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# THOU and YOU in eighteenth-century English plays

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## ABSTRACT

This study is a quantitative and qualitative investigation of the use of THOU and YOU<sup>1</sup> in four tragedies and four comedies written in eighteenth-century Britain<sup>2</sup>. The quantitative study deals with three factors: genre, characters' class and gender. THOU tends to appear very frequently in tragedies, which were often written in verse. While class has a notable influence, gender does not play an important role in the pronoun choice.

The qualitative study of THOU in comedies reveals that THOU is used to mark heightened emotion. In tragedies, THOU can be used as an unmarked pronoun to represent social distance. As in comedies, emotive use of THOU is also seen in tragedies.

One unexpected finding is that the percentage of THOU in the eighteenth-century tragedies in this study is higher than that in Shakespearean plays. These eighteenth-century tragedians sometimes used THOU where Shakespeare did not. My hypothesis is that eighteenth-century dramatists tried to imitate an older style of second person pronoun usage when writing tragedies, but since THOU was no longer a part of their everyday language, they failed to imitate it perfectly and enregistered THOU as a part of theatrical language.

## 1. Introduction

Although THOU is often thought to have fallen out of use in standard eighteenth-century English (e.g. Baugh – Cable 1993: 236-237, Barber et al. 2009: 211), it was employed in specialised ways in drama – an aspect which

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<sup>1</sup> Following Walker (2007), THOU refers to *thou, thee, thy, thine* and *thyself* and YOU refers to singular *you, your, yours* (including *your's*) and *yourself*.

<sup>2</sup> I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr Jane L Hodson for her comments and discussions. I am also indebted to Dr Christine Wallis for her helpful suggestions. All remaining errors and inadequacies are my own.

has not yet been investigated satisfactorily. There are only three major studies of second person pronouns in eighteenth-century plays: Bock (1938), Mitchell (1971), and Walker (1997). Here I give a short description of the latter two works, written in English. Mitchell (1971) undertook a large-scale quantitative study of sixty-two plays in five genres (tragedies, comedies, farce, heroic drama and pantomime) by twenty-nine British playwrights published in the period 1580-1780. With regard to eighteenth-century plays, there are twelve comedies, seven tragedies and four farces in her corpus (1971: 7-11). Her aims are to find out when THOU disappeared from British plays and to get a better overall perspective of the decline of THOU in them (1971: 11-12). She concludes that the decline of THOU became significant in the middle of the sixteenth century and that THOU became virtually extinct in the latter half of the eighteenth century (1971: 99). One of the issues with her method is that she includes *ye* in THOU forms under the name of “old forms” (1971: 11). This is problematic because the decline of *ye* is different from that of THOU (Trudgill 1990: 92-93). Another limitation of Mitchell’s study is that she looks at the figures retrieved from her electronic corpus only, i.e. she did not look into each context.

Walker (1997) carried out quantitative and qualitative analyses on trial proceedings, witness depositions and drama comedies written or recorded in the period 1560-1760 using *The Corpus of English Dialogues* (CED). Although her main focus is “real” speech, i.e. trials and depositions, she gives a detailed analysis of “constructed” speeches in comedies for comparative purposes. Her data reveal that THOU declined over the course of time in all three genres. She uses the sex, age and social rank of the speaker and addressee as extra-linguistic parameters which affect the use of THOU and YOU. Her corpus, however, does not include tragedies, which have quite a different style from comedies (Section 3 and 4.3 of current study).

One important issue is whether the language of plays can be considered as a representation of “real” speech (e.g. Walker 2007). I agree that the language of plays is different from contemporary everyday language. In particular, tragedies demand “a sense of detachment heightened by the use of verse or rhetorical prose” (Hartnoll 1983: 836). Therefore, what is the point of studying such language? Shiina (2005), who studies vocatives in gentry comedies, argues for the validity of studying the language of plays:

The linguistic competence of the playwright and audience is formed by the language in society, and the drama must be based upon such language use to the extent that the audience can understand it. [...]

I would rather maintain that the playwrights construct the characters in their dramatic world based upon the language use in the real world of the period. (Shiina 2005: 86-87)

As she argues, although the language of plays differs from everyday language, it is written to be performed and read by a contemporary audience. Accordingly, the language of the plays still reflects some aspects of the language competence of these contemporary audiences. It should not be considered as a substitute for spoken language in general, but as one individual register/style in eighteenth-century English.

## 2. Methodology and corpus

For this study texts were retrieved from Literature Online (LION). LION was chosen to enable electronic searches. As regards the reliability of LION texts, I compared the first act of each play on LION with the original texts found in ECCO and confirmed that there was no alteration regarding personal pronouns. Prologues, epilogues and songs are excluded from the data because my focus is on the main text. Plural *you* and its variants were excluded by manually checking all of the search results. Singular *ye* is not included either. Plural *you* and *ye* will be discussed in a future study.

My corpus consists of four comedies and four tragedies published in England. I chose four authors and selected two plays by each of them to see whether there was a difference between plays by the same author. The comedy corpus consists of Sir Richard Steele's *The Tender Husband* (1705, hereafter *Tender*) and *The Conscious Lovers* (1723, hereafter *Conscious*), George Colman Elder's *The Jealous Wife* (1761, hereafter *Jealous*) and Colman Elder and David Garrick's *The Clandestine Marriage* (1766, hereafter *Clandestine*). The tragedy corpus consists of George Lillo's *The London Merchant* (1731, hereafter *Merchant*) and *Fatal Curiosity* (1736, hereafter *Fatal*) and John Home's *Douglas* (1756) and *Agis* (1758). The plays were chosen for the following three reasons: year of publication, whether the author published more than one play in the same genre, and length (containing more than 10,000 words). As regards each author's origins, Steele was Irish, Home was Scottish and all of the other authors were English. All the plays were performed in London.

