

Pet Names

Connection and identity in second-person fiction.

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Vol 2:

*Hello, is it you you're looking for? Connection and
identity in second-person fiction.*

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Declaration

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Date

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Abstract

The creative work, *Pet Names*, is eight loosely interrelated narratives. Each narrative depicts the nuances and idiosyncrasies of a generic suburban character who fails to fulfil a need for interpersonal connection and self-satisfaction. The narratives are vignettes of each character's daily life and include the mundane, irrational and absurd. The narratee/protagonist in *Pet Names* is addressed using the second-person pronoun.

The exegesis is entitled *Hello, is it you you're looking for? Connection and identity in second-person fiction*. It comprises several analytical chapters that explore ways in which second-person narration not only complements but also highlights the thematic elements of a text that involve interpersonal connections and notions of self. The exegesis examines the second-person narrative works of authors Julio Cortazar, Miranda July and Lorrie Moore and analyses how these individual authors' use of second-person narration reflects their rhetorical interests concerning interpersonal relations and definitions of selfhood. The exegesis cites a number of narrative theories concerning second-person narration and relates them to *Pet Names* and to the writings of the above-mentioned authors. Also included is a chapter on narrative empathy that deconstructs the complications involved in representing unempathetic characters. It debates whether reader-empathy is necessary in narrative, particularly in my own writing, where there is a questioning of narratorial 'appropriateness' by deploying challenging forms of address.

Hello, is it you you're looking for?
Connection and identity in second-person
fiction.

(Exegesis)

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Introduction

This exegesis explores how the second-person narrative mode exaggerates certain characteristics of a narratee (commonly referred to as ‘you’, the recipient of the narrator’s address) or narratee/protagonist (when the ‘you’ is also the narrative’s protagonist) and problematises their reception. The exegesis consists of four chapters, the first three focusing on second-person short story/stories by the authors Julio Cortazar, Miranda July and Lorrie Moore. Each of these chapters analyses ways that the individual author’s use of the second-person narrative mode illuminates the characters’ struggles for a sense of self and issues about interpersonal connection. Various second-person narrative theoretical studies are cited to argue this point.

Chapter one examines Cortazar’s short story “Graffiti” and reveals the role apostrophe plays in bringing the reader’s attention to the story’s themes of interpersonal connection. Chapter two looks at July’s short story “The Shared Patio” and compares it with the concept of double deixis outlined in David Herman’s article “Textual ‘You’ and double deixis in Edna O’Brien’s “A Pagan Place””. Herman describes double deixis as the way second-person texts address multiple audiences simultaneously (380). This particular chapter investigates the way July’s use of a double deictic address highlights her rhetorical concerns of taboo and common understandings or definitions of inappropriate social conduct. The third chapter focuses on the use of an instructional second-person address in Moore’s collection of short stories, *Self-Help*, comparing and contrasting her use of second-person address

with that of instructional address used in traditional self-help publications. The chapters also analyze each author's use (of the second-person narrative mode) and its effect on the reader. The influence of Cortazar's, July's and Moore's stories on the creation of my creative work *Pet Names* is also discussed. The fourth, and final chapter in the exegesis looks at the role of empathy in narrative fiction and reveals the reasons for/and ramifications of a lack of empathy in *Pet Names*.

The desire of characters to connect with others and their search for identity is discussed in relation to the 'you' from Lorrie Moore's short story collection *Self-Help*, Miranda July's "The Shared Patio" and Julio Cortazar's "Graffiti". All these texts depict narratees and/or narratee/protagonists as socially isolated individuals in search of means to connect with others (in each particular 'story world'). The narratee in second-person fiction refers to the intended recipient of the narrator's address, (the 'you'). It is difficult to establish if any of these authors chose to adopt second-person narration because of a belief that the narrative mode would facilitate or even exacerbate their narratee's feelings of isolation and desire for social connection. It could be argued that aspects of the 'you' address are simply meant to draw attention to and/or polarise certain traits of a fictional character. This exegesis discusses similarities between the narratee-protagonists in each of these stories and identifies ways the second-person narration intensifies certain antisocial and isolated themes and characterizations.

Simply defined as 'someone who the narrator addresses' (Prince 7), the narratee (the 'you') in second-person texts is presented as being more important than the narrator (Prince 7). Unlike texts that are narrated in either the first or third

person, second-person texts are more concerned with who is listening rather than who is speaking (DelConte 1). I have identified a thematic link in second-person fiction that has not received much consideration in critical works on second-person narration. The narratee (that is the 'you' being addressed) in many second-person texts is frequently presented as having the desire (but the complete inability) to connect with their own 'story' world. For example: In Julio Cortazar's "Graffiti", the 'you' is presented as a graffiti artist who develops an entire, hypothetical back story for the person who has created a graffiti 'piece' next to their own artwork. Cortazar's 'you' (perhaps unable to relate to others) invents a hypothetical graffiti artist to connect with and relate to, an artist who is able to 'understand' the narratee. 'Almost immediately it occurred to you that she would be looking for an answer, that she would return to her sketch the way you were returning to yours' (Cortazar 35).

In second-person texts, narratees are also often presented as struggling to find a strong/stable sense of self. In Jay McInerney's *Bright Lights, Big City* for example, the narratee/protagonist, shown as having a complete lack of autonomy, is destined to be molded by the consumer-driven culture of the nineteen eighties. McInerney's use of second person implies that society dictates an individual's actions. 'you are waiting to enter the ballroom of the Waldorf-Astoria, where a fashion designer is showing you his fall line. You copped an invitation from your friend at *Vogue*' (McInerney 113). In McInerney's book the inclusiveness of the pronoun 'you' situates the reader and the character together. The second-person address is used to illustrate the way in which the cultural saturation of the nineteen eighties impacts on the individual. 'Second-person narration exemplifies this cultural climate, for it

manifests in narrative technique that someone or something outside yourself dictates your thoughts and actions' (DelConte 2). The protagonist does not have the 'freedom to create a self' (Gorra 401) and his autonomy of thought and action is restricted by American society and culture (Gorra 402). In Jonathan Nolan's 'Memento Mori', the protagonist (Earl) and the narratee (you) are one and the same. Having a ten-minute memory caused by anterograde amnesia means that Earl tries to connect with his future-self through a series of letters addressed in the second person. 'No. Your life is over. You're a dead man. The only thing the doctors are hoping to do is teach you to be less of a burden to the orderlies' (Nolan 188). Also, in Oriana Fallaci's *Letter to a Child Never Born*, 'you' the narratee takes the form of an unborn child that 'your' mother continues to address/attempts to connect with whilst 'you' are in her womb and also long after 'you' have died in utero. 'I could throw you away and you wouldn't even know I'd done so. You'd have no way of knowing whether I'd done you wrong or a favor' (Fallaci np) The notion of presenting the narratee with a false sense of autonomy is discussed in relation to Cortazar's, July's and Moore's short stories. I focus predominantly on this concept in regards to Moore's commentary on the prescriptive nature of the self-help genre in her collection of short stories *Self-Help*.

Julio Cortazar's second-person short story "Graffiti" will be used to explore the idea of second-person narration as a technique that exacerbates a character's social ineptitude and desire to belong. In "Graffiti" the pronoun 'you' represents a graffiti artist who is addressed by the protagonist 'I' but is spoken to internally. The two never actually meet. Cortazar's work adopts a rhetorical and apostrophic use of

second person, creating a feeling of social isolation. Cortazar's story creates intimacy through the power of the 'narrative apostrophe' (a term that it used to describe the unusual communicative circuits present in second-person narrative) (DelConte 7). The reader is positioned on the outside, looking in. This use of second person emphasises the narratee's seclusion while at the same time accentuating intimacy or the wanting of intimacy. 'You pictured her as dark and silent, you chose lips and breasts for her, you loved her a little.' (Cortazar 35). Through his use of second person, Cortazar is able to create a feeling of intense intimacy between characters that never meet.

The shifting and 'open' nature of some second-person narratives is addressed in relation to Miranda July's short story, "The Shared Patio". Monika Fludernik's paper, "Introduction: second-person narrative and related issues." advocates for a more 'open' and flexible interpretation when studying second-person narratology (Fludernik 1). She also suggests that it is necessary, when analysing second-person texts, to recognise that it is often arbitrary to make a clear distinction between a second-person text and an interior dialogue text (Fludernik 2). Many narratives that are stylised with interior dialogue incorporate second-person narration in instances of self-address (Fludernik 2). In Miranda July's short story "The Shared Patio", the first-person narration is interspersed with passages written in the second person. These 'passages' are submissions that the protagonist has written for a motivational/supportive magazine for readers who are HIV positive. The reader is unaware that the sections of second-person narration are magazine submissions until the end of the story. Because the protagonist is presented as a socially-

uncomfortable and anxious person ‘waiting for someone to notice that I rise each morning seemingly with nothing to live for’ (July “The Shared Patio” 6), the sections of second-person narration can be interpreted as either self address; perhaps a motivational inner dialogue that the protagonist is having with herself or an extradiegetic address (one that is being directed at someone external to the story). ‘What is the most terrifying thing that has ever happened to you? Did it involve a car? Was it on a boat?’ (July “The Shared Patio” 2) Fludernik’s explanation of the interconnectedness between second-person narration and interior dialogue is used to facilitate an understanding of the ways in which Miranda July uses the two styles to reveal/portray an individual’s psyche. Miranda July’s “The Shared Patio” has also been chosen to demonstrate that second-person narration can be interpreted as both the protagonist’s self address and also an address to those external from the story (i.e. the reader holding the book) to portray feelings of social isolation and anxiety. ‘[Y]ou are just stabbing the earth, again and again, as if you want to kill it for continuing to spin, as if you are getting revenge for having to live on this planet, day after day, alone’ (July “The Shared Patio” 4) This notion of a dual address and a shifting and/or indefinable narratee is explored in consultation with David Herman’s concept of ‘double deixis’. A text is double deictic when a reader finds it difficult to discern who or what is being addressed and whether the address is horizontal (address to and or from individuals from the intradiegetic story world) or vertical (from the story world to an extradiegetic narratee/s) (Herman 379-380). The chapter on Miranda July’s use of second-person narration also explores her rhetorical interests in common understanding of social taboo behaviours and working out how

to ascertain what actually constitutes social taboo.

Lorrie Moore's short stories have been selected because they reveal the complex relationships between narrator, narratee, narrative audience and ideal narrative audience in second-person fiction. Moore blurs the boundary between actual audience – the one who holds the book – and the audience that is addressed in the story. Her story "How" is not a traditional story that presents the reader with an obvious protagonist but is more a narrative that is directed toward hypothetical characters and hypothetical scenarios (DelConte 3). Instead of offering the reader advice (as in traditional forms of self-help literature), Moore's stories guide the narratee through hypothetical situations that often end negatively (Phelan 2). Moore's stories have also been chosen because they depict socially inept narratees and protagonists that seek, but ultimately fail, in attaining their desired sense of self. Moore's instructional address is compared to the instructional address as found in traditional self-help publications such as Dale Carnegie's seminal work *How To Win Friends and Influence People*. Carnegie's text is used to compare and contrast the various potential effects that an instructional second-person mode has on the reader.

This exegesis identifies the similarities in the way narratees and protagonists are characterised in Lorrie Moore, Miranda July and Julio Cortazar's work and argues that second-person narration is a narrative mode that polarises a character's (whether narratee or narratee/protagonist) social ineptitude. In the fourth chapter I focus on the role of empathy in narrative and examine Suzanne Keen's work on narrative empathy to identify the reasons behind the lack of empathy in my writing, the effects of representing unempathetic characters, and how a lack of empathy

impacts the reader's response to *Pet Names*. I will concentrate on the concept of 'empathic inaccuracy' that focuses on the instances when a reader's interpretation (of a character's emotional state) is not aligned with the author's intentions (Keen 222).

*When people don't understand you invent
someone who does: Apostrophe and
rhetoric in Julio Cortazar's "Graffiti".*

This next section investigates how Julio Cortazar's short story uses second-person narration to reveal the narratee and narrator's desire for human connection and communication. Although the political context of the story is addressed, the actual focus is on the social and personal aspects of the characters and not the story's political themes because this exegesis is concerned with the way second-person narration works to highlight a character's social isolation and desire for interpersonal connection.

Jonathan Culler's analysis of apostrophe in *Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Linguistic and Deconstruction*, builds upon Irene Kacandes' connection between apostrophe and second-person narration in her *Style* article, 'Narrative Apostrophe: Reading, Rhetoric, Resistance in Michel Butor's *La Modification* and Julio Cortazar's "Graffiti". Kacandes' concept of narrative-apostrophe explains how second-person narration draws a reader into the text and also how second-person narration can work to intensify aspects of a narrative that are concerned with interpersonal connection. In addition, this exegesis demonstrates how Cortazar's story blurs the lines between narratee and narrative audience. The discussion concludes with how the use of apostrophe in my own creative work attempts to highlight characters' feelings of

isolation and their need for human connection. Both “Graffiti” and my own creative work is cited to illustrate how creating characters with generalised and broad qualities can help to further obscure the lines between narratee and narrative audience and also to identify the difficulties and limitations that come with creating such a character.

Julio Cortazar’s second-person short story, “Graffiti”, is generally accepted to be a response to the military dictatorship in Argentina in the mid 1970s although Cortazar does not actually specify a particular locale or city in which the story takes place. In his essay, ‘Tales of Repression and ‘desaparecidos’ in Valenzuela and Cortazar’, Tyler states that whilst “Graffiti” is clearly a narrative that takes place in the time of military dictatorship in the nineteen-seventies ‘[t]he persecution [...] is sort of generic; by that I mean it could have occurred in any country in Latin America.’ (Tyler 2 of 4). The narrator and narratee’s method of communication can be interpreted as a means of rebelling against a totalitarian regime. The artists are able to communicate through their artwork. The illustrations are those that cannot be understood by the police or general public and are images that can only be understood by someone who knows how to read them.

One night you saw her first sketch all by itself, she’d done it in red and blue chalk on the garage door, taking advantage of the worm-eaten wood and the nail heads. It was more than ever she—the design, the colors—but you also felt that the sketch had meaning as an appeal or question, a way of calling you (Cortazar 35).

