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The Pragmatic Influences on *Thou* and *Ye* in Some Middle English Romances

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
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Dedication

I dedicate this effort to my husband, Ross Meyer, whom and with whom I have been studying for thirteen years. Please forgive the poor planning which forced me to study 700-year-old pronouns on our honeymoon. I'm blessed to have found a man who knows me, loves me as Christ loves the Church, values my opinions, and honors my passions—even the literary and linguistic ones. You're a keeper.

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Aislinn Meyer

ABSTRACT

The standard explanation of the semantics of power and solidarity for second person Middle English pronoun choice, advanced by Roger Brown and Albert Gilman and accepted by many Middle English scholars since, has proven insufficient to explain many choices between *thou* and *ye* that fictional characters make. This paper applies the discourse theories of pragmatics and politeness, developed by Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson, to the relatively untouched data set of non-Chaucerian romances in order to account for some of those anomalies.

By examining the pronouns of address in *Floris and Blancheflour*, *Havelok the Dane, Ywain and Gawain, Sir Launfal*, and *Sir Degrevant*, this paper finds that the realm of politeness, specifically the desire to soften face-threatening acts and occasionally the desire to insult by ignoring politeness, often explains pronoun choice in many of those previously anomalous instances. The broader lens of pragmatics also lends itself to other insights into Middle English second person pronoun usage; the pronouns in these romances show that social deixis does occur within the Middle English address system and that at least a functional understanding of the power and solidarity semantics must have existed on a conscious level because speakers use these semantics for their own rhetorical purposes.

1   Introduction and Background

1.1   Background of the Discussion

As speakers of Modern English, we often change the words and tone of our conversations depending on with whom we are speaking and where we are holding the conversation. Our society has built up expectations for address towards certain people in certain circumstances. For example, I would feel very embarrassed if, in a chance conversation with a professor and a classmate, I accidently called my professor *girl* and called my classmate *ma'am*. However, if I needed to use a second-person pronoun towards my professor or my classmate, I could properly use *you* towards either of them. In Middle English, though, speakers use differentiated pronominal forms of address in addition to differentiated nominal forms of address. While *thou* is the singular second-person pronoun in Middle English and *ye* is the plural second-person pronoun, scholars agree that by the late thirteenth century, Middle English speakers commonly used *ye* and its forms to address superiors, in Angelika Lutz's words "individuals of higher rank" in the social hierarchy, as a form of respect (Kennedy 22; Lutz 191). Many modern European languages, such as German and French, still use the plural second-person pronoun as a respectful form of address to an individual, a practice which spread throughout European countries in the Middle Ages as one court adopted the practice of other, more respected courts (Brown and Gilman 159). Using *ye* (sometimes spelled *ʒe*) in place of *thou* (sometimes spelled *þou*) as a singular pronoun of address enters English during the Middle English era; in fact, David Burnley notes that Europeans began using the plural pronoun of address to a singular addressee "in Latin epistolary practice in the fifth century," but such a practice did not enter English until the Middle English era,

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specifically "the middle thirteenth century" (28). Whether Latin (through the church) or French (through the prestige of France's court) had more direct influence on the English usage of *ye* as singular is unclear (Kennedy 24). While the Middle English singular use of *ye* certainly developed as a result of the influence of other languages, the application of those address pronouns in English does not always correspond to the use of singular *ye* in other languages (Mazzon 136-37).

In scholarly discourse about second-person pronouns of address in Indo-European languages, *T*, standing in for the Latin *tu*, represents all the forms of the singular second-person pronoun, and *V*, standing in for Latin's pronoun *vos*, represents all the forms of the second-person plural pronoun being used as a singular pronoun of address. Since I am specifically discussing the English address pronouns *thou* and *ye*, I will use *T/Y*, as is conventional in the field.

