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"I AM WITH YOU": SECOND-PERSON NARRATION IN RON BUTLIN'S NOVEL "THE SOUND OF MY VOICE"

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The article analyses the use of second-person narration in Ron Butlin's first novel "The sound of my voice". On the basis of narratological studies the author identifies the major features of this experimental narrative mode, in which the protagonist and the addressee are a single character addressed by the second-person pronoun. Butlin's work employs you in reference to the protagonist, a 34-year-old alcoholic, and the figure of the narrator becomes visible only towards the ending of the novel. The communicative structure of the work reflects the unstable mental state of the protagonist. Second-person narration embodies his split personality, in which "I" and "you" represent different aspects of the same man. His long monologue dramatizes his recovery from self-destructive behaviour through self-acceptance and coming to terms with the past. By putting the reader in the position of a co-witness to this process, "The sound of my voice" develops an evocative depiction of a fractured self.

Keywords: second person, narration, novel, Ron Butlin, "The sound of my voice", alcoholism, fractured self, recovery.

«Я С ТОБОЙ»: ПОВЕСТВОВАНИЕ ОТ ВТОРОГО ЛИЦА В РОМАНЕ РОНА БАТЛИНА «ЗВУК МОЕГО ГОЛОСА»

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В статье анализируется использование повествования от второго лица в первом романе Рона Батлина «Звук моего голоса». Исходя из нарративного анализа, автор выделяет основные черты экспериментального способа повествования от второго лица, в котором главный герой и адресат являются единым персонажем. В произведении Батлина в роли главного героя выступает 34-х летний алкоголик, и фигура рассказчика становится видимой только к финалу романа. Коммуникативная структура произведения отражает

нестабильное психическое состояние главного героя. Повествование от второго лица воплощает его раздвоение личности, в котором «я» и «ты» представляют разные аспекты одного и того же человека. Длинный монолог героя драматизирует его выздоровление от саморазрушительного поведения через самопринятие и примирение с прошлым. Ставя читателя в положение со-свидетеля этого процесса, «Звук моего голоса» создает запоминающееся изображение раздробленного «я».

Ключевые слова: второе лицо, повествование, роман, Рон Батлин, «Звук моего голоса», алкоголизм, раздробленное «я», выздоровление.

A former Edinburgh Makar (poet laureate) Ron Butlin has been acknowledged as one of the most engaging and diversely talented writers of his generation for many years in his native Scotland. Even though his debut novel "*The sound of my voice*" has been described by Irvine Welsh as "one of the greatest pieces of fiction to come out of Britain in the Eighties" [15, p. 1], it has gained less scholarly attention than it deserves and has been primarily analysed in terms of its depiction of alcoholism [q.v.: 1; 9], with critics merely acknowledging its use of the experimental form of second-person narration. The aim of the present paper is to fill in this lacuna in the Butlin scholarship by exploring his ground-breaking use of this narrative mode, which only recently has gained in significance. Its most striking feature is the consistent use of the pronoun of address – in the case of fiction written in the English language it is naturally *you* – in reference to a fictional protagonist [4, p. 288]. While the term *second-person narrative* designates a class of narratives, the category of the second-person narration, employed in the title of the present study, should be understood as referring to a certain narrative technique, which naturally dominates in second-person narratives but which can also be used in narratives of other types. This paper seeks to demonstrate that second-person narration becomes in "*The sound of my voice*" a very evocative and though-provoking literary device by means of which the fractured self of an alcoholic is presented.

In "*Narrative discourse revisited*" Gérard Genette notes that Gerald Prince's

seminal "Introduction to the Study of the Narratee", in which he coins the category of the narratee as a communicative partner of the narrator [12], fails to deal with a special case of narratives in which the addressee and the hero converge in one agent [7]. And indeed one should note the existence of the "you"-protagonist of second-person narratives, who – as Brian Richardson argues – should not be confused with the addressees evoked/described in such texts as "*Tristram Shandy*" or "*Heart of darkness*" [13, p. 310]. Having pointed out Prince's omission, Genette himself devotes to second-person narratives only a few lines, in which he merely classifies second-person narration as one more instance of heterodiegesis, that is a narrative mode in which the narrator does not participate in the story [7, p. 133]. Genette's treatment of this phenomenon epitomises a general tendency in the narratology of the 1970s and 1980s to disregard the significance of second-person narratives. Only at the end of the 20th century did they attract more attention, mostly due to their postmodern subversive character. As the essays constituting the special issue of "*Style*" (Volume 28, Issue 3) devoted to this narrative mode demonstrate, second-person narrative is a mode in its own right, matching so-called first- and third- person narratives in variety of forms and effects produced.

