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Creating disconcerting uncertainty through sustained second person narrative voice: Second person narrative voice in the fiction of G.M Glaskin and Peter Kocan

Abstract:

Sustained second person narrative voice is rarely used because it apparently asks too much of a reader. It also challenges a writer because of the difficulty it offers with point of view. Most commonly, second person is used to change point of view, expand on character or alter narrative flow or perspective, often through dialogue, where it can be either or both interrogatory and expository. When used in this manner, second person does not necessarily change the overall narrative voice, which is likely to be primarily first or third person. It is almost universally agreed that in fiction sustained second-person narration is hard to manage, and that second-person narrative voice is very rarely used in sustained form because of the difficulties in maintaining it. Whether or not this is true, certainly the employment of sustained second-person narrative form in literary fiction in English has not been as prevalent as the corresponding first-person and third-person forms. One difficulty is the immediately obvious effect of using second person, which is that it directly addresses the reader, making the reader complicit with the narrative voice. This creates a disconcerting uncertainty; is *You Me*? But this can be used to very good effect, setting up a collaboration of reader and writer where “you” becomes “me”. This paper explores the use of sustained second person narrative in G. M. Glaskin’s (Neville Jackson’s) *No end to the way* and Peter Kocan’s *The Treatment*.

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Keywords:

second person narrative voice—G. M. Glaskin—Peter Kocan

Introduction: What is second person narrative voice?

Second person is nothing more than *You*, yet its effect when used in sustained fictional narrative voice is much more complex than that. As a narrative technique, it operates by means of the protagonist being referred to through the use of “you”. In many non-narrative usages it is a very common written technique. For instance, it can be an impersonal, bureaucratic device used to achieve distance, much like passive voice. Then, “one” replaces you. As an example, I paraphrase a sentence from a writing guide referring to the ‘false rule’ of avoiding using ‘you’: “if one has read this far, one knows I have violated this false rule again and again” (Marius, 1995).

As a sustained narrative voice, second person is rarely used because it apparently asks too much of a reader. Author and writing teacher Libby Gleeson says: [second person] “is so rarely used and is so difficult to sustain that I don’t consider it a useful part of a teaching program”(Gleeson, 207). It doesn’t rate even a mention in a basic guide such as Abrams’ *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (Abrams,1993). Even so, Monica Fludernik has compiled an extensive bibliography of works that use second person narrative voice (Fludernik, 1994). I have been influenced as well by her writing on this topic (Fludernik, 1993).

Also, even though rarely used and hard to sustain, second person narrative voice may blur the writer’s conceit of who is addressing whom, which, while that can become a strength of its narrative impact, can lead some of the very few writers who attempt to use it to neglect a fundamental aspect of their writing and lose sight of their readers. As Grave and Hodge (rather pompously) put it: “Every writer should be clear *who he is* for the purpose of writing—whether himself, or the representative of a point of view, or the spokesman of a particular group. Similarly with ‘you’. Every writer should envisage his potential public—which may be twenty people, two hundred, twenty thousand, or the whole world—and should write nothing either above or below its supposed capacity” (Graves and Hodge, 1947).

Second person narrative voice offers further challenges to a writer because of the difficulty it offers with point of view, which E.M. Forster states to be the “fundamental device of novel writing” (Forster, 1927). This is demonstrated through the fact that second person is almost never used in film, where the camera is so immediately “I” and thus governing point of view from that perspective. Christopher Isherwood’s title “I am a camera” after all is a phrase as much about recording exactly (and only) what is seen as it is about point of view. It refers to his conceit that as first person narrator he could only record what he could see with his own eyes. This conceit disappears with second person. “You” can look at the camera, “you” can be in front of the camera (probably with voiceover), but it is almost impossible for “you” to be seeing through it.

Yet nevertheless, reality television shows such as *Australian Idol*, *So you think you can dance* and *Dancing with the Stars* feature some elements of second-person narrative voice through their constant exhortation to ‘you’ the viewer to vote and participate. Interactivity in games and such television programs (SMS “Maria” to 1900670567 to make sure your favourite performer returns here next week) use and manipulate second person to commercial advantage.

“You” can also be a direct communication to the reader, as in Tom Keneally’s *The Tyrant’s Novel*: “Imagine you’re far back, two hundred years ago, when in the West the bodies of criminals were displayed” (Keneally, 2003).