1.2 Standard Explanation of T *and* Y *use*

Since A.G. Kennedy's landmark 1915 work *The Pronoun of Address in English Literature of the Thirteenth Century*, scholars have studied the circumstances surrounding a Middle English author's choice between *T* and *Y*. Kennedy provided the foundation for the study of *T/Y* use in Middle English, establishing that Middle English speakers commonly use *Y* to address superiors in the social hierarchy as a form of respect by the late thirteenth century (Kennedy 22; Lutz 191). In Middle English, the use of *Y* in singular address toward social superiors appears directly as a result of other languages

(Mazzon 136; Blake 49)[1]. The Middle English choice between *T* and *Y* is one less guided

by social norms than the choice in Early Modern English, in which speakers often used *Y*

as a straightforward, obligatory polite form of address; however, scholars are still

studying the circumstances which might have informed the choice between *T* and *Y* for a

Middle English author. Scholars debate the degree to which Middle English authors'

pronoun choice was connected to factors outside of the text and slight distinctions *within*

the social classes of characters. One of the aims of this paper is to further explore these

non-standard, newer understandings of *T/Y* choice.

In order to examine the use of Middle English address pronouns in terms of social

relationships, we must first understand the basics of the social hierarchy of England

during the Middle English era. The social philosophy of England in the Middle Ages,

devised primarily by the clergy (Singman and McLean 10), split the population into three

estates according to their social function:

> The first estate was the clergy, who were responsible for people's spiritual
>
> well-being. The second estate was the aristocracy, who were supposed to
>
> defend the nation through their military might. The third estate was the
>
> commons, whose role was to labor and produce the country's wealth.
>
> (Singman and McLean 9)

These seemingly straightforward social divisions did not always translate easily into

actual practice. The aristocracy debated with the clergy about which estate wielded more

power and importance in the social realm. Also, since the commons included everyone

---

[1] Note the difference between this use of Y towards superiors and the rhetorical use of T/Y to make
inferiority/superiority distinctions which are not necessarily bound by class, discussed in the section on
Pragmatics.

from unskilled laborers to the members of the rising merchant class, many people in the

third estate were wealthier and occasionally even more powerful than members of the

other two estates (Singman and McLean 9). Even though every person's place in the

social ladder theoretically defined other aspects of his or her life and relationships, such

as what clothes one might wear and what respect one commanded in the social realm, the

specific social placement a person held could be a matter of confusion (Singman and

McLean 9). All of these groups had subgroups which held varying degrees of social

status, which in the clergy was occasionally chosen based on the nobility of one's

upbringing (Singman and McLean 11). Many of the subgroups overlap in social hierarchy

in our best approximation of actual practice in Medieval England. See Table 1 for just

such an approximation. In addition to the hierarchy within estates and the overlap among

estates, sometimes groupings such as gender, education, and family complicated the

ideally straightforward social divisions in England (Brown and Gilman 159). For

instance, even though the context of the family establishes the patriarch as the person

deserving most respect in marriage and family situations, the customs of *fin'amors*[2] often

place women in a higher position than men because of their elevated status as the beatific

beloved (Brown and Gilman 158; Mazzon 140). Even this brief explanation of England's

social structure reveals that readers, literary scholars, and linguists often struggle to

determine the superiority or inferiority of an individual in relation to the speaker in

---

2   *Fin'amors* translates from French as "fine love." This is the word that medieval people gave to the non-rule-bound "'code' of love" which developed from the European courts and the troubadour culture (Paterson 31). It is "a type of sensual love and what distinguishes it from other forms of sexual love, from mere passion, from so-called Platonic love, from married love is its purpose or motive, its formal object, namely, the lover's progress and growth in natural goodness, merit, and worth" (A.J. Denomy, qtd. in Paterson 31).

Middle English literature.[3]

Beyond the superiority use of *Y*, Roger Brown and Albert Gilman have further shaped scholarly interpretation of *T* and *Y* as a result of their work called "The Pronouns of Power and Solidarity." In their seminal work on second person pronouns of address in

First Estate	Second Estate	Third Estate		
Clergy	**Aristocracy**	**Rural Commons**	**Urban Commons**	**Landless Commons**
	King, Queen			
Archbishop	Duke, Duchess			
Bishop	Earl, Countess			
Major Abbot	Baron, Lady		Mayor of London	
Abbot, Prior	Knight Banneret, Lady		Alderman of London, Mayor of great town, major legal officer	
Archdeacon, Dean	Knight Bachelor		Other mayor or civic or legal officer, great merchant	
Priest, Master of Arts	Squire		Lesser merchant	
Monk, Friar		Franklin, Yeoman	Craftsman	Yeoman (servant)
		Husbandman	Journeyman	Groom (servant)
		Cottar	Apprentice	Page, Laborer
				Vagrant

Table 1: Table from Singman and McLean showing the relationship between the estates and hierarchy. They note that "[r]anks at the same horizontal level were considered to be roughly equivalent to each other" (23).