Although ignored by major narratologists, the specificity of the second-person narrative has not been completely disregarded by literary scholars. Simultaneously with studies in text reception and the functions of the narratee, the use of second-person pronoun in narratives has been examined. The special issue of "*Style*" mentioned above is a culmination of research on this peculiar literary form, which started with the publication of Bruce Morrissette's pioneering essay "*Narrative 'You' in contemporary fiction*". The main purpose of this article is to relate second-person narratives to relevant non-literary and literary forms and to demonstrate the variety of functions the second-person pronoun can perform in narrative texts. Morissette identifies two basic properties of this narrative form: the involvement of the reader it provokes and the exhortative character it imposes on the text [11].

Mary Frances Hopkins and Leon Perkins's "*Second-person point of view*" has a similar, introductory character. However, apart from merely enumerating examples of

second-person texts, they also identify a set of basic properties whereby the narrative *you* can be distinguished from other uses of the second-person pronoun:

– the reportative character of second-person narratives;

– the internal and actantal nature of the narrative *you*;

– the specificity of the actions performed by *you;*

– duality between the time of narration and that of the story told.

Hopkins and Perkins juxtapose the second-person point of view with the two other, more traditional narrative modes and demonstrate that it matches them in flexibility and variety of effects produced. What distinguishes second-person narratives is a much greater degree of ambiguity, resulting from the referential vagueness and the flexibility of usage of the second-person pronoun [q.v.: 8].

Although Hopkins and Perkins cite examples of various possible functions of the second-person pronoun in a narrative, they do not systematise them. This aspect of the problem is explored by Helmut Bonheim, who presents a survey of the referential possibilities of *you* in his essay "*Narration in the second person*." He describes the possible uses of *you* according to the specificity of its referent. At one extreme of the scale he situates the impersonal generic *you* in the sense of *one*, which does not refer to any specific addressee; at the other he puts the specific *you* which refers to the main character of a given story. In between these two extremes Bonheim situates *you* referring to the implied reader and *you* denoting the character-addressee concretised on the level of the presented world. According to him, only narratives in which *you* designates the protagonist can qualify as second-person narratives proper. Just like Hopkins and Perkins, Bonheim emphasises that the referent of *you* is frequently very unclear or unstable, this referential ambiguity being the basic property of second-person narration [2].

Narratives evoking the "you"-protagonist can be further classified according to some distinctive features. In "*The poetics and politics of second person narrative*" Brian Richardson distinguishes three basic types of second-person narratives:

– the standard form, in which a story is told about a single protagonist who is referred to as *you*, which usually also designates the narrator and the narratee;

– the subjunctive form, in which the imperative or the future tense are consistently employed to project a story of a narratee distinct from a narrator;

– the autotelic form in which *you* refers to both an actual reader of a given story and the character concretised on the level of the presented world [13, p. 311-324].

While the studies mentioned above focus on some specific qualities of a relatively small number of second-person narratives, Monika Fludernik analyses this form from a broad theoretical perspective and on the basis of the most substantial body of second-person texts. She proposes the following comprehensive definition of second-person narrative: "[it is] narrative whose (main) protagonist is referred to by means of an address pronoun (usually *you*) ... Second-person texts frequently also have an explicit communicative level on which a narrator (speaker) tells the story of the "you" to (sometimes) the "you" protagonist's present-day absent or dead, wiser, self" [4, p. 288]

In contrast to other theorists of second-person narrative, Fludernik regards the presence of the communicative level as an optional, not an inherent, element of second-person narratives. She demonstrates that some of them are in a reflectoral mode and focus on an experiencing rather than narrating self. In such texts the second-person pronoun designates a protagonist who is not an addressee of the tale told, but merely an actant on the story level [5, p. 450-454].

According to Fludernik, the variety and flexibility of second-person narratives has radical implications for narratology in general. Due to the constructedness and unnaturalness of its design – the addressee being told his own story – second-person narrative undermines the categories of traditional narratology and discloses the realistic parameters on which it relies. One of these basic parameters is the Chatmanian story/discourse dichotomy, which assumes that a series of events that constitute the story is later related in a particular form of discourse. While this is true of real-life storytelling, the distinction cannot be applied to second-person narratives with a prominent address function since they create story *ex nihilo* by the sheer force of address to the "you" [5, p. 457-58]. Likewise, second-person narrative frequently

collapses distinctions between narrative levels, simultaneously situating its narratee inside and outside the presented world.

