz off to parties, bring home prizes for the family. *We*'ll bet on horses.
>
> *We* [all four] all see the car. Celia says, "He's here. Neil's come." *We* stop and stare like the mouth-breathers Neil says *we* are—idiots bound for the cannery, the sweatshop, goods headed downriver [= Katie and Anne, since it is his daughters whom Neil always puts down in this manner]. "Well, *we*'re [Jenny and Celia] going in": Jenny speaks then like her mother, the expert fatalist. She and Celia go away toward the house.
>
> […] *We* [Katie and Anne] hear a voice calling *us*; it is *our* mother, Grace, calling and calling. Do *we* only imagine she wants to come out with *us* and run away? *We* feel separate from all of *them*, and *we* will have to go in alone, stupid and tardy, exposed, the family watching. "Well, if it's not Mutt and Jeff," Neil will say, because *one of us* is taller and *the other* shorter.

The passage narrows from the foursome to the two groups of sisters, in turn widening and narrowing the referential scope of *we*. Taking the text as a whole, the vagueness of the *we* reference can best be resolved by interpreting the novel as a reminiscence of childhood days from the perspective of Grace's two girls Katie and Anne, which broadens out into the *we* of the four children, including an appreciation of the communal viewpoint of Libby's daughters. Taken linguistically, the use of *we* in the novel is counter-intuitive if not contrary to logic; yet in the reading of the text as a fictional evocation of childhood experience, these inconsistencies and contradictions pale into insignificance.

The vagueness of the group in *we*-narratives may in fact serve an ideological function since it allows members some anonymity within the collective and therefore disperses individual guilt. This is clearly the case in the final chapter of Julie Otsuka's *The Buddha in the Attic* (2011) discussed below. In other instances, the group as unspecified collective (no names provided) alternates with more focused scenes in which

individuals are named; the reader is supposed to visualise the scene more concretely, as in Ayi Kwei Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973: 110, my emphasis):

> In silence we were taken down the river. Silence in which we looked at the river banks slipping past yet missed their familiarity. […] Moonlight was keen like a sharp knife, cold. The things it lit stood out in accusation against us, against our greed, against our blindness, against the ease with which we had let ourselves slide into doom. Inside there was the endless howling chagrin when we considered the many chances we had had for avoiding this perdition; also an irresistible feeling, first of shame. […] All were stricken with this despair, *all except Naita, Lini and Abena*.

In this passage, the enslavement of the tribe is depicted, and the collective despair contrasts with the behaviour of three individuals given authenticating reference (compare Fludernik 2011b). As a result, the situation emerges as much more concrete and invokes the impression of a witness report. In one passage, the novel provides a list of names which includes the entire group (Armah 154–155, my emphasis):

> We went to the water now and drank. […] Mokili walked from the shadow of the trees. Ankoanda followed him. Suma came next, then Dovi, Ndlela, Pili, Kenia, Kwesi, Liamba, Ude, Makaa, Ashale, Ona, Kamara, Lini, Naita and Sobo. With Manda came Ulimboka.
> "This one I do not know," said Isanusi. […]
> Isanusi came to know Juma, came to know Kimathi, Soyinka, Dedan, Umeme, Chi, Mpenzi, Inse, Nandi, Kibaden, Kima, Mensa, Ngazi, Kisa, Tete, Kesho, Irele, Okai, Ankonam, Akole, Kakra, Nisa, *everyone of us in turn.*

Reading this passage, one starts to wonder who the *I* of narration is or whether we should be conceiving of the text as a communal narrative act, as is suggested by the following comment (128, my emphasis):

> The time has come *for us to pause for breath*. […] We have reached the time when we must speak of consciousness. […] unconnected consciousness […] is part of the white destroyers' two thousand seasons of triumph against us.

The imaginary communal voice here pauses for comment; the scene highlights the difficulty one may have in imagining a realistic act of narration for the novel. This act of narration emerges more convincingly as a fiction or a metaphor within the novel's discourse of commemoration. As Alber (2015: 220) points out, the novel extends the reference of *we* to refer to all victims of colonialism, or even to all human beings of an anti-colonial persuasion.

We have seen how not only the question of who (and how many) are telling the story but also the scope of the *we*-protagonists may remain vague and cannot be clearly accounted for. We have also observed a tendency to alternate between passages that refer to the collective *we* and sentences that highlight the agency of one member of the group (or a restricted number of members, mostly two or three). It is precisely because we hear about different protagonists but do not have a complete list of the *we*-group that our sense of the extent of the collective remains vague.

Similarly, in *The Wives of Los Alamos*, the *we*-group remains numerically and descriptively vague. Not only are we informed that the families are given new appellations, thereby adding to the disincentive to refer to members by name but only first names are mentioned; very few women emerge as distinct personalities. For instance, it is Agnes who convenes the women to watch the light from the first atomic explosion (2015: 179–180). Naming is more common when the other person has to be foregrounded against the group. Thus, Genevieve, a "Brit", stands out on account of her behaviour (67), and "Louise went into labor while at work but monitored her contractions with a stopwatch and still finished her experiment before leaving the Tech Area" (69). The "women scientists" are an out-group, both envied and hated; they in turn look down upon the housewives: "We despised what she knew and how she laughed at our questions. How she went on hikes with our husbands without us. How she carried herself with the knowledge of things we did not know" (33). Yet this "she" is not given a name. The native women who have been imported to serve as housemaids, though usually referred to in the plural, are sometimes given names (57–63, 83; see Richardson 2015).

The relationship between group members and the community in *we*-narratives can become more problematic when the narrative focuses on a

group whose common experience is at issue, with individuals illustrating group identity. This is the case with the two novels I discuss in the next section.

10.5 How to Compress Many Different Experiences into One Generic Destiny

In this section, I return to Julie Otsuka's *The Buddha in the Attic* (2011) and Tara Shea Nesbit's *The Wives of Los Alamos* (2015 [2014]). These novels merge single experiences with those of the group by rendering the former as either subvariants of the same (Otsuka) or using them as representative vignettes in which a very specific situation is taken to be metonymic for the communal experience (Nesbit). Compare the following extracts. Firstly, from Otsuka's novel (2011: 61, original emphasis):

> We laid them down gently, in ditches and furrows and wicker baskets beneath the trees. We left them lying naked, atop blankets, on woven straw mats at the edges of the fields. We placed them in wooden apple boxes and nursed them every time we finished hoeing a row of beans. When they were older, and more rambunctious, we sometimes tied them to chairs. We strapped them onto our backs in the dead of winter in Redding and went out to prune the grapevines but some mornings it was so cold that their ears froze and bled. […] But when they tired and began to cry out for us we kept on working because if we didn't we knew we would never pay off the debt on our lease. *Mama can't come*.

Secondly, from Nesbit's (2015 [2014]: 3–4, my emphasis):

> It was March, gas was rationed; therefore the streets were quiet. We heard a car pull up in the driveway. We wiped out hands on our apron and placed the apron on the dishes. The door-bell rang and a young man, just slightly older than *our husbands*, … stood on our porch in a porkpie hat and asked whether the professor was home. His eyes were the color of stillness—something between a pale body of water and the fog that emerges above it. Although dinner was almost ready our house was chilly. […] *Our husbands* came downstairs and they shook hands.

In the first extract, the working mothers' desperate attempts to keep their small children with them during their back-breaking farm labour is detailed in a list of various strategies. Despite the disparity in locations and individual solutions to the problem, the overwhelming communal predicament comes across as a shared experience of the *we*-protagonists (and *we*-narrators). By contrast, in Nesbit's vignette of the husband being asked to join the task force at Los Alamos, *one* experience is narrated as if it had happened in exactly the same way to all the wives of the researchers; but the scene is so very specific that the event cannot possibly have occurred in exactly this way to *all* the women. In fact, the narrative goes on to undermine the reliability of the vignette by means of metafictional commentary: "Or it did not happen like that at all. One day […] we came downstairs to find our husbands smoking a pipe in their wingback chair […] and we hear them ask us, *How'd you like to live in the Southwest*?" (4). This passage is of course tongue-in-cheek since it repeats the same gesture of mock generality ("our husbands"; "we") for an extremely specific situation. Although the recruitment will have happened differently in each individual case, the as yet dispersed women are welded together into a common fate from that moment onwards, and this is symbolically indicated by the representative scenario.

In Otsuka's novel, a second technique is that of listing the *issei* women's different ways of doing or experiencing the same thing, for instance trying to combine work with childcare, thereby enumerating a variety of different reactions and providing a range of responses. Similarly, earlier in the novel, the shocking description of sexual exploitation that the women experience on their wedding nights is rendered as a list; it constitutes the nadir of the women's immigration experience. The husbands, whose fake pictures as handsome and rich young men they had received before their departure (hence the label "picture brides"), turn out to be ugly old farmhands who are exhausted from labour as well as being violent, unromantic and completely autocratic spouses (historically, this negative presentation may be exaggerated—see Hughes 2016: 5). Maxey claims that "the women's individuality is erased" (2015: 8), but this is true only to the extent that the individual experiences recounted are not linked to *named* individuals; in fact, she acknowledges that "the novel pays tribute to the full variety of first-generation Japanese American or *issei* women in terms of age, regional roots in Japan, and differing experiences" (8).

Otsuka's most exciting trick is that of shifting perspective at the end of the novel—a strategy that sparked much discomfort in reviewers (Becker 2011; Le Guin 2012; Maxey 2015). We have followed the collectively presented lives of the Japanese immigrant women from their journey to America through their marriages, child-raising, work routines in farming and domestic service in white households, all the way to their confrontation with their children, who want to discard Japanese culture, until we reach Pearl Harbor. The women and their families are sent off to camps, having first tried to deny their Japanese roots by putting their Buddha statues in the attic. At this point, the *we*-narrative switches to the perspective of the (white) town folk, who soon forget about their former Japanese friends at school, and eventually settle on Mexican-Americans to do their housework and farm labour. It is this stroke of ingenuity that makes Otsuka's novel so memorable and disquieting. Besides juxtaposing *we* and *they*-references (the husbands, the children, the employers), Otsuka employs a deliberately vague *you* that interpellates the current reader (Maxey 2015, 2016: 8).

Nesbit, by contrast, uses the single representative scene as her mode of rendering the vision of the collective. Especially in comparison with Otsuka's novel, the wives of Los Alamos emerge as self-centred and conservative. They are kept in ignorance of what their husbands are working on and, when they eventually find out, are only marginally bothered about the ethics of atomic power, but more proud of their spouses and delighted to be allowed to move back home. Nesbit's first-person plural format highlights what all the women shared (2015 [2014]: 5):

> We were European women born in Southampton and Hamburg, Western women born in California and Montana, East Coast women in Connecticut and New York […] and no matter who we were we wanted nothing to do with starting all over again […]

The contrast with Otsuka is also social since the wives of Los Alamos are mostly highly privileged women and expect to make an impact (2015 [2014]: 5):

> We had degrees from Mount Holyoke, as our grandmothers did, or from a junior college, as our fathers insisted. We had doctorates from Yale; we had coursework from MIT and Cornell; we were certain we could discover for ourselves just where we would be moving.

Richardson (2015: 207–209) astutely demonstrates that the lists of attributions in respect of the wives and their husbands often tend to undermine communality: such "depiction threatens to approach universality" (2015: 207). Yet I would argue that this is, precisely, the point—the husbands come from just anywhere and the community of wives is forged by their husbands' scientific careers rather than a spatial or social communality pre-existing the Los Alamos experience. The story of the women turns out to be one of bitter relegation to the margins, of exile from a life where they would have played an important social role. They are reduced to their household and child-rearing duties.

Shared experience is also an issue in Joshua Ferris' *Then We Came to the End* (2007). The collective mind of the employees also encounters some checks when something is described as general which—one assumes—only applies to a very few people (2007: 7):

> How we hated our coffee mugs! Our mouse pads, our desk clocks, our daily calendars, the contents of our desk drawers. Even the photos of our loved ones taped to our computer monitors for uplift and support turned into cloying reminders of time served. But when we got a new office, a bigger office, and we brought everything with us into the new office, how we loved everything all over again, and thought hard about where to place things, and looked with satisfaction at the end of the day at how well our old things looked in this new, improved, important space.

Only some of the employees in the company are likely to get promoted, hence the *we* must have a significantly less extensive reference at the end of the passage. The novel also utilises several passages of free indirect discourse for the collective mind. When Tom is suspected of revenging himself for having been sacked, Amber's evidence for his unbalanced inclination is rejected by the group (2007: 24):

> Hijinks! We cried. Fun! That's not insanity. Amber was outvoted. We knew Tom. We knew Alan Glew, Linda Blanton, Paul Saunier. We knew Neil Hotchkiss and Cora Lee Brower and Harold Oak. They weren't any of them coming back here with a nightmare in a backpack. They had been let go. They packed their things. They left us for good, never to return.

