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**The second-person pronoun across genres**  
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## **1. Introduction: genre and situation of address**

Taking the genre of the headline as case study, Frow (2005: 9) distinguishes six prominent defining generic features. A genre is for him marked by:

- distinctive “formal features”, that is the lexical specifics that pertain to it as well as the overall visual and syntactic structure
- a “thematic structure” based on recognizable “topics or topoi”
- a “situation of address”
- a “structure of implication” whereby a certain “complicity” with the reader is generated, based on shared “background knowledges”
- a “rhetorical function” as the Text is meant to generate pragmatic effects
- a specific “frame” or “physical setting” that makes one genre apart from another.

Genre is not here merely defined as a fixed set of macro-structural textual conventions (Biber & Conrad, 2009) or context-dependent norms (Maingueneau, 2005) creating a certain horizon of expectations facilitating evaluative appreciation (Jauss, 1978). Frow’s rhetorical approach to genres highlights the situation of address they create and the specific pragmatic effects they aim at eliciting.<sup>1</sup> The interpersonal relation created in and by genres can be expressed in more or less explicit terms though. The presence of the second person pronoun is obviously a key element in making the inherent “situation of address” visible in all genres.<sup>2</sup>

An extract from the *Financial Times* will show what could be an instance of “invisible” intersubjectivity. In the extract below, the lexicon pertains to business and economics; the text is also embedded with quotations from experts of financial policy, aiming at satisfying the need of a faithful, paying readership looking for specific economic knowledge and/or tips.

Yesterday’s order from the Commodity Futures Trading Commission is the third relating to attempted manipulation of Isdafix, a key benchmark, following penalties for Citigroup (\$250m) and Barclays (\$115m) in May.

It drags Goldman into a global rate-rigging probe that began with Libor and Euribor, two interbank lending rates, and moved on to foreign exchange. The CFTC has wrung fines of more than \$5.2bn in 18 actions against a host of Wall Street banks. The CFTC said Goldman’s unlawful conduct involved multiple traders, including the head of its interest-rate products trading group in the US.

“Penalties for manipulation should fall the responsible Goldman perpetrators, not shareholders,” said Bart Naylor, financial policy advocate at Public Citizen, a lobby group.

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<sup>1</sup> This perspective thus links Authors/Readers/Texts and Contexts where previous conceptions of genres have tended to lay emphasis on one of these aspects only (see Sorlin 2015).

<sup>2</sup> De Cock (2016: 363) also shows that “some genres rely more heavily on hearer attention than others”, singling out the genre of “academic writing” as a “neutral” genre in terms of intersubjectivity. Yet in some corpus data and in some countries, she adds, even this supposedly “objective” genre can reveal “signs of authorial presence” that elicits “reader involvement” (De Cock, 2016: 372).

“Goldman pulled into rate-rigging storm with \$120m fine over vital benchmark”, *Financial Times*, 22 December 2016, p. 1.

Background knowledge in the field is indeed required in the “structure of implication” that underpins the FT, the main pragmatic effect being to inform and keep the reader up to date on major (mainly) financial affairs or economic tendencies. As all texts, the FT is addressed but its “situation of address” remains implicit as the intersubjective relation between writer and reader has no place in a newspaper designed to deliver “objective” facts.<sup>3</sup> The reader’s implied “presence” is never acknowledged, let alone addressed with the second-person pronoun.

By contrast, the genres referred to in this article will feature the “situation of address” prominently while being based on a similar production and reception participation framework as the FT example in that they rest on a communicative situation that cannot be a dialogical one – the genres considered here indeed make a potential reciprocity of positions in the addresser/addressee dyad impossible. The article will first emphasize what seems like a recent growth in the use of the second-person pronoun across genres, which tends to make the “situation of address” more visible than ever.<sup>4</sup> Indeed advertising, marketing, political slogans, tweets and literature seem to have opted for the “you” address to attract receptors’ attention to a higher degree than before, creating a more personal relationship with the addressee, predicated as it is on a deictic shift of perspective and focalisation. In so doing, it revitalizes genres that have so far not featured such directness. Lastly it points out the pragmatic strength of the second-person pronoun in the diverse genres as well as the potential risk-taking of such an involving and transgressive strategy.

