

What Happens When a Word Is Falling Out of Use? A Case Study on THOU and YOU in Henry Fielding's Plays

Ayumi Nonomiya
(School of English)

Introduction

One of the most significant changes in the history of the English language is the decline in the variety of second-person pronouns.¹ Numerous studies have been done on the use of second-person pronouns in the periods in which both THOU and YOU were used frequently, especially in Shakespearean works.² However, THOU and YOU in Late Modern English (1700-1900), the time when THOU had almost disappeared, are rather neglected. There are only three studies including eighteenth-century dramas in their corpora: those of Bock, Mitchell, and Walker.³ Moreover, those studies are inadequate for revealing the whole perspective of second-person pronouns in the eighteenth century. This study will show that THOU in the eighteenth century was largely disappearing, though it managed to survive in a very specific and narrow field. The research question is specifically focussed on the relationships between the use of pronouns and genre of the plays.

History of Second-Person Pronoun System

In the Old English period (800-1100), English had both a second-person

¹ Reymond Hickey, 'Rectifying a Standard Deficiency: Second-person Pronominal Distinctions in Varieties of English', in *Diachronic Perspectives on Address Term Systems*, ed. by Irma Taavitsainen and Andreas H. Jucker (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2002), pp. 343-374 (p. 343).

² THOU refers to *thou, thee, thy, thine* and *thyself* and YOU refers to singular *you, your, yours* and *yourself*.

³ Martin Bock, 'Der stilistische Gebrauch des englischen Personalpronomens der 2. Person im volkstümlichen Dialog der älteren englischen Komödie' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Innsbruck, 1938); Eleanor Rettig Mitchell, 'Pronouns of Address in English, 1580-1780: A Study of Form Changes as Reflected in British Drama' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Texas Agricultural and Mining University, 1971); Terry Walker, *Thou and You in Early Modern English Dialogues* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2007).

singular pronoun *þu* (=thou) and a second-person plural pronoun *ge* (=ye/you).⁴ The plural pronoun *ge* was not used as a polite form of address for individuals in this period.

The use of YOU as a second-person singular pronoun can be found from the thirteenth century onward, perhaps due to the influence of Latin,⁵ but it was not until the Late Middle English period (1300-1500) that the use of YOU for a single person had been firmly established and THOU had become non-neutral. Lass states that ‘starting in the late fourteenth century, and increasing into the seventeenth, *you* gradually becomes the neutral term of singular address, with *thou* increasingly marked by affectivity’.⁶

In the Early Modern English period (1500-1700), THOU was a clearly marked form and used mainly for two purposes:⁷ ‘(i) marking asymmetrical (permanent or temporary) status relations; and (ii), as a general indicator of heightened emotional tone, intimacy, etc’.⁸ Although being marked, THOU was not disappearing yet at this stage. Ulrich Busse shows that the overall ratio of THOU and YOU in Shakespearean plays is 0.7:1. The pronouns are used with differing frequencies in different genres: THOU appears more frequently in historical plays while YOU is more frequently used in comedies.⁹

⁴ Richard Milne Hogg, ‘Phonology and Morphology’, in *The Cambridge History of the English Language. Vol. I: The Beginning to 1066*, ed. by Richard M. Hogg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 67-167 (p. 144).

⁵ Sister St. Geraldine Byrne, *Shakespeare’s Use of the Pronoun of Address; Its Significance in Characterization and Motivation* (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1936), p. xiv.

⁶ Roger Lass, ‘Phonology and Morphology’, in *The Cambridge History of the English Language. Vol. III: 1476 to 1776*, ed. by Roger Lass (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 56-186 (p. 150).

⁷ For the discussion of markedness, see Randolph Quirk, ‘English Language and the Structural Approach’, in *The Teaching of English*, ed. by Randolph Quirk and Albert Hugh Smith (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 6-35 (p. 31).

⁸ Lass, p. 149.