Most commonly, second person is used to change point of view, expand on character or alter narrative flow or perspective, often through dialogue, where it can be either or both interrogatory and expository as in Joseph Hansen’s *Fadeout*:

While Dave checked a number in his address book, he asked Ito, ‘Do you know whether anybody else saw him while he was here?’

‘You mean came to see him?’

Dave dialled. ‘I mean just what I said.’ (Hansen, 1970)

When used in this manner, second person does not necessarily change the overall narrative voice, which is likely to be primarily first or third person.

Second-person narration is also a very common technique of several popular and non- or quasi-fictional written genres such as guide books, self-help books, interactive fiction, role-playing games and Do It Yourself-manuals simply because it allows the writer to tell the reader what to do in an instructional manner, as these examples demonstrate:

Push the button on the handrails to signal to the driver that you want to get off. After 8 pm, you can only board through the front door and, if you already have a ticket, you must present it upon boarding. (Lonely Planet, *Berlin*, 2002)

Pull up edges of muslin and fold and wrap until you have a neat bolster or fat sausage shape. Pin if you wish (if muslin is firmly folded there should be no need to do this). (Stephanie Alexander, *The Cook’s Companion*, 2004)

The voice may also be used in advertisements as a means of achieving a sense of empathy with the receiver of the advertising message:

Keep your business moving by choosing Optus Wireless Broadband. You’ll always be connected to the internet in areas with 3G mobile coverage, so whether you’re between clients, presenting work or in a café, you’ll still be in the loop. (Optus ad, 2008)

This empathetic use of second person narrative voice can also be used in song lyrics and poetry. Some examples from these genres include the following:

With your sheets like metal and your belt like lace
And your deck of cards missing the jack and the ace
And your basement clothes and your hollow face
Who among them did you think could outguess you? (Bob Dylan, *Sad-Eyed Lady of the Lowlands*)

You tossed a blanket from the bed,
You lay upon your back, and waited;
You dozed, and watched the night revealing
The thousand sordid images
Of which your soul was constituted (T.S. Eliot, *Preludes III*)

The drone of flying engines
 Is a song so wild and blue
 It scrambles time and seasons
 If it gets through to you
 Then your life becomes a travelogue
 Full of picture post-card charms
 Amelia, it was just a false alarm (Joni Mitchell, *Amelia*)

Dylan is not seriously addressing his audience as “you” in *Sad-eyed Lady of the Lowlands*. He is clearly addressing the sad-eyed lady, but the allusions are easily extended further. Eliot’s *Preludes* is less clear as to who is “you”. The listener/reader begins to be drawn in, implicit in the addressed “you”. Joni Mitchell maintains a more ambiguous you; “you” may be Amelia [Earhardt], but may also be Mitchell herself, or her listener/reader, and in this use we come close to the full effect of sustained second person narrative voice.

Difficulties in using sustained second-person narrative voice

While it is not the most common narrative technique in literary fiction, second-person narration has been used as a narrative device in various literary, and often experimental, works within modern and post-modern precepts. For example, it is used in intermittent and sustained forms in Italo Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveller*, Patrick White’s *The Living and the Dead*, and Tom Robbins' *Half Asleep in Frog Pajamas*. In these works, second person can be fluid between first and third person, the literary effect being partly a blurring of point of view and partly the narrative being defined not by who is speaking but by who is listening.

Patrick White uses second person in this manner in *The Living and the Dead*, where he “bounces” (to use Forster’s term) from third to second person to suggest both a disturbance and uneasiness:

He remembered the face of the German woman, moments earlier on the platform, resting on her husband’s shoulder in a last unseeing embrace. Or rather, you were drawn beyond the eyes of the little German Jewess into a region where the present dissolved, its form and purposes, became a shapeless directionless well of fear (White, 1967).

One difficulty writers using second person face is the immediately obvious effect of using second person, which is that it directly addresses the reader, making the reader complicit with the narrative voice. However, this can be used to very good effect when used well. Readers can imagine themselves within the action, which can be used to place them in different situations, for example, in Iain Banks' novel *Complicity*, where the chapters that deal with the actions of a murderer are in the second person.

