1 Theorising the 'You Effects'

1.1 A General Trend across Genres?

1.1.1 The Personalising Game in Marketing

One of the most obvious effects of the pervasive use of the second-person pronoun 'you' across discursive genres has been to produce an artificial form of intersubjectivity. Of course, 'you' in advertising is by no means new. We need only to recall the McDonald's ads from the 1970s. You may remember the jaunty melody of the 'Grab a bucket and mop' TV commercial in 1971. It ended on 'You deserve a break today, so get up and get away to McDonald's'. There are two striking points in this line: the use of the second-person pronoun and the two imperative forms that prompt the viewer and potential customer to take action. The joyful atmosphere of dancing employees, as they scrub down and mop up ('There's nothing so clean as my burger machine'), changes what is in fact an imperative call to action into a merry invitation. The directness of the MacDonald's ad, which appears to have captured the force of the 'you' effects as described by today's marketing and advertising strategists, seems almost avant-gardist!

The change in emphasis from the advertiser to the reader/viewer seems part of a change in perspective, as captured in Tom Trush's book, *The 'You' Effect. How to Transform Ego-Based Marketing into Captivating Messages That Create Customers* (2012). The book, which shows how decisive the use of the second-person pronoun can be, was written to help business owners and entrepreneurs develop the most efficient and attention-grabbing marketing materials. A study carried out by the Department of Psychology at Yale University even concludes that the second-person pronoun is the most 'persuasive' word (Trush, 2012: 2). As potential clients (called prospects) are daily inundated with thousands of messages, an entrepreneur who contents herself with showcasing her brand and product in an ego-centred approach is sure of losing the capacity to attract people's attention. Trush explains, 'Many business owners and entrepreneurs continue force-feeding promotional messages as if their product or service is the only game in town. They push pitch after

pitch with little concern for people's fading attention spans' (Trush, 2012: 21–2).

A good marketing strategy for Trush consists of switching from 'I' / 'we' to 'you', shifting viewpoints from what the company wants to say about itself to what the prospect wants to hear. He continues:

> You see, your prospects are only concerned about themselves. When your content is filled with repeated uses of the words 'we,' 'our' or your company name, you make your marketing message all about you.
>
> This is like being that guy at a party who only talks about himself, laughs at his own jokes and always has a story that tops whatever anyone else says. (Trush, 2012: 2)

The use of 'you' establishes a personal relationship between human beings; as a result, selling sounds like an intimate conversation: 'The easiest way to incorporate your prospects into your marketing message is to create content that reads more like a conversation and less like a corporate essay. When you use the words "you", "your" and "you're", you tell prospects your content is written specifically for them' (Trush, 2012: 2).

More specifically, what 'you' enables the businessperson to do is to enter the prospects' minds, to understand their wishes and expectations and to translate these into a tagline that will be the direct answer to the prospects' needs. Trush quotes this instance of the switch from an ego-based to an addressee-oriented perspective that tells the prospect how she will benefit from the product:

> Recently I was working on a piece and the original headline was 'The new standard in high performance storage.' We changed it to read, 'The guaranteed easiest way to double your storage abilities, boost efficiency and slash your operating costs.' So, we're taking it to the next level. We're giving people an end result with that storage device. (Trush, 2012: 150)

The recourse to 'you', therefore, does not reflect an ideological evolution in marketing. It merely offers a mirror image of an 'I' perspective. It amounts to a mere reversal of what remains an ego-centred, albeit concealed, approach that still needs prospects to do what business owners want: buy their products. This simple strategic reversal can be observed in the evolution of the L'Oréal slogan 'Because you're worth it!' that has used different personal pronouns across time. The famous slogan worked wonders when it appeared. The brand was looking for a slogan for its hair dye (a more expensive product than the American competitor, Clairol's Nice'n Easy). In order to justify the extra ten-cent cost, a twenty-three-year-old copywriter, by the name of Ilon Specht, came up with 'Because I'm worth it'. This slogan went on to make L'Oréal the leader in hair dyes in the 1980s. Interestingly, the deictic shift from 'I' to 'you' occurred at the beginning of the twenty-first century when the slogan became 'Because you're worth it'. In using a you-first strategy, not only