This cannot realistically refer to *all* of the staff, but only to a group of people gathering around Amber and contradicting her. Contrast this with an earlier passage of free indirect discourse in which the communal attitude strikes one as more realistic (2007: 19):

> Thank god we didn't have to worry about a misfortune [dismissal] like that. We were corporate citizens, buttressed by advanced degrees and padded by corporate fat. We were above the fickle market forces of overproduction and mismanaged inventory.

Such passages approach the communal narration of gossip already familiar from traditional small-town settings in which the *we*-narrative, irrespective of the actual narratorial persona(e), feels familiar (Naylor 1989: 160).

We-narrative therefore treads a tightrope between shared experiences of a group of individuals and their very specific actions and opinions, creating and un-creating subgroups with communal attitudes or thoughts. A homogenous group would not only be unbelievable, it would additionally be boring to read about. The zest of *we*-narration lies in the illimitable variety of *we*, which allows the authors to weave in and out of the specific and individual experience, adding up variants of the similar to arrive at an overall communal identity.

10.6 How *We*-Narratives Upset Grammar

The tension between shared communal experience and the individual lives of protagonists can also be observed to affect grammar. One source of such oddity lies in the necessity of collapsing the individual and the collective under one pronominal schema. My first example comes from *The Buddha in the Attic*. Otsuka's text is particularly notable for its evocation of concrete individual experiences that serve to bolster, rather than detract from, the collective story of the Japanese women immigrants and their sad fate. Otsuka achieves a paradoxical merging between the disparate details of personal circumstances and the overarching similarity of

lived experience in the gross. Take, for instance, the following passage from the opening of the novel (2011: 3, my emphasis):

> On the boat *we were mostly virgins*. *We* had long black hair and flat wide feet and *we* were not very tall. *Some of us* had eaten nothing but rice gruel as young girls and had slightly bowed legs, and *some of us* were only fourteen years old and were still young girls *ourselves*. *Some of us* came from the city, and wore stylish city clothes, but *many more of us* came from the country and on the boat *we wore the same old kimonos we'd been wearing* for years—faded hand-me-downs from *our sisters* […]

Taken literally, these lines contain odd collocations and illogicalities. Thus, the combination of "some of us were only fourteen years old" with "and were still young girls ourselves" clashes with the referential framework, since "ourselves" seems to refer to *all girls*, but here must mean those older than fourteen. Similarly, the *we*-group wearing old kimonos has to refer back to the sub-group of "many more of us" from the country, but the "we" seems to include all the women on the boat. The contradiction arises because—grammatically speaking—the reference of "*we*" cannot change within one sentence, though the different groups of the women are part of the overall narratorial *we*. In other words, the "we" who speaks cannot be both from town *and* from the country or fourteen years old *or* older; yet the phrase "some of us" logically implies that the speaker belongs to both groups. Richardson (2015: 204–206) discusses similar discrepancies and unidiomatic juxtapositions caused by the use of *we* in Richard Wright's *12 Million Black Voices* (1988 [1941]). In that text, the oddities emerge from the temporal conjunction of *we*-protagonists and *we*-narrators over a span of two hundred years.

In relation to Nesbit's novel, I pointed out the illogical combination of a general claim about *all* the women and the prototypical scene that invokes one very particular scenario that cannot have happened to every woman in the same manner. Richardson also notes an even more unverisimilar "unnaturally plural depiction of a single event" ("One morning a husband from across the street called our name"—Nesbit: 201; cited Richardson 2015: 208). He is also correct in suggesting that this technique smacks of Genette's category of the iterative (209), several separate events being condensed into one rendering.

Another such impossible constellation occurs in the highly metafictional novel *Sabbatical* by John Barth (1984: 9):

> Though *we* do not court it, *we* are no strangers to foul weather. Grizzled Fenwick—bald, brown, bearded, barrel-chested—is a sailor since childhood; sunburnt Susan, sharp and shapely, since *our marriage* seven years ago.

Since one does not usually refer to oneself and one's partner by full names, especially with such adjectival attributes, the collocation with "our marriage" (a violation of the rules of agreement) in passages of this kind (which recur in the novel) has a slightly unsettling effect. See also: "After *Susan* has wept briefly and *Fenwick* has comforted her, *we* put together another meal […] and eat it" (48). The split thus effected between the happily married couple, verbalised by an external focalisation on the two partners in the sailing venture, is linked to their attempt to project positive self-images for the benefit of their respective spouses; it could also be argued to anticipate, or even predict, the couple's later emotional drifting apart.

Let me turn to a final example from the opening of Ferris' novel about the community of office employees. Here, the fact that office staff are male and female sometimes requires different emphases in terms of elaboration regarding the communal mind (2007: 8):

> And how lovely it was, a bike ride around the forest preserve on a Sunday in May with our mountain bikes, water bottles, and safety helmets. Crime was at an all-time low and we heard accounts of former welfare recipients holding steady jobs. New hair products were being introduced into the marketplace every day and the glass shelves of our stylists were stocked with tidy rows of them, which we eyed in the mirror as we made small talk, each of us certain, there's one up there just for me. Still, some of us had a hard time finding boyfriends. Some of us had a hard time fucking our wives.

The "mountain bikes" hint at the interests of male employees, the hair products at those of women; the boyfriends relate to the preoccupations of the female office staff, while sex will be the concern of the men. Since *we* is grammatically supposed to have the same referential scope, this passage seems to create a hermaphrodite office worker with a male and a female identity.

These grammatical transgressions of first-person plural narratives foreground the oddities and illogicalities of communal storytelling; the speaker(s) are no longer part of a close-knit group but belong to a collective that consists of irreconcilable sub-groups or individuals.

10.7 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the peculiar challenges and oddities of *we*-narration. Surprisingly, there are few texts that utilise the distinction between inclusive and exclusive *we* for literary effect. Nevertheless, implicit inclusiveness can be argued to emerge as an interpretative strategy, for instance in relation to the office workers in Ferris's novel: the novel's popularity suggests that it was read by many white collar workers in a spirit of sharing their predicament after the 2008 crash. More insidiously, the final *we*-chapter in Otsuka's *Buddha* implicitly involves the American reader as complicit in what was done to the Japanese Americans.

The most important conclusion to be drawn from the analysis of *we*-texts is their referential ambiguity both on the discourse and story levels. This ambiguity can be utilised to memorable effect by playing with very heterogeneous groups that are merged into one *we*. Many texts exploit the tension between generality and individuality in a number of ways, for instance by alternating between narratives of shared experience and scenes involving individual experiences that counterpoint, diversify, or exemplarily corroborate collective fortunes. The greatest challenge in these texts consists in the combination of sameness and difference, individuality and commonality. A collective does not easily adduce sympathy or allow identification on the part of the reader; with the introduction of individuals, the face of groups acquires human features that enhance empathy and understanding for the depicted community.

Finally, we have also observed that the collapsing of many individual stories into one shared experience puts the grammar of *we*-narration under stress, resulting in oddities of combination and collocation. A communal voice is *per se* a fiction: in real life stories are not told in tandem but in alternating turns. While fictional *we*-texts therefore overstep the limits of realistically possible collective narratives, creating a *we*-voice

that could not have a real-world equivalent, they—at the same time—by means of these violations of natural storytelling scenarios, manage to convey important information. Thus, they succeed in reimagining the plight of a whole generation of Japanese immigrant women or in depicting female war experiences as a means of questioning the war effort and its practical and ideological bases.

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11

Multi-Teller and Multi-Voiced Stories: The Poetics and Politics of Pronouns

Marina Grishakova

11.1 Introduction

Pronouns have attracted considerable research interest in linguistics, semiotics, and discourse studies due to their crucial role in shaping communicative and referential structures of discourse, cross-mapping or blending its various layers and anchoring utterances in wider communicative contexts. In this formative capacity, pronouns function as part of the deictic system that "determines the structure and interpretation of utterances in relation to the time and place of their occurrence, the identity of the speaker and addressee, and objects and events in the actual situation of utterance" (Lyons 1981: 170). From the developmental perspective, it is thought that pronouns originate in the basic "action coordination routines" (Hutto 2008: 51)—orientational-expressive patterns of gesturing and pointing aimed at calling someone's attention to or expressing interest in some features of the environment, developed in early childhood.

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Likewise, pronouns perform attention-capturing and identification functions in discourse by calling up deictic centres, signalling communicative roles and aligning them with different deictic set-ups.

This chapter explores the poetics (narrative functions) and 'politics' (alignment of narrative functions with cultural and social contexts) of pronouns in polyvocal narration. First, I introduce the important referential capacity of pronouns and their role in developmental cognition, everyday discourse, and narrative world-making. Subsequently, I consider the ways in which fiction might exploit the referentiality of pronouns. In Sect. 11.4 of this chapter, I extend the exploration of pronouns in fiction by considering various forms and functions of polyvocal narration. In Sect. 11.5, I offer an analysis of a specific mode of polyvocal narration that I call liminal deixis. Finally in the conclusion, I consider the poetics and politics of polyvocal narration.

11.2 Pronouns, Deixis, and Narrative World-Making

Recognition and identification are important evolutionary and developmental skills: recognition and identification mistakes are costly. It is not by accident that the longstanding traditions of 'comedy of errors' and *Döppelganger* stories built on recognition and misrecognition motifs are still enjoying popularity. Here, it is interesting to recall Lotman's hypothesis on the eventual 'grammaticalisation' of the categories of mythological thinking, arguably functioning as structures of narrative grammar in modern texts. In his essay on the origin of plot (1979), Lotman suggested that the passage from the mythological cyclical texts to discrete-linear (historical) plots was accompanied with the proliferation of character pairs: a mythic hero, combining light and dark, positive and negative aspects, broke into doubles or a whole cluster of double companions, such as twins, relatives etc., with similar names.

Lotman uses Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* and *As You Like It* as case studies. In the latter, the juxtaposition of the two ducal brothers, one of whom lives in exile in the forest and another rules and lives at court, is doubled in the antithesis between the analogous pair Oliver and Orlando

de Boys and the instantaneous conversion of comedy villains (Duke Frederick and Oliver de Boys) into the models of virtue. Oliver encapsulates his experience of sudden conversion or reunion with his virtuous alter ego in a short line, establishing somewhat controversial relations of contrast and equivalence, replacement and continuity, between his former and current self. It is an interesting example of how a brief deictic-pronominal formula captures the dynamics of the overall story (cit. in Lotman 1979: 165–166):

> Twas I; but 'tis not I. I do not shame
> To tell you what I was, since my conversion
> So sweetly tastes, being the thing I am.

The affirmation "twas I" followed by the negation "but 'tis not I" suggests a contrasting, mutually exclusive relation between the two selves and the replacement of the past 'I' with the present 'I'. However, the pronominal co-reference (both are 'I') implies a relation of contradiction and complementarity (the two 'I's' are both different *and* the same), whereas the conversion is perceived as a return to one's 'true self' ("the thing I am"). This example, cited by Lotman, illustrates that linguistic functions of pronouns are extended and modified in fictional narratives: rather than being solely noun's proxies, pronouns participate in narrative dynamics and world-making.

Lyons' view on deixis as the prerequisite for all reference has often been cited (Lyons 1975; see also Galbraith 1995). Yet long before Lyons, Humboldt and Peirce, dissatisfied with the inadequate grammatical theory of pronouns as substitutes for nouns, placed deictic (indexical) elements, "by means of which language becomes a concrete and embodied phenomenon, imbued with the subjectivity of the speakers and their coordinate system" (Viola 2011: 399), at the centre of verbal communication and defended their primacy over anaphors. For Peirce, it is nouns that can serve as substitutes, albeit imperfect ones, for pronouns, rather than vice versa: "'[W]hen a noun is used to show what one is talking about, the experience of the hearer is relied upon to make up for the incapacity of the noun for doing what the pronoun does at once,' *Collected Papers* 2, 1893" (cited in Viola 2011: 399). These ideas seem counterintuitive from the common sense perspective on pronouns as anaphors used in ordinary

'informative' speech to refer back to the antecedents—yet they are warranted by the developmental perspective and the situation of language learning by children. In ordinary communication, the reference content of 'I' and 'you' is immediately available to interlocutors, and the content of third-person reference is usually based on common reference frames.