⁹ Ulrich Busse, *Linguistic Variation in the Shakespeare Corpus: Morpho-Syntactic Variability of Second Person Pronouns* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2002), p. 283.

TABLE 1: SECOND-PERSON PRONOUN CHANGES (S = SINGULAR, P = PLURAL, FAM = FAMILIAR, POL = POLITE, NOM = NOMINATIVE, ACC = ACCUSATIVE)¹⁰

OE AND EARLY ME			LATE ME (1400)			EMODE (1650)			MODE	
S	NOM	<i>þU</i>	FAM	NOM	<i>THOU</i>	S	NOM	<i>YOU (THOU)</i>	S	<i>YOU</i>
	ACC/DAT	<i>þE(C)</i>		ACC	<i>THEE</i>		ACC	<i>YOU (THEE)</i>		
P	NOM	<i>GE</i>	POL	NOM	<i>YEE</i>	P	NOM	<i>YOU</i>	P	<i>YOU (ALL)</i>
	ACC/DAT	<i>EW(O)IC</i>		ACC	<i>YOU</i>		ACC	<i>YOU</i>		

In the Late Modern period (1700-1900), the use of THOU became even rarer than in the previous period:

[t]hroughout the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, *thou* continued to be used in increasingly restricted contexts, at least in Standard English.¹¹ Apart from the usage of Quakers, [...] the use of *thou/thee* was mainly confined to religious and poetic usage.¹²

THOU still survives in dialects, although it has been driven into the verge of extinction in many non-standard varieties. Peter Trudgill points out that some dialects in the UK retain the distinction between THOU and YOU but most dialects are losing or have lost it.¹³ Joan C. Beal points out that THOU was still heard in Sheffield in 1981:

The Sheffield example [...] shows that the use of *thee/thou* was already a stereotype: the speaker is not using these pronouns, but citing them as typical ‘South Yorkshire’. Indeed, in the Sheffield area a verbal form *thee-ing and tha-ing* (cf. French *tutoyer*) is used to describe this usage [...] This implies that, just as in most European languages and in earlier English, use of *thee/thou* is

¹⁰ Elly van Gelderen, *A History of the English Language* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2006), p. 167.

¹¹ Peter Trudgill defines Standard English as follows: ‘Standard English is that variety of English which is usually used in print, and which is normally taught in schools and to non-native speakers learning the language. It is also the variety which is normally spoken by educated people and used in news broadcasts and other similar situations’. Peter Trudgill, *Sociolinguistics: An Introduction to Language and Society*. 4th edn (London: Penguin, 2000), pp. 5-6.

¹² Joan C. Beal, *English in Modern Times: 1700-1945* (London: Arnold, 2004), p. 70.

¹³ Peter Trudgill, *Sociolinguistics*, p. 92.

socially marked and inappropriate use can offend.¹⁴

Literature Overview

As indicated above, there are three major studies dealing with the use of THOU and YOU IN eighteenth-century plays. I introduce the two studies written in English, and explore the possibilities for further research.

Eleanor Rettig Mitchell studies sixty-two dramas of five genres (tragedy, comedy, farce, heroic drama and pantomime) by twenty-nine playwrights published in the period 1580-1780. She collected and analysed her data using a computer programme. She found that the mid-sixteenth century is the time when the decline of THOU became significant and that 'between 1730-1780 *th[ou]* forms dropped to less than 10% of the total occurrences of the pronoun of address'.¹⁵ Mitchell's method is often problematic, most notably since she includes *ye* in THOU forms under the name of 'old forms'.¹⁶ This limits the usefulness of the data because the decline and the geographical distribution of *ye* are different from those of THOU.¹⁷ Another problem is that her study lacks qualitative analysis. As one of her aims is to show the computer method she used for data collection, she utilises the figures retrieved from it only; that is, she examines the quantitative data without microanalysis. Therefore, qualitative approaches, especially new approaches such as historical pragmatics which emerged after Mitchell's study, are required.