Even so, only a small number of novels have been written in a sustained second-person narrative voice. One relatively prominent example is Jay McInerney's *Bright Lights, Big City*, where the central character is clearly modeled on the persona of McInerney the author, and the author appears to have decided that second-person

point of view would create even more intimacy than first-person and a sense that the reader is blind and the plot is leading him or her along.

You are not the kind of guy who would be at a place like this at this time of the morning. But here you are, and you cannot say that the terrain is entirely unfamiliar, although the details are fuzzy. You are at a nightclub talking to a girl with a shaved head. The club is either Heartbreak or the Lizard lounge. All might come clear if you could just slip into the bathroom and do a little more Bolivian Marching Powder. (Jay McInerney, *Bright Lights, Big City*, 1984)

As seen in McInerney's work, the strength of second person is its immediacy as it literally puts the reader into the narrative experience through the invitation to participate as "you". Yet there is also a degree of alienation in that the narrator is not the reader's "me" but another distanced narrator. This may have something to do with English itself — "you" in English is both singular and plural, and already ambiguous, unlike the, for example, *tu/vous* and *du/sie* of French and German. As well, English "you" lacks any gender, further opening its ambiguous potential. While colloquial plural forms such as the Australian "youse" and American "y'all" are commonly used in speech, they are rarely used in narrative form except to reflect appropriate dialogue. As Hazel Smith notes: "The second person can also be employed in narration to set up ambiguities about who is being addressed [...] By means of the pronoun 'you' the narrator can speak partly to someone else in the narrative, and partly to the audience, thereby implicating the reader in what is happening" (Smith, 2005). It is this use that I will examine here.

No End to the Way

I would like to draw attention to an Australian work in sustained second person narrative voice, Neville Jackson's *No end to the way*. I've had a copy of this book since 1974. My edition was published in New York in 1969 by McFadden-Bartell and is printed with a price of US\$0.75. It was the lurid cover of *No end to the way* that attracted me, the naked torso of the blond on the cover. The blurb ("A novel about hidden sex between men—penetrating—honest—telling it like it is") suggested even more. It was being marketed a nice bit of pulp fiction, a genre I have examined at length elsewhere (Fisher, 2005), but it is more than that.

The book was first published in 1965 in the United Kingdom. The British edition was reprinted twice in 1967 and again in 1968, then brought out in a Corgi paperback edition in 1985. It was one of the author's most successful books but, as with much of his writing, it sold best outside Australia. While the name "Neville Jackson" is on the cover, the copyright page notes "by permission of G.M. Glaskin" and this is the name of the true author (Fisher, 2002). Gerry Glaskin spent much of the fifties and sixties in Malaysia and Europe, but returned to his native Perth around 1968 and remained there until his death in 2000. He wrote an enormous variety of works, winning the Commonwealth Prize in 1955 for *A world of our own* (Van Langenburg, 2001), a novel that "examines the attempts by a number of ex-servicemen to cope with the post-war world; praised in England and a best-seller in Norway, neither it nor any of

Glaskin's equally successful later novels aroused significant literary interest in Australia" (Wilde *et al.*, 1985).

Glaskin thus had a significant profile outside of Australia so for the more controversially themed *No end to the Way*, the pseudonym of Neville Jackson "was insisted upon by publishers Barrie & Rockliff, London, when its [the book's] absence of the obligatory tragic ending by death of the main protagonist took three years to be passed by the U.K. Home Office" (<http://cf.vicnet.net.au/ozlit/writers.cfm?id=699> [Jackson, Neville]).

At that time, it must be remembered, books that were open about homosexuality were restricted in the United Kingdom and practically totally forbidden in Australia. Homosexuality was still a criminal offence in both countries. *No end to the way* was one of the first books published in the United Kingdom that portrayed a (relatively) happy homosexual. Before 1965, to be registered for publication in the United Kingdom, books featuring homosexual unions were required by the Home Office to have ignominious or tragic endings. A book could not be published suggesting that two men could have a happy, yet illegal, sexual relationship.

Unfortunately for Glaskin, *No end to the way* was immediately banned for import into Australia because of its portrayal of homosexuality, which was then an instant reason for a book to be denied entry to the country. It was banned in spite of the fact that the Censorship Board felt it had literary merit. Nicole Moore of Macquarie University notes in research conducted at the National Archives of Australia that A. Hope Hewitt, a lecturer in literary studies at the Australian National University and the first female member of the Australian Literature Censorship Board, compared the book favourably to Vidal's *The City and the Pillar* (which had been banned since 1948). Hewitt wrote in 1965 that if the time came to release books on homosexuality, both Vidal's and Glaskin's "would be good, serious fictional studies with which to start" (Moore, n.d.). However, it was still felt that books that depicted homosexuality without condemning it were detrimental to the public good.

