



University of Kentucky
UKnowledge

University of Kentucky Master's Theses

Graduate School

2005

EXPANDING DEICTIC SHIFT THEORY: PERSON DEIXIS IN CHUCK PALAHNIUK'S FIGHT CLUB

Anna Laura Bennett
University of Kentucky

[Right click to open a feedback form in a new tab to let us know how this document benefits you.](#)

Recommended Citation

Bennett, Anna Laura, "EXPANDING DEICTIC SHIFT THEORY: PERSON DEIXIS IN CHUCK PALAHNIUK'S FIGHT CLUB" (2005). *University of Kentucky Master's Theses*. 278.
https://uknowledge.uky.edu/gradschool_theses/278

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at UKnowledge. It has been accepted for inclusion in University of Kentucky Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of UKnowledge. For more information, please contact UKnowledge@lsv.uky.edu.

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

EXPANDING DEICTIC SHIFT THEORY: PERSON DEIXIS IN CHUCK PALAHNIUK'S *FIGHT CLUB*

Deictic shift theory (DST) was developed as a model of the construction and comprehension of all types of fictional narrative. With respect to the participant structures of texts, however, DST researchers have focused their attention on deictic shifts in third-person narratives, leaving first-person narratives unanalyzed from this theoretical perspective. As a result, DST in its present form does not adequately account for the variety of manipulations of a range of perspectives that may be achieved in first-person narratives. Nor has DST been systematically applied to texts whose participant structures undergo extensive reorganization as the result of a surprise ending or other narrative twist.

By analyzing the deictic and referring expressions that create the participant structure of Chuck Palahniuk's novel *Fight Club*, this thesis tests DST's potential to account for authors' and readers' cognitive experiences of first-person narratives with plot twists. The analysis establishes a wider range of linguistic cues that may affect readers' mental representations of characters. It identifies interactions between elements in the participant structure, including those that permit the representation of non-narrating characters' subjective perspectives, as well as the linguistic features that enable these interactions. The thesis examines the effects of an author's violations of traditional narrative perspective constraints, and it underscores the importance, especially in DST-motivated analyses, of recognizing the potential for interplay between general narrative constraints and the narrative structure of a specific text. The thesis revises DST's account of the nature and extent of deictic shifts in first-person narratives and describes the role deictic shifts play in fictional narratives that contain plot twists.

KEYWORDS: cognitive stylistics, deictic shift theory, *Fight Club*, first-person narrative, person deixis

Anna Laura Bennett
July 25, 2005

EXPANDING DEICTIC SHIFT THEORY:
PERSON DEIXIS IN CHUCK PALAHNIUK'S *FIGHT CLUB*

By

Anna Laura Bennett

Dr. Greg Stump
Director of Thesis

Dr. Joyce MacDonald
Director of Graduate Studies

July 25, 2005

RULES FOR THE USE OF THESES

Unpublished theses submitted for the master's degree and deposited in the University of Kentucky library are as a rule open for inspection, but are to be used only with due regard to the rights of the authors. Bibliographical references may be noted, but quotations or summaries of parts may be published only with the permission of the author, and with the usual scholarly acknowledgments.

Extensive copying or publication of the thesis in whole or in part also requires the consent of the dean of the Graduate School of the University of Kentucky.

A library that borrows this thesis for use by its patrons is expected to secure the signature of each user.

THESIS

Anna Laura Bennett

The Graduate School
University of Kentucky

2005

EXPANDING DEICTIC SHIFT THEORY:
PERSON DEIXIS IN CHUCK PALAHNIUK'S *FIGHT CLUB*

THESIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of master of arts in the
College of Arts and Sciences
at the University of Kentucky

By

Anna Laura Bennett

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Greg Stump, Professor of Linguistics

Lexington, Kentucky

2005

MASTER'S THESIS RELEASE

I authorize the University of Kentucky Libraries
to reproduce this thesis in whole or in part
for purposes of research.

CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background	1
Deixis in Natural Language	3
Deixis in Fictional Narrative	5
Chapter 2: Textual Exploration	12
Standard Deictic Center Devices and the Focalized WHO	12
Representing the Subjectivity of the Focalized WHO	14
Indirect Representation of Characters' Dialogue	15
Nonstandard Uses of Standard Deictic Center Devices	20
Second-Person Narration	21
Narrator as Focalized WHO	24
Self-Address	25
Fictional Reference	26
Reader as Focalized WHO	30
Edgework Cued by the Plot Twist	30
Chapter 3: Theoretical Implications	33
First-Person Narrative	33
Narrative Twists and Preparatory Edgework	39
Conclusion	41
Appendix 1: Deictic Center Devices That Affect the Focalizing WHO	42
Appendix 2: Standard Deictic Center Devices That Affect the Focalized WHO	43
<i>References</i>	45
<i>Vita</i>	48

CHAPTER 1

Introduction and Background

Fictional narratives that contain surprise endings or other plot twists rely on the reader's shock of discovery to achieve their full impact. When a first-person narrative delivers such a twist, the effect of the surprise is often amplified. The reader of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," for example, is horrified when, in the final pages of the short story, the extent of the protagonist's madness is revealed: it is she who has gnawed the bedstead, and who has worn a groove in the wall by creeping methodically around the perimeter of the room. The first-person narration of the story heightens the impact of the revelation, not only because all narrated events have been filtered through the protagonist's skewed perspective, but also because the involved reader develops a sense of identification with the narrator that leads the reader to seek alternative interpretations of her peculiar observations and behavior until the evidence becomes overwhelming. Further, first-person narration strengthens the impact of a narrative surprise because the reader and the narrator typically unravel the plot twist simultaneously, in a sense, experiencing it together. In Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations*, the reader jumps to the same conclusions about the source of Pip's fortune that Pip himself does, and therefore experiences reactions similar to the character's own to the revelation that his mysterious benefactor is the convict Provis and not Miss Havisham, guardian of Pip's beloved Estella. Just as Pip reviews his interpretations of past events and, what is more important, mentally reorganizes his relationships with other characters, so too does the reader.

When a twist in plot development so radically shifts the relational structure among characters, the reader must engage in a substantial cognitive reworking of the fictional identities and relationships that have been (and are being) narrated by the text. The twist in Chuck Palahniuk's 1996 novel *Fight Club* requires just such cognitive reorganization. The framing device that opens the narrative introduces the two protagonists—Tyler Durden and the unnamed first-person narrator—in the midst of a murder-suicide plot atop a skyscraper due to explode in ten minutes. With Tyler's gun in his mouth, the narrator reflects that 'all of this: the gun, the anarchy, the explosion is

really about Marla Singer’, and he describes the three characters’ relationship as ‘a sort of a triangle thing. . . . I want Tyler. Tyler wants Marla. Marla wants me. [¶] I don’t want Marla, and Tyler doesn’t want me around, not anymore’ (4). From the beginning, then, the reader is led to believe that the participant structure of the novel centers on this triangle of unreciprocated emotions. The plot twist in *Fight Club* lies in the revelation that Tyler—violent, charismatic, and driven by delusions of anarchic grandeur—is not a separate person at all but the alter ego of the passive, system-invested narrator.

While it might seem that the plot twist actually simplifies the participant structure of the narrative by collapsing a triangle into a dyad, the tension between the competing personalities only increases after the revelation of the twist. Indeed, the ultimate resolution of the triangle is achieved, at least in part, not by Marla’s finding out that Tyler and the narrator are the same person but by her coming to ‘know the difference’ between them. The expressions used by Tyler and the narrator to refer to and address each other during their first post-plot twist “meeting” reflect this tension at the most fundamental level of meaning:

- (1) “There isn’t a me and a you, anymore,” Tyler says, and he pinches the end of my nose. “I think you’ve figured that out.” (155)

Tyler’s speech is important, not only because it helps to clarify the participant structure of the novel, but also because the forms of the referring expressions he uses belie his meaning. Even in the midst of insisting that the two are one, Tyler selects personal pronouns that maintain the boundary between himself and the narrator. And, though everyone now knows that the narrator and Tyler share a nose, the narrator does not describe the physical contact as, for example, ‘I pinch the end of my own nose’. Thus the reader must interpret (1) to mean what Tyler intends, but she also registers, albeit perhaps at a less conscious level, that the sentence contains morphosyntactic features that contradict its semantics.

A textual exploration of *Fight Club* will reveal the extent to which this tension between the form and function of referring expressions, and more generally the competition between interpretations of linguistic evidence, is used to complicate the participant structure of the narrative and, in turn, to enhance the effect of the plot twist. To understand how these expressions create—and revise—the participant structure of the

novel, we turn first to the linguistic phenomenon of deixis and then to deictic shift theory, a theory of cognitive deixis in narrative.

Deixis in Natural Language

From the Greek word for pointing or indicating, *deixis* refers to the features of language, including verb tense and aspect, personal pronouns, and adverbs of time and place, that depend for their full interpretation on the context of their utterance. Linguistic expressions that possess this property of context dependence were first termed *indexical symbols* by Peirce (cited in Burks 1949). Following Peirce, Burks used the distinction between token and type to help distinguish indexical symbols, such as ‘this’, from non-indexical symbols, such as ‘red’. Each use of a particular word in context is a token; the class of all tokens of that word is a type. The tokens of both non-indexical and indexical symbols have symbolic meanings, each of which is specified by a general linguistic rule that applies to all tokens of the type. But whereas the full meaning of a non-indexical symbol token (e.g., ‘red’ in the utterance ‘the book is red’) is contained in this symbolic meaning, the full meaning of an indexical symbol token (e.g., ‘this’ in the utterance ‘this is the book’) also contains the contextual information (generally, a spatiotemporal point) of that token. Burks called the combination of symbolic meaning and relevant situational information the *indexical meaning*. As Burks observed, one cannot judge the truth value of a sentence that contains a token of an indexical symbol without knowing the token’s indexical meaning—and whatever one must understand to be able to verify a sentence (i.e., to judge its truth value) is precisely the meaning of that sentence.

Because the anchoring of situational information is crucial to the interpretation of deictic expressions and the sentences that contain them, there must exist a subjective orienting point for context-embedded discourse. Bühler (1934/1982) termed this orienting point the *origo*; others have since called it the *center* (Fillmore 1971; Lyons 1968) or, more specifically, the *center of orientation* (Rauh 1983) or the *deictic center* (Levinson 1983). In the primary deictic categories of person, place, and time deixis, *I* is understood to be the speaker’s self, *here* is understood to be the speaker’s current location, and *now* is understood to be the speaker’s present time. It is in relation to this speaker-centric “zero point” that other personal, spatial, and temporal deictic expressions (in the same

speaker's speech) are constructed and comprehended.¹ The deictic center is not stable; indeed, it shifts slightly even in the course of a single conversation, as different participants adopt the role of speaker. It is participants' orientation to the deictic center of the speaker's utterances, combined with their knowledge of the symbolic meanings of deictic expressions, that allows them to construct a shared indexical meaning of each deictic expression (indexical symbol token) used in that particular context, thus enabling communication.

Accounts of deixis have expanded beyond the traditional three domains of person-place-time to include discourse deixis, which encodes spatial or temporal references to sections of the discourse itself, and social deixis, which encodes relative social status of participants and nonparticipants (Fillmore 1971; Levinson 1983). Cross-linguistic evidence suggests that all deictic domains are organized similarly: they are partitioned, most generally, into "the encoder," "in connection with the encoder," and "not in connection with the encoder" (Rauh 1983).² The present investigation of the participant structure of a narrative text necessarily focuses on person deixis, which is encoded primarily in the morphosyntactic features of pronouns. This deictic domain is organized as above, with respect to participant roles (Levinson 1983; Lyons 1968): the speaker uses first person to refer to himself or herself ("the encoder"), second person to address the hearer ("in connection with the encoder"), and third person to refer to other people (and things) who are not participating in the conversation and may be present or absent, identified or unidentified ("not in connection with the encoder"). As we shall see, however, in fictional narrative, the lines cannot always be drawn so clearly: the distinctions between speaker and hearer, participant and nonparticipant, are frequently confounded.