Freedman (2007) points out the differences in usage of THOU and YOU between male playwrights and Aphra Behn in the seventeenth century (further discussion of this issue is in 3.3). I only chose male playwrights for my corpus, so that gender differences would not affect the data. Male rather

than female playwrights were chosen simply because there is a greater number of them and there are more plays to choose from. This does not deny the necessity of studying female authors in the future.

I will compare my results with previous studies on Shakespearean works, when relevant. This is because eighteenth-century plays, especially tragedies, were strongly influenced by Shakespeare. Nicoll describes Shakespeare's popularity as follows: "[t]hat Shakespeare was fully appreciated in the period 1700-1750 requires little proof. The critics looked up to him; [...] Not a season passed but some half a dozen of his plays appeared on the boards of the theatre. The age teems with reminiscences of his characters, his themes and his language" (1925: 67). It is plausible that eighteenth-century playwrights studied the Bard's text and tried to write like him. Another reason for this comparison is that qualitative studies on seventeenth-century and Restoration plays are scarce. It is undeniable that the eighteenth-century English stage was influenced by such plays (Nicoll 1925, 1927); however, it is hard to find a relevant study to compare with my data, while such studies using Shakespearean works are numerous.

This is a pilot study for my ongoing PhD thesis and focuses on qualitative analysis, although quantitative findings are also considered.

### 3. Quantitative analysis

#### 3.1 Overall figures

The percentage of THOU varies drastically in each play, ranging from 0.5% in *Jealous* to 77% in *Agis*, as shown below:

Table 1. THOU and YOU in each play

Year	Title	THOU	YOU	THOU %
1705	<i>The Tender Husband</i>	40	704	5.4%
1723	<i>The Conscious Lovers</i>	36	883	3.9%
1761	<i>The Jealous Wife</i>	6	1262	0.5%
1766	<i>The Clandestine Marriage</i>	14	1026	1.3%
1731	<i>The London Merchant</i>	56	431	11%
1736	<i>Fatal Curiosity</i>	152	159	49%
1756	<i>Douglas</i>	292	116	72%
1758	<i>Agis</i>	288	87	77%

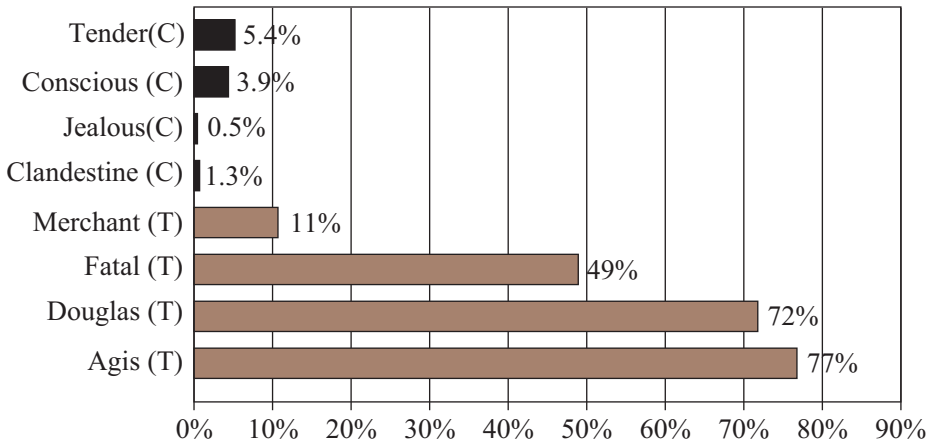


Figure 1. Percentage of THOU and YOU in each play. C represents “comedy” and T represents “tragedy”

One reason for this difference is genre; the first four at the top of the graph are comedies, and the four at the bottom are tragedies. These two genres were written in different styles in the eighteenth century; comedies tended to have a contemporary setting and were written in prose, while tragedies had “an elevated, poetic style with events which depict man as the victim of destiny yet superior to it, both in grandeur and in misery” (Hartnoll 1983: 835).

There is one tragedy with a noticeably low frequency (11%) of THOU, *Merchant*. The difference is even more striking when compared with *Fatal*, a tragedy written by the same author. These two tragedies share many aspects – they were written by the same author, in the same decade, dealing with the middle class in England – but their crucial difference is medium; *Merchant* is written in prose while *Fatal* is in verse. Busse’s study of second person pronouns in Shakespearean works reveals that the majority of Shakespearean plays show a preponderance of THOU in verse and YOU in prose (2002: 66-67). This holds true for my corpus; 89% of all occurrences of THOU appear in verse.

The medium or style of the eighteenth-century plays also seems to be different from that of Shakespeare. While eighteenth-century plays are often written in verse or prose exclusively, Shakespeare employs both media in one play in his tragedies, comedies, and histories. Additionally, some characters in Shakespearean tragedies, such as servants and inn keepers, speak entirely in prose to represent their status (Busse 2002: 65). In contrast, in the three eighteenth-century verse tragedies, all characters, including the

lower-class ones, speak entirely in verse. This might indicate that the style of these tragedies is somewhat different from that of Shakespearean tragedies. I will discuss this point further in 4.3.3.