In fiction, though, the anaphoric function of pronouns characteristic of ordinary conversational discourse is reversed: the reader encounters proper names and deictics without knowing their referential content in advance and moves from hypothetical, ambiguous or vague reference to more focused reference, as if repeating the language learning situation—indeed, the situation of learning a new artistic (semiotic) language. Experimental fiction, for instance, may introduce cataphoric pronouns whose exact reference content may remain unclear, unavailable, or deferred due to a long stretch of text separating the pronoun from its co-referents (for instance, in Henry James' or Hemingway's stories), the availability of several potential co-referents or, on the contrary, the lack of co-reference (e.g. in the passages of interior monologue in Joyce's *Ulysses* that capture "the working of the consciousness at a level below that of complete verbalisation" [Leech and Short 2007: 202]). Consider the much discussed opening and closing sections of Toni Morrison's *Jazz* (1993: 3, 229):

> Sth, I know that woman. She used to live with a flock of birds on Lenox Avenue. Know her husband, too. He fell for an eighteen-year-old girl with one of those deepdown, spooky loves that made him so sad and happy he shot her just to keep the feeling going.
>
> …I can't tell anyone that I have been waiting for this all my life and that being chosen to wait is the reason I can. If I were able, I'd say it. Say make me, remake me. You are free to do it and I am free to let you because look, look. Look where your hands are. Now.

Both the opening and closing feature an unstable, fluid deictic framing and a metamorphic *I* as a witness, participatory collective voice or omniscient narrator whose voice intermingles with character voices and whose identity and reliability are constantly problematised.

Another example of ambiguous and considerably delayed pronominal reference contributing to a complex and polyvocal narrative construction, can be found in an embedded narrative in Margaret Atwood's

(2000) *The Blind Assassin*. The main diegetic level of a female protagonist Iris Chase's first-person narration embeds a third-person narrative—Iris' sister Laura Chase's novel *Blind Assassin,* with two characters referred to through pronouns 'she' and 'he' only. Due to thematic matches between the embedding and embedded story, the latter is perceived as a (virtual) counterpart of the former, as something underreported in the main narrative—a projection of Laura's own life story and her love affair with the young leftist activist Alex Thomas. Only the last sections of Iris' embedding narration cast doubt on the co-referential decoding of the embedded narrative's 'he' and 'she' as Alex and Laura of the main frame. The co-reference is, finally, revised and reversed: Iris turns out to be the embedded novel's author and Alex Thomas' lover, and Laura's sacrificial loveless affair with Iris' husband, as a means of saving Alex Thomas, is disclosed. Within this new configuration, Iris and Laura's roles appear interchangeable and the embedded 'she' co-referential with both Laura and Iris. The ending, suggesting the possibility of the book being 'co-authored' by the Chase sisters and thereby integrating the counterparts of the story, could be perceived as an allusion to M. C. Escher's illusionistic lithograph of hands drawing one another into existence (1948).

The ambiguity and variability of pronominal reference in these examples is indicative of the constitutive role of pronouns in narrative dynamics and the reader's involvement in the ongoing process of narrative construction. Pronominal choices encourage the reader to scan and revise available referential frames formed or retrieved in the process of reading—to match them with continuously changing deictic coordinates and, thereby, to map out text's semiotic 'topology', a system of meanings. It is through the ascription of available referential meanings to deictic coordinates that the reader contributes to narrative construction and world-making.

11.3 Pronouns, Shifters, and Extended Subjectivity Zones

While a work of fiction, instead of mirroring the outside world, projects its own "internal field of reference" (Harshav 2007: 4–5), it is the system of in-built temporal, spatial, and subjective coordinates that brings the

projected world to life. Even if the projected (imaginary) world is strange and unfamiliar to the reader, specific deictic coordinates serve as its access points. However, whereas deictics in everyday discourse refer to the real-life existents, deictics in fiction are secondary indices (signs becoming signifiers to other signs; Sönesson 1996) or secondary deictics. Fiction enhances and intensifies Piaget's 'semiotic (symbolic) function' (Piaget and Inhelder 1969), the capacity for attending to objects beyond the immediate reach, separated from their original context, such as the objects of memory and imagination, by providing access to distant sub-worlds and transforming them into the worlds within actual reach—"the sector of the actual world that arranges itself spatially and temporally around the person as its actual center" (Schütz and Luckmann 1973: 36). The symbolic function, or the ability to operate with imaginary objects beyond their original contexts, to capture their deferred meanings, and to assimilate them to one's own experiential world, prominent in play, exploratory activities, and work of imagination, is intensified and enhanced in fiction.

Taking into consideration the special role of deictics in fiction, it would be helpful to distinguish between the properly linguistic deictics and the extended deictic concept of *shifters* as fictional operators establishing long-distance supra- and extralinguistic links and contributing to narrative dynamics and world-making (see also Grishakova 2012a). According to Jakobson, shifters are indexical symbols that combine symbolic and indexical functions and index a speech event in relation to the narrated event. While originating in established systemic conventions ("codes"), shifters take on their meaning in a specific communicative situation ("message"): "the indexical symbols … are a complex category where code and message overlap" (Jakobson 1971: 132). In a more dynamic, process-oriented perspective, semiotic 'codes' could be understood as *interpretive frames* that ensure minimum felicity conditions for discourse (narrative) processing.

Respectively, shifters may be defined as perspective-oriented indexical set-ups that instantiate available interpretive referential and experiential frames and perform mapping functions in fictional narratives, thereby contributing to the overall narrative construction (building and linking "narrative spaces", in Dancygier 2012: 36). This process is analogous to

the shifts of attention that provoke perceptual leaps between the various sub-worlds of experience, as described by Schütz and Luckmann (1973; see also Galbraith on deictic shifts). Yet fictional narrative is detached from the immediate storytelling context and mediated by the default agency (narrator). The deictic set-up of the fictional world displaced from the *here*-ness and *now*-ness of the act of narration can be interpreted only in imaginary, projected contexts where *I* and *you* of the ordinary conversational situation are substituted for the imaginary centres of subjectivity. In this way, fictional deictics or shifters not only define the spatiotemporal coordinates of utterances or align participants of communication with these coordinates, as happens in everyday communication. They also index and link distant referential contexts as well as stylistic and symbolic features distinctive of those contexts and, thereby, perform the functions of referential mapping and world-building (see Emmott 1997 on the role of the 'long-distance' links in fiction).

In fiction, the subjectivity 'zones'—analogues to Bakhtin's "character zones", inflected with subjectivity markers or individual 'accents' (Bakhtin 1981: 316)—extend far beyond their (pro)nominal pivots to distanced realms and blend two or more centres of subjectivity in a single narrative frame. The narrating *I* may be fleshed out as non-*I*, or vice versa, for instance in first-person plural (*we*) and second-person narration, or in pronominal shifting in free indirect discourse where the narrating *I* may merge with or shift to the character's *I*. This is evident in the first sentence of Chekhov's short story 'Rotschild's Fiddle' (cited by Paducheva 2011: 19) which merges the narrator's and character's perspective: "It was a small town, worse than a village, and almost the only people living in it were old men, *who died so rarely that it was actually quite annoying*" (italicised; my emphasis; for other examples of such shifting, see Fludernik 1993: 114–124).

Similarly, in such forms as ostensible simultaneous narration or narration in historical present, the grammatical present may be read as the present of events in the storyworld and, concurrently, as the past retrospectively attended at the moment of narrating. Conversely, the past of narration may be encoded as the present of the storyworld due to present and future tense deictics incorporated in the context of the grammatical past of narrated events. Respectively, the whole deictic set-up of fictional narrative is internally re-contextualised (compared with the ordinary

communicative situation) and produces what I term lamination—a simultaneous monitoring of several associated or dissociated grounds, or subjectively imbued deictic set-ups (Grishakova 2012a).

The distant zones of subjectivity could be signalled verbally or perceptually (as verbally encoded perceptual signals), by "egocentric words" (Paducheva 2011: 10–15). The *verbal* encodings of subjectivity include various subjectively coloured expressivity features—typographical, phonetic, grammatical, syntactic, pragmatic, lexical (see Fludernik 1993: 226–274; Uspensky 1973). Although the majority of Fludernik's examples include a character as the source of expressivity (Fludernik 1993: 223), the expressivity features in fiction neither qualify consistently as markers of cited or reported speech, nor always enable a character attribution. They may be also attributable to the hypothetical experiencer or perceiver (see below; Fludernik 1993: 253), or serve as markers of the hypothetical discourse embedded in impersonal narration.

The *perceptual* encoding of subjectivity has been identified as the fictional function of 'showing'—"a text-induced process of *epistemological transfer* such that the recipient will decode the perceptual information source as something he might have experienced" (Linhares-Dias 2006: 7; original emphasis), or, in Greimassian semiotics, the cognitive function of the 'observer' (Fontanille 1989; Grishakova 2012b: 134–154). As with verbal ('expressive') encoding of subjectivity, perceptual encoding either relates to a character's extended zone of subjectivity or appears in the context of impersonal narration without a character attribution. In the latter case, the shifting deictic set-up re-orients the narrative frame as regards the implied centre of subjectivity or a perceptual profile adopted by the narrator. Consider the following passage from Vladimir Nabokov's story *The Potato Elf* (1997 [1924]: 229, 230; my emphasis):

> …Fred was extremely well built, and had there not been *those* wrinkles on his round forehead and at the corners of his narrowed eyes, as well as a rather eerie air of tension […], *our* dwarf would have easily passed for a gentle eight-year boy.

Demonstratives 'this' and 'that', deictic adverbs of spatial orientation (e.g. 'here', 'there', 'on the left', 'straight ahead', 'in front'), words of perception, particularly subjective, fallible or unreliable perception (e.g. 'seem',

'appear', 'look', 'become visible', 'one could sense', 'smell', 'feel') imply subjective presence and are, therefore, markers of subjectivity. Thus, in the above passage, the demonstrative "those" and the first-person possessive pronoun "our" evoke a sense of proximity and empathy (empathetic deixis), and orient the description as regards to an imaginary observer.

Narrator's shifts in distance and proximity as regards the narrated world may take on various secondary meanings in fiction. Proximity may refer to empathy or sympathy, intimacy, intensive sensation, joint attention, familiarity, routine; distance or remoteness—to anonymity, neutrality, detachment, desire, the ineffable, or sublime. The fact that perceptual encoding could be read as a signal of expressivity, i.e. verbal encoding of subjectivity, verifies that narrators, indeed, can be focalisers (see Phelan 2001): the concept of 'point of view' (Uspensky 1973), prematurely discarded by Genette (1980: 189), embraces both the perceptual and verbal encodings of subjectivity considered as separate functions of 'speaking' (narration) and 'seeing' (focalisation) in Genettian narratology.

However, the implied 'observer' or 'perceiver' (perceptually encoded point of view) could also be blended with or separated from the narrator within the same narrative frame. Paducheva cites the following line from Pushkin's *Queen of Spades*, which stands out against the deictic setting of the whole episode, focalised through Herman inside the old countess' house, because it implies an observer *outside* the house: "People ran up, voices rang out and lights went on in the house" (Paducheva 2011: 230). Similarly, an example from Annie Proulx' *Hunting Mister Heartbreak* (1991) ("We were shrinking…With nothing to measure itself against now except the open Atlantic, the ship, so enormous in Liverpool, so lordly on the Irish sea, was dwindling into a dot") interpreted by Dancygier as *said* or *thought by an observer on the ship* leaving port (2012: 131) could be, more precisely, described as the narrative frame blending the narrator's *we* with the imaginary external observer's perspective located somewhere outside the ship. Only the latter would have been able to observe the ship getting smaller as "the result of the change of the background against which it is viewed." (Dancygier 2012: 104).

The concept of the observer introduces an imaginary perceiver within a relational (ego-based) coordinate system. In Genettian narratology, the above-cited examples would be classified as a case of zero (*Queen of Spades*) or external (*Hunting Mister Heartbreak*) focalisation and, therefore,

non-deictic description (in the landmark-based or absolute, abstract, coordinate system). It is clear, however, that only the ego-based coordinate system is deictic (see Fillmore 1998; Hill 1974). Fictional narrative is therefore imbued with the subjectivity of speakers and perceivers and markers of extended subjectivity. In fiction, deictic systems take on secondary (supralinguistic, symbolic) meanings, determine the forms of reader engagement, and contribute to narrative dynamics. In the next section, I consider the role of pronouns in creating fictional subjectivities specifically in the context of polyvocal narration.

11.4 Forms and Functions of Polyvocal Narration

Insofar as fictional deictics or shifters monitor referential systems, they mediate and shape what could be called the politics or ideologies of fiction—the relations between fictional discourses and broader (cultural, social) contexts, positioning of fictional discourses within and their impact on cultural and social environments. The linguistic turn informed by the Kantian tradition, Saussurean linguistics, the rise of various formalisms and structuralisms in the humanities, natural and social sciences, analytical language philosophy, Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, twentieth century experimental avant-garde art—all these developments contributed to a specific understanding of the artistic text as a constructed object, and language as both confining and constitutive, self-regulating system that, rather than being a transparent window on reality, conjures its own reality. Words were reconceived as exchange values, and names and pronouns as place-holders—permanently displaced signifiers with a signified slipping away in the process of signification, revealing a gap between utterance and enunciation, immediate experience and its verbalisation. A causal connection between language, representation, and self has been discarded.