---

3   This struggle in turn complicates analysis of *T* and *Y* pronouns since many scholars agree that people regularly use *Y* to address social superiors and *T* to address social inferiors.

Indo-European languages, Brown and Gilman trace the general development of *V* pronoun usage:

> For many centuries French, English, Italian, Spanish, and German pronoun usage followed the rule of nonreciprocal *T-V* between persons of unequal power and the rule of mutual *V* or *T* (according to social-class membership) between persons of roughly equivalent power. There was at first no rule differentiating address among equals but, very gradually, a distinction developed which is sometimes called the *T* of intimacy and the *V* of formality. (159)

In other words, speakers in these European languages did not at first make a distinction within social classes through second-person pronoun choice. They used *V* towards people in higher social classes and *T* towards people in lower social classes. Brown and Gilman begin to build upon Kennedy's assumption about *T/Y* choice—that characters and people use *Y* towards social superiors—by asserting that the circumstances surrounding the relationship and the instance also informed an author's or speaker's choice between *T* or *Y* (159). With this shift, people within the same social class would use different second-person pronouns depending on the level of social formality required of the conversation. Brown and Gilman call the influence on pronoun differentiation based on social standing "the power semantic" (158) and the influence on pronoun differentiation among equals based on formality "the solidarity semantic" (159). Thus, according to Brown and Gilman, when Middle English speakers use *Y* in address towards an individual, they are either using it in order to acknowledge the addressee's previously established social power or in order to enforce the social distance which is appropriate in a formal setting or

circumstance.

1.3 Problem, Solution, and Complications

1.3.1 Complications with Standard Explanation

Scholars, especially scholars of Chaucer, have attempted to apply the general

principles of Brown and Gilman's work with Indo-European pronouns to Middle English

works. However, the simple categories of power and solidarity do not explain all of the

uses of *T* and *Y* in Middle English literature or epistles. Even the superiority system itself

is too complicated and unregulated to base a complete explanation of pronoun choice on

it. For example, within the context of the *fin'amors* tradition, men often speak to women

by addressing them with the elevated term "lady" and by using *Y*, presumably as a form

of respect to their lofty status as the beloved "regardless of whether the woman has a

status that is superior, inferior, or roughly equivalent to that of the male character

addressing her" (Mazzon 140).[4] However, even this demonstration of respect for women

becomes complicated in the structure of the marriage relationship, where, according to

Gabriella Mazzon, husbands are superior to their wives and thus address them with *T*

while expecting *Y* from their wives (Mazzon 151). Should a courteous husband address

his noble wife with *T* or *Y*? Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* contains many examples of

marriage relationships which seem to complicate the traditional understanding of the

influence of the power and solidarity semantics on pronoun choice. In The Franklin's

Tale, for example, the married couple consists of a noble knight Arveragus and his

---

4   This use of *Y* is technically a rhetorical use that falls under the categories of Pragmatics and Politeness, which will be treated later. This example nevertheless demonstrates how social distinctions are often vague and do not always dictate *T/Y* use as per the standard explanation.

beautiful wife Dorigen. Dorigen uses *ye* to address Arveragus three times, and Arveragus

uses both *ye* and *thou* to address Dorigen, employing them five times and two times

respectively (Pakkala-Weckström, "Genre" 131). Arveragus has previously promised to

"folwe hir [Dorigen's] wyl in al, / As any lovere to his lady shal" (Chaucer 749-50),

essentially promising to follow the *fin'amors* ideal in his marital interactions. Despite his

promise, he does not live up to the ideal he sets up for himself, at least in the forms of

address, as evidenced by the contrasting example of Aurelius, Dorigen's wooer. Aurelius

addresses Dorigen, the woman whom he "loved . . . best of any creature" (Chaucer 939),

with *ye* forty-two times and does not once address her with *thou* (Pakkala-Weckström,

"Genre" 131). Aurelius, who pines after an unachievable lady to whom he has devoted all

of his energies, represents the ideal *fin'amors* lover. He consistently addresses his lady

with the respectful *ye* (Pakkala-Weckström, "Genre" 130). Aurelius's use of *ye* towards