From the political perspective of the story, the graffiti can be interpreted as ‘emblems of freedom’ (Tyler 3 of 4). Despite the fact that the artwork is constantly being removed by the police, the ‘messages’ or communication take place before the

artwork has been removed. Even after the narrator is incarcerated, she creates one last piece as a way of imploring ‘you’ to continue to rebel/protest through art.

I had to leave you something before going back to my refuge where there was no mirror anymore, only a hollow to hide in until the end in the most complete darkness, remembering so many things and sometimes, as I had imagined your, life, imagining that you were making other sketches, that you were going out at night to make other sketches (Cortazar 38).

Irene Kacandes, in her article ‘Narrative Apostrophe: reading, rhetoric, resistance in Michel Butor’s *La Modification* and Julio Cortazar’s “Graffiti”’, suggests that “Graffiti” has been overlooked by critics for being ‘polemical and thus aesthetically inferior.’ (Kacandes 336). Kacandes argues that Cortazar’s piece is worth analysing because of its artistic sophistication and the way it uses rhetorical resistance to totalitarianism to connect with others in society through art (Kacandes 336). Depending on the readership “Graffiti” can be approached from a number of perspectives. For the purposes of this exegesis, the focus is on the elements of social seclusion and desire for companionship that exist between the narrator, narratee and narrative audience. In the Prelude to his book *Understanding Julio Cortazar*, Peter Standish suggests that ‘Cortazar has shown us how far the reading of any text is an activity that is colored by the reader’s own cultural and ideological baggage’ (Standish xi). Aligned with this concept is my own ideological baggage that involves an individual’s desire, but also his inability, to connect with others. Subsequently, my focus is the interpersonal and emotional aspects of the story and how these are amplified by second-person narration.

“Graffiti” begins with a first-person female narrator, addressing (internally)

an unnamed 'you' protagonist. After the opening paragraph, the first-person narration dissolves and we are presented with a second-person narrative that depicts the first-person narrator's imagined 'you' imagining a relationship with her (the unnamed first-person narrator). In the story both narrators are graffiti artists who 'communicate' via their 'banned' medium.

It amused you to find a sketch beside yours, you attributed it to chance or a whim and only the second time did you realise that it was intentional and then you looked at it slowly, you even came back later to look at it again, taking the usual precautions (Cortazar 33).

Although the two artists never meet; not only is 'your' fantasy of 'her' completely hypothetical, but the 'you' and 'yourself' are also hypothetical as 'you' and 'yourself' have been invented by the first-person narrator. Many critics have interpreted Graffiti as story that 'promotes intimacy' (Kacandes 339).

[T]he structure of enunciation of the main diegetic level, then, is that of a speaker who addresses someone she cannot talk to directly, someone who is not only 'absent,' but whom she apparently has never really met. This situation does not seem to preclude a sense of intimacy between the characters: I would go so far as to say it promotes it (Kacandes 339-40).

The first-person narrator, unable to connect with others, invents someone to connect with, someone who shares her interests and desire to create chalked illustrations, someone who understands her art and emotions. Kacandes suggests that Cortazar's story creates intimacy through the power of the 'narrative apostrophe' (her term for describing the unusual communicative circuits present in second-person narratives). Kacandes' term stems from the term 'apostrophe' used by rhetoricians for describing

instances when an ‘orator turns away from his/her “normal” audience, the judges, to address another: whether his adversary, a specific member of the jury, someone absent or dead, or even an abstract concept or inanimate object.’ (Kacandes 329). Given that ‘apostrophe’ has been linked to heightened emotion, “Graffiti”’s apostrophic use of second-person address can be interpreted as intimate (Kacandes 329). In this section I will look at “Graffiti”’s apostrophic address, the invention of one character by another and their communication through art to discuss how second-person narration is a narrative technique that not only complements certain themes but also highlights particular universal characteristics such as a need for human connection and understanding.

Firstly, I will clarify what is meant by ‘apostrophic address’ and how it relates to “Graffiti” and to second-person narration in general. I will also outline how the apostrophic nature of second-person narration works to heighten or exaggerate the particular characteristics within a second-person text relating to social ineptitude and a desire for human connection. Second-person narration can, in cases like Cortazar’s “Graffiti”, use an apostrophic address to create intimacy (in that, a connection or bond is formed between the addressor and addressee) and heightened emotion. In the chapter ‘Apostrophe’ in *The Pursuit of Signs*, Jonathan Culler states that apostrophe is interested in the process or circuit of communication and not the meaning of the words themselves (135). This is relevant when looking at second-person narration. This is particularly so in “Graffiti”, because the story focuses on the ways and lengths the narrator goes to in order to communicate and connect with someone who is not only absent but who may not actually exist. Apostrophe is

commonly used in poetry to ‘turn away from empirical listeners by addressing natural objects, artifacts, or abstractions’ (Culler 138). The technique is also used to indicate an intense connection or involvement with the addressed person, thing or abstraction. Culler refers to Blake’s *Poetical Sketches* when discussing how apostrophe is used to intensify emotion or connection with the addressee. “‘O Rose, thou art sick’ differs from ‘The rose is sick’ in that the former marks a powerful outburst of concern.’ (138). Rhetoricians believe that passionate addresses are apostrophic; Culler suggests that this is because an apostrophic address is a process of bringing objects to life or into being by asking that they (the objects) ‘bend themselves to your desire’ (138).

Through apostrophic address, objects or absent beings become ‘potentially responsive forces asked to act or refrain from acting, or even continue behaving as they usually behave.’ (138). The idea that apostrophe enables objects to become ‘potentially responsive forces’ is significant when discussing the effects of narrating in the second person. Second-person narration is generally an example of one-sided communication in that the narratee does not respond to the narrator’s address. However, despite this, the narratee is always presented as having the possibility of offering a response. This concept is relative to “Graffiti” and other second-person texts such as Miranda July’s “The Shared Patio” and Lorrie Moore’s short stories.

Cortazar’s ‘you’, like Blake’s rose, is given importance and heightened emotion via the second-person apostrophic address. Like Blake’s rose, one could argue that Cortazar’s story may lose certain apostrophic effects if the narratee became ‘he’ or ‘that artist’. Cortazar’s ‘you’ gives the impression of direct

communication and heightened intimacy between the narrator and the narratee. '[Y]ou drank glass after glass of gin and you talked to her, you told her everything that came into you mouth, like a different sketch made with sound [...] you chose lips and breasts for her, you loved her a little.' (Cortazar 35). This intimacy is also projected onto the reader through a process that Kacandes calls 'narrative apostrophe' (Kacandes 329).

Narrative apostrophe is developed from the historical, western understandings of apostrophe as being linked with heightened emotion. Although apostrophe has been interpreted as a communicative-circuit, Kacandes states that an apostrophic address is short-circuited communication because traditionally, an apostrophic address is one-sided. The communication is as Kacandes states 'short-circuited' because, whilst the addressee can 'hear' the address, they do not have the opportunity to respond. It often appears as though the receiver or reader can respond to the address, can become the orator, but under no circumstances does the *addressee* become the orator. For example, in "Graffiti", the narratee, the 'you', does not shift to the narrator. Narrative apostrophe actually addresses two audiences simultaneously, the intertextual audience and the actual reader (Kacandes 329). Understanding the effects of apostrophe and Kacandes 'narrative apostrophe' have on an implied reader are crucial in understanding how particular aspects of second-person narration impact a reader and to what extent a reader is able to align him/herself with the narratee and receive the narrator's address.

In "Graffiti", the first-person narrator, a female graffiti artist conjures up a persona for the artist that is responsible for the chalk drawings she finds alongside

her own. Within the first page, we understand almost immediately the narrator's perceptions of her position within her society and society's opinions of street artists. 'In the city people no longer knew too well which side fear was really on.' (Cortazar 34). As previously mentioned, the story has been perceived as a political response to Argentine totalitarianism in the nineteen seventies – the female graffiti artist, seeking someone to connect with, be understood by – invents a hypothetical persona for a fellow artist whom she will never meet. Through Cortazar's use of the narratee, we are able to understand the narrator's emotions and feelings of being marginalised. The audience, however, does not realise that the narrator has invented the narratee's persona until the story's final passage. The narrator, longing to be accepted and have her artwork understood, invents a narratee who does understand her, a narratee who is also longing for someone to connect with and be understood by. The narratee is presented as understanding the narrator's artwork and reasons behind her choices '[y]ou sketched a quick seascape with sails and breakwaters, if he didn't look at it closely a person might have said it was a play of random lines but she would know how to look at it.' (Cortazar 35). The narratee also romanticises about the prospect of a relationship with the narrator 'you also felt that the sketches had meaning an appeal or question, a way of calling you' (35) 'you wrapped your sketch in an oval, that was your mouth and hers and hope' (37). Although it might appear as though (since the narrator has invented another person to relate to) the story would preclude intimacy, the hypothetical nature of the story and the absence (or non-existence) of the narratee actually work to promote intimacy.

The second-person narration is at once the illusion of direct communication (an illusion because she is unable to speak to him literally) and also a stand-in for the communication-through-artistic expression that they have already experienced (DelConte 9).

As ‘apostrophe’ is a short-circuited, or one-way communication, and Cortazar’s use of apostrophe implies that the narratee always might reply to the address. And since the two artists communicate through their work, the address signifies hope of possible communication and human connection. ‘He [the narratee] always might reply: he always might be drawing.’ (Kacandes 337). This idea of feeling marginalised creating ways to connect with others works on both an intradiegetic (within the text) and an extradiegetic (outside the text) level. The story serves as an ‘allegory of the narrative’s/narrator’s hope that the inscribed reader, the addressee, becomes real reader, that the ‘you’ will become a real reader and available agent able to share love’ (Kacandes 337). The narratee and narrator’s need and search for connection is a humanistic subject matter that can carry extradiegetic effects; it further invites the reader into the role of the narratee. The lines between narratee and ideal narrative audience are also blurred due to the broad characteristics given to the narratee. In “Graffiti”, the narratee is not given specific physical characteristics.

Culler states that apostrophe allows the reader to not only understand aspects of the narrator’s feelings toward whatever is addressed but also to know how the narrator feels about the very act of addressing. When discussing the effect of an apostrophic address, Culler’s analogy is of a man yelling at a bus for being late. The explanation is that the address is neither about the bus nor about the man’s feelings towards the bus. The apostrophic address often concerns the addressor, which in this

instance is the bus-cursing man. An apostrophic address usually reveals things about the addressor 'his (the man yelling at the bus) apostrophes work less to establish the *I-Thou* relation between him and the absent bus than to dramatise or constitute the image of the self.' (Culler 142). In an apostrophic address, aspects of the addressor are revealed through the manner in which he/she addresses an object or absent person 'the vocative of an apostrophe is a device which the poetic voice uses to establish with an object a relationship which helps to constitute him.' (Culler 142). This aspect is evident from Cortazar's use of second-person narration in "Graffiti". As alluded to already, the emotions and characteristics possessed by the imagined 'you' help to give the reader an insight into the narrator's innermost feelings and desires. Moreover, the story's apostrophic address puts the reader in touch with the narrator's personal feelings. This intimate connection may not have been achieved if the second-person address had been substituted by a third-person address. In many places throughout "Graffiti", it is unclear who is being addressed. The reader is aware that the addressed is a street artist who is trying to connect with the narrator. The street artist (in a similar way to the narrator) feels persecuted for their art but the address can be interpreted as shifting and/or undefined. This not only allows the reader to feel involved in the text but also works to further illuminate the narrator's feelings of social isolation. A connection is made because we, as an audience, feel as though we are being addressed.

An analysis of Cortazar's story shows that the concept of 'short-circuited' communication can actually help us understand how certain thematic aspects of the text are highlighted. As the narratee's identity has been 'imagined' or 'conjured up'

by the narrator, I would infer that the narrator's role represents that of an omnipresent puppet-master. Despite the fact that the narratee appears to have an opportunity to respond and complete the communicative circuit, the narratee always acts in accordance with the narrator's intentions: the narratee feels segregated and persecuted because the narrator feels segregated and persecuted. The narratee admires the narrator 'you admired her' (Cortazar 35) because the narrator wants to be admired. The narratee interprets the narrator's sketches as artworks with hidden meanings because the narrator inserts hidden meanings in her work: 'you also felt that the sketch had meaning' (35) 'a person might have said it was a play of random lines, but she would know how to look at it' (35). The narratee wants to continue to defy laws/rules and create artwork because that is what the narrator wants 'you' to do. 'Nor could you resist, and a month later you got up at dawn and went back [...] and in the same place, there where she had left her sketch, you filled the boards' (37). The narrator has created those feelings for the narratee and the narratee therefore shares them. Kacandes suggests the climax supposes that "'you' will become a real and available agent able to share love, as in the inscribed scene, and able to participate in acts of protest as in the story as a whole.' (Kacandes 337).

In his essay "Some Aspects of the Short Story" in *The New Short Story Theories*, Cortazar explains that when developing a short story, a writer should work with material that is universally understood as meaningful. Stories that depict common occurrences or aspects of domesticity can be perceived as significant and meaningful when they illuminate something beyond the menial activity or subject matter (247). Cortazar uses Katherine Mansfield and Anton Chekhov as examples of

authors who are capable of finding meaning in the mundane as they are able to convert commonalities into an ‘implacable summary of a certain human condition or the burning symbol of a social or historical order’ (247). In “Graffiti”, Cortazar (like the aforementioned authors) comments on the ‘human condition’ through his portrayal of the actions of the two artists. The artists are shown as communicating through their ‘banned’ sketches, even after the narrator is incarcerated for her graffiti. Not only can this communication through a ‘banned’ medium be interpreted as a way of resisting the totalitarian regime (Kacandes 334), but the way in which the narrator and narratee communicate further illustrates their social characteristics and feelings of social marginalisation. The artists communicate through an alternative medium (abstract drawings; not written words or direct speech) and also, the narratee is completely hypothetical as the narrator conjures up all the narratee’s actions, characteristics and emotions. Through the narrator’s construction of the narratee, one can interpret “Graffiti” as a depiction of the need for human connection and the desire to be understood and accepted.