Modernist and postmodernist experimentation re-conceptualises the relationship between subjectivity, language, and representation. Some authors (Beckett, Robbe-Grillet, Oulipo authors) struggled to entirely dissociate and emancipate language from subjectivity and various forms

of complicity (historical, ideological) that subjectivity implies, and to forge a new, unbiased connection between language and reality. In *The Unnamable* (1953) and *Texts for Nothing* (1950–1952), Beckett's first-person narrator seems to be groping for its own self/selves, while trying to avoid both closure and disintegration, casting a series of disjointed and fractured self-projections neither of which is stable or durable. The instability of the narratorial voice short-circuits reader expectations for closure and highlights the approximate and distorting character of any self-identification. The narrator refers to other narrative voices, or to characters of other Beckett novels, which it then claims to be fictions invented by itself (see Richardson 2006: 76). The opening of Beckett's *Company* (1979), "A voice comes to one in the dark", contains an ambiguous subjectivity attribution: the verb 'comes' usually signals the deictically oriented ego-coordinate, that of a perceiver as the final point of the trajectory of movement (comes to me, you, him) yet the perceiving-orienting function is, in this case, obscured by the indefinite pronoun 'one'. Furthermore, the role of 'one' as the perceiver (i.e. the subject of perception that is only available within the first-person perspective) is negated via the third- and second-person ascription (Beckett 1989: 6):

> Use of the second person marks the voice. That of the third that cankerous other. Could he speak to and of whom the voice speaks there would be a first. But he cannot. He shall not. You cannot. You shall not.

Other postmodernist authors such as Philippe Sollers, on the contrary, practiced an intensely 'subjective' writing anchored in bodily perceptions and sensations (*l'écriture corporelle*), which dismantled classic essentialist features of subjectivity such as rationality, individuality, autonomy. Throughout Sect. 11.4, I consider various forms of multi-voiced narration that experiment with the relationship between language and subjectivity.

11.4.1 *We*-Narration

We-narration is intermediary between mono- and polyvocal narration but has a tendency to metamorphose into polyvocal narration: "'we' can grow or shrink to accommodate very different sized groups" (Richardson

2006: 14). It can translate into other forms, such as *they*-narration—as in Monique Wittig's feminist lesbian writing analysed by Margolin (2000), Fludernik (1993), and Richardson (2006)[1]—or split into individual albeit anonymous voices, as in other works of feminist and postcolonial fiction which are ambiguous or subversive as regards the essentialist stereotype concepts of gender, race, or ethnicity (for instance, see Macrae's discussion of pronouns in postcolonial fiction, this volume). Conversely, *we* can extend to a group and, ultimately, a generation or generations, as in Jeffrey Eugenides' *Virgin Suicides* (2002 [1993]) representing, in contrast with feminist writing, a stereotyped concept of communal male thinking (see Fludernik, this volume).

The *we* of Eugenides' novel, interspersed with other pronominal usages, is a much more fuzzy entity, when compared with the filmic adaptation's group of several boys with a voiceover narrator representing the group. The novel's *we* embraces teenagers of a suburban neighbourhood, a group of adults remembering their teenage years, a specific group of boys or separate boys (talking with girls by phone, visiting girls), and extends to the imaginary *we* as an epitome of male sexual fantasies. On the other hand, as Maxey states "'we' also relates to a very particular young adulthood: that of wealthy, white, suburban Detroit in the 1970s. In other words, just as 'we' is gendered and historically precise, so it is also raced and classed, where 'we' with "our pink faces" (214) stand distinct from 'them': the dispossessed black communities of inner-city Detroit" (Maxey 2015: 6).

The *we* could, therefore, introduce both consensus and dissenting types of entities, in-group or out-group splits (for a similar dynamic created by *they*-narration, see Alber, this volume). In *A School for Fools* (1976) by Sasha Sokolov, the schizophrenic character's monologue splits into two separate voices or two selves that, nevertheless, try to appear a single person to other people. The italicised (in the original) *there* refers to a mental institution and the fact that the difference is punishable and has to be suppressed in the ideologically homogeneous Soviet system (Sokolov 1988: 21; my emphasis [exc. '*there*']). The split schizophrenic *I* of Sokolov's narrator could be considered as a metaphorical projection of the Soviet 'doublespeak' and the ideological dissent persecuted by repressive psychiatry.

> What's the difference? *I* am telling *you* a very interesting story, and *you* are starting to pester *me* again, and *I* don't pester *you* after all, *I* thought *we* agreed once and for all that there is no difference between *us*, or do *you* want to go *there* again? Excuse me, in the future, *I* will try not to cause *you* unpleasantness, *you* understand, not everything is right with my memory. And *you* think mine is all right? Well, excuse me, please excuse me.

Whilst *I* and *you* represent the split selves of the schizophrenic character, *we* and *us* are also used intermittently to reveal a unity between the first- and second-person singular referents, particularly in their shared desire not to return to the institution. In other moments in *A School for Fools*, *we* becomes a generalised label referring to all pupils in the special school, or even all "stupid people", revolting against their tutors (Sokolov 1988: 112; my emphasis):

> *We*'ll break the poles off our own nets, catch all the really stupid people, and put these nets on their heads like dunce caps, and then *we*'ll beat their hateful faces with the poles. *We*'ll arrange a fabulous mass-scale civil execution, and then those who tormented us in our idiotic specschools for so long will have to run conditioning relays themselves.

The *we*-narration dramatises pressure, tension, and fluctuation between the individual and group thinking, which is particularly obvious in the case of thought representation. Some plural pronominal forms consistently refer to a homogenous group in the sense that the subjects share the same referential relation to the speaker; for example, *they* designates third-person others (*they* = she + he + she, etc.). In contrast, *we* is not a plural form of *I* (*we* ≠ I + I + I…, but rather we = I + you + he + she…). *We* aligns the speaker with a group but doesn't involve choral speech or narration. It implies heterogeneity and, therefore, excludes 'thinking in unison': "Any 'we' mental action description inevitably combines first person inside knowledge with a second or third person inferential one. The fact that 'we' is not an authorized spokesman for the group makes the problem more acute" (Margolin 2001: 253).

Research on *we*-narration and representation of 'collective' thought and emotion in fiction dovetails with contemporary philosophical and sociological interest in group thinking and behaviour, shared intentionality and

the phenomenological *we* (e.g. Zahavi 2015a). In his lecture given in the Copenhagen Center for Subjectivity Research, Zahavi tackled the issues of group agency and sought to answer the following questions: What is '*we*-experience'? Can groups be intelligent agents? Might the shared emotions involve fusion and a breakdown of individual boundaries? Does the *we*-experience, the experience of being part of a *we*, presuppose, retain or erase the difference between self- and other-experience? How are individuals experientially interrelated and to what extent is collective intentionality based on interpersonal understanding and reciprocal recognition? (Zahavi 2015b). As we have seen earlier, the analysis of 'collective narration' in fiction raises very similar questions. *We*-narration problematises the essentialist conceptions of selfhood, authority, and gender, tackles various issues related to group and individual thinking and behavior, reveals a gap between the individual and group agency, and explores the appropriation of group identity and voice by the individuals. It does so, however, not in the form of systematic exploration and philosophical reasoning but through low-level (linguistic, stylistic, and narrative) choices, consideration and negotiation of competing meanings in particular cultural and experiential contexts and by questioning accepted meanings and perspectives. While playing off its double (linguistic-representational and symbolic-referential) contingency, fictional narration retrieves referential frames beyond the immediate contexts where it operates, and indexes wider referential systems, such as human beliefs, attitudes and assumptions on how the world works.

11.4.2 Multi-teller and Multi-voiced Stories

As a form that is complementary or overlapping with *we*-narration, polyvocal narration manifests a polyphony of blended or separate non-hierarchical voices, two or multiple narrators or narrator-like figures and embedded or layering narrations. As compared with the prototypical *we*-narration, polyvocal narration features loosely associated individual agents or aggregates of agents rather than group identity and agency. In certain polyvocal narratives, "different textual segments inscribe the utterances of different narrators, each with his own independent deictic

centre […] Successive narrative utterances in such texts are deictically anchored in different persons, times and places and addressed to different receivers" (Margolin 1984: 190). In this case, even if deictic anchorage (temporal, spatial or subjective) is indeterminate or ambiguous, narrators remain distinct and "deictically decentered" (e.g. in Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*; Margolin, ibid.).

Other polyvocal narratives feature less distinct, hypothetical or loosely associated narrators, or aspects of the same narrator—weakly personalised or blended selves (Nabokov's *Pale Fire*, Cortázar's *62: A Model Kit,* Fuentes' *The Death of Artemio Cruz*). They often combine various (first-, second-, and third-person) personal forms of narration with interchangeable use of pronouns, multiple deictic shifts, and ambiguous pronoun reference. Narrative layering and embedding as well as the use of varying emphases and intonational shifts in narrative voices (Azcel 1998) further complicates narrative identity attribution. García Márquez' (1975) *The Autumn of the Patriarch* combines *we*-narration with omniscient third-person narration. However, instead of being a voice of authority, *we*-narration turns out to be a 'hypothetical speculation' by the uninformed collective voice, encompassing a plethora of intermediary unreliable narrators (Labanyi 2007: 152).

Instead of the classic types of emplotment usual in Western literary narratives, tracking a single central character or several interacting characters in a goal-driven plot, the multi-voiced and multi-teller narration offers a series of outlooks into the events or alternating glimpses of a number of characters and narrators (Margolin 2000: 597). It builds on the relational dynamic and a variable narrative perspective: the open-ended negotiation of conflicts; a shared polyphonic space of narrative voices; weakly causal patterns of narration; a multiple-draft type of emplotment, including randomness and limited narratorial control (an emergent story, story in the making combined with patterning). Along with *we*-narration (e.g. in Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Edouard Glissant, Joan Chase, Joyce Carol Oates; see Richardson 2006: 37–60), polyvocal narration is characteristic of postcolonial (Salman Rushdie, Toni Morrison), queer and feminist (Monique Wittig, Margaret Atwood, Ali Smith, Jeanette Winterson), antiglobalist and ecocritical fiction (e.g. Douglas Coupland's *Generation X*), due to its philosophical and political underpinnings: it undermines the essentialist

conception of subjectivity, discredits various forms of patriarchal authority, reveals marginalised voices, introduces a dynamic sense of otherness and develops attuned, dialogic forms of interaction (see Margolin 2000; Tröhler 2010; Macrae, this volume). The displacement or shift of deictic grounds, ambiguous or mixed pronominal reference, and extended subjectivity zones with vague subjectivity markers are characteristic of experimental modernist and postmodernist polyvocal narration.

Finally, multi-voiced or multi-teller narration extends to metafictional forms—such as Nabokov's *Pale Fire*, Brook-Rose's *Thru* and *Between*, Italo Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveler*, Pelevin's *Budda's Little Finger* (orig. *Chapayev and Void*) and many others—whose storyworlds embed alternative worlds or layers of reality with varying reality ascription, blending fact and fiction and revealing that the work is an artifice. Continuous re-centering and re-contextualization of layered pronominal-deictic patterns trigger re-framing and reconfiguration of the overall narrative construction. The shifts occur between the diegetic and extradiegetic world, textual and extratextual reality and include authors and readers in a complex metaleptic interaction (for further discussion of pronouns in metafiction and autofiction, see Gibbons, this volume). The device of re-centering heightens reader's engagement with the fictional world. This kind of strategy destabilises the usual process of reading, where deictic shifts remain inconspicuous: in experimental fiction, the very destabilisation becomes a text-generating principle involving the reader in co-processing and interpretation. In the next section, I show how these strategies affect narrative construction.

11.5 The Survivor

In this final section, I discuss the fourth chapter of Julian Barnes' (1989) novel *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters*, called 'The Survivor.' I focus on what I classify as 'liminal' deixis. Liminality refers to a position on the threshold or border, in a state of transition, in the space in-between two realms. Another narratological concept that capitalises on 'liminality' is 'liminal plotting' (Jonnes 1990; Dannenberg 2008). Dannenberg defines 'liminal plotting' as a form of reader engagement with plot in the

state of suspense that opens up an array of possibilities and stimulates creation of multiple imaginary versions of the future by the reader. Similarly, 'liminal deixis' suggests an array of possibilities for referential mapping, i.e. ascribing meanings to the deictic coordinates (such as *I*/non-*I* or *here*/*there*, etc.), while suspending or impeding reader's choice or judgement on the value of this mapping.

Barnes' story challenges the reader to map out positive and negative, actual and virtual deictic coordinates, while suggesting, at the same time, that any choice is compromised and invalidated. The main character of the story is Kathleen Ferris who is concerned about nuclear disaster and environmental pollution. After the Chernobyl disaster, she becomes obsessed with the spread of radiation and the destiny of the reindeer that became radioactive. She anticipates a forthcoming nuclear war. Her fears intermingle with memories of school bullying, infantile fantasies that involve Father Christmas, her own 'daddy' (elements of baby talk are incorporated in what initially develops as an impersonal narration imbued with Kath's thought and speech but referring to her as an anonymous 'she'), her bullying partner, and males in general.