## 2. A “you” trend?

The second-person pronoun has been present in advertising for a long time – the McDonald brand for instance has been using it for several decades as in *You deserve a break today* dating back from the 70s. But it lately seems to have become more general practice, thereby complying with marketing strategists’ recommending to place the interlocutor at the centre of marketing communication (see Trush, 2012 for instance). Another striking fact about ads or more generally notices that are given for people to read in and out of shops is the anthropomorphizing of inanimate objects that are given a voice, thus creating a situation of interlocution with the reader, as in “try me” or “use me”. This is a relatively recent phenomenon that has risen since the 1990s and which pertains to what Katie Wales (2013, 2015) calls the “Alice in Wonderland Principle” as it seems to have taken its inspiration from Lewis Carroll’s signs down the rabbit hole.<sup>5</sup> The use of prosopopoeia sets up a mock intersubjective relation bringing the reader to adopt the perspective of the object and draw consequences for herself, as in “buy me now before you lose me forever” (Wales, 2015: 100).

The pseudo-intersubjective effect induced by the use of the second person pronoun seems to have reached broadcasting news participating framework. Journalists on French television (France 2 for instance) presents mid-day news broadcast as *Votre*

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<sup>3</sup> The Letters and Comment section excluded.

<sup>4</sup> This qualitative observation will need to be backed up by further quantitative research.

<sup>5</sup> Wales indicates that the phenomenon, although more and more “coming into the consciousness of the ordinary public”, is difficult to trace’ (Wales, 2015: 102-103).

13h, announcing topics preceded by the second-person pronoun (*Votre santé, Votre énergie*), highlighting the new addressee-oriented news presentation. Personal pronouns also appear to have entered other genres like that of the political slogan. Barack Obama's 2008 first person plural campaign slogan "yes, we can" found an echo in Pablo Iglesias Turrión's Spanish "Podemos" party (meaning "we can") in 2014. Recent British and American slogans have carried on the trend of pulling addressees into the political debate. The 2016 LEAVE campaign slogan for the United Kingdom European Union membership referendum (*Let's take back control*) was also used in a more direct, you-oriented way: "Vote Leave – Take (Back) Control", placing in the people's hands the responsibility for change. On the same model, Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign slogan "Make America Great Again" hinges on the same ambiguity between the elliptical "[we are going to] make America great again" and an implicit you-address through the imperative form inviting his voters to "make America great again" by voting for him. The use of active verbs (take/make) combined with a potential you address must be contrasted with David Cameron's more clearly we-oriented Remain slogan ("stronger, safer and better off") as well as Hilary Clinton's slogan choice based on a similar comparing adjective ("Stronger Together").<sup>6</sup>

"You" has also invaded tweets, thus directly addressing the viewer, as compared with more traditional newspaper headlines where the use of "you" has not been as frequent<sup>7</sup>. The pronoun is even sometimes used in the Tweeter version of the article and not in the actual title of the newspaper article it refers to, as Montcomble (2017) shows in this example:

12 wines your kitchen can't do without (@nytimes, 13 October 2015)

12 Everyday Bottles for Wine Lovers (*The New York Times*, 12 October 2015)

This new medium has fostered a higher use of the second-person pronoun with the hope of bringing the tweet reader to want to read more information on the subject and click on it to access the newspaper article webpage.

Lastly, literature also took its "you turn" in famous novels written in the second person from the 1970s onwards with earlier instances in the two previous decades (see Fludernik, 1993, 1994 for a precise stocklist). If one contends that all fiction is "addressed", this relatively recent trend foregrounds the situation of address in a more "insistent" way to use Fludernik's words: "Morphologically explicit address [...] seems to require the explication of the circumstances of a pretended speech act in much more insistent a fashion" (Fludernik, 1993: 223). Where first- and third-person narratives tend to leave unclear who the addressee might be, the presence of "you" compels the reader to reconstruct the "situation of address" that is explicitly stated. This marked communicative framework entails a change of perspective in the way "you narratives" can be read but also critically apprehended. As has been shown by theorists that have become interested in second-person fiction (Kacandes, 1990, 1993, Fludernik, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, Herman, 1994, DelConte, 2003, Richardson, 1991, 2006), traditional narratological models of analysis fail to register the specificity of the "genre". New models have been put forward highlighting the communicative dimensions of the situation of interlocution that can be quite complex in you narratives: Fludernik adopts