A comparison of the data with those for Shakespearean tragedies reveals that the tragedies in verse studied in this article contain more THOU than Shakespearean plays. Indeed, the highest percentage of THOU in Shakespearean tragedies is 60% (in *Romeo and Juliet*), far smaller than 77% in *Agis* (Freedman 2007: 18).

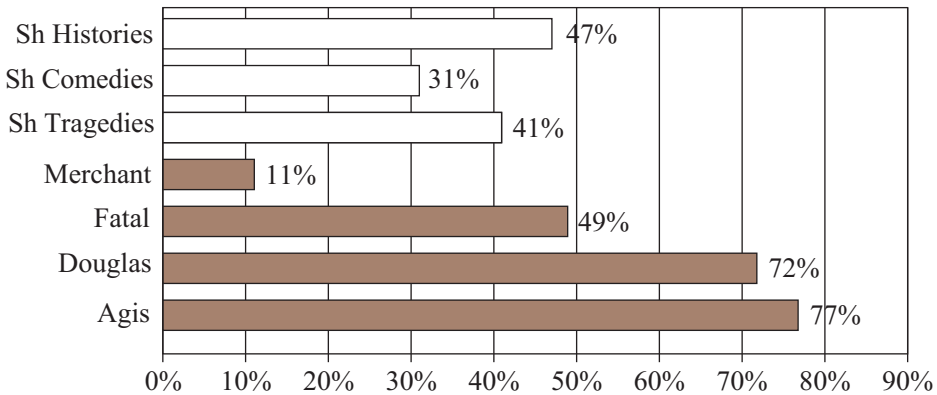


Figure 2. Average percentage of THOU in Shakespearean histories, comedies and tragedies (based on Freedman 2007: 18) and eighteenth-century tragedies in my corpus

This finding does not support the claim that the use of THOU declined in the course of time. In the next section, I investigate reasons for the increase of THOU in these eighteenth-century tragedies, compared with its rarity in contemporary comedies. I focus on two extralinguistic factors which are considered to affect the use of pronouns, i.e. class and gender.

### 3.2 Class

THOU and YOU are thought to reflect the social relationship between interlocutors. Brown – Gilman (1960) argue that “power” (a non-symmetrical relationship between superior and inferior) and “solidarity” (a symmetrical relationship between equals) determine whether a speaker chooses THOU or YOU. Walker shows that power based on social rank, especially between the top and bottom sections of the social hierarchy, influences the choice of pronoun in her corpus (2007: 186, 294).

### 3.2.1 Classification of status and class

My classification of class and status follows Shiina (2005) and Walker (2007), both of whom include eighteenth-century comedies in their corpora. However, I have simplified their categories into four: upper, upper-middle, middle and lower (Table 2). Some texts under discussion deal with ancient and/or foreign settings, but I have tried to assign the same role system to them to allow comparison of my results with those of other works (cf. Byrne 1937: 146-158). It can be hypothesised that playwrights may have assigned some contemporary style of talking according to the characters' status rather than creating completely new styles and classes for their ancient plays. To take an example from *Agis*, a story of ancient Sparta, the actual relationship between the king and his soldiers would be different from that in England, but here I try to put characters into a roughly equivalent category, such as Greek emperor as Upper and Greek citizens as Middle.

Table 2. Classes and categories in eighteenth-century plays

Category	Subcategory	Description of subcategory	Example
Upper	U1	nobility	royalty, duke, baron, feudal lord
	U2	knights and baronets ( <i>Sir</i> )	knight, baronet
Upper-middle	UM	gentry	gentry
Middle	M1	wealthy merchants and those in profession	retailer, clergyman, medical doctor, citizen, military officer
	M2	craftsmen and farmers	weaver, tailor, blacksmith, innkeeper
Lower	L1	servants	servant, labourer, chambermaid
	L2	unemployed and criminals	whore, thief, unemployed

Although aristocrats (Upper) and gentry (Upper-Middle) are similar in the point that they earn income not by manual labour but by land ownership (Walker 2007: 25), there is a clear difference between gentry and the other groups, e.g. in the use of address terms such as “your lordship” and “your highness” to the former.



Because this analysis of class focuses particularly on interpersonal dynamics, non-human subjects such as *God* and addresses to the speaker him/herself are excluded from the data. These will be treated in a future study.

### 3.2.2 Analysis

#### 3.2.2.1 Comedies

When we look at the relationships between the speaker and the hearer, the most notable relationship is that of superior to inferior (bars in white in Figure 3).