It's banning was significant enough, but the sustained second person narrative voice Glaskin uses throughout makes this book a forgotten classic. Michael Hurley states that it is "the first Australian novel narrated from an openly male homosexual point of view" (Hurley, 1996). That that point of view is second person gives both an intimacy with the reader, for the "you" is "me", and a narrative distance. An illusion that use of the second person can create is that the reader is in fact the narrator, and this effect works powerfully in *No end to the way*. This leads to other understandings outside the 'ego' of the reader. There is a collusion with the reader, so that there is no didacticism, but merely revelation, even though that revelation sometimes can be sensational.

It also suggests the narrator is an outsider, separate somehow from the rest of society. For a homosexual in the 1950s and early 1960s, this would certainly have been the case. To put the book in historical context, as I've indicated earlier male homosexuality was still illegal in Australia in 1965 when *No end to the way* was first published, and this situation remained in some states for more than 20 years thereafter (NSW did not repeal laws against homosexual acts until 1984). Historian Graham

Willett states that *No end to the way* is the strongest literary representation of the fear that homosexuals experienced in the 1950s. He writes:

The characters, who are, in [the narrator] Ray's pithy phrase, perfectly well adjusted to their maladjustment, are nonetheless subjected to the relentless pressure of a society that neither understands nor approves of their kind. All of this is reflected in a debilitating day-to-day fear: of the disapproval of family and friends; of being beaten up by the men they meet in bars; of blackmail; of police entrapment; of arrest, exposure, and disgrace. It is reflected too, in intolerable constraints on daily activities: in only being able to kiss good night if the street was dark enough; only being able to hold hands in cinemas and in the car if their touching was out of the line of sight; in searching for a flat where the windows were not open to on-lookers who might see them forget themselves for a moment and kiss (Willett, 1997).

In this context, it is easy to feel an outsider leading a hidden and secret life. The outsider aspect of second person is also strong in Peter Kocan's *The Treatment*, where the narrator, Len, is a prisoner in a locked psychiatric hospital having been found convicted of a shooting. Kocan himself was given a life sentence in 1966 for his attempted assassination by shooting of senior Labor politician Arthur Calwell.

When I first read *No end to the way* and realised it was set in Australia — in Perth of all places, though this is not immediately obvious — it was somewhat of a watershed and I have described the experience elsewhere (Fisher, 2004). As a young man struggling with my sexual identity, the second person narrative voice seemed to speak directly to me, even from the very first sentence: “You know all too well that you just have to go in, that it will be impossible for you not to go in, because it's Saturday night and, as the song goes, Saturday night is the loneliest night of the week”.

Almost immediately, I knew where I was, even in the gay bar: “If the cops come in to scour round, it always looks respectable enough. And the rest of it's a very respectable pub, one of the city's best. Just a bit old and in need of a face-lift. Country people use it a lot, in the residential part” (Jackson, 1969). The pub is “the kind of pub the gays always seem to pick out and make their own, the world over” [p. 11] (incidentally, an early Australian use of the term ‘gays’¹). Ray has gone there for “the ones that *aren't* obvious ... that most everybody wants; what's called ‘rough trade’ or, if it's not so rough, just ‘trade’. Casual adventurers. Or week-end dabblers. Sometimes only once a month, once a year. And bisexuals. There's no end to the variety of types in the games”. [p. 11]

