



The Faculty of Arts and Education

MASTER'S THESIS

Study programme: Master in Literacy Studies	Spring, 2023 Open
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Title of thesis: The Good, the Bad and the Madness – An investigation of the double narrative and subjectivity in <i>Piranesi</i> (2021) and <i>YOU</i> (2014)	
Keywords: Masculinity Stereotypes Trauma Crime Fiction Labyrinth Subjectivity Unreliable Narrator Double Narrative	Pages: 62 + attachment/other: 7 Stavanger, May 11, 2023

Abstract

This thesis conducts an investigation into how narrative structures as well as the literary device of the double is used to explore subjectivity in *YOU* (2014) and *Piranesi* (2021). A particular focus is placed on the literary motifs of the labyrinth and the double, or doppelgänger, and how the manifestation of these devices are used in the novels to explore subjectivity.

YOU is a crime thriller where the focus of the story lies in the criminal acts committed by the narrator. Furthermore, the narrator in *YOU* portrays his madness mostly through a deceptive narrative. He depicts a story of love, when in reality it is a story of his own delusions. *Piranesi*, on the other hand, is a fantasy novel structured as a detective novel in the sense that the reader is encouraged to take on a detective role alongside the narrator. The narrator does not know it himself, but it becomes evident to the reader at quite an early stage that he suffers from amnesia. The story then focuses on uncovering the mystery of the narrator's lost memories. Meaning that this narrator does not intentionally deceive us, but rather takes the reader along on the journey for answers.

This thesis predicates that the motifs of the labyrinth and the double are used in both of these novels in order to explore the subjectivity of the narrators. Thus, this thesis aims to demonstrate how the narratives of *Piranesi* and *YOU* can help us explore the things that cannot be said about subjectivity as well as helping us identify imprisoning narratives and saving us from it. Furthermore, the two books demonstrate how literature can help us understand ourselves and the world around us.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my amazing supervisor, Janne Stigen Drangsholt. Thank you for encouraging and supporting me throughout this year. You have guided and inspired me through this whole process, and I could not have asked for a better supervisor. Without you this thesis would never have become what it is today.

I would also like to thank my friends and family for all their love and support. A special thanks to my partner for putting up with me throughout this process and for all the love, encouragement and support you have given me. You have taken care of me, our dog and our home during this period which has made it so easy for me to focus on this thesis. I feel so lucky to have you in my life.

In addition, I want to thank my mom for continuously checking in on me, for taking care of me and making sure that I am happy and healthy. You have always been one of my biggest supporters, including this year, and for that I am very grateful.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow students. Linn, I hope you know how much I appreciate our friendship. It has been invaluable throughout this process. You are insightful, helpful, encouraging and supportive and I appreciate you immensely.

To my study group. You have been a great help and support system. It is always nice to be around people who are in the same situation as yourself, and I cannot imagine getting through this year without you. Thank you for all the quizzes, all the laughs and all the theory discussions and tips. Thank you for keeping me sane.

A huge thanks to all of you, this thesis would be impossible without your help, support and encouragement!

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Chapter 1: Introduction

We read literature for a variety of reasons. One of the reasons is to learn more about our surroundings and about ourselves. In *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory* (2016), Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle argue that a great portion of literature asks philosophical questions about identity, sexuality and the self. In other words, literature creates a space where we as humans can explore what it means to be human, including questions about the self and our own identity. Literature, in fact, according to Bennett and Royle, is the place where questions about identity and the self is most thoroughly explored. Furthermore, literature explores these subjects with a sense of openness and through the use of imagination leaving plenty of room for exertional personal transformations. Meaning, literature aims to allow us to say everything and anything that we wish to say.

If literature, then, is a place to explore the self, it also builds and explores subjectivity. Subjectivity can be defined as an internal experience of the self, which links it to terms such as identity and the self. Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis is one of the most famous theoretical perspectives in terms of subjectivity. His theoretical perspective on the subject is explained in Nick Mansfield's *Subjectivity: Theories of the Self from Freud to Haraway* (2000), where we learn that Freud argues that subjectivity is something that develops over time through interaction with bodies and gender. Moreover, Psychoanalysis can help us understand how our feelings and thoughts come to be, as well as how we are shaped by our surroundings. Men, for example, are often encouraged to prescribe to stereotypes that subscribe to toxic masculinity. One such masculine stereotype is the chivalric knight in love. This is linked to the tradition of courtly love where the man in reality does not love the woman, but rather the feelings he gets from being in love. Simply put, the man loves being in love, thus rendering the woman a mere object in the males meaning making. Similarly, the stereotype of the Nice Guy is frequently portrayed in literature and films. This stereotype is characterized by a man who presents himself as nice and reliable but in reality, is not a nice guy. In other words, both of these masculine expressions are in themselves double. Furthermore, both these stereotypes fall under the concept of toxic masculinity, or the traditional patriarchal masculinity. This means that the man often sees himself as stronger, smarter and more capable than the woman, and that the woman, in turn, needs to be submissive and protected and is rendered a mere object in face of the masculine meaning making. Both of these stereotypes will be explored in this thesis in relation to how narrative can function to imprison this form of toxic masculine

subjectivity by allowing us to explore and identify it, and in turn saving us from it.

Furthermore, our subjectivity is comprised of more than the cultural possesses instilled in us over time. Freud argues that our internal process is split between the conscious and unconscious mind, the latter being where all uncomfortable and scary thoughts are suppressed. In *The Trauma Question* (2008), Roger Luckhurst describes trauma and its effect on the human psyche as well as in which ways it can affect narrative. A traumatic event can be completely blocked from the mind of the trauma victim. Thus, it is repressed to the unconscious. Because it can be repressed it can also affect the mind, resulting in amnesia and missing gaps of memory. The *doppelgänger* has frequently been used to explore themes of trauma and mental health in literature and film. Trauma narratives can also represent a double in that it does not present the reader with the full picture. On one hand, there is the story that we are told and on the other is the actual truth.

To understand the effects and meaning of thematized subjectivity in literature one must also consider the narrative. In *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (2017), Mieke Bal points out the importance of narrative as well as the various ways in which a narrative works. An important aspect of understanding the narrative is the narrator, who is responsible for representing the narrative events to the reader. This can be done in a variety of ways. When analyzing the narrative and the narrator it can be crucial to consider the narratorial point of view, the focalizer and the reliability of the narrator. Can we believe the narrative that is presented to us? Stories where the narrative is portrayed to us from a first-person point of view often display double motifs. Put in simpler words, a narrator may present a story to us as true, when in reality it is not, thus giving us a double narrative. There is the narrative that the narrator presents to us as reliable and true from their point of view, and then there is the narrative that is true.

Additionally, it is relevant to consider the genre of the two books in question. Although they contain several opposing aspects, they both fit into the genre of crime fiction. The detective and mystery novel seek to solve the mystery afoot, while the crime thriller focus more on the crime and the effects of the crime. Thus, the crime thriller usually concerns itself more with the mind and psyche of the criminal, while the detective novel sets out to solve the puzzle or mystery.

By using these theoretical perspectives this thesis aims to investigate motifs of the double and the narrative structures in *Piranesi* (2021) and *YOU* (2014), and how they are used to explore subjectivity in these novels. Additionally, this thesis will demonstrate how narratives can be used to build, heal and imprison subjectivity.

The next chapter will concern the relevant theory needed to properly investigate models of the double in the subject as well as on a narrative level. From there the next two chapters will take on analyzing each of the novels using this theory to uncover the double motifs present and how this device is used to explore subjectivity.

Chapter 2: Literary review

As mentioned, this thesis will comprise an investigation of doubleness in *Piranesi* (2021) and *YOU* (2014). This will be done by investigating the narrators and their narratives in these two novels. Both of these novels present the reader with unreliable narrators and deceptive narratives which both use models of the double. However, subjectivity is also crucial to understanding the narrators, their motifs and thoughts. Especially because both novels represent doubleness in the narrator, or the self. Therefore, this chapter will mainly concern narrative and subjectivity, as well as important subcategories needed to fully understand the effect of these two concepts in the novels. This will also demonstrate how narratives can function to build, heal and imprison subjectivity, which will then be further discussed and explored in chapter 3 and 4.

2.1. Narratology

Stories have a central part in our lives as they are everywhere, all around us all the time. In *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory*, Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle argue that our lives are shaped by stories as we use them in our daily life (54). Not only do we tell stories, but the stories also reflect us as they always involve motifs of self-reflection and the metaphysical (Bennett and Royle 54). To analyze and understand a story, one needs to understand the narrative and its effects. This is also true in terms of this thesis, as the narratives in *Piranesi* and *YOU* are key to understanding and analyzing how these books reflect aspects of our society and lives. Specifically, how narrative can function to build, heal and imprison subjectivity. Therefore, the next section will cover the narrative as well as narrative approaches.

2.1.1 The narrative

To understand the unreliable narrator, one must understand the purpose of narrative. And to understand the purpose of narrative one must understand the theory of narrative, in other words narratology. Mieke Bal defines narratology as “a systematic account of narrative techniques and methods, and their transmission and reception” in her book *An Introduction to*

the Theory of Narrative (2017) (I). In simpler words, narratology is the theory of narrative. Narrative, on the other hand, can be defined as multiple events that take place in a specific order, including a beginning, a middle and an end (Bennett and Royle 55). The narrative series of events are connected in time, meaning that the ending, for example, depends on what happens earlier in the narrative, thus also making time an important aspect of a narrative (Bennett and Royle 55). Narrative also often includes different types of literary tools. This could be everything from flashbacks, jumping forward in the story, slowing an event down, or other means that disrupt the chronological order of the narrative (Bennett and Royle 56). The sequence of narrative, beginning, middle and end, emphasizes that getting to the end is the goal (Bennett and Royle 56). The end is where everything is resolved and explained, and readers often find themselves unable to put down a book as they want to find out what happens next and how it ends. One of the attractions, and paradoxes, of a good story is that we desire the end and long for the knowing and satisfaction it gives us, yet we take a certain pleasure in the delaying of this end, and the digressions from the main plot along the way (Bennett and Royle 57).

2.1.2 The Genre

It is also relevant to mention genre, which can be significant in understanding and reading a novel in a sufficient manner. For the two novels in question, both, in some way or another, fit into the genres crime and mystery. In *Crime Fiction* (2005), John Scaggs describes and explains different forms of the crime genre. One of the subgenres of crime fiction is the mystery and detective novel. Scaggs states that one of the main characteristics in this genre is the “chain of causation [...] in which the final solution of an apparently unsolvable mystery depends on the “primacy of plot” and the narrative importance of cause and effect (34). In other words, one of the characteristics of this type of novel is that the plot and the narrative cause and effect is significant in the chain of events that leads to the mystery being solved. Moreover, Scaggs mentions that the mystery or detective novel opens with a question mark that encourages the reader to act as a detective alongside the narrator to unveil the mystery of the novel (34). Novels like these can be seen as puzzles, and a central part of the genre is that the reader is supposed to partake in solving this puzzle alongside the detective (37). This subgenre of crime fiction is especially relevant in terms of *Piranesi* as the narrator takes on a detective like role trying to uncover the secrets surrounding his life.

Equally important to this thesis is the crime thriller, which focuses more on the crime

committed and its outcome rather than the solving of the crime as in detective stories (Scaggs 106). The thriller also seeks to elevate the risk of the narrative as it often exaggerates the portrayal of the events by reshaping them into a rising curve of danger, violence or surprise (Scaggs 107). Therefore, it can be argued that, in contrast to the detective novel, the thriller focusses on the lurking danger that is present instead of investigating previous actions (Scaggs 107). Furthermore, the crime thriller is based on the psychology of the characters in the story by focusing on what makes a person commit a criminal act (Scaggs 107). Other characteristics of the crime thrillers are that they often do not include a detective, and they often have a radical social perspective on society, which is used as critique to the given theme (Scaggs 108). Many of these characteristics can be found in *YOU*, which is why the theory on crime thrillers is relevant in relation to my thesis.

2.1.3 Literary models: The labyrinth

In his postscript to *The Name of the Rose* (2016), Umberto Eco postulates that in order to properly understand crime fiction, as well as the appeal of crime fiction, we must go to the model of the labyrinth (564). He argues that the crime novel represents a form of conjecture, meaning that we make opinions or draw conclusions without knowing all the facts (Eco 564). For Eco, then, the lure of crime fiction is not that we necessarily want the culprit to be brought to justice, but that we want a satisfactory answer to the question of who is to blame, and not necessarily of the murder (Eco 564). What we want to know is who is to blame for death, for sorrow, for evil. These are the questions, Eco holds, that crime fiction ultimately deals with and that continue to bring us into the labyrinth as it, similarly to crime fiction, leads down many paths, opinions and conclusions (564-565) And similarly to conjecture, some conclusions prove to be fruitful, while others are misleading.

In Paul Sheehan and Lauren Alice's investigation *Labyrinths of Uncertainty: True Detective and the Metaphysics of Investigation* (2017), the model of the labyrinth also plays an important role. Here they discuss and analyze the HBO TV-show *True Detective* as belonging to the genre of metaphysical detective fiction. Sheehan and Alice define metaphysical detective fiction as the most appropriate term to use in relation to narrative approaches that explore themes of experience, identity, and our relationship to the world in an effort to question our idea of meaning and truth (30). Many texts from the last half of the century use the labyrinth symbol to outline conspiracies (Sheehan and Alice 31). Crime fiction also often makes use of the split narrative to represent madness and the detective's

obsession for logic and order, which in turn leaves the detective vulnerable to the criminal's labyrinth of clues (Sheehan and Alice 31). The image of the labyrinth is similar to crime fiction in that it presents an impossible mystery filled with clues that lead absolutely nowhere (Sheehan and Alice 35). Furthermore, they argue that the labyrinth takes on two forms in *True Detective* (Sheehan and Alice 35). Firstly, the labyrinth can be found in the landscape and environment where the plot is set, as well as in the criminal's lair, meaning that it can be a typographical signifier (Sheehan and Alice 35). Secondly, it takes form in the "conspiracy-as-labyrinth" motif which is shown through layers of conspiracy and corruption leading to many paths and people (Sheehan and Alice 35). In other words, they argue that the labyrinth can be an analogy for crime fiction. Similarly to the labyrinth, the detective or narrator in crime fiction leads us down many paths and presents many clues in search of the answer to the mystery in question, which leads to the end, or the way out of the labyrinth. The model of the labyrinth and its two forms is relevant to both *Piranesi* and *YOU*. In *Piranesi* the labyrinth is manifested in the environment through the house. *YOU*, on the other hand, the labyrinth is present in the city with its endless roads, paths and alleys. Furthermore, the labyrinth is also thematized in both narratives in the form of conspiracies, which I will go further into in chapter 2 and 3.

2.2. Subjectivity and literature

We read literature for many different reasons. We read to be entertained, to dream, and to feel. Literature is more than just entertainment and an escape from our daily lives, however. As can be seen from Eco's postscript above, even the most popular genres of literature proceed to ask and explore philosophical questions such as "who are you" or "who am I". Literature is in fact the creative space where questions about personal identity and subjectivity are most thoroughly explored (Bennett & Royle 151). Subjectivity is an important part of this thesis because it is thematized through the narrator in both *Piranesi* and *YOU*. It is, however, also a complex concept to understand. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines it as "1. The quality or condition of being based on subjective consciousness, experience, etc.; the fact of existing in the mind only". In other words, subjectivity is an internal experience of the self. But what does that mean? When Bennett and Royle discuss subjectivity, they point to the fact that the term "subject" leads us towards a more critical way of thinking, where the "I" is not independent and free but is actually always subject to both inside and outside forces (Bennett

& Royle 151). Outside forces can refer to social, cultural, or regional forces, for example, while the unconscious can be an inside force (Bennett & Royle 151). In other words, our subjectivity is built up by different factors surrounding us in our daily lives.

The view on the subject and subjectivity is not something that has always been set in stone, however. In the 1600s Descartes' theory on the subject was largely based on rationality, as formulated in his cogito "I think therefore I am" (Bennett & Royle 153). Freud's psychoanalysis radically changed the way in which we think of the subject (Bennett & Royle 153). Because of Freud's theory on the unconscious, Descartes' theory becomes obsolete, since, if there indeed is a part of our selves that lies hidden from us we cannot with accuracy say that we completely know who we are or what we think (Bennett & Royle 155). Therefore, Descartes' theory was considered too simple to fully explain the complex subject.

Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis may in sum be viewed one of the most influential theoretical perspectives on subjectivity in modern times. In *Subjectivity: Theories of the Self from Freud to Haraway* (2002), Nick Mansfield states that in Freud's theoretical perspective subjectivity develops over time through interaction with our bodies and gender, rather than something that has always been there from the time we are born (Mansfield 8). Psychoanalysis aims to explain the truth of the subject, how our internal feelings and thoughts are structured and how they came to be. Furthermore, it attempts to explain both traits that derive from the social and public spheres as well as those that are unique to the individual person (Mansfield 9). Shortly explained, the freudian subject is in a constant struggle. Our internal experience is split between cultural processes that over time has been instilled in the conscious mind, and the unconscious desires we find threatening and uncomfortable, the latter of which the conscious wishes to keep hidden by repressing it (Mansfield 30). These repressed feelings and desires therefore look for other ways to express themselves, which can be manifested through, for example, dreams or neurotic symptoms (Mansfield 30).

Such aspects of the psyche are, among other things, referred to by Freud as the uncanny. Uncanny is a term coined by Freud and refers to when the familiar becomes unfamiliar (Bennett and Royle 35). In other words, it concerns a disturbance in what we find familiar. The uncanny can be described as the thoughts and feelings that arise when these disturbances of the familiar arise (Bennett and Royle 40). Similarly, the unconscious and all it entails is unfamiliar and disturbing, which is why it is suppressed by the mind (Mansfield 28). Therefore, the unconscious and the uncanny are in a way synonymous with one another.

Interestingly, like the crime novel, the unconscious can also be compared to a labyrinth. In *The Labyrinth of Possibility: A Therapeutic Factor in Analytical Practice*

(2014), Giorgio Tricarico argues that the labyrinth can be a model of the unconscious which is where the therapeutic process must start to uncover hidden potential (XV). It can also represent the individual's psychological defenses and negative beliefs about the possibilities we have in our lives (Tricarico XV). Furthermore, Tricarico argues that typical expressions of the therapeutic processes of the mind is being lost and searching for a path, running into one way streets, retracing your steps and ending back where you started and experiencing anxiety and confusion (9). All of these things are also true for the labyrinth, and Tricarico therefore compares the mind with the labyrinth (Tricarico 9). Tricarico also argues that the painted, carved and built labyrinth is a form that humans designed to express that life continues even in death (17). Similarly to the unconscious, the labyrinth also evokes the concept of the uncanny (Tricarico 28). Being in a labyrinth evokes a mood of uncertainty and deception (Tricarico 28). Paths and roads are familiar concepts, but in the labyrinth, one has no way of knowing if one is on the right path making it unfamiliar and strange. Thus, the deception of the labyrinth makes it uncanny. Furthermore, the labyrinth is a disturbance in the familiar as it represents the suppressed unconscious. One of the characteristics of the labyrinth is that there is one way in, but that is also one way out (Tricarico 28). This means that if someone were to find themselves in a labyrinth, this could create hope and be motivation to search for freedom (Tricarico 28). In other words, the labyrinth can represent possibility or at least in some way the hope of possibility (Tricarico 28). Moreover, this means that there is hope even though the journey might involve risks and danger. This can be the risk of being lost in the labyrinth forever, or the risk of running into the minotaur. Or, in regard to the unconscious, it can be the risk of running into "[t]he other within ourselves" (29) as Tricarico puts it, which can lead to either a better understanding of the self or destroy and demolish.

Similarly to the labyrinth, literature as a way to explore identity and subjectivity is also a place of openness and possibility (Bennett & Royle 155). Literature both challenges and criticizes our cultural and historical views on various subjects such as identity, thus allowing new ideas and values to enter our cultures and lives. It can also help us to verbalize experiences that are challenging to confront and process, as we will see in the next section. And, finally, since it is also a product of the culture in which it is produced, literature can also, like the labyrinth itself, function to deceive and confuse us regarding identity and subjectivity.

Furthermore, it is relevant to mention the house both regarding the mind and the labyrinth. In *Reading the House: A Literary Perspective*, Kathy Mezei and Chiara Briganti argue that writers like Virginia Woolf and Katherine Mansfield use the house as a

representation of our inner psyche (839). In other words, the literary house and its scope can be used as models of the human psyche (Mezei and Briganti 841). For example, in Edgar Allan Poe's story, *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1839), the dark, rotting House of Usher symbolizes the narrators mind and madness. The symbol of the house is particularly relevant in relation to *Piranesi* as the world he inhabits is described as an endless house and is also often referred to as a labyrinth. As stated above, the house then, similarly to the labyrinth can represent the human psyche, or mind.

2.3. Literature: Saying the Unsayable

There are many tools and literary devices which can be used to explore the aspects of being that can be challenging, and that subjectivity might have problems dealing with or comprehending. One of the challenges to the subject is trauma, which is disruptive and incomprehensible. It can manifest in the subject in many different ways by, for example affecting the memory. Furthermore, trauma in narrative is often confusing and hard to follow, which is illustrated the narrative in *Piranesi*. Trauma is also a theme that is prominent in both *Piranesi* and *YOU* through the narrative and especially the narrators. Therefore, this next section will concern trauma in the subject and trauma in narrative.

In *The Trauma Question* (2008), Roger Luckhurst takes a closer look at trauma and trauma in relation to narrative. Luckhurst states that “trauma disrupts memory, and therefore identity, in peculiar ways” (1). In other words, experiencing trauma can affect the memory which in turn can alter parts of our identity. Trauma can cause complete memory loss where the memory of the traumatic event is completely blocked from the mind, or it can cause general avoidance of feelings and thoughts related to the traumatic event (Luckhurst 1). A traumatic event can also be continuously relived, however, through flashbacks or dreams, or even situations that resemble the traumatic event (Luckhurst 1). The third set of symptoms points to what Luckhurst refers to as “increased arousal” (Luckhurst 1). This can lead to an uncontrollable temper, being extremely careful and watching out for danger, or even an over-the-top response to being startled (Luckhurst 1).

According to Freud, a traumatic event can only be perceived as traumatic after the event has already happened (Luckhurst 5). This later understanding of the traumatic events comes through the symptoms described above, such as intrusive flashbacks or increased arousal, alongside an effort to understand these signs (Luckhurst 5). This, in turn, causes an

aporia as the event is not experienced when it happens but after the fact, thus making it clear only in another time and place (Luckhurst 5). Aporia refers to an internal contradiction that is impossible to resolve, and it also makes trauma seem as something that cannot be narrated in and as language.

Initially a traumatic event is defined as something that happens outside of what we as humans normally experience (Luckhurst 79). As mentioned above, trauma can be seen as anti-narrative because of its natural aporia and because it does not adhere to a chronological structure (Luckhurst 79). Nor does it necessarily fit into any other way of narrating a story because it disrupts and confuses. At the same time, cultural forms such as cinema and literature have given trauma a narrative where it is temporalized, transferrable and understandable to the audience (Luckhurst 80). One literary and cinematic tool that is used to mediate trauma is the double, which is a way of formulating the sense of multiple personality that can appear (Luckhurst 80). This double is often represented in the masculine rivals, or in a person with multiple personalities. Either way the double is also an uncanny concept, which will be discussed further below. Thus, Luckhurst argues that because trauma has been used to tell interesting stories about big existential themes like identity, memory and selfhood, that it has become a “paradigm” (80).

Since trauma in narrative is an aporia it can be confusing and hard to follow. Still Luckhurst states that narrative actually “heals aporia” although it can never “finally seal over the wounds of temporal existence, and that discordance will always propel further apprehensions” (Luckhurst 85). In other words, narrative cures the internal contradiction in trauma narrative. Still the “discordance” or lack of harmony in the temporal existence within the narrative does not disappear but make way for further understanding of this type of narrative. Some claim that humans can only understand time as narrative (Luckhurst 84). In other words, we understand time when we put it in and explain it through a narrative and it then reaches full meaning as it becomes a “condition of temporal existence” (Luckhurst 84). Temporal existence means that it lasts only for a short time and is not eternal, much like the human life. Because of this, narrative is a way to practice order over chaos, a way to put things that are hard to understand into a comprehensible space where it can be analyzed and explored (Luckhurst 84). This is also the case with trauma and in the following section I will provide examples of some of the ways in which literature represents trauma, which are also important to the thesis as a whole.

2.3.1. Trauma and the uncanny

As mentioned above, Luckhurst states that trauma can only be perceived as trauma after it has happened (5). In relation to this he states that the post-traumatic experience involving flashbacks, increased arousal and an effort to understand and make sense of the event is fundamentally uncanny (Luckhurst 98). The term “uncanny” was first coined by Freud in his essay titled *The “Uncanny”* (1919) where he largely focused on the uncanny in relation to the double and literature (Bennett and Royle 40). As mentioned, the uncanny is frequently seen to be connected with a sense of mystery or eeriness, or even strangeness (Bennett and Royle 35). In more concrete terms it refers to a sense of unfamiliarity at the core of the familiar, or in other words, a sense of familiarity in that which is unfamiliar (Bennett and Royle 35). This means that the uncanny is not just things that are scary or strange, but something that disrupts what we find familiar and create a sense of displacement in us (Bennett and Royle 35). This is also similar to trauma as both trauma and the uncanny are displacements. A good example of something uncanny is déjà vu which gives you a feeling that you have experienced something before that you in actuality have not experienced (Bennett and Royle 35).

Spiritual aspects such as odd coincidences or the sense that something happens because of fate are also uncanny (Bennett and Royle 37). If something happens that seems too good to be true, it insinuates that someone or something of a higher power pulls the strings (Bennett and Royle 37). This is thus uncanny because it suggests that one is not in control of one’s own fate, but rather that this is controlled by a higher power. Furthermore, death is uncanny, as well (Bennett and Royle 39). Life is something that is familiar to us, something we experience everyday (Bennett and Royle 39). Death therefore is something that we are not familiar with or have experienced, it is unimaginable and frightening, and thus becomes uncanny (Bennett and Royle 39). Finally, love can be seen as something uncanny as the loved one is always in a sense a stranger (Bennett and Royle 246). Bennett and Royle argue that falling in love is in a sense traumatic, and that is why we call it “falling” in love (246). Even though falling or being in love can be exciting and nice it also evokes fear. This can be the fear of not being loved back, or the fear of losing a part of your own identity as you share your life with someone else. (Bennett and Royle 246)

An echo of the real-life experience of déjà vu is the literary use of repetition, for instance of an incident or a character (Bennett and Royle 36). The uncanny is not just that which is mysterious, strange and bizarre, it also involves a kind of duplicity in what we find familiar, both in the sense of doubling but also referring to deception (Bennett and Royle 42).

The idea of the double, or the doppelgänger is also an uncanny repetition in the sense that there are more than one of the same character (Bennett and Royle 36).

Furthermore, Freud argues that the doppelgänger is a paradox (Bennett & Royle 36). This is because in some ways it assures immortality, because if there is more than one of you, you can live forever (Bennett & Royle 41). On the other hand, it also guarantees death as “you” are now someone else, meaning you can neither be you or alive anymore (Bennett & Royle 41). Because of this the doppelgänger trope threatens the very logic of identity and individualism (Bennett & Royle 41). This paradox is also one of the reasons why the doppelgänger is uncanny.

We see traces of the doppelgänger in both *Piranesi* and *YOU*, and the doppelgänger trope in itself is the definition of uncanny (Bennett & Royle 36). The male rivalry and relationship can represent a masculine form of the literary trope of the double or the doppelgänger (Mansfield 100). This is usually depicted in a confrontation between the protagonist and a rival who are quite similar, or almost identical (Mansfield 100). What the protagonist then, confronts in his double is something he recognizes in himself or in his own nature (Mansfield 100). This can be a number of things, for example, the rival can be the protagonist’s evil twin, or he can have romantic relationship of some kind with the woman the hero is in love with (Mansfield 100). In other words, the rival possesses qualities that are similar to the hero himself. Because the hero confronts his own qualities in his rival, his subjectivity rises to a higher level where he learns something new about himself (Mansfield 100). We see this in *Piranesi*, for example, where the narrator is his own doppelgänger due to personality change and memory loss. When he realizes this and confronts his previous self, he obtains a higher level of subjectivity as he better understands himself and his situation.

The uncanny doppelgänger is also linked to deception, which is also uncanny as it is something we don’t know, something unfamiliar. Bennett and Royle argue that many works of literature focus on deception and being deceived (69). Deception can be explored through for example, costumes, or it can be expressed on a psychological level through for example wearing a “mask”. In relation to this they argue:

But the fact that a ‘person’ is itself, in some sense, a ‘mask’, means that even if we think we ‘know’ the soul or self of a person, his or her true identity, there is always a possibility, even if that person is ourselves, that such an identity is itself a sort of mask. (69)

In other words, if we see the person as a mask, a collection of traits, values, and expressed thoughts presented to us in the way that the individual wishes to be perceived, that means that we can never truly know the true identity of any human being, not even ourselves. This idea in itself is uncanny as it questions everything, we think we know about those around us as well as our own identity. Or in other words, it turns something that is safe and familiar into something that is strange and unfamiliar. Additionally, the mask as deception in literature is often used to explore themes of identity, focusing on philosophical questions such as “who am I?” (Bennett and Royle 69).

As seen above, the uncanny is very relevant as a tool used by literature to investigate and manifest challenging psychological occurrences. It also explores how the literary and the real merge into one another (Bennett and Royle 36). Furthermore, the uncanny could be defined as a phenomenon that occurs when real life takes on a literary or fictional form (Bennett and Royle 36). Yet, literature in itself could be seen as a discourse of the uncanny, as it is the form of writing that continuously explore the uncanny experience, thought and emotion (Bennett and Royle 36). We can look at it this way: the real is not something unchangeable and eternal, it is something that is constructed and sustained by human perceptions, thoughts and assumptions, and is therefore something that can be changed (Bennett and Royle 36).

2.3.2. Trauma and the unreliable narrative

When we talk about narrative, and, more specifically, the narrator, we commonly tend to think of them as having a first or third point of view. Mieke Bal explains in her book *An Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (2017) that traditionally narratives have been called first-person or third person depending on the narrator’s voice (Bal 12). However, she adds “with an exceptional ‘second-person experiment’” (12). In other words, some authors make use of the second-person perspective. This means that the text is written about or to a “you”. This type of narrative, however, is rather problematic. Bal states that “The “you” is simply an “I” in disguise, a “first-person” narrator talking to himself; the novel is a “first-person” narrative with a formal twist to it that does not engage the entire narrative situation, as one would expect it should” (21). In other words, the use of a second-person point of view, is simply a disguised first-person narrator. In addition, the use of a second-person point of view does not fully capture the entire picture. The narrative becomes deformed and lacking as a second-person point of view cannot “engage the entire narrative situation” (Bal 21). As will

be discussed below, this is especially relevant in relation to *YOU*, as the narrator frequently narrates from a second-person point of view, which is directed towards his love interest.

In addition to considering the narratorial voice, one must also consider the identity of the focalizer and the actor of the presented scene. Robert Dale Parker states that focalization is the term used in narratology for what used to be called point of view in his book *How to Interpret Literature: Critical Theory for Literary and Cultural Studies* (2015) (70). When critics or readers alike mention point of view they refer to the first-person narrator's perspective and voice (Parker 70). Narratology named the concept focalizations because it is not the same as the point of view (Parker 71). Focalization is about who's voice the perspective comes from, and this is not always the narrators (Parker 71). It often happens that a different voice than the narrators come in to retell events describing it from the perspective of another character (Parker 71). The focalizer refers to who's voice and thoughts are represented (Parker 71). Simpler put, the narrator is the one that narrates, the focalizer is the one who's point of view the narration is based on and the actor is the one that causes or experiences the scene. These things are important to think about when analyzing a narrator. If a first-person narrator is speaking for, or applying thoughts and feelings to someone else, they would make it seem like that person is the focalizer, when in reality it is still the narrator.

This brings us to the unreliable narrator and narrative. Parker suggests that there is no such thing as a reliable narrator as there are always several ways to read and understand a story, and readers may interpret the same story in different ways no matter how reliable the author may seem to be (70). Bal, on the other hand, states, "If a character talks about itself to itself it is practicing self-analysis. We cannot be sure that it is judging itself correctly; indeed, in literature we encounter many unreliable, deceitful, immature, incompetent, mentally disturbed self-analysts." (117). In other words, we often encounter self-analyzation when looking at first-person narrators. Since we do not get any other point of view or feedback from other characters, we can never be certain that what the narrator is telling is the ultimate truth. In addition, the "I" of the first-person narrator often shares their thoughts and feelings, and most of the narrative in these situations is told as an inner dialogue, meaning that they constantly self-analyze, thus in Bal's argument, become unreliable. The self-analyzing narrator also function to problematize the exercise of getting to know oneself. This can also relate to trauma as processing the traumatic event is an internal experience similar to that of self-analyzation.

The genres where we often meet this dilemma are the autobiographical ones, such as a diary, confessions or autobiographical novels (Bal 117). A diary is defined by the *Oxford*

English Dictionary as “1. A daily record of events or transactions, a journal; specifically, a daily record of matters affecting the writer personally, or which come under his personal observation”. In other words, a diary is a personal record of the events the writer encounter and observe, meaning that the writer use the diary to make sense of themselves and the world. Because of this, writing a diary is in itself a form of self-analyzation making it evident as to why Bal argues that this is one of the most common forms of self-analyzation. Furthermore, writing a diary in a sense also creates a double as it records a past, or different version of ourselves. As mentioned, the double is frequently used to explore themes of trauma, and therefore narrative in the form of a diary can function to explore, understand and heal trauma, specifically in narrative.

