

Notes on Leaving the Motel by W.D. Snodgrass:

This is an interesting question because the poem "Leaving the Motel," by W.D. Snodgrass, does seem to begin in third person ("Outside the last kids holler..."), but then switches to a checklist of all of the things that must be done before these two lovers can leave their hotel room. The narrator seems to be talking to the his/her lover in the poem.

"Pick up the towels; fold your collar

Out of sight."

The use of "your" switches the point of view to second person. The narrator is thinking through what must be done so that no trace will be left of the lovers' affair. Even though there is obviously love or at least affection there, they have to go back to their lives, pretending that this meeting did not happen.

"And leave behind

Your license number only,

Which they won't care to trace

We've paid. Still should such things get lonely,

Leave in their vase

An aspirin to preserve

Our lilacs..."

Again, the narrator is either thinking through what they ("We've paid"--first person) need to do or is actually telling his/her partner to "leave your license number only" (second person).

It is difficult to know for sure whether the two are actually speaking to one another, or if these are the narrator's thoughts as to the importance of keeping their rendezvous a secret. Snodgrass' narrator seems to be addressing his/her lover throughout this poem, and because of that, most of the poem is written in second person.