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<sup>6</sup> The more active strategy of the ambiguous you slogans can be regarded as part of a wider populist movement that aims at setting ordinary people against a corrupted political elite that has taken power away from them in a "we/you versus them" binary opposition.

<sup>7</sup> See Montcomble 2017 for a quantitative analysis.

“homo- and heterocommunicative” categories in lieu of Genette’s homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narratives.<sup>8</sup> Delconte (2003) opts for a similar reader-response oriented perspective, leaving out the notions of narrator, voice and point of view to give pride of place to the “axis of the narratee”, by focusing on who is listening rather than who is speaking or seeing.<sup>9</sup>

This more or less recent change of perspective induced by the use of “you” intends to achieve different pragmatic goals depending on the genres that resort to it (buy this, do that, vote for me, go on watching/reading for instance) but in all cases it aims at gaining the addressee’s trust or attention. The next part discusses this attention-grabbing effect and shows to what extent it can contribute to shaking genre boundaries.

### **3. Revitalizing genre expectations through defamiliarisation**

The “you address” tends to simulate a relationship with the addressee through the adoption of a (fake) conversational mode that is looked for in marketing. As Trush (2012: 20) indicates, “marketing involves initiating and developing relationships similar to the one you have with a spouse. The most important component in both interactions is trust”. The latter simile indicates the level of intimacy that is sought after through the second person, as what matters is to get inside the prospect’s head, find out what she is thinking, what her desires, fears, and beliefs are and provide a tagline that is a direct answer to them. Good marketing consists in changing the perspective from the product to be sold to what the client can profit from it and the second person pronoun is decisive in this construction. Facts are therefore relegated to the background in order to foreground the benefits to be derived from the product for the customer. This is the difference between “the lawnmower has a 21-inch cutting blade” (fact) and “You slice a wider cutting path so you slash your mowing time by as much as 51%” (benefit) in which the prospect gets an answer to what the product can do for her (Trush, 2012: 100), by explicitly situating her at the heart of the process (of mowing here). The second-person pronoun brings the sellers to not so much showcase their products, logos and mission statements – as it is the case in the traditional ego-oriented perspective – as to focus on the addressee’s supposed needs.<sup>10</sup> It is a means to trick the client into believing she is listened to and involved, while this strategy is a mere reversal of an ego-based strategy.

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<sup>8</sup> More broadly Fludernik’s typology takes into consideration the overlap between addressee and protagonist that cannot be easily resolved in the homo/heterodiegesis dichotomy, especially in cases where narrator and narratee share “both a presence of interlocution on the enunciatory plane and an existential past on the story plane”, which goes beyond Genette’s “metaleptic” possibility whereby an extradiegetic narrator transgresses the frontier discourse/story by addressing a character in a playful mode (Fludernik, 1993: 218). Fludernik’s continuum between homo and heterocommunicative narratives enables her to account for “you narratives” where the narratee is told her story to herself (through the second-person pronoun) by an heterodiegetic narrator for instance.

<sup>9</sup> Based on a “narrator, protagonist and narratee” triadic model, Delconte’s rhetorical approach brings to the fore the different functions that can be performed by the three components on diverse diegetic planes rather than their presence/absence in the same ontological world (as in Genette’s model) (Delconte, 2003: 210-211).

<sup>10</sup> Yale scholars in psychology have shown that “you” is the word shoppers react to the most strongly (it is at the top of a list of the 12 most persuasive words before money, save, new, results, health, easy, safety, love, discovery, proven and guarantee) (Trush, 2012: 2).