Furthermore, when we talk about narrative, and especially the unreliable narrator, it is relevant to take irony into consideration. Bennett and Royle define irony as “a rhetorical figure referring to the sense that there is a discrepancy between words and their meanings, between actions and results, or between appearance and reality: most simply, saying one thing and meaning another.” (370). In narrative then, for example, we can be told one thing and the truth can be whole other thing, or it can mean something different entirely. Both the narrative in *YOU* and in *Piranesi* makes use of irony as the reader has to read between the lines to find the true meaning or events in these two novels.

2.4. Subjectivity and gender

In our modern world, we are not completely free as to how subjectivity is created and one of the categories that function to determine us as subjects is gender. In *Genders*, David Glover and Cora Kaplan states that “gender” can be used to refer to the sexual difference in social and cultural aspects of society (11). According to Freud’s psychoanalysis our subjectivity is produced and developed as a result of getting to know our own body and gender (Mansfield 8). Furthermore, our subjectivity is also shaped by the cultural possesses that has been instilled in our mind over time. If our subjectivity, then, is subject to outside forces such as culture, one can assume that culture also enforces ideas and values on to us, and even further encourages us to subscribe to certain types of gender identities. This brings us to stereotypes. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a stereotype as

A preconceived and oversimplified idea of the characteristics which typify a person, situation, etc.; an attitude based on such a preconception. Also, a person who appears to conform closely to the idea of a type

According to Bennett and Royle, every literary text can be thought about and analyzed in relation to how they reinforce or question gender stereotypes (212). One of the most traditional, and almost outdated, gender stereotypes is that of the strong, dominant and unemotional husband to his opposite subordinate and emotional wife (Bennett & Royle 211). As mentioned, this idea about gender roles is dying and is rarely presented as the idealized form of gender roles in our contemporary society. Still, there are many other types of masculinity and gender roles that men are encouraged to subscribe to that still subscribe to these toxic masculine ideals.

Masculine values have for a long time been dominant in society. Because of this masculinity had not really been studied until the increase in men's movement literature in the 1980s to 1990s (Mansfield 92). As the feminine movement quickly grew the feminine became an interesting object of analysis giving insight into gender, gender roles and politics (Mansfield 92). The traditional dominance of the masculine in our society as well as this new focus on the feminine gave both an historical as well as a cultural insight. Therefore, a focus on the masculine and masculinity was being specified and we see an increase in masculine theory in the 1990s (Mansfield 92). In psychoanalysis, both Freud and Lacan based their theory of subjectivity on the masculine, making the man the center of the theory and then adapting that same theory to a woman (Mansfield 70). For Freud the masculine was the defining norm of subjectivity (Mansfield 93).

To understand the male subjectivity then we must consider the gender stereotypes they prescribe to. One well-known historical stereotype is that of the chivalric knight saving the damsel in distress. This stereotype is also linked to the concepts of courtly love and mimetic desire. A rather new masculine stereotype is that of the Nice Guy, which in many ways mirror that of the knight. There is also the homosocial bond which is the relationship between men that does not include sexual relations. The homosocial bond works as a form of masculine meaning making. All of these masculine expressions or stereotypes have in common that they prescribe to and take part in patriarchal behaviors and toxic masculine ideals. These behaviors leave the woman redundant and a mere object in the man's meaning making. Thus, these stereotypes can be dangerous, and literature and narrative can help us explore and identify these behaviors and thus save us from them.

2.4.1. Masculine stereotype: The chivalric male

As mentioned, a historical masculine stereotype is the chivalrous knight, who incidentally, also represents courtly love. But to fully understand the chivalric knight and courtly love one must start with mimetic desire. In *Ressentiment : Reflections on Mimetic Desire and Society* (2015), Stefano Tomelleri brings up René Girard's theory of mimetic desire. For him desire is not a private matter, but rather involves several individuals and can only exist in relation to these other people (Tomelleri 72). Our desire is fueled by the admiration for the other and therefore we desire what the other desires, we desire to be like the other (Tomelleri 72). There are similarities between this and Sedgwick's theory of homosocial desire, where the subject desires the object because the other desires the object, and where the desire itself is more important than the subject that is desired (Bennett & Royle 256). In Sedgwick's theory on homosocial desire, which will be discussed further later in this chapter, desire often leads to rivalry between two men because they both desire the same female love interest (Bennett & Royle 256). In regard to this, Girard's theory of mimetic desire is quite similar where the desire to be like the other and acquire what the other has can twist into hatred and resentment for this same other (Tomelleri 72). The object desired in mimetic desire can be a person, a social status, a job, almost anything as long as it is desired by the other (Tomelleri 74). Mimetic desire then means to imitate the other's desires (Tomelleri 72).

Mimetic desire can also be linked to literature. In *The Mimetic Desire of Paolo and Francesca* (1978), René Girard mentions Dante's famous work *The Divine Comedy* (1973) where the two lovers Paolo and Francesca initiated an affair. Together they read the story of Lancelot and Guinevere, and when they reached the love scene between the two, they became embarrassed (Girard 2). Then when Lancelot and Guinevere kiss for the first time, so do Paolo and Francesca (Girard 2). The affair in the book gives them permission to imitate and act on their own forbidden feelings towards each other. Timo Airaksinen mentions Miguel de Cervantes *Don Quixote* (1605) as another literary example of mimetic desire in *Vagaries of Desire: A Collection of Philosophical Essays* (2019). Here the main character, Don Quixote read too many epic romances and wishes to become a knight himself (Airaksinen 89). He then reimagines himself as a knight thus recreating himself as a fictional character (Airaksinen 89). Thus, when Don Quixote sees himself in the light of the mythical and fictional heroes he looks up to, he engages in mimetic desire (Airaksinen 90). In other words, the copying and repeating these knights is mimetic in nature and reading these stories allows him to live out

his desires. It is also worth mentioning that *Don Quixote* is a parody of the traditional knight tales. As J.M. Sobré explains in *Don Quixote, the Hero Upside-Down* (1976), the hero, Don Quixote confuses fiction with real life, and that is part of his tragedy (127). The story plays on humor and irony as he, for example, confuses windmills for giants and himself for a knight (Sobré 127). This means that for Don Quixote mimetic desire alongside intertextuality has made him create a false reality that he himself wishes to be true. Similarly, the narrator of *YOU* portrays a narrative that he believes and that he wants us to believe, but that is, in fact, false, which is not only his tragedy, but which also proves dangerous for his immediate surroundings.

These examples of intertextuality in relation to both Dante's *The Divine Comedy* as well as Cervantes's *Don Quixote* are crucial to understanding how life and literature intermingle. Bennett and Royle define intertextuality as a word that describes the limitlessness of how every text refers to other texts (Bennett and Royle 370). It can also be used in a softer sense to refer to echoes or allusions (Bennett and Royle 370). In other words, intertextuality refers to texts that refers to other texts and so on in an endless cycle. Both Dante and Cervantes use intertextuality as they refer to other works of literature in their text in relation to mimetic desire. Dante uses this by referring to the tale of Guinevere and Lancelot and Cervantes by referring to historical romances and tales of knighthood. Similarly, the narrator in *YOU* refers to literature and movies to excuse and allow himself to act the way he does.

Previously I mentioned Lancelot and Guinevere in relation to mimetic desire, but they are also relevant in relation to courtly love. In Thomas Malory's version of the stories of Arthur and the round table, *Le Morte d'Arthur* (1485), Lancelot and Guinevere, is part of the courtly love tradition. Charles Moorman argues in *Courtly Love in Malory* (1960) that courtly love was an aspect of Guinevere and Lancelot's love that Malory had to consider when he wrote the tales (Moorman 164). Previous works of literature written around the same time that contained the concept of courtly love, presented this as a part of the chivalric code of knighthood, which is also how Malory used the concept in his works (Moorman 164). Moorman argues that love, or courtly love contains some of the most important features of the chivalric code, where the man proves through his actions, such as bravery, generosity and courtesy, the noble feelings he holds towards his love (165). Still, courtly love is also adulterous and immoral and was for those reasons condemned by the church (Moorman 165). Ultimately the adulterous nature of Lancelot and Guinevere's love is one of the reasons for the failure of King Arthur's court, meaning that their love ended in tragedy and a great downfall of the kingdom (Moorman 166). This is directly relevant in relation to *YOU* as the

narrator's love interest also goes by the name Guinevere, thus making connections to the legendary tale of Lancelot and Guinevere.

In *The Meaning of Courtly Love* (1969), Herbert Moller states that courtly love was popular in the High Middle Ages and flourished within the literary genre of poetry (Moller 39). The central aspect of experiencing courtly love is that the desired woman occupies all the thoughts and feelings within the man (Moller 40). Traditionally the desired woman was married and, thus, unobtainable, but still this love was celebrated as a source of higher morality, challenging religious and social norms at the time (Moller 40). The lover is overwhelmed by his intense desire for his love both physically and emotionally, still the ideal of courtly love was that this yearning should never become actuality in real life (Moller 40). The expression of courtly love was reserved for the men, and if displayed by a woman would be seen as highly improper (Moller 40). The women described in this poetic genre were little known to the men, or even imaginary (Moller 41). This type of poetry was more about sexual urges than about courting a lady and is a form of imaginary love (Moller 41). Moller states that "This love is ideally limited to one object and that forever, and the rejected or neglected lover cannot turn away from her" (41). In other words, the man is spellbound by his love and can never love another as he loves this object. It also reveals the gendered view on women as objects of desire instead of autonomous human beings. Moller also points out that the courtly lover exists in a space of jealousy as he does not wish to share his lover with anyone else (45). The concept of pure love, which was a big part of the courtly love tradition, has also shaped and inspired how we think about love in Western Society (Moller 43). Yet, his courtly- and pure love is not platonic as it approves and encourages acting on desires such as kissing and lying beside the lover's nude body as well as all things that provoke desire (Moller 43)

As a part of this type of love is that it can never be, one can assume that it is, inevitably not the woman the man really loves, but the idea of being in love. Even Romeo, from Shakespeare's famous play *Romeo and Juliet* (1597) displays courtly love in the first scene where he describes his love for Rosaline. Other than Romeo describing and talking about Rosaline she does not appear in the play, which enhances the performance of courtly love. It is not Rosaline the character that is important, but rather Romeo's feelings towards her.

In terms of *YOU* it is also relevant here to mention the love letter as it is a part of the narrator's expression of his courtly love. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a letter as such: "A written communication addressed to a person, organization, or other body, *esp.* one

sent by post or messenger; an epistle.” (II. 4a.). In other words, a letter can, in a sense, be any written communication addressed to a specific person or organization.

2.4.2. Masculine stereotype: The nice stalker

A modern and newer masculine stereotype that shares similar traits to the chivalric knight is that of the “nice guy”. The Nice Guy trope is something most of us are familiar with, even if we don’t realize it. In her MA thesis *Masculinities in The Great Gatsby and (500) Days of Summer* (2021), Ingeborg Nesbø argues that the Nice Guy has been popularized through western media for decades (1). We often see the “nice guy” figure in movies, more specifically in romantic comedies, but this figure is also often found in works of literature. The nice guy is often presented as the protagonist of the story and usually has an alternative masculinity (Nesbø 1). In other words, he seldom fits into the traditional sense of what a masculine man is and often borders more on the feminine side (Nesbø 4). Despite his alternative masculinity, the nice guy often proves to carry hegemonic, and especially toxic masculinity ideals (Nesbø 1). This in part because of the nice guy’s obsession with love, which in turn make him idealize the woman he desires (Nesbø 1). The problem with this trope is that he often isn’t a nice guy at all, and in a way, they only display this alternative masculinity to further take part of patriarchal behaviors, values and ideas (Nesbø 1). What separates the nice guy from common hegemonic masculinity is that he views the woman he desires and obsesses over as his ultimate goal, and as the object, which in his possession, will finally and ultimately make him happy (Nesbø 1).

Furthermore, the typical nice guy usually has few to no close friends, is not typically seen as successful in terms of academic achievements and work life, and has an ideology along the lines of “all-or-nothing” (Nesbø 26). All of this leads to the idealization of love and women and often leads to anger, and even hatred towards some traditionally masculine men (Nesbø 4-5). Because of the idealization of love and women, nice guys often believe in the concepts of “true love” and “love at first sight” (Nesbø 24). These concepts are important to the nice guy, and is at the core of his personality, even though most know these concepts to be untrue (Nesbø 24). This form of idealized love is often not a love of the object itself, or the woman, but rather goes inwards towards the subject itself (Nesbø 25-26). In other words, the nice guy does not necessarily love the woman he desires, but rather the feelings he experience when he is with her. Because of this the Nice Guy trope goes hand in hand with the ideals of courtly love. Even though courtly love is forever unobtainable and the nice guy’s desired

woman is in theory within reach, the way love is felt and expressed is almost identical. Which is, not really loving someone else as another individual human being, but loving them as an ideal, and even more so, loving the idea of being in love. Lacan has himself made this point by arguing that talking about love in itself can be as pleasurable and exciting as experiencing it (Bennett and Royle 240).

The nice guy trope is also similar to the idea of the “average Joe”. In *Living the Image: A Quantitative Approach to Delineating Masculinities* (2006) Andrew P. Smiler states that the average Joe is a masculine stereotype described as a strong, yet simple man who is reliable, honest and hardworking (4). The average Joe, similarly, to the nice guy, is not especially masculine, meaning that he is not an alpha male and spends his time working or servicing others (Smiler 4). Other usual characteristics found in this stereotype is that they are responsible and unremarkable, or average, as suggested in the name (Smiler 4). This stereotype is quite relevant to *YOU* as the main character and narrator’s name is Joe. This will be further discussed in chapter 3.

In contrast to the traditional masculine man or characters that we are familiar with, the Nice Guy is more assertive and not as aggressive in his pursuit of his love. He often hides his intentions for a while before he finds the courage to go after the woman he desires, or he waits and hopes that she too will eventually fall in love with him (Nesbø 1). Because of the desire towards the love interest, as well as the assertiveness of the Nice Guy, these characters sometimes exhibit stalker tendencies (Nesbø 9). A stalker is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as “A person who pursues another, esp. as part of an investigation or with criminal intent; *spec.* one who follows or harasses someone (often a public figure) with whom he or she has become obsessed” (Draft editions 1997). In other words, a stalker is a person who harasses someone by following or pursuing them in some way because they are obsessed or infatuated with this person. In *STALKING: Knowns and Unknowns* (2003) Lorraine P. Sheridan argues that stalking represents continuous irregular behavior and is therefore not an isolated activity or offence (Sheridan et. al. 5). A study found that some of the most common forms of stalking that offenders subjected their victims to were public approaches, repeated calls, assaults and continuous observation and following of their victim (Sheridan et. al. 5). Many stalkers have some sort of mental disorder (Sheridan et. al. 9). This can be anything from personality disorders, meaning they can be narcissistic antisocial or borderline, to mood disorders or schizophrenia (Sheridan et. al. 5). Still, stalkers are less likely to be psychopaths than other criminals. Stalkers themselves often don’t know that they are stalkers and view their own actions as protecting or displaying love for their female love interest (Nesbø 9).

This does not make their actions more justifiable, but it does reveal their internal delusions (Nesbø 9). This becomes extremely clear to the reader in *YOU* where the narrator is a stalker but justifies his actions as innocent as he is only trying to get to know his love interest, and all he wants is to protect her.

The stalker has also been present, and even romanticized in other recently popular literary works such as the *Twilight* books written by Stephenie Meyer. The books were wildly popular in the early 2000s and got a movie adaptation. The story surrounds young Bella as she moves to a new town to live with her father. Here she meets the mysterious vampire, Edward, with whom she falls madly in love. In *Twilight: The Glamorization of Abuse, Codependency, and White Privilege* (2014), Danielle N. Borgia argues states Edward's character is romanticized throughout the novels and by fans of the books, but that the character has also been criticized for his obsessive behavior and his stalking of Bella (156). Edward lures Bella in with money and fancy things and isolates her from those around her (Borgia 157). In the books Edward is presented as Bella's protector, as she is weak and clumsy and unable to protect herself. Edward even takes it as far as watching over Bella when she sleeps, showing his stalker tendencies (Borgia 156). Bella herself does not find this behavior creepy or weird, but rather comforting as she knows she is safe and protected (Borgia 156). This is just one example of how the stalker has been romanticized in popular culture in the later years. Romanticizing and idealizing this type of behavior sets an example for men to follow and is one type of masculinity that men in turn are encouraged to prescribe to.