My creative work has some similarities to aspects I have identified in “Graffiti”. Like Cortazar’s story, my characters have a sense of being outsiders in their own community however they are not marginalised or persecuted by the authorities. They are socially inadequate. In the same way as Cortazar’s narrator and narratee, the characters I have developed are in search of human connection. They are inept when it comes to communicating with others and many create internal, hypothetical interactions with the narratee. ‘The organist’, for example, imagines interactions with the narratee and the narratee likewise has hypothetical interactions

with the organist. In Cortazar's work the narrator's hypothetical scenarios depict her feelings of social seclusion but also the desire she has to connect with a street artist like herself. The hypothetical personas and interactions of my characters reflect not only their apprehensions about social interactions but also their need to connect with one another.

Similar to "Graffiti" my writing has instances of narrative apostrophe. 'The organist', for example, addresses the narratee internally and invokes hypothetical actions for (and interactions with) the narratee. 'The Organist feels sick at the thought of you and the old man kissing passionately. So passionately that you forgot to steer, causing your car to veer into the path of an oncoming truck.' (Lovett 54). Each character considers him/herself to be more socially inept than the other but nonetheless they all have the desire to connect socially. Reminiscent of "Graffiti", the narrative apostrophe in my own work reveals qualities of the addressor as well as aspects about how the addressor feels about addressing and why they have the need to address something or someone absent. For example the organist's relationship with his grandmother and his role in her death causes him to feel unworthy of certain interactions. He has a desire (but hesitance) to interact with the narratee.

In the final passage of "Graffiti", when the reader becomes aware that the narrator has created a hypothetical persona/actions for the narratee, we realise that the hypothesised scenarios are in fact not as relevant as the reasons behind the narrator's need to imagine the interaction. As Kacandes states, Cortazar's story is not void of intimacy and human interaction, instead it represents hope and the possibility that the connection between the narrator and narratee (or one similar) may

have taken place or could very well eventually take place.

It is an allegory of the narrative's/narrator's hope that the inscribed reader, the addressee, becomes a real reader, that the 'you' will become a real and available agent able to share love, as in the inscribed scene and able to participate in acts of protest as in the story as a whole. The scene is an allegory of a reading that had consequences. If we imitate it, "Graffiti"/graffiti can continue to function as resistance (Kacandes 338).

This differs from my writing. The characters create internal addresses and hypothetical interactions with the narratee (and also with other characters) but the interactions do not eventuate because of each character's social shortcomings. Interactions that do occur between characters are anticlimactic, owing to each individual's personal 'baggage' and the possibility of their desired interactions eventuating is somewhat farfetched. My motive stems from an interest in the way some individuals make uninformed comparisons between themselves and others (assuming that the lives or personalities of others are somehow superior to their own). It is unimportant if the assumptions about others are correct (they are generally exposed in my writing as being incorrect) and whether the desired interactions will ever eventuate, the significance (as previously mentioned when discussing Cortazar's use of narrative apostrophe) is on the address itself and its significance to the addressor.

In the same way as the English translation of "Graffiti", the *gender* of the narratee in my writing is open to reader interpretation. If, like me, you are only able to read the English translation of Cortazar's story (and cannot identify a character's sex based on masculine/feminine prepositions in an inflected language) then the lack

of definition surrounding the narratee's gender (i.e. if the narratee is perceived as female) can serve as another reason why the narrator may feel like an outsider in her community. This ambiguity would not exist if the story adopted another narrative mode. Monika Fludernik states that it is irrelevant for the author and or reader to clarify exactly who the 'you' is because second-person narration is often rhetorical in that the narrative mode is employed as a metaphor, (as previously discussed in the case of McInerney's *Bright Lights Big City*). Second-person texts are also able to 'accommodate for a variety of 'you's' and a variety of 'I's,' and a combination of these.' (Fludernik 285). My initial intention was to keep the narratee as undefined and 'generic' as possible. Giving the narratee's specific characteristics (whether physical or emotional) was something I initially wanted to avoid. My work, like Moore's, addresses a generalised narratee in an instructive manner. 'Begin by meeting him in a class' (Moore "How" 577). My aim was to blur the lines between narratee and narrative audience. As more characters and multiple points of view were created, I found the need to develop a 'persona' for the narratee in order to reveal the connection between all the characters in the narrative.

Cortazar's use of second-person narration to illuminate the narrator's desire for human interaction and understanding has been influential on my creative work. Culler's work on apostrophic address and Kacandes' development of 'narrative apostrophe' reveal the way that second-person address invites the reader into the text. Narrative-apostrophe in Cortazar's story enables the narrator's feelings of marginalization to become apparent to the reader through the manner in which they address the narratee. The apostrophic address also allows the reader to understand

the narrator's feelings toward/reasons behind her need to apostrophise. The technique of narrative-apostrophe in my work is intended to enable the reader to interpret the characters' desires and reasons for their hesitance and/or incapacity to interact with one another.

'It's ok to be unsure.' The deictic 'you' in Miranda July's "The Shared Patio".

This next section discusses Miranda July's short story "The Shared Patio", from the collection *No One Belongs Here More Than You*, and focuses on aspects of the story's second-person address and how it works to not only demonstrate the narrator's and narratee's desire for human connection but also their inability to self-improve. July's story, much like her other creative works (e.g. other stories in *No One Belongs Here More Than You*, her 2005 film *Me and You and Everyone We Know* and her 2011 film *The Future*) deals with individuals' desires for human connection. These works also address western notions of acceptable and unacceptable social conduct. "The Shared Patio" is an example of both first-person and second-person narration. The address shifts between the intertextual and extratextual. The reader, at various stages in the story, is both presented with the option of either receiving a direct address or assuming the role of the narratee. Like Cortazar, July uses narrative apostrophe through second-person narration to project the narrator's and narratee's desire to connect at an interpersonal level. *'Remember this when you wake up in the morning and think you have nothing. Stand up and face east, Now praise the sky and praise the light within each person under the sky. It's ok to be unsure.'* (July "The Shared Patio", italics in original).

July's and Cortazar's protagonists possess similarities relating to desire for, but inability to attain, interpersonal connection. Both protagonists are depicted as

wanting to connect with a particular character within the text but the protagonists are unable to ‘connect’ due to social and political barriers such as those in July’s story and Cortazar’s story respectively. “That night you barely escaped a pair of policemen, in your apartment you drank glass after glass of gin and you talked to her, you told her everything that came into your mouth” (Cortazar 35). July’s first-person female protagonist pretends that Vincent understands her inappropriate and idiosyncratic behaviour which he finds it desirable. This is evident in the protagonist’s imagined interactions between the two of them. “Did you ever really love her? Not really, no. But me? Yes. Even though I have no pizzazz? What are you talking about, you perfect thing.” (July 8) Whilst Vincent is having an epileptic seizure, the protagonist falls asleep on his chest and dreams of Vincent holding her breasts. “He held them as if he had wanted to for a long time. [...] He was a complex person with layers of percolating emotions [...] and he burned for me. This complicated flame of being was mine.” (July 7) July’s protagonist is similar to Cortazar’s in the respect that both protagonists imagine having a complex relationship with another character. These imagined relationships are both completely hypothetical. “No matter what? Even when you are with Helena and I am just the short woman upstairs, am I still yours then?” (July 8). “[E]nough remained to understand that she had tried to answer your triangle with another figure, a circle or maybe a spiral, a form full and beautiful, something like a yes or an always or a now.” (Cortazar 36) The protagonists’ desire for (but inability to attain) interpersonal connection causes them to create imagined and hypothetical relationships.

The concept of narrative apostrophe has already been discussed in relation to Cortazar’s “Graffiti”, therefore this section not only identifies the way that second-person narration, in July’s writing, highlights the narrator’s feelings of being socially

inadequate but also how the second-person narration projects a character's need for affirmation that their social conduct is acceptable. Many of the rhetorical aspects throughout July's creative work concern social taboos and individuals' experiences with forbidden conduct. This section outlines the way second-person address enables July's rhetorical interests to pervade the narrative. These concepts are discussed in relation to 'double deixis'. Developed by David Herman in his article 'Textual 'You' and double deixis in Edna O'Brien's "A Pagan Place"', double deixis explains how second-person texts can address multiple audiences/narratees simultaneously. In the case of a double deictic text, it is difficult to discern who or what is being addressed and whether the address is horizontal – (address to and or from individuals from the intradiegetic story world) or vertical – (from the story world to an extradiegetic narratee/s). (Herman 379-380). The section goes on to show how a double deictic second-person address plays with the concept of stable identity and therefore complements July's characters' need to connect and have their thoughts, behaviours and identity validated by others both within and external to the story world.

Dennis Schofield's concept of Protean-'you' (when the 'you' could perhaps represent a character, a reader, a narratee, a narrator or a combination of these) from his thesis *The Second Person: A Point of View? The function of the Second-Person Pronoun in Narrative Prose Fiction*. is also cited to demonstrate how the ambiguity surrounding July's 'you' complements the story's themes. In his thesis, Schofield coins the term Protean-'you' which in the same way as double deixis, is a term used to define the shifting and or indeterminable 'you' in second-person texts.

It (Protean-'you') is a mode in which it is unclear whether the 'you' is a

character, the narrator, a reader/narratee, or no-one in particular—or a combination if these so that readers find ‘second person’ utterances at once familiar and deeply strange. (Schofield vii).

This ‘familiarity’ of second-person address is the focus of how second-person narration in “The Shared Patio” not only complements the narrator’s and the narratee’s desire for interpersonal connection but also how this ‘familiar’ nature of second-person address invites the reader to share these same desires and yearnings. Lastly the influence of July’s work on my own creative processes is discussed. In contrast to “The Shared Patio” there are a few instances in my own writing that could be interpreted as double deictic. Those that are evident in my writing are pointed out to indicate how double deixis in my creative piece complements both the notions of one’s inability to self-improve and the individual’s desire for validation. The discussion also centres on the means by which my creative work, like July’s, uses second-person narration to challenge certain perceptions of socially acceptable and unacceptable thoughts and conduct.

Double Deixis.

The term ‘deixis’ refers to a word, action or symbol; any expression that needs contextual information to gain meaning (Busselle & Bilandzic 262). The second-person pronoun is a prime example of deixis because like other deictic words (such as ‘here’, ‘now’ and ‘I’), the word ‘you’ gains its meaning from context. Double deixis therefore refers to situations where the second-person pronoun does not demarcate one singular addressee. In ‘Textual You and double deixis in Edna O’Brien’s “A

Pagan Place””, David Herman identifies a ‘double deictic’ ‘you’ as one that ‘produces ontological hesitation between the virtual and actual by constantly repositioning readers, to a fundamentally indeterminate degree, within the emergent spatiotemporal parameters of one or more alternative possible worlds.’ (Herman 378). Herman states that in double deixis, the second-person pronoun forces the reader to both actualise and virtualise the narratee to interpret ‘you’ as both a fictional character and a direct (or vertical) address to the reader. The vertical address can also be directed towards someone (other than the reader) or something outside the text (Herman 383). Analysing the way an author employs double deixis can help to categorise or re-describe the disorienting nature of some second-person texts. Double deixis can also be used to ‘abolish the boundary between the textual and extratextual, the fictive and the real, the virtual and the actual.’ (Herman 380). Herman’s concept relates to Monika Fludernik’s (aforementioned) insistence that in many cases it is irrelevant for the author and reader to clearly identify who the ‘you’ is in second-person fiction as second-person texts are often rhetorical. (Fludernik 282) Like Fludernik, Herman outlines the rhetorical nature of second-person narration and highlights the insignificance of identifying one narratee, as many second-person texts constantly reposition the reader and narratee. Double deixis is used when referring to texts that address multiple audiences simultaneously. A reader’s inability to identify or pin point the audience in a second-person text may initially be disorienting but it opens opportunities for increased reader involvement and participation in the text and, in the case of both “The Shared Patio” and my own creative work a double deictic address can work to draw attention to characters’ social inadequacies and desire for

interpersonal connection (Lovett 5). I will outline how double deixis highlights social inadequacies and a sense of ‘longing’ in a text by referring to deictic shift theory and deictic transfer that explains a receiver’s relationship and involvement in a text. (Busselle and Bilandzic 263).

Herman states that double deixis forces us to question the notion that we, as readers, can clearly demarcate both texts and contexts (Herman 385). The second-person pronoun is vague, in that without taking context into account, ‘you’ could refer to anyone and anything. Even when we, as readers, are familiar with a narrative’s context, second-person address is still often ambiguous. In double deictic second-person contexts, the reader is like a ‘fellow player’ (Herman 388) in that they can simultaneously find themselves positioned within the fictive world and on the outside of the text. ‘[T]he figure of the reader refers back to the real reader and, to that extent, produces a reference that points beyond the fiction itself.’ (Herman 388). I would argue that double deixis is a technique that July deliberately uses to make her readers assume the role of addressee and become participants in the text. This section will discuss how the multiple ‘yous’ in Miranda July’s “The Shared Patio” complement the author’s rhetorical themes of longing for interpersonal connection and notions of ‘taboo’.

In July’s story a female, first-person narrator recounts a scenario in the form of (what appears to be) a vertical address. The narrator recounts an incident in which her neighbour has an epileptic fit. Instead of coming to the neighbour’s aid, the narrator falls asleep on his chest and dreams about having an intimate relationship with him. The story is presented as conversational and it seeks the narratee’s input

and validation not for the narrator's actions (she herself identifies them as inappropriate) but for her desire for companionship, the same desire that has prevented her from doing the right thing, namely, to help her fitting neighbour. According to DelConte's definition of what actually constitutes a second-person text, July's work (given that the narratee and protagonist are not one and the same) would not necessarily constitute a second-person story. However the story's use of second-person narration is essential to the way the narrative transpires because the narratee can be interpreted as undefined and shifting. July's story aligns itself with my point regarding how second-person address complements and highlights a character's social inadequacies. This section will discuss how July's use of second-person address helps to highlight a key element of the story: the narrator's inability to better herself and be, as July states, 'present' in a situation because she is too stuck in the hypothetical relationships she develops internally. (July in Kushner 63)

"The Shared Patio" is the opening story in July's collection *No One Belongs Here More Than You*. The story, like the others in the collection, and also in keeping with July's other works, depicts characters who are looking for ways to reach out and communicate with one another. 'People hoping for miraculous events to intervene in their lives, children cultivating their own private and idiosyncratic longing, everyone improvising ways to communicate with one another –these are predominating themes in July's work.' (Kushner 63). July's works commonly consist of sections of second-person narration that depict a character's feelings of social inadequacy. Even the book's title *No One Belongs Here More Than You* signifies an apostrophic address for all potential readers, illustrating a desire to

connect with the reader even before they have begun reading. In “The Shared Patio” the female, first person narrator longs for connection and understanding. The element of ‘longing’ is a recurring theme in July’s work; she is interested in the ways people try to interact and connect with each other, particularly people from different walks of life. ‘I was (and am) interested in seeing different kinds of people together, unusual pairs in terms of age and gender and race’ (July in Kushner 63). ‘[T]he focus is on what the individuals are feeling, their ability to reach through the web of their own fears and fantasies and connect with someone else’ (July in Kushner 63). July’s story can be interpreted as the narrator’s apostrophic address as well as a means of connecting with something/someone absent and a means of self-address. The narrator’s self-address also serves as a rhetorical question. She seeks ‘your’ approval and/or validation. ‘It still counts, even though it happened when he was unconscious.’ (July 1).