The second-person pronoun also seems to monitor addressees' attention in a more effective way<sup>11</sup> in tweets pretending that the reader is no longer a "disembodied abstraction" (Moncomble, 2017) but at the center of the message. The same would be said with ads or notices adopting the anthropocentric mode, producing a defamiliarising effect. Such notices as "bake me, I'm yours" creates a personal and vital relationship between the product and the reader that can be surprising to the reader on first encounters and thus draw her attention. It can also have the advantage of being at times more tactful in notices that aim at directing people's actions. Compare for instance the potentially face-threatening imperative demand (with an implicit you) in "step off the grass"<sup>12</sup> that seems to emanate from a disembodied official voice and the more situation-engaging explicit use of the pronoun in "your feet are killing me", forcing the reader to empathize with the grass that is granted feelings. The addressee is brought to construct a situation of enunciation in which the object is granted a (human) speaker status to which the addressee is to respond on equal terms. This polite way of directing her response is likely to secure cooperation in a more effective way. The second person is a key element here in an anthropomorphic strategy that intends to mock an intimate interaction through an inanimate object.

Advertising, marketing and messages carried across through prosopopoeia capitalize on the attention-grabbing "you" effect. This is also true of fiction using the second person, inviting the reader to take an active role in the events described. This more engaging potential of the second person pronoun as compared to the other two personal pronouns more traditionally used in fiction has been evidenced by psycholinguistic and cognitive research on text comprehension (Ruby and Decety, 2001, Brunyé et al, 2009, Ditman et al, 2010). The reader-centric perspective induced by the use of the second person pronoun dislodges the reader from an external observer's position to bring her to engage with the story in a more immediate way. For Brunyé et al (2009: 31), the best way to make a reader imagine herself in the character's shoes is to use the you address for it gives the reader the "palpable sense of 'being there'". Personal pronouns are indeed instrumental in the perspective that a reader is invited to take while reading. But this "pull-in" effect can even occur when "you" does not signal a direct address to the reader (see part 3). An extract from George Orwell's *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933) will give a sense of the extent to which the second person encourages engagement. The reader is called upon to share a poor person's perception and emotions through a switch to "you" at the end of the first paragraph of this excerpt:

This put an end to my plans of looking for work. I had now got to live at the rate of about six francs a day, and from the start it was too difficult to leave much thought for anything else. It was now that my experience of poverty began – for six francs a day, if not actual poverty, is on the fringe of it. Six francs is a shilling, and you can live on a shilling a day in Paris if you know how. But it is a complicated business.

It is altogether curious, your first contact with poverty. You have thought so much about poverty – it is the thing you have feared all your life, the thing you knew would happen sooner or later; and it is all so utterly and prosaically different. You thought it would be quite simple; it is extraordinary complicated. You thought it would be terrible; it is merely squalid and boring. It is the peculiar *lowness* of poverty that you discover first; the shifts that it puts you to, the complicated meanness, the crust-wiping. (Orwell, 1961: 16-17)

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<sup>11</sup> Internet hinges on this paradox highlighted by Guéguen (2016: 34): human interaction disappears behind the vast quantity of data flowing through the media, which is why as soon as the human reappears for instance through the "you" address, the pronoun tends to produce a remarkable effect.

<sup>12</sup> These examples are drawn from Wales (2015).

Although “you” does not refer to the reader (this is more of an ego-centric “you”<sup>13</sup>, see 4.1), it is likely to attract her attention. Psycholinguistic research has indeed shown that personalisation has an impact on depth of processing and thus on memory (Sanford & Emmott, 2012: 255). If “you” tends to capture attention, it might be because presenting the information as relevant to the “self”/reader is more likely to make it more interesting to her (Sanford & Emmott, 2012: 177).