2.4.3. Masculine stereotype: The homosocial doppelgänger

As mentioned Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's theory of the homosocial is closely linked to mimetic desire, but is also a form of masculine meaning making. The term homosocial refers to the social interaction between men and can be defined as intense relationships and bonds between two or more people of the same gender that does not include a sexual relationship (Parker 205). Sedgwick suggests that western culture does not include a distinct critical analysis of a modern homo- and heterosexual definition (Bennett & Royle, 257). In other words, our understanding of western culture today is structured without defining these important terms and is therefore incomplete. Sedgwick uses the term "homosocial desire" to refer to the way relationships and discourse is structured in movies, novels and other stories in western culture (Bennett & Royle, 257). Homosocial desire is not the same as sexual or homosexual desire and it does not need to be physical at all (Bennett & Royle, 257).

Sedgwick claims that there is a connection between male homosocial desire and the structures in place for preserving and executing patriarchal power (Bennett & Royle, 257). It is worth noting that the usual places of homosocial bonding, such as the locker room or the clubroom often have an aura of negative homophobic views. This is also why Sedgwick argues that the homosocial bond and desire is not a homosexual one, but rather that it can enable these negative patriarchal ideas about for example homosexuality (Bennett & Royle, 257).

Homosocial desire is in fact central to the tradition of what we might think of as “heterosexual” writing, where it is most often written by and about heterosexuals (Bennett & Royle, 257). She argues that a large number of stories and narratives in western society uses the homosocial desire in their portrayal of desire (Bennett & Royle, 257). While the stories often depict a man desiring a woman it is usually the bond between the men, either as friends, rivals or associates that is at the center (Bennett & Royle 257). In *Piranesi* for example, the friendship and companionship between two men is the most significant relationship in the book. In *YOU* on the other hand we see the homosocial bond between two rivals interested in the same female love interest. Both these books make use of the homosocial bond between men as an important structure of the story.

As mentioned, one way that Sedgwick defines the “homosocial” is as the bond between two rival men. This rivalry often ends with death for one of them (Mansfield 99). If you look at a narrative of rivalry between two men, the woman is put aside as an object or a prize to be won in the dramatic struggle between the hero and the villain (Mansfield 97). In this case, the winning of the woman becomes a symbol of the hero’s moral superiority signifying him as all that is good and righteous and the woman is reduced to a sexual prize and represents purity, innocence and weakness, (Mansfield 97). The conflict between the two men is at the center and the two men involved are often very similar to each other with a few distinct differences (Mansfield 100). The men, destined to kill each other, are on a plane of higher equality and heroic daring that they don’t need to show or share with anybody, especially a woman (Mansfield 99). If we put the theory of the *doppelgänger* together with Sedgwick’s homosocial bond, however, we can understand the two fighting rivals as one immersive and united masculine subject both fighting against and indulging in its own desires (Mansfield 100). In other words, if looking at the violence that the rivals engage in, the masculine subject both tries to rid the world of violence, and yet also wants to bring violence into the world. It wants to cleanse the world of violence by engaging in violence and destruction (Mansfield 100). Mansfield puts it like this when referring to the masculine rivals: “To do good, they must enact their own evil” (Mansfield 101). The hero must embody the

essence of his nemesis to defeat him, to do what's right and good and eventually defeat his enemy, he must inflict his own evil (Mansfield 100). The narrator of *YOU* is a good example of this type of homosocial bond and the doppelgänger trope, as he has to embody his rival to ultimately get rid of him and win the girl. This type of homosocial bond between rivals is based on a traditional macho type of masculinity where the man is the savior of the weak and innocent woman, which draws similarities between the homosocial and chivalric knight. In other words, the man is dominant, and the woman is submissive. Masculine expressions such as this has for a long time been dominant in our culture and continues to be a frequently used type of masculinity to appear in both movies and literature.

This way of portraying masculinity is also connected to the gaze. According to Mansfield (96), Freud claimed that the human gaze was a form of sexual activity unrelated to the genitals. Hollywood and the film industry, for example, design their films from a male, or masculine, perspective, making the female and her body an object of visual pleasure and interest (Mansfield 96). One of the ways the picture of a woman displayed graphically or even naked can be approached by men is that she is then either saved, corrected or enclosed in either appropriate disciplining or consummating desire, making her vulnerable to the masculine truth (Mansfield 97). This perspective can also be found in literature, where the woman becomes a mere object of male fascination. Thus, the woman becomes an object in the male's meaning making and is meant to reassure or encourage the subjective male definition of masculinity (Mansfield 97). From this point of view then, masculinity is to be a savior and to dominate in any romantic relationship with a female.

Chapter 3: Caroline Kepnes's *YOU* (2014)

This chapter aims to analyze what forms of masculine stereotypes the narrator of *YOU* conforms or aspires to by investigating the novel's representation of subjectivity. This task will be undertaken by looking at the narrative style and other literary devices, such as the doppelgänger, the uncanny, irony as well as masculine stereotypes. *YOU* is a novel written by Caroline Kepnes and was first published in 2014. The book prompted three sequels and a successful Netflix show. The third book of the series *You Love Me* (2021) was an instant *New York Times* best seller. The book is written in a first-person narrative from the main character Joe's point of view. Joe is a stalker obsessed with a woman named Guinevere Beck. In the book she is usually referred to as Beck, but in this thesis she will be referred to by her first name Guinevere. Joe romanticizes his stalker behavior through the narrative, thus the use of the first-person narrative is a clever way of giving us insight into an obsessive person's psyche. The book's themes also function as a social critique on the line between love and control as well as how the increased availability of our and others' lives through social media leading to increased danger, especially for women. This chapter will be divided into two main passages that both center on doubleness. The first part concerns doubleness in narrative and the second part will unpack doubleness in culture.

3.1 Doubleness in Narrative

As mentioned above, in *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory* (2016) Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle argue that we read literature for various reasons, out of which the most important is to explore big philosophical questions about the self, subjectivity and sexuality, as well as questions about the world and each other on an interior and an exterior level (151). This also applies to *YOU* which explores love as well as subjectivity, masculinity and narrative in a modern contemporary setting. The narrator of *YOU* is a male being in the context of the American heteronormative society. We as readers understand that he outwardly presents a self that he wants his surroundings to believe in, which is that of the stereotypical "Average Joe", but we soon learn that there is a doubleness at play here, which is both expressed on a narrative as well as on a thematic level.

The narrator is an important part of any story, especially in books like *YOU* where

there is a first-person narrative. Since the novel is written in first-person, we only get one account of the events, and we have to trust what the narrator tells us to be true. Because of this, the first-person narrative used in this book and the way the story is told is an important part of how we as readers perceive the story. In *An Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (2017), Mieke Bal states that books as most commonly written in a first- or third point of view (12). However, sometimes authors use a second-person point of view in their novels. The narrative in *YOU*, for example, deviates from the first-person point of view as a great portion of the book is told from a second person point of view. Bal argues in that the use of a second-person point of view is problematic as she states, “[t]he ‘you’ is simply an ‘I’ in disguise” (21). In other words, the second-person point of view is not a comprehensive view of the narrative, and in reality is only a camouflaged first-person narrator. This narrating style is revealed already in the first line of the book where it is clear that the narrator talks, or narrates, to someone.

YOU walk into the bookstore and you keep your hand on the door to make sure it doesn't slam. You smile, embarrassed to be a nice girl, and your nails are bare and your V-neck sweater is beige and it's impossible to know if you're wearing a bra but I don't think that you are. (1)

This type of narration style is interesting because the story is about Joe, the narrator and protagonist, and his love story with this unsuspecting “you” from the first sentences of the novel. But, as we can see from the first two sentences of the book, Joe narrates in a second person point of view, and by doing so he narrates certain parts story from his love interest, Guinevere's point of view.

This brings us to the theory on the focalizer. In, *Interpret Literature: Critical Theory for Literary and Cultural Studies* (2015) Robert Dale Parker states that the term focalizer is used to refer to whose voice and thoughts are represented in the scene, and this is not always the narrators (71). Thus, when Joe tells the story from Guinevere's point of view, he applies thoughts and feelings onto her, which in turn makes it seem like Guinevere is the focalizer. In reality it is Joe's voice and perspective that is represented. He is the “I”, disguising himself and his perspective in the “you” as the second-person perspective is always a camouflage for the first-person narrator. Moreover, this is problematic as we don't know if these thoughts and feelings are true from Guinevere's actual point of view, as she herself never narrates any part of the story. For example, we have no way of knowing if Guinevere is embarrassed, or even

thinks of herself as a nice girl. The narrator tricks us into thinking that Guinevere is the focalizer of these sentences. Thus, the effect of this type of narrative style is that the reader is tricked into thinking that the thoughts and feelings Joe forces onto Guinevere are in fact true from her point of view, even though, Joe, as well as the reader has no actual way of verifying this. This, in turn, means that Joe makes Guinevere the focalizer of his words. He shapes and presents her in the view that he himself sees her. Meaning that we are not seeing the real Guinevere, but rather Joe's ideal and romanticized version of the woman he loves.

Furthermore, there is a doubleness at play here as the whole book is actually from Joe's point of view, giving Guinevere no power or speech as her actual thoughts and feelings never come across to the reader. This is just one of the ways that Joe's obsession with his love is explored throughout the book as well as a way for him to assert power over Guinevere in the narration of "their" love story. There is also a level of irony to this presented narrative. Even though Joe presents his love interest as the focalizer through the second person point of view, the reader realizes that they are being deceived. In the first two lines, for example, he uses the pronoun "you" eight times, further strengthening the argument that he seemingly makes Guinevere the focalizer. Yet, at the very end of the second sentence he states, "I don't think that you are" making use of the pronoun "I", revealing that it is all, in fact, from his point of view. Because of this the reader knows that the sentences are told from Joe's perspective and not Guinevere's, and we understand that he is trying to force a false narrative upon us. In relation to this it is also worthy to note that the title of the book itself is ironic as it is a lie. The title *YOU*, indicates that the book is about said "you", or Guinevere. But, as stated, the "you", or the second person perspective is always a first-person narrator in disguise. Therefore, the book is not about the "you", it is about the "I". Or in other words, the book is not about Guinevere, but rather about Joe and his obsession with her.

Furthermore, Joe uses this narrative technique as well as dramatic internal monologue continuously throughout the book ultimately as a way to fuel his own delusions. Through his own subjective view of their love story, he imagines Guinevere in the light of his ideal woman, as well as portraying her as having the same emotional and erotic feelings towards him as he does for her. At one point he states, "your panties are soaked right now" (94). This way of portraying women is also connected to the gaze as it is an example of how Joe sexualizes Guinevere as a part of his own masculine meaning making. In *Subjectivity: Theories of the Self from Freud to Haraway* (2000), Nick Mansfield explains the Freudian theory of the gaze as a form of sexual activity that is unrelated to the genitals (Mansfield 96). The gaze, or the male gaze, makes the female body an object of visual pleasure, which in turn

makes the woman an object or symbol in the man's masculine meaning making (Mansfield 96-97). One of the ways this meaning making can be approached is by either saving, disciplining or consummating desire with the woman, which in turn makes the woman vulnerable to the masculine truth (Misfield 97). Joe then, uses the gaze to sexualize Guinevere to reassure himself of his own masculinity. He approaches this by imagining that they have intercourse directly after portraying her in an overly sexualized manner. Thus, making Guinevere both an object in his own masculine meaning making as well as reassuring and encouraging his own subjective masculinity. This is also another example of him forcing feelings and attributes upon his love interest. This passage also illustrates how he idealizes and sexualizes her by imagining her in erotic situations with him. As he portrays Guinevere in his own image, he over sexualizes her, ultimately making her a sexual object designed for his pleasure instead of seeing her as an equal human being.

Another good example of how he imagines and applies thoughts and feelings to Guinevere that are actually his own wishful thinking comes when he states:

It's not romantic and it's a daylight date but I understand that your attraction to me is so intense that you have to keep a safe distance from me. (125)

Joe states this as Guinevere reaches out to him to ask if he is willing to go with her to IKEA and help her assemble a new bed. Joe presents this to us as an intentional "daylight date". His narrative is that Guinevere has asked him on a date to an unromantic location in an unromantic setting because she is so attracted to him that if it had been any other way, she would not have been able to keep her hands off him. The issue here is that Guinevere never call this meeting a date, making us question his perception of this interaction. Joe is also aware, because he is monitoring her online activities, that she has previously reached out to other friends and even posted an ad to craigslist for help, before eventually asking him. In other words, Joe has no good reason to suspect or believe that she is intensely attracted to him, or that this is even a date at all. Thus, it can be argued that these thoughts and overly erotic feelings that he applies to her are not true, but rather what he wished to be the truth, further showing the extent of his delusions about their relationship. It is his subjective understanding of the interaction, which the reader questions because of the circumstances surrounding it. In other words, the reader experiences that the narrator, Joe is unreliable.

We usually think of the first-person narrator as unreliable in themselves because we

only get one subjective point of view on the given story. Regarding the unreliable narrator Bal states, “If a character talks about itself and to itself, it is practicing self-analysis. We cannot be sure that it is judging itself correctly” (117). In other words, if a character, in this case the narrator, talks about himself to himself we cannot trust the self-analysis because there is no outside input. If a character, on the other hand, talked about himself to others he would receive feedback from an outside source and the findings or assessments of the analysis would be more trustworthy as it is acquired from several sources. If we put this into the context of *YOU*, Joe is a character that talks to himself about himself, thus he is practicing self-analyzation. However, the narration style is, once again, trying to trick the reader. Since a great portion of the book is written from a second person point of view where it seems like Joe is talking to Guinevere, one can easily overlook the self-analyzation. If Joe was in fact talking to Guinevere, it would not be self-analyzation at all. Nevertheless, the reader knows that this too is part of Joe’s internal monologue as he does not get an answer or feedback. Therefore, in Bal’s definition, since Joe is talking about himself and his love story, he is ultimately also analyzing himself. Because of this self-analyzation, we can never be sure that he is in fact telling the truth, making him an unreliable narrator. Additionally, because of Joe’s delusions about his chivalric behavior and relationship with Guinevere, we do not even know if this self-analyzation is in fact true. In other words, since Joe justifies his actions as innocent and heroic, he himself is not realistically self-analyzing but rather fueling the delusions of his unrealistic love story. Thus, the self-analyzation that the narrator presents to the reader is untrue.

Still, Joe’s deception as a narrator goes beyond false self-analyzation. In addition to the self-analyzation, he is also unreliable because of the doubleness of the narrative. This is shown through his unrealistic thoughts about his relationship with Guinevere as well as his unprobeable subjective narration of their tragic love story. He romanticizes her and their relationship to an unbelievable extent, and several times Guinevere’s actions completely contradicts the narrative that Joe is trying to create. This can be seen in the previous example where he portrays Guinevere as having such an intense sexual attraction to him that she needs to schedule a date during the day at an unsexual place like IKEA. But as we know, there is no proof to corroborate this narrative. In other words, the reader is aware that there is a gap between the narrative that Joe wants us to perceive, and the actual truth, hence the doubleness of the narrative.

Joe also withholds information from the reader, further strengthening the argument

that he is an unreliable narrator. An example of this is when Guinevere's friend Peach's apartment has been broken into. When told about it, Joe instantly thinks to himself: "I didn't *break in* and I didn't move her *chaise*" (161), an incident that he has never mentioned before. Previously to this, it has seemed like Joe has brought the reader along to every and all relevant events regarding his love interest and her life. Therefore, it is peculiar that he has not mentioned this before. This shows us that Joe is withholding information from us. As he narrates the story to Guinevere, it appears as if he mentions this now only to disprove to her the accusation that he feels affronted by. Furthermore, it can be assumed that he withheld this information for one of two reasons. Either he didn't find it relevant to the progression of their relationship, or to their shared story in general. Or he withholds the parts of the story that he does not want Guinevere to know about from the narrative. This, in turn, makes him unreliable because we have no way of knowing what other information he might exclude from the narrative.

Furthermore, it is relevant here to mention the genre of the book. *YOU* fit the characteristics of crime fiction, and more specifically its subgenre of the crime thriller. In *Crime Fiction* (2005), John Scaggs explains that the crime thriller, unlike for example the mystery and detective novel, tends to focus more on the crime that has been committed and its outcome rather than solving the mystery or crime (106). The narrative of the thriller is also often more exaggerated, dangerous, violent and shocking (Scaggs 107). These characteristics are also present in *YOU* as the story revolves around Joe, his life, the crimes he commits and the results of these crimes. Still, with little to no thought into the idea of him getting caught. Furthermore, Joe's narrative is quite vulgar and violent as he over frequently over sexualizes his love interest as well as repeatably stalks and kills her and people around her. Thus, making the novel a crime thriller. In contrast to the mystery and detective novel, the crime thriller also often lacks the presence of a detective as the focus often is on the criminal or the criminal act (Scaggs 108). Also, here *YOU* stays true to the genre of the crime thriller.