does the L'Oréal ad make the addressee believe she is worth as much as the spectacular specimen of womanhood who is addressing her, but it takes away the potential ego-centrism of the addressor, thus democratising beauty, so to speak. For Tungate (2011), when the first actress (Cybill Shepherd) uttered the slogan, it suited the feminist demands of the time, promoting equality and self-fulfilment for women. He adds, 'And it endured – at least until 2004. By then, the feminist message had been diluted and the line seemed arrogant and narcissistic, especially on the lips of an actress earning millions of dollars in endorsement fees' (Tungate, 2011: 70). Since 2009, the direct address of 'Because you're worth it' has been replaced by a more inclusive variant ('Because we're worth it'). According to Tungate (2011: 70), this was designed to strengthen 'the connection between consumers and the brand'. This evolution towards a collective 'we-ness' seems to go one step further by transcending the I-you dyad via a more inclusive 'we' (you and I) pronoun, creating a fictitious community of spirit through the product (or the brand).

1.1.2 The Expansion of 'You'-Oriented Strategies across Genres

The dissimulation of ego-centred marketing finds an echo in the anthropomorphising strategy used in certain ads or notices that use animated objects in the anticipation that humans can identify with them. Consumers are asked to relate to the speaking 'I' in the usual conversational mode. This is part of what Katie Wales (2013, 2015) calls the 'Alice in Wonderland' principle, as Lewis Carroll's 'Eat me' or 'Drink me' signs down the rabbit hole appear as literary precursors to today's marketing tricks. Although it is hard to situate the rise of the phenomenon precisely, Wales sees it as emerging in the 1990s, as more and more ads came to adopt a speaking voice that directly addressed the consumer. From a brief 'Try me' to more developed forms such as 'Buy me now before you lose me forever' or 'Once you've opened me, pop me in the fridge and drink me within 4 days', these ads adopt the perspective of the object with the aim of achieving a more personal involvement of the consumer. This transfer from an 'it-you' to an 'I-you' relationship through prosopopoeia exploits the spontaneous tendency in human beings to give prominence to 'speakers' rather than 'inanimate entities' according to what linguists call the Animacy Hierarchy (Croft 2003, Corbett 2012; see Gardelle and Sorlin 2018 for an overview). Objects become conversational partners that attract our attention through the attribution of a human voice. It is by focusing the attention of the consumer on the animated product that the agents (i.e. the sellers) are enabled to conceal themselves behind the animation of the puppet object. In *Persons and Things*, Johnson (2010: 19) sees this animation of commodities as a form of 'fetishism' used to manipulate the consumer, and she denounces the phony conversation that we are supposedly having with a conversing object:

a speaking thing can sell itself; if the purchaser responds to the speech of the object, he or she feels uninfluenced by human manipulation and therefore not duped. We are supposed not to notice how absurd it is to be addressed by the Maalox Max bottle, or Mr. Clean, or Mrs. Butterworth, or the Quaker Oats man, or Aunt Jemima, or the Elidel man, or the Aflac duck.... It is as though the relation between buyer and commodity were the entrance to a relationship—*res ipsa loquitur*.

The aim of such a strategy is to seem less face-threatening in its approach; the indirectness and liveliness of the I-mouthpiece supposedly sugar coat a more direct and impersonal appeal. Wales (2015: 101) gives the example of 'I'm a shopping basket, please use me' as compared to the more impersonal, potentially patronising 'This is a shopping basket, please use it'. The same can be said of what she calls 'eco-speak', which can be found on recycling bins ('Please recycle me'), as a way of drumming up empathy with the speaking object, thus standing a better chance to induce an environmentally friendly responsible behaviour.

