Writing the Reader and/or Character
in Ryan North's *To Be or Not to Be* and *Romeo and/or Juliette*

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Readers in second person fiction reside on the threshold of the fictional world. They may maintain their distance with the fabricated world of fiction (*The French Lieutenant's Woman* by John Fowls) or step inside the fiction as a character (*If on A Winter Night A Traveler* by Italo Calvino). The first group may consist of readers of any age, gender, and cultural background. Casting the reader as the protagonist, however, entails a convincing portrayal of the character, and consequently the reader. The unspecified "you" has to be translated into a series of attributes and character traits for the reader to be transformed into a character. The age and the gender of the character addressed as "you" may impact the story significantly and exclude certain groups of readers. The aforementioned restrictions are in contrast with the all-inclusive nature of second person fiction. Ryan North's *To Be or Not to Be* (2013) and *Romeo and/or Juliette* (2016) respond to the challenges of writing the reader as a character by recycling the "choose your adventure" format and drawing on the readers' familiarity with video games and hypertexts. Inspired by "avatars" in video games, North's books invite the readers to choose a character, follow her/his (mis)adventures, and even switch characters if they wish. Similar to hypertexts, the fragmentary structure of the text linked by numbers and images in both books gives the readers the freedom to either follow the familiar storyline of Hamlet and Romeo and Juliette, or the quite unconventional one(s) that the books offer. Revisiting the second person fiction in the digital era, Ryan North's books explore the limitations of writing the reader as the character and expand the boundaries of second person fiction, the study and evolution of which are the main objectives of this paper.