The reader is constantly seeing through the eyes of the narrator: “Impossible to think that he was the first one to seduce you, when you were just eighteen, almost as many years ago. The first one after Uncle Kev, that is.” [p. 12] This leads to another understanding outside the ego of the reader, even to a child's reaction to paedophilia, or at least sex between the child Ray and his 16-year-old uncle. “‘You've got to do it to become a man,’ Uncle Kev had told you. And you'd believed it. You had believed everything Uncle Kev told you. So you believed this was what you had to do to become a man, and you wondered who had done it for Uncle Kev. Had he had someone nice as Uncle Kev himself was? All the same, you were glad when it was over. You thought you'd never be able to go to sleep, but you did.” [p. 33] Glaskin

manipulates the second person narrative voice so that the reader identifies with, and distances from, but ultimately must accept, a “gay” (his term) narrative point of view. By avoiding the first person, Glaskin allows his readers to place themselves in Ray Wharton’s place (“it had been something just between you and Uncle Kev, you had loved each other so” [p. 33]), and even understand “Uncle Kev” “After that, you couldn’t wait for night to come, to be with Uncle Kev. Every night. And no one ever knew. No one” [p. 33]. But Uncle Kev is killed in a motorcycle accident. “And you had never again let anyone do what Uncle Kev had done with you, even though at times you wanted it so much. But that had been just for Uncle Kev alone. No one else” [p. 34].

Ray has dinner with his friend Professor Bruce Farnham (“Glad to see yer, mate,” he drawls, as always, and his voice doesn’t go with either of his personalities, professor *or* gay.”[p. 44]) whose “guest from the east is fattish, fortyish, with red hair going bald, freckles. Bruce tells you he’s the chairman of some government tribunal, just visiting the state for a few days before going back again” [p. 44].

Cor, the blond “god” Ray Wharton falls for, is from Holland. He studied architecture there, but didn’t finish, not that it matters in Australia. His disillusionment comes out in the conversations that punctuate the narration:

‘I’d still have to do it all again. Europe’s architecture just won’t *do* for Australia,’ he adds. And it’s not just sarcasm, but more a kind of light amusement. ‘Like medicine and law, and several other things,’ he goes on, and the whole silly point of it rubs you raw, you almost hate the country, the way it wantonly makes so much waste of its new migrants and, much more personally, treats people like yourself as some kind of criminal” [p. 20].

Ray falls deeply for Cor. “No, it isn’t Uncle Kev you think about from now on. Cor ...” [p. 34]. The story of the developing relationship and its angst gains strength from second person: “Pretty dark street, too. Dark enough to kiss each other goodnight without having to worry about it, or even hurry it up. And when he has gone, you find yourself singing all the way home, at the top of your voice, the car’s engine humming a sort of accompaniment. Just a big happy kid” [p.41].

But when Ray tells his old friend, Bruce the professor, about Cor Bruce tells him that bad news that Cor is married and his wife is pregnant:

‘You’re kidding,’ you say again. It’s all you *can* say.

But—‘I’m not kidding, boy. You know me, Ray. I wouldn’t kid anyone about a matter like this. Especially not you, old thing.’

You nod your head. Yes, you know it. You know old Bruce well enough for that, all right. He just wouldn’t do it. So what he tells you is true. It must be all true. You just have to sit there, numb inside and out, and let it sink into you, swill all around inside of you, like a pain from some inward bleeding [p. 49].

Despite these obstacles, Ray and Cor continue their relationship, confronting Cor’s wife Mia and homophobic employers. But Cor finds he cannot keep up with the gay life and leaves Ray.

But about six months later you get another short letter, just to say that he's marrying again, to an Australian girl this time, yes a real girl, but one who understands, he says. Her father owns a string of chain stores; he's taking her up to the north of Queensland, to manage one of them. If there's one thing he can't face, he says, it's loneliness; just the mere prospect of it frightens him to death. And he can't see anything but loneliness ahead of you in the *gay* [italics in original] life, not these days. So he wishes you luck, and again sends his love [p. 191].

The second person narrative works consistently, though there are some points that caused this reader some irritation. There is a concentration on social status that seems at odds with the other more liberal views of the narrator. For example, Ray wonders what a school teacher and a shop assistant (two characters, Roy and Andy, in a gay bar) are likely to have in common, and he is briefly disappointed when he finds out that Cor is a bar steward in a club, since it doesn't align with his own job as an advertising agent.