Terry Walker carried out qualitative microanalysis as well as quantitative studies on trial proceedings, witness depositions and drama comedies written or recorded in the period 1560-1760. She uses the sex, age and social rank of the speaker

¹⁴ Joan C. Beal, *An Introduction to Regional Englishes* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 41.

¹⁵ Mitchell, p. 99.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁷ Peter Trudgill, *The Dialect of England*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), pp. 92-93.

and addressee as extra-linguistic factors and explains minutely how she determines these factors in her corpus. The results show that use of THOU declines in all of the three genres. Among the three parameters, sex and social rank play an important role, but age has a visible effect only in comedies. Although Walker makes interesting points about dramas, her primary focus is trials and depositions, and she includes only five comedies written in the eighteenth century, some of which are only a part of an entire play.¹⁸ Nonetheless, when we take a closer look at the data within eighteenth-century plays, we can see that there are differences between genres as well as each play. Consequently, studies with a larger and more balanced corpus are needed.

In conclusion, the intention of this paper is to combine these two studies by doing quantitative research and using a larger scale corpus. This would consist of using complete (not partial) dramas and making use of Walker's qualitative analysis to explore the context of each instance of THOU and YOU.

Methodology and Corpus

As a pilot study I included the following six plays in my corpus:

The Covent-Garden Tragedy by Henry Fielding (1732): hereafter
Covent

The Modern Husband by Henry Fielding (1732): hereafter *Modern*

The Author's Farce by Henry Fielding (1734): hereafter *AF*

The Tragedy of Tragedies by Henry Fielding (1737): hereafter *Tr*

The Beggar's Opera by John Gay (1728): hereafter *Beggar*

The Conscious Lovers by Richard Steele (1722): hereafter
Conscious

I chose Henry Fielding as my main author for the following two reasons. Firstly, his career as a dramatist lasted only nine years, from 1728 to 1737. This means that it is

¹⁸ Walker, p. 173.

unlikely that his English changed much in the course of his short career. Secondly, he wrote three genres of plays: comedies, (mock-)tragedies and farces. This suits my aim of comparing the style in each genre. I chose two (mock-)tragedies (*Covent* and *Tr*); one farce (*AF*); and one comedy (*Modern*) to represent each genre. I included two comedies, *Beggar* and *Conscious*, for comparison; most of the characters of *Covent* and *Beggar* belong to a lower social class while *Conscious* and *Modern* have a similar setting. I chose male dramatists only so that the genders of the authors do not influence the data; I would need a larger corpus to make a comparison between male authors' and female authors' usage, which is beyond the scope of this study. Nonetheless, it is worth noting an interesting observation made by Penelope Freedman with respect to gendered use of THOU and YOU. She claims that female characters never use THOU to one another in Restoration plays written by male authors, but that women do use THOU to close female friends and family members in Aphra Behn's *The Rover*.¹⁹

The play texts have been retrieved from the Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO) database. The earliest texts available were chosen, to avoid changes made in the use of THOU and YOU in later editions for the benefit of modern audiences. All instances of the plural YOU in each text were recorded manually and individually. This study focuses on dialogues; that is, interactions of characters, to see the pragmatic and sociolinguistic influences, such as emotion and relationship. Consequently, texts not written as interactions between characters, that is, prologues, epilogues, and airs, are excluded from the corpus. The data were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively.

¹⁹ Penelope Freedman, *Power and Passion in Shakespeare's Pronoun* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p. 4.

THOU and YOU in Eighteenth-Century Plays: Analysis

Macro-Analysis of the Data

The percentage of THOU in the whole corpus is low, at 14% (see Table 2 below). When we look at the difference between the plays, we see that two plays contain an exceptionally high frequency of THOU: *Covent* and *Tr*. This striking difference is probably due to the genre of the plays, as discussed below. Compared to the difference in genres, the difference of frequency amongst authors is relatively small; the percentage of THOU in Fielding's comedy, *Modern* (5%), is closer to Steele's *Conscious* (4%) and Gay's *Beggar* (18%) than that in his tragedies (75% and 55%). The slightly higher number in *Beggar* may be due to two characters that use THOU frequently to show their love, as discussed below.