Since people including officials prefer to ignore the disaster and, apparently, cover up its consequences, Kath decides to escape, takes two cats (Paul and Linda), boats away from the corrupt world and lands on a small island. The cats' names refer to Paul and Linda McCartney and the escape episode is reminiscent of the Beatles' song "Yellow Submarine".[2] These allusions to the counter-culture of the 1960s look rather obsolete in the 1980s atmosphere of the Chernobyl disaster, cold war and apocalyptic-nuclear fears as well as updated environmental and ecological concerns. However, as with the emancipatory and protest movements of the 1960s, people prefer to ignore Kath's message. The Old Testament apocalyptic motif of Noah's ark, a version of an attempt at salvation and survival amidst a disaster, is central to the novel.

Kath appears in the story in third-person narration (*she*) and alternatively as the first-person narrator (*I*). Her consciousness and speech are double-distanced from the reader, being framed and re-framed both by third-person narration and by interruptions from patronising *they*-discourse ("it wasn't a very serious accident, they said", "they said she shouldn't be sentimental," etc., Barnes 2009: 84, 85). These narrative modes compromise and obscure

Kath's message with common sense counter-arguments, questioning the reliability of her knowledge, her legitimacy and her right to speak at all.

The story thus features an 'agonistic' structure (i.e. embedding of hostile voices disputing Kath's message). The protagonist's speech, thought and perceptions infiltrate third-person narration in the opening sections and thought and speech of other characters are embedded in Kath's first-person narration in mid and last sections. In the passage quoted below, Kath considers her partner Greg's possible reactions to the nuclear disaster. Kath's thoughts (first order) wander to include fragments of Greg's discourse (second order, as imagined by Kath) addressing Kath ("silly cow") or addressing girls he is flirting with in a pub ("why don't you come and sit on my knee, darling"). Moreover, also included (at the level of third-order embedding) is public opinion cited by Greg ("those fellows up there would sort something out") (ibid., 87, 90):

> I wonder what happened to Greg. I wonder if he's safe. I wonder if he thinks about me, now he knows I was right […] Or, perhaps, he'll pretend nothing has even happened; that way he can be sure he was right. Yes, it wasn't what you thought, it was just a comet burning out in the sky, or a summer storm, or a hoax on TV. Silly cow. […]
>
> He was out there, knocking back another beer, saying how those fellows up there would sort something out, and in the meantime why don't you come and sit on my knee, darling?

It is the various levels of embedded voices (Kath imagining Greg; Kath imagining Greg in turn discussing public opinion) that create the multivoicedness and liminal deixis of this passage.

Kath is, apparently, a whistle-blower who, besides exposing and warning, carries a positive (environmentalist, emancipatory, life-affirming) message. The ending of the story seems to adopt Kath's perspective and to frame it as real, as "things how they are" (111):

> The next day, on a small, scrubby island in the Torres Strait, Kath Ferris woke up to find that Linda had given birth […] She felt such happiness, such hope!

However, the multiple framing from male and public opinion perspectives discredits Kath's catastrophe message and invalidates it as an epitome

of infantilism (Kath as an obedient child believing in miracles), female self-victimisation (Kath, arguably, suffering from "persistent victim syndrome", ibid., 108), idealistic or wishful thinking (she imagines thousands going to the sea, similarly to her, in the boats) and, ultimately, a delusion. Kath's message appears escapist and utopic.

This strategy of 'liminal deixis' impedes reader's ascription of referential value to the deictic coordinates of the story (*I/she* vs. *he/they*; *here* vs. *there*). My students, for instance, find that the story—by featuring contrasting stereotypical positions with regard to urgent societal issues and threats—challenges the reader to identify with one position, without giving up on the alternatives. The reader is tempted either to align with Kath's opponents or to accept Kath's message, while also being aware that both positions are compromised and neither is presented as privileged. Similarly, neither the 'actual world' of the story nor the 'possible world' of Kath's imagination is ascribed incontestable reality. The 'liminal deixis', thereby, suspends judgement on which narrative ontology counts as actual and which virtual, privileged or discarded, superior or inferior, and allows for alternative but equally valid narrative world constructions.

11.6 Conclusion

It is believed that pronouns originate in the basic orientation and communication routines developed in early childhood. This explains their role in discourse and narrative where they also perform pointing, linking and orienting functions and constitute, together with other indexical elements, a deictic system. In fiction, referential deictics or shifters establish long-distance supra-linguistic links, maintaining certain referential cohesions across stretches of text, that help the reader to capture deferred meanings, to revise referential frames formed or retrieved in the process of reading and to assimilate them to one's own experiential world—in other words, to exercise reader's symbolic (semiotic) capacity. The whole deictic set-up of fictional narrative is internally re-contextualized as compared with the ordinary communicative situation and produces lamination—a simultaneous monitoring of several associated or dissociated grounds, or subjectively imbued deictic set-ups. Pronominal choices encourage the reader to scan proximate and distant contexts for available

referential meanings and match them to deictic coordinates, contributing thereby to referential mapping and narrative world-making.

The analysis of the pronominal-deictic functions in experimental polyvocal narration proves that, rather than being merely a manifestation of playfulness and experimentation in fiction, polyvocal narration is loaded with various cognitive and exploratory tasks. It problematises essentialist conceptions of subjectivity, challenges various types of totalising thought and language, manifests tensions between group and individual thinking, dispels the illusion of perfect communication, the universal truth or reality as a common-sense or ideological construct. It does so by actively involving the reader in the process of narrative world-making, through low-level (linguistic, stylistic, and narrative) choices, negotiation of competing meanings in specific cultural and experiential settings and by questioning accepted perspectives.

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Notes

1. In "Telling in the Plural" (2000: 603–604), Uri Margolin describes the "group talk" in Wittig's *Les Guérillères* as a combination of *they-*, *we-* and anonymous individual voices.
2. This is a hypothetical allusion. However, the motifs of "sailing on the sea", child's consciousness, desire for escape as well as connections with anti-war protests, all of which are also prominent in Barnes, refer to "Yellow Submarine" as a likely sub-text of the escape episode in Barnes' chapter.

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12

Pronouns in Literary Fiction as Inventive Discourse

Henrik Skov Nielsen

12.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I approach the question of pronouns from a rhetorical perspective, focusing on literary fiction as inventive discourse. In the rhetorical approach to fictionality (cf. Nielsen et al. 2015; Zetterberg Gjerlevsen 2016a, b; Walsh 2007, 2016; Phelan 2011; Zetterberg Gjerlevsen and Nielsen forthcoming), fictional discourse is perceived as the result of a communicational strategy comparable to truth, lie, and irony; Zetterberg Gjerlevsen and Nielsen offer the following definition: "We define *fictionality* as intentionally signaled, communicated invention" (forthcoming, original emphasis). Literary fiction, then, is one discourse form among others talking about states of affairs given and taken as invented.

Standard models of pronouns, however, especially linguistic ones, are based on non-inventive language uses. In the rhetorical approach, I suggest, it becomes evident that parts of the grammar of literary fiction

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work differently from non-fictional conversational discourse. I don't mean to suggest that fiction is an autonomous category entirely ontologically different from non-fiction, but that it very often contains strong signals that the story is invented, and that its references—including reference to characters by means of pronouns—very often work differently than in discourse where the participants are physically present. With respect to pronouns, I demonstrate in this chapter that attempts to model the understanding of literary fiction on an understanding of non-fictional discourse will inevitably neglect several of its most specific features.

I argue that pronouns do not work the same way in communication that employs fictionality as in non-fictional, conversational discourse. If a standard account of an enunciation contains a speaker 'I', 'here', 'now', then all three concepts are questioned in literary fiction. Focusing on pronouns, the chapter argues that it is a mistake to impose real-world, non-invented, narrative situations on fictional narratives. Literature, very often, is not unisonous, and the non-fictional meanings of pronouns are regularly transgressed. This holds true for first-, second-, and third-person pronouns.

The chapter takes a philosophical and semiotic approach to the sign and a rhetorical approach to literary fiction (as opposed to an ontological approach). In what follows, I re-read Charles Sander Peirce's often quite enigmatic remarks on especially the indexical sign of which the pronoun is a sub-species, and argue on a strictly semio-logical basis that this kind of sign inevitably invites readers to process them differently from pronouns in non-inventive discourse. Having presented the semiotic framework, I offer a new reading of Peirce and his concept of the indexical sign before moving on to examine deictic and personal pronouns in literature.

12.2 What Is a Sign? What Is a Pronoun?

To briefly introduce a semiotic approach to what the sign is, broadly, I draw on Charles Sander Peirce's trichotomy of different types of signs, here quoted from *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce* volume II.

In an unidentified fragment from around 1897 Peirce begins the description of the sign with a somewhat tentative definition: "A sign, or *representamen*, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity" (1960: 2.228, original emphasis). Peirce continues shortly after, "The sign stands for something, its *object*" (1960: 2.228, original emphasis). In another article, Peirce provides the following definitions of the three sign types in the triadic approach (*CP*: 2.247–2.249, original emphasis):

> An *Icon* is a sign which refers to the Object that it denotes merely by characters of its own, and which it possesses just the same, whether any such Object actually exists or not. It is true that unless there really is such an Object, the Icon does not act as a sign; but this has nothing to do with its character as a sign. […]
> An *Index* is a sign which refers to the Object that it denotes by virtue of being really affected by that Object. […]
> A *Symbol* is a sign which refers to the Object that it denotes by virtue of a law, usually an association of general ideas, which operates to cause the Symbol to be interpreted as referring to that Object.

Some of this might seem fairly obscure. To understand the implications, I find it fruitful to draw on Jakobson's reformulation (1996: 468, my emphasis):

> Using C.S. Peirce's division of signs into indexes, icons, and symbols, one may say that for the interpreter an index is associated with its object by a factual, existential contiguity and an icon by a factual similarity, whereas there is no compulsory existential relation between symbols and the objects they refer to. […] Thus the structure of symbols and indexes implies a relation of contiguity (artificial in the former case, physical in the latter), while the essence of icons consists in similarity. *On the other hand, the index, in contradistinction to the icon and the symbol, is the only sign which necessarily involves the actual copresence of its object.*

Thus, in Jakobsonian terms, the icon is associated with its object through similarity, the index through contiguity, and the symbol by 'artificial contiguity'.

Turning from the general approach to signs to pronouns specifically, a pronoun, from Latin *pronomen*, is—as the etymology gives away—normally considered something that stands in the place of a noun (from *pro-* 'in place of' and *nomen* 'noun'). In addition, it seems undisputed that context decides the meaning and understanding of the pronoun in the simple sense that the referent of 'I', 'this', 'here', etc. changes from use to use. The unaddressed problem, though, for literary fiction specifically and for much inventive discourse generally, is that context, in the sense of non-inventive discourse with a specific situation and physically present participants in the discourse, is frequently absent. Sometimes the consequences are small or non-existent. The sentence 'John told Mary that he loved her' works much the same way in inventive and non-inventive discourse, since it is easy to see from the context that the pronoun "her" refers anaphorically to Mary with or without the presence of either person. I leave aside here the possibility in both cases that "her" could actually refer to woman other than Mary because this ambiguity does not hinge on the difference between invention or non-invention or on the presence or absence of the persons but rather on a (perhaps deliberate) ambiguity and unconventional/unexpected language use. In the sentence, 'Look at this marvellous tree', however, the pronoun 'this' seems to demand the presence of the mentioned tree and a contiguity between tree, speaker, and listener. Even in a sentence like 'I am about to tell you the story of my life', the understanding of the pronoun 'I' is modelled on a communicational situation in which a speaker is present. In many instances of inventive language use, no such presence exists.

In striking fashion, Peirce points out how—contrary to etymology and commonsensical opinions—the pronoun does not, in an important sense, stand in the place of a noun. Actually, the contrary is the case for the very specific reason that the noun has to rely on the experience and pre-existing knowledge of the speaker of the meaning of the noun, whereas the pronoun as an index indicates directly. Peirce writes (1960: 2.287, note 1, original emphasis):

> A pronoun is an index. A noun, on the other hand, does not *indicate* the object that it denotes; and when a noun is used to show what one is talking about, the experience of the hearer is relied upon to make up for the

> incapacity of the noun for doing what the pronoun does at once. Thus, a noun is an imperfect substitute for a pronoun.

This is a brilliant point. The point is also, though, dependent on the direct connection and contiguity between pronoun and object; a connection which is further established in a following passage (Peirce 1960: 2.287, note 1, original emphasis):

> Nouns also serve to help out verbs. A pronoun ought to be defined *as a word which may indicate anything to which the first and second persons have suitable real connections, by calling the attention of the second person to it.* Allen and Greenough say, "pronouns indicate some person or thing without either naming or describing" [1884: 128]. This is correct—refreshingly correct; only it seems better to say what they do, and not merely what they don't.