The narrator informs ‘you’ about her neighbours Vincent and Helena. The narrator goes on to explain how she fell asleep on Vincent’s chest on the apartment’s shared patio whilst Vincent was having an epileptic fit and instead of helping Vincent, she dreamed of having an intimate relationship with him. The story, like July’s other works, is both comedic and unsettling. The socially-uncomfortable narrator imagines hypothetical scenarios and social interactions with characters and recounts these to ‘you’ (a presumed extratextual audience). ‘What if she [Helena] and I were close friends? What if I borrowed her clothes?’ (July 2). This address appears double deictic and could be interpreted as being directed toward an extratextual addressee and/or also as an instance of self-address. The story features sections of

italicised second-person narration, from an unidentified narrator. These sections are 'instructional' and are similar to the self-help format of writing (this will be discussed later; in detail with regard to Lorrie Moore's writing). *'Do you have doubts about life? Are you unsure if it is really worth the trouble? Look at the sky: that is for you. Look at each person's face as you pass them on the street: those faces are for you.'* (July "The Shared Patio" 11). These sections are also double deictic. The reader could interpret the italicised address as both a diary entry of the first-person narrator, a direct address to the reader and also an address to another vertical or horizontal audience. The nature of the italicised sections both complements the narrator's feelings and desires and also projects them onto the addressee.

If you are sad, ask yourself why you are sad. Then pick up the phone and call someone and tell him or her the answer to the question, Why are you sad? If you don't know anyone, call the operator and tell him or her (July "The Shared Patio" 2).

Remember this when you wake up in the morning and think you have nothing. Stand up and face the east. Now praise the sky and praise the light within each person under the sky. It's okay to be unsure. But praise, praise, praise (July "The Shared Patio" 11).

At the end of the story, we become aware that the italicised sections of second-person address are most likely examples of entries that the narrator has developed for a magazine aimed at supporting people with HIV.

It is actually really hard to write something that will make a terminally ill person feel better. And *Positive* has rules, you can't just lift your guidance from the Bible or a book about Zen; they want original material. So far none of my submissions have gotten in, but I'm getting closer (July "The Shared

Patio” 11).

The deictic and ‘generalised’ nature of the address, allows the address to apply to anyone both within and external to the story world. The nature of the address (about reaching out to others who also feel alone and unsure of themselves) draws attention to July’s recurring themes of ‘longing’ for human connection. The deictic nature of July’s writing can also be explained in relation to deictic shift theory.

In “Fictionality and Perceived Realism in Experiencing Stories: A Model of Narrative Comprehension and Engagement” Busselle and Bilandzic outline why readers are transported into the world of a fictional story through identification with either the address; character/s or fictive worlds. Busselle and Bilandzic describe deictic shift as a ‘flow-like state accompanied by a loss of awareness of self and the actual world.’ (256). Deictic shift theory concerns the reader’s ‘psychological relocation’ (256) into the locale of the narrative. Whilst the argument surrounding deictic shift theory and reader experience is quite complex and far too large to cover in detail for this exegesis, I will concentrate on the aspects of deictic shift theory that relate to the way second-person narration highlights certain themes in a text and can also work to project them onto the reader. A deictic shift occurs when readers engage with a narrative to the extent that they lose awareness of their current self/surroundings and enter those of the story world (Busselle and Bilandzic 261). In *Deixis in narrative: a cognitive science perspective*, it states that before they even begin reading a narrative, readers are given cues about how to prepare to interpret the narrative. (74). The very titles of Miranda July’s work immediately expose her rhetorical interests. As previously mentioned the title of July’s short story

collection, *No One Belongs Here More Than You*, uses the deictic nature of the second-person pronoun to communicate with potential readers and also to outline the thematic elements regarding interpersonal connection. Her other works such as the 2005 film, *Me and You and Everyone We Know*, and the 2011 book *It Chooses You*, also employ deictic words that are apt for each text's elements of desire for interpersonal connection. Deictic shift theory explains why an audience gets the impression of direct experience and (in the case of second-person narration) direct address when interpreting a narrative (Busselle and Bilandzic 262).

Through a deictic shift, readers are given the opportunity to form an emotional closeness with the text (and in the case of much popular music) the deictic nature of words such as 'I' and 'you' and 'here' and 'now' enable a multitude of receivers to relate to the words. In "'I have my tricks and trap doors too': Double Deixis, Reader investment and Self-Identification in Literature and Popular Music", Straiton analyses listener responses to popular songs to identify the ways in which songs that use deixis create a shared domain, and allow for receivers to develop 'a sense of self identification, self implication and the possibility of modification of the self through their [songs'] textual form.' (Straiton 286). This concept applies to "The Shared Patio" and I would argue that each reader does not necessarily need to share great similarities to the narrator in order to relate to and identify with the narrator's longing for intimacy and interpersonal connection. The double deictic nature of the story's address invites the reader to assume both roles of narratee and narrative audience (at times) simultaneously. Through both the first person narration/conversational sections (that address a narratee) 'I'll tell you about Vincent. He is an

example of a New Man' (July "The Shared Patio" 3) the reader is drawn into the text and the role of the narratee. Phrases such as 'You might have read the article about the New Men in *True* magazine last month' (July 3) and 'She is Greek with blond hair. It's dyed. I was going to be polite and not mention that it's dyed, but I really don't think she cares if anyone knows' (July 2) project a sense of familiarity and camaraderie between the reader and narrator; like listening to a friend recount an anecdote. Not only does this enable the reader to connect with the narrator and relate to her situation, the second-person deictic address can also become unsettling as we, as readers, are casually informed of the narrator's disturbing and socially 'taboo' thoughts and behaviours. We, as readers, having deictically shifted into the world of the narrative, are then confronted by the knowledge that the narrator may have allowed Vincent to die and would rather dream about him cupping her breasts than make any attempt to save his life.

Unlike July's story, my creative work contains very few instances of double deixis. My initial intention was to create an address that functioned both vertically and horizontally. The goal was to present a 'you' that could simultaneously exist (or be interpreted as existing) within the story world and external to the story world. The double-deictic nature of Cortazar's, July's and Moore's work made me consider following a similar approach that allowed for a multitude of different interpretations about whom or what the address was directed toward. Early in the drafting stages, a conscious decision was made to write in an instructional style. 'Do not shower. Do not dress conservatively. Do not catch the bus to work.' (Lovett 5). This is a technique used by both July and Moore and is often found in instructional 'how to'

and ‘self-help’ manuals (which are often written in second person). This style complements the thematic concerns in my (and both the previously mentioned authors’) writing that deal with social inadequacies and desire for interpersonal connection. The nature of ‘self-help’ manuals assists those who seek to improve aspects of their lives/selves (this will be discussed in detail in the section on Lorrie Moore’s short stories). The more I developed this ‘instructional’ mode of writing, the more I began to give the narratee specific attributes. This was essential for the narratee to exist in relation to the other characters within the narrative. Despite the narratee’s specific ‘back story’, my work still contains some instances of double deixis. Deictic words have specifically been chosen to allow for multiple interpretations. In the following excerpt for example, ‘your’ features are not given any specificity and the scene’s location is also not disclosed. ‘Your’ gender is also withheld. These decisions were made to allow for increased reader involvement and interpretation.

Walk down to the local commercial strip. Stop to watch a sales assistant undress a mannequin. Notice that the mannequin’s bellybutton is much smaller than yours. Try to decide what equates to a normal size. Locate your bellybutton through your sweater (Lovett 11).

Brief instructional passages containing ‘open’ scenarios and deictic words allow for a double deictic reading. The specific back-story and the interactions/connections to other characters cause my second-person address to be predominantly interpreted as horizontal: an address directed towards an intertextual narratee.

Like July’s story, my creative work plays with the nature of a reader’s

deictic shift to highlight rhetorical elements in the narrative. Busselle and Bilandzic state that a deictic shift is to some extent a ‘flow like’ experience where readers transport themselves into the world of the narrative and surrender consciousness of their (the reader’s) actual self and surroundings (263). This suggestion however, seems somewhat implausible to me and I in no way would assume that the deictic shift in my own creative work coerces readers into surrendering their own consciousness. My intention is to play with the deictic shift that a reader goes through when they ‘identify with the character from whose position a story is told.’ (Busselle and Bilandzic 263). The purpose is to combine the apostrophic nature of second-person narration with a narratee-protagonist that has a bizarre, yet likeable persona. The objective is to present the reader with a narratee that is given ‘universal’ attributes or feelings with which the reader can either identify or sympathise. As outlined earlier, I deliberately chose not to attribute a gender, name, location, physical characteristics or a particular profession to the narratee. This decision was made to allow the narratee to adapt to each reader’s subjective interpretation. My writing also aims to expose both the narratee’s (and other characters’) desire but inability to connect. The principle is a character’s feelings of social inadequacy and desire for interpersonal connection and not who the individual actually is. These are qualities that I consider to be ‘universal’ and as such I have chosen not to particularise certain characteristics (like the name and gender) of the narratee.

In “The Shared Patio”, July’s use of deictic shift causes readers to identify or connect with the protagonist. This puts readers in an unsettling or confronting

position when the protagonist expresses socially ‘taboo’ thoughts or conduct. The apostrophic and deictic nature of the second-person pronoun also contributes to the reader’s feeling of unease because they may have previously received the address or aligned themselves with the narratee. From a creative perspective this advances the author’s rhetorical concerns as to what actually equates to ‘taboo’ conduct and also why certain individuals’ methods of seeking interpersonal connection are considered inappropriate. In “The Shared Patio” for example the narrator’s conversational (most-likely vertical) address to the narratee, shifts us (as readers) into the position of addressee and allows us to identify with the narrator’s situation. However, when the narrator discloses her actions surrounding Vincent’s seizure, we feel unsettled for identifying with the narrator. July states that the intention behind her creative work is to:

make a space where it’s not clear, or maybe not even interesting, whether someone is good or bad or crossing a line. Instead, the focus is on what the individuals are feeling, their ability to reach through the web of their own fears and fantasies and connect with someone else, regardless of how appropriate this connection is, and it often isn’t (July in Kushner 63-64).

An individual’s feelings and desires are the core concerns of July’s creative work. Her ability to allow the significance of these ‘desires’ to permeate or overshadow the thoughts and conduct that seem inappropriate have influenced my own creative process. The intention of my writing is, in a similar way to July, to depict characters who long for interpersonal connection. My characters represent somewhat ‘likeable’ individuals or those to whom one can hopefully ‘relate’. This approach provides the reader with an opportunity to ‘shift’ into the narrative world. The ‘inappropriateness’ of my characters’ actions, demonstrates both their desperation

for interpersonal connection and their social inadequacies. Ultimately the characters, despite their particular situation, yearn for a sense of belonging and connection. It is an attempt at self-fulfillment. For example: 'The Boy' attempts to become his grandfather's bride because he feels as though his grandfather is the only one in his family who truly cares for (and understands) him. Similarly, as a child, The Priest character (unable to mix with other children) tries to locate God so the two of them can become friends (Lovett 64).

Protean 'You'.

Denis Schofield's development of the Protean-'you', in his thesis "*Second person : a point of view? The function of the second person pronoun in narrative prose fiction*" looks at the ambiguous and fluid nature of the second-person pronoun in prose fiction. Comparable to Kacandes, who shifts or blurs the lines between the ideal narrative audience and narratee, Schofield's Protean-'you' looks at second-person narration as a narrative mode, unlike first and third person, that does not feature any stable subjectivity. (Schofield vii). Schofield examines the way second-person texts can confuse readers or put them in a position of doubt. With a shifting and/or unidentifiable 'you', second-person texts deny the readers of an absolute subjectivity or 'truth.'

The address in second-person texts can often be open to individual interpretation. Schofield suggests this characteristic represents the human condition or identity as something that is never totally complete. Protean 'you' concerns post-structuralist aspects of second-person narration and the representation of the human

subject. '[T]he actual condition of the human subject—the subject as dispersed and contingent rather than unified and authoritative.' (Schofield vii). In contrast to the apostrophic and communicative nature of second-person narration, Schofield's Protean-'you' looks into the multiple subjectivities of a second-person text and the way that second-person texts comment on the ambiguous and inter-subjective qualities of identity (Schofield ix). Schofield defines this aspect of Protean 'you' as 'Almost You'. This approach stems from Keat's notion of negative capability that focuses on the manner in which a person is able to be present in uncertain situations without the need to rationalise or look for explanations or reason (Schofield ix). The concepts of Protean 'you' and 'Almost You' have relevance to "The Shared Patio" in the way the second-person narration highlights a character's need for human connection and sense of belonging. July's narrator, uncomfortable with her sense of self, seeks both: connection from characters and affirmation from narratees (both within and external to the story world).