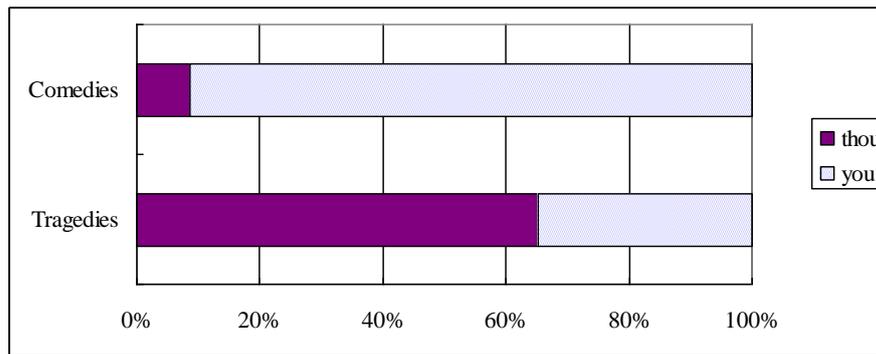
TABLE 2 INSTANCES OF THOU AND YOU IN EACH PLAY

	THOU	YOU	TOTAL
<i>COVENT</i> (1732)	119 (75%)	39	158
<i>MODERN</i> (1732)	52 (5%)	969	1021
<i>AF</i> (1734)	36 (8%)	439	475
<i>TR</i> (1736)	122 (55%)	99	221
<i>CONSCIOUS</i> (1722)	36 (4%)	883	919
<i>BEGGAR</i> (1728)	71 (18%)	330	401
TOTAL	436 (14%)	2759	3195

a) Genre and Style

The genre of a play has significant influence on the use of THOU: in comedies the percentage of THOU is 9% on average, while in tragedies it is as high as 65% as demonstrated by Figure 1.

FIGURE 1: THE PERCENTAGE OF THOU IN COMEDIES AND TRAGEDIES



Several studies reveal that playwrights tend to use THOU more often in tragedies than in comedies. Busse shows that among Shakespearean plays THOU is more frequent in histories while comedies contain the lowest rate of THOU.²⁰ He could not find a significant difference among the rate of THOU in tragedies, romances, and Roman plays, but he claims that the use of second-person pronouns in tragedies is more similar to that of histories than to that of comedies.²¹ Mitchell finds that THOU (including *ye*) is more frequent in tragedies than in comedies in her corpus; tragedies contain an average of 35%, while comedies contain an average of 14%.²²

Mitchell suggests that the high frequency of THOU in tragedies is partially because tragedies tend to contain many asides and apostrophes. The difference between asides and apostrophes is that the addressee of the former is present on the stage but cannot hear the speech while the addressee of the latter is absent.²³ Mitchell shows that 71% of the total occurrences of second-person pronouns in apostrophes appear in tragedies, with 81% of these occurrences being THOU or *ye*.²⁴ Based on these data, she concludes that THOU and *ye* appear more frequently in tragedies due to asides and apostrophes. However, my data reveal that the number of THOU in asides and apostrophes is too low to affect the percentage of THOU in tragedies (0% in

²⁰ Busse, p. 45.

²¹ Ibid., p. 45.

²² Mitchell, p. 56.

²³ For a full definition of asides and apostrophes, see Walker, p. 192.

²⁴ Mitchell, p. 101.

Covent; 7% in *Tr* for THOU). Although THOU is often associated with asides and apostrophes,²⁵ Freedman claims that similar settings do not necessarily induce the same use of personal pronouns in Shakespearean plays:

[c]onditions for the use of T or V [= YOU] must be sufficient, but they are very rarely necessary; even such apparently fixed conventions as T address to the absent addressee or V address by child to parent have been shown to have exceptions.²⁶

This statement seems to be applicable to eighteenth-century dramas. A tentative conclusion here is that the high frequency of THOU in the two tragedies, i.e. *Tr* and *Covent*, is probably due to the genre, but a closer look at each occurrence is necessary to find out what induces the appearance of THOU.