This "real connection" between pronoun, object, first person, and second person is exactly a feature of much conversational discourse, but not of literature, where pronouns do not have true deictic contiguity to the object, but only anaphoric contiguity of a second order to other words. This is also in line with Lyon's critique in *Semantics* 2: "[…] to say that pronouns are primarily substitutes, whether for nouns or nominals, is to imply that their anaphoric function is more basic than their deictic function" (1977: 637). What happens, though, when we realise, firstly, that the pronoun does not essentially replace a noun, but rather directly indicates its object by real connection and physical contiguity, and secondly, that any such connection and contiguity is absent in literature even as an extensive use of pronouns prevails? This is what the next section explores.

12.3 The Pronoun as Indexical Sign

The index is, as we saw, the only sign that involves the existence of its object. Jakobson even says that the index involves "the actual copresence of its object" (1996: 468), which should probably not be interpreted to mean a necessary immediate presence of the object. Rather, the index will

have a present, past or future contiguity with its object, such as when a barometer measurement forecasts the future weather, or when a petrified foot print points to the earlier existence of a brontosaurus. We can put this even more bluntly and say that the index is a sign, which—as far as its indexical function is concerned—refers to its producer. As Niklas writes, "An index is connected with its object by a factual link, usually a causal one; it is produced by its object" (1984: 235).

Lyons explains (1977: 107):

> Smoke does not merely imply that there is somewhere a fire; it indicates the fire as the source of the smoke. Slurred speech does not merely imply that somebody is drunk; it indicates the drunken state of the speaker. We will take it as an essential feature of all indices that they should convey information, in this way, about their source.

The same sign often has several different functions and will regularly work as an index, as a symbol, and as an icon. A drawing of a lamb, for example, could as an icon refer to a lamb, as a symbol to Jesus and as an index to a painter. If we know we are dealing with indices, then we are—with some reservations and modifications to follow—able to make logical conclusions about the relation between the index sign and its object and to conclude that the sign is produced by its object. For instance, it is immediately clear that, whereas neither an iconic drawing of, nor the symbolic word for 'a unicorn' in any way proves the existence of said mythological creature, if something proved to be, indisputably, unicorn poo, then the (possible past) existence of the animal itself would be equally indisputable. As far as logical deductions and conclusions are concerned, thus, it is necessary to distinguish between symbolic, iconic, and indexical references. The problem, however, is that sometimes it is surprisingly difficult to determine the nature of the reference.

12.4 The Indexical Symbol

Writing specifically about demonstrative pronouns, Peirce states, "The demonstrative pronouns, 'this' and 'that', are indices. For they call upon the hearer to use his powers of observation, and so establish a real

connection between his mind and the object" (1960: 2.287) This is not exactly what Peirce said earlier, when he stated: "An *Index* is a sign which refers to the Object that it denotes by virtue of being really affected by that Object. […]" (1960: 2.247, original emphasis). What the quotes have in common, though, is the required connection to the object—in one case with the mind of the hearer, in the other with the sign. This ambiguity has to do with the very nature of demonstrative pronouns. Peirce treats them as indices but, as will become clear, they are not in and of themselves indices. To work as indices, they need an indexical supplement—a nod, a pointing finger, an eye-direction, or something similar. We are so prone to thinking of this as inherent in the use of the demonstrative pronoun that Peirce overlooks the fact that this supplement and this pointing finger isn't actually part of the word itself.

The symbol evokes general concepts in the mind, whereas the index points to singular objects through contiguity, but in literature such contiguity does not exist. There is typically no 'factual link', nor is the deixis normally 'produced by its object'. In literature, the supplement that makes deixis indexical is absent; there are no pointing fingers or nodding gestures in literature. If we re-examine the passage where Peirce describes 'this' and 'that' as indices, we see that he establishes a situation with a curious condition, which is actually quite similar to that of literature (1960: 2.287, original emphasis):

> Suppose two men meet upon a country road and one of them says to the other, "The chimney of that house is on fire." The other looks about him and descries [*sic*] a house with green blinds and a verandah having a smoking chimney. He walks on a few miles and meets a second traveller. Like a Simple Simon he says, "The chimney of that house is on fire." "What house?" asks the other. "Oh, a house with green blinds and a verandah," replies the simpleton. "Where is the house?" asks the stranger. He desires some *index* which shall connect his apprehension with the house meant. Words alone cannot do this. The demonstrative pronouns, "this" and "that," are indices. For they call upon the hearer to use his powers of observation, and so establish a real connection between his mind and the object; and if the demonstrative pronoun does that—without which its meaning is not understood—it goes to establish such a connection; and so is an index.

This comes very close to self-contradiction. If 'this' was an index in itself, then the traveller would already have the desired index. But as Peirce accurately states, "Words alone cannot do this." It is as a consequence of exactly this that the displacement from contiguity between sign and object to contiguity between mind and object takes place. It says further in the quote that if the demonstrative pronoun establishes such a connection, it is an index; by implication this means that sometimes the demonstrative pronoun fails to establish this connection, and then its meaning is not understood. In the curious incident Peirce outlines, this latter situation is actualised since the pronoun fails to establish such a connection.

The index proves the existence and contiguity of its object. In addition, language includes signs which seem to possess an indexical structure, and which seem to logically imply the existence of the object, but which are not real indices. Lyons stresses something similar about the deictic pronoun: "In so far as the very fact of pointing to something commits the person who is pointing to a belief in the existence of what he is pointing at, the use of a deictic pronoun carries with it the implication or presupposition of existence" (1977: 656). In counter distinction to real indices, demonstrative pronouns can be used without presupposing or implying existence of the object. This goes for words like 'this', 'that', and 'these' etc. but also—as we will see shortly—for 'I', 'you', and 'she'. Using such words can create an illusion of the necessary existence of the object where none actually exists. When trying to understand words like those from the Simple Simon in Peirce's tale, we find a telling displacement from an indexical register in "that house" to a symbolic "Oh, a house". The existence of the object in such uses of quasi-indices is tied to semantic expectations and conventions rather than to the ontological necessity in real indices.

Context rather than ontology leads us to expect that the speaker is committed to believing in the existence of the object (as something with an actual link to the sign). In fictional discourse, this context is very different. Indices in literature fail to point out their objects to receivers for the good reason that there is no contiguity and no real connection. When reading fictional discourse we do exactly what Peirce's man did; we displace the understanding from an indexical one to a symbolic one: We don't look for '*that* flower', '*this* man', or even '*I*', but automatically and

instantly read it as '*a* flower', '*a* man', and 'some person referred to by the pronoun "*I*"'. The conclusion that follows from this is very general: when reading literature and inventive discourse we reverse the relation between index and symbol in the pronoun as indexical symbol, as I explain in the next section.

12.5 Personal Pronouns as Indexical Symbols

This section brings these general remarks about pronouns and indexical symbols to work on the personal pronouns in literature, with a special focus on the first-person pronoun but including also second- and third-person pronouns.

Beginning with the third-person pronoun, I will use the opening words of the novel *The Discoverer* (Norwegian *Oppdageren*, 1999) by acclaimed novelist Jan Kjærstad as an example. The novel begins, from the very first words, with an *ecce homo* moment, where we enter the story by reading: "Look at this man […]" (1999: 7, my translation). The phrase "Look at this man [/this human] […]" is repeated several times during the first 3–4 lines before it yields to the third-person pronoun "he": "look at how he […] before he […]" (1999: 7, my translation). The words clearly seem to situate addresser and addressee in a shared spatio-temporal system. However, our understanding of the words and hence the entire opening of the novel depends on our ability to understand the reference to the singular through our knowledge of the general, exactly because we realise we are not sharing time or space with the speaker. While the object has to precede the sign in non-inventive conversation, here the sign invites our imagination of a man, a human being, without any inclination to ask "what man?" like the stranger asked the simpleton about the house. Instead, as pointed out above, we do exactly what Peirce's man did; we displace the understanding from an indexical one to a symbolic one: We don't look for "this man" but reverse the relation between index and symbol in the pronoun as index symbol and create instead contiguity between mind and general concept and imagine "a man".

As readers, our processing of narratives narrated in the grammatical first person, and characters designated by the first-person pronoun, actually

follow surprisingly similar lines. In 'The Impersonal Voice in First-Person Narrative Fiction' (Nielsen 2004), I made the—at the time—controversial claim that "[…] in literary fiction, as opposed to oral narrative, one cannot be certain that it is the person referred to as "I" who speaks or narrates" (2004: 133). The claim has since gained widespread acceptance, and the idea has become almost common place. In that article, I was especially concerned with a range of examples, which seemed to prove that logically the person designated by the pronoun *I* could be neither its enunciator nor the narrator.

I also postulated, though, that the phenomenon was general and that we should look for an understanding of first-person narration that would solve a problem that had arisen for every no-narrator theory since Hamburger wrote *Die Logik der Dichtung* in 1957. Hamburger claims that in first-person fiction, the situation is very different from epic fiction (in the third-person), arguing that first-person fiction is more like autobiography than it is like epic fiction, because the subject of enunciation in the former type of texts narrates something that exists independently of the enunciation.

Hamburger's case thus adds another element to the discussion of the relation between voice and narrator: the status and ontology of the narrated world. In Hamburger's view, if there is a subject of enunciation, then it will narrate something that in fiction exists prior to its narration. On the other hand, if there is no subject of enunciation, then the sentences of fiction will produce the world they describe. Consequently, as Hamburger herself recognises, there is an insurmountable difference between the ontology of the narrated world in the two cases. For her, only the narrated world of the first case belongs to the domain of true fiction. In this way, Hamburger concludes that fictional first-person narrative does not belong to the domain of true fiction (cf. Nielsen 2004).

With the semio-logical understanding of the pronoun in inventive discourse, we can now see why this counter-intuitive conclusion of Hamburger's is unnecessary: because it is based on non-inventive sign use. Using the proposed theory of pronouns in fiction allows me now to explain the mechanism behind the claim I made in 'The Impersonal Voice' (2004) about first-person narrative fiction on a sign-theoretical basis. Whenever the sign *I* has been encountered, an undeniable identity

between producer and object has been assumed. Indeed, it has been part of the very definition. For example, here is Barthes quoting Benveniste (Barthes 1972: 139, original italics):

> *I* is nothing other than "la personne qui énonce la présente instance de discours contenant l'instance linguistique *je*" (Benveniste ["the person who utters the present instance of discourse containing the linguistic instance *I*"])

Jakobson, similarly, and including the second person, writes (1990: 390):

> Thus first person signals the identity of a participant of the narrated event with the performer of the speech event, and the second person, the identity with the actual or potential undergoer of the speech event.

However, when acquiring and inhering these definitions (if not from Jakobson then from Benveniste and a long linguistic tradition), it is always forgotten that it is expressly restricted to a "speech event" where there is someone "who utters". With Peirce's sign distinctions we begin to glimpse just how crucial this restriction is. The word 'I' when spoken includes a double reference to the speaker in the form of a symbolic as well as an indexical reference, which almost imperceptibly melt together.

In non-inventive speech, the symbolic function is created along an indexical axis. The general logic behind this is very clear in Waugh as well as Jakobson (Waugh 1984: 416):

> Shifters are deictic categories and as such are related to the *hic et nunc* of the speech situation; they build a reference to the speech situation into the signatum, which reference anticipates in the code their use in a given message. Thus "I" means the person uttering "I" […]. This meaning is general in the sense that it underlies all the various contextualizations in the given speech situations, and invariant in the sense that it is constant, present each time "I" is used.

Jakobson is worth quoting at length (1990: 388; original emphasis):

> According to Peirce, a symbol […] is associated with the represented object by a conventional rule, while an index […] is in existential relation with

> the object it represents. Shifters combine both functions and belong therefore to the class of INDEXICAL SYMBOLS. As a striking example Burks cites the personal pronoun. *I* means the person uttering *I*. Thus on one hand, the sign *I* cannot represent its object without being associated with the latter "by a conventional rule," and in different codes the same meaning is assigned to different sequences such as *I*, *ego*, *ich*, and *ja*: consequently *I* is a symbol. On the other hand, the sign *I* cannot represent its object without "being in existential relation" with this object: the word *I* designating the utterer is existentially related to his utterance and hence functions as an index. (see Benveniste 1956) […] Every shifter, however, possesses its own general meaning. Thus *I* means the addresser (and *you*, the addressee) of the message to which it belongs.