Moreover, the crime thriller focuses more on the psychology of the characters by investigating what makes them tick (Scaggs 107). In other words, the thriller seeks to uncover what and why someone commits a criminal act. Similarly, as mentioned, *YOU* focus on Joe and his experience of his obsession with Guinevere. Meaning that the focus lies on Joe's subjective experience of his actions and crime. Thus, making the novel an investigation in itself, looking to uncover the truth about Joe. Lastly, the crime thriller is often used to comment on aspects of society in a radical way (Scaggs 108). *YOU*, for example, can be seen as a social commentary on the line between love and obsession as well as the increasing

availability of our lives and every movement in the age of social media. This social commentary is also in a sense extreme, seeing as Joe is a psychopath and a stalker who does not see the issue with his behavior and actions.

Another compelling and relevant theory in terms of this subject is that the labyrinth can be used as a mode to represent crime fiction. In *Labyrinths of Uncertainty: True Detective and the Metaphysics of Investigation* (2017), Paul Sheehan and Lauren Alice argue that many texts in recent years use the labyrinth as a model to outline conspiracies (31). The two are parallels in a sense, as crime fiction often presents a mystery of some sort filled with many paths and clues, like a labyrinth (Sheehan and Alice 35). The labyrinth in crime fiction can also take up two forms. It can be represented in the plot's environment and surroundings, and it can be present in the motif in terms of leading to many different clues and realizations (Sheehan and Alice 35). In *YOU* the labyrinth can be found in both these forms. Firstly, it can be found in the environment as the novel is set in New York, a big city with many streets, roads and blind alleys, similarly to a labyrinth. Secondly, it is thematized in the motif through Joe's conspiracy to obtain Guinevere and keep her to himself. As we follow Joe on his quest to win his love, we also follow him down many paths, some which move him closer to his goal and some which prove to be less fruitful.

3.2 The narrative models – intertextuality

If we read the narrative on the surface level and accept what we are presented with at face value, this novel is a love letter presented by the narrator, and sender, Joe to his love object, and receiver, Guinevere. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a letter as such: "A written communication addressed to a person, organization, or other body, *esp.* one sent by post or messenger; an epistle." (II. 4a.). This book then, is a letter in the sense that Joe has written down and narrates their love story to and for Guinevere. Through the narrative he repeatedly talks about her as well as the intense feelings he has for her throughout the story. She is the object of his desire, the thing he yearns for that in the end will make him whole and complete.

The way Joe expresses his feelings as well as the way he narrates Guinevere's character is very similar to that of the courtly love tradition. According to Herbert Moller in *The Meaning of Courtly Love* (1960), the concept of courtly love flourished amongst men in the High Middle Ages and was often used in poetry at this time (39). Furthermore, the concept of courtly love alongside the concept of pure love has also had a lasting imprint in shaping and inspiring the way we think about romance in Western Civilization (Moller 43).

Moller defines the concept as a state where all thoughts and feelings are directed towards the desired woman who is forever unobtainable (40). The woman was often idealized and was mainly described as an object of love (Moller 41). Another important aspect of courtly love is that often the idealized women were imaginary or women that the poets hardly even knew (Moller 41). This means that the men expressed love to either a fictional object of desire, or to an object which they knew little to nothing about. This in turn results in the idealization and objectifying of women as well as the idea that it was the desire itself that was important, not the woman who was desired.

Joe's behavior towards Guinevere shares many similarities with the concept of courtly love. Throughout the story Joe spends more time stalking, thinking and talking about Guinevere, his love interest, than he does in her presence. Even when they are together, he applies thoughts and feelings upon her that he wishes her to have. In other words, Joe does not see Guinevere as an autonomous human being with thoughts and feelings of her own, but rather as an object for him to desire and shape. Because of this, Joe's desire for Guinevere can be seen as courtly love. What he desires most is to desire her. In the end it is not Guinevere that is important and drives the plot forward, but rather Joe's desire for her.

The fact that the poets that engaged in courtly love often did not know the women they wrote about, or wrote about women that did not even exist is also reflected in the courtly love that Joe engages in. Just as the poets who wrote in the courtly love tradition, Joe falls in love with someone he does not know and from that point on he creates his own overly romanticized version of her identity. Therefore, the Guinevere that he falls madly in love with does not exist outside of his own mind. Similarly, to the narrative, this too is plagued by a doubleness. He falls in love with a woman he does not know, or more specifically his romanticized, imagined version of her. However, the version of Guinevere that he loves and idealizes is not real. It is the subjective image in which he sees her, the surface and not the autonomous human being that she is. Hence the doubleness, there are two versions of Guinevere, the one that Joe loves and idealizes, and the real Guinevere that the reader hardly get to know.

Moller also states that a central part of courtly love is that it should or would not become a reality (40). Since it is the desire that is at the heart of the concept and not the relationship, there is no reason or purpose for it to end in an actual relationship. Similarly, Joe finds that when he does attain Guinevere it is not as he imagined. She is not the object that he romanticized and sexualized but rather a complete human being with her own thoughts, feelings and ideas. Similarly, she is not created to fulfill him and his desires. Still, he idealizes

her and tries to make her fit into the image of the ideal woman that he has created for himself, the imaginary woman he fell in love with. Ultimately, their relationship ends in tragedy with Guinevere's death. This further enhancing the argument that the love Joe holds for Guinevere is of courtly love as it is not meant to become an actual relationship, and neither was Joe's desire for Guinevere.

The concept of courtly love is closely related to the idea of mimetic desire. In *The Mimetic Nature of our Ressentiment* (2015), Stefano Tomelleri describes mimetic desire as the idea that desire is fueled by the admiration of others and that we desire things not on our own merit, but simply because others do (72). This means that we do not decide to desire things on our own, but rather we desire something because someone else desires it as well. Simply put, mimetic desire is to imitate the other's desires (Tomelleri 72). Taking this into consideration, it can be argued that Joe only desires Guinevere because she is an object that others desire. Both her friend Peach and her lover Benji desires her, and this is what makes her desirable for Joe.

As we know from René Girard's *The Mimetic Desire of Paolo and Francesca* (1978), mimetic desire can also relate to works of literature, such as in Dante's *The Divine Comedy* (1973). Here the two lovers, Paolo and Francesca read the story of Guinevere and Lancelot's forbidden love, which in turn gives them permission to act on their own feelings for one another, resulting in adultery (Girard 2). Similarly, it is relevant to mention the love story of Lancelot and Guinevere in relation to this novel. Lancelot and Guinevere are characters in the stories about Arthur and the round table where the former is a knight, and the latter is married to the king. The pair eventually enter into a secret romantic relationship. In *Courtly Love in Malory* (1960, Charles Moorman argues that an aspect of Guinevere and Lancelot's legendary love was that it was, in fact, courtly love (164). The tales about Arthur and the round table as well as works of literature written at the same time, present courtly love as a central part of the chivalric code of knighthood (Moorman 164). This is because the concept of courtly love contains some of the most important features of the chivalric code. This includes proving his noble feelings through brave, generous and courteous actions (Moorman 165). Similarly to the story of Lancelot and Guinevere, Joe also perform these forms of chivalrous acts towards his Guinevere. He shows bravery in saving her from the train tracks, for example, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Furthermore, in Joe's mind he also displays bravery by killing the people around her, as he has deemed them bad for her, thus doing this is in her best interest. He also displays generosity as he helps her with setting up her new bed without expressing that he expects anything in return, even though he presumes that they will have

sex. Furthermore, he displays courtesy in seemingly not being too aggressive in quest to obtain Guinevere, as well as not pressuring her to do things she does not want. This further enhances the argument that the love Joe experiences for Guinevere fits that of the courtly love tradition. Additionally, because of his perception of his chivalric behavior one can argue that Joe sees himself as and acts like a knight on a quest to win the love of his desired woman.

Moreover, in the tales of Arthur and the round table, the love between Lancelot and Guinevere is one of the main causes of the downfall of Arthurs kingdom (Moorman 166). *YOU* draw parallels to this in naming the love interest Guinevere. Similarly to the tale of Lancelot and Guinevere, the love between Joe and Guinevere ultimately ends in tragedy as courtly love is not meant to reality. Therefore, it is essential in terms of the courtly love tradition that the love does not end in happiness. Just as Lancelot and Guinevere's love end in the destruction of a kingdom, Joe and Guinevere's relationship end with the tragic death of Guinevere. Thus, the use of the name Guinevere in the book allude to the tale of Lancelot and Guinevere ultimately foreshadowing the pairs tragic ending. In addition, it also sets the tone of what type of story this is. As mentioned, Joe sees their love as a magnificent and grand love, similarly to the legendary love story of Guinevere and Lancelot.

Just as Paolo and Francesca gave in to the temptations of mimetic desire, Joe himself engages in mimetic desire where he justifies his actions by comparing them to other love stories or songs. For example, in the beginning of the second chapter he mentions a movie called *Hannah and her sisters* (1986), which he views to be one of the most romantic love stories of all time. The movie is about Hannah and her two sisters. Hannah's husband falls in love, and starts an affair with her sister Lee, which is the most important thing for Joe. In the movie, Hannah's husband stages a run in with Lee. Joe, in turn, compares this to his stalking of Guinevere, justifying his actions as the same type of romantic gesture. Because of this, Joe himself engages in mimetic desire as the events he reads or watches allows him to act the way he does.

It is also relevant here to mention Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1605). In *Vagaries of Desire: A Collection of Philosophical Essays* (2019), Timo Airaksinen mentions the relationship between *Don Quixote* and mimetic desire. The main character by the name of Don Quixote, reads too many epic romances and stories of knighthood, thus wish to become a knight himself (Airaksinen 89). This makes him reimagine himself with his fictional heroes in mind (Airaksinen 89). As he does this he engages in mimetic desire. Furthermore, this reimagining of himself leads to him confusing fiction with real life as he has created a delusion for himself. This is what makes the book especially significant in relation to *YOU*.

Similarly to Don Quixote, Joe imagines and presents the tale of the love story between him and Guinevere the way he wants it to be perceived. He has also read many books concerning love and has an idea of what love is, thus he molds his story after grand stories of love, which in turn makes him lose sight of what's real. As mentioned, Joe sees himself as Guinevere's savior and protector, as well as thinking that their love is a grand one that was fated to happen. All these things are molded from traditional romantic tales.

3.3 The doppelgänger motif

Courtly love then, is a dangerous ideal of love. It is based on the desire of an imaginary object. The love is based on a woman that is not real. In Joe's case the desired woman is an overly romanticized and sexualized version of Guinevere. In the end, she cannot live up to this ideal, but in reality, this does not matter as she is only valuable as a part of the narrative that Joe has decided to tell himself. Therefore, one can argue that there is a doppelgänger motif on a psychological level present in the narrative as there are two versions of the same story. There is a gap between the story that Joe tells himself, and the actual story. He presents the story to us as a grand, romantic love story that is written in the stars, but the reader knows that there is more to it. This is shown in the end of the first chapter where Joe states:

You didn't walk in here for books, Beck. You didn't have to say my name. You didn't have to smile or listen or take me in. But you did. (9)

From this quote it is evident that Joe looks at this first meeting as fate or something that was destined to happen. They were destined to meet and fall in love. Yet, Guinevere is not the idealized damsel in distress or an unobtainable princess for him to win, as he wants us to think and as he himself thinks. This idea that they were destined to meet is also uncanny. If something happens that seems too good to be true, it insinuates that someone or something of a higher power pulls the strings (Bennett and Royle 37). This is thus uncanny because it suggests that one is not in control of one's own fate, but rather that this is controlled by a higher power.

The double, or doppelgänger is also closely linked to the uncanny. Bennett and Royle state that the uncanny means that something is unfamiliar and usually implies a sense of eeriness (35). The uncanny is unfamiliar, disruptive and strange (Bennett and Royle 35). The doppelgänger is uncanny as it is a form of repetition (36). There is more than one of the same

person, which we find strange and unnatural. As mentioned, in *YOU* there is a psychological doppelgänger motif in the narrative method. It can be argued to be a doppelgänger because there are two clear sides to this story. The two sides are different, but they are parallel stories as they are about the same people, time, and place. On one hand, we have the story that Joe presents to us, and wishes the reader to accept as true. The story where he is madly in love with a woman who is everything he wants. A story where he is the hero, the savior, the protector. On the other hand, as mentioned, the reader knows that this is not true and that the story he presents is unreliable and subjective. Therefore, you also have the real story, from an objective point of view, that we never get to see. Thus, the narrative presented is only one, unrealistic side of the events, resulting in a doppelgänger motive on a psychological level.

As mentioned, the narrator of the book conforms to several masculine stereotypes throughout the story. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a stereotype as “3. b. A preconceived and oversimplified idea of the characteristics which typify a person, situation, etc.; an attitude based on such a preconception. Also, a person who appears to conform closely to the idea of a type». In other words, a stereotype is a generalized idea about a person or group of people based on gender, nationality, race or other cultural and personal traits. Several different masculine stereotypes and expressions are found in this book. Most of them are subcategories of the traditional patriarchal type of masculinity, such as the nice guy, the stalker and the knight, as has previously been signaled in the discussion of courtly love. Masculine expressions are explored in several ways in this novel as Joe prescribes to a number of masculine identities and expressions throughout the story. These masculine stereotypes ultimately prove to be harmful both to Joe, as well as his surroundings in different ways, which will be discussed further in this part of the chapter.

Throughout the book the reader can see that there is a doubleness to Joe as he projects the self that he wants those around him to perceive. In other words, we do not know if, or when we actually see the real Joe as he prescribes to many different types of stereotypes and personality traits. One of these stereotypes is that of the Average Joe. The Average Joe, according to Andrew Smiler in *Living the Image: A Quantitative Approach to Delineating Masculinities* (2006), is known for being reliable, kind, hardworking and unextraordinary (4). The stereotype is often used to describe the blue-collar worker, in other words, men who work in manual labor (Smiler 4). In many aspects, the person Joe often portrays outwards fit this stereotype, as he presents himself as loyal and kind as well as an “average” man of sorts. The self he presents seems to be nothing out of the ordinary, although this isn’t true. Herein lies the doubleness of his character. He portrays himself as something that he’s not. On the one

hand he seems to be a reliable upstanding normal citizen, but on the other hand the reader knows that this is not true as he is a dangerous stalker. Considering the Average Joe stereotype, it is clear that the name “Joe” for the main character is no coincidence, but rather a use of irony, such as the use of the name “Guinevere” for his love interest. The name fits the narrator as he tries to be and present himself as an Average Joe, but it is ironic because he is far from it. He presents as kind and reliable, but is in fact ruthless, meticulous and malicious. In this sense, the name fits him in terms of who he aspires to be but is ironic in terms of who he really is.

In this sense the Average Joe stereotype goes hand in hand with the Nice Guy character trope. They share many character traits such as being kind and reliable, although in contrast to the Average Joe, the Nice Guy stereotype has an underlying doppelgänger motif. In her MA thesis *Masculinities in The Great Gatsby and (500) Days of Summer* (2021), Ingeborg Nesbø defines the Nice Guy as a guy that presents himself as being sensitive, kind and different from the traditional macho masculinity, but is neither in reality (1). The Nice Guy often quickly becomes obsessed with his love interest and starts stalking and surveilling them (Nesbø 9). Another character trait of this stereotype is that they see their love interest as an object for them to love and desire, similarly to that of the courtly love tradition (Nesbø 25-26). Similarly, to the Nice Guy, Joe projects an alternative masculinity that differs from the traditional hegemonic masculinity, where he is not concerned with social status and never himself had any sort of higher education. Still, he portrays himself as emotional and intellectual in terms of his love for books, meaning he is not a typical macho man either. As mentioned, what he ultimately tries to present himself as is an Average Joe. Or, in other words, he projects the self he wishes to portray, the self he thinks his love interest wants. Yet, the fact that he, in reality, is not an Average Joe is what ultimately makes him a Nice Guy. Put in simpler terms, he is a Nice Guy because he is not, in fact, a nice guy. Because of this the Nice Guy stereotype is also double in itself, it presents as one thing but in reality is something entirely different. This also reflects Joe, strengthening the argument that he too, is double for the same reasons.

Furthermore, beneath this shell of sensitivity and kindness is a man led by traditional patriarchal ideals and a toxic masculinity. He reveals this side of himself when he eventually does enter into a relationship with Guinevere as he states: “we are one of those 1950s couples, very sexist, because I am in charge and you like it that way” (237). In this quotation, Joe gives away his view on gender roles, providing proof that he does, in fact, prescribe to a patriarchal form of masculinity. Furthermore, it reveals how he views their relationship as well as his role

in it as the dominant party. This sheds light on a whole new side to him, which is far from the kind, reliable and sensitive man that he has previously tried to portray himself as. This is his ideal relationship, where he is in charge and she submits to him, ultimately making him the dominant partner in the relationship. He even states in his own words that they are in a “very sexist” relationship (237). This coincides with both toxic masculine ideals as well as patriarchal ideals which in modern western times is viewed in a negative light. Additionally, he also makes use of degrading words directed towards women. Before Joe and Guinevere have sex for the first time he thinks, “and you’re not wearing any panties under that skirt, you whore” (242), further enhancing the argument that he proscribes to toxic masculine ideals. Here again he sexualizes Guinevere and makes her a sexual object as well as degrading her, proving that she is nothing but a plaything to him, to do with as he pleases. He is the boss, and she is the submissive girlfriend.