But despite these irritations, Glaskin's consistent second-person narrative voice has a powerful effect and impact on the reader that lifts the book from pulp sensationalism to a moody, introspective study of an individual caught in the shadows of their sexuality. It also allows Ray to plod off into the sad loneliness of the '*gay* [italics in original] life', which does not seem that wonderful. However, what has to be remembered in 2008 is that Ray hasn't been killed off, which was the expected tragic end for a homosexual character at that time.²

Glaskin's 'happy' conclusion presented major problems for his publisher in 1965. Glaskin planned the book as the second of a trilogy on sexualities. Although *No end to the way* "was said to be the first and possibly only novel written entirely in the second-person singular, a further development of Glaskin's technique of what he terms the 'third person subjective' for the readers' greater sense of immediacy", Glaskin actually arrived at this "development for 'No End To The Way' ... to avoid pronominal confusion of the two main protagonists of the one gender ..." In other words, technique was paramount in the creation of second person narrative voice, and through its use Glaskin consciously or unconsciously built in the intimacy and distance that characterises *No end to the way*.

It's an achievement that worthy of resurrection. Sadly, however, *No end to the way* remains out of print

Peter Kocan's *The Treatment*

The Treatment's opening sentence reads: "Down a long road all sun and shadowy with trees overhead and a slow look from cows across the fence and you're there" (Kocan, 1980: 1). With that, the reader is immediately within the story and part of the narrative voice. There's a nurse walking patients. "As you go past you can't help your eyes flickering over her legs and the swell of her chest. After the months at the gaol the sight stabs you. And now she might be the last woman you'll ever see." The reader and the narrator are seeing through the same untrusting and somewhat

bewildered eyes. The sense of alienation and fear created with the use of second person continues through Kocan's sustained use of it.

Dialogue is more important as a means of propelling the narrative in this work than in *No end to the way*.

‘Um, my hair’s blond when the sun shines on it, Sir.’ You realise how stupid that sounds and that he might think you’re being insolent. Your heart is thumping. He looks at you for a while longer. Then he closes up the file.

‘I think that’ll be all for now,’ he says. ‘You can go out with the others.’ [p. 4]

But second person works well in again developing a sense of alienation and separation, a sense of being watched and observed: “So you work a bit faster, but not too past, or too slow. You’re concentrating so hard on timing every move to what you think is a proper balance between fast and slow that you feel giddy. You imagine what the screws might think if you fell over.” [p. 20]

Occasionally Kocan demonstrates a sense of ‘them and us’ by using plural first person to make a distinction between the patients and the ‘screws’: for example, “Sometimes, if there’s an interesting conversation going on, we stay drinking tea and lying on the grass for half an hour. It’s lovely lying there with a pleasant tiredness in your muscles and the sun on your face, listening to the talk. Then a screw will sigh wearily and say: ‘Ah well, boys, we’d better strike another blow or Arthur’ll be after our balls,’ and the men get up slowly and go back to work.” [p. 17]; and “We’re coming in from the vegetable gardens before lunch, all dusty and hot from the work, being counted through the verandah in the usual way. The screw who’s counting finds one short.” [p. 86]

Len Tarbutt, the narrator, has been sentenced to life in prison for shooting someone. It’s a thinly veiled fictionalisation of Kocan’s attempt to kill Calwell in 1966, an act that was pivotal in Kocan’s life. His most recent work, *Fresh Fields* (2006), continues the themes of *The Treatment* and its companion novel *The Cure* (1983, they were latter published in one volume). He’s been moved to the psychiatric hospital as part of a rehabilitation process. Lying in his cell, which is about the same size as the room he rented when he planned the attempted assassination, he remembers what he was doing on his last night there: “You were sawing the barrel from a .22 rifle. The hacksaw blade was too light for gunmetal and kept bending and warping. You were also worried about the noise of it. The walls were very thin and you were afraid the men in the other rooms might get suspicious. They might even be spying through some crack or peephole, though you’d often examined the walls for openings and could find none. Still, you couldn’t be sure, and the thought bothered you, especially whenever you masturbated” [pp. 29-30]. The simplicity of the language combined with the second person to stress the paranoia, helped by the combination of the sawing of the gun barrel and the mention of masturbation. In the mirror, Len poses with the sawn-off gun: “It was a new self you saw: the set of the shoulder, the curve of the cheekbone, the elbow cradling the gun, all seemed suddenly significant. You felt a kind of hum coming from inside yourself, like the hum of a live bomb” [p. 30] Again, the simplicity of this language and point of view is far more disturbing in second person, with the reader part of the voice, than it is in first person: “I felt a kind of hum coming

from inside myself, like the hum of a live bomb” is trite and absurd, but the bounce to second person introduces a paranoid menace, a sense of cold calculation, and something not quite right.