We will soon see how this again—while accurate for non-inventive discourse—does not hold true for pronouns in literature. Waugh and Jakobson both—along very similar lines of arguments—establish a general, symbolic meaning for 'I' (and by implication for all other index symbols): "Thus 'I' means the person uttering 'I'" (Waugh) and "Thus *I* means the addresser […] of the message to which it belongs" (Jakobson). We can briefly re-state this in the general form of "Thus I is a symbol for that which it is an index for" and even more generally; "Thus we understand that the invariant meaning of the index symbol is that it is a symbol for what we know it is an index for". This does not mean that shifters do not have symbolic functions, but that they have them in a very specific way, which is grounded on their index function. That is, the meaning of it (its symbolic function) is its producer in the form of the person uttering it (and thus its indexical reference). Exactly because of this dependence on the index function, the only meaning we can normally attribute to *I* is inseparably attached to the *hic* and *nunc* of its enunciation. An "I" severed from this here and now and this occasion is empty, a quote, a not-*I*. To put it differently: "I" is a sign devoid of meaning until pronounced—at which point it is filled with significance. When spoken in non-fictional discourse, the speaker will make herself the object of the sign in and by the very act of pronouncing it; thereby creating for the sign an object that did not exist (as an object for this sign) before spoken.

When reading literature, we reverse the relation between indexical function and symbolic function in the indexical symbol. This holds evidently true for "*I*" but also for index symbols like "*this* flower", "*that* house" etc., which we understand in reading by imagining them as general concepts rather than singular entities. We imagine *a* flower, *a* house, *a* person designated by the pronoun "*I*" without necessarily assuming any contiguity or actual link between speaker, sign, and object.

The sign "*I*", additionally, cannot be understood without an indexical supplement; so in literature we produce one, but it is displaced, as a relation between mind and general concept rather that between sign and object. Peirce's thinking about signs provides us with the opportunity to accurately characterise the cognitive operations in relation to the sign when it has the peculiar property that it can only be understood in relation to an object to which it has an existential relation while simultaneously such an object is absent.

In conversation and oral language, we hear someone talk and completely independent of semantics, the words indexically refer to a specific person as the indexical object of the words. In addition, we choose by convention to use the sign *I* as a symbol for the speaker. Literature, completely different in this respect, does not attach the words indexically to a specific person (except if we want to talk about the real author, but that question and the question of the author's relation to pronouns, shifters, indices and all other words in a text is beyond the scope of this article). Here, readers tend to deduce in the opposite direction (from sign to assumed producer rather than from producer to symbolic sign) and conclude that "*I*" refers to a person saying "*I*", and thus refers to the one producing the words, and that, accordingly, "*I*" refers to a narratorial agent responsible for the choice and enunciation of the words at some here and now occasion. This can be summarised in the following general conclusion:

> *In conversational uses of the pronoun where a speaker is present, we understand the indexical symbol as a symbol for that for which we know it is an index (Cf. Waugh and Jakobson). In literature, the pronoun works in a structurally different way, so we reverse the procedure and thus understand the indexical symbol as an index for that for which we know it is a symbol.*

This explains why we can have narratives in the grammatical first person authoritatively narrating events and thoughts that the character could not know and why the limits of the character's knowledge is routinely transgressed in literature from different periods and genres. However, if the narrative act is disconnected from the pronoun normally signalling a speaker, then what about the instances in which this speaker is explicitly present as a narrating *I*? How about the very normal cases in which—far from being transgressed—the limits in the knowledge and memory of the character-narrator is explicitly thematised?

Let me give another example—the opening lines of *The Third Policeman* (O'Brien 1967: 7; also cf. Nielsen 2011, where this example is mentioned in a different context):

> Not everybody knows how I killed old Phillip Mathers smashing his jaw in with my spade; but first it is better to speak of the friendship with John Divney because it was he who first knocked old Mathers down by giving him a great blow in the neck with a special bicycle-pump which he manufactured himself out of a hollow iron bar.

The act of narration is explicitly thematised, and a narrating "I" is reflecting upon how to retrospectively narrate earlier events. The question, though, is what to conclude from this explicit split of the protagonist into 'I, then' and 'I, now'. First of all let us notice that, contrary to appearances, nothing in this split makes the narrative's enunciator manifest for us. The distinction between narrated *I* and narrating *I* works quite well for didactic purposes. The interpretation of sentences like 'little did I know then, that this would later change my life…' hinges crucially on the understanding that the "I" can take up two very different positions in the same narrative independent of the question of the fictionality of the narrative. And yet, though at times a useful one, the feeling that a narrative can provide us access in this way to the time of the narrative act is an illusion. There are only three options for the narrating *I*:

1. Completely contiguous with the narrated *I* (like in Bret Easton Ellis' *Glamorama* and numerous other first-person, present tense fictions including popular ones, like Suzanne Collins' *Hunger Games*)

2. Non-thematised and unlocated in space and time (Camus' *The Stranger* and several of Hammett's novels would be examples of this case)
3. Explicitly thematised and described in the text (cf. O'Brien above)

In the first category, the assumption of simultaneity between living and telling leads to implausibilities (see Nielsen 2011). In the second category, speculations about the situation of the telling are at best useless and at worst misleading, since there is often not only no identifiable, but even no imaginable, point in time and space in which the narrative act is situated. That holds true for a large number of first-person as well as third-person narratives.

In the third category, finally, the paradox lies in the fact that in the very moment where the narrating *I* is explicitly identified and located in time and space, it becomes, inevitably, a narrated *I*. It is thus not only a telling person, but also a told one. What the third category presents, then, is only in a limited sense accurately described as narrated and narrating *I*. More precisely, it is two (or more), temporally distant versions of the narrated *I*. In fact, in the O'Brien example, the very nature of the narrative situation of the alleged narrating *I*, possibly in some afterlife, remains fairly vague and not exactly mimetic. In conclusion, the narrating *I* is either: (a) absent and useless, or (b) a narrated *I*; neither of which guarantee to the reader that the narrative has to remain within the limits of real-life storytelling and the limits of the knowledge of the protagonist.

In all instances, the pronoun remains detached from the normal existential contiguity it has to its object in non-inventive language, which in all instances allows for a transgression of (or, for that matter, an adherence to) the limits of the character. The function of the pronoun, however, as an indexical symbol and our inclination (and even indoctrination) to understand fictional discourse along the lines of non-fictional discourse is what makes it so tempting to imagine that addresser and designated are one and the same—even when there is ample evidence to the contrary (Jakobson 1990: 388, original emphasis):

> Turning, finally, to the second-person pronoun: Once again, the assumption that *you* refers to the addressee is based on conversational language where *I* means the addresser […] and *you*, the addressee […] of the message to which it belongs.

The curious thing about most fictional second-person narratives (with Butor's *La modification* as a prominent and classical example) is that although the protagonist is designated by *you* throughout these narratives, nothing at all suggests that the protagonist feels in any way addressed (by a narrating voice): He is not hearing voices, does not feel he is being spoken to, and does not respond to the narrative. In short, nothing except the very use of the second-person pronoun suggests that any address is taking place.

If, in natural linguistics, the first-person pronoun designates "the speaker", third-person "the one spoken about", and second-person "the one spoken to", then it is clear that in many fictional narratives the pronouns lose this functionality. The protagonist in fictional second-person narration appears just as ignorant of being the centre of a narrative as are the protagonists in third-person narratives. Outside fiction in, say, conversational narratives, the referent of "you" is inevitably addressed. In most fictional second-person narratives, the referent of "you" is instead inevitably imagined, and obviously not addressed by the pronoun. Looping back to first-person narratives, my argument above suggests that this line of reasoning can even be extended to first-person narratives in which "I" often does not refer to "the speaker" and in which, accordingly, even the first-person protagonist may well be just as ignorant as third-person characters about being the centre of a narrative (Nielsen 2011). In each case, the pronouns 'this', 'he', 'I', and 'you' suggest a commitment to a belief in the existence of what is pointed at where nothing and none actually is. In each case, the reader does what Peirce predicted and displaces the contiguity from one between sign and singular object in the world to one between sign and general concept in mind.

12.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued from a rhetorical perspective that literary fiction is a discourse talking about states of affairs given and taken as invented. This means that the grammar of literary fiction works differently compared to non-fictional conversational discourse in some respects simply because of the context dependence of some conversational

features, including features of pronouns. Furthermore, I have demonstrated that attempts to model the understanding of literary fiction on an understanding of non-fictional discourse is doomed to fail, and that we are led astray if we take the full consequence of imposing real-world narrative situations on fictional narratives and begin to wonder, say, when and to whom and for what reasons any character-narrator designated by the pronoun *I* narrates the story.

I have also argued that readers tend to automatically process pronouns in literature differently from pronouns in non-inventive discourse before and beyond theorising the difference. If we overlook the fact that the gestural supplement, by which the demonstrative pronoun supposedly points out its object, is absent in literature, then we miss a fundamental limitation and possibility of inventive discourse. In light of this, I have offered the rather simple and economical explanation that the use of pronouns with an overt lack of commitment in belief of the existence of this which they are pointing out is one of many ways in which a fictional narrative can foreground its own inventive powers and resistance to real-world descriptions. We read it as a signal of fictionality and, circularly, process it differently because of a contextual assumption of fictionality. Pronouns have almost inevitably been described from a linguistic perspective based solely on non-inventive language use. I have described some of the differences fictionality make. I have done so on a logical, semio-logical, and philosophical basis rather than an analytic, aesthetic, or an impressionistic one. This is certainly not to deny the analytic and aesthetic consequences but to argue that these consequences of inventive discourse have to do also with logic as something that supports and motivates rather than contradicts feelings and emotions associated with fiction.

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13

Postscript: Unusual Voices and Multiple Identities

Brian Richardson

The theoretical analysis of unusual pronouns and speaking positions in literature has itself had a rather unexpected history. 1957 saw the publication both of Michel Butor's second-person novel, *La Modification*, and Robbe-Grillet's *La Jalousie*, with its apparent "absent narrator" or "*je néant*" technique. These works helped consolidate the *nouveau roman* as a movement and inspired a new wave of experimentation with different and unusual narrating stances in fiction. One such innovative text is Carlos Fuentes' *La Muerte de Artemio Cruz*, published in 1962, whose sections were narrated in alternating first-, second-, and third-person forms, with each form using a different verb tense. In 1966, an even more radical experiment was performed by Maurice Roche in *Compact*, which employs numerous tenses, typographies, and pronouns and which, in addition to *I*, *you*, and *he*, includes *we*, *one*, and a passive voice, pronounless narration. Critics working on individual novels gave considerable attention to the use, function, and positionings of the pronouns used in

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narration; narrative theory, however, lagged far behind, and attention to their use in other literary forms lagged further still.

It wasn't until the early 1990s that Monika Fludernik, Uri Margolin, Irene Kacandes, and I tried to extend narratology so it could circumscribe such unusual narrative voices. Many other theorists, like James Phelan and David Herman, also addressed these issues in individual journal articles; this began a fairly regular stream of studies that has continued to the present. In creative works, a number of new experiments were appearing, and some had developed new variants, such as the 'hypothetical' mode of second-person narration that uses the language of a 'how to' manual to construct a narrative, as in several of Lorrie Moore's stories: "Apply to law school. From here on in, many things can happen. But the main one will be this: you decide not to go to law school after all" (1985: 125). The history of second-person narration was examined and important texts preceding Butor's by Ilse Aichinger, Mary McCarthy, and Nathaniel Hawthorne were unearthed (see Fludernik 1996; Richardson 2006: 17–36). Earlier manifestations of *we*-narration were also being uncovered and its history established.

As the study of unusual pronominal forms has continued, our understanding of the role and import of the use of pronouns in narrative, and in literature more broadly, has greatly expanded. First of all, they are innovative, supple, and often pleasantly defamiliarising tools of the creative author, lending freshness and power to the narration and suggesting new stylistic and ironic possibilities in the prose. We see this playfulness in Jay McInerney's lines: "They're trying to imagine themselves in your shoes, but it would be a tough thing to do. […] Meg can't imagine what it's like for you to be you, she can only imagine herself being you" (1984: 101). Such experiments also offer the possibility of a more accurate kind of mimesis of both thought processes and interpersonal relations. The mental state of dreamers as they slide in and out of consciousness seems to be especially aptly represented in second-person narration, as we see in Hawthorne's story, 'The Haunted Mind': "What a singular moment is the first one, when you have hardly begun to recollect yourself, after starting from midnight slumber! By unclosing your eyes so suddenly, you seem to have surprised the personages of your dream in full convocation round your bed" (1982: 200).

The complex layering of identities that comprise individual subjectivities are also well served by original pronominal uses. Much of the research on pronouns that has emerged since the 1990s does an impressive job of untangling the various roles, personae, discourses, and selves that constitute an individual *I*, *you*, *we*, or *they*. Narration from a *we* or especially a *you*-perspective often alters the dynamics of immersion; typically, we either identify more with the protagonists or resist identification more thoroughly—or, in some cases, alternate between the two. Some forms of second-person narration address the reader: you already are familiar with the kind of discourse that can, at times uncomfortably, address you rather too directly; you don't like the fabricated intimacy that this implies.