The subversion of theoretical models and transgression of realistic parameters is not the only effect second-person narrative can produce. It is also a form, which allows a very evocative exploration of *la condition humaine*: "second-person narrative can and frequently does correlate with great emotional depth since the dialogic relationship it puts at its very centre allows for an in-depth treatment of human relationships, especially of relationships fraught with intense emotional rifts or tensions" [5, p. 466]

Finally, second-person narrative has significant philosophical undertones: Dennis Schofield argues that it undermines the Cartesian notion of a unitary autonomous self by positing a dynamic, ambiguous subject-in-process and thus produces a narrative equivalent of a poststructuralist and Peircean concept of self as a sign [q.v.: 14].

"*The sound of my voice*" consistently uses the second-person pronoun in its address function in relation to the central character. Consider the opening of the novel: "You were at a party when your father died – and immediately you were told, a miracle happened. A real miracle. It didn't last, of course, but was convincing enough for a few moments. Then, an hour later, you took a girl home and forced her to make love" [3, p. 3]. This passage exemplifies the overall form of the novel: it focuses on the "you" and employs the second-person pronoun in reference to a fictional protagonist.

While this sustained use of the second-person perspective signals that *you* designates the protagonist of the novel, it does not unequivocally attribute to him the position of the narratee. As mentioned above, Fludernik argues that second-person narrative can lack an allocutive function, which would signal that *you* evokes not only the protagonist but also the addressee of a given narrative. This is the case with a second-person narrative in a reflector mode, in which the second-person pronoun is employed to designate the reflector-character and to establish the centre of consciousness from whose experiential perspective the events are presented. When

utilised in this manner, *you* loses its allocutive character and the text in which it is employed becomes an instance of Fludernik's category of non-communicative narrative [6, p. 229]. Consequently, *you* designates the narratee-protagonist if the use of the second-person pronoun is correlated with signals of the communicative character of the narrative in which the "you" *qua* protagonist appears. The most potent signal that the "you" is a narratee is the use of imperatives, this grammatical form endowing a given narrative with an exhortative character. This is exactly the case with "*The sound of my voice*":

"The alarm clock – has stopped ringing. *Lie still*. *Relax for a few moments before getting up*. *Let the sunlight colour-in the room – that's its job, not yours*. *Relax. Kiss Mary. Say: good morning Mary. And smile.* This is the first day" [3, p. 130; emphasis added].

The conative character of the sentences marked in this passage indicates, on the one hand, the presence of the narrator uttering them and, on the other, the address function of *you*. This passage exemplifies one more property typical of second-person narratives evoking the presence of a narratee-protagonist: the address function frequently remains latent, only to be revealed in the final part, as happens in the case of "*The sound of my voice*". This sudden disclosure of the presence of the narrator is reinforced by the appearance of the first-person pronoun in narration:

"Trust me. The narrow lane leading to the main gate. *I am with you* [emphasis added]. The mud is rising into your chest, choking you. It's all over the path, and you can hardly keep your feet any more as you slide from side to side, colliding with the metal railing, then with the wall.

But you must keep going. One step. Then grasp at the railing and hold on to it. Rest for the moment to gather your strength, letting the mud settle where it belongs – on the ocean floor, not here" [3, p. 131].

Even though the presence of the speaking "I" is clearly visible in the passage quoted above, the narrative still focuses on the narratee-protagonist and his experiences, the narrator being nothing more than a disembodied voice the protagonist apparently hears inside his head.

Having demonstrated that "*The sound of my voice*" consistently employs second-person narration and that the narratee and the protagonist coincide in one figure designated by *you*, we need to discuss the reasons for its use and the effects it produces. It would appear that the narrator's aim is to awaken certain memories in the narratee-protagonist and to make him acknowledge his feelings. Thus, it may be argued that the narrator assumes that the narratee knows what he is talking about but he resists being fully conscious of the nature of the events described to him. In Butlin's novel the narratee's resistance results from the nature of the events narrated to him. The narrator describes his present state, namely his being a deeply unhappy thirty-four-year-old alcoholic, unable to accept himself, and the traumatic childhood experiences which apparently effected his present state.