1. Although the standard, speaker-centric model of deixis is widely employed, some researchers have questioned its applicability to deixis in naturally occurring discourse; see Jones's (1995) critique of the standard account and proposal of an alternative, sociocentric model.

2. Rauh (1983) adapts the terminology of communication theory to reflect the pragmatics of deixis: in communication, the encoder constructs and encodes the message *from his or her perspective*; the decoder decodes and reconstructs the message *and the encoder's perspective*.

Studies of person deixis often note the functional difference between first and second person on one hand, and third person on the other (e.g., Benveniste 1971; Bühler 1934/1982). Whereas the personal pronouns *I* and *you* function only deictically, third-person pronouns can perform not just deictically but also anaphorically (i.e., by referring to an entity named previously within the discourse). There is some disagreement, however, regarding the nature of the connection between an anaphor and its referent. According to some analyses, including that by the influential Halliday and Hasan (1976), the third-person pronouns “refer back” to their antecedents; thus they refer only indirectly, through a mechanism of cross-reference, to the entities themselves. Ehlich (1982) characterizes the difference between anaphora and deixis as a functional difference that

reflects the psycholinguistic activities the hearer has to perform in order to understand a speaker. He is, in effect, instructed to alter [in the case of deixis] *or* to sustain [in the case of anaphora] his focus of attention in the ongoing process of communication. (331; italics in original)

Other authors, however, have challenged the view of anaphora as cross-reference, claiming that it contradicts proforms’ utility as cognitively efficient referral mechanisms (Emmott 1995). Instead, they suggest that anaphoric uses of third-person pronouns operate by coreference—that is, by directly triggering the mental representation of the referent itself (Brown and Yule 1983; Emmott 1992, 1995, 1997; Lyons 1977). Emmott’s (1995) account of anaphora in fictional narrative is especially relevant to the current investigation. Emmott argues that the strict antecedent view of pronouns does not reflect the reader’s experience of a text through the cumulative process of reading, which goes far beyond manipulating linguistic symbols to “actively thinking about a character who has recently been mentioned” (85). Indeed, because the reader must update her mental representations of characters as the discourse continues, the analysis that best accounts for the coherence of narratives is one that posits that the pronoun directly activates (and thus enables updating of) the mental representation itself, rather than cross-referencing it through the antecedent (Emmott 1995).

Deixis in Fictional Narrative

In face-to-face communication, the use of context-dependent expressions is possible precisely because speaker and hearer share a context. During discourse, deictic

expressions can be constructed by each speaker and reconstructed successfully by each hearer because participants are able to utilize their shared understanding of references to their shared spatial and temporal environment. Lyons (1977) explains,

The grammaticalization and lexicalization of deixis is best understood in relation to what might be called the canonical situation of utterance . . . with all the participants present in the same actual situation able to see one another and to perceive the associated non-vocal paralinguistic features of their utterances. . . . There is much in the structures of language that can only be explained on the assumption that they have developed for communication in face-to-face interaction. This is clearly so as far as deixis is concerned. Many utterances which would be readily interpretable in a canonical situation-of-utterance are subject to various kinds of ambiguity or indeterminacy if they are produced in a non-canonical situation: [for example,] if they are written rather than spoken and dissociated from the prosodic and paralinguistic features which would punctuate and modulate them. (637–638)

Of course, the fact that deictic expressions “developed for communication in face-to-face interaction” does not preclude their use in other communicative contexts, such as telephone conversations and letters or e-mail messages. But the more removed the speaker or writer is from the hearer or reader—that is, the fewer deictic domains they share—the more adjustments participants must make to ensure successful communication. They may simply forego strictly deictic expressions in favor of context-independent descriptions, especially in the domain of place deixis. Thus the demonstrative pronoun ‘those’ that would be used in face-to-face communication might be exchanged in a telephone conversation for a descriptive noun phrase (‘the herbs planted outside the kitchen window’). Alternatively, when he or she is removed from the hearer or reader, the speaker or writer may “tak[e] the other fellow’s point of view” (Fillmore 1971, 235). This is the option chosen, for example, by the person who writes in an e-mail message at nine o’clock in the morning ‘I hope you had a good day’ to the recipient who does not check her e-mail until she gets home from work. The encoder may be seen in such cases as “transferring the deictic center to the hearer’s, or reader’s, spatio-temporal situation in which the text will be encountered” (Brown and Yule 1983, 53). That we routinely make the necessary cognitive and linguistic adjustments to use deictic expressions even in these far-from-canonical situations reveals not only the flexibility of

our cognitive systems but also the extent to which the coherence of human communication depends on deixis.

The case of deixis in fictional narrative, however, presents a still more complicated case. Clearly, the author and reader do not share a perceptual space. Even in narratives in which the actual environment of the author does contribute a relevant orienting point for deictic expressions (i.e., the narrative is situated to some degree in the author's real world), that context is not readily available to the reader. Similarly, "taking the other fellow's point of view" is not a viable option for the author, since he or she is completely unaware of the reader's spatiotemporal situation. In general, the entities, events, and places that are narrated, and the relationships among them, cannot depend for their structural coherence on real-world entities, events, or places, precisely because they are fictional. Yet deictic expressions are employed in every type of fictional narrative.

Bühler (1934/1982), the first to examine deixis in narrative, established a typology of deixis based on the various contexts that provide referential structure for deictic expressions: *demonstratio ad oculos*, structured by the speaker's present physical and temporal environment; *anaphora*, structured by the context of the discourse itself (perhaps more accurately termed *discourse deixis* [Rauh 1983]); and *deixis at phantasma*, structured by the context of imagination and memory. It is this third type that is involved in reading narrative. The reader of a novel, Bühler thought, experienced a deictic reanchoring, which could occur as either "Mohammed goes to the mountain or the mountain moves to Mohammed" (27–28). Modern researchers of deixis in fictional narrative consider the former experience to be the more phenomenologically valid: the reader "loosens" herself from her real, immediate environment and imagines herself in the situation of the text (Galbraith 1995; Segal 1990, 1995).

How fictional narrative enables the reader to achieve this reorientation is one of the central questions of deictic shift theory, a model of discourse representation and narrative comprehension. The theory begins to address the problem of deixis in narrative by positing a story world, of which the story itself is a subset: the coherence of the story is preserved by virtue of its being embedded in the story world. The author makes the causal, spatial, and temporal relations in the story available to the reader, who in turn understands the story by creating a mental model of the story that fits in the story world

(Segal 1995). The referentiality of the actual world is transferred to that of the fictional world, and the reader's subjectivity is transferred to the characters (Galbraith 1995). The notion of a story world is, of course, not specific to deictic shift theory; it is typical of representational text models. Emmott (1997, 1998), for example, writes of fictional worlds, and Werth (1995, 1999) of text worlds. These approaches have much in common with deictic shift theory, including the assumption that readers import knowledge of the real world and of other possible worlds into the story world,³ in addition to drawing on their everyday experiences of real-world deictic orientation to help create the necessary deictic structure in the story world.

Of course, as we have seen, deixis in the story world itself is not structured by either the author's or the reader's actual world. How, then, does the reader comprehend, not just the deictic references in fictional narratives, but the fictional narratives themselves, which, like all human communication, depend for their very coherence on deixis and reference? According to deictic shift theory, the reader creates a mental model of the story world and then projects, or shifts, her deictic center into that model. That is, in the process of reading, the reader responds to the textual cues provided by the author (who has likewise taken up one or more perspectives within the text in the process of creating it) to construct a deictic coordinate system in the world of the narrative.⁴ The reader then continues to reconstruct and reorient the deictic center, as cued by the text, during the course of the narrative. With respect to a particular narrated event, specific morphological, lexical, and syntactic elements of the text direct the reader to an active spatiotemporal location within the mental model when and where the reader witnesses the

3. The filling in of real-world information is associated, in deictic shift theory, with the deictic center principle of textual economy (Zubin and Hewitt 1995).

4. In this respect, deictic shift theory has much in common with Margolin's (1984) model of narrative indexicality. A crucial difference is deictic shift theory's opposition to the "necessary narrator" theory of narrative (Galbraith 1995), to which Margolin subscribes. Deictic shift theory posits that characters' subjectivity may be represented directly, without any epistemological recourse to a mediating speaker if one is not specifically deictically indicated in the text. Therefore, the reader creates a deictic field at the level of narration only if the text explicitly calls for one—but deictic shift theorists recognize that first-person narrative explicitly calls for a narrator's deictic field. The current investigation is therefore amenable to Margolin's framework.

event (Segal 1990, 1995). One of the particular strengths of deictic shift theory is its identification and classification of these textual elements and their specific effects on the deictic center.

The deictic center of the text—the “window” from which the reader witnesses fictional events or, more generally, the perspective from which the reader experiences the elements of the story world—contains the components of the WHO (the narrative’s participant structure), the WHERE (its spatial structure), the WHEN (its temporal structure), and the WHAT (its object structure; Zubin and Hewitt 1995). The WHO component, which is of central interest to the present investigation of person deixis, comprises two subcomponents. The first, the focalizing WHO, is the participant whose perspective provides the deictic center’s origin (that is, if the context includes any such participant; the focalizing WHO is void in so-called objective contexts). Because deixis in narrative is detached from the coordinates of the speech situation, the linguistic realization of the deictic center may represent any of a variety of perspectives, even within the same narrative. In other words, the focalizing WHO may shift from one character to another, depending on which character’s subjectivity is currently active. It is these types of deictic shifts—from subjective character to subjective character, and from subjective context to objective context and back—that have been the focus of deictic shift theorists’ work on the WHO component (see Bruder and Wiebe 1995; Wiebe 1990, 1995). Yet texts with “overt narrators”—including all first-person narratives—are excluded from such analyses because every sentence in such a narrative is considered to be a subjective sentence (i.e., a sentence that presents a character’s consciousness, in this case the narrator’s; Wiebe 1995).

The second, less-studied subcomponent of the WHO is the focalized WHO, the participant (if any) on whom the narrative is focusing. The structural behavior of this subcomponent is similar to that of the WHAT: both shift and decay more easily and more rapidly than the focalizing WHO and are, in general, much less stable (Zubin and Hewitt

1995). The focalized WHO is like the focalizing WHO, however, in its potential to be a subject of intention (Zubin and Hewitt 1995).⁵

As the deictic center shifts throughout the narrative, the reader maintains traces of previous deictic centers so that each component has, in addition to a current content (which may be void), a history. In the case of the WHO, the history is a “global representation of all the WHOs in the story world” (Zubin and Hewitt 1995, 134) that contains participant properties, such as intentional structures, as well as associations both among participants and between participants and other specific WHATs, WHENs, and WHEREs. By accumulating these traces of previous WHOs, the reader is able, for example, to identify the referents of expressions that might otherwise be ambiguous, as well as to more easily reinstate WHOs that she has tracked earlier in the narrative. The maintenance of the history also allows the reader to update his or her mental representations of characters (former and current WHOs) each time new information is presented or new inferences are made (Zubin and Hewitt 1995; see also Emmott 1995, 1997).