Wales (2015: 97–8) interprets this new trend towards prosopopoeia as part of the 'imperative speech act of consumerism' which consumers have grown accustomed to. In the new version, 'Buy me', though still using the same imperative speech act, sounds less imperative than 'Buy this product'. This new way of reaching out to the consumer seems to have spread to other fields and media. In France, the informality of advertising and marketing discourse can now be detected even in news broadcasts where, for example, the addressee-oriented perspective of 'votre 13h' ('your midday news') is preferred to the more impersonal 'the midday news'. This trend has been extended to the very presentation of the news topics. On France's Channel 2, for instance, the second-person pronoun pops up across the screen in news titles such as 'votre santé' (your health) or 'vos impôts' (your taxes). This pretends to construe the addressee as more than an impersonal viewer. In the fiercely competitive field of news broadcasts, with the arrival of 24-hour news channels, this modernisation of news broadcasting is part and parcel of the drive to attract viewers' attention and consequently keep audience ratings high. However, the risk for the producer is that, as the viewer becomes more accustomed to it, this second-person strategy may very well lose the involvement effect desired. The added risk for the viewers is that we become so used to the technique we no longer realise just how manipulatively directive the technique can be.[1]

[1] Another example of this are the imperative news feeds of the type 'Watch the tennis game now live on...', 'Listen to President Macron's response to the health crisis' and so on that constantly bombard our mobile phones. There appears to be no perception on the part of the smartphone user of how directive these news feeds are. After our attention (and action) has been skilfully directed towards one event rather than another, we passively receive them as news and/or entertainment on offer. While for smartphones this imperative form may be chosen for its

Twitter also seems to have adopted the more familiar and informal ways of connecting with readers used in marketing discourse. Moncomble (2017), for instance, shows that compared to traditional headlines, the use of 'you' is more frequent in the Twitter promotion of the article than in the actual article on the newspaper website:

Hoverboard ban: What are the penalties for riding on the pavement? What will happen if I use an outlawed Segway? (The Independent, 12 October 2015)

What could happen if you use an outlawed Segway (@Independent on Twitter, 12 October 2015)

Note the use of the more generic first-person pronoun 'I' meaning 'anyone' rather than the second-person 'you' in the non-Twitter headline of the article. The Twitter version, on the other hand, addresses the reader more directly with the hope of making her feel like clicking on the tweet link to access the newspaper article webpage. As in all good marketing strategies, the 'you' option adopted by the social network seems to show concern for the reader herself and the way the topic can relate more personally to her. The conversational tone also reflects the interactive nature of the social network medium.

What the examples above have emphasised is that personal pronouns are instrumental in building perspectives and in attributing positions to both speaker and addressee. To feel addressed by a product that says, 'Buy me' is to have adopted the perspective of an 'I' speaker addressing a 'you'. The choice of personal pronouns can influence the way readers perceive the speaker's position and their own relation to it. As many linguists (Benveniste 1966, Lyons 1977, Jarvella and Klein 1982, Levinson 1983, Bühler 1990, Fillmore 1997) have shown, pronouns belong to the category of 'person deixis': in using a pronoun, an addressor orientates what she says towards her own temporal and locational situation of enunciation. Interpreting person deixis thus requires 'knowing certain aspects of the communication act in which the utterances in question can play a role'. That is to say, it requires knowing 'the identity of the interlocutors in a communication situation' as well as the place and time from and at which the addressor speaks (Fillmore, 1997: 61). In the literature devoted to the topic, the speaker's position is referred to in spatial terms and the perceptual locus of the addressor is called a 'deictic centre' (Bühler 1990 [1934]). As demonstrated in Deictic Shift Theory (DST), processing deictic cues implies projecting oneself into the addressor's deictic centre to determine the personal, temporal and locational characteristics of the situation of utterance (Duchan et al. 1995).

conciseness, it cannot be denied that these suggestions of topics or entertainment are directives at heart.

Rather than speaking of 'roles' in the communicative events, I prefer the term 'positioning' (used by Davies and Harre 1990 and O'Connor, 1994: 53) for its more dynamic rendering of meaning negotiation and position processing. As O'Connor (1994: 53) indicates, the process of positioning identifies 'the act of stance taken or assigned, explicitly or implicitly in the participation framework of discourse management'.