The deictic nature of the second-person pronoun enables Schofield to examine the inter-subjective nature of second-person fiction. Schofield cites Lois Oppenheim's analysis of Butor's *La Modification* in, *Intentionality and Intersubjectivity: A Phenomenological Study of Butor's La Modification*, to argue how second-person, third-person narration, denies readers access to omniscience and an 'authorising subject who has access to all knowledge and who stands at the centre of knowledge' (Schofield 131). Both Oppenheim and Schofield, suggest that second-person narration undercuts the witness function of third-person narration and puts us in a place of uncertainty and ambiguity. Second-person narration leads to 'new

certainty, to new existential truths about the individual's Being-in-the-world predicated not on Cartesian transcendent subjectivity but on phenomenological intersubjectivity' (Schofield 131). Second-person narration provokes reader involvement and allows readers a number of options as to whom/with what to identify. We, as readers, can oscillate between identifying with the addressee, addressor, narratee/protagonist, other characters and any combination of these (Schofield 131). The intersubjective nature of second-person narration requires the reader (and their own set of ideologies and understandings of reality that they bring to a text) to ultimately 'complete' the text. July plays with the intersubjective nature of second-person narration to address her rhetorical concerns about definitions and interpretations of what constitutes socially 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate' conduct. In the case of "The Shared Patio", the female narrator, like many of July's other characters, seeks interpersonal connection but, owing to the narrator's social inadequacies, the means of pursuing connection can be interpreted as unorthodox and even perverse.

And although I was genuinely scared about this epileptic seizure I was in charge of, I slept. Why did I do this dangerous and inappropriate thing? I'd like to think I didn't do it, that it was in fact done to me. I slept and I dreamed that Vincent was slowly sliding his hands up my shirt as we kissed (July "The Shared Patio" 7).

July's interest in the boundaries/definitions of what constitutes 'taboo' and unorthodox conduct suits her undefined narratee as well as the intersubjective nature of her second-person address. It was previously mentioned that the conversational, casual first person (presumably vertical) address to an un-named narratee, invites

readers to share the perspective of the female narrator. ‘If you look at it, you will think it’s only Helena and Vincent’s patio’ (July “The Shared Patio” 3). July plays with the concept of taboo and her use of second-person address encourages the reader to also question the lines of acceptable and appropriate conduct. This is similar to the opening passage of Vladimir Nabokov’s *Lolita*, in which Nabakov’s brief use of the second person address invites readers to situate themselves in the same position as the jury (that is being addressed).

Did she have a precursor? She did, indeed she did. In point of fact, there might have been no *Lolita* at all had I not loved, one summer, a certain initial girl-child. In a pryncedom by the sea. Oh when? About as many years before *Lolita* was born as my age was that summer. *You* can always count on a murderer for a fancy prose style.

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, exhibit number one is what the seraphs, the misinformed, simple, noble-winged seraphs, envied. Look at this tangle of thorns (Nabokov 11, my emphasis).

Although my work shares many similarities to July’s short story, particularly in relation to our rhetorical concerns regarding the definitions of social taboo, my work, unlike July’s, contains very few instances of double deixis. My initial intentions were to present the reader with an address that could be interpreted as both horizontal and vertical, however, for the narratee to fit with the other characters/exist within the context of my narrative, it became necessary to add further and more specific characterisation. Reading *Pet Names* should enable the reader to assume the role of the narrative audience and understand that the address is directed toward an intertextual narratee. By presenting obscure and socially-unacceptable scenarios in an instructional second-person address, the reader will hopefully feel

unsettled by the events. This in turn should prompt the reader to question why they have a sense of unease and the reasons for it. Generating such a response would confirm that my rhetorical interests regarding the definitions of the taboo have permeated the narrative. July employs a conversational address in her short story which encourages the reader to both assume the role of the narratee and also ‘side’ with the views of the first-person narrator/protagonist. When the reader is presented with the protagonist’s inappropriate actions, the reader may have already connected with the protagonist and thus, have their (the reader’s) own perceptions/morals called into question. In *Pet Names* on the other hand the narratee’s obscure tendencies and behaviours are introduced at a very early stage. The possibility in this instance is that the reader never truly sees him or herself as the recipient of the address. A consequence may be that the reader will want to distance him or herself from the narratee. July’s and my work do differ in respect to deixis and tone. I argue however that both works take advantage of the communicative nature of the second-person address to illuminate two overarching thematic concerns: an individual’s desire for interpersonal connection and what actually constitutes social taboo and inappropriate conduct.

How to feel dissatisfied: Lorrie Moore and instructional second-person narration.

This section examines ways that hypothetical and instructional modes of second-person narration not only mock the self-help genre but also focus on a narratee's search for identity and purpose. Second-person and hypothetical texts taken from Lorrie Moore's collection *Self-Help* are used to illustrate the points in question. Moore's story "How to Become a Writer" is the main focus of the analysis. Dale Carnegie's seminal self-help publication, *How to Win Friends and Influence People* is also used to compare and contrast the potential effects of an instructional second-person mode on the reader. Although the narrative mode in *Self-Help* tends to mock traditional self-help publications, Moore's use of second-person narration, nonetheless highlights the sense of self-dissatisfaction and lack of autonomy among her multiple female narratees. Some of the narratees addressed in *Self-Help* are ambiguous (that is some are not given names or physical characteristics), which provides a broader readership with an opportunity to receive the address and position itself as the narratee. In Moore's stories, 'readers fluctuate between identifying with the narrator and differentiating ourselves from her through the use of specific and more general lines.' (Vogel 73). Elizabeth Vogel's paper, "I don't know why I joke. I hurt: Pain, Humor, and Second-Person Narration in Lorrie Moore's 'How to Be an Other Woman'" argues that Moore's use of instructional second-person narration (despite each narratee's particular characteristics):

constructs a women's communal experience that goes beyond a humor of one-liners and direct expressions (often associated with a 'male' conception of humor). Instead, the second-person point of view helps to create multiple meanings for narrator and reader (Vogel 71).

Using a similar approach to sections of Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People*: 'Be sincere. Do not promise anything that you cannot deliver.' (Carnegie 271), many of the stories in *Self-Help* are written in an instructional future tense, which creates hypothetical scenarios. I argue that this approach further encourages the reader to receive aspects of the address. 'Feel discovered, comforted, needed' (Moore "How" 577). In Carnegie's book, second-person address imparts positive feelings that are intended to improve aspects of an extradiegetic narratee's life/persona 'if in the last-minute rush of Christmas buying some of our salespeople should be too tired to give you a smile, may we ask you to leave one of yours?' (Carnegie 103). Moore's use of the address, on the other hand, (given that her stories focus on a lack of autonomy and inevitable self-dissatisfaction) imposes upon the reader an idea of inevitable self-dissatisfaction. The intention is to explore the way Moore's use of instructional second-person narration enables the author to project themes of personal dissatisfaction and self-doubt onto an extradiegetic audience. I will also outline how Moore's use of an instructional second-person address has influenced my own creative work.

Traditional self-help publications vs. *Self-Help*.

Louise Woodstock's "All About Me, I mean, You: The trouble with Narrative Authority in Self-Help Literature", identifies how self-help literature encourages readers to construct themselves in the author's image. (Woodstock 325) This particular reference demonstrates how traditional self-help books while appearing to 'abdicate authority directly to the reader' (Woodstock 321) are actually prescribing how the reader is supposed to 'help themselves'. Woodstock suggests that the very term 'self-help' is somewhat misleading as '[w]hen reading a self-help book, you seek help from others. It is an inherently social act, not an individual one.' (Woodstock 321) The reader is receptive and willing to be advised by the author and through the author's recounts of overcoming similar life experiences, the reader learns how to 'help' him or herself. (Woodstock 322). This type of authority is analogous with Max Weber's concept of charismatic authority, outlined in *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, and is based on an individual's identity and character (Weber 312). Charismatic authority 'rests on the appeal of leaders who claim allegiance because of their extraordinary virtuosity, whether ethical, heroic or religious' (Coser 227). Weber states that a 'leader' gains authority from the belief that 'his followers have about his mission' (Coser 227). This relates to authors of self-help and how to texts, as the author's 'authority' is derived from overcoming similar experiences that the reader faces. For example, Carnegie uses personal stories (mixed with those of famous leaders) about overcoming adversity. The suggestion is that under similar circumstances readers have the capacity to do the same. 'I am going to tell you how

business people in my own courses have applied these principles with remarkable results' (Carnegie 134).

Unlike traditional self-help texts, Moore plays with narrative authority to guide her multiple narratees onto the path of inevitable self-dissatisfaction. In her paper, "I Don't know why I Joke. I hurt: Pain, Humor and Second Person Narration in Lorrie Moore's 'How to Be an Other Woman'", Elizabeth Vogel suggests that the narratees in *Self-Help* represent a common, female experience. Although Moore refers to a narratee by their name or gives them specific attributes, the address is often fluid. Vogel suggests that Moore's use of second-person narration frequently addresses a communal, female 'you' (Vogel 71). Guiding her narratees into ultimate personal dissatisfaction forces the reader to 'pay attention to restrictive roles and social narratives that may normalise behavior that does not benefit women' (Vogel 71). Moore's use of an instructional and hypothetical form of second-person narration critiques self-help publications such as Carnegie's. Moore humorously guides her narratee into ultimately undesirable situations (like how to become an unsatisfied mistress or misunderstood writer), while outlining the contradictory nature of women's conduct books. 'Advice books have served seemingly contradictory functions in the past, spreading women's words of wisdom to other women while also enforcing standards of proper, acceptable behavior' (Vogel 75). Moore's narratives highlight the ironic and contradictory nature of self-help publications although her narratees all share the desire for intimacy and a feeling of inevitable dissatisfaction. 'A week, a month, a year. Feel discovered, comforted, needed, loved, and start sometimes, somehow, to feel bored' ("How" 577). 'You

spend too much time slouched and demoralised.’ (“How to Become a Writer” 630). The narratees are seeking more (from their professional or personal lives) but inevitably fail to find/attain what they desire (Vogel 75). In *Self-Help*, Moore not only uses a hypothetical and instructional second-person address to mock traditional self-help publications, like Carnegie’s, but also makes comment on women’s shared experiences, particularly in regard to romantic relationships. Moore’s stories critique the notion of seeking ‘prescribed’ relationship advice while at the same time highlighting the struggles her narratees have looking for and attaining a strong sense of self.

Identity in *Self-Help*.

Moore’s ‘yous’ are often women in their thirties who appear to be confident, witty and autonomous, however these characteristics are only superficial. Notwithstanding initial impressions, Moore’s women are outsiders in their own lives. The characters, despite the hypothetical nature of the stories, remain ill at ease with their identities and lifestyles. In his analysis of “How to be an Other Woman”, Phelan states that even though Moore’s stories appear to be open-ended and present us with a narratee who is autonomous they nonetheless ‘paint a very bleak picture of women’s chances for satisfying relationships’. Moore’s female narratees find themselves unfulfilled and do ‘not escape to happiness’ (Phelan 356) even when their relationships end. What follows addresses the recurring theme of identity and selfhood in Moore’s work and how through the narrative mode, these concepts are received by an

extradiegetic audience.

Elizabeth Vogel also suggests that it is Moore's use of common or 'universal' female experiences that draws readers to at times, move into the addressee position. Focusing around 'issues complicated by gender—heterosexual love, infidelity, mother/daughter relationships—the narrator and reader become de-centered to gain both distance and intimacy' (Vogel 71). Presenting readers with scenarios and experiences that they can relate to/identify with allows readers to vacillate between assuming the role of narratee and narrative audience. Also in many stories, Moore does not give the narratee specific physical characteristics which may encourage the reader to assume the role of addressee. '[R]eaders know the protagonist's interior thoughts, but do not know what she looks like. For the reader, she can be anyone or everyone' (Vogel 73). As Moore's stories give a female readership the opportunity to receive aspects of the address, and given that the stories ultimately direct the narratee onto the path of inevitable inner dissatisfaction, I argue that Moore's use of hypothetical second-person narration not only highlights these characteristics in the narratee but also works to project notions of self-doubt and dissatisfaction onto an extradiegetic audience.

As a technique second-person narration generally illustrates a character's split identity and/or the disconnection from oneself and Moore's second-person narration suggests that each narratee/protagonist is 'at odds with the roles in which they find themselves and with the expectations of families and spouse; they are uncomfortable even with their names, the most obvious marker of their identities' (Weekes 3). The stories in *Self-Help* concentrate on the female persona and the notion that women

construct an identity by living for and through external factors (i.e. family and work) rather than being able to develop an autonomous sense of self (Weekes 2). The idea of female protagonists striving for an autonomous sense of self is not restricted to the short stories in *Self-Help*. Moore's novel *Who will Run the Frog Hospital* depicts an adolescent female relationship that challenges the audience to question whether the protagonist Berie's 'experience (of adult loneliness and an idealization of a childhood friendship) is an experience common to most women or whether it is unique to Berie.' (Fagan 53). In both *Who will Run the Frog Hospital* and *Self-Help*, Moore's shifting; sometimes undefined narratee encourages an ideal narrative audience to identify with Moore's narratees' difficulties that relate to forming a sense of self.

Moore uses the instructional, hypothetical second-person voice satirically. Her narration not only mocks the self-help genre but also appears to mock the genre's target audience. In his paper "Self-Help for narratee and narrative audience: how 'I' – and 'You'? – read 'How'", James Phelan explains:

Where the standard narrative in the self-help genre always leads its audiences (actual and authorial) onward and upward toward Self-Fulfillment and the Better Life [...] Moore's narratee-protagonist is on a slow course to nowhere. [...] Strong emotions for the narratee seem less appropriate than knowing laughter about modern relationships and self-help books (Phelan 355-356).

The next section focuses on Moore's "How to Become a Writer" to further illustrate how Moore's use of hypothetical second-person narration imposes certain negative feelings onto an extradiegetic audience. "How to Become a Writer" is written to guide the narratee along the path necessary to become a writer. However, as with

Moore's other stories, these instructions expose the inevitable difficulties that the protagonist/narratee will face. These difficulties are not only based on developing writing, the hypothetical narration also suggests that the protagonist/narratee will ultimately struggle to form and accept her sense of self. The narratee/protagonist's specific characteristics (e.g. the 'you' addressed is also referred to as Francie) infer that the address is horizontal and the 'you' is within the text, however, this story (as with others in the collection) presents a 'you' with generic qualities that enable the address to be received by the reader. In "How to Become a Writer" we are presented with a relatable narratee that 'female readers will likely identify with' (Vogel 73). As an audience we can easily interpret 'Francie' to be an ambiguous 'you' who struggles with their own sense of self.