Shifts (and stability) in the deictic center are signaled to the reader by deictic center devices: morphological, lexical, and syntactic units, as well as elements of the textual structure (e.g., blank lines and paragraph breaks). In the case of the WHO component, the cognitive operations that the reader performs in response to these devices comprise introducing a character, maintaining the current character, shifting to another character, and voiding the WHO; collectively, these and other deictic center operations are termed *edgework* (Segal 1995). Zubin and Hewitt (1995) catalogue those deictic center devices that affect the focalizing WHO (see appendix 1). Deictic center theorists have thoroughly investigated these devices in non-first-person narratives but have not established the extent to which these devices are found in first-person narratives, no doubt because they have assumed that the focalizing WHO remains constant once the narrator is introduced at the beginning of the novel.

5. The focalizing WHO is also termed the *subjective character* (Bruder and Wiebe 1995; Hewitt 1995). The focalized WHO is also termed the *focal WHO* (Bruder and Wiebe 1995).

Zubin and Hewitt (1995) do not identify deictic center devices that affect the focalized WHO, perhaps because they would be too numerous and varied to classify: within most narratives, many characters are mentioned many times, and each mention, regardless of the form it takes, is very likely to shift the focalized WHO to that character.⁶ At least some of the devices Zubin and Hewitt identify as affecting the focalizing WHO, however, should affect the focalized WHO similarly; these should be expected in first-person and non-first-person narratives alike. For example, subject chaining, a common maintenance device, may maintain a focalized WHO just as it does a focalizing WHO. The focalized WHO in (2), from “The Yellow Wallpaper,” is the narrator’s husband.

(2) John is practical in the extreme. He has no patience with faith, an intense horror of superstition, and he scoffs openly at any talk of things not to be felt and seen and put down in figures. (9)

The WHO remains unchanged in this passage because the device of subject chaining, here in the form of pronominalization, maintains John as the focalized WHO.

Deictic shift theory’s attention to identifying the focalizing WHO in subjective contexts and distinguishing between subjective and objective contexts has unfortunately resulted in less-developed knowledge not only of the devices that affect the focalized WHO but also of the possible interactions between the two subcomponents of the WHO. More generally, the concern with identifying subjective contexts has led deictic center theorists to neglect first-person narratives. From the standpoint of deictic shift theory, the most important aspect of the first-person narrative is its constant focalizing WHO, a narrator who can easily restrict or distort the deictic window through which the reader views the story world (Zubin and Hewitt 1995). But deictic shift theorists view the subjectivity devices that are available to third-person narration as more subtle (Zubin and Hewitt 1995) and thus, presumably, more worthy of investigation. As a result, deictic shift theory in its present form does not adequately account for the variety of manipulations of a range of perspectives that may be achieved in first-person narratives, particularly in those whose participant structures are further complicated by radical plot twists.

© Anna Laura Bennett 2005

6. The authors also do not identify devices that affect the WHAT, whose structural behavior, as noted previously, is similar to that of the focalized WHO.

CHAPTER 2
Textual Exploration

This chapter begins by applying specific components of deictic shift theory to aspects of person deixis in *Fight Club* and proceeds to examine other person deictic phenomena that deictic shift theory must be expanded to accommodate.

Standard Deictic Center Devices and the Focalized WHO

As expected, many of the focalizing WHO deictic center devices identified by Zubin and Hewitt (1995; see appendix 1) are attested in *Fight Club* as affecting the focalized WHO (see appendix 2 for examples from the text). Also as expected, given the different structural behavior of the two subcomponents of the WHO, the volatile focalized WHO is less restricted than the focalizing WHO in the devices that can introduce, maintain, shift, and void it.

A consistent difference appears with respect to focalizing WHO antishifting devices: devices that *block* shifts in the focalizing WHO often *shift* the focalized WHO. A definite noun phrase in object position, for example, blocks the focalizing WHO from shifting to the character the noun phrase refers to, but it increases the likelihood that the focalized WHO will shift to that character, as (1) illustrates.

- (1) All night long, I dreamed I was humping Marla Singer. Marla Singer smoking her cigarette. Marla Singer rolling her eyes. (47)

The placement of ‘Marla Singer’ in direct object position shifts the focalized WHO from the narrator to Marla. Similarly, in (2), the focalized WHO shifts to the complement ‘Marla’ of the perception predicate ‘hear’, though this structure is an antishifting device for the focalizing WHO.

- (2) One evening, I hear Marla on the front porch, telling a space monkey, “I’m here to see Tyler. Tyler Durden. He lives here. I’m his friend.” (125)

That the linguistic features which act as antishifting devices for the focalizing WHO can act as shifting devices for the focalized WHO reflects the instability of the latter WHO subcomponent. In fact, the mere mention of a character’s name or other referring expression in virtually any syntactic position seems to have the potential to introduce the character into the focalized WHO, maintain that character in the focalized WHO, or shift

the focalized WHO to that character, depending only on the composition of the focalized WHO prior to the character's mention.

Passage (3) contains cues to several such deictic center operations.

- (3) Our only neighbors are a closed machine shop and across the street, a block-long warehouse. Inside the house, there's a closet with seven-foot rollers for rolling up damask tablecloths so they never have to be creased. There's a cedar-lined, refrigerated fur closet. The tile in the bathroom is painted with little flowers nicer than most everybody's wedding china, and there's a used condom in the toilet.

I've been living with Tyler about a month.

Tyler comes to breakfast with hickies sucked all over his neck and chest, and I'm reading through an old *Reader's Digest* magazine. This is the perfect house for dealing drugs. There are no neighbors. There's nothing else on Paper Street except for warehouses and the pulp mill. . . . (48–49)

The first paragraph's purpose is to describe a location, a subtype of discourse that, unsurprisingly, voids the focalized WHO. At the beginning of the second paragraph, the narrator, as the subject of the sentence, is introduced into the focalized WHO, which then shifts mid-sentence to Tyler, the object of the preposition 'with' (a syntactic position never predicted to shift the focalizing WHO). At the beginning of the third paragraph, Tyler is maintained in the focalized WHO as the subject of the first conjoined clause; the focalized WHO then shifts to the narrator, the subject of the second conjoined clause. Note that this shift marks another departure from the behavior of the focalizing WHO: although clause conjoining in some instances maintains the focalized WHO (see appendix 2)—just as Zubin and Hewitt (1995) observe that it does with respect to the focalizing WHO—it acts as a shifting device in this sentence because the conjoined independent clauses have different subjects. At the end of (3), the narrator as focalized WHO decays when the location description resumes, voiding the focalized WHO.

A surprising feature of *Fight Club* is its low incidence of pronominalization to maintain the focalized WHO. In (4), for example, the character's name is repeated even though the pronoun 'he' could replace the second 'Tyler' without introducing any ambiguity.

- (4) Tyler pries the lid off the can of lye. "You can blow up bridges," Tyler says. (64)

Throughout the narrative, both Tyler's and Marla's names are frequently used in contexts in which the appropriate third-person pronoun could refer unambiguously to the correct character (see page 93 for heavy use of Marla's name), and the names even of secondary characters such as Big Bob (123) and minor characters such as Albert the waiter (74–75) and Raymond K. Hessel (chapter 20) are occasionally used where pronouns would suffice. In contrast, the narrator remains anonymous, referred to both by himself and by other characters almost exclusively with pronouns. Deictic shift theory predicts this distribution of referring expressions in subjective contexts in third-person narratives: the character that is the focalizing WHO in a particular context is more likely than other characters to be referred to with reduced expressions, including both pronouns and zero-anaphors, within that context (Hewitt 1995). In a third-person narrative, this pattern helps the reader identify the focalizing WHO of a subjective context (and, conversely, it is the focalizing WHO's salience in the context that permits the reduced expressions), but the distinction is not particularly meaningful in first-person narrative, where a pronoun (*I*) is the default referring expression for the narrator, the default (and only) focalizing WHO. The low rate of pronominalization and the correspondingly high rate of the use of proper names as referring expressions in *Fight Club* may simply reflect the novel's larger theme of the relationship among naming, identity, and existence (for example, one fight club mantra is 'You're not your name' [135], and in Project Mayhem, 'Only in death will we have our own names since only in death are we no longer part of the effort' [169]).

Representing the Subjectivity of the Focalized WHO

In writing a first-person narrative, the author does not take up just any perspective in the story world from which to construct the story; he takes up specifically the perspective of the narrator. The focalizing WHO thus cannot shift, and the reader of the first-person narrative recognizes, implicitly or explicitly, this constraint. What is of interest, then, are the ways in which the author may manipulate the properties of the WHO, without shifting the focalizing WHO, to present the subjectivity of characters other than the narrator.

Indirect Representation of Characters' Dialogue

A mechanism that allows authors to provide the illusion of a perspective other than the narrator's is the indirect representation of other characters' speech (Banfield 1982). Throughout *Fight Club*, Palahniuk makes extensive and somewhat unconventional use of indirectly represented dialogue. Appearing in these contexts, for example, are perception and mental predicates: deictic center devices that typically shift the focalizing WHO to the predicates' subjects. Consider (5), in which the narrator and Marla discuss who will have access to which support groups. (The passage begins with the narrator's speech, which is almost invariably indirectly represented.)

(5) We'll split bowel cancer. She gets it the first and third Sunday of every month.

"No," Marla says. No, she wants it all. The cancers, the parasites. Marla's eyes narrow. She never dreamed she could feel so 'smarvelous. She actually felt alive. Her skin was clearing up. All her life, she never saw a dead person. There was no sense of life because she had nothing to contrast it with. Oh, but now there was dying and death and loss and grief. Weeping and shuddering, terror and remorse. Now that she knows where we're all going, Marla feels every moment of her life. (28)

According to deictic shift theory, the mental predicate in the underlined sentence (and, cumulatively, the perception predicate in that sentence's complement and subsequent similar predicates) should cue the reader to shift the focalizing WHO to Marla. What precludes any shift is the sentences' embedding in the unambiguous context of Marla's speech. The reader is enabled to sense another character's subjectivity while retaining the structure of the deictic center; contextual cues signal that the "other" subjectivity is being filtered through and represented from the narrator's perspective. The subjective experiences even of minor characters are represented in this fashion when those characters are focalized WHOs. Passage (6), for example, might be assumed to be a character's thoughts—

(6) Oh.
God.
Help.
Me. . . . (157)

—except that it is preceded by a single attributive tag that marks it as the Seattle police commissioner's indirectly represented speech:

(7) The commissioner said, no. (157)

While (7) makes it clear that (6) contains the commissioner's protests and pleadings, the indirect representation allows the reader to sense the fear that the commissioner experiences as the members of Project Mayhem attack him.

The context does not always provide the cues necessary to signal that a perspective other than the narrator's is being represented, however. Chapter 11, for example, opens with this description of a hypothetical scenario:

- (8) In South America, Land of Enchantment, we could be wading in a river where tiny fish will swim up Tyler's urethra. The fish have barbed spines that flare out and back so once they're up Tyler, the fish set up housekeeping and get ready to lay their eggs. In so many ways, how we spent Saturday night could be worse. (77)

Globally because this is a first-person narrative, and locally because the thoughts in (8) lack an attributive tag, the reader naturally assumes that it is the narrator who is imagining this situation and comparing it to the real events of Saturday night. The exchange that immediately follows (8), however, invalidates that interpretation:

- (9) "It could've been worse," Tyler says, "what we did with Marla's mother."
I say, shut up.
Tyler says, the French government could've taken us to an underground complex outside of Paris where not even surgeons but semiskilled technicians would razor our eyelids off as part of toxicity testing an aerosol tanning spray. (77)

The reader now grasps that it was Tyler's perspective represented at the chapter opening. Again, given the first-person narrative structure, readers are highly unlikely to retroactively enact a deictic shift in the focalizing WHO (i.e., reconstructing the deictic center so that Tyler is the focalizing WHO at the beginning of the chapter). As in (5)–(7), it is the context of indirectly represented speech that allows the reader to attribute this passage correctly. But in contrast to examples (5)–(7), the contextual information here is provided later, after the passage has begun. Therefore, the reader originally adds invalid information to the WHO and then must perform extra edgework: she must nullify her original interpretation and update the WHO of the deictic center to reflect that it is Tyler, not the narrator, who possesses esoteric zoological knowledge and adopts a flippant view of whatever high jinks the two have been perpetrating. These properties should accrue to Tyler's trace in the history of the WHO, not the narrator's.