Micro-Analysis of Fielding's Plays

In this section I examine characteristic uses of THOU and YOU in Fielding's plays. I do not discuss instances in *Beggars* and *Conscious* due to limited space. When we look closely at each occurrence of THOU, we can see it is often influenced by the speaker's emotions, such as love and scorn. It is also influenced by the style of the text and theatrical conventions. When THOU is the unmarked form, the use of YOU can have special meaning, as does THOU in plays whose unmarked form is YOU. I deal with the two tragedies first, then the comedy and the farce.

a) The Covent-Garden Tragedy (1732)

Covent is a satirical piece. The play is set in a brothel and the main characters are the prostitutes and their customers. A young prostitute Kissinda and her customer Lovegirlo are in love with each other, while another prostitute, Stormandra,

²⁵ Anne Carvey Johnson, 'The Pronoun of Direct Address in Seventeenth-Century English', *American Speech* 41 (4) (1966), 261-269 (p. 269).

²⁶ Freedman, p. 260.

who also loves Lovegirlo, asks her devoted customer Bilkum to kill him.

In *Covent* THOU is the unmarked form and YOU represents formality and earnestness. One example is seen in dialogue between Stormandra and her customer Captain Bilkum:

STORMANDRA	Captain, are <u>you</u> a Man?
BILKUM	I think I am; The Time has been when <u>you</u> have thought so too, Try me again in the soft Fields of Love.
STORMANDRA	'Tis War not Love must try <u>your</u> Manhood now, By Gin, I swear, ne'er to receive <u>thee</u> more, 'Till curs'd <i>Lovegirlo</i> 's Blood has dy'd <u>thy</u> Sword.
BILKUM	<i>Lovegirlo!</i> Whence this Fury bent on him?
STORMANDRA	Ha! dost <u>thou</u> question, Coward? – Ask again, And I will never call <u>thee</u> Captain more. Instant obey my Purpose, or [. . .] I will arrest <u>thee</u> for the Note of Hand, Which <u>thou</u> hast given me for twice on Pound; But if <u>thou</u> dost, I call my sacred Honour To witness, <u>thy</u> Reward shall be my Love.
BILKUM	<i>Lovegirlo</i> is no more. Yet wrong me not, It is <u>your</u> Promise, not <u>your</u> Threat, prevails. ²⁷

Bilkum and Stormandra exchange the unmarked form THOU with each other in the previous scene. Here, however, Stormandra opens the conversation with YOU,

²⁷ Henry Fielding, *The Covent-Garden Tragedy* (London: printed for J. Watts, 1732) ii. 7. 4-21.
Underlined text is mine.

probably due to the serious tone of her speech, namely that she wants to ask him to commit murder. Bilkum responds to her with YOU, following her formality. She replies to him with YOU, but soon she starts using THOU. THOU in the last part of her speech might represent a lovers' use of THOU.²⁸ Bilkum uses YOU, taking her proposal seriously. There is a similar scene in *Much Ado About Nothing*; where Beatrice asks Benedict to kill Claudio. Gert Ronberg explains that Benedick switches from (lover's) THOU to YOU, showing his sincerity and asks her if she honestly thinks Claudio wronged Hero.²⁹

Another special use of YOU is to indicate alienation, which is shown in the dialogue below:

PUNCHBOWL	What is the Reason, Captain, that <u>you</u> make This Noise within my House? [. . .] Oh! cou'dst <u>thou</u> bear to see the rotten Egg Mix with my Tears, and trickle down my Cheeks, [. . .] Or see me follow the attractive Cart, To see the Hangman lift the Virgal Rod, That Hangman <u>you</u> so narrowly escap'd!
BILKUM	Ha! that last Thought has stung me to the Soul; [. . .] Behold <u>thee</u> Carted—oh! foresend that Sight, May Bilkum's Neck be stretch'd before that Day.
PUNCHBOWL	Come to my Arms, <u>thou</u> best belov'd of Sons, Forgive the Weakness of <u>thy</u> Mother's Fears. ³⁰

²⁸ Freedman, p. 24.