What is not completely clear is the identity of the "I." The voice of the "I" narrates to the narratee his past and present experiences, describes to him his present condition and finally helps him deal with the situation in which he has found himself. There are no indications in the text that the voice addressing the protagonist belongs to some other character or a heterodiegetic narrator. The communicative structure of "*The sound of my voice*" seems rather to reflect the unstable mental state of the protagonist: the form of Butlin's novel can be interpreted as a dramatization of a split personality, in which "I" and "you" represent different aspects of the same man. That the "I" speaking is to be located in the narratee-protagonist being addressed is indicated by the fact that the novel is consistently focalised from the perspective of the protagonist: what the narrator narrates does not go beyond what the protagonist has experienced.

The "I" represents the reflecting aspect of the protagonist's psyche, which realises that his alcoholism leads to self-destruction, whereas the "you" seems to embody the aspect, which acts without considering consequences. Careless as the "you" is, it seems to constitute the locus of the protagonist's identity: the text focuses on the "you" and can be interpreted as the attempt of the "I" to save the "you," the success of this attempt depending on whether or not the "you" accepts the message of the "I" and changes. The use of the second-person narration creates tension between

these two aspects of the protagonist's psyche, without privileging any of them.

The process of the protagonist's recovery has a dynamic character and seems to split into two phases presented chronologically in the novel: (1) the description of his present state as well as of the past events, which contributed to it and (2) his new, alcohol-free life with the help of the narrator. These two phases are separated by the climactic moment of narration, situated towards its ending, when the words of the "I" apparently finally reach the "you" of the narratee-protagonist:

"Yesterday you witnessed a stranger's death and felt it to be your own, in part. Tonight you stand here terrified that wherever you look you will see only yourself looking back. You have reached a moment quiet enough to hear the sound of my voice: so now, as you stare out into the darkness, accept the comfort it can give you and the love. The love" [3, p. 129].

What follows is a presentation of the protagonist's first day without drinking, the very phrase "first day" being self-consciously employed by the narrator: "This is the first day" [3, p. 130].

The above quotation might suggest that the first, major part of the narrative has never reached the narratee; however, the textual signals appearing in it indicate that the moment when it is narrated should be located in the vicinity of "a moment quiet enough" mentioned above, even though the exact circumstances of the act of enunciation cannot be reconstructed. The first section of the novel describing the events, which instilled in the protagonist the sense of shame and guilt ends with the reference to something he saw at a railway station:

"By your own effort you have managed to keep these things [shame and guilt] hidden from the world and from yourself. Quite forgetting their existence, in fact, until recently, when while standing at a railway station on the way to work one morning, you were once again brought face to face with them. In that one moment the restraining force of over twenty years was suddenly released, tearing apart the darkness and yourself" [3, p. 18].

The protagonist's experience at the railway station consisted in his witnessing of a stranger's suicide. As the above passage indicates, the first part of the novel is

narrated some time after this event, while the passage about the "you" hearing the voice of the "I" is explicitly located a day later. The temporal proximity between these two moments of narration suggests that the narrator's words about the narratee hearing his voice should rather be interpreted as referring to the latter's reception of the whole first part of the novel.

This first part of the novel can be interpreted as a dialogicised record of the protagonist's reflections brought about by the stranger's suicide, as the passage quoted above suggests. These reflections are presented in the form of a dramatic monologue in which the narrator describes to the narratee his present state and the events the latter refuses to remember or draw conclusions from. A peculiar use of tenses, involving constant oscillation between present and past forms, suggests that the narratee-protagonist re-lives, or is forced to re-live by the "I" of the narrator, the key events from his life. Consider the following example:

"After a few minutes you asked if you could go and play with the toy car and caravan parked in the layby below. […]

They shouted after you to come back, to watch the road. Even now, thirty years later, you sometimes sense your father stumbling after you, still trying to catch up with you. So you ran faster.

The car and caravan are not far away now – and you can't wait to begin playing with them" [3, p. 13].

This passage comes from the section of the text describing the family picnic during which the protagonist, a small child then, experienced the correlation between the subjectively perceived size of an object and the distance from which it is seen. Initially, the event is appropriately narrated in the past tense but suddenly the present tense and the word *now* appear. It should be noted that the two instances of *now* occurring in the passage quoted above totally differ in terms of their modality. The first "now," combined with the phrase "thirty years later," refers to the generally understood *now* of narration; it designates a temporal perspective from which the past events are presented and thus can easily be naturalised. A bit more puzzling is the second instance of "now" and the present tense: the actions narrated in the final part

of this passage are a continuation of the actions narrated in the past tense. Thus, paradoxically, the second "now" indicates that the retrospective perspective of the first "now" is abandoned in favour of the immediate perspective of a child running towards a caravan. Such a use of the present tense to narrate the past experiences of the protagonist combined with the second-person narration suggests that the narrator's aim is to make the narratee re-live the events described, in this case to become temporarily a child again.