Passages that unexpectedly mandate cognitive revision of the WHO occur several times in the novel, usually because indirectly represented dialogue is initially not attributed to its speaker. The vast majority of these instances involve confusion between the narrator and Tyler—a significant observation, considering the nature of the plot twist. In each case, as in (8), the reader is unaware that the interpretation of perspective is in question at all until she reads further. An important point to consider is whether the history of the WHO also then retains some evidence of the original interpretation and/or its correction. That is, does the reader accumulate traces that conflate her mental representations of the narrator and Tyler, perhaps preparing her incrementally for the radical edgework that the plot twist will require?

That the WHO retains the misinterpretation in some form seems likely in principle, but the point is difficult to assert when the text makes the correct interpretation available to the reader perhaps only a second after she has formed the first, wrong impression, as is likely the case with the sequential (8) and (9). Logically, the more removed the “misleading” evidence is from the disambiguating information, the stronger and more persistent the faulty trace formed in the history of the WHO should be. Passage (10) is the first element in one such example.

(10) Marla lives at the Regent Hotel, which is nothing but brown bricks held together with sleaze, where all the mattresses are sealed inside slippery plastic covers, so many people go there to die. You sit on any bed the wrong way, and you and the sheets and blanket slide right to the floor. (49–50)

As usual, the reader automatically attributes this untagged description to the narrator. Two pages later, however, when the description continues, the narrator explicitly attributes it to Tyler.

(11) Tyler tells me how Marla lives in room 8G . . . (51)

The reader now has no choice but to retroactively assign the previous description to Tyler’s perspective as well, especially given the narration in the intervening paragraphs of Tyler’s trip to Marla’s apartment the previous evening to save her from a drug overdose: at this point in the narrative, Tyler’s experience is the only source of the narrator’s (and thus the reader’s) knowledge about Marla’s hotel.

The elements of another example occur, again, within a single chapter, but separated from each other now by several pages. The narrator lists the various

committees that have been formed to carry out the tasks of Project Mayhem and then, apparently sensing the oxymoron, seems to shrug:

(12) Organized Chaos. The Bureaucracy of Anarchy. You figure it out.⁷
(110)

From (12) the reader infers that the narrator is uninterested in resolving the apparent discrepancies between Project Mayhem's ideology and its practices, and she adds that feature to her mental representation of the narrator as a trace in the history of the WHO. But in the conversation between the narrator and Tyler during which Project Mayhem was birthed (a conversation that occurred previously in story world time but is narrated a bit later in the story), a different interpretation emerges.

(13) It's Project Mayhem that's going to save the world. A cultural ice age. A prematurely induced dark age. Project Mayhem will force humanity to go dormant or into remission long enough for the Earth to recover.
"You justify anarchy," Tyler says. "You figure it out." (116)

Here, the unconcerned attitude is revealed to be Tyler's, while the narrator attempts to imbue the project with a sense of humanitarian accountability. Some cognitive revision is now required of the reader; whether she reinterprets the first occurrence of 'You figure it out' as Tyler's indirectly represented speech or as simply the narrator's recollection (and affectation) of an attitude that Tyler expressed to him, she must move that feature from her mental representation of the narrator to her mental representation of Tyler.

The most extremely removed from each other are the following passages, (14) from chapter 1 and (15) from chapter 23:

- (14) This how-to stuff isn't in any history book.
The three ways to make napalm: One, you can mix equal parts of gasoline and frozen orange juice concentrate. Two, you can mix equal parts of gasoline and diet cola. Three, you can dissolve crumbled cat litter in gasoline until the mixture is thick.
Ask me how to make nerve gas. Oh, all those crazy car bombs. (3)
- (15) Down the basement stairs, one space monkey is reading to the other space monkeys. "The three ways to make napalm:
"One, you can mix equal parts of gasoline and frozen orange juice concentrate," the space monkey in the basement reads. "Two, you can mix

7. Though in (12) the narrator appears to be addressing the reader, this interpretation is revised by (13). The phenomenon of the narrator's addressing the reader does occur elsewhere in the text, however, and will be discussed in a later section.

equal parts of gasoline and diet cola. Three, you can dissolve crumbled cat litter in gasoline until the mixture is thick.” (161)

In (14), the narrator does not offer any source tag for ‘this how-to stuff’, though the context reinforces the reader’s default interpretation of the narrator as not just the focalizing WHO but also the source of the information. It is not until near the end of the novel that the reader encounters these words again, now in their original form: an instruction sheet written by Tyler for the members of Project Mayhem. That the narrator delivers these instructions verbatim (to the reader) in the framing device of chapter 1 suggests that in constructing the story, the author intended both for the misattribution to be made and for the correction to be long in coming—quite long enough for the original trace to be firmly fixed in the history of the deictic center.

As these cases accumulate, the reader builds a history of the WHO that conflates the narrator’s perspective with Tyler’s. This history contains traces of properties and experiences that were first attributed to the narrator and then had to be reassigned—perhaps with substantial cognitive effort, and perhaps not completely successfully—to Tyler. What is important to the reader’s cognitive negotiation of the plot twist is not so much the specific contents of the WHO (i.e., which properties are assigned to the narrator and which to Tyler) as it is the frequency with which the path between the two characters is traversed in the history of the WHO, specifically for the purpose of moving properties and experiences from the reader’s mental representation of the narrator to her mental representation of Tyler.⁸ Whether or not the reader is consciously aware of this revision process, repeating these deictic center operations on the WHO cognitively prepares her for the substantial and mostly conscious edgework she will have to perform when the plot twist is fully revealed.

8. The moving metaphor is employed here only for ease of explanation. The cognitive process the reader engages in could be represented otherwise. For example, each feature that is ascribed to the narrator might be thought of as acquiring a subscript N, each feature ascribed to Tyler a subscript T, etc. Those features that the reader first erroneously assigns to the narrator and then reassigns to Tyler might be thought of as having a hybrid subscript, such as T(N), that denotes both the former trace and the current trace and thus maintains a mental connection between the representation of the narrator and that of Tyler in the history of the WHO.

Nonstandard Uses of Standard Deictic Center Devices

As discussed above, perception and mental predicates, normally considered shifting devices, may appear (in first-person narratives) with subjects other than the narrator, without shifting the focalizing WHO, when they are embedded in contexts of other characters' indirectly represented speech. *Fight Club*, however, contains a single example of this shifting device that does not occur in a character's speech and whose subject is not the narrator. Its subject is Tyler.

- (16) Tyler and I still go to fight club, together. Fight club is in the basement of a bar, now, after the bar closes on Saturday night, and every week you go and there's more guys there.

Tyler gets under the one light in the middle of the black concrete basement and he can see that light flickering back out of the dark in a hundred pairs of eyes. First thing Tyler yells is, "The first rule about fight club is you don't talk about fight club.[''] (41)

Since the narrator is present in the situation, the contextual cues suggest straightforward, firsthand narration: the narrator watches Tyler get under the basement light and hears Tyler yell the fight club rules, and he narrates what he observes. What the narrator cannot do (as far as the first-time reader is concerned), and what he cannot narrate doing, is transfer his deictic center to Tyler's so that he can see from Tyler's vantage point. According to deictic shift theory, the underlined clause *should* shift the focalizing WHO to Tyler—and perhaps it does, for a fraction of a second, before the reader reins her cognitive apparatus back in to obey the constraints of first-person narrative and continues reading, perhaps slightly unsettled. But whether every reader or any reader temporarily shifts the deictic center to Tyler, all readers accrue this transitory feature to the history of the WHO: the narrator's direct access to Tyler's perceptual state.

Though they are less radical than (16), other examples occur in the text in which perception and mental predicates have Tyler as their subject—that is, as one of the referents of the narrator's inclusive *we*.

- (17) So Tyler and I are on top of the Parker-Morris Building with the gun stuck in my mouth, and we hear glass breaking. (2)

- (18) We just totally forget about Tyler's whole murder-suicide thing while we watch another file cabinet slip out the side of the building . . . (3)

They are less radical than (16) in that they do not so directly represent Tyler's subjectivity; they contain Tyler only in conjunction with the narrator. However, the

nature of the plot twist increases the significance of the focalizing WHO's expansion to include Tyler.⁹ In (17) and (18), the speaker shifts from *I* to the more diffuse *we* in a process Margolin (1984, 1987) terms *displaced person deixis* or, more generally, *deictic transfer*. The uses of *we* in these sentences represent the morphological type $I \rightarrow we$ transfer, which decenters the subject by creating a "diluted *I*" (a phrase Margolin borrows from Benveniste) that includes "the speaker and his alter-egos" (192). This is the weakest type of deictic transfer—that is, it has the smallest decentering effect on the subject—but, again, in (17) and (18) the shift is strengthened by the nature of the plot twist. Indeed, much later in the novel, immediately after the plot twist is revealed, Tyler makes explicit the $I \rightarrow we$ transfer.

- (19) "What it is," Tyler says, "is we have police who come to fight at fight club and really like it. We have newspaper reporters and law clerks and lawyers, and we know everything before it's going to happen."
 We were going to be shut down.
 "At least in Seattle," Tyler says.
 I ask what did Tyler do about it.
 "What did *we* do about it," Tyler says.
 We called an Assault Committee meeting. (155)

That Tyler embraces the use of *we* while the narrator largely avoids it, especially as the novel near its climax, reveals the narrator's ambivalence about exploiting the subject-decentering effect of the $I \rightarrow we$ transfer (as Tyler, who is in a sense the usurper of the subject) and succumbing to the subject decentering (as the narrator, the original subject and owner of the body).

Second-Person Narration

Though the narrator attempts to maintain an identity distinct from Tyler's throughout the novel, he does not always narrate Tyler's experiences in third person. As discussed above, the narrator occasionally employs the first-person-plural pronoun to narrate experiences he and Tyler share, but second person is better suited to the purpose of representing a single other character's perspective. Both first and second person have the advantage of participant status that third person lacks, but, unlike first person, second

9. Zubin and Hewitt (1995) describe the scope of the focalizing WHO in third-person narrative as capable of expanding to include two or more characters treated as a group, but they do not explore this property of the deictic center with respect to the first-person-plural pronoun.

person need not involve the speaker. Furthermore, in certain contexts, both first-person-plural and second-person proforms can assume general meanings (the *we* of ‘all humanity’, the *you* of ‘anyone’), in which case they may be considered indefinite forms that void the focalized WHO (cf. Zubin and Hewitt 1995).