However, Joe is also assertive in his quest for his loved one, which is a typical characteristic of the Nice Guy. His wish is that Guinevere will fall in love with him the way he fell in love with her, and instead of being aggressive in his endeavor to win her heart he takes his time and learns everything about her. In relation to this, Nesbø states that Nice Guys often display stalker tendencies (Nesbø 9). They are less aggressive in their quest for love, but because of this approach their love interests in more subtle ways where they get to know or look after her (Nesbø 9). This, in turn, leads to more stalker related behavior and ways of approaching women. This is also true for Joe. As he tries to get to know Guinevere, he steals her phone so he can follow her activities online as well as read her emails and messages. He also follows her and spies on her outside her building, until it’s time to make a move. This happens when Guinevere accidentally falls on the subway platform, giving Joe the perfect opportunity to help her and establish himself as a savior and protector. Joe himself repeatedly justifies his stalking as innocent as all his actions are done with the honorable intention of protecting her. Before Guinevere trips and falls on the subway tracks Joe states:

You’re too close to the tracks, Beck, and you’re lucky I’m here, because if you fell or if some sicko had followed you down, some derelict rapist, you wouldn’t be able to do anything (35)

This statement is particularly relevant for three reasons. For one, it shows Joe’s need to protect Guinevere. “you’re lucky I’m here” (35) he states, as she is his damsel in distress, and he is her knight in shining armor. Without him she would be in a dangerous situation, and all

he is doing is making sure she is okay. Secondly, it highlights the severity of Joe's own delusions. He points out that "some sicko" could have followed her and acknowledges that that would have been a dangerous situation. Yet, he does not see his own actions in the same light, even though he can be perceived as a "sicko" following her. He sees his behavior as admirable because his intentions are good and can because of this separate his own actions from someone else following her, because he imagines their intentions as malicious. This further enhances the argument of how Joe's delusional view twists the narrative, as he cannot see the severity of his own actions. Lastly, this situation is also ironic as Joe proves his worth by saving Guinevere. In other words, he uses the opportunity to save Guinevere as a way to establish his own masculinity to her, as well as himself. This selfless act of heroism is therefore, in a sense, also selfish.

Ultimately, what this display is that Joe wishes to be perceived as something and someone that he is not. In other words, he wears a "mask", projecting the person he wants to be identified with whilst hiding his true self, the sexist, violent, ruthless killer. Bennett and Royle argue that many works of literature concerned themselves with deception, thus using things such as the mask to explore themes of identity (69). *YOU* uses deception and the mask to explore an obsessive person's psyche as well as expressions of masculine identity. Like Joe, for example, who subscribes to various forms of toxic masculinity, but use the mask to conceal this, making him more attractive to his love interest, as well as more likable to the people around him.

Joe's obsessive need to protect Guinevere goes beyond following her to make sure she is safe. Before Joe really gets to know Guinevere, she has a causal relationship with another man named Benji. In Joe's eyes Benji is an obstacle between him and his love and therefore needs to be dealt with. Yet, in the end his ultimate reasoning for getting rid of Benji is because he hurts or is not good enough for Guinevere. His behavior towards Guinevere enrages Joe and as he decides to do something about it, he states: "I need to save you" (64). This short but insightful sentence shows both Joe's reason and his intention. His intention is to save his love interest from her lover because, in his eyes, he is not good enough for her. A chivalric, selfless act derived from selfless and protective feelings. Still, by stating "I need" Joe involuntarily reveals that the decision is ultimately based on his own wants and needs. He needs to rid himself of the competition so that his shot with Guinevere increases and he can have her all to himself. In other words, the act is not selfless nor chivalric, but rather based on Joe's own desires which is in correlation with the rest of the narrative.

This in turn brings us to the relationship between Joe and Benji. The pair has little to

no interaction before Joe decides to kidnap him. In Joe's eyes they share a love interest, and this makes them rivals. Joe desires the object that Benji has, Guinevere, and for her to become his he needs to eliminate the competition. This is what drives him to kidnap, and ultimately kill Benji. Their bond resembles that of the homosocial bond between male rivals. Mansfield brings forth Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's theory on the homosocial bond, which is a shared bond between people of the same gender, often men (97). This bond is often portrayed between two rivals where the woman becomes a mere object and price to be won (Mansfield 97). Additionally, one characteristic of the homosocial rivals is that it often leads to the death of one of them (Mansfield 99). This is similar to the concept of courtly love where the woman is also reduced to a mere object of desire instead of an autonomous human being. In Joe and Benji's rivalry, it is their bond, their journey that is important and not Guinevere. They both desire the same woman and therefore one of them must die.

Previously I described Joe as presenting toxic masculinity ideals, which again becomes relevant as the type of homosocial bond he shares with Benji is related to the same traditional macho or toxic masculinity. According to Sedgwick, in this type of masculine expression, the man is the savior, and the woman is weak, innocent and in need of saving, which conforms to traditional patriarchal masculinity. This makes the woman a mere object of desire and the man the rescuer on a heroic quest to win his prize (Mansfield 97). This also relates to Joe's need to protect and save Guinevere, as he sees her as weak, innocent, and incapable of handling matters herself. In other words, in his shared homosocial bond with Benji, Joe prescribes to a completely different type of masculinity than what he wishes us to perceive.

It is also relevant to mention Joe's relationship to Guinevere's friend Peach when discussing the homosocial. Peach is very possessive over Guinevere and Joe discovers that she is in fact in love with her. This makes him perceive her as a rival. Even though the homosocial bond is between two people of the same gender, usually men, one can argue that Joe indeed has such a rivalry with Peach. Joe sees them as romantic rivals, thus perceiving her as a masculine rival of sorts. Similarly to Joe's rivalry with Benji, this rivalry too ends in a death. More specifically the death of Peach. This further enhances the argument that the two are in a homosocial bond of rivalry.

Furthermore, these two homosocial bonds are significant as they both represent the *doppelgänger* trope. If we put the theory of the *doppelgänger* together with Sedgwick's homosocial bond, we can understand the two fighting rivals as one immersive and united masculine subject both fighting against and indulging in its own desires (Mansfield 100). To

defeat his doppelgänger, or his own qualities which are reflected in the doppelgänger the hero must engage in violence. Mansfield puts it like this when referring to the masculine rivals: “To do good, they must enact their own evil” (Mansfield 101). The hero must embody the essence of his nemesis to defeat him, to do what’s right and good and eventually defeat his enemy, he must inflict his own evil (Mansfield 100). This is similar to Joe’s homosocial bonds. To defeat them he must engage in violence by killing them, and he must embody them to not get caught. With Benji he does so by taking over his social media and writing posts resembling those Benji himself wrote to make it seem as if he is still alive. Similarly, with Peach he writes a note to Guinevere explaining why she left. Both of these people are vastly different to Joe in both behavior, values and social standing as they are from homes with resources and money. Their values directly contradict Joe’s own values, thus for him to write posts and notes resembling them he needs to embody not only who they are, but what they stand for. This then results in the doppelgänger.

The doppelgänger is also connected to trauma. In *The Trauma Question* (2008), Robert Luckhurst states that the double is often used in literature and cinema to explore and mediate trauma (80). Motifs the double and the doppelgänger is also used in *YOU* to explore subjectivity and the human psyche but there is generally little mention of trauma. Even though Joe displays few signs of trauma throughout the book, he retells a story from when he was fifteen and locked in what he refers to as “the cage” by his employer (50). The cage is where the bookstore he works at stores rare and valuable books. Joe was locked in the cage to be taught a lesson and three days went by before he was let out. Luckhurst states that initially a traumatic event is defined as something that happens outside of what we as humans normally experience (Luckhurst 79). Being locked in a cage for three days is not within the bounds of normal human experience. Even though Joe tells this story in a calm tone and looks back at it as a valuable lesson, I would argue that he experienced something traumatic. Furthermore, a traumatic event can also be continuously relived through flashbacks or dreams, or even situations that resemble the traumatic event, or it can lead to what Luckhurst calls “increased arousal” (Luckhurst 1). Increased arousal can be an uncontrollable temper, being extremely careful and watch out for danger or an over-the-top response to being startled (Luckhurst 1). Even though Joe might not display many signs of trauma, he does have an uncontrollable temper which is shown through all the murders he commits. This is especially apparent when he kills Guinevere in a fit of rage when she tries to escape from him. More specifically when she tries to escape from the very same cage that Joe was locked in as a child (409). Joe also,

in a sense, continually relives his trauma by locking other people in “the cage”. Thus, there are some signs of trauma present in *YOU*.

In addition to being used to explore and mediate trauma, the doppelgänger is also uncanny. The uncanny is very relevant as a tool used by literature to investigate and manifest challenging psychological occurrences. The term uncanny is often connected with a sense of mystery or eeriness, or even strangeness and refers to a sense of unfamiliarity in the familiar (Bennett and Royle 35). The literary use of repetition of an instance or character is uncanny because it involves a kind of duplicity in what we find familiar, both in the sense of doubling but also referring to deception (Bennett and Royle 42). There are many traces of the uncanny in *YOU*, but it is mostly depicted through the double and deception. As depicted in this chapter this is portrayed both in the narrative and in Joe’s subjectivity on a social and cultural level. The narrative is deceptive because Joe portrays it in the way he wishes it to be perceived, which is also why it is double. The way Joe portrays himself is also double as he portrays himself to be someone that he is not. Furthermore, there is also uncanny repetition concerning “the cage”. Joe himself was locked in it as a teenager, and as an adult he repeats this by locking others in the same cage.

To conclude, this chapter illustrates how the double is used in both narrative and subjectivity to explore an obsessed person’s psyche. The double is used in narrative in terms of deception to present a false narrative to the reader. There is Joe’s recount of the events which are deceiving and unreliable and then there is the truth. The double is also illustrated in subjectivity and culture. Joe prescribes to several masculine stereotypes which, most of which presents as nice, reliable and chivalrous. Yet, they all hold underlying toxic masculine ideals, hence the doubleness. Furthermore, it demonstrates how narrative can function to build and, especially, imprison subjectivity. *YOU* imprisons and mediates toxic masculinity in the narrative through Joe’s subjectivity. This helps us explore and more importantly identify these toxic masculine traits, thus saving us from them.

Chapter 4: Susanna Clarke's *Piranesi* (2021)

This chapter aims to analyze how the narrative structure as well as motifs of the double and the labyrinth is used to explore the subjectivity of the narrator in *Piranesi* (2021). This task will be undertaken first and foremost by looking at the narrative style and motifs the labyrinth and the double, as well as other literary aspects and symbols used in the book to explore themes of mental health, trauma, identity and subjectivity. *Piranesi* is a fantasy and mystery novel written by Susanna Clarke. The book is a *New York Times* bestseller and in 2021 Clarke won the *Women's Prize for Fiction* for the book. The main themes in this novel include mental health and attendant themes such as isolation, trauma, and spirituality. The setting of the book is a house that is the world. The House has three levels clouds in the Upper Halls and a sea in the lower halls, while the main floor is where the narrator resides. The House is also shaped like a labyrinth and includes miles and miles of different paths and halls. The book follows the narrator and protagonist, whom I will refer to as Piranesi in this thesis, and is narrated through his journal entries. Piranesi and his friend the Other are the only two people alive in this world. The pair are good friends and work together in their search for the ancient knowledge, which presumably is hidden somewhere in the House. It is revealed at an early stage of the book that the narrator has some form of amnesia, as he struggles to remember his own chooses and even his own name. As the story progresses the narrator uncovers more peculiar findings and sets out to solve these mysteries as well as his own identity.

This chapter will mainly focus on motifs of the labyrinth and the double and how the manifestation of these devices as well as the narrative structure is used explore subjectivity.

4.1 Narrative

Narrative is a central part of any story. It is what drives the plot forward. In *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory* (2016), Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle define narrative as a beginning, middle and end, in other words, multiple events that take place in a specific order (55). Time is also an important aspect of narrative as the series of events portrayed by the narrative are also connected in time (55). This means that the ending, for example, depends on what happens earlier in the narrative (55). When investigating the narrative, it is important to consider the narrator, or the one who tells the story. As Mieke Bal mentions in *An Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (2017), the narrator can employ different

perspectives, out of which first-person and third person are the most traditional. *Piranesi* conforms to this tradition in the sense that it is written in a first-person perspective with the use of the pronoun “I”. Furthermore, the narrative conveyed and presented to the reader in the form of journal, or diary entries. Through the narrator’s journal the reader gets a look into his thoughts and feelings as well as the world he inhabits. As mentioned, the Oxford English dictionary defines a diary as “specifically, a daily record of matters affecting the writer personally, or which come under his observation”. In other words, the narrator uses the diary as a tool for analyzing and better understanding of himself as well as his surroundings. Similarly, to *YOU* the narrator in *Piranesi* presents the reader with a narrative that he wishes us to believe, but also a narrative that the narrator himself believes in. Yet, it becomes clear to the reader at an early stage of the story that there is something strange going on in this world, even though the narrator himself seems willingly oblivious to this. This makes the reader question the narrative from the beginning. An example of this is when the narrator explains his relationship with the Other, as well as their scientific work, he states “Piranesi. It is what he calls me. Which is strange because as far as I remember it is not my name” (9). This is one of the first instances where the reader is familiarized with the strange memory issues the narrator seems to have. His companion, and the only other living human being in the house calls him “Piranesi”. He accepts this as his name yet does not think it actually is. Furthermore, the narrator does not seem to question the strangeness surrounding this, and instead seems satisfied with living in the blissful unknown. It is also relevant to mention here that the title “*Piranesi*”, similarly to *YOU*, is a lie. Piranesi is the name the other gives to him, but it is not his actual name. The title then, is ironic as it is based on a false name.

Another example of the memory troubles of the narrator is presented when he is listing all his journals. The first ones are labeled in a normal fashion with the first one called “*December 2011 to June 2012*” (13). This labeling is consistent for the first three journals, but the third one has been crossed out and labeled with a more obscure description: “*Thirtieth Day in the Twelfth Month in the Year of Weeping and Wailing, to the Fourth Day of the Seventh Month in the Year I discovered the Coral Halls*” (13.). At first the narrator does not seem to notice this change in labeling, but eventually he states that “Reading over what I have just written, I have realized something. I have used two systems to number the years. How could I not have noticed this before?” (15). This further enhances the reader’s suspicion that something is not right. It raises questions like: “why has he changed the numbering system?” and “why does he not remember changing it?”. Furthermore, the narrator rationalizes this strange occurrence by stating that he prefers the new system because to him it makes more

sense. He then, happily moves on from this without further questioning the changed system. This then presents a doubleness in the narrative. There is the narrative that the narrator presents to us as true. Yet, this narrative is unreliable and questionable. Thus, there is the alternative objective narrative of the events that is actually true.

This brings us to the unreliable narrator that we are presented with in *Piranesi*. As previously mentioned, in regard to the unreliable narrator Mieke Bal states that

If a character talks about itself to itself it is practicing self-analysis. We cannot be sure that it is judging itself correctly; indeed, in literature we encounter many unreliable, deceitful, immature, incompetent, mentally disturbed self-analysts (2017, 117)

In other words, when a character self-analyzes we have no way of knowing if the analysis and collusions are correct as no other parties are involved in the process. Thus, a narrator that engages in this form of analyzation is unreliable as the reader cannot trust the conclusions the narrators draw about themselves. Furthermore, Bal mentions that the most normal genres for this type of self-analyzations is that of the autobiographical novels, including diaries (117). This is particularly relevant when we look at the narrator in *Piranesi*, as he exclusively engages in self-analyzation almost explicitly without feedback from anyone around him. According to Bal's definition, then Piranesi is an unreliable narrator as we cannot confirm the analyzation process nor the conclusions he draws. This argument is further enhanced by the fact that it is written as a diary. As mentioned, a diary is used to analyze and understand ourselves and the world around us, which is in itself self-analyzation. A diary is also private and personal, written by the "I", to the "I" for that person's eyes only. Writing "dear diary", for example, is just a euphemism for "dear myself" as it is only meant to be read by the person who wrote it. Additionally, a diary is also in a sense a double. It is a place where we record past events, thoughts and ideas, and thus it functions as a double of ourselves.