Switching from “I” to “you”, Orwell both distances himself from his speaker’s role and appeals to the interlocutor using the “empathy-evoking effect” of you (de Hoop & Tarenskeen, 2016: 165). The second person pronoun invites the reader to mentally share the experiencer’s “mental space” by placing her within it (Kluge, 2012, Kluge, 2016: 501). If in prosopopoeia, the animated object invites the addressee to share “its” mental space through direct address, the second person in Orwell’s text places the addressee herself in “the animated role of the mental space’s protagonist” (Kluge, 2016: 507). Lastly, the deictic shift has generic incidences, the second person in Orwell’s book triggers a distancing effect from the autobiographical “I” mode that clouds the book’s generic categorisation. The use of “you” gives the work a more “journalistic” than autobiographical outlook, placing the account of life in poverty in two big cities in the 1930s beyond any subjective and personal judgment, and thus contributing to the generic indeterminacy.

The second person pronoun has been so far approached as if its reference was stable across genres and discourses, which, as the next section underlines, is far from being the case.

## 4. A powerful and tricky device

### 4.1 The pragmatic specificity of the “you” pronoun

Orwell’s excerpt has shown that the reference of the pronoun goes beyond clear direct address to the reader. Kluge’s (2016: 504) continuum of possible reference best illustrates the extent of the pronoun’s referential ambiguity:

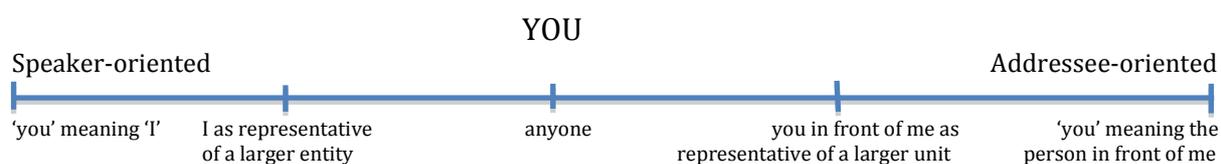


Fig.4.1.1 From Kluge (2016: 504)’s continuum of reference of the 2sg

Although it concerns face-to-face interaction, the continuum can be a starting point for a transposition to “page-to-face interactions” so to speak in written texts. The first category on the left is a case of deictic transfer from “I” to “you” behind which somebody

<sup>13</sup> For Wales there is an inherent subjectivity to the pronoun even in its generic uses (Wales: 1996, 78).

(or a fictional character/narrator) can “hide” for diverse reasons.<sup>14</sup> Orwell’s “you” can be said to occupy the left-hand side of the continuum as he describes personal experience that could be extended to any poor person in the same condition (this is “I as representative of a larger unit” in Kluge’s terms). The 4<sup>th</sup> type, in between the prototypical generic use (close to “one”) and the prototypical “you” as a term of address, refers to addressees that fit the categorisation of a larger unit beyond one specific individual in front of the speaker.<sup>15</sup> In the following excerpt, “you” reaches out to the reader but narrows down the category of the universal reader to a specific membership category:

But some natives – most natives in the world – cannot go anywhere. They are too poor. They are too poor to go anywhere. They are too poor to escape the reality of their lives; and they are too poor to live properly in the place where you live, which is the very place you, the tourist, want to go – so when the natives see you, the tourist, they envy you, they envy your ability to leave your own banality and boredom, they envy your ability to turn their own banality and boredom into a source of pleasure for yourself. (Kincaid, 1988: 18-19)

Kincaid’s book on her native island, Antigua, starts in the genre of the travel guidebook before switching to that of a polemical essay in which she gives vent to her anger against the corrupting influence of colonization in its past and new forms (the touristic industry). The force of the interpellation is all the stronger as “you” does not refer to any (universal) reader who might read the piece. It ascribes specific membership in addressing the representatives of the “westernised white tourist”. This unusual face-threatening direct address aims at destabilising the reader by compelling her to enter the situation of interlocution from which she cannot escape as a member of the tourist unit (see Sorlin, 2014).

Kluge’s continuum could only apply to the genres under study (in which addressees cannot become addressers) if the two categories on the right are changed: the “you in front of me” must be substituted with the more general category of you as “recipients”. Indeed the personalised address to “the person in front of you” cannot apply to a readership/audience the author cannot know personally. In fiction, “you” can address what is traditionally called the “implied reader” of the Text<sup>16</sup> (apostrophized via “you”) or an identified narratee and/or protagonist.