Ideological concerns are often situated in pronominal uses in ways that are especially visible, revealing, or paradoxical, as we become aware of the forces that determine the social constitution of individuals: "You go through customs. Since you are a tourist, a North American or European—to be frank, white—and not an Antiguan black returning to Antigua […] you move through customs quickly" (Kincaid 1988: 4). Many genres, including poetry, drama, and nonfiction, are being refashioned by their pronominal choices. At the same time, the analysis of other, seemingly innocent or straightforward texts is being greatly enriched by the use of new kinds of analytical frameworks based on the study of unusual pronoun use.

Looking back from the vantage point of the present, we see how second-person fiction has continued to proliferate and that first-person plural narratives now are widespread. This is also borne out by three forthcoming (2018) studies: Daniel Newman's article on an extreme kind of 'hypothetical' second-person form in Jennifer Egan's 'Black Box'; Steve Beaulieu's account of unnatural *we*-narration in John Edgar Wideman's African-American novel, *Sent for You Yesterday*; and Delphine Munos' analysis of *we*-narration in Chang-rae Lee's dystopian Asian-American text, *On Such a Full Sea*. We can also observe that other pronouns have proven more resistant to development: *one*-narration is still very rare, though some of Joshua Parker's examples of *you*-discourse seem like a *you* doing the work of a *one*; such fiction is perhaps more likely to appear in French or German, where the possibilities of *on* and, especially, *man* are

much greater, as Monique Wittig's *L'Opponax* or Joseph Roth's *Radetzkymarsch* disclose (see Fludernik 1996: 232–235). *They*-narration is also still very rarely employed—though in his essay, Jan Alber shows exactly how effective it can be, especially in his fine account of its function in Ursula Le Guin's story, 'The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas'. One assumes that pronounless, passive voice narration will probably always be rare, and few *it*-narratives are likely to appear.

It is gratifying to see that a number of the authors of some of the classic studies of unusual forms of narration and pronoun use continue to produce important new contributions to the field. Monika Fludernik who, as much as anyone, has pioneered this field and nurtured its development for a quarter of a century, continues to add to her impressive body of work. Her anatomy of the forms of *we*-narration in this volume is equally useful and important, as it clarifies the different possible constituencies of the *we*, which may be inclusive or exclusive, and may refer to the discourse or to the storyworld. Jan Alber continues to extend his repertoire, working impressively on the numerous distinctive features of *they* narration. Henrik Skov Nielsen has expanded his analyses and, via Peircean semiotics, firmly grounds his seminal work on the distinctive aspects of pronouns in works of fiction, branching out from his earlier studies of the narrating *I* and the experiencing *I*. Now, he includes second- and third-person narrators as well.

One of the most fascinating areas explored in this volume (and, it will, I suspect, be for many the unexpected 'star' of the book) is the first-person singular. *I* has been astutely analysed in several essays covering many genres, including by Marcello Giovanelli here who shows how Langston Hughes' numerous *I*s designate multitudinous subject positions. This is complemented by the intellectually fascinating account of the *I* and other pronouns in Katie Wales' impressive study of *Hamlet*. Her explanation of the numerous lexical, social, religious, philosophical, and demonological implications of *I*, *he*, and, especially, *it* greatly aid our interpretation of the play and our understanding of pronominal usage in the Renaissance, as well as identifying Shakespeare's distinctive deployments of these forms. Andrea Macrae's excellent study of the creation, erasure, and overwriting of the *I* (and, to a lesser extent, a very devious *you*) is a model of combined narrative analysis, critical reading, and

ideological commentary as it explores the slippage of pronoun reference and roles in Zoë Wicomb's novel, *David's Story*.

Perhaps the most exciting new development may well be the twists given to first-person singular narration by autofiction and related forms, as Alison Gibbons demonstrates so convincingly in her essay, where she provides the first rigorous exploration of autofiction's paradoxical yet compelling narrative voice. She also alludes to a "metamodern" practice of writing autofiction when the central character may, or may not, have a different name to the author. She identifies and theorises the multiple, shifting *I*s of this increasingly popular kind of narration in the hands of Ben Lerner: "Lerner the author and Ben the character exist for readers as overlapping but ultimately irreconcilable phantoms of the authorial figure" (85). She goes on to provide a perspicacious reading of Ben Lerner's narrative, *10:04*, in which she also discusses its second person aspects and what she deftly calls third-person autofiction. Finally, she masterfully brings out the work's intertextual, polymorphous, and wonderfully polysemous final lines. Together, these essays clearly document the protean, elusive, and dynamic nature of the *I* in literature.

One can perceive an interesting bifurcation in this group of essays—a bifurcation that also appears in narrative theory itself—concerning the "unnatural" aspects of many of the practices explicated here. Monika Fludernik shows in detail how fictional *we*-texts "overstep the limits of realistically possible collective narratives, creating a *we*-voice that could not have a real world equivalent" (188–189). Jan Alber similarly observes that some fictional *we*-narratives operate within realist or mimetic boundaries, others "disorient our readerly expectations," and unnatural ones "move beyond real-world possibilities" (133–134). Henrik Skov Nielsen is still more insistent. For him, it is "evident that parts of the grammar of literary fiction work differently from non-fictional conversational discourse" and that attempts to model an understanding of literary fiction on features of non-fictional discourse "will inevitably neglect several of its most specific features," (217–218) including those that apply to pronouns.

Others are more circumspect about the impossible nature of some of their examples. Despite performing what most theorists of the unnatural would call a superb unnatural analysis of an indisputably unnatural text, Alison Gibbons does not seem to feel the need to draw on the resources

of unnatural narratology. To be sure, it is not immediately clear that such an addition would contribute much to her analysis. For some of the others, it is not the case at all. I wonder if Catherine Emmott's impressive and powerful essay might be still richer if it were to confront more directly the unusual or impossible framing and framebreaking of Janice Galloway's story; such framebreaking typically weakens the mimetic effect and thus can inhibit empathetic identification with the characters. Marina Grishakova employs the real world studies of sociologists, psychologists, linguists, and phenomenologists to bring to bear on the various multi-teller and multi-voiced fictional narratives she discusses in her study; it is not clear, however, how useful many of these can be when applied to works that reject the real world norms that are studied by these researchers. Despite this, her accounts of unnatural authors like those of Samuel Beckett and Vladimir Nabokov remain highly perceptive and valuable.

Similarly, in Wales' insightful reading of *Hamlet*, one could pursue the unnatural aspects further. If one were to look specifically for unnatural speeches, one might go first to Hamlet's instructions to the visiting actors at the beginning of Act Three, Scene Two. When he tells them how to speak, is he not giving them Shakespeare's own instructions? Since the Renaissance theatre did not have directors, the playwright would typically advise the actors how to speak their lines and make their gestures. Might Shakespeare the author be re-inscribing (or even partially parodying) Shakespeare the director in the words spoken by an actor to, among others, Shakespeare the player: "Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue"? One can even go further: is there an intertextual (or intertheatrical joke) contained in Polonius' claim that "I did enact Julius Caesar: I was killed I' the Capitol; Brutus killed me." The play of Shakespeare's performed in the Globe just prior to *Hamlet* seems to have been *Julius Caesar*; is the actor playing Polonius alluding to his recent work in the same theatrical space? Or, since the actor playing Hamlet (Richard Burbage, no doubt) would most likely have played the role of Julius Caesar as well, is there a comic inversion at work: is the actor playing Polonius 'borrowing' the *I* of the actor he is speaking to? In any event, Brutus kills Caesar, as Polonius notes, just as Hamlet will kill Polonius, as the prior stabbing is repeated by the latter one.

One might press still further: since there are forty-two roles in the play but Shakespeare's troop had as few as ten adult actors (along with four boys), many roles had to be doubled up. Stephen Booth, in his essay on doubling in Shakespeare (1979), shows how creative and ironic this might be. A key question then would be who else would be played by the actor playing the ghost? Whoever it would be would produce a fascinating lamination (to use Grishakova's expressive term) of *I*s. What if the actor playing the ghost also plays Claudius? (Then it might be much more understandable that Hamlet delays in killing him.) Such an arrangement would bring a number of piquancies to the production, not least when Claudius tells Hamlet not to mourn excessively over the death of his father: if both are portrayed by the same man, then death at the Globe may not seem so bad. The possibilities of interconnected unnatural subject positions are vast, and Shakespeare is not one to let many of them slip past.

The effects of the difference in reception between fictional and nonfictional narratives might be most prominent in the essay by Helen de Hoop and Kim Schreurs, 'On the Interpretive Effects of Double Perspectives in Genetive Constructions'. This essay importantly discloses the great value of empirical studies of reception. So often literary scholars state, "The reader clearly feels…" or "the reader is obviously expected to discern…" or similar such statements; this kind of study can show exactly how readers do in fact process narratives, and is thus a valuable contribution to reader response studies, even though—or especially because—it produces unanticipated results. These results in turn go on to beg still deeper questions, both ideological and philosophical/theoretical. The authors express their surprise that the version of the story focalised through the woman did not confirm their hypotheses of increased identification with the woman, especially "given the fact that the man eventually kills his wife in the story" (127). On the one hand, this finding seems to beg for an additional study, in which the gender roles of the protagonists are reversed, to see whether and how much more harshly women are judged for the same actions that men perform. On the other hand, we must wonder how much of the effect produced is due to the fact that readers know they are processing a work of fiction. I am sure that readers are much more tolerant of the apparent demands of poetic justice when they know the work

they are reading is not a factual account. No one ever protests when, at the end of the story of Hänsel and Gretel, the old woman, screaming, is burned alive in her oven. In a nonfictional version of the study's story, questions about moral culpability and possible criminal prosecution could be addressed. The difference of fiction, which unnatural narrative theory foregrounds, is extremely prominent in any case involving narrative ethics, though often it is little examined or utilized in such analyses.

Looking over these essays as a whole, one can discern at least one pattern that may in turn invite additional critical speculation. Jan Alber notes the abandonment of the third-person plural at the end of Lawrence's story, 'Things'; Monika Fludernik discusses the controversial shift from one *we* to a different, partially opposed *we* in the last chapter of Otsuka's *The Buddha in the Attic*; and Joshua Parker expertly discloses the function of "islands" of *you* narration at the beginnings and endings of novels. In a recent article, I briefly pointed to the dramatic effect that a shift in pronominal perspective can produce, such as the sudden shift from *we*-narration to third-person narration at the end of Tara Shea Nesbit's *The Wives of Los Alamos* and the abrupt emergence of an *I* narrator in the final sentences of both Conrad's *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* and Maxine Swann's *Flower Children* (Richardson 2015). So many similar transformations of unusual narrating voices at the same point in a narrative beg for further examination.

In his discussion of "balance" as a rule of narrative configuration, Peter Rabinowitz has noted that as "readers expect the initial point of view to return at the end of the text (as in a musical ABA structure), authors can fulfil that expectation to create a sense of closure" (1998 [1987]: 126). Rupture may be an equally important signal, such as an abrupt break with the particular point of view or mode of narration, and it will be especially effective in texts with unusual kinds of narrators, particularly if this precipitates an ontological disturbance in the world of the text. We find this last kind of situation occurring at the end of Ian McEwan's *Atonement*, as a first-person speaker claims to have written what had seemed to be a third-person omniscient text. It is a particularly mean irony that Virginia Woolf, whose rejection of conventional plotting McEwan castigates throughout the novel, is in fact one of the first authors to use what I have called this "pseudo-third person" stance in 1922

(Richardson 2006: 10–13). Well into *Jacob's Room*, the narrator abruptly admits that she is not omniscient or outside of the narrative world previously depicted in standard third-person fashion; she is instead one human being trying to infer the thoughts of another: "This was in his face. Whether we know what was in his mind was another question" (n.d.: 94).

This sudden revelation of the identity of the narrator and her relation to the fictional world also appears Edith Wharton's novella, 'New Year's Day' (1924). The same kind of narratorial twist, famously employed by Camus at the end of *La Peste* (1947) as well as by Robbe-Grillet at the end of *Dans le labyrinthe* (1959), is playfully thematised at the end of Iris Murdoch's *The Philosopher's Pupil* (1983). We also find this move in non-fiction, as Vladimir Nabokov concludes his memoir, *Speak, Memory* with a *you*-discourse directed to his wife, Vera. Joshua Parker does a signal service in assembling the many shifts in address pronouns that appear at the end of a wide variety of narratives; we would do well to consider them as techniques and indicators of closure and at times even components of the story, even as they seem to metaphorically trace out a pronominal plot themselves. These acts then are not mere stylistic changes but integral components of the larger narrative progression. As Grishakova states, they are "indicative of the constitutive nature of pronouns in narrative dynamics and the reader's involvement in the ongoing process of narrative construction" (197). It is clear that the roles of pronouns in narration and in literature more broadly are extremely significant and their use continues to develop in creative ways. The essays in this volume promise to drive narrative theory and critical analysis forward in a number of important directions.

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