In "How to Become a Writer", as with other hypothetical narratives, the reader does not experience a story in the traditional sense as nothing within the story has actually occurred: it only may occur in the future. DelConte suggests that hypothetical uses of second-person narration create a more complex relationship between the reader and the narratee-protagonist (DelConte 20). Hypothetical forms of second-person narration rely on the reader identifying with the elements of a narratee-protagonist's actions and or character to feel as though it is 'the reader' who is also actually being addressed. For example in a 'how-to' book about playing golf, the reader must have some level of interest about learning how to play golf for the publication to carry out its purpose (DelConte 19). In "How to Become a Writer", the relationship between narratee-protagonist and narrative audience becomes blurred only if the readership is the text's ideal narrative audience (in that they can

connect/relate to elements of the addressed 'you'). Like Weekes, DelConte infers that although the narratee-protagonists in hypothetical second-person texts are presented as having some level of choice about their future, the events that take place in the story will inevitably happen regardless of their choice. DelConte says of Pam Houston's 'How to Talk to a Hunter', the story 'points to the fluidity of character even within the deep structure fibula of events: different potential actants may do one thing or another, yet the basic progression and outcome of events will remain unchanged' (DelConte 20). Given the thematic thread of Moore's *Self-Help* collection, however comedic and cynical the tone, an ideal narrative audience cannot help but interpret the texts as having a melancholic subtext - inferring that no matter who the address is transferred to; who the 'you' may be, the events will always more or less end up the same.

Throughout the story, the narratee is 'instructed' to feel disillusioned and to constantly question the choices behind her writing. 'Why Write? Where does writing come from?' (Moore "How to Become a Writer" 630). 'Begin to wonder what you do write about. Or if you have anything to say.' (632) Elizabeth Vogel outlines the connection between humor and identity in Moore's work. Vogel writes of the narratee in "How to Be an Other Woman": 'Although her comments are sarcastic and biting, she constantly questions her own perceptions and doubts her ability to make clear judgments' (Vogel 77). This is also the case in "How to Become a Writer", where, through humour, Moore identifies the issues the narratee will inevitably face - issues that question her creative ability and identity as a 'writer'. Each hypothetical piece suggests that the protagonist retains a certain level of autonomy in relation to

choosing the future Moore proposes for them. The undecided factors ‘He will have a nephew named Bradley Bob. Or perhaps a niece named Emily who is always dressed in pink and smells of milk’ (“How” 579) infer that the narratee/protagonist is ultimately in control of their future. In spite of the many options available, ‘you’ ultimately has the same outcome. It is irrelevant just ‘how many ways she [the protagonist] turns a phrase, no matter how many points of view she assumes, she can make only one choice, but that doesn’t mean she’ll feel it was the right one’ (Drzal in Weekes 5). The notion of limited ‘choice’ also relates to the previously mentioned notion (as outlined by Louise Woodstock), that traditional self-help publications are prescriptive. The author specifies exactly how the reader should improve his/herself (Woodstock 325). In the same way as readers of traditional self-help texts, Moore’s narratees appear autonomous in their search for a sense of self but they are ‘prescribed’ inevitable self-dissatisfaction.

A similar use of second-person narration can be found in Georges Perec’s, *A Man Asleep*. Perec’s novel is predominantly written in present tense however there are a few instances of hypothetical second-person narration that could be interpreted as a play on the prescriptive second-person address commonly used in traditional instructional self-help publications. “You must forget hope, enterprise, success, perseverance” (Perec 163). Perec’s narratee, a severely depressed young man, is depicted at the point of almost self-annihilation. Unlike traditional self-help texts, Perec’s ‘you’, in the same way as Moore’s, is ‘prescribed’ a path of ultimate dissatisfaction.

You have hardly started living, and yet all is said, all is done. You are only twenty-five, but your path is already mapped out for you. The roles are

prepared, and the labels: from the potty of your infancy to the bath-chair of your old age, all the seats are ready and waiting their turn. Your adventures have been so thoroughly described that the most violent revolt would not make anyone turn a hair (Perec 155).

Comparable to Moore's narratees, the decisions made by Perec's 'you' are irrelevant because 'your' path has already been determined. 'You' are not autonomous. "You walk or you do not walk. You sleep or you do not sleep. You walk down your six flights of stairs, you climb back up again. You buy *Le Monde* or you do not buy it. You eat or you do not eat" (Perec 184). "Everything is ready for your death: the bullet that will end your days was cast long ago, the weeping women who will follow your casket have already been appointed" (Perec 155).

Instructional second-person narration in *Pet Names*.

Certain personal decisions regarding my own creative work have been affected by aspects of Moore's writing. Reading critical responses to *Self-Help* for example influenced me to modify my writing from second-person narration to a hypothetical/instructional second-person narration. This preference was a consequence of comparing the two second-person narrative forms and deciding that using an instructional second-person address to 'direct' the narratee into undesirable or unsettling situations ultimately works to both confront and unnerve the reader. As previously outlined, the hypothetical mode of address is typically employed in how-to guides and self-help manuals. Both are generally understood to be texts that help the addressee improve aspects of his/her life. Moore's use of the narrative mode

mocks the genre and highlights issues surrounding personal choice and lack of autonomy. I on the other hand adopt the instructional second person to present the reader with a narratee who engages in idiosyncratic and disconcerting conduct. My intention is to address a narratee who is not only anxious and obscure but who also engages in activity/thoughts that are not necessarily condoned by the reader. This approach although having the potential to distance the reader from the narratee, and therefore the text, nonetheless presents the reader with an idiosyncratic person who is open to being not just anyone but everyone. The characterization of my narratee however, is quite specific and the reader therefore is likely to perceive the address as horizontal 'the fuller the characterization of the 'you' the more aware actual readers will be of their differences from that 'you' and thus, the more fully they will move into the observer role, and the less likely this role will overlap with the addressee position' (Phelan 73). The possibility is that the reader may not receive any aspects of the address, resulting in the address being perceived as predominantly horizontal (within the text). Despite this the instructional mode of address still has the potential to solicit the reader into the narratee's conduct.

The use of an instructional address is intended to highlight the narratee's taboo conduct and encourage the reader to question his/her own preconceptions about what actually constitutes the 'taboo'. For example: 'Remove the sugared almonds, one by one, from underneath their mother's backside. Apologise once. Blaspheme twice. Crush the eggs between your thumb and forefinger' (Lovett 20). This example, like others from my writing, depicts the narratee engaging in socially abnormal conduct with animals. Instructional second-person narration brings into

question a reader's own prejudices regarding the 'taboo'; particularly in relation to the treatment of animals. Instances of 'inappropriate' or 'bizarre' human/animal interactions are included to reflect my interest in the way individuals value animals differently (Woods 26).

Moore adopts the self-help style to guide her female narratees into inevitable dissatisfaction. I, by way of contrast, use the same style of narration to guide/instruct my narratee to continue with their idiosyncratic thoughts and behaviours. Each of the characters in my creative work, along with the narratee, can be perceived as eccentric. The reader is presented with tidbits/excerpts of individuals' lives and thoughts. It is not essential or even relevant that the narratee, and other characters, overcome their anxieties or work on their peculiarities. The purpose is to present the reader with an insight into the multiplicity of diverse thinking and daily experiences of different individuals (young and old, male and female) from an unspecific/general suburban locale. Moore's narratees' 'autonomy' is presented as irrelevant since the narratee (regardless of the number of choices available) can make only one choice, but that doesn't mean she'll feel it was the right one (Drzal in Weekes 5). In a similar way I use the instructional mode of second-person narration to play with the notion of tradition in 'how to' and advice texts. Many advice texts are meant to improve aspects of a reader's personality, my intention however is to instruct the narratee to continue with their self-doubt and idiosyncratic internal dialogue. This highlights the dominant themes of social-anxiety and the ongoing (yet mostly unsuccessful) search for belonging/connection with others that are associated with my work.

But, I don't want to feel what you feel:
Empathic Inaccuracy in *Pet Names*.

This section discusses issues concerning empathy and creating empathetic characters in *Pet Names*. A particular focus is 'empathic inaccuracy' and the reasons why a reader would not want to ally themselves with a character's feelings. The reluctance to feel empathy for a certain character might be a consequence of the disparate beliefs, experiences and moral codes that potentially exist between the two entities. The role empathy plays within a text and an analysis of empathic inaccuracy is addressed, as are the reasons a reader may not empathise with the characters in *Pet Names* (Keen 222). This section also theorises whether morally questionable characters in my own work are a significant cause of empathic inaccuracy.

The term 'empathy' originated in the early twentieth century and was a translation from Theodor Lipps' psychological German term 'Einfühlung' meaning, 'feeling one's way into'. (Keen 208). The notion of 'feeling one's way into' according to Karl F. Morrison, in his book *I am You*, stems from the sentence 'I am You' which was developed from Martin Buber's book *I and Thou* (1878). Buber believed that an individual's selfhood was created through his or her relations with others and that one became conscious of oneself through interaction with others (Morrison 20). The sentence 'I am you', a remnant of Vedic theology, reflects the notion that God inhabits all beings and that personality is formed from a divine unity

(Morrison 1). Vernon Lee, it is said, coined the word *empathy* in 1904. ‘Lee’s arguments proceed from a deep conviction that the phenomenon of empathy is not divorced from language; rather, empathy explains how we use and understand metaphor.’ (Morgan 38) The term has developed and contemporary understanding of empathy equates to a sense of being able to ‘feel’ what another ‘feels’. This section outlines how the lack of specification and characterisation in my work potentially prevents readers from truly ‘identifying’ and ‘feeling’ their way into a character’s situation. It is suggested that the amoral and ‘inappropriate’ nature of my characters can inhibit the reader’s ability or need to empathise with a character’s actions. The reader is introduced to characters who engage in the ‘taboo’. A consequence is the reader’s disquiet about identifying with conduct that challenges their own moral or ethical position. This perspective is addressed particularly in relation to interactions with animals. Examples of text types both specific and general that have characters who cause emotional distress rather than empathy for the reader are also cited.

Initially the reason why empathy is necessary in certain texts is analysed. Suzan Keen’s paper: “A Theory of Narrative Empathy” and her book *Narrative Empathy In The Novel* are the main sources to which I refer. Empathy is a sharing effect evoked by witnessing, hearing or reading about another’s emotional state (Keen “A Theory of Narrative Empathy” 208) Empathy is different from sympathy in that empathy means to feel what another feels whereas sympathy is a supportive emotion. For example ‘I feel your pain’ is empathising and ‘I feel pity for your pain’ is sympathising (209). Empathy is often a precursor to sympathy. Empathy either leads to sympathy or personal distress. Sympathy is a supportive emotion that is

usually ‘other directed’ whereas empathy that leads to personal distress is self-oriented. Personal distress occurs from an ‘over-aroused empathic response that creates personal distress (self-oriented and aversive) [that] causes a turning-away from the provocative condition of the other’ (208). Empathy can be considered an emotion in its own right. With empathy, we feel what we interpret as the emotions of others. This section looks at this concept in relation to my writing. Keen suggests as individuals we empathise when, ‘we feel what we believe to be the emotion of others’ (Keen “A Theory of Narrative Empathy” 208). A reason readers may find it difficult to empathise with characters in my work relates to the calculated broad and vague nature of the characterisations. The physical descriptions are unspecific or not apparent and are intended to inhibit the reader from developing any sort of relationship with or appreciation of a character’s feelings. (Keen *Empathy and the Novel* 72) Many of my characters’ emotional states are irrational and at times farcical which make it difficult to empathise with what are often seemingly irrelevant or ludicrous situations. Narrative empathy can be divided into different groups. Categorical empathy occurs when the characters in a narrative share similarities with the reader’s group identity. In this instance, the reader will identify with the characters within the text. Situational empathy, another type of narrative empathy, relies on the reader being able to recall a particular personal experience that is comparable to that in the text. This type of empathy generally leads to compassion; however it is less common because an author cannot depend on every reader having been in a similar situation (to that outlined in a narrative) (Keen “A Theory of Narrative Empathy” 220). Each reader will interpret a text differently and no singular

narrative technique can predict that a reader's empathic reaction to a text will match a particular character's feelings. As readers we may have empathy in that we feel what we 'believe' to be a character's experience but we 'do not have the luxury of questioning the character: we cannot ask, is that how you really felt' (222). A situation in which a reader's interpretation of a character's emotional state and the author's intentions do not match is referred to as empathic inaccuracy.

Empathic inaccuracy occurs when a reader responds empathetically to a fictional character at cross-purposes to the author's intentions. Authors also sometimes evoke empathy unintentionally. This accident contributes to empathic inaccuracy (222).

The empathic gap in my writing is not strictly aligned to Keen's above definition. Nonetheless it can still be construed as empathically inaccurate because the reader's need to feel empathically for a character is frustrated by the lack of specific characterisation, the taboo, the farcical nature and the disjointed structure of the writing. This conclusion has been drawn from the many responses of those who have read my work. Empathic inaccuracy is a consequence of the readers not being able to feel (although they have sought to be) empathetic towards the characters in the text. Keen suggests that rather than trying to eliminate empathic inaccuracy (by way of altering the text in an attempt to unite the author's intentions with the reader's feelings), one should acknowledge the battle between an author's intentions and a reader's interpretations. This allows us to recognise the opportunities for perceiving narrative empathy as rhetorical (Keen "A Theory of Narrative Empathy" 223). I would suggest this is a fluid state, a fluctuation between states, perhaps.

Narrative mode also affects a reader's ability to empathise with characters. Texts written in the first person (in comparison to those written in third person) allow the reader to empathise with the narrator because the narrative mode provides the reader access to internal thoughts and feelings. Previous sections of the exegesis identify ways in which second-person narratives are able to make readers feel complicit in what is occurring within the text and those experiences may project certain emotions onto the reader. Texts that frequently switch between narrative modes can inhibit a reader's ability to form a strong appreciation of a particular character's feelings. This lack of understanding has the potential to prevent the reader's ability to empathise with that character. Also, if the narration, whatever the narrative mode, is unreliable or farcical, then the reader's ability to empathise will be greatly affected. Whilst my writing may fit into aspects of these empathy-preventing categories, I argue that the obscure and immoral nature of a character's thoughts and conduct encourages the reader to question and perhaps hold back from empathising with characters in *Pet Names*: understanding and empathising with immoral conduct calls one's own moral position into question.