Lecercle's (2019: 13–37) analysis of Field Marshal Kitchener's 1914 slogan 'Your Country Needs YOU' compellingly illustrates this positioning of speaker and hearer. Designed after the huge losses of the British Army against the Germans, when the British government sorely needed volunteers, the poster features the Minister of War, a military hero, pointing a finger at the viewer. Through the quasi-physical contact established by this gesture, the passer-by, upon seeing the poster, is ascribed a position – that of the soldier he is asked to become. For Lecercle, drawing on Althusser's definition of ideology as 'what *interpellates* individuals into subjects' (Alhtusser, 1976: 12), what takes place here is an interpellation that leads to the creation of two subjects (both addressor and addressee), while at the same time ascribing a specific place to them.[2]

In Althusser's terms (1976: 108), individuals become subjectified at the very moment they are 'subjected' (*assujettis*). The implied authoritative intonation of the imperative form in Kitchener's slogan, which in fact takes the form of an assertion, fulfils what Jakobson (1960) termed the conative function of language, as it aims to spark off a certain response in the addressee. Lecercle demonstrates how the refusal to comply with the call of the slogan would immediately identify you as a cowardly traitor to the cause. Interpellation seeks to make any 'counter-interpellation', that is any reply that would run counter to Kitchener's order word, impossible. Lecercle (2019: 35) points to the particular historical context of the slogan. Though today, an ad designed to enrol would-be soldiers would focus on the professionalism required rather than on the military patriotism of old, for Lecercle 'the interpellation technique' has remained intact.

Today's political slogans can hardly adopt the directness of Field Marshal Kitchener by assigning voters a place and a direction to follow. And history shows that the second-person pronoun has been used by very few American presidents.[3] Apart from Lincoln's 1860 'Vote yourself a farm' campaign

[2] I keep the French term, as most translators of Althusser have done, after trying to render it by 'hailing'. Lecercle (2019: 257) indicates that translators adopted the loan translation even though the English term, borrowed from French in the nineteenth century, strictly means parliamentary interpellation and does not include the 'Hey you!' interjection of the police officer as used by Althusser as an example of interpellation. In the 'Hey you!', the police officer *interpellates* the person hailed *into a subject* at the very moment she responds by turning round.

[3] For a complete list, see www.presidentsusa.net/campaignslogans.html

slogan, it was Lyndon B. Johnson who, in 1964, used the direct address in his campaign slogan to urge American citizens to vote, 'The stakes are too high for you to stay at home'. He was referring to the threatened use of nuclear weapons by his opponent, Barry Goldwater. An interesting mixed mode of third-person reference with a second-person perspective was used by Barry Goldwater himself, whose team came up with an insidious message designed to appeal to the deep feelings of citizens, in response to media criticism about Goldwater's extremist views, 'In your heart you know he's right'. The direct address to the audience originates from a deictic centre that is not the candidate himself but some impersonal speaking voice that comes to his defence. The distance established with the candidate through the personal pronoun ('he') makes it possible for him to protect himself by having someone else speak for him on his behalf to the voters.[4] In political slogans there are therefore several ways of implicating the voters and bringing them to identify 'the stance taken and assigned, explicitly or implicitly' (O'Connor 1994).

It seems, however, that in recent political slogans, personal pronouns have once again come to play a role. We only need to think back to Barack Obama's inclusive 2008 slogan ('Yes, We Can') that found an echo in 2014 in Pablo Iglesias Turrión's Spanish 'Podemos' party (meaning 'we can'). It is interesting to note that the parties that have lost in major elections have used adjectives in their slogans. In the case of Hillary Clinton's 'Stronger Together' in the 2016 presidential election or 'Stronger, Safer, Better off' used by David Cameron as the Remain slogan for the referendum on Europe, this more indirect, soft-play approach has proved unsuccessful. By contrast, the 'winning' slogans have relied on a more direct, interpersonal, interactive mode: 'Make America Great Again' (US), 'Take Back Control' (UK). Although Donald Trump seems to have been unaware of the filiation, his 'Make America Great Again' is virtually the same slogan as Ronald Reagan's 1980 'Let's Make America Great Again'.[5] Digging into the art of political storytelling, Sergeant (2020: 135) comes to the same conclusion on the inclusive power of the imperative forms – in these winning slogans they are 'urging participation' and involvement from the electorate.