The passage quoted above presents in a nutshell the temporal vagaries characteristic of the first, major part of "*The sound of my voice*". The oscillation between different temporal perspectives emphasises the interconnectedness of all the events from the narratee-protagonist's life, especially the impact of the past experiences on his present state. In his monologue the "I" focuses on the three elements of the protagonist's life: the traumatic past experiences connected with his father, his recent actions exemplifying simultaneously the depth of his alcoholism and his inability to experience feelings, his general present condition. As regards the first element of the protagonist's psychological portrait, he apparently experienced his father's indifference, if not hatred. What the narrator emphasises is the fact that the narratee still experiences the impact of these childhood experiences:

"Had he [the protagonist's father] glanced at you, smiled and replied to your greeting; had that commonplace event ever happened, ever once, it would have been the miracle to change your life. One moment of certainty that for all the years to come would have been yours to recall at will, saying to yourself: that was *me*" [3, p. 16].

The italicisation of *me* points to the major consequences of the father's rejection: the narratee's lack of stable identity or self-acceptance. In the case of "*The sound of my voice*" the distance between the protagonist and his own self comprises not only the distance between the "you" and the "I" but also a split within the "you" itself. The long-lasting effect of the father's rejection is his struggle to conform to the social expectations:

"Every day, every moment almost, you must begin the struggle over again –

the struggle to be yourself. You keep trying, like an actor learning his lines, in belief that eventually, if you work hard enough, you will play the part of 'Morris Magellan' convincingly. In time you hope to convince even yourself" [3, p. 31].

This passage multiplies fissures in the protagonist's personality: the "you" itself can be divided into the pretending part and the pretended one. This split is in turn reflected upon by the "I." Paradoxically, "the struggle to be yourself" does not describe the struggle for authenticity, for free self-expression, but its opposite – the attempt to conform to the expectations of others. As Joe Jackson suggests, "like a conductor, much of Magellan's social action is gestural, intended to coax performance out of himself or others" [9, p. 104]. Morris Magellan's problem, as the phrase "the struggle to be yourself" indicates, lies in lack of self-acceptance. His efforts exhaust him, hence his escape into alcohol and the state of oblivion it induces. However, even drinking cannot give the protagonist peace he desires. For one thing, he needs more and more alcohol in order to survive; for another he is still unable to escape from himself, but he loses contact with people surrounding him: his wife, children, colleagues. The passages devoted to his recent actions record a number of situations in which he is unable to establish contact with them. The narrator points out to him the solipsistic situation to which his drinking is leading, the vision of which horrifies the protagonist: "you stand here terrified that wherever you look you will see only yourself staring back" [3, p. 129].

It is the stranger's suicide that instigates the protagonist's transformation and leads to the reflections dramatized in the text of the novel, but it is not completely clear why this event has such a great impact on him. Describing the protagonist's immediate reaction the narrator suggests its liberating effect; the protagonist cherishes the awareness that he is not in any way responsible for it: "You want to be quite certain that the tragic element, which at this distance you can only sense, does not come from you nor in any way belongs to you" [3, p. 107]. At the same time, the protagonist cannot forget the image of the body falling under the engine or overcome an inexplicable anxiety it filled him with. It seems that the suicide can be read as a prefiguration of his own self-destruction, which makes the protagonist realise the

direction in which his life is moving. Such an interpretation is suggested in the final part of the novel, when the protagonist remembers again what happened at the platform he is approaching:

"The platform, *where the colour white flutters in front of the train to slow it down, then tangles in the wheels to bring it to a dead stop.* It's over. Perhaps you will imagine this every time you stand here. But don't worry – it's all over. That will not happen to you. Trust me" [3, p. 131].

The appearance of the "I" instigated by this event can be interpreted as the dramatization of the psychological process in which the reflections hitherto pushed out of the consciousness come to the fore. Furthermore, the love offered to the "you" by the "I" seems to be self-love (acceptance) he has been longing for.