²⁹ Gert Ronberg, *A Way with Words: The Language of English Renaissance Literature* (London: Arnold, 1992), pp. 85-86.

³⁰ Henry Fielding, *Covent*, i. 3. 1-20.

In this scene Punchbowl blames Bilkum for making a scene in front of the brothel. Punchbowl acts as Bilkum's mother and she frequently calls him 'my son'.³¹ At the beginning of her speech, Punchbowl combines the formal and alienating YOU with a formal term of address 'Captain', which she uses only once in the entire play. Terttu Nevalainen and Helena Raumolin-Brunberg, who study address terms in Early Modern English letters, state that '[t]he professional or occupational titles [. . .] are not far from the negative extreme [of the politeness scale]'.³² Punchbowl slips into THOU in the middle of her speech, possibly because of her heightened emotion, and then she returns to YOU. After Bilkum shows his repentance, she starts using THOU with words indicating their strong bond, such as 'best belov'd of Sons' and 'thy Mother'.

In conclusion, YOU is used to convey seriousness and coldness while THOU is used as an unmarked form in *Covent*.

b) The Tragedy of Tragedies (1736)

Tr is a farce written in the style of tragedy and the author pretended that *Tr* was a newly discovered Elizabethan drama. Fielding aimed to show the verbal absurdity of tragedies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries through this work.³³ The story is loosely based on the folk tale 'Tom Thumb' but the setting is moved to a court and the main topic is Tom Thumb's marriage with Princess Huncamunca. As a tragedy most of the characters including Tom Thumb die.

³¹ As Fielding points out in his 'criticism' (*Covent*, p. 6) the relationship between Bilkum, Stormandra and Punchbowl is unclear. Accordingly, terms of endearment like 'mother' and 'son' do not necessarily signify real blood relationships.

³² Terttu Nevalainen and Helena Raumolin-Brunberg, 'Constraints on Politeness: The Pragmatics of Address Formulae in Early English Correspondence', in *Historical Pragmatics: Pragmatic Developments in the History of English*, ed. by Andreas H. Jucker (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1995), pp. 541-661 (p. 557).

³³ George W. Sherburn and Donald F. Bond, *The Literary History of the England. Vol. III. The Restoration and the Eighteenth Century, 1660-1789* (London: Routledge, 1967), p. 891.

In *Tr* THOU is more frequent (59%) and men use THOU more often than women do. Approximately one third of the instances of THOU by male characters are spoken by King Arthur (52x; 35%). Since he has the greatest power in the play, he uses THOU with his interlocutors most of the time. One exception person is Glumdalca, the queen of giants, who is only addressed as YOU by Arthur. Even though she is defeated and in captivity, he pays respect to her as a queen. This honorific use of YOU to a sovereign is in accord with King Lear's use; Stein states that the address term between sovereigns is normally YOU.³⁴ Another person who is addressed as YOU by Arthur is his daughter Huncamunca. He mainly uses YOU with her, but in the following example he switches to a more intimate THOU, trying to console her affectionately:

KING	A Country Dance of Joy is in <u>your</u> Face, <u>Your</u> Eyes spit Fire, <u>your</u> Cheeks grow red as Beef.
HUNCAMUNCA	[...] Yes, I'll own, since licenc'd by <u>your</u> Word, I'll own <i>Tom Thumb</i> the Cause of all my Grief. For him I've sigh'd, I've wept, I've gnaw'd my Sheets.
KING	Oh! <u>thou</u> shalt gnaw thy tender Sheets no more, A Husband <u>thou</u> shalt have to mumble now. ³⁵

It is worth pointing out that Huncamunca uses only YOU with her father. In fact, she uses YOU more often than the other female characters; in her speeches THOU takes up

³⁴ Dieter Stein, 'Pronominal Usage in Shakespeare: Between Sociolinguistics and Conversation Analysis', in *Diachronic Perspectives*, ed. by Taavitsainen and Jucker, pp. 251-307 (p. 265).