A gap exists between rhetorical intention and reader interpretation in my creative work. This is possibly a consequence of the reader looking for reasoning or justification in the characters' thoughts and actions. A defence of, or explanations for each character's conduct, has deliberately been avoided throughout the various stages of developing *Pet Names*. A genred approach, such as those found in murder mysteries in which reasons contributing to the taboo are succinctly explained, has been consciously bypassed. This approach is particularly relevant to the young

characters in my work. Rationalisation for ‘My Sweetness’ animal-maiming for example is that ‘she wants to feel powerful like a Jesus with a gun’ (Lovett 39). Proffering an imbedded/psychological explanation has been intentionally put to one side. This aspect of my writing has been influenced by childhood experiences, interacting with young people and the work of Miranda July and Todd Solondz who specifically depict children engaging with the ‘taboo’. July and Solondz characterise child characters as impulsive, naïve and amoral. A moral rationalisation or reductionist approach to understanding the actions of their young characters would undoubtedly reorientate the work of these authors. It places the moral onus on reader-reception, thus framing another level of a simultaneous ‘metacritical’ reading. Just as Mark Twain’s *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* can be read as a children’s novel, an adult fiction and as social commentary.

In his film, *Happiness*, Solondz’s young characters are thrown into an adult; sexualised world that they (the children) cannot comprehend. Through the films representation of taboo child/adult relations, the film comments on the power of sexuality and raises the conundrum of the (adult/parent) protector as the exploiter (Defino 309). Similarly, July presents children engaging in taboo behaviour (in numerous works) as innocent acts of curiosity. July’s film *Me and You and Everyone We Know*, depicts (both adult and child) taboo behaviour in terms of idiosyncrasies that ‘everyone you know’ has or is capable of having. July’s film projects an optimistic and moral interpretation of its individuals, despite (or perhaps because of) their unconventional behaviour. The film infers that adults should ultimately take a step back from their ‘goal oriented, over-scheduled, leisure- and

sometimes sleep-deprived lives' (Cardullo 648) and experience things from 'a child's playful, expectant point of view' (Cardullo 648). When adults act with child-like impulsiveness and spontaneity they forgo the need for moral and rational judgement. Although it is not a requirement for films to include moral messages, in the case of *Me and You and Everyone We Know*, it could be argued that this representation, despite the director's intentions, dismisses and/or works to normalise the exploitative nature (in the case of Andrew and Nancy) of certain adult behaviour. On the other hand, *Happiness* does not reduce the distance between the normative and the perverse 'other' by condoning or justifying subversive behaviour. Instead, by substituting the notion of the monstrous 'outsider' with characters, who on the outside appear to be congenial and 'normal' members of society, Solondz provides an intimate and moralised look 'at lineaments of the world we all occupy' (DeFino 314). It is this 'life-negating' aspect of Solondz's work that makes his attack on social deviancy all the more significant. Rather than working to produce a conventional narrative (in which good prevails), Solondz shows that 'monsters' are not readily identifiable, happiness (for some) is ultimately unobtainable and subversive behaviour sometimes goes unpunished (Mirsky in Solondz 9).

Character identification is significant in relation to whether or not a reader is able to empathise with a character's situation. Empathy and the feeling that follows it, 'sympathy', are often associated with morality. If there is contention between a reader and the decisions, behaviours and emotions of a character, then the reader may want to distance him or herself from that character. According to Suzanne Keen, successful authorial empathy occurs when a reader empathises with a character

whose moral code does not match that of the reader (Keen “A Theory of Narrative Empathy” 215). My writing gives readers, who despite not identifying with or condoning what characters do, an opportunity to empathise with the circumstances and experiences of those characters. However, my characters’ identities are predominantly formed by their internal dialogue and idiosyncratic behaviours. Their identities are intangible because they are devoid of age, location, physical attributes and in the case of ‘you’, gender. The reader is only presented with ‘bite-size’ excerpts of the characters’ everyday and often ‘inappropriate’ thoughts and behaviours. Keen suggests that even naming a character may contribute to a reader’s ability to empathise with that character. Withholding character names, like I have done in *Pet Names*, may therefore hinder the reader’s ability to connect with the said character (Keen 217). I have deliberately withheld the names of each ‘human’ character in my text and attributed ‘people’ names to their pets. The reason for this is to represent the characters’ internal panics and idiosyncrasies as belonging to anyone rather than specifically ‘someone’. The intention is to demonstrate that we are all idiosyncratic. What we consider as ‘normal’ with respect to our internal dialogue can be perceived as bizarre and inappropriate by others.

Attributing the pets with human names relates to the previously mentioned anthropomorphism that suggests humans more readily connect with animals that possess ‘human-like’ traits or characteristics. Personal experience also determines whether a reader will identify with a text. Many of the characters in *Pet Names* engage in the inappropriate or taboo particularly in regard to animals. As a consequence the reader may choose not to identify with the characters and therefore

have difficulty empathising with their situations. Wayne C. Booth suggests, ‘*If an author wants intense sympathy for characters who do not have strong virtues to recommend them, then the psychic vividness of prolonged inside views will help him*’ (Booth 377–8, emphasis in original). Rather than have the reader empathise with each character and appreciate the reasons behind their every action the intention is to portray the everyday thoughts and behaviours of socially uncomfortably individuals. The aim as already alluded to is to avoid a rationalization or reductionism of their thoughts and behaviours. The individuals, all of whom are of different ages, search for personal fulfillment but are inhibited by their inability to connect with others. Representing each character empathetically would require that the character be altered. I argue that a rational, calculated and even, likable individual, rather than be interpreted as ‘anyone’ as the ‘prolonged inside views,’ (Booth 377-8) requires specificities that would result in the character being identified as ‘someone’ rather than a broader ambiguous being.

Keen outlines that the pace of a narrative can invoke or hinder a reader’s empathy. The staccato and short/punchy nature of my writing also has the potential to restrict a reader from empathising with the story. The narrative is not linear and has the capacity to prevent readers connecting with or understanding each character’s emotions. This is a product of the editing process that concentrates on structure and pace. Idiosyncratic internal dialogue is broken down into numbered sections and interspersed with italicised recollections of certain incidents in each character’s past. Although not immediately apparent to me as the author, my writing can tax the reader’s attention span and the idiosyncratic nature of my work does place certain

demands on the reader. Whilst I still want to present the reader with short idiosyncratic and punchy pieces that are void of sentimentality and flowery description, I have altered my work by breaking the prose into segments in order to present the idiosyncratic internal dialogue, presented in small, easily-digestible doses. The short; the segmented structure of my work may hinder the reader's ability to form a strong understanding of each character and therefore inhibit the reader from empathising with that character. The overall effect is a reversal of Cortazar's "Graffiti", returning narrative to an anonymous provocation.

The empathic inaccuracy and empathic gap that exist between the reader's interpretation and the actual intent of my writing are due to a number of reasons. Works that influence my creative writing deal with the taboo, characters tend to be irrational, socially uncomfortable and at the periphery of what might be considered normal. It is difficult to empathise with a character if the reader is unable to understand or accurately interpret that character's feelings. To rationalise or explain why the characters behave as they do would diminish the spontaneity of their actions and ultimately alter the direction of the work. The narrative mode of a creative piece also affects the reader's ability to empathise with a text. The segmented and disjointed nature of the prose in *Pet Names* disrupts the reader's capacity to form strong connections with or an understanding of any one character. Switching between narrative modes has the same effect. The capricious and absurd nature of certain situations in my work denies the need to empathise with those experiences particularly when they involve the taboo. What could be said about a reader who empathises with an individual that intentionally hurts animals? This is

the paradox in my writing. The purpose of the writing is to call certain conduct into question. A specific interest of mine, alluded to previously, is the anthropomorphic ranking of animals. This section has addressed the idea that readers have a tendency to identify with characters that are relatable or understandable. These characteristics are not evident in my work. The aim is to depict discrepant idiosyncratic vignettes of the socially inept who long for (but seldom attain) interpersonal connections. The aim is to depict discrepant idiosyncratic vignettes of the socially inept who long for (but seldom attain) interpersonal connections. My creative work caricatures specific moments in the lives and minds of an eclectic collection of individuals, and although the thoughts and situations presented are both trivial and farcical, the aim is to reflect the nuances of each situation exactly as they occur. There is a deliberate attempt to offer the reader stories devoid of grandiose themes and tidy plots. Readers may not characterise my work as ‘realism’, nonetheless the reasoning for this method of character representation does relate to ‘verismo’. Rationalising or pigeonholing the characters would be to miss the point of the representations. This concept closely relates to Virginia Woolf’s classic statement from *The Common Reader* about depicting the ‘ordinary’ rather than ‘extra-ordinary’ interiorities of a character.

Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad of impressions—trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life on Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from the old; the moment of importance came not here but there; so that if a writer were a free man and not a slave, if he could write what he chose and not what he must, he could base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention, there would be no plot, no comedy, no

tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style, and perhaps not a single button sewn on as the Bond Street tailors would have it. Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; but a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this uncircumscribed spirit? (Woolf 212-213)

Conclusion

During the initial stages of creating *Pet Names*, I was unaware of the exact role second-person narration played in my writing. I knew I was drawn to the narrative mode because of its apostrophic qualities. It took me back to my first experience of reading second-person address in 'choose your own adventure' narratives. I was drawn to the idea of being directly addressed and having the feeling that I had both a level of autonomy as to how the story unfolded and also a sense of belonging to the text. When beginning to write in the second-person voice, I considered whether it was perhaps somewhat narcissistic to be drawn to texts that were at some level addressing 'me', the reader. After researching and gaining a better understanding of the theoretical work behind the narrative mode, I continue to work with the medium because it complements many of the thematic and ideological aspects of my writing. For the most part, all my creative work is driven by the notion that people are idiosyncratic. What appears normal for one person can seem bizarre to another. The primary motive behind my writing is to reveal the internal dialogue of different individuals. Characters of various ages and backgrounds demonstrate that they share similar fears and issues in relation to both their sense of self and how they interact with others. Despite the characters being very idiosyncratic, they all nonetheless are searching for a sense of belonging. The second-person narration, outlined in each section, is intended to immediately draw 'you' in and communicate with 'you'. Regardless of the type of second-person address, there is always some level (either

miniscule or large) of implied reader autonomy within the text. 'You' always has/have a choice. A level of connection and interaction exists between the narrator and the narratee; a notion that 'you belong here' and 'you are needed for this narrative to continue' that I have come to is the consequences of using the narrative mode to attempt to make the reader complicit in things or scenarios that go against his or her moral code (Booth 377-8).

Each of the four essays in this exegesis has focused on a different aspect of second-person narration and demonstrates ways in which the narrative mode works to represent the aforementioned characteristics of the narrator and/or narratee. The four sections of this exegesis are intended to give you, the reader, an insight into the creation of *Pet Names* and the associated influences and theories that have contributed to the development of the work. This conclusion synthesises the key arguments from each of the four essays and identifies the arguments all indicate that second-person narration as a narrative mode works to illuminate themes of social isolation and desire for interpersonal connection within a text.

The first essay focuses on Cortazar's short story "Graffiti" to show the apostrophic qualities of second-person narration. Cortazar's use of second-person address in "Graffiti" indicates how the apostrophic nature of the narrative mode denotes the narrator's desire for human interaction and understanding. Cortazar's use of apostrophic address helped me understand the ambiguity of the address. The benefits of this approach were evident when editing my creative work as I became more confident regarding the different ways the reader could interpret the second-person address (and who the reader would identify as the narratee). The use of

second-person narration allows readers to understand the narrator's feelings toward the narratee and also exposes the narrator's need to apostrophise. The original intention was to adopt an approach similar to that of Cortazar. However after a continuous reworking of my stories it is evident that my method is the antithesis of Cortazar's. It is anticipated therefore that the reader will not understand or align him or herself with the characters in the text. This was a major issue faced when editing my creative work. There was a need to establish precisely why readers might not identify or align themselves with my characters and how this would affect the readers' experience. Sharing my work with others and studying the creative works that have most influenced my writing, demonstrates that both the ambiguous address coupled with the taboo nature of the characters' thoughts and actions encourage the reader to feel the need to distance him or herself from the characters within the text. This led to investigating the taboo presented in Miranda July's short story "The Shared Patio". July's story, in a similar way to Cortazar's, is an example of narrative apostrophe. Like "Graffiti", "The Shared Patio" highlights the narrator's desire for interpersonal connection. However July's story goes on to demonstrate how the use of second-person narration illuminates a character's need for personal justification. July's protagonist in "The Shared Patio" wants affirmation that her actions are socially acceptable (and not taboo). In the following excerpt, the address is directed toward an intertextual character. Given that the story's address fluctuates between a horizontal and vertical address, the reader may still, in this section, align him or herself as the narratee.

You can see that I'm perfect?

It's in each thing that you do. I watch you when you hang your bottom
over the side of the bathtub to wash it before bed.
You can see me do this?
Every night (July "The Shared Patio" 8).

July's work, particularly her rhetorical themes of representing and playing with common understandings of what actually constitutes socially taboo and inappropriate conduct have been influential in relation to my own approach. My analysis of July's work focuses on David Herman's concept 'double deixis' and explains how second-person narration appears to address two audiences simultaneously. In July's short story, the protagonist is apparently addressing both an audience within the text (horizontal address) and one outside the text (vertical address). The double deictic or ambiguous address affects the reader's perception of the characters and projects the address onto the reader. To all appearances the narrator in July's story is seeking approval from the reader in relation to her (the narrator's) inappropriate conduct. The protagonist wants to connect with the narratee (as in Cortazar's story) while at the same time be reassured that her thoughts and behaviors are acceptable. This can be unsettling for the reader as it calls into question the reader's own morals.