Yet the continuum must also be supplemented by another level of reading taking the point of view of the “real” recipient to determine whether she is willing to “self-ascribe” as addressee/speech act participant when reading/hearing “you”. I’m here referring to Wechsler (2010) showing that the reader may “self ascribe” as addressee although she

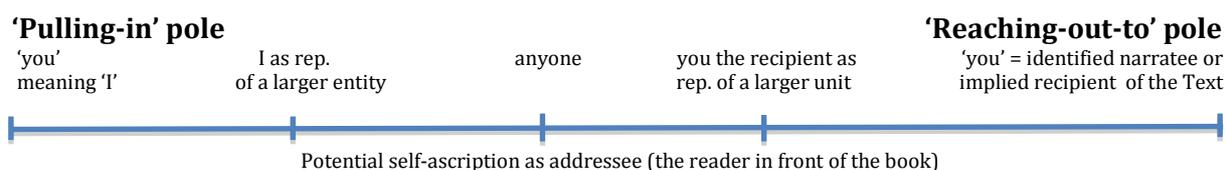
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<sup>14</sup> The use of the “you” pronoun to refer to the protagonist, narrator and narratee in Jay McInerney’s *Bright Lights, Big City* has thematic resonance for DelConte (2003: 205) so much so that no other form could have done a better job: “McInerney’s story of a man jaded from his job, failed marriage, and life in general uses the *you* address to its protagonist to emphasize an existence dictated from outside, an appropriate and effective narrative mode considering the novel’s critique of the consumer society of the 1980s”.

<sup>15</sup> For this category, Kluge (2016: 504) gives the example of a vendor trying to sell cooking utensils to a group of women, bringing them to visualize what they could do with them: “she does not address them exclusively or particularly, but posits them as typical representatives of a larger unit, encompassing ‘anyone who has bought these moulds and uses them for cooking’”.

<sup>16</sup> I’m using the Text with the capital T to involve both written and oral texts.

knows she is not uniquely addressed.<sup>17</sup> The addressee is the one who “self-ascribes membership in the reference set of the pronoun” (Wechsler, 2010: 333). What matters is not whom the pronoun refers to but who self-ascribes the property of being the addressee. In the genres considered in this article, to the two poles (“pulling in” the reader on the one hand, inviting some identification with the “you” persona, and “reaching out to” an implied reader or some addressee on the other) must be added another communicative level specifying how the (real) reader might relate to the “you”. In figure 4.1.2, the first line features the diverse references of “you” as potentially intended by the speaker/writer whereas the second line brings on the notion of “self-ascription” from the point of view of the recipient of the Text.



#### 4.1.2 Two poles and two levels induced by the second-person pronoun in non-interactive genres

The figure illustrates that self-ascription is in theory possible across all types of “you” as an *effect of reading* (unless the “you” entity can explicitly not be identified with at all, as is the case where a narratee is clearly identified for instance).

This effect of reading is particular prominent in fiction. Even if the “you” pronoun can be identified as “I-oriented” or as typically generic (anyone), this does not preclude the reader from self-ascription as addressee. Even when “you” seems to have an identifiable reference (a specific addressee for instance, either the protagonist herself in self-address or a narratee inside or outside the novel), the reader may feel addressed on a metafictional level – maybe because of the pronoun’s original “strong interpersonal base” (Wales, 1996: 59).<sup>18</sup> In other words, readers may “self ascribe” as addressees although they know they are not uniquely or directly addressed. Herman speaks in this case of “doubly deictic you” that is “neither a term of address nor not a term of address”.<sup>19</sup> “You” may indeed have an actualised reference or, to speak like Goffman (1981), a ratified addressed participant, but it can also make room for ratified recipients (that is readers) who are both (diegetically) unaddressed and (extradiegetically)

<sup>17</sup> The *de se* theory is based on the prediction that each addressee x will understand the pronoun as referring to x via self-ascription. Wechsler (2010: 353) gives the following example of the teacher asking “write your name at the top of the page” addressing Tommy and Mary: “Even if Tommy and Mary are both addressees, Tommy understands the teacher as instructing him to write his own name, not Mary’s. This is exactly what the *de se* analysis predicts. The second-person pronoun is specified for self-ascription BY each addressee. So each addressee x is being told to write x’s name at the top of the page, not just to write the name of some addressee”.