As previously stated, Piranesi presents the narrative of the story as true and believes this throughout most of the book. However, it is clear that he has amnesia, as displayed in the previous examples. Furthermore, he presents the house as a magical land free of the modern technologies that we are familiar with, yet he continuously mentions a "shining device" that the Other possesses. The first time this is mentioned he states: "When I entered the Hall he was already there, leaning on an Empty Plinth, tapping at one of his shining devices" (21). He provides little to no further description of this shining device and does not seem to recognize

what object this is. Yet, to the reader who is familiar with modern technology it seems like a technological device of some kind. Further, on page 65, the shining device is mentioned twice, one of them being: “He was making notes on his shining device”. Here again the narrator does not provide the reader with further description of the shining device, but now we know that you can tap on it as well as write notes on it. The reader will at this point most likely identify the shining device with a phone. This means that they do have access to modern technology, or at least the Other does, which again begs the question: Why cannot Piranesi identify what this is? The memory issues the narrative illustrates the narrator as having also makes him unreliable. He himself cannot identify or understand certain aspects of the story he tells, nor does he remember his own previous actions. Because of this the reader cannot trust the information he relates to them. Here we also see the use of irony as there is a gap in what the narrator and the reader perceive. Therefore, this situation is ironic because Piranesi cannot identify the phone, but the reader most likely will. This also illustrates the double motif in the narrative. There is a gap between the narrators comprehension of the events and the readers understanding, thus creating a double narrative.

It is also relevant when discussing the narrative to mention the genre of the book. It is a fantasy and mystery novel, but *Piranesi* can also be put in the category of crime fiction. In *Crime Fiction* (2005), John Scaggs describes characteristics of one of the subgenres of crime fiction, mystery and detective novels. One of the characteristics of the mystery and detective novels are that they open with a question mark which encourages the reader to take on a detective role alongside the narrator to unveil the given mystery (Scaggs 34). This characteristic is also present in *Piranesi* as the book opens with the narrator describing the events surrounding “the joining of the three tides” (3) that he witnesses in the Ninth Vestibule. Tides and vestibules usually do not go together, thus already on page 3 the reader is encouraged to take on the role of a detective to try and understand the events described. On the next page Piranesi goes on to describe the world he inhabits, and this too is puzzling to the reader. He describes the world as a house. For example, in his description of the world he states, “I have climbed to the Upper Halls where clouds move in slow procession and statues appear suddenly out of the Mists. I have explored the Drowned Halls where the Dark Waters are carpeted with white water lilies.” (5). This also raises questions for the reader, as this description of the world does not match their own, further encouraging them to solve and comprehend the mystery that is Piranesi’s world. Furthermore, the big question mark arrives when he explains that he is called Piranesi, but does, in fact, not think that it is his real name. This insinuates to the reader that something strange is afoot both in terms of the plot as well

as the narrators own psyche. Therefore, as illustrated, *Piranesi* adheres to the characteristic of the mystery and detective novel where the reader is engaged and encouraged to join as a detective to uncover the secrets lurking in the plot.

Crime fiction can also be linked to the labyrinth. Paul Sheehan and Lauren Alice argue in *Labyrinths of Uncertainty: True Detective and the Metaphysics of Investigation* (2017), that the labyrinth can take on two forms in literature and other medias (35). Firstly, the labyrinth can take form in the environment where the plot takes place (Sheehan and Alice 35). This form of the labyrinth is also present in *Piranesi* as the House is often described as a labyrinth because of its many paths and endless halls. Secondly, the labyrinth can be seen in the motif of “conspiracy-as-labyrinth”, meaning that the mystery or conspiracy has many layers leading down many different roads (Sheehan and Alice 35). In other words, Sheehan and Alice argue that the labyrinth can be an analogy for crime fiction as they both have many paths, blind alleys and search to solve the mystery, or in terms of the labyrinth, find the way out. The second form the labyrinth can take in narrative is also present in *Piranesi*. As mentioned, *Piranesi* belongs to the genre of detective and mystery fiction in which the detective follows many clues, or paths, to try and solve the mystery. Therefore, the labyrinth is also thematized through the narrative in that *Piranesi* acts as the detective, leading us down many roads, some fruitful and some not, in search for answers.

4.2 Subjectivity

It is also relevant to mention subjectivity in terms of *Piranesi*. Not only because the novel is written in a first-person narrative and we only get his subjective point of view, but also because subjectivity is continuously thematized by focusing on the self, mental health and the effects of isolation. The Oxford English dictionary defines subjectivity as: “1. The quality or condition of being based on subjective consciousness, experience, etc.; the fact of existing in the mind only”. In other words, subjectivity is an internal experience of the self. Furthermore, our internal experience is split between cultural processes that over time has been instilled in the conscious mind, and the unconscious desires we find threatening and uncomfortable, the latter of which the conscious wishes to keep hidden by repressing it (Mansfield 30). These repressed feelings and desires therefore look for other ways to express themselves, which can be through for example dreams or neurotic symptoms (Mansfield 30). In *Piranesi*, the unconscious is illustrated through neurotic symptoms. As mentioned, *Piranesi* suffers from amnesia where memories have been blocked from his conscious mind. Yet, several times

throughout the book he is presented with words and events related to his lost memories, both from the Other and through his own journal entries. When this happens, his reaction is severe, and he becomes distressed. Thus, when the narrator is faced with these repressed memories, he becomes neurotic and frightened.

The house represented in *Piranesi* is also quite relevant in terms of his subjectivity. The House is one of the most important symbols of the novel as it is in itself a world. According to Kathy Mezei and Chiara Briganti in *Reading the House: A Literary Perspective* (2002), authors often use houses to represent the characters inner self (839). They go on to specify that the house can be used as models or representations of the human psyche (841). I argue that this is also true for *Piranesi* for two reasons. Firstly, the House can in itself represent the human mind. Piranesi describes the House as having three floors: the basement or Drowned halls, the main floor where he resides and the Upper Halls where there are clouds. If we put this into the context of the human mind the different levels of the House can be viewed as different aspects of the mind. The Drowned Halls, for example, with their Dark Waters where Piranesi is unable to roam freely could represent the unconscious where desires, feelings and thoughts are hidden away from the conscious mind. The main floor could be a model for the consciousness, the part of our brain where we reside and roam on a daily basis. And lastly, the Upper Halls containing the Clouds could represent the part of our mind where dreams and aspirations reside, making a connection to the term “having one’s heads in the clouds” which refers to someone who daydreams and is not present in the moment. Secondly, the House also represents Piranesi’s state of mind. As mentioned, the House is often described as a labyrinth and the Other tells Piranesi, “You see, the labyrinth plays tricks on your mind. It makes people forget things.” (68). Thus, the House, similarly to trauma, which I will go into further later in this chapter, can make you forget, or suppress memories. This is the very thing that happened to Piranesi. The House therefore represents his state of mind.

This brings us to the labyrinth which is another important symbol in relation to *Piranesi* as well as representing his mind and being thematized through the narrative. In other words, the House and the labyrinths are parallels in this novel and double each other, symbolizing and representing the same things in somewhat different ways. Therefore, it is also relevant in terms of this novel, to mention the relationship between the mind and the labyrinth. In *The Labyrinth of Possibility: A Therapeutic Factor in Analytical Practice* (2014), Giorgio Tricarico argues that the labyrinth can be compared to the unconscious as the two share some key characteristics (9). Some of these key aspects are; being lost and searching for a path, running into one way streets, retracing your steps and ending back where

you started as well as experiencing anxiety and confusion (Tricarico 9). Many of these aspects are also present in the narrator's internal journey throughout the novel. In the instance regarding "Batter-Sea", which will be discussed further later in this chapter, the narrator follows a road leading to a blind alley because he cannot comprehend the meaning of the word, which causes him to turn back and leave it be. He also searches for the right road when he eventually realizes that something does not add up in his life. And finally, he retraces his steps by reading in his old journals to find out that he has been brought to the house unwillingly, leading him back to where he originally started by realizing who he is, where he is from and why he is in the House.

Furthermore, one of the characteristics of the labyrinth is that there is one way in, but that is also the only way out (Tricarico 28). Moreover, this means that there is hope and that the dangerous journey is worth the risk. In terms of the unconscious, the danger of the journey can be running in to "The other within ourselves" (29) as Tricarico puts it, which can lead to both a better understanding of the self or destruction and despair. Similarly, the danger that Piranesi ultimately faces is himself. He has to resolve the deep seeded issues that he himself struggles with and confront himself through his journals. Only after he has done this can he better understand himself and his situation. The result of this confrontation proves to lead to a higher level of subjectivity and enrich his sense of self.

The narrator's amnesia is a central part of the narrative as well as being one of the main reasons why the narrator is unreliable and untrustworthy. Since the narrator's amnesia is a central part of the narrative it is crucial to look at the cause of these memory issues. This is first addressed when the Other brings up the issue of Piranesi's lost memories. He states:

You see, the labyrinth plays tricks on your mind. It makes people forget things. If you're not careful it can unpick your entire personality. (68)

As the house is often referred to as a labyrinth, this statement indicates that it is the house in itself that makes you forget things and lose time. The statement also indicates that in the long run the house can alter your personality as you lose more of yourself alongside the lost memories. This is one explanation for the narrator's strange loss of memory, but his behavior alongside the narrative structure can also be linked to trauma.

In a world similar to our own, the narrator visits Valentine Ketterley, or as we know him, the Other. Piranesi is going to interview him about his mentor chasing an ancient knowledge, in which he helped. Ketterley asks him if he would like to experience a ritual

which is supposed to bring you to a different world, an offer which Piranesi accepts. He is told to close his eyes as the ritual starts. There is music and chanting as well as a shift in the air, and then the narrator states:

I opened my eyes. The walls of a vast room rose up around me. Statues of minotaur's loomed over me, darkening the space with their bulk, their massive horns jutting into the empty air, their animal expressions solemn, inscrutable. (182)

He has been transported to another unfamiliar world. But what is crucial here is the closing of his eyes as this also represents a gap in his memories. In *The Trauma Question* (2008), Robert Luckhurst states that someone who has been affected by trauma can completely block the traumatic event from their mind (1). Similarly, Piranesi experience a gap in his memory in the transportation from a known world to a new and unfamiliar one. In the blink of an eye, he is transported to another world with no memory of what happens in between. In other words, he has blocked the trauma of the event from his mind completely.

Luckhurst defines trauma as an event which happens outside of the normal human experience (79). In other words, trauma is something out of the ordinary, something most people do not, or are not supposed to experience during their lives according to social and cultural standards. Furthermore, Luckhurst argues that trauma is anti-narrative because of the natural aporia surrounding it (79). This means that trauma narratives differ from other narrative styles because trauma confuses and disrupts the narrative, making it hard to follow. Similarly, in *Piranesi*, the narrative is sometimes hard to follow as the reader uncover the secrets hidden in the house and Piranesi's life alongside Piranesi. The narrative jumps back in time to previous journal entries as Piranesi tries to understand his surroundings and the events that happen in his life. There is also a lot of confusion throughout the narrative as the reader only gets Piranesi's point of view, and he seems to know and understand as little, sometimes even less, than the reader.

Yet, Luckhurst argues that narrative can resolve the internal contradiction of trauma (85). That does not mean that narrative can heal the discordance of trauma, but rather that it can open for further understanding of trauma. Similarly, Bennett and Royle state that we read literature to ask and explore philosophical questions about ourselves and the world around us (151). This idea is similar to what Luckhurst means when he states that "Narrative heals all aporia" (85). Literature mediates trauma, thus helping us explore the nature of trauma both in the human subject and in narrative and can therefore help resolve the internal contradiction

that trauma is. By exploring it through literature we can get a better understanding of how it works and what it is even though it does not resolve the lack of harmony in the trauma narrative. This is also true for Piranesi as it is through his own narrative, his previous journal entries, that he can comprehend and start to heal the trauma that he endured. Thus, by putting his trauma into narrative he can explore, understand and heal that same trauma.

The trauma present in *Piranesi* can also be found in the narrator himself, not just in the narrative. As mentioned, Piranesi displays a number of memory issues throughout the book and these can be linked to trauma. Luckhurst states that “trauma disrupts memory”, meaning that trauma can affect the memory of the person experiencing it in several different ways (1). One of the ways that the mind can be affected by trauma, for example, is that all memory of the traumatic event can be completely blocked from the mind (Luckhurst 1). This is also the case in *Piranesi*. He does not remember anything from his life before the traumatic event until he reads his old journal entries and realizes that he has been kidnapped and brought to the House. Meaning, that he is, in fact, from a world similar to our own. In other words, the memory of the traumatic event of being abducted and left in a strange, unfamiliar world has been completely blocked from the narrator’s mind. Therefore, it can be argued that the trauma the narrator has experienced is the reason behind his memory issues. Not only has he suppressed all memory of the traumatic event itself, but also all the memories of his previous life that don’t coincide with the life he lives in the House.

Furthermore, Luckhurst mentions the Freudian idea that traumatic events can only be understood as traumatic after they initially happen (5). The delayed comprehension of the traumatic events comes through unwanted flashbacks as well as an effort to understanding these flashbacks and signs (Luckhurst 5). Similarly, Piranesi sometimes seems to get flashbacks from the other world as well as being able to recognize words that previously had meaning to him but no longer does. Even though he continuously dismisses the odd words, thoughts and feelings he experiences, his longing for understanding is ultimately what drives him to find out what really happened to him, which in turn also gave him some of his old memories back. One such odd word he encounters is “Batter-sea”, which the Other asks him if he remembers, which he does not (22). Yet, a few pages later he states:

I saw a black scribble against a grey Sky and a flicker of bright red; words drifted towards me – white words on a black background. At the same time, there was a sudden blare of noise and a metallic taste on my tongue. And all the images – no more than fragments of ghosts of images really – seemed to coalesce around the strange

word, 'Batter-Sea'. I tried to get a hold of them, to bring them into sharper focus, but like a dream they faded and they were gone. (26)

This passage illustrates how Piranesi is processing his trauma. As mentioned, the memories of and surrounding the traumatic events are blocked from the mind, including memories of his previous life. Here he is presented with a word that meant something to his previous self, thus resulting in images, familiar sounds and taste that his mind, or his previous self, associates with the word. In other words, the word "Batter-Sea" engenders a physical reaction because the mind recognizes it even though he cannot remember it. This is typical of trauma narrative and is parallel to how he cannot remember the world that he is from, or anything associated with it. Because of the trauma he endured by being brought to the House he has blocked the traumatic memory as well as anything that can be associated with it from his mind.

This passage is also an example of the occurrences that eventually lead Piranesi to the truth. Another example of an event leading the narrator to the truth comes when he reads an entry from his first journal. This entry takes place in a world similar to our own, yet this is unfamiliar to Piranesi. After he has read the journal entry, he becomes quite distraught and states, "The words on the page – (in my own writing) – looked like words, but at the same time I knew they were meaningless. It was nonsense, gibberish!" (108). Similarly, to the previous passage, this is an example of Piranesi trying to process and understand the trauma that he endured, which can be quite stressful. This is later followed by, "I have discovered that I am mad already!" (108), which illustrates the distress he endures in processing his trauma. It creates an *aporia* within the narrator, an internal contradiction where he is trying to process and make sense of the events and yet does not want to relive the trauma that he endured. Thus, trauma is an *aporia* in narrative, but also creates an *aporia* in the person experiencing trauma.

As previously stated, trauma is an *aporia* in narrative making it hard to follow and understand. The movie industry and literature has given trauma a narrative and a platform where it is temporalized and understandable to the audience, solving the internal contradiction of trauma in narrative (Luckhurst 80). This is done by extensive use of things like multiple personality or the double to portray trauma (Luckhurst 80). This double brings us to the *doppelgänger* in regard to the masculine and the uncanny.

4.3 Masculine Bonds

In the book *Subjectivity: Theories of the Self from Freud to Haraway* (2000), Nick Mansfield mentions Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's theory about homosociality (97). The term homosocial refers to social interaction between men as a form of masculine meaning making (Mansfield 97). In *How to Interpret Literature: Critical Theory for Literary and Cultural Studies* (2015), Robert Dale Parker defines homosociality as an intense relationship between two people of the same gender which does not include a sexual relationship (205). In literature the homosocial bond is often at the center of the story, meaning that it is the shared intense relationship between the men, either as friends, associates or rivals, that is the most meaningful relationship depicted in the story (Bennett and Royle 257). This is also true for *Piranesi* as the most meaningful relationship in the book is the friendship between Piranesi and the Other. The narrator describes the two as equals, men of science and reason. Still, the Other is the only other living person in the House and Piranesi looks up to him, respects him and trusts him explicitly.