In chapter 3 of *Fight Club*, the narrator intersperses descriptions of his own job responsibilities as a recall campaign coordinator with descriptions of Tyler’s duties as a movie projectionist. The narrator describes in detail a process called a changeover, the projectionist’s switching from running one reel of a film on one projector to the next reel of a film on a second projector. (The narrator explains, ‘I know this because Tyler knows this’—a sentence he repeats throughout the novel.) In addition to providing a clever metaphor for the shift from one personality to another, this passage expertly manipulates the second-person pronoun, using it to slip subtly from the completely generalized *you* in (20), to a more specific *you*—a generic projectionist-*you*—in (21), and finally, in (22), to a specific projectionist-*you* that, by virtue of its specificity, becomes the focalized WHO.

(20) The small reels pack into a pair of hexagonal steel suitcases. Each suitcase has a handle on top. Pick one up, and you’ll dislocate a shoulder. (17)

(21) The old theaters that run a movie with two projectors, a projectionist has to stand right there to change projectors at the exact second so the audience never sees the break when one reel starts and one reel ran out. You have to look for the white dots in the top, right-hand corner of the screen. (17)

(22) The second white dot is the five-second warning. Excitement. You’re standing between the two projectors and the booth is sweating hot from the xenon bulbs that if you looked right at them you’re blind. At home, you’ll sometimes wake up in your dark bed with the terror you’ve fallen asleep in the booth and missed a changeover. The audience will be cursing you. (17–18)

Moreover, by virtue of its extreme subjectivity, the *you* in (22) appears either to eclipse the narrator’s perspective or, what is more likely (given the constraints of first-person narrative), to merge the focalized WHO with the focalizing WHO, transferring to the narrator the subjective experience of performing a changeover, something he has never done (as far as the first-time reader knows). Further, an unmistakable connection between the projectionist-*you* in (22) and Tyler is forged when the experiencer of these events later shifts from second to third person (reestablishing the narrator as the focalizing WHO

and Tyler as the focalized WHO) but repeats the detail, now in third person, of *Tyler's* waking up, terrified:

- (23) Sometimes, Tyler wakes up in the dark, buzzing with the terror that he's missed a reel change or the movie has broken or the movie has slipped just enough in the projector that the sprockets are punching a line of holes through the sound track. (18–19)

These subtle shifts in perspective are clearly deictic shifts, albeit of a slightly different nature than those so far identified by deictic shift theory. Even though the focalizing WHO has not shifted, the reader has a strong sense that the quality of the focalizing WHO has changed during these passages—most radically by briefly merging with the focalized WHO.

The reader's sense of the subjectivity of the focalized WHO is achieved in these passages by second-person narration. The use of *you* draws the reader in to identify with the projectionist (Tyler) in a way that the use of third person cannot, as confirmed by comparing the involvement effect achieved by (22) with the more personally removed effect of (23) (cf. Fludernik 1995). Even more important with respect to the plot twist is that, by narrating in such an intimate, subjective way experiences he has never had, the narrator also implicates himself in this identification with the projectionist, serving to further conflate the reader's mental representations of the narrator and Tyler.

As important as the sense of involvement between the narrator and Tyler is to the plot twist, Tyler is not the only character whose experience is represented using second person. Indeed, one of the most remarkable uses of *you* in *Fight Club* involves a minor character, Raymond K. Hessel, whose life the narrator threatens for an Assault Committee homework assignment. The type of *you* in itself is not noteworthy; it matches the type Herman (1994) terms *fictionalized address*, in which one character addresses another. What is remarkable is the way it is employed: rather than being restricted to direct discourse, as Herman claims it must be, *you* is used here to address the narration of the encounter directly to Raymond K. Hessel.

Chapter 20 is devoted entirely to the narrator's encounter with Raymond; the shift from third person to second person occurs in the sixth paragraph:

- (24) Raymond Hessel, Raymond didn't say anything. Probably he figured I was after his money, his minimum wage, the fourteen dollars in his wallet. Oh, Raymond Hessel, all twenty-three years of you, when you started

crying, tears rolling down the barrel of my gun pressed to your temple, no, this wasn't about money. Not everything is about money. (144)

Here, paradoxically, although the change from *he* to *you* should signal a shift in the focalized WHO, no such shift occurs: the character occupying the focalized WHO in this paragraph (and, indeed, in the entire chapter) is stable. As in (22), it is more accurate to describe the shift as occurring *between* the focalized WHO and the focalizing WHO, rather than in one or the other—a shift that brings the two closer to each other, though not to the extreme degree achieved in (22). The powerful effect of addressing the narrative to the focalized WHO is illustrated by the difference between (25), a standard sentence that might have appeared in the novel had the chapter not switched to second-person narration, and (26), the sentence that actually closes the chapter.

(25) Raymond K. K. Hessel's dinner is going to taste better than any meal he's ever eaten, and tomorrow will be the most beautiful day of his entire life.

(26) Raymond K. K. Hessel, your dinner is going to taste better than any meal you've ever eaten, and tomorrow will be the most beautiful day of your entire life. (147)

Whereas Raymond is an intimately involved participant in (26), he would be merely a topic in (25).

Narrator as Focalized WHO

As many of the examples above have demonstrated, the narrator is at least as likely to be the focalized WHO as any other character is.¹⁰ Because the narrator is also the “speaker” of the text, he is its *I*; the reader assumes that the person deictic structure of the text reflects this fact, and she therefore expects the narrator to use the first-person pronoun to refer to himself when he is the focalized WHO. The phenomena of self-address and fictional reference, however, make available to the narrator the use of the second person.

10. This observation, though it seems commonplace, means that the same character (the narrator) routinely occupies both subcomponents of the WHO simultaneously, a phenomenon for which deictic shift theory in its present form does not fully account. This point will be discussed in chapter 3.

Self-Address

In addition to its standard use in dialogue and its nonstandard use in second-person narration, fictionalized address may be used for the purpose of self-address, a function of *you* that often implies an internal conflict or dual self (Margolin 1984). Indeed, in *Fight Club*, the narrator's self-address occurs most often in the context of his attempts at guided meditation, itself a kind of dissociative venture. When Tyler is burning his hand with lye, for example, the narrator addresses himself:

(27) Don't even think of the word *pain*. (66)

Example (27) is also representative of the narrator's use of self-address in that he rarely employs the second-person pronoun, usually relying instead on the imperative mood with a zero nominal. Instances of self-address in *Fight Club* are isolated, but a single, full sequence of rather conversational self-address occurs after the plot twist is revealed, shortly before the novel's climax.

(28) The world is going crazy. My boss is dead. My home is gone. My job is gone. And I'm responsible for it all.
There's nothing left.
I'm overdrawn at the bank.
Step over the edge.
The police tape flutters between me and oblivion.
Step over the edge.
What else is there?
Step over the edge.
There's Marla.
Jump over the edge.
There's Marla, and she's in the middle of everything and doesn't know it.
And she loves you.
She loves Tyler.
She doesn't know the difference.
Somebody has to tell her. Get out. Get out. Get out.
Save yourself. (184)

The "sides" of the narrator that speak in (28) do not reflect his larger split identity, and it is difficult to resolve precisely which side of the narrator speaks which part. What does seem clear is that the duality apparent in (28) is precipitated by the narrator's fleeting recognition that he is responsible for everything that Tyler has done—a moment of clarity that, paradoxically, almost sends the narrator over the edge. It is the narrator's

conversation with himself here, however, that sets in motion the events that will finally resolve the more fundamental duality that plagues him.

Fictional Reference

An even more radical type of *you* that occurs in *Fight Club*, a type unique to narrative, is the narrator's use of *you* for *I*, which Herman (1994) terms *fictional reference*. The *you* of fictional reference exhibits an uncoupling of form from function: it retains the morphosyntactic features of the personal pronoun of address but assumes the deictic functions of a first-person pronoun through another morphological type of Margolin's (1987) deictic transfer, that of $I \rightarrow you$ (Herman 1994). As (29) reveals, fictional reference thus creates a kind of interpretive competition: the form of the pronoun signals that the referent is an addressee, but the function signals that the referent is the speaker (i.e., the narrator).

- (29) You give up all your worldly possessions and your car and go live in a rented house in the toxic waste part of town where late at night, you can hear Marla and Tyler in his room, calling each other human butt wipe.
(55)

In its uncoupling of feature and function, fictional reference *you* is like the impersonal (generalized) *you*, which functions as an impersonal pronoun of reference though it retains the features of the personal pronoun of address (Herman 1994).

Indeed, the reader of *Fight Club* cannot always clearly distinguish instances of fictional reference from generalized uses of *you*. In particular, earlier chapters of the novel contain many uses of the second-person pronoun that the reader is equally likely to interpret as generalized *you* or as fictional reference. Passage (30) is one such example from chapter 3.

- (30) The charm of traveling is everywhere I go, tiny life. I go to the hotel, tiny soap, tiny shampoos, single-serving butter, tiny mouthwash and a single-use toothbrush. Fold into the standard airplane seat. You're a giant. The problem is your shoulders are too big. Your Alice in Wonderland legs are all of a sudden miles so long they touch the feet of the person in front. Dinner arrives, a miniature do-it-yourself Chicken Cordon Bleu hobby kit, sort of a put-it-together project to keep you busy. (18)

Though the narrator is clearly describing his own travel experiences and the reader may thus interpret each *you* in (30) as the narrator's *I* (i.e., as fictional reference), the experiences are common enough that it is equally plausible to read each *you* as more or

less general. Other similar cases occur throughout the first two-thirds of the novel, though some involve a more restricted generalized *you*. In chapter 6, for example, the narrator often uses the second-person pronoun to describe participating in fight club:

- (31) You aren't alive anywhere like you're alive at fight club. When it's you and one other guy under that one light in the middle of all those watching. (42)

Although the fully generalized *you* interpretation is not available in passages like (31), an interpretation of *you* that refers generally to all current and potential members of fight club is available—as is the interpretation that each *you* has taken on the deictic properties of the narrator's *I*. Regardless, no disambiguating information is ever provided, either in this context or in future passages, leaving these uses of *you* open to either interpretation.

In some cases, an unambiguous interpretation of *you* as fictional reference does emerge—but only after the reader has first encoded them as impersonal. In (32), the reinterpretation is made available by an incomplete $I \rightarrow you$ deictic transfer.

- (32) The big wet face settles down on top of my head, and I am lost inside. This is when I'd cry. Crying is right at hand in the smothering dark, closed inside someone else, when you see how everything you can ever accomplish will end up as trash.
Anything you're ever proud of will be thrown away.
.....
This is when I'd cry because right now, your life comes down to nothing, and not even nothing, oblivion. (7)

As we have seen briefly above and as Fludernik (1995) has observed, some uses of *you*, particularly generalized *you*, can serve to involve the reader in the narrative. Conversely, like the impersonal *one*, generalized *you* can also establish distance between the speaker and the content of his speech. In the first four sentences in (32), the reader senses that the narrator is inviting her in, that he believes to be universal his experience of crying at the futility of one's own life. The last sentence, then, comes as somewhat of a shock: the reader knows quite well that the narrator is not crying because an impersonal, generalized *you's* life is amounting to nothing. The *you* in this line can only be fictional reference, the deictic properties of *I* transferred temporarily to *you*—and so, surely, this interpretation should apply to all the *yous* in the context. The reader may determine retrospectively that the narrator's use of *you* in (32) is more likely a ploy to distance himself from the emotional content of his observation than it is an attempt to involve her in it. When the

plot twist is revealed (much later in the novel) and the reader learns of the narrator's split identity, this latter interpretation gains strength.