<sup>18</sup> De Hoop & Tarenskeen (2015: 173) hypothesize that even in generic uses self-ascription takes place first before “it is overruled by the context in which you is used”.

<sup>19</sup> Herman (1994: 378-411) distinguishes between functional types of you that depict either total agreement between the grammatical form and its deictic function (you addressing a narratee or apostrophizing the reader) or total disagreement (when you is in fact a disguised ‘I’ or a disguised ‘one’). Doubly deictic you falls in between these categories by showing neither complete agreement nor complete discord between form and function.

addressed as they may sometimes be invited to feel interpellated – Kacandes (1993: 139) speaks of “irresistible invitation”.

This very capacity of the pronoun to make the reader feel addressed while not addressing her specifically and personally makes it a powerful device in fiction as well as advertising and marketing strategies. But as shall be pointed out in the next and final point, this pragmatic specific feature of the pronoun must be exploited in not too obvious a way for it to work unawares.

## 4.2 The potential risks of the involving strategy

The very capacity of the pronoun to give a plurality of addressees the possibility to self-ascribe is also what can make addressees realise they are not the only ones. Working on charity fundraising ads, this is what Andrea Macrea (2015) calls the “push and pull” effect of the second-person pronoun which has an undeniable involving quality calling for empathy and creating intimacy (pull) that is yet undermined by the reader’s awareness that she cannot and is not uniquely addressed. This “synthetic personalisation” (Fairclough, 2001) – a mass address that pretends to be personalised – risks alienating the reader, making her want to pull out of the role the deictic you wants her to assume.

More generally, the second person gets “personal” in a way that might be seen as an unwarranted imposition on the viewer/reader. Ads such as “your time is running now – start today” (used by a make-up brand called Younique looking for business presenters for the brand<sup>20</sup>) oscillate between an offer (start your own business) and a command (join the Younique ‘family’ now) that might make the addresser’s pragmatic goal too obvious, producing the perlocutionary effect of pressuring or blackmailing the addressee.

Lastly in literature, you narratives may take risks that first- and third-person narratives take to a lesser degree: they might prompt different responses depending on the degree of identification with the “you” addressee and/or protagonist. Kacandes (1994)’s reading of readers’ reaction to Michel Butor’s *La modification* (1957) for instance shows the potentially different, but equally passionate, responses to the “vous” address: some felt strongly addressed by this “vous”, other readers felt both unaddressed and addressed at the same time, others still felt completely alienated from the pronoun that sets up a mock dialogue between an (absent) narrator and a protagonist/narratee from which the reader feels excluded. Thus the involving power of the second person affects reading to a degree that seems to be “reader-specific” as it seems very much dependent on the reader’s willingness to yield to what Mildorf (2016: 151) calls the “illusion of address”.

## 5. Conclusion

“You” seems to have invaded various genres which try to capitalise on the second person pronoun’s power of persuasion, involvement or transgression. It entails a shift in perspective and focalisation from the intention of the speaking voice to how the addressee is brought to relate to the situation of communication that is implicitly or

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<sup>20</sup> <https://infogr.am/what-makes-us-younique> Note the conflation of ‘unique’ and ‘you’ – a cognitive association that the receiver is bound to make each time she reads the name of the brand.

explicitly constructed. If “you address” in ads, tweets, and political speeches strives to get the reader to self-ascribe as actual, unique addressee whereas the pronoun potentially points towards a plurality of addressees (a specific target category or a universal audience), fiction purposefully plays on the pronoun’s pragmatic ambiguities, inviting a plurality of addressees to fill in the addressee’s position (protagonist, narratee and reader). This is the complex “pull-in” quality of the second person pronoun that is thoroughly exploited in literature but which plays on the same bet as in marketing and advertising that the reader will feel personally addressed even if she is not the only one to be addressed (ads/fiction) or not the one addressed at all (fiction).

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