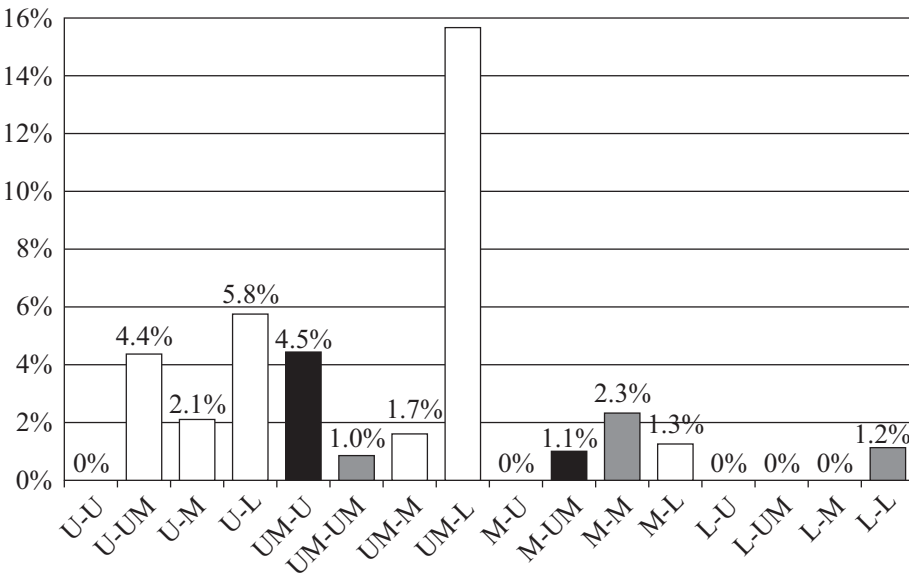


Figure 3. Average percentage of THOU to YOU in each class in comedies. The pattern of each bar represents the difference in power: superior to inferior (white); between equals (grey); inferior to superior (black). U stands for the upper class, UM stands for the upper-middle class, M stands for the middle class and L stands for the lower class. (see Appendix 1 for raw data)

All of the categories in which the speaker’s class is higher than that of the hearer have at least one example. Among such relationships, the category “from an upper-middle class character to a lower-class character” (UM-L) is much more frequent than others (15.7%). This is because of *Tender*, in which

half of the second person pronouns in this category (UM-L) are THOU (8× out of 17×; 47%). None of the other comedies include THOU in this category. In *Tender*, all of the occurrences of THOU from an upper-class character to a lower-class character are from a master/mistress (Mr and Mrs Clerimont) to their servant (Jenny). Mr Clerimont addresses Jenny with THOU when revealing his love to her:

- (1) Well, Jenny, you topp'd your part, indeed --- Come to my Arms thou ready willing fair one --- Thou hast no Vanities, no Niceties; but art thankful for every Instant of Love that I bestow on thee --- (*Tender* 5.1, emphasis added)

Mrs Clerimont uses THOU when she shows a patronising behaviour to her maid, complimenting her in spite of her "Englishness":

- (2) Jenny: I am beholden to your Ladiship, for believing so well of the Maid Servants in England.  
Mrs Cler.: Indeed, Jenny, I could wish thou wer't really French; for thou art plain English in spite of Example --- (*Tender* 3.1, emphasis added)

Walker points out that in comedies from the period 1720-1760, servants are sometimes addressed with THOU by their masters and mistresses, prompted by an element of positive emotion or negative feeling (2007: 229)<sup>3</sup>. This seems to be applicable to the use of THOU in *Tender*, and the usage seen here is patronising and affectionate.

As regards addresses between equals, THOU is used most frequently among upper-middle class and middle-class characters. The speakers' relationships are either those of family members, or lovers. It seems THOU is used to represent special relationships between characters rather than showing their class or equality. In contrast, Walker shows that the lower-class is most likely to exchange mutual THOU in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Walker 2007: 185). In my data, however, such mutual use of THOU is quite rare and only found in *Conscious* (6×).

<sup>3</sup> Walker could not gain enough data to draw conclusions about lower-class characters addressed with THOU in the period 1680-1719, when *Tender* was written (1705) (2007: 226). In her data the most common personal pronoun used in such a relationship is YOU.

There are a few occurrences of THOU addressed from inferior to superior. However, these occurrences should be treated with caution, for all of them occur in special relationships not based on class and their contexts require investigation. There is only one character who uses THOU to her superior: an upper-middle-class girl called Niece to her upper-class cousin Humphry (*Tender*). At first sight, this seems to represent the closeness of the two ranks (Walker 2007: 186). However, when examined closely, it is revealed that Niece is performing a role-play;

- (3) Niece: If thou hast yet learn'd the use of Language, Speak Monster.  
 Humph.: How long have you been thus?  
 Niece: Thus? What wouldst thou say.  
 Humph.: What's the cause of it.

(*Tender* 3.2, emphasis added)

In the above quotations, Niece identifies herself as a heroine of a romance (*Valentine and Orson*) and Humphry as the savage man in the story. Judging from Humphry's responses, this is not her usual way of talking. Her use of THOU here represents not intimacy, but the archaic style of romance. As regards the use of THOU from a middle-class character to an upper-class character, the former mistakes the latter as somebody else of the same rank. These cases suggest that in-depth analysis is needed to identify the usage in irregular cases, rather than accepting the numbers of tokens only.

### 3.2.2.2 Tragedies

An unexpected result occurs in tragedies when the hearer's class is taken into consideration (Figure 4). Considering the difference of power, it is rather surprising that there are occurrences of THOU used by a lower-class character to an upper-class character (L-U, 25%). However, these 'unusual' occurrences need to be treated with caution, for some of them are not chosen based on class system, as in the data in comedies. Out of 21 occurrences of THOU (see Appendix 1 for the number of occurrences), about half (12×) of them occur in a relationship more complicated than the simple class system. In *Douglas* the speaker is an old shepherd named Norval and the hearer is a young lord named Douglas. Although their statuses are lord and subject, Norval has brought up Douglas as his son 'Young Norval' to keep him from assassination. His true identity is revealed in the middle of the play, and Norval begins to treat him as his master, not as his son. However, their bond as family is still strong, as the following scene shows:

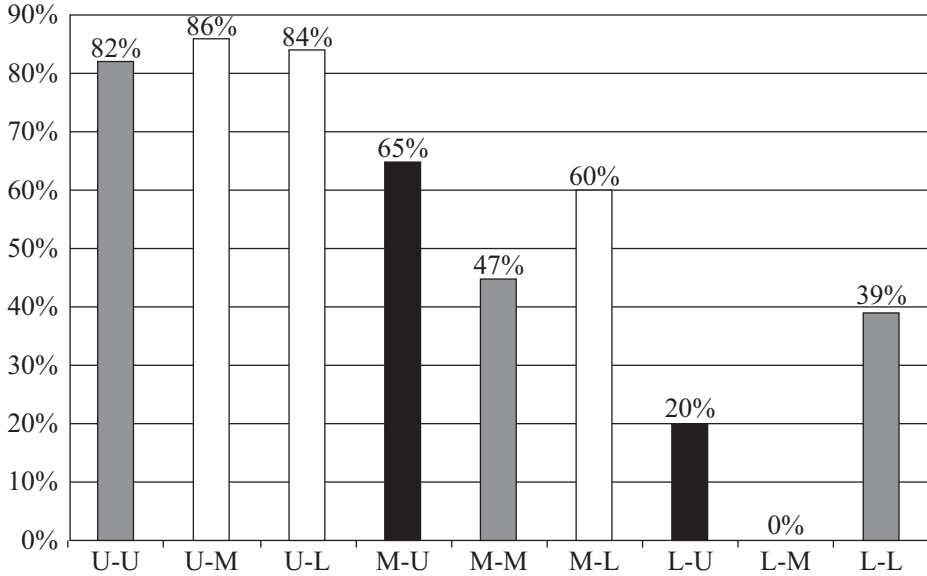


Figure 4. Average percentage of THOU in each class in tragedies. The pattern of each bar represents the difference of power: superior to inferior (white); between equals (grey); inferior to superior (black). U stands for the upper class, M stands for the middle class, and L stands for the lower class

- (4) Norval: Forgive, forgive,  
 Canst thou forgive the man, the selfish man,  
 Who bred Sir Malcolm's heir a shepherd's son.  
 Douglas: Kneel not to me: thou art my father still:  
 Thy wish'd-for presence now compleats my joy. [...]  
 Norval: And dost thou call me father? O my son!  
 (*Douglas* 5.1, emphasis added)

The first THOU by Norval is a representation of his fatherly affection as well as strong emotion. Even after learning the truth, Douglas still treats Norval as his father, although retaining the difference of status by using THOU. Then Norval addresses him with THOU as his son. Therefore Norval's use of THOU to Douglas should be considered not as an representation of class difference but as a special case of family relationship.

Other uses of THOU from lower-class characters to upper-class ones are: negative feeling towards an upper-class character (3×); a servant to her mistress (1×); positive feeling towards a noble character (5×); I will look into some of these more closely in Section 4.3.

### 3.3 Gender

I study gender as a second factor determining the use of *THOU* and *YOU* according to Walker (2007). Her hypothesis is that “[i]f *THOU* is used to inferiors, then women, who in Early Modern England were considered subordinate to men, might be more likely than men to be addressed with this pronoun” (2007: 72).

The median of the percentage of *THOU* is shown in Table 3. As in 3.2, addresses to non-human subjects and the speaker are excluded, so as to concentrate on interpersonal relationships.

Table 3. *THOU* and the gender of speakers / hearers in eighteenth-century plays

speaker	hearer	tragedies	comedies
female	female	27.7%	2.3%
female	male	57.7%	4.7%
male	female	42.6%	4.2%
male	male	52.0%	2.5%

In comedies, the percentage of *THOU* is very low in general and there is no outstanding difference between each category. *THOU* is mostly used to show positive emotion regardless of gender, except for one example showing irritation or anger between male characters in *Clandestine* (*Clandestine* 4.2).

In the tragedies, the category which has the lowest percentage of *THOU* is between female characters. This might be because women are associated with “more polite” ways of talking, i.e. *YOU* (cf. Walker 2007: 5). Another possible reason is that all the writers in my corpus are male (Section 2). They might have imagined that women spoke more politely than they did. Freedman points out the different usage of *THOU* in Aphra Behn’s plays and in those of her contemporary male authors:

Playwrights may not always accurately represent the usage of their time if they venture into social milieux outside their own experience: when Barber (1976) drew conclusions about the speech of smart London society in the mid-seventeenth century based on a survey of Restoration comedies, he found that though male friends could use *T* [= *THOU*] to one another, *V* [= *YOU*] was the pronoun of choice for women, even if they were close friends or sisters. In the plays of Aphra Behn, however, close female friends, sisters and cousins frequently

slip into T when they are alone together [...]. It seems that, [...] male playwrights extrapolated from women's public behaviour and drew the wrong inference. (Freedman 2007: 4)

Since there are scenes in which only women are present, e.g. a servant-maid and her mistress in her dressing room, there is a possibility that representations of women's speeches in such scenes might not be accurate.

Walker's hypothesis that women, being subordinate to men, receive more (and give less) THOU than men, does not seem to hold good for my data; the category "from female to male characters" shows the second highest rate of THOU in tragedies. This result might be influenced by the class of female characters; upper-class female characters tend to use THOU to their subordinates regardless of their gender. Most occurrences of THOU are uttered by Lady Randolph in *Douglas*, who is the wife of a lord and has the second strongest power in the play. Unlike in Shakespearean plays, in which upper-class couples exchange YOU (Stein 2003: 277), she exchanges THOU with her husband.