The sustained use of the second person voice enhances this effect. There is growing appreciation of Len’s madness, and the reader develops an empathy with it, as with Ray Wharton’s aberrant sexuality. Len recalls that: “Last night you’d seen ‘Dr Zhivago’ for the seventh time and the return afterwards had been very bad. The final scene, where Lara walks out into the street under huge portraits of Lenin and Stalin, to disappear forever, ‘a nameless number on a list afterwards mislaid’, had filled you with a sort of ecstasy of grief. You wanted to explode, literally, like a skyrocket, into nothingness. That was feeling, pure, untouchable, and you’d gladly have died right there in the seat rather than return to yourself and face the street outside with its squalor of traffic and people” [pp. 33-34]. The combination of Len having seen *Dr Zhivago* seven times and the phrase “return to yourself” is a powerful demonstration of his madness and dissociation, and it is almost palpable to the reader in second person. The reader is walking with Len on the precipice of insanity.

Len, though, receives a book of poetry from his mother and, with the help of Marian, the hospital librarian, begins to write his own poetry. While this is his route out of madness, his awareness and perception of the world about him becomes more harrowing. For one thing, he has to censor himself because any poems he sends out for publication need to go through the screws. He’s warned to not write about the beatings of patients, or the treatment patients receive from the screws. One screw harasses a patient, who complains he is being harassed, but the complaint is taken as a sign of the patient’s madness:

You watch these things happening, feeling that you should be writing about them in poems, writing about the real things here, the bad things, the way Wilfred Owen or Siegfried Sassoon wrote about the bad things they saw.

But you know they’d call it ‘slander’. [p. 99]

This self-awareness concludes the book when, after a Christmas lunch: “You sit staring at the tablecloth, thinking you’re going to die of sorrow.” [p. 102] Once again, when expressed in the first person this becomes a trite sentence. It works reasonably well in third person, but the complicity between narrator and reader is lost. Second person demonstrates its strength in achieving a sense of alienation and separation within a narrative.

Conclusion

In both *No End to the Way* and *The Treatment*, the sustained second person narrative voice provides both distance and intimacy, connecting the reader with the narrator through the constant use of “you”, but repelling as well since the reader is asked to accept confronting narrative aspects as if they were the reader’s own experience through the implicit complicity in “you” being both the reader and the narrator. Used in this consistent manner, second person narrative voice can be an effective alternative to first or third person narrative.

Endnotes

1. G.M. Glaskin lived for a number of years in the United Kingdom and Amsterdam. He had a Dutch companion, Leo van de Pas, who came back to Perth with him (Van Langenberg, *op cit.*). His use of 'gay' may have been influenced by British use. The *Oxford English dictionary* records a 1935 usage of 'geycat' [*sic*] for a homosexual boy in underworld and prison slang. The term had been used earlier by tramps as a term for a young dilettante. Raymond Chandler noted a similar usage for American hoboes. Peter Wildeblood, the pioneering United Kingdom agitator for decriminalisation of homosexuality, uses the term in his 1955 book *Against the law*, and says it is an American euphemism for homosexual. Eric Partridge (*The Routledge dictionary of historical slang*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1973) records 'the gaying instrument' as nineteenth century slang for the penis, 'gaying it' as nineteenth and early twentieth century slang for sexual intercourse, and the phrase 'lead a gay life' as a euphemism for living immorally or from prostitution from about 1860. The meaning addicted to social pleasures and dissipations is recorded by *Oxford* and *Macquarie*, as with 'gay dog', and 'gay Lothario'. The *Macquarie dictionary of new words* (Macquarie Library, Sydney, 1990) records Australian use of gay from 1983, but personal knowledge, and works cited elsewhere in this paper, show earlier usage. In Rodgers, Bruce, *The Queen's vernacular: A gay lexicon* (Blond & Briggs, London, 1972) the etymology is given as the sixteenth century French *gaie* meaning homosexual man, with a cross reference to British slang 'gay girl' for whore. However, the semantics of this etymology is not supported by other sources. Nevertheless, Rodgers records widespread American usage of the term from the mid-1960s.

2. E.M. Forster withheld publication of *Maurice* until after his death (and the changing of the law in the United Kingdom) rather than be forced to rewrite his "happy" homosexual love story.

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