In some cases, the resolution of the ambiguity of fictional reference/generalized *you* follows a pattern similar to the one observed above with respect to the focalizing WHO, by which attributions made to the narrator were corrected much later. Chapter 3 begins thus:

- (33) You wake up at Air Harbor International.
Every takeoff and landing, when the plane banked too much to one side, I prayed for a crash. That moment cures my insomnia with narcolepsy when we might die helpless and packed human tobacco in the fuselage.
This is how I met Tyler Durden.
You wake up at O'Hare.
You wake up at LaGuardia.
You wake up at Logan.
Tyler worked part-time as a movie projectionist. . . . (15)

The sentence 'You wake up at [airport]' (or some very close variation) occurs a total of eighteen times in the chapter. The *you* in each of these sentences can be interpreted as fictional reference—again, the accounts do arise from the narrator's own experiences of waking up in airport after airport—but the generalized *you* interpretation is the more plausible, according to deictic shift theory: If the spatial location of a specific WHO (such as the *you* of fictional reference) changes, the WHERE of the deictic center shifts to the new location; conversely, a shift in WHERE is not expected when the spatial location of an indefinite subject (such as generalized *you*) changes. As the sequence of sentences in (33) makes clear, the spatial adverbial 'at [airport]' does not shift the WHERE of the deictic center to the location of the airport, thus strengthening the interpretation of each *you* as generalized *you*.

Chapter 21 begins almost exactly as chapter 3 does but then proceeds quite differently.

- (34) You wake up at Sky Harbor International.
Set your watch back two hours.
The shuttle takes me to downtown Phoenix and every bar I go into there are guys with stitches around the rim of an eye socket where a good slam packed their face meat against its sharp edge. There are guys with sideways noses, and these guys at the bar see me with the puckered hole in my cheek and we're an instant family. (148)

The reader immediately senses a difference in the sentences about waking up at airports in this chapter: the deictic center does shift to the location (and the time zone) of the airport, and narration continues from that spatially anchored point. Still, the reader may retain the generalized *you* interpretation, noting that a shift occurs from second person to first person when the narration actually begins, signaling what appears to be a shift in the focalized WHO (i.e., from generalized *you* to the narrator). As the chapter continues, however, the narration of experiences after waking up at various airports does shift, each time (albeit temporarily), into second person:

- (35) You wake up at O'Hare and take the shuttle into Chicago.
Set your watch ahead an hour.
.....
Every bar you go into, punched-out guys want to buy you a beer. (149)

With the third sentence of (35), the generalized *you* interpretation of 'You wake up at [airport]' loses all validity. Not only does the shift in WHERE that corresponds to the WHO's movement suggest that the WHO is a specific character, but logic dictates that the *you* in the last sentence of (35) can refer only to the narrator.

At such points in reading second-person fiction, the "reader has to acknowledge the existence of a fictional situation" (Fludernik 1995, 107). The sense of involvement elicited by generalized *you* must end when the reader "discovers specific features of the *you*-referent with which she cannot identify by any stretch of the imagination" (107)—in other words, once the *you* can be unambiguously labeled as fictional reference. Beginning with the third sentence in (35), specific features (here, experiences) are ascribed to the narrator that the reader does not share. Much as the reader may have felt when she identified the (incomplete) deictic transfer in (32), she feels pushed out of the narrative now, since she cannot identify with this feature of being recognized by battered members of fight club chapters across the country. But then, *neither can the narrator*.

- (36) The bar is empty, and the bartender says, "Welcome back, sir."
I've never been to this bar, ever, ever before. (150)

As the reader will soon discover (or confirm), it is only as his alter ego Tyler that the narrator has visited these bars, and since the narrator still lacks conscious access to the Tyler component of his identity, he feels pushed out of his own life. Paradoxically, then, the sense of readerly distance effected by the shift from generalized *you* to unambiguous fictional reference draws the reader closer to the subjective position of the narrator: as the

reader is removed from the events in the narrative, so too is it revealed that the narrator is and has been utterly removed from his own experiences.

Reader as Focalized WHO

The most surprising entity to occupy the focalized WHO is you: the reader of *Fight Club*. The use of second person termed *apostrophic address* directly involves the reader in the narrative by addressing her. Given the second-person pronoun's address function and its resultant "irresistible invitation" (Kacandes 1993, 139), the interpretation of 'you' as referring to oneself is natural—though the reader of fiction is understandably surprised, and usually somewhat unsettled, to find herself addressed by the fictional narrator. Most of the instances of apostrophic *you* in *Fight Club* are not as startling as they might be, coming in the form of stock phrases such as 'if you know what I mean' (21) or subjectless imperatives such as 'picture [blank]' or 'consider [blank]', as in (37).

(37) Everywhere I go, there's the burned-up wadded-up shell of a car waiting for me. I know where all the skeletons are. Consider this my job security. (20)

But in one instance, *you* takes the undeniable form of the narrator's addressing the current reader of the story.

(38) Just before Marla and I met at Remaining Men Together, there was the first lump, and now there was a second lump.

 What you have to know is that Marla is still alive. Marla's philosophy of life, she told me, is that she can die at any moment. The tragedy of her life is that she doesn't. (99)

Briefly, in the middle of (38), the apostrophic *you* shifts the focalized WHO from Marla to the reader, solely for the purpose of asserting to the reader in the actual world the continuing existence of a character in the virtual world. The interaction of these different ontological planes presents a problematic case for deictic shift theory, as will be discussed in chapter 3.

Edgework Cued by the Plot Twist

The plot twist is revealed by a single referring expression: the bartender in Seattle addresses the narrator as 'Mr. Durden'. Once the reader understands that the narrator and Tyler are the same person, she begins to revise the participant structure of the story world, relying on cues from the narrative to determine how much of the participant

structure to reconstruct, and to what extent. She is guided by the narrator, who in fact is engaging in a similar process, albeit more reluctantly, as he tries to understand the revised participant structure of his “real” world.

The narrator’s first action after leaving the bar in Seattle is to call Marla from his motel room. Like the reader, the narrator has begun to suspect that if Tyler has had sex with Marla, then the narrator has “too.” When she refuses to answer his questions about whether they have slept together, he changes tactics and asks her how they met.

- (39) “In that testicle cancer thing,” Marla says. “Then you saved my life.”
I saved her life?
“You saved my life.”
Tyler saved her life.
“You saved my life.”
I stick my finger through the hole in my cheek and wiggle the finger around. This should be good for enough major league pain to wake me up.
Marla says, “You saved my life. The Regent Hotel. I’d accidentally attempted suicide. Remember?” (152)

The narrator remembers the incident, though as (39) makes clear, he recalls it only secondhand, as an event that Tyler experienced and later described to him.

The reader, on the other hand, not only remembers the incident but retains, in her mental representation of the story world, a trace connecting the narrator’s knowledge about the Regent Hotel to Tyler’s: a (mis)cue that has subtly prepared her for this turn of events. Now that the plot twist has been revealed, this and all the other traces of incorrect attributions in the history of the WHO, as well as the instances in which Tyler’s subjective perspective was directly represented or merged with the narrator’s, and those in which the focalizing WHO was decentered to include Tyler along with the narrator, coalesce into a joint characterization in the reader’s mental representation of the story world. Tyler is the narrator, and the narrator is Tyler. Of course, the reader has received many other clues to the plot twist that are fully interpretable only in retrospect, some in the form of interactions between characters (such as Tyler’s habit of disappearing when Marla appears), others in the form of referring expressions. The latter involve not only Tyler and Marla—for example, Marla’s addressing the narrator as ‘Pumpkin’—but also secondary and minor characters, such as the fight club mechanic who exhibits extreme devotion to the narrator, and the men in various fight club bars who address the narrator as ‘sir’. The reader now mentally reviews all of these cues (and may even review them

physically as well, returning to key passages in the text), not only to facilitate the radical restructuring of the relationships in the story world ultimately cued by the plot twist, but also to strengthen her new interpretations—that is, to shore up the newly revised participant structure.

CHAPTER 3

Theoretical Implications

Deictic shift theory was developed to account for the construction and comprehension of all fictional narratives (Segal 1990, 1995; Talmy 1995). The theory's specificity is one of its strengths—in particular, the specification of the morphological, lexical, and syntactic devices predicted to alter components of the deictic center around which narratives are structured—but also one of its weaknesses, because it reveals the areas in which that specificity has not been achieved.

First-Person Narrative

Though deictic shift theory in its general development includes first-person narrative, it has neglected this narrative form at the level of specific detail. The textual exploration of *Fight Club* enables several observations about first-person narratives that may be integrated into deictic shift theory to help complete its account of fictional narrative.

Deictic shift theorists identify two subcomponents of the WHO of the deictic center, the focalizing WHO and the focalized WHO, but they have described the deictic center devices that affect only the former (Zubin and Hewitt 1995). Indeed, in discussions of the WHO, the subcomponent of interest is clearly the focalizing WHO, the subjective character (see Bruder and Wiebe 1995; Hewitt 1995; Wiebe 1990, 1995; Zubin and Hewitt 1995). Although the results of the present investigation do not justify the theory's lack of attention to the focalized WHO, they do underscore the difficulty inherent in identifying specific deictic center devices that affect the focalized WHO. The textual exploration verifies deictic shift theory's characterization of the subcomponent's structural behavior: Though some of the devices that affect the focalizing WHO were found to similarly affect the focalized WHO, there was a greater trend toward shifting the focalized WHO, even by devices that maintain or block shifts in the focalizing WHO. In addition, the focalized WHO decayed rapidly, voided merely by the lack of mention of a character. Finally, the textual exploration reveals that, whereas changes and stability in the focalizing WHO are cued primarily by specific devices (see appendix 1), the deictic

center operations of introducing, maintaining, and shifting the focalized WHO are cued primarily by the context just prior to the mention of the character—that is, the current content of the focalized WHO determines which operation is cued by the character’s mention.

Expanding deictic shift theory to include first-person narrative requires changes in the theory’s characterization of the relationship between the focalized WHO and the focalizing WHO. One of the most frequent focalized WHOs in *Fight Club* is the narrator—a remarkable observation from the standpoint of deictic shift theory because it means that at various points throughout the novel, the focalizing WHO and the focalized WHO are the same character. Zubin and Hewitt (1995), however, claim that the phenomenon of a single character’s occupying both subcomponents of the WHO is rare, occurring only when “the focalizing WHO’s intentional state is self-reflective,” in which case “the focalized WHO is a *projected ego*, a projected image of the focalizing WHO, and conceptually distinct from the former, yet objectively the same character in the story” (134; italics in original). These statements may be accurate with respect to third-person narratives, but they apply only partially to first-person narratives. First, though narrators do frequently enter self-reflective states, they focus on themselves (i.e., they become focalized WHOs) for a variety of other purposes, including narration of events in which they participate. Second, the narrator-character may or may not be a projected ego when he or she is the focalized WHO. Margolin (1987) describes the narrator-character as “a single main referent who forms the topic of his [the narrator’s] discourse, and who is identical with the speaker, or at least serves as his counterpart in some narrated domain” (185). The narrator-character is most obviously “identical with the speaker” when the narration is in the present tense—as the majority of the narration in *Fight Club* is.

Passage (1) illustrates several of these points.

- (1) I want to make Marla laugh so I don’t tell her about the last time I hugged Chloe, Chloe without hair, a skeleton dipped in yellow wax with a silk scarf tied around her bald head. I hugged Chloe one last time before she disappeared forever. I told her she looked like a pirate, and she laughed. (97)

Here, the narrator is both the focalizing WHO and one of the focalized WHOs (along with first Marla and then Chloe), though his intentional state is not self-reflective. In the present-tense narration, the narrator and his narrator-self are identical, whereas in the

past-tense narration, the narrator-self is a “former self” counterpart of the narrator, or, in the terms of deictic shift theory, a temporally projected ego. Not only is it common in first-person narrative for the focalizing WHO and the focalized WHO to be the same character, then, but this phenomenon of joint occupation of the subcomponents of the WHO places no restrictions either on the narrator’s intentional state or on the relationship that the narrator-character may be in with respect to the narrator-speaker. These observations mark a difference between first-person and third-person narratives that deictic shift theory must reflect: the narrator in first-person narratives is, in addition to the focalizing WHO, the default focalized WHO.