The use of the second-person narration to present this process might suggest that the protagonist remains unaware of what has happened or is happening to him and needs the narrator to relate it to him. Indeed, the narrator of "*The sound of my voice*" describes to the narratee the latter's own past and present situation, which indicates that without the former's help the latter would not remember or comprehend it. At the same time, however, the narrator seems to assume that the narratee already knows what he is told, but he has resisted remembering the events described or drawing conclusions from them. Consider the passage, typical in its convoluted use of tenses, narrating the way in which the narratee explained to his friends the cause of his father's death:

""He had a bad heart", you explain to Helen and Andy. It is only now, however, more than ten years after saying it, that you might realize the ambiguity of your remark. This ambiguity allowed you to say exactly what you felt about him. *He had a bad heart*, you said, at once deceiving them and yourself of the true intention behind this hastily thought-up epitaph" [3, p. 23].

The tentative 'might' indicates that the narrator assumes that the narratee would be capable of understanding his words without his help. The phrase "he had a bad heart" indeed seems to grasp well the narratee's possible feelings about his father, though it remains unclear whether he understands the impact of his father on his

whole life. It seems rather that it is the narrator's task to bring back painful memories and feelings and in that way enable the narratee to come to terms with the past.

At the same time, describing the recent events, the narrator is pointing to the narratee his ability to experience authentic feelings, which he has not lost despite the years of pretending. The narrator seems to assume that in this case only the "you" can tell whether the feelings described were the real ones, hence the references to the narratee's emotions take the form of questions, recurring throughout the part of the text devoted to the narratee's recent actions:

1) "Were you aware of how much it disturbed you to watch her [the protagonist's wife] putting the finishing touches to her make-up?" [3, p. 39].

2) ""Thank you", you managed to say in a clear voice, holding her [the protagonist's wife] gaze for as long as you could before having to look away. Was that real shame?" [3, p. 54].

3) "Are you aware of how anxious, how frightened you are?" [3, p. 112].

These questions suggest that the narrator's aim is to instigate the process of self-examination in which the narratee will come to understand his own past and present experiences rather than to impose on him a certain interpretation of them. At the same time, they indicate in an amplified form lack of omniscience on the narrator's part. As has already been noted, the novel is focalised from the protagonist's perspective; consequently, the frequent, apparently alcohol induced, black holes in his consciousness are not, or rather cannot, be filled in by the narrator.

The final part of the novel suggests that the narrator of "*The sound of my voice*" has managed not only to communicate with the narratee but also to instigate his transformation. Significantly, this part of the novel is narrated in the present tense exclusively and includes a number of imperatives. The consistent employment of the present tense suggests an immediacy of contact between the "I" and "you," as if the "I" constantly accompanied the "you." Furthermore, it can be interpreted as the signal of the narratee's coming to terms with his own past.

At the same time, the imperatives indicate that he still needs the help of the narrator, which the latter unhesitatingly offers: "The walk to the station. I am with

you. It is all right. Everything is. A day at the office, then home again. I will be with you. Trust me" [3, p. 131]. The phrase "trust me," recurring throughout the final part of the novel, can be read as an indication of the narrator's uncertainty whether the protagonist is really willing to accept his message and guidance.

The ending of "*The sound of my voice*" suggests the possibility of the unification of the protagonist's split personality. While driving his family back home from a picnic, the protagonist suddenly senses his father's presence behind himself and sees him in front of himself. Desperate to escape from his father and simultaneously catch up with him, the protagonist drives faster and faster until his father seems finally to acknowledge his presence by raising his arm. This imaginary encounter with the father, apparently taking place in the protagonist's psyche, is followed by a sudden transition to what seems to be the physical reality of the presented world:

"It is only *now* that you are aware of Mary clutching on to you, her voice screaming at you to stop. There are tears running down your face as you release the accelerator and begin to slow down. When the car comes to a halt on the hard shoulder you are weeping uncontrollably. Your tears and mine" [3, p. 139].

On the one hand, the above passage reveals that the protagonist's imaginary encounter with his father could have easily become an encounter with death; on the other, the very last words of the novel emphasise the similarity, if not identity, obtaining between the "you" and "I" and the sameness of their feelings. As Carole Jones elucidates, "this final statement signifies the communion of the protagonist's fractured subjectivity, an acceptance of self long made impossible by a loveless upbringing" [10, p. 56].

Far from a mere experiment for experiment's sake, the narrative mode of second-person narration allows Butlin to develop a highly evocative representation of fractured self of an alcoholic. The narrative mode he employs on the one hand embodies the conflicting aspects of the protagonist's personality and on the other reflects the vagaries of an alcoholic's mind, including blackouts and distorted memories as well as a sense of guilt and shame. Combined with complex temporal

structure, in which the past and the present intermingle, the second-person narration as employed in in "*The sound of my voice*" becomes perfect dramatization of the process of recovery through self-acceptance.

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