From the above discussions, it can be concluded that the genre of a play and the class and gender of characters play a vital role in the use of second person pronouns in eighteenth-century plays. However, it should be noted that the patterns of occurrences vary greatly from play to play.

## 4. Qualitative analysis

### 4.1 Introduction

In this section I will look more closely at the characteristic uses of THOU and YOU in each play. The use of personal pronouns can be influenced not only by class and gender, as we have seen in 3.2 and 3.3, but also by a speaker's emotion. I will deal first with comedies, followed by tragedies.

Bruti (2000) claims that there are two axes determining personal pronouns. One is social distance, or power difference, as Brown – Gilman (1960) suggest (Figure 5). The second axis is emotional attitude (Figure 6). When the speaker's emotion is neutral, YOU tends to be used, with THOU reserved for heightened emotion, either in a negative way (e.g. scorn and anger) or in a positive way (e.g. affection). These two axes are not always compatible with each other, so sometimes one of them is stronger than the other.

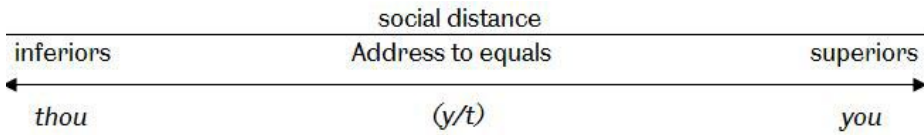


Figure 5. The axis of social distance (Bruti 2000: 35)

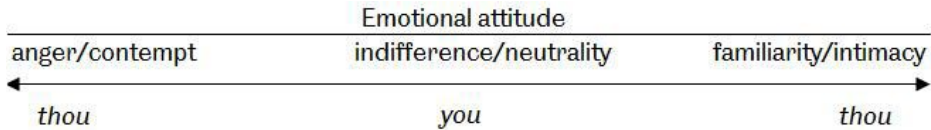


Figure 6. The axis of emotional attitude (Bruti 2000: 35)

## 4.2 Comedies

THOU is apparently a marked form in comedies, accounting for only 2.8% on average in my corpus. The main use of THOU in comedy is to signal a climax or heightened emotion. Its appearance is ephemeral; in other words, characters switch from THOU to YOU very rapidly. Hope presumes that such rapid shift of pronouns is due to micro-pragmatic factors: “[p]resumably conversations tend to begin with socially pragmatic usages, and move on into non-socially pragmatic usages once a context has been established” (1994: 147). Here is an example of quick change from THOU to YOU, taken from *Jealous*:

- (5) [*Oakly is talking to his wife Mrs Oakly, who is in a violent fit after reading a letter and mistakenly believing he is having an extramarital relationship. He tries to soothe her and clarify her misunderstanding.*]

Oakly: Nay, never make Thyself so uneasy, my Dear --- Come, come, you know I love You. Nay, nay, You shall be convinced.

Mrs Oakly: I know You hate Me; and that your Unkindness and Barbarity will be the Death of Me.

Oakly: Do not vex Yourself at this Rate --- I love You most passionately --- Indeed I do --- This must be some Mistake.

Mrs. Oakly: O, I am an unhappy Woman!

Oakly: Dry up thy Tears, my Love, and be comforted! --- You will find that I am not to blame in this Matter --- Come, let Me see this Letter, --- Nay, you shall not deny Me. [...]

'Tis a Clerk-like Hand, indeed! A good round Text! And  
was certainly never penned by a fair Lady.

Mrs Oakly: Ay, laugh at Me, do!

Oakly: Forgive Me, my Love, I did not mean to laugh at Thee

---

(*Jealous* 1.1, emphasis added)

At the opening of his speech, Oakly resorts to the emotional and affectionate pronoun *THOU* to comfort his wife, combining it with an address of endearment "my Dear". Soon after finishing the first sentence he switches to *YOU*, his unmarked pronoun to his wife. He resorts to *THOU* with endearment two more times when seeing his wife in a violent passion, represented by an exclamation mark. The use of *THOU* does not seem to be an everyday option in eighteenth-century comedies by this time.

### 4.3 Tragedies

#### 4.3.1 Social distance

Generally speaking, there are three factors which prompt the use of *THOU* in tragedies: aside and soliloquy, social distance, and emotion (see also Nonomiya 2013). The latter two factors (i.e. social distance and emotion), can be explained through markedness theory. According to Stein's definition,

The unmarked form corresponds to socially norm-governed use; in a given contact it is the usual, default signal of relationships. [...] It represents the logical and semiotic precondition for its very semiotic exploitation in marked, emotionally charged uses. (Stein 2003: 252)

The following is an example of unmarked *THOU* based on social distance:

(6) [*Anna is Lady Randolph's chambermaid.*]

Anna: Have I distress'd you with officious love,  
And ill-tim'd mention of your brother's fate?  
Forgive me, Lady: [...]

Lady R.: What power directed thy unconscious tongue  
To speak as thou hast done?

(*Douglas* 1.1, emphasis added)



Obviously, Lady Randolph has more power than her chambermaid Anna. Lady Randolph uses THOU to Anna most of the time in the play, while Anna almost always addresses Lady Randolph with YOU, sometimes using address terms of deferential address such as “(my) lady”.