³⁵ Henry Fielding, *The Tragedy of Tragedies, or, the Life and the Death of Tom Thumb the Great* (London: printed; and sold by J. Roberts in Warwick-Lane, 1731), ii. 4. 26-34. Underlined text is mine.

only 23% of her address pronouns, while THOU constitutes an average of 57% of the speech of the other female characters. She uses YOU with her father, her lovers and strangers. One of the rare occurrences of her using THOU is found in a violent quarrel with Glumdalca, the queen of giants:

HUNCAMUNCA	Well, may <u>your</u> Chains be easy, since if Fame Says true, they have been try'd on twenty Husbands. [...]
GLUMDALCA	I glory in Number, and when I Sit poorly down, like <u>thee</u> , content with one, Heaven change this Face for one as bad as <u>thine</u> .
HUNCAMUNCA	Let me see nearer what this Beauty is, That captivates the Heart of Men by Scores. <i>[Holds a Candle to her Face.]</i> Oh! Heaven, <u>thou</u> art as ugly as the Devil.
GLUMDALCA	<u>You</u> 'd give the best of Shoes within <u>your</u> Shop, To be but half so handsome.
HUNCAMUNCA	– Since <u>you</u> come To that, I'll put my Beauty to the Test. ³⁶

In this scene Huncamunca and Glumdalca have a quarrel over Tom Thumb, the man they are both in love with, and try to scorn each other. Huncamunca consistently uses the polite YOU while Glumdalca uses THOU. When Huncamunca sees Glumdalca's face, she effectively uses THOU to express her surprise and scorn. Glumdalca employs YOU in response, which is a marked form to her, possibly trying to convey insolence under civility.

³⁶ Ibid., *Tr*, ii. 7. 12-15.

To sum up, THOU is used to show strong emotion and scorn while YOU generally represents a polite attitude but nevertheless may show scorn, if used by THOU-users in *Tr.*

c) The Modern Husband (1732)

Modern is Fielding's comedy of corrupt couples and young lovers. An amorous nobleman tries to ensnare the chaste wife of his inferior, while the aristocrat's children fall in love with the children of the chaste woman. Most of the main characters belong to the upper class or the upper middle class.

In this play YOU is much more dominant or unmarked. One exceptional use of THOU is in an apostrophe:

SCENE III

Emilia *alone.*

EMILIA [...] Oh! *Gaywit!* too much I sympathize with thy Uneasiness. Didst thou know the Pangs I feel on thy Account, thy generous Heart would suffer more on mine. (*Enter Gaywit*)³⁷ Ha! my Words have rais'd a Spirit.

SCENE IV

Emilia, *Mr. Gaywit.*

MR. GAYWIT I hope, Madam, you will excuse a Visit at so unseasonable an Hour.

EMILIA Had you come a little earlier, you had met a Mistress here.³⁸

Emilia loves Gaywit, but she conceals her love from him. She addresses him with THOU in soliloquy (Scene III) according to the convention of plays. However, she switches to YOU as soon as he appears (Scene IV), that is, when her speech is no

³⁷ I follow Wood's addition of stage direction to make the context clearer. Nigel Wood (ed.), *She Stoops to Conquer and Other Comedies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

³⁸ Henry Fielding, *The Modern Husband*, (London: printed for J. Watts at the Printing-Office in Wild-Court near Lincoln's-Inn Fields, 1732), v. 3. 1–4. 4. Underlined text is mine.

longer a soliloquy. As her love towards him is not revealed, she does not use the 'lover's' THOU to him in person.

d) The Author's Farce (1734)

AF is Fielding's two-act farce. The first part is a tragic story of a poor poet, driven out of his lodging and deserted by his girlfriend. The second part shows a puppet-show written by the poet, but gradually the puppet-show and real life (the world where the poet lives) merge and the play ends with a hilarious happy-ending scene.