This brief detour through the genre of the political campaign slogan shows that personal pronouns (and their combination) are instrumental in

[4] As Seargeant (2020: 132–3) recalls, the slogan did not fare well in the end as '[a]lmost immediately this was lampooned by his critics with alternative versions such as "In your guts, you know he's nuts" and "In your heart, he's too far right"'.

[5] However, the campaigning Trump hesitated between the exhortative request for joint action in 'let's make America great again / we will make America great again', and repeatedly used a more addressee-oriented imperative form that left it up to the people to make the right choice by voting for him ('Make America Great Again'), where he adopts the 'you' effect recommended by marketing strategists.

orchestrating focalisation and fostering projection into the different positions they set up. Another discourse that is of special interest to us in this book is literary discourse. The defamiliarising effect that accompanies the reading of a narrative written entirely or mostly in the second person may be part of the reason novelists opt for this unusual pronoun: it tends to involve readers in unprecedented ways. The 'you' pronoun used in fictional texts has been shown in psycholinguistic research to be a better attractor than other pronouns because the personalisation it implies appears to have an impact on depth of processing and thus on memory (Sanford and Emmott, 2012: 255). One probable explanation for this is that in the 'you narrative', the information seems to be presented as more relevant to the self/reader and is thus more likely to make it more interesting to her (Sanford and Emmott, 2012: 177).

As the next chapters will demonstrate, the 'you' effect, as exploited in marketing strategy, finds a certain echo when it is used in literary discourse – but only a certain echo. In the same way as 'you' engages potential clients in active interaction when it invites them to continue reading through a 'You can click here' link, or a 'I want to learn more',[6] 'you' engages the literary reader in unexpected ways when it is used in a narrative. But it is the 'polysemy' (Wales 1996) of the pronoun that will prove to be so exciting, and so innovative. Indeed, what 'you' indexes fluctuates in a way that will become clear further down, when I propose a theoretical model of potential references for 'you'. Not only has the emergence of second-person narratives changed the way readers relate to the pronoun – we have always been more accustomed to 'I' or 'he/she' – it has incited narratologists to modify traditional narratological models that could not accommodate this new form. There is undoubtedly an 'oddity' in 'you' narratives, and that is what we are going to explore now.

1.1.3 How Odd Are 'You Narratives'?

Traditional narratological theories have proved robust for the study of the traditional categories of fiction. Thus, Simpson (1993: 51) adopts the grammatical division of first- and third-person narratives when he categorises first-person novels as Category A and third-person novels as Category B.

In a footnote, the author concedes that this categorisation excludes odd pronominal narratives ('we', 'you' or 'they' narratives), inviting the reader to decide whether a specific Category C should be established for them.

[6] It has been proved that inviting potential clients to continue their reading through incentives like, 'You can click here' or 'I want to learn more' has an impact on their memory. They remember the information four days later better if they have clicked into it through those links (see Guéguen 2014, 2016).

However, since the publication of Simpson's book, there has been a burgeoning of 'odd' pronominal narratives, and the question of whether 'you narratives' should be cast in a category of their own has come to the forefront.[7]

The problem with a clear distinction along pronominal lines is that it prevents us from seeing the kinship between pronouns highlighted by linguists and narratologists. For Genette (1972: 252), there is always an implicit presence of an 'I' enunciator behind a third-person narrative. Conversely, first-person narratives are about an 'I' that can be construed as a third person, that is someone about whom something is said (Joly, 1990: 21). Joly's assumptions are based on Guillaume (1987: 183). Going against the grain of those wanting to remove the third person from the personal pronoun paradigm, Guillaume contends that *la troisième personne est partout* (the third person is everywhere). Likewise, the third person can also be included in the second person with the idea that 'you' is construed both as the person who is talked *to* and the person who is talked *about* (see Gardelle and Sorlin, 2015: 4).