Dorigen—but not Arveragus's pronoun choice—aligns with the precedent Chaucer

establishes, according to Derek Pearsall:

> A particularly consistent point of usage in Chaucer is that courtly
>
> relationships between men and women, including husbands and wives, are
>
> almost always marked by the avoidance of *T* forms. The reason is partly in
>
> the desire not to proclaim or presume upon an intimacy but more
>
> importantly in the desire to avoid the implication of servitude which may
>
> be present, whether asserted or acknowledged, in the intimacy of *T* forms.
>
> (76)

Arveragus, for one reason or another, does not follow the precedent set by Aurelius or

other husbands in Chaucer. I could easily point to pronoun switches between spouses in

The Wife of Bath's Tale, The Tale of Melibee, and others; however, they are unnecessary for my project because even this one example shows that relationships between characters in The Franklin's Tale and other Middle English texts do influence pronoun use, but that the internal factor of superiority creates enough ambiguity to call for an examination into the possibility of other influencing factors.

In the twenty-first century, some scholars have felt that the two general categories explaining *T/Y* choice, power and solidarity, have not sufficiently addressed the circumstances which seem to surround *T/Y* choice in Middle English literature because of the large set of *T* and *Y* instances which cannot be explained by power and solidarity. Such attempts have resulted in fairly complicated accounts of the circumstances surrounding pronoun choice. For instance, David Burnley has developed a moderately elaborate flow chart to explain "the factors which might influence the choice of pronoun by Chaucer when he intended to lend verisimilitude to verbal exchanges between his characters" (Burnley 28; see Figure 1). While Burnley includes standard internal factors such as relationships of power and solidarity through social class and intimacy of the characters, he also includes innovative internal influences, such as politeness, in his schema. Also, rather than focusing strictly on the relationship between the characters, which undeniably plays a role in *T/Y* choice, as evidenced strongly in Chaucer's Tale of Melibee, Burnley examines influences outside of the textual relationships, external influences such as genre and medieval rhetorical practice.

However, most of these scholars—including Burnley—have drawn their data primarily from personal epistles, which are often between persons of higher class and are mostly from the fifteenth century, and Chaucer. While of course epistles provide

important data for examining the natural linguistic practice of written *T/Y* use, their

authors' pronoun choices are not influenced by external factors of genre,

translation/adaptation, or fictional practice. The works of Chaucer, also, provide an
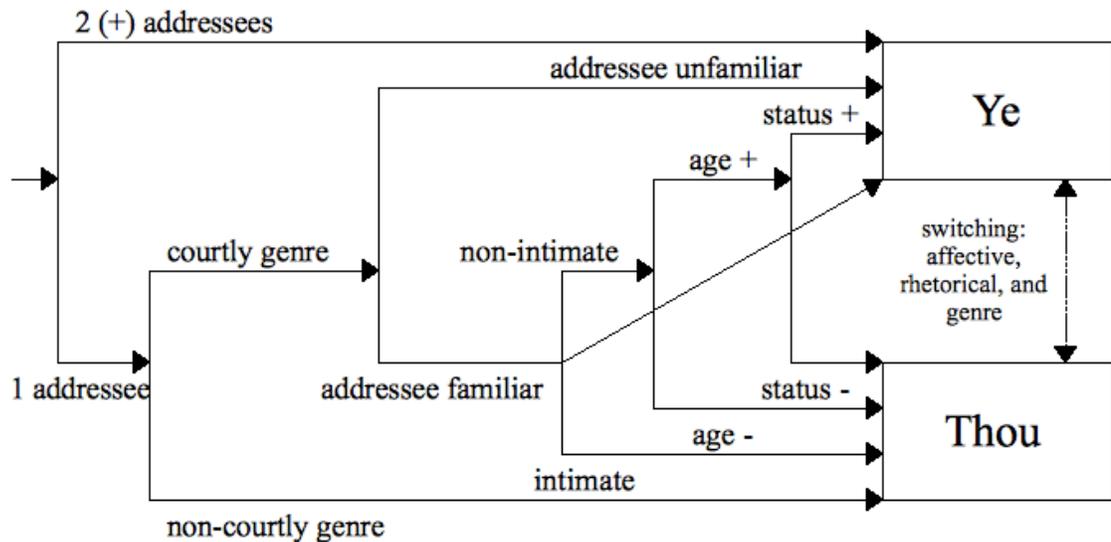
Figure 1: Adaptation of David Burnley's account of pronoun choice in Chaucer's corpus (Burnley 29).