Although THOU is generally used to those socially inferior to the speaker, this pronoun is also used to God and other supernatural beings (Beal 2004: 70). There is one deviation of THOU used by a lower-class character to an upper-class character, which invokes an image of a celestial being:

- (7) *[A shepherd is caught by servants of the lord of the land. The wife of the lord comes to him, so he starts begging her to save him.]*  
 Heav'n bless that countenance, so sweet and mild!  
 A judge like thee makes innocence more bold.  
 O save me, Lady! from these cruel men,  
 Who have attack'd and seiz'd me; who accuse  
 Me of intended murder.

(*Douglas* 3.1, emphasis added)

The shepherd's use of THOU maximises, rather than diminish, the power difference by elevating the lady's position to a heavenly being, using the pronoun for God THOU. This is also an example of using another “style” or “register” to make speech more effective. I will discuss the issue of styles further in 4.3.3.

#### 4.3.2 Emotion

Another use of THOU is emotive, as in comedies (4.2). This kind of THOU is often seen in the climax of plays. I present one example from the last act of *Merchant*:

- (8) *[Barnwell is waiting for his execution in a cell. His best friend, Trueman, visits him to comfort him.]*  
 Trueman: What have I suffer'd since I saw you last? [...] --- But oh! to see thee thus!  
 Barnwell: I know it is dreadful! I feel the Anguish of thy generous Soul, --- but I was born to murder all who love me.  
 Trueman: I came not to reproach you; --- I thought to bring you Comfort, --- but I'm deceiv'd, for I have none to give; --- I came to share thy Sorrow, but cannot bear my own.

(*Merchant* 5.5, emphasis added)

Barnwell and Trueman, being fellow apprentices, usually exchange YOU. In this sorrowful scene, however, they often fall into THOU to express their strong anguish and sorrow. Their use of THOU might result from the fact that they know that Barnwell will die soon. Hope, in a study of seventeenth-century depositions, points out that deathbed scenes often seem to evoke emotive use of THOU (1993: 86). The appearance of THOU is ephemeral and the speakers switch to YOU very quickly, as with THOU in the comedies.

Another typical case of heightened emotion is contempt. When a lower-class character is angry with an upper-class character, THOU is used, overriding the difference in power. Freedman points out that Isabella in *Measure for Measure* and Emilia in *Othello* use THOU to their superiors, Angelo and Othello respectively, out of “moral outrage” (2007: 101, 147)<sup>4</sup>. Below is one such example of anger in my corpus:

- (9) [A shepherd is condemning the feudal lord who killed his son.]  
 I fear thee not. I will not go.  
 Here I'll remain. I'm an accomplice, Lord,  
 With thee in murder.

(*Douglas* 5.1, emphasis added)

Judging from the use of the deferential address term “Lord”, the speaker seems to be aware of the difference in social status. However, his anger and sorrow are so strong that he cannot help using the pronoun of contempt THOU. His attitude is strongly shown in the first line, “I fear thee not”.

#### 4.3.3 Eighteenth-century tragedians and Shakespeare

Although Shakespeare had a strong influence on eighteenth-century dramatists (Section 2), there seem to be differences between Shakespeare's use of THOU and that of the eighteenth-century tragedians in this study. The latter use THOU more frequently than Shakespeare, as we have seen in 3.1. A qualitative study on the contexts in which THOU occurs reveals that eighteenth-century playwrights, especially Home, use THOU where Shakespeare did not employ it, such as in a conversation between higher-rank couples (3.3; cf. Stein 2003). Another example is a maid-servant switching from YOU to THOU when talking to her mistress:

<sup>4</sup> This kind of overriding might be seen only in plays. Walker (2007) shows that in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century trials and depositions, lower class people did not use thou to their superiors, even when expressing anger. Nevertheless, this overriding of social difference does occur in contemporary comedies.

(10) [Anna, a chambermaid of Lady Randolph, chides her mistress for indulging in her sorrow.]

Anna: Forgive the rashness of your Anna's love:  
 [...] And warn you of the hours that you neglect,  
 And lose in sadness.

Lady R.: So to lose my hours  
 Is all the use I wish to make of time.

Anna: To blame thee, Lady, suits not with my state:  
 But sure I am, since death first prey'd on man,  
 Never did sister thus a brother mourn.  
 What had your sorrows been if you had lost,  
 In early youth, the husband of your heart?

(*Douglas* 1.1, emphasis added)

On the one hand, it is possible to consider this THOU as a representation of strong bond and heightened emotion. Culpeper – Archer, who study requests in trials and plays in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, point out that there can be a special, intimate relationship between a mistress and her female-servant, “in which the normal power asymmetries were suspended” (2008: 68).