However, the homosocial bond is often depicted as a rivalry between two men, often fighting for the love of the same woman (Bennett and Royle 257). Sedgwick argues that such a rivalry between two men often ends in the death of one of them (Mansfield 99). Even though there is no female love interest for the two men to fight about, the friendship between Piranesi and the Other does evolve into a rivalry of sorts. After Piranesi has read the journal entry describing his kidnapping by the Other, he states, "The Other is not my friend. He has never been my friend. He is my enemy." (187). This marks the end of their friendship and the start of their rivalry. Piranesi uncovers the trauma that he endured while simultaneously realizing that his only friend is, in fact, not his friend at all. The Other knew about the disadvantages of staying in the house too long, such as memory loss and personality changes. He brought Piranesi to the House for his own gain, to help him with his research on the ancient knowledge. In the end their rivalry is short lived as the Other drowns in the flood after trying to kill Piranesi. Thus, fulfilling Sedgwick's prophecy that the homosocial rivalry usually ends in the death of one of the men.

Moreover, the homosocial rivalry often involves a woman either in need of saving, or as a prize for the protagonist to win in the dramatic struggle between the rivals (Mansfield 97). Here the woman is reduced to a sexual prize, as the winning the woman becomes a symbol of the protagonist's moral superiority further upholding the idea that he is good and righteous (Mansfield 97). This aspect of the homosocial bond is based on a traditional macho

form of masculinity where the man is the savior of the weak and helpless woman. In *Piranesi* on the other hand, the author plays with these traditional gender roles as Piranesi is saved by a woman, not the other way around. The narrator fancies himself a scientist and a man of reason but does not clearly understand himself nor his surroundings. His savior on the other hand, a police officer and investigator, finds him by using the traits he so admires in himself, reason and logic. She is brave, smart and resourceful which is ultimately what leads her to him. Therefore, in a sense, Piranesi, the weak and innocent man is saved by a good, brave, logical woman. Thus, it is clear that the traditional gender roles of the man as a savior have been flipped in this novel, resulting in social commentary on tradition gender roles.

Mansfield also mentions the doppelgänger as the homosocial bond and rivalry can represent a masculine form of this literary trope (100). Literature that makes use of the doppelgänger trope usually depicts a struggle between the protagonist and a rival who is quite similar or almost identical (Mansfield 100). Meaning that what the protagonist confronts in his double is something that he recognizes in himself. In contrast, in *Piranesi* the two rival men in the homosocial bond, Piranesi and the Other, are not the ones depicted as doppelgängers. In this book the protagonist, Piranesi, is his own doppelgänger as he depicts that he experiences several different personal identities throughout the book. On one of the last pages of the book, after everything has settled and Piranesi has been rescued, he states:

This, I suppose, is where I differ from both of them – from Matthew Rose Sorensen and Piranesi; I find I do not care greatly about clothes. (238)

Here the narrator, or the “I”, separates himself from both Matthew Rose Sorensen, which is who he was before he came to the House, and Piranesi, which is who he was in the House. In his own words he is telling us that he has experienced three different personal identities. Therefore, the almost identical doppelgänger that the protagonist has to face in *Piranesi* is himself.

According to Freud the doppelgänger trope is also paradox because in some ways it assures immortality, because if there is more than one of you, you can live forever (Bennett & Royle 41). On the other hand, it also guarantees death as “you” are now someone else, meaning you can neither be you or alive anymore (Bennett & Royle 41). Because of this the doppelgänger trope threatens the very logic of identity and individualism (Bennett & Royle 41). This can be seen to some extent in *Piranesi* as the narrator is his own doppelgänger. As the discovery of his previous identity becomes reality, he realizes that he is not who he

thought he was. He both is and is not himself. In the end this is what drives him to the third identity, neither of the two first were complete. They became obsolete when faced with each other threatening Piranesi's identity and self-understanding. Thus, making a third identity where both the life he previously led, as well as the life he led in the House are incorporated.

Furthermore, Mansfield states that the struggle between the rivals they obtain a higher level of significance, and as the protagonist confronts his double as well as his former self, he obtains a higher level of subjectivity (100). In other words, as the protagonist confront his rival, he gets a better understanding of himself as well as his surroundings. This part of the doppelgänger trope is also present in *Piranesi*. Here the narrator confronts his doppelgänger, his previous self, unknowingly by reading his first journals. When he reads what Matthew Rose Sorensen portrays about his abduction and arrival at the house, he too reaches a higher level of subjectivity. Not only does he realize that he is, or was, Matthew Rose Sorensen, but he also sees reality in a new light. He is not from the House, the Other is not his friend, he is not Piranesi, and he has been deceived. All of these revelations come to him at once in the confrontation with his previous self, his double.

However, the double is also linked to trauma. As previously stated, literature has given trauma an arena to be temporalized and explored as it has been a central part of telling interesting stories about existential things such as identity, memory and selfhood (Luckhurst 80). One of the ways in which this has been explored in literature is through the use of the double or the doppelgänger (Luckhurst 80). Similarly, the doppelgänger trope is used in *Piranesi* to explore themes of mental health, identity and memory. There would be no doppelgänger in *Piranesi* if it were not for trauma as it is the traumatic event that causes the split in personality that creates the double.

This brings us over to the uncanny as the doppelgänger is uncanny in nature (Bennett and Royle 36). There are many uncanny aspects to be analyzed and found in *Piranesi*, such as repetition and the doppelgänger, death and odd coincidences. The concept of the uncanny can be hard to explain because it is somewhat abstract. It can be defined as a sense of mystery, eeriness or strangeness (Bennett and Royle 35). In other words, it refers to a sense of unfamiliarity at the center of the familiar, meaning that it is something that disrupts what we find familiar and safe (Bennett and Royle 35). The doppelgänger for example is uncanny because it is a form of repetition (Bennett and Royle 36). Repetition is uncanny as it is a type of duplicity in what we find familiar, both in terms of the double but also deception (Bennett and Royle 42). This is also evident in *Piranesi*. The narrator's doppelgänger, his previous self is in a sense familiar as it is him, and yet he is unfamiliar and strange as he no longer

recognizes his previous self. It is a repetition or extension of himself that he does not recognize, which is what makes it uncanny.

However, there is more uncanny repetition present in the book. The House, which is the world where Piranesi lives as well as being where most of the plot takes place, is also uncanny. Firstly, it is uncanny because the world is described as a house, which is something that the reader is familiar with. Yet it is unfamiliar in that the house is world in its nature with seas at the bottom level and clouds at the upper level. Something familiar has become something unfamiliar and is therefore uncanny. Furthermore, the house is uncanny because it is a repetition and extension of the other world represented in the book that is like our own. There are elements that echo each other in the two worlds, such as the sea and sea creatures being on a lower level and the clouds and birds being on a higher level. Both worlds are also viable and suitable to live in. In summation, the House and Piranesi's home world are similar in many aspects, thus a repetition, or a double, of each other which makes them uncanny, but also uncanny in that they are vastly different.

Furthermore, there are recurring instances of odd coincidences or "fate" present in the book, which are also uncanny. If something seemingly happens because of fate, that insinuates that there is a higher power of sorts pulling the strings, meaning that we are not in control of our own fate (Bennett and Royle 37). Fate and odd coincidences are therefore uncanny. In *Piranesi* this is depicted in several ways. For example, on page 42, Piranesi experiences the birds flying in a certain formation gathering on certain statues in the House. This he interprets as a sign from the birds. He concludes the interpretation of the signs as such, "So this, as far as I can tell, is what the birds told me. *A message from afar. Obscure writing. Innocence eroded.*" (43). This can be seen as just an obscure analysis of imaginary signs by a mad man, but all the messages from the birds are proven true. The message from afar alludes to the messages his savior, who comes from his home world, leaves him on the walls of the House. The obscure writing refers to the entries in his first journal that he wrote in his home world, which he finds obscure and mad. Lastly, the innocence eroded foreshadows his own loss of innocence. Loss of innocence in literature is often related to growing up, leading to greater awareness of oneself and one's surroundings as well as a greater understanding of evil, pain and suffering in the world. This is also true for Piranesi, in a sense as he loses his innocence and reaches a higher level of consciousness as he learns who he is, how he came to the House and who he can and cannot trust. Therefore, these signs are a warning of what's to come and the fact that all the warning comes true is fate. This then

alludes to an all-knowing higher power sending him signs through the birds, thus making these instances uncanny.

Death is also something uncanny as we are familiar and comfortable with life and death is unimaginable and scary (Bennett and Royle 39). There are many mentions of death in *Piranesi*. In the beginning of the book, for example, Piranesi gives us an account of everyone who has lived in the House. Beside the Other, Piranesi has not personally met anyone else, but he has found the bones of 13 other humans, meaning that someone else has lived in the house before him. This is especially uncanny as we do not know who these people are and why they are in the house. In addition, we do not know what killed them, which creates an air of danger and mystery. Furthermore, the most central death in the book is that of Piranesi. As mentioned, the doppelgänger represents death because there cannot be two of the same person living at once (Bennett & Royle 41). Therefore, since Piranesi is his own doppelgänger and has a different personal identity to Matthew Rose Sorensen, his previous self is in a sense dead. Also, when he confronts his double, his current self, or Piranesi, also dies as he ends up conforming to a third personal identity at the end. It is also relevant to mention the labyrinth in terms of death. The labyrinth is also uncanny as being in a labyrinth evokes a mood of uncertainty as one might be both fascinated and frightened (Tricarico 28). Furthermore, Tricarico also mentions Kerényi's argument that the painted, carved and built labyrinth is the form that humans designed to express that life continues even in death (17). Thus, the labyrinth can represent that even though Piranesi's double, or previous self is dead, his life continues after death as the human that he was still lives on.

In sum, this chapter finds that motifs of the double and the labyrinth are used in the narrative of *Piranesi* to explore subjectivity. The double as well as motifs of the labyrinth in narrative makes the narrative unreliable and deceitful, but also functions to explore expressions of trauma. Furthermore, the use of the doppelgänger trope explores themes of trauma and identity in relation to subjectivity. In addition, this chapter demonstrates how narrative can function to both build, imprison and most importantly heal subjectivity. As literature mediates trauma and gives it a space to be explored and make way for further comprehension, it also functions to heal the aporia related to trauma and narrative. Thus, this chapter illustrates how narrative can function to heal subjectivity.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

By analyzing these two novels using theories on narrative and subjectivity it is clear that motifs of the double is used in both books to thematize and explore subjectivity. Even though the two books chosen for this thesis are, as mentioned above, quite different, there are several similarities between them. Both *Piranesi* and *YOU* are written in a first person-point of view, resulting in a subjective narrative and an unreliable narrator. They both frequently engage in self-analyzation, real and fake. Because they are self-analyzing without getting an outside opinion, we cannot trust that they are analyzing themselves correctly, thus resulting in unreliability. Yet, there are significant differences in the narrative style as well. *Piranesi* takes on a rather traditional approach in terms of using a first-person perspective in the form of a journal. Here the double narrative is represented in the gap between the narrator's understanding of his surroundings and the readers understanding of what is going on. The narrator seems oblivious to many of the abnormalities presented by him in the narrative, thus resulting in two stories. On one hand, you have the narrative presented by the narrator's as true, and on the other hand you have the readers understanding of the narrative. In *YOU* on the other hand, the narrator frequently uses a second person point of view, which is less traditional. In doing this he makes his love interest the unsuspecting focalizer of his thoughts, leaving the reader to read between the lines to see past his deception. Because of this it is evident quite early in the book that the narrator is trying to control and shape the narrative to his liking. This also demonstrates to the reader the severity of the narrator's delusions. The story is presented to us as a grand love story between two people, but the reader sees through this as there are instances where the information provided directly contradicts the narrative that Joe creates. In reality then, the narrator is a stalker who, through the narrative, fuels his own delusions about this romance, when in reality it is a story about the narrator's own unrealistic desires. Like *Piranesi*, the double narrative in *YOU* lies in the gap between the narrator's understanding of the events and the readers. The narrator constructs and present the narrative to us as true, when in fact it is not. Furthermore, these narratives demonstrate how narrative can build subjectivity. Neither narrator is a real human being, yet they have subjectivities to be explored and understood. They even engage in self-analyzation and exploration of their own subjectivities.

In addition, both books fit into the genre of crime fiction, yet in different subcategories. *YOU* is structured as a crime thriller, thus focusing more on the criminal acts

the narrator commits, as well as the psychology behind his choices. This results in a surprisingly insightful take on love and obsession. Piranesi on the other hand, is structured as a mystery and detective novel. This involves an engaged reader who is encouraged to act as a detective alongside the narrator to solve the mystery in question. Meaning, that the main focus in this novel is on the mystery, more precisely on the solving of the mystery. Knowing the genre of the books is essential to understanding the unreliability and deception presented to us through the narratives, as well as to understand the two narrators' identity and function.

Furthermore, trauma is key to understanding the narrator's journey, especially in *Piranesi*. It is trauma that has given the narrator amnesia and it is amnesia that makes him unreliable. Thus, this narrator does not try to deceive us, but rather is deceived by himself and others. This also affects the narrative and makes it confusing and hard to follow. Still *Piranesi* is a good example of how narrative heals the aporia in trauma by giving it a space to be explored and understood. Even though it ultimately cannot heal the hurt and pain literature and narrative gives it a place to be explored. Additionally, it is Piranesi's own narratives, his previous journals, that ultimately solves the mystery of the plot, and also in Piranesi himself. This narrative in the end is what makes Piranesi reach a higher level of subjectivity as he understands himself, his surroundings and his relationships better because of it. This illustrates how narrative can function to heal subjectivity. Narrative mediates trauma, giving it a place to be properly explored and understood.

In trauma too, we see traces of the doppelgänger, as this trope has been used to explore themes of mental health and trauma. This is also true for *Piranesi* and *YOU*. In *Piranesi*, the narrator is his own doppelgänger as he has previously prescribed to a completely different personal identity. This shift in self is caused by the trauma he endured, and by the end of the books he depicts having had three separate identities. In *YOU*, the doppelgänger trope is presented in a different way. Joe embodies his victims to conceal their deaths and not get caught. The narrator in *YOU* is also a doppelgänger, but more in a social scale rather than personal.

Joe prescribes to several masculine stereotypes and expressions throughout the novel, most of which fall under the category of toxic masculinity. He presents himself as a nice, reliable, upstanding guy, when in fact he is the complete opposite. Thus, making him fit into the stereotype of the Nice Guy. Furthermore, he presents his story as a love story where he is, in a sense, the chivalrous knight in shining armor ready to save his love on a moment's notice. This masculine expression too is problematic as he views himself as strong and courageous while his love interest is weak, innocent and helpless. Both of these masculine expressions are

also models of the double, as they both present as good and honorable when in truth they hold deeply rooted patriarchal masculine ideals.

Additionally, the love that the narrator presents as having towards his love interest fits with the concept of courtly love. A characteristic of this type of love is that the man presents himself as being deeply in love with the desired woman, when in truth he is in love with love. He is in love with an imaginary idealized object that he has created, thus he is not in love with the actual woman, but the woman that he imagines her to be. Here too, similarly to the Nice Guy and the knight, the woman becomes a mere object in the males meaning making, leaving the actual human being redundant and unimportant.

This thesis, then, demonstrates how narratives can function to build, heal and imprison subjectivity. Narrative builds subjectivity in the sense that these two narrators are not actual human beings but created characters. Still, they both have a subjectivity to be explored, analyzed and understood. Thus, narrative builds subjectivity. Narrative also functions to heal narrative by giving trauma a place to be properly explored and understood. As mentioned, a traumatic event can only be understood as such after it has happened. Trauma is also an aporia and causes disruptions to narrative. Even though trauma narratives are disruptive and lack harmony, they heal the internal contradiction in these narratives and open for further exploration and understanding on the subject. As shown in *Piranesi*, narrative provides a space where trauma can reign and express itself the way that it is perceived and because of this gives it a space to heal and be understood.

Lastly, narrative can function to imprison subjectivity. Joe, for example, prescribes to toxic masculine ideals through the Nice Guy, the knight and the stalker. Many men still prescribe to the same toxic ideals today. Such an example is Andrew Tate who is an influencer and self-proclaimed misogynist. He built a reputation online for stating offensive comments directed towards women and now have a huge social media following. Narratives then, when imprisoning such misogynistic and patriarchal ideals, helps us see through the toxicity and see this behavior for what it really is; harmful. This thesis then demonstrates how literature and narrative can help us say things that cannot be said relating to subjectivity as well as giving these themes a place to be explored, recognized and understood. It helps us understand ourselves and the world around us and saves us from imprisoning narratives.

Initially I had planned to analyze *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (2009) alongside the two chosen novels. Similarly to the novels I chose, this novel explores subjectivity through themes of identity and trauma. Because of the limitations of this thesis, I had to choose two novels to focus on. I could have chosen *Piranesi* and *The Perks of Being a*

Wallflower as they are quite similar in terms of themes and narrative style. But I chose to keep *Piranesi* and *YOU* because the fact that the two novels are so different and yet share so many aspects fascinated me. In terms of further research, it would be intriguing to research these themes in all four books in the *YOU* series as well as focusing more on desire and gender. I would have also liked to analyze the symbols present in *Piranesi* as there is quite a few, but due to the objective of this thesis it was not relevant in this case.

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