In the chapter on July's work, I referred to deictic shift theory that concerns the reader's 'psychological relocation' into the narrative (Busselle and Bilandzic 256). Although a number of approaches have been addressed in this exegesis, July's thematic and rhetorical interests are those most closely representative of my own. Many of July's works focus on a longing for interpersonal connection (particularly when a character's desire steps outside socially acceptable boundaries) (July in Kushner 63-64). Some significant issues faced in creating *Pet Names* relate to deixis. The essay concerning July's story argues that *Pet Names* has few instances of double deixis. The

consequence of positioning my narratee with a particular back-story is that the reader interprets the address and predominantly intertextual. The initial goal was to create an address that was entirely double deictic. Research into the role of empathy in narrative (to be concluded later) suggests that in order to empathise or have a level of emotional investment in a text, readers need to understand (or feel as though they can understand) how a character feels. A reworking of my writing was intended to give the reader a degree of understanding of the characters but there was no expectation that the reader should actually accept or empathise with each character. This point of demarcation between my work and July's is discussed in the following paragraph.

“The Shared Patio” adopts a familiar and conversational tone that is inviting to the reader. The recognizable and friendly first-person address encourages the reader to both side with the narrator and assume the role of the narratee. ‘What if she and I were close friends? What if I borrowed her clothes?’ (July “The Shared Patio” 2). The tone of the narrator's questions suggests the narratee also feels the same way/shares a similar understanding. July has an ability to manipulate this familiarity. She presents the narratee with the narrator's inappropriate and taboo desires causing the reader to feel not only uncomfortable for receiving the address but also allowing July's rhetorical interests of ‘taboo and what actually constitutes the taboo’ to permeate the narrative. The use of familiar and deictic words and address allows July to draw the reader in then assault them with her rhetorical concerns. Attaining a similar effect has proven to be somewhat elusive in my own work. Booth suggests ‘If an author wants intense sympathy for characters who do not have strong virtues [...] the psychic vividness of prolonged inside views will help him’ (Booth 377-8). Why did I not simply rework the characters in *Pet Names*? Why wasn't the reader presented with prolonged insights into each character's most inner thoughts and feelings? This approach was tried but rejected. Each of my characters, like many of July's, longs for interpersonal connection. The characters however struggle to achieve this connection because each has issues about interacting with others and difficulty establishing how he/she ‘fits’ in society. The intention was to present the reader with the idea that the characters in *Pet*

Names are challenged when it comes to articulating and rationalizing their feelings and behaviours. The concepts in *Pet Names* differ from July's because the reader is not required to understand or empathise with the inappropriate nature of the characters. July's works on the other hand encourages the reader to acknowledge the innocence and naivety of her characters' discrepant actions/desires. The characters' pursuit of interpersonal connection coupled with their inability to connect causes such behaviours/desires. '[G]radually I realised he had lifted up the back of my skirt and was nuzzling his face between my buns. He was doing this because he loved me. It was a kind of loving I had never known was possible. And then I woke up' (July "Majesty" 20-21) Second-person narration is a well-suited and obvious choice in many of July's works. The intersubjective nature of the address needs 'you' to function. '*Are you angry? Punch a pillow. Was it satisfying? Not hardly. These days people are too angry for punching.*' (July "The Shared Patio", italics in original.) Each reader brings his/her own set of ideologies and beliefs to a text and it is July's ability to have the reader position themselves as the narratee that allows the author to project her own rhetorical concerns onto the reader (Schofield 131).

In contrast I do not anticipate that the reader will understand and subsequently empathise with my characters. My characters are not depicted as naïve and innocent. Is it possible to infer that their thoughts and behaviours can be clearly explained through their personal and psychological issues/yearnings? The simple answer is 'No.' Readers often try to reveal or rationalise a character's inappropriateness. At times however it is difficult to rationalise or explain why people act the way they do: the spontaneous discordant things done on impulse. This is an aspect I represent in my writing. From the outset my creative work informs the reader that although he or she may not understand a character's motivation, all the characters are innately similar; they desire connection and for someone to give them a 'pet name'. The inference is that someone needs to care for you in order for them to give you a 'pet name'.

We do not hold their hand. We do not invite them for dinner. We do not trust them to care for small children. We find their language crude and

their actions unsettling. We draw the curtains and close the door and move to a different train carriage.

This does not make them go away.

We do not want to acknowledge it but they are like us. And we are like them. We want someone to hold our hand. And invite us for dinner. And trust us with small children.

We long for a pet name. This is our reasoning. It is theirs. It is yours (Lovett 2).

In a similar way to the characters from the writing of Cortazar and July, my characters have a mind to connect with others but lack the necessary social skills to do so. Cortazar's protagonist invented and interacted with a like-minded person. In July's story, an inability to connect contributed to the protagonist physically embracing and dreaming of a life with her neighbour at precisely the same moment the unfortunate man guy was having a seizure. The incident also caused the protagonist to reach out to a narratee via motivational articles. In *Pet Names* the characters attempt to interact with animals rather than each other. 'People who are bad at friends have pets. That is because animals aren't very good at telling if someone's a loser or not' (Lovett 113)

Deciding to offer only vague or ambiguous characterizations has also contributed to further obstacles that relate to empathy and the 'readability' of my work. The aim is not to confuse the reader although at the same time I do not necessarily want or require them to understand or have an affinity with the thoughts and behaviours of the characters. Both July's and Cortazar's stories demonstrate second-person narration is perfect for depicting desires and frustrations that surround an individual's need for interpersonal connection and sense of belonging in society. The second-person narrative mode, unlike other narrative modes, reaches out from the page and impels the reader to complete the communicative circuit. Each reader is required to establish the positioning of the narratee. The participatory nature of the second-person narrative mode is also somewhat 'social' and welcoming in itself (e.g. July's title *No One Belongs Here More Than You*). It serves to highlight a story's themes of interpersonal

connection. My creative work, on the other hand, has the capacity to restrict a reader's ability to clearly identify the desire of various characters for connection. Unlike the other authors, the readers of my work do not have a prolonged insight into the nuances of each character's emotional and psychological state. The attributes of each character do not represent the methodical or rational. The capacity of the reader to empathise with a character is therefore circumvented. I depict various idiosyncratic and (depending on the reader) seemingly irrelevant events of individuals who inhabit a nonspecific community. In *The Common Reader* Virginia Woolf states 'if a writer were a free man and not a slave, if he could write what he chose and not what he must, he could base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention' (212-213). In somewhat less articulate and more vulgar parlance of *Pet Names*, 'sometimes, some people are just dicks. And I guess that, sometimes, you, Sir. David Attenborough, may wish to identify me as 'some people.' (Lovett 137).

The essay on Lorrie Moore and instructional second-person narration examines ways that instructional and hypothetical forms of second-person narration mock the self-help genre while at the same time assist the narratee's search for identity and self-improvement. Reference to Moore's collection of short stories, *Self-Help*, illustrates how an instructional second-person address makes visible a narratee's sense of self-dissatisfaction. Carnegie's seminal self-help publication, *How to Win Friends and Influence People* is cited to demonstrate how Moore's use of the instructional second-person narration not only ridicules the self-help genre but also rhetorically comments on the role of women in a certain society. Moore's stories 'construct a women's communal experience that goes beyond a humor of one-liners and direct expressions' (Vogel 71). The chapter on instructional second-person narration reveals how both Moore's and my own use of the mode, unlike traditional self-help publications, direct the narratee into inevitable dissatisfaction. In *Pet Names* for instance the style of instructional second-person narration serves to further highlight the narratee's desire but inability to connect with others in his/her (the narratee's gender is not specified) community.

Max Weber's concept of charismatic authority (as outlined in Weber's *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*) illustrates how/why readers see authors of self-help publications as authoritative figures whose instructions are worth following. Self-help authors acquire authority by sharing with readers how they (the authors) or others were also able to overcome similar circumstances to those experienced by the reader. To gain authority Carnegie interweaves personal anecdotes with those of famous people/people in positions of power. Moore's narratees represent a common and fluid female experience. The fact that Moore leads her narratees to inevitable self-dissatisfaction not only mocks the self-help genre but it exposes the contradictory nature of traditional self-help publications geared to a female readership (Vogel 75). 'Feel discovered, comforted, needed, loved, and start sometimes, somehow to feel bored' (Moore "How" 577). The irony of traditional self-help publications is reflected in their titles that suggest the decision-making autonomy of the readers. The books however specifically identify exactly what readers need to do in order to 'better' themselves. The subjective view of the author therefore predominates exactly what it is that constitutes a 'better' self. These publications can also be perceived as 'social' as the idea of seeking advice is a social act and not a solitary one. As alluded to earlier, the initial appeal for me related to the instructional and communicative nature of 'choose your own adventure' narratives. To work, the writing requires the reader to receive the address and interact with the text. This aspect influenced my decision to use instructional second-person narration in *Pet Names*. The hypothetical and instructional form, regardless of the where the reader chooses to position the narratee, suggests communication.

Pet Names is largely influenced by Moore's mockery of the self-help genre. Moore's tone inspires my work. Her tone is sarcastic and somewhat tongue-in-cheek, yet she allows her rhetorical views to permeate the text. Moore uses the instructional mode of second-person narration to direct her narratees into inevitable self-satisfaction. Despite Moore's influence on my writing, I have developed a contrasting style of narration that instructs my narratee to continue with their bizarre/idiosyncratic and

seemingly 'unproductive' thoughts and behaviours. This complements my writing's thematic concerns. 'Instructing' the narratee in such a way, infers that the characters in *Pet Names* desire interpersonal connection and yet their social inabilities and particular idiosyncrasies assume they will never attain what they desire. This relates to my decision to allow characters' actions and thoughts to remain unresolved and inexplicable. Rationalizing their thoughts and behaviours would suggest that the characters have some level of understanding of their social flaws. Being able to understand their social inadequacies the characters would then potentially work on their inadequacies to achieve their goals of interpersonal connection and a desired sense of self. Self-improvement/development is something that my writing is intended to avoid.

This exegesis ended with a chapter outlining the role empathy plays in a narrative. I found it necessary to depict the lack of empathy in my creative work and argue against representing characters with whom readers can readily identify and empathise. Suzanne Keen's extensive studies related to the role of empathy in fiction were cited to identify and explain my work's lack of empathy. Narrative empathy can be categorised into different groups. The most common form of empathy is Categorical Empathy that occurs when characters in the narrative share similarities with a reader's group identity (the same way Moore's female narratees appeal to communal female experiences). Situational Empathy on the other hand requires the reader to recall a particular moment or 'situation' similar to the character's experiences. Nonetheless to ensure the reader can empathise with a character, an author must guarantee a reader can feel they understand what the character feels. To empathise readers need to feel as though they can understand the character's feelings. *Pet Names* avoids these things. The intention is not to present the reader with a faceless other (similar to depictions of foreign armies in film). Without *any* vested interest in a character's fate, the reader would simply stop reading because they would lose interest. The aim is to walk a fine line between depicting characters as obvious and specific and portraying characters as faceless, ambiguous beings that are too generic to warrant caring about.

In the early writing stages, I decided against attributing/addressing each character by their Christian name. I have instead assigned them a 'pet name' or a generic term/the name of their occupation such as 'The Priest' and 'The Organist'. It was considered that conferring characters with Christian names, a set locale and specific physical attributes would encourage readers to identify characters as particular 'someones'. This being said I want to encourage reader involvement and participation, as in 'Choose Your Own Adventure' stories. The onus is on the reader to envisage each character. In addition the choice not to confer characters with Christian names implies that who an individual is does not really matter. According to Keen, even something as simple as attributing a character with a first name can allow a reader to identify with/and therefore empathise with said character (Keen "A Theory of Narrative Empathy" 216). The idea to avoid names (as previously stated) is to prevent the reader connecting with and understanding the characters. The characters themselves do not have the capacity to appreciate the reasons behind their idiosyncratic thoughts and inappropriate behaviours. Most of the time, their inappropriate actions are not premeditated. At the core of each character is the need for interpersonal connection and a strong sense of self. Ways in which they go about attaining their desires are irrational, bizarre and inappropriate. A similar method is adopted in Cormac McCarthy's novel *The Sunset Limited*. McCarthy's character 'Black' suggests that all people really want to be loved by God. In the same way my characters long for interpersonal connection although they cannot attain it. 'Yes. Because what he really wants he cant get. Or he thinks he cant get. [...] He wants what everybody wants. [...] He wants to be loved by God' (McCarthy 59).

Something apparent in July's work is allowing the reader to connect with each character and understand reasons behind the character's inappropriate actions. This both downplays and excuses the character's behaviour. July's characters' actions are represented as naïve or innocent, whereas I on the other hand do not want to excuse the behaviours. The reader cannot connect with the characters because the characters do not know how to connect with each another. Being unable to achieve their desired

interpersonal connections, the characters interact with (and also take their frustrations out on) animals. Many of the animals are given ‘people’ names to show the pets (e.g. Sophia Foccacia, Jerome Martinez, Lizzy-June and Elizabeth) are a source of friendship and connection for the characters. The human characters interact with animals instead of each other. Their inappropriate treatment of animals reinforces these individuals’ social shortcomings and their inability to relate to others.

Stand in front of the book section. Ignore the romance novels. Run your fingers over the spines of the hard backs. Trace a particular title twice. ‘Pets are to love’. Take the book from the shelf. Encyclopaedias fall to the floor. Leave them there for the volunteers to pick up and put back. Select, at random, page fifty-three. Stare at the picture of the puppy in a party hat – at the puppy that looks like the love child of Richard Gere and a raisin (Lovett 11).

It is argued that the narrative mode, used by the three authors on whose works I have focused, enables their rhetorical concerns to permeate the narrative. Each author’s choice of second-person narrative works to illuminate the writer’s rhetorical concerns of interpersonal connection and to attaining a sense of self. Ways in which each author’s work has influenced the creation of my narrative, *Pet Names*, is also apparent. I have argued the means by which second-person narration has complemented and highlighted my own rhetorical concerns: these concerns being an individual’s desire for (but inability to attain) interpersonal connection and a sense of belonging in his/her community. The essay on empathy outlines the reasons for (and ramifications of) the lack of empathy in my own writing. It is anticipated this exegesis has allowed the reader to appreciate some of the thought processes behind the creation of *Pet Names* and that the literary and critical theory has contributed to studies on the effects of employing the second-person voice.

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