On the other hand, Anna's use of THOU is rather irregular when compared with that in Shakespearean works, where several studies show that it is very rare for maid-servants to use THOU to their mistresses. Byrne points out that “[i]n Shakespeare, one among these ladies-in-waiting usually stands out in the position of intimate companion and confidante to her mistress, in which case she is addressed by her Lady with the affectionate, confidential *thou*, though she ever returns the respectful *you*” (1936: 151). To take a few examples from individual works, Nerissa in *The Merchant of Venice* addresses her mistress Portia with YOU only (Freedman 2007: 75) and Emilia in *Othello* never addresses her mistress Desdemona with THOU except when the latter is dead (Mazzon 2003: 234). I surveyed female servants' use of THOU to their mistress using Open Source Shakespeare (24 characters in 17 plays; see Appendix II for the full list of characters) and found only two characters using THOU; Charmian in *Antony and Cleopatra* addresses Cleopatra with THOU when the latter's life is in danger (5.2.3427, Open Source Shakespeare); the nurse in *Romeo and Juliet* uses THOU to Juliet (1.3.451-452, Open Source Shakespeare), as “*thou* of intimate privilege for her young charge” (Byrne 1936: 153). As a whole, in Shakespearean plays maidservants use THOU to their (adult) mistress only on very special occasions. Considering that Anna's

THOU in the above quotation represents heightened emotion but not in an emergency, this use of THOU is, at least, different from Shakespeare's usage.

It is impossible to draw any general conclusions from small samples, but I would still attempt to offer a hypothesis. The use of THOU had changed since Shakespeare's time, and the use by the authors in my study had become more simplified. Although the eighteenth-century playwrights in this study retained some traits of the older use of THOU, such as a representation of heightened emotion, they might be less subtle about the contexts or relationships between interlocutors in which it could occur. Considering that, by then, THOU had almost fallen out of use in standard everyday English, they had to learn how to use it through written sources from previous times, such as Shakespearean works. They could learn some characteristics of THOU by doing so, but they failed to learn the whole system of THOU and YOU in plays and formed their own style of using THOU.

## 5. Conclusion

Although THOU was falling out of use in eighteenth-century standard everyday English, it still played an important role in the eighteenth-century plays in this study. THOU has a significant presence, especially in the tragedies, and at first sight there seems to be little change from Shakespeare's time. However, when each occurrence is considered/examined closely, there seem to be changes in the environments where THOU can occur. I suggest that this change is a part of "enregisterment" and "deregisterment". Enregisterment is "processes through which a linguistic repertoire becomes differentiable within a language as a socially recognised register of forms" (Agha 2003: 231). In other words, some features of one variety (pronunciation, lexical items etc.) can be put into a certain register and considered to belong to it, i.e. 'enregistered' into one register. Enregistered features do not always stay enregistered forever, and they need to be replicable so that they can be disseminated and noticed (Agha 2004: 27). Sometimes enregistered features become 'deregistered', in other words, lose their connection to the previously linked register (Williams 2012). For example, certain phonetic features of 'Pittsburghese', according to Johnstone et al., used to be associated with the working class, but they were deregistered or 'semiotically de-linked from' class, and enregistered as a regional dialect, 'Pittsburghese' (2006: 95). I hypothesise that a similar process occurred to the use of THOU. THOU was originally used as a marker of social distance, intimacy and strong emotion, at least in Shakespeare's times. In the eighteenth-century plays in this study, THOU as a marker of

power and social distance was undergoing a process of “deregisterment”. It lost its position as an optional personal pronoun. Instead, it was enregistered as a constituent of theatrical language. This is represented differently in comedies and in tragedies. In comedies, THOU is used as a representation of very strong emotions, but speakers change to YOU quickly, even in the same sentence. In tragedies, THOU appears quite frequently to create an archaic, grave style – even more often than in Shakespearean plays.

Although this study has dealt with only a few samples from eighteenth-century plays, it has shown variation both in plays as well as in genres. Needless to say, further study is needed, but careful qualitative analysis of the environments where THOU occurs is especially important.

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## APPENDIX 1

The raw figures of THOU and YOU according to class or genders

Table 4. THOU and YOU in each class in comedies

	THOU	YOU
U-U	0	199
U-UM	10	279
U-M	12	326
U-L	12	90
UM-U	16	265
UM-UM	10	1044
UM-M	2	58
UM-L	8	59
M-U	0	241
M-M	10	554
M-L	1	70
L-U	0	140
L-UM	0	50
L-M	0	58
L-L	6	228

Table 5. THOU and YOU in each class in tragedies

	THOU	YOU
U-U	182	40
U-M	31	5
U-L	106	20
M-U	36	19
M-M	352	534
M-L	43	26
L-U	21	62
L-M	0	87
L-L	3	10



Table 6. THOU and YOU and the gender of speakers in comedies

	THOU	YOU
Female-Female	12	480
Female-Male	23	809
Male-Female	28	837
Male-Male	30	1485

Table 7. THOU and YOU and the gender of speakers in tragedies

	THOU	YOU
Female-Female	39	102
Female-Male	278	204
Male-Female	133	179
Male-Male	292	298

## APPENDIX 2

Table 8. Female characters attending another woman in Shakespearean works

Works	Characters
<i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>	Charmian, Iras
<i>The Comedy of Errors</i>	Luce
<i>Coriolanus</i>	gentlewoman
<i>Cymbeline</i>	Lady
<i>Henry V</i>	Alice
<i>Henry VIII</i>	Anne Bullen, Patience
<i>Love's Labour's Lost</i>	Lady Rosaline, Lady Maria, Lady Katharine, Boyet
<i>Macbeth</i>	gentlewoman
<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	Nerissa
<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>	Margaret, Ursula
<i>Othello</i>	Emilia
<i>Pericles</i>	Lychorida
<i>Richard II</i>	Lady (attending on the Queen)
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	nurse
<i>Twelfth Night</i>	Maria
<i>Two Gentlemen in Verona</i>	Lucetta
<i>Winter's Tale</i>	Emilia, Paulina