In *AF* YOU is much more dominant than THOU (92%; 8%). One reason for using THOU in this play is to represent heightened emotion such as love and surprise, as shown in the dialogue between a poor poet Luckless and his friend Witmore below:

WITMORE Oh! Luckless, I am overjoy'd at meeting you — here, take this Paper, and you will be discouraged from Writing, I warrant you.

LUCKLESS What is it? — Oh! one of my Play-Bills.

WITMORE One of thy Play-Bills!

LUCKLESS Even so, Sir! — I have taken the Advice you gave me this Morning. [...]

WITMORE Well — I wish you Success.—

LUCKLESS Where are you going?

WITMORE Any where but to hear you damn'd, which I must, if I were to go to your Puppet-Show. [...] If they shou'd laught till they burst — the Moment they knew you were the Author — they wou'd change their Faces, and swear they never laugh'd at all.

LUCKLESS Pshaw, I can't believe thee.³⁹

Luckless and Witmore normally use YOU to each other, and THOU is used to represent

³⁹ Henry Fielding, *The Author's Farce and the Pleasures of the Town* (London: printed for J. Roberts, in Warwick-Lane, 1730), ii. 9. 1-26. Underlined text mine.

their strong surprise. The appearance of THOU is ephemeral and the speaker switches from THOU to YOU quickly. Hope, who studies Early Modern court records, suggests that THOU came to be used in a non-socially pragmatic, emotional way,

[...] since it depends on immediate linguistic and situational context, rather than broader social context. Such usages can encode anger and affection, and it is also notable that there seems to be evidence for conscious manipulation of the forms by speakers.⁴⁰

In other words, the use of THOU is regulated not by static relationships or power difference between speakers (e.g. employers and employees) but by more dynamic, pragmatic relationships. Presumably THOU is used as a signal or deviation to emphasise the change of feeling of the characters in a non-socially pragmatic way.

Style also induces THOU. Don Tragedio, a personification of tragedy in the puppet show, addresses the Goddess of Nonsense in the style of tragedy with rhymed iambic pentameter:

TRAGEDIO	To <i>Shakespear, Johnson, Dryden, Lee, or Rowe,</i> I not a Line, no, not a Thought, do owe. Me, for my Novelty, let all adore, For, as I wrote, none ever wrote before.
----------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

NONSENSE Thou art doubly welcome, welcome.⁴¹

The Goddess of Nonsense usually uses YOU to other characters. Presumably she uses THOU here following Tragedio's style in her reply.

⁴⁰ Jonathan Hope, 'Second Person Singular Pronouns in Records of Early Modern "Spoken" English', *Neophilologische Mitteilungen*, 94 (1) (1993), 84-100 (p. 92).

⁴¹ Henry Fielding, *AF*, iii. 1. 366-370.

Conclusion

In this study I have revealed that although THOU was disappearing in eighteenth-century English, it was still used in dramas in specialised ways. In other words, THOU was no longer a choice but a signal of dramatic importance, deviating from the norm. The genre of plays has strong influence on the use of THOU and YOU. In tragedies THOU is often an unmarked form. The use of the older second-person pronouns, together with other factors such as blank verse, gives tragedies a grave and antique style. YOU is used to show coldness and formality in tragedies. In comedies and farces YOU is the normal form and THOU is very rarely used highlight dramatic scenes. THOU is no longer a living option at that time but a deviation or a signal to emphasise the change of feelings in a non-socially pragmatic way, considering that speakers quickly switch from THOU to YOU in the middle of speech. Although THOU tends to express strong emotions, its use is hard to generalise and qualitative, context-based studies on each occurrence are needed to establish the characteristics of THOU and YOU usage in eighteenth-century British dramas.