This proximity of the third-person pronoun to the other pronouns (and vice versa) leaves the question open as to whether we need to construct a Category C to deal with second-person novels. Given the proximity just mentioned, would it make more sense to see 'you narratives' in which the protagonist is both narrator and narratee – that is self-addressed narratives – as part of Category A? In such cases, 'you' is in fact a disguised 'I'. Likewise, would it make sense to subsume 'you narratives' in which the 'you' protagonist is a character referred to as 'you' but is not the direct addressee as part of Category B? If the protagonist is not talked *to* but talked *about*, then the third person could have been chosen instead. The problem with this dual categorisation is that it does not take into account a simple fact: If 'I' most of the time can only refer to the person who says 'I', and if the reference of a third-person form can most of the time be easily retrieved, the flexible, diverse and sometimes ambiguous reference of 'you' renders any simple classification illusory, as has been underlined by many a 'you narrative' specialist (Morrissette 1965, Hopkins and Perkins 1981, Prince 1985, 1987, Margolin 1986, Hantzis 1988, Richardson 1991, 2006, Kacandes 1993, Herman 1994, 2002, Bell and Ensslin 2011, Macrae 2012, 2016, 2018, Iliopoulou 2019). In fact, as this book will show in detail, the second-person pronoun tends to hesitate between the first and third person in the pronominal paradigm. Richardson (2006: 22) points out the 'irreducible oscillation between first and third person narration that is typical of second person texts' as the dubious 'you' pronoun 'constantly

[7] Whether 'you narratives' should be ranked with 'we' and 'they' narratives is a question for another book. See Fludernik (2011), who has worked extensively on 'we narratives' and for a stock list of such 'we' novels.

threaten[s] to merge . . . with another grammatical person' (Richardson, 2006: 20–1). DelConte (2003: 204) speaks of an 'overlap of second-person with either first- or third-person because second-person is also either first- or third-person'.

Taking Michel Butor's *La Modification* (1957) as the forerunner of the flourishing of 'you narratives', Fludernik (1993, 1994a) was the first to clearly mark the ground by proposing an inventory of such narratives, particularly from the 1970s onwards but including earlier instances in the two previous decades (see Fludernik 2011 for an updated analysis and stock list). More importantly, she offered a new model of narrative forms giving centre stage to 'you'. Traditional telling/showing narratological typologies – such as Stanzel's dichotomy between the narrating self and the experiencing self, or Genette's categories of homodiegetic and heterodiegetic – were seen to be inadequate when it came to the study of 'you narratives'. Fludernik saw the need to switch from the telling/showing perspective to one that was clearly oriented towards the narratee. She could thereby highlight the communicative dimension of the circuit between a narrator and the one who is at the 'receiving or interactive end of that communicative frame' (1994b: 446):

> My solution to this conundrum was to propose a synthesis of the Stanzelian and Genettean typologies, which transfers the concepts of narrating and experiencing self to the addressee. It thereby creates the distinction between an addressee-*you* and an experiencing-*you*, with the same 'identity of realms of existence' characteristic operating between them as is familiar from Stanzel's first-person narrative in relation to narrating and experiencing self. At the same time, I extended Genette's concepts of homo-/heterodiegesis to a distinction between narratives with, or without, a communicative level, inventing the terms homocommunicative and heterocommunicative fiction. In homocommunicative fiction, the narrator and/or narratee are also protagonists on the level of the story, whereas in heterocommunicative fiction neither of them has an existence on the story level – they only exist on the extradiegetic level of narrator–narratee communication. (Fludernik, 2011: 106)

Fludernik's model (Figure 1.1) still allows for the distinction between the story world and the narration world (i.e. the extradiegetic level), but it takes into account the way both narrators/narratees on the narration level can also function as protagonists in the story.

She goes on to map six different potential configurations in 'you narratives'. The first, minimal configuration features 'you' as sole reflector on the story level only. This is the only necessary element for it to be a 'you narrative'. The most encompassing configuration (Category F) is when 'I' and 'you' are present on both levels: a homodiegetic narrator (participating on both levels) communicates with a 'homoconative' narratee also present on both levels. In other words, the first-person narrator addresses 'you' on the narration level and tells about their past interactions on the story level (the addressee often only