The textual exploration of *Fight Club* revealed a variety of interactions between the focalized WHO and the focalizing WHO that enabled representation of the focalized WHO’s perspective: indirect representation of characters’ dialogue, nonstandard use of standard deictic center devices, and narration in the second person. These devices appeared, sometimes in conjunction with each other, to offer the reader at least a glimpse of subjectivities other than the narrator’s. The result is what Margolin (1984) terms a *partial transfer*, “a contamination of the position (space, time, person) of the narrator . . . with that of a third-person individual in the domain of reference” (201). Although the representation of other characters’ perspectives does not in itself jeopardize the larger assumption of deictic shift theory that the focalizing WHO in first-person narratives is stable, it does suggest that the narrator is not the *only* possible subjective character.

Typically, sentences that indirectly represent a character’s thoughts, beliefs, or feelings as expressed in his or her speech are attributed to that character. The attributive tag reminds the reader that she is being exposed to the character’s subjectivity only through the focalizing WHO—that is, from the narrator’s perspective. The device is noteworthy in these cases primarily because it frees the author to represent a character’s subjective perspective outside the confinement of directly represented speech, to achieve an effect with third person that approximates the subjectivity of first person (Banfield 1982).

When such passages occur in first-person narratives without clear attribution to a character, however, the reader automatically interprets them as the narrator’s subjective sentences, since no cues signal the reader to assign the represented thoughts, beliefs, or

feelings to anyone else. While deictic shift theory does address the potential for uncertainty about the identity of the focalizing WHO, it predicts that readers typically wait until the conflict is resolved by further deictic center devices before performing the edgework of assigning subjective sentences to one character or another (Zubin and Hewitt 1995). Clearly, deictic shift theory must be revised to account for the fact that the participant structure of any text with an overt narrator possesses a default recipient of features expressed in such contexts—that is, the reader’s mental representation of the narrator. Moreover, the author of a first-person narrative can rely on the reader’s default interpretation of such contexts in constructing the narrative and use them, as Palahniuk does in *Fight Club*, to manipulate the reader’s mental representation of the participant structure.

The nonstandard use in *Fight Club* of some standard deictic center devices—specifically, those that shift the focalizing WHO to a character other than the narrator—pushes the limits of deictic shift theory further. Certainly, deictic shift theory’s positing that the focalizing WHO is constant in first-person narratives not only contributes to the internal consistency of the theory but also reflects the general experience of readers of first-person narratives. Pip is the only focalizing WHO in *Great Expectations*, and the reader does not expect Dickens to shift the focalizing WHO to Joe, Estella, or any of the other characters in the novel. The same constraint operates in *Fight Club*, but in this postmodern novel, deictic center devices do appear to shift the focalizing WHO, if only briefly.

While a strict application of deictic shift theory might overlook these shifts because they are not predicted to appear in first-person narratives, an analysis that takes into account the novel’s participant structure suggests that the author intentionally uses deictic center devices in nonstandard ways to violate the constraint. As with any violation, it is the existence of the rule that lends this violation its force: the focalizing WHO’s shift to Tyler is noteworthy precisely because the constraint on first-person narrative usually prohibits such a shift. Moreover, though the shift violates the reader’s expectations when she encounters it, the violation takes on specific meaning when the plot twist is revealed, since even this nonstandard use of the device operates within the established parameters of the story world: it occurs only in connection with the character

that is linked inextricably to the narrator in the participant structure. These observations do not mean that deictic shift theory must offer an *a priori* account of all such nonstandard uses of deictic center devices, but rather that its adherents should be open to the interpretation of these nonstandard uses, when they do occur, as purposeful violations effective within the context of a particular narrative.

Finally, the perspectives of characters other than the narrator may be represented using second-person narration, an observation that has two important implications for deictic shift theory—the first related to deictic center devices that properly or improperly mark the advent of the second-person narration, and the second related to the deictic center operations, or edgework, that the reader performs in such contexts. First, within a passage, or even within a single sentence, generalized *you* may shift to a *you* whose referent is a specific character, introducing that character into the focalized WHO (since the focalized WHO is void while a generalized *you* is in effect). Yet this change in the deictic center is not signaled by any change in the morphosyntactic features of the pronoun—or, indeed, by any standard deictic center device. The reader is prompted to perform the edgework of introducing the character into the WHO only by the semantic content of the context: the *you* referent becomes the focalized WHO when its features become too specific to attach to a generalized *you* (cf. Fludernik 1995). Conversely, second-person narration may be initiated by switching from third person to second person (i.e., shifting the narrative so that it addresses rather than refers to the focalized WHO), a switch in pronoun that would seem to shift the focalized WHO but instead maintains it.

Second, the edgework that the reader must perform when second-person narration begins is not adequately described by the operations of introducing and maintaining characters as focalized WHOs. In both of the above cases, the reader senses a qualitative change in the focalized WHO—or, more precisely, in the relationship between the focalized and focalizing WHOs: the focalized WHO referred to or addressed in the second person occupies a position closer to the focalizing WHO than does the “standard” third-person focalized WHO. This qualitative shift is attributable to the pragmatic distinction between second person, by definition a participant, and third person, by definition a nonparticipant.

When the narrator is the focalized WHO of second-person narration—that is, when the narrator uses the *you* of fictional reference—a different effect is achieved. As suggested in chapter 2, deictic shift theory may be usefully augmented in this respect by Margolin’s (1987) typology of transferred first-person deixis, deictic transfers that decenter (or, in more extreme cases, void) the narrative subject. The morphological type of deictic transfer that enables fictional reference is the $I \rightarrow you$ transfer (which enables self-address as well); the weaker type $I \rightarrow we$ is also attested in *Fight Club*, as is a more radical type, described below.

The notion of subject decentering may at first seem incompatible with deictic shift theory, given both the theory’s premise that narrative construction and comprehension depend upon the author’s and reader’s reorientation to a deictic center in the story world, and the fact that the deictic center in first-person narrative corresponds to the narrator (the speaker, Margolin’s narrative subject). If deictic transfer destabilizes that deictic center, then it destabilizes the entire narrative structure. But, of course, that is precisely the author’s intended effect in *Fight Club*: encoded in the plot twist itself is the radical $I \rightarrow he$ transfer by which the narrator’s subjectivity is transferred to Tyler. According to Margolin, “the distantiation and alienation . . . effect [of the $I \rightarrow s/he$ transfer] is at its strongest when the speaker’s internal states, including memories, perceptions and imaginings, are presented in the *s/he* form” (193). Indeed, the effect is strong enough in *Fight Club* to uphold the illusion that Tyler is a separate character altogether from the narrator. Far from being incompatible with subject decentering, then, deictic shift theory helps explain why the transfer of first-person deixis has such a powerful effect.

A destabilization effect that may be more difficult to reconcile with deictic shift theory is that occasioned by the second-person phenomenon of apostrophic address.¹¹ Since, as we have seen, the mere mention of a human entity is sufficient to shift (or introduce, or maintain) the focalized WHO to that entity, we must assume that the effect

11. The use of *you* to address the reader is the subject of the only application of deictic shift theory to any second-person phenomenon (Hosenfeld, Duchan, and Higginbotham 1995); unfortunately, that study examines persuasive texts, a discourse type that presents only the regular deictic challenges of spatiotemporally removed communication between writer and reader, not the challenges of communication between different ontological planes (i.e., those of fictional narrator and actual reader).

of apostrophic address in fiction is to shift the focalized WHO to the reader. But surely this is impossible: not only does the reader not exist in the story world, but she has shifted her deictic center into the story world in order to comprehend the narrative, whose deictic expressions should not have referential force in the actual world (Margolin 1984).

Deictic shift theory cannot claim to elucidate the mechanics of apostrophic *you*, but its lack of an explanation for an arguably inexplicable phenomenon—that is, communication between a virtual world and an actual world—is not an irredeemable fault. The “ontological hesitation between the virtual and the actual” (Herman 1994, ¶2) is a characteristic feature of second-person fiction, a postmodernist narrative form in which, generally speaking, the narrator-protagonist refers to himself or herself in second person, though both fictional reference and apostrophic address are frequently utilized.¹² Deictic shift theory’s strength may lie in its capacity to specify why readers react the way they do to apostrophic *you*—that is, the unsettling effect a reader feels, for example, when the narrator of *Fight Club* stops narrating Marla’s history to reassure the reader that Marla is alive may result from the feeling of being temporarily forced to attempt, and failing, to mentally support two deictic centers: one in the real world to accommodate herself as the focalized WHO being addressed, and the other in the story world to accommodate the narrator as the focalizing WHO.

Narrative Twists and Preparatory Edgework

Though narrative twists are closely associated with some literary genres—Culpeper (2002), for example, notes that the core feature of detective novels is their “dramatic recategorization” of a particular character as the perpetrator, and Attardo (2002) includes in his typology of humorous texts the category “humorous plot, with punch line” to classify narratives that, like extended jokes, contain a final punch line that requires the reader to reinterpret the foregoing story—such twists appear in all narrative types. In constructing a fictional narrative that incorporates a surprise ending or other plot twist, the author must tread carefully, neither providing so many clues as to reveal the twist too early nor providing so few as to render the twist implausible. The desired effect is that “the audience begins by being taken aback and ends by nodding their heads as a

12. See Fludernik (1994) for a bibliography of second-person texts and criticism.

result of recognizing that the surprise has been prepared for” (Phelan 2005, 333). The author has at his disposal various techniques to aid him in achieving the balance between surprise and plausibility. At plot level, for example, the literary device of foreshadowing is commonly employed to provide suspense. Thus, in *Great Expectations*, Pip’s several encounters with convicts both prepare the reader for Provis to return and increase her anxiety at the prospect of his return—without leading her to guess the significance of Provis’s relationship to Pip. The result is a plot twist that is at once believable and shocking.

From the standpoint of deictic shift theory, the author of a narrative twist must construct a deictic structure that is coherent and consistent enough to support the narrative up to the point of the plot twist, but flexible enough to transform into the post-plot twist deictic structure. The results of the textual exploration of *Fight Club* suggest that what is here being called *preparatory edgework* has a similar effect at the cognitive-linguistic level of the text. The cues and miscues of deictic center devices lead the reader to construct a participant structure that foreshadows the post-plot twist structure. Once the plot twist is revealed, then, the reader is better cognitively prepared to shift to the resultant participant structure and to make the adjustments necessary to adapt it to her mental model of the story world (and vice versa). Moreover, the easing of the transition arguably increases the plausibility of the radical plot twist.¹³ Of course, an author need not build an alternate (post-plot twist) version of the deictic structure into the narrative to deictically foreshadow the plot twist. It is reasonable to assume, however, that narratives whose plot twists require radical deictic restructuring will enjoy proportionally greater effects of preparatory edgework, facilitating the reader’s adaptation to and acceptance of the plot twist.

The supposition that cognitive work on the deictic center in a local context can lead up to global work on the deictic structure of the entire text at the point of the plot

13. This is not to claim that the plausibility of this particular novel is complete, only that preparatory edgework increases the reader’s acceptance of the plot twist. The “knowing” reader of *Fight Club* will be able to identify at least a few elements of the participant structure that are difficult to interpret in light of the plot twist. In particular, instances of public interaction between the narrator and Tyler (such as their parking lot fight) are difficult to resolve, if only because the narrator is said to be asleep when he sees Tyler. In all, though, the novel’s careful construction holds up well upon rereading.

twist suggests a further possibility: the edgework cued by a plot twist, radical as it may be, is of the same type as that cued by a single deictic center device. Whereas the scope of the latter is primarily the current content of the deictic center, that of the former is primarily the history. The results of the textual exploration of *Fight Club* provide some evidence for this claim, particularly in the form of interactions between the focalized WHO and the focalizing WHO. The reader is prompted to merge a focalized WHO with the focalizing WHO once, temporarily and effective only in the local context (cued by a pronoun shift), and then again, permanently and effective over the entire participant structure of the narrative (cued by the plot twist). If this account of edgework is valid, plot twists may then be conceived of as large-scale deictic center devices, setting in motion the edgework that revises the deictic structure of the narrative itself.

Conclusion

If deictic shift theory is to provide a unified framework for the analysis of all forms of fictional narrative, the theory's mechanics must be extended to include the deictic center devices identified by the present investigation, and its predictions modified to accommodate the edgework those devices cue. The theory's model of the participant structure of narrative fiction must be expanded to reflect the roles of both subcomponents of the deictic center's WHO, as well as their potential to interact. In this modified form, deictic shift theory should have considerable potential, not only to model the construction and comprehension of first-person narratives and narratives with plot twists, but also to account for the unique effects of these narrative forms.

APPENDIX 1

Deictic Center Devices That Affect the Focalizing WHO (Adapted from Zubin and Hewitt 1995, 145–149)

A. Introducing devices

1. Presentative structure
 - a. Preposed adverbial phrase/clause + subject NP (usually indefinite)
 - b. Existential construction: ‘it’/‘there’ + [*to be*] + NP
2. NP with extended modifier (also a maintaining device)

B. Maintaining devices

1. NP with extended modifier (also an introducing device)
2. Clause conjoining
3. Subject chaining
 - a. Pronominalization
 - b. Zero-anaphora

C. Antishifting devices

1. Definite NP in direct object or indirect object position (the focalizing WHO does not shift to the object entity)
2. Indefinite subject (the focalizing WHO does not shift to the subject entity)
3. Complementation, especially of perception predicates, cognition predicates, speech predicates, and causatives (the focalizing WHO does not shift to the entity contained in the complement)

D. Shifting devices

1. Perception or cognition predicate (the focalizing WHO shifts to the subject entity)
2. Definite NP in subject position
3. A shift in the WHERE (the focalizing WHO shifts to the character located in the new WHERE)

In addition, overall high frequency of mention of a character decreases the number of supporting features necessary to shift the focalizing WHO to that character.

E. Voiding device: Chained indefinite reference

APPENDIX 2

Standard Deictic Center Devices That Affect the Focalized WHO

A. Introducing devices

1. Presentative structure

a. Preposed adverbial phrase/clause + subject NP

Around us in the Trinity Episcopal basement with the thrift store plaid sofas are maybe twenty men and only one woman, all of them clung together in pairs, most of them crying. (7)

b. Existential construction: 'it'/'there' + [to be] + NP

Then there was Bob. (11)

2. NP with extended modifier

The little skeleton of a woman named Chloe with the seat of her pants hanging down sad and empty, Chloe tells me the worst thing about her brain parasites was no one would have sex with her. (9)

B. Maintaining devices

1. NP with extended modifier

Walter from Microsoft catches my eye. Here's a young guy with perfect teeth and clear skin and the kind of job you bother to write the alumni magazine about getting. (46)

2. Clause conjoining

His name was Tyler Durden, and he was a movie projectionist with the union, and he was a banquet waiter at a hotel, downtown, and he gave me his phone number. (23)

3. Subject chaining

a. Pronominalization

"Remember this," Tyler said. "The people you're trying to step on, we're everyone you depend on. We're the people who do your laundry and cook your food and serve your dinner. We make your bed. We guard you while you're asleep. We drive the ambulances. We direct your call. We are cooks and taxi drivers and we know everything about you. We process your insurance claims and credit card charges. We control every part of your life.

"We are the middle children of history, raised by television to believe that someday we'll be millionaires and movie stars and rock stars, but we won't. And we're just learning this fact," Tyler said. (157)

b. Zero-anaphora

Marla walked around the corner from the clinic to City Laundry and _stole all the jeans out of the dryers, then _walked to a dealer who gave her fifteen bucks a pair. (99)

C. Shifting devices

1. Definite NP in subject position

Mister his honor, mister chapter president of the local chapter of the national united projectionist and independent theater operators union just sat. (103)

2. A shift in the WHERE

At the end of Albert's story, Tyler smiles and says, "Cool."

Back in the hotel, right now, in the elevator stopped between the kitchen and the banquet floors, I tell Tyler how I sneezed on the trout in aspic for the dermatologist convention and three people told me it was too salty and one person said it was delicious. (75)

D. Voiding device: Chained indefinite reference

Or, I could just sit in the bushes and pump the hand pump until the plumbing was superpressurized to 100 psi. This way, when someone goes to flush a toilet, the toilet tank will explode. At 150 psi, if someone turns on the shower, the water pressure will blow off the shower head, strip the threads, *blam*, the shower head turns into a mortar shell. (60)

REFERENCES

- Attardo, Salvatore. 2002. Cognitive stylistics of humorous texts. In Semino and Culpeper 2002, 231–250.
- Banfield, Ann. 1982. *Unspeakable sentences: Narration and representation in the language of fiction*. Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Benveniste, Emile. 1971. *Problems in general linguistics*. Trans. Mary Elizabeth Meek. Coral Gables, FL: Univ. of Miami Press.
- Brown, Gillian, and George Yule. 1983. *Discourse analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- Bruder, Gail A., and Janyce M. Wiebe. 1995. Recognizing subjectivity and identifying subjective characters in third-person fictional narrative. In Duchan et al. 1995, 341–356.
- Bühler, Karl. 1934/1982. The deictic field of language and deictic words. In R. J. Jarvella and W. Klein 1982, 9–30.
- Culpeper, Jonathan. 2002. A cognitive stylistic approach to characterization. In Semino and Culpeper 2002, 251–277.
- Duchan, Judith F., Gail A. Bruder, and Lynne E. Hewitt, eds. 1995. *Deixis in narrative: A cognitive science perspective*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Ehlich, Konrad. 1982. Anaphora and deixis: Same, similar, or different? In R. J. Jarvella and W. Klein 1982, 315–338.
- Emmott, Catherine. 1992. Splitting the referent: an introduction to narrative enactors. In *Advances in systemic linguistics: Recent theory and practice*, ed. M. Davies and L. J. Ravelli, 221–228. London: Pinter.
- . 1995. Consciousness and context-building: Narrative inferences and anaphoric theory. In Green 1995, 81–97.
- . 1997. *Narrative comprehension: A discourse perspective*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- . 1998. “Situating events” in fictional worlds: The reader’s role in context construction. *European Journal of English Studies* 2: 175–194.
- Fillmore, Charles. 1971. Towards a theory of deixis. *Working Papers in Linguistics* 3:219–242.
- Fludernik, Monika. 1993. Second person fiction: Narrative *you* as addressee and/or protagonist. *Arbeiten aus Anglistik und Amerikanistik* 18:217–247.
- . 1994. Second-person narrative: A bibliography. *Style* 28:525+. Academic Search Premier.
- . 1995. Pronouns of address and “odd” third person forms: The mechanics of involvement in fiction. In Green 1995, 99–129.
- Galbraith, Mary. 1995. Deictic shift theory and the poetics of involvement in narrative. In Duchan et al. 1995 19–59.

- Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. 1899/1973. *The Yellow Wallpaper*. New York: Feminist Press.
- Green, Keith, ed. 1995. *New essays in deixis: Discourse, narrative, literature*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Halliday, M. A. K., and Ruqaiya Hasan. 1976. *Cohesion in English*. London: Longman.
- Herman, David. 1994. Textual *you* and double deixis in Edna O'Brien's *A Pagan Place*. *Style* 28:378+. Academic Search Premier.
- Hewitt, Lynne E. 1995. Anaphor in subjective contexts in narrative fiction. In Duchan et al. 1995, 325–339.
- Hosenfeld, Carol, Judith F. Duchan, and Jeffery Higginbotham. 1995. Deixis in persuasive texts written by bilinguals of differing degrees of expertise. In Duchan et al. 1995, 407–420.
- Jarvella, R. J., and W. Klein, eds. 1982. *Speech, place and action: Studies in deixis and related topics*. New York: Wiley & Sons.
- Jones, Peter E. 1995. Philosophical and theoretical issues in the study of deixis: A critique of the standard account. In Keith 1995, 27–48.
- Kacandes, Irene. 1993. Are you in the text? The “literary performative” in postmodernist fiction. *Text and Performance Quarterly* 13:139–153.
- Levinson, Stephen C. 1983. *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- Lyons, John. 1968. *Introduction to theoretical linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- . 1977. *Semantics*. Vol. 2. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- Margolin, Uri. 1984. Narrative and indexicality: A tentative framework. *Journal of Literary Semantics* 13:181–204.
- . 1987. Dispersing/voiding the subject: A narratological perspective. *Texte* 5/6:181–210.
- Palahniuk, Chuck. 2004. *Fight club*. Literary ed. New York: Henry Holt.
- Phelan, James. 2005. Narrative judgments and the rhetorical theory of narrative: Ian McEwan's *Atonement*. In *A companion to narrative theory*, ed. James Phelan and Peter Rabinowitz, 322–336. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Segal, Erwin M. 1990. Fictional narrative comprehension: Structuring the deictic center. *Proceedings of the 12th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society*, 526–533. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- . 1995. A cognitive-phenomenological theory of fictional narrative. In Duchan et al. 1995, 61–78.
- Semino, Elena, and Jonathan Culpeper, eds. 2002. *Cognitive stylistics: Language and cognition in text analysis*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

- Talmy, Leonard. 1995. Narrative structure in a cognitive framework. In Duchan et al. 1995, 421–460.
- Werth, Paul. 1995. How to build a world (in a lot less than six days, using only what's in your head). In Keith 1995, 49–80.
- . 1999. *Text worlds: Representing conceptual space in discourse*. London: Longman.
- Wiebe, Janyce M. 1990. Identifying subjective characters in narrative. *Papers presented to the 13th International Conference on Computational Linguistics (COLING-90, Helsinki)*, 401–408. Morristown, NJ: Association of Computational Linguistics.
- Zubin, David A., and Lynne E. Hewitt. 1995. The deictic center: A theory of deixis in narrative. In Duchan et al. 1995, 129–155.

VITA

Anna Laura Bennett was born in 1977 in Owensboro, Kentucky. She holds a bachelor of arts degree in psychology from the University of Kentucky in Lexington, where she graduated summa cum laude with honors in psychology.

As a graduate teaching assistant in the University of Kentucky Department of English, Ms. Bennett taught first-year composition for two semesters and served as a writing consultant in the Writing Center for five semesters. In 2004–05, she was appointed to coordinate special programs for the Writing Center. She was also selected as a graduate student member of the university's Writing Initiative.

In 2002, Ms. Bennett joined the staff of *Limestone: A Journal of Art and Literature* as a fiction editor and copyeditor. She continued as copyeditor for the 2003, 2004, and 2005 issues, and in 2004–05 also served as managing editor.

Ms. Bennett is a freelance editor and writing consultant in Lexington.