insufficient data set to determine general Middle English practice because Chaucer is

such an exceptional, innovative author.[5] Because of his familiarity with foreign literature,

Chaucer, according to Norman Blake, "appreciated more clearly than many the strengths

and weaknesses of English as a medium of composition and what constraints the

linguistic situation imposed upon anyone who sought to extend its possibilities" (Blake

168-69). Chaucer's push to "extend . . . possibilities" makes him more likely to adapt

standard *T/Y* use for his particular literary aims than strictly to follow standard norms,

thus making his corpus an incomplete picture of *T/Y* use in Middle English romance.

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5   For an introduction to Chaucer's distinctiveness as a Middle English author, see Brewer.

1.3.2 Aims of this Paper

Because the standard explanation of pronoun use presented by Kennedy, Brown, and Gilman is insufficient, and because modern scholars have focused primarily on pronoun choice in Chaucer and epistles, I see a need for further examination of Middle English fictional *T*/*Y* choice. In this paper, I hope to build on the admirable foundation established by these scholars who have begun to explore further influences of *T*/*Y* choice. Rather than treat all Middle English practice in a limited space, my paper will focus on a group of works which have been neglected in this area of study since Kennedy's study: non-Chaucerian romance. Middle English romances fit well into a study such as mine since their distinct genre-markers, which became "more sophisticated rather than diminishing with time " (Fewster 27), show that the genre is especially susceptible to adopting—and then purposefully thwarting—regularity (even in language patterns) for literary purposes. Christine Chism notes, "whether brisk as an alliterative battle-sequence or devious as a courtly suitor, a romance works its spell through repetition and variation" (61). By choosing a few different romances on which to focus, I am following in the footsteps of historical linguists who manually study small corpora in order to study specific types of speech acts; my specific methods of choosing specific instances of one particular genre is "structured eclecticism" (Taavitsainen and Juker "Speech Acts" 10). I will focus on applying theories developed by other scholars, especially the theory of politeness, to the relationships internal to the fiction in this new set of data, hoping to further confirm the efficacy of describing Middle English fictional pronoun use in general in their terms.

I will not discard older theories like those of Kennedy or Brown and Gilman, but

instead I will explore other possible factors which might have influenced an author's

choice between *T* and *Y*. A study such as mine addresses the problems of the standard

explanation—namely, the standard explanation does not adequately explain a large set of

data—without ignoring the benefits of the standard explanation or the merits of modern

discourse studies. The standard explanation seems, simply, not to be the whole

explanation. Other scholars have recognized this deficiency, and I hope to join them in

actively addressing these current scholarly limitations.

1.3.3 Complications with Finding Other Explanations

While exploring other explanations of Middle English pronoun choice seems

necessary based on the large set of non-categorized *T*/*Y* uses, we should not expect (or

desire) to explain all *T*/*Y* choice in Middle English literature. Blake warns against such

foolhardiness:

> Modern accounts of medieval English syntax necessarily arrange the
>
> available material into general rules and trends, and so unwittingly create
>
> the impression that the language at the time was more regulated and
>
> systematic than it was. While all languages exhibit patterns to assist
>
> communication, it is often easier to detect those patterns in speech rather
>
> than in writing, which is subject to so many pressures pushing it in
>
> different directions. . . . Modern investigations have the inherent danger
>
> that they create norms of linguistic use for medieval language which are
>
> then used by editors to emend their texts to make them conform to those
>
> norms. The result can be that the norms become self-perpetuating and self-

justifying. (Blake 137)

Languages reflect cultural frameworks that native speakers use to interpret, shape, and communicate their experiences. Thus, we must be careful not to dive thoughtlessly into an examination of pronoun use in a language which developed in a different culture and expect to be able to explain it according to our understanding of our own language use, especially since our culture likes to bind language with systemized prescriptive rules. Middle English developed without any standard form because of the relative dialectal isolation, the lack of standardization prior to the use of the printing press, and the consciousness of fluidity and hybridity that must accompany language change when it is initiated abruptly by a foreign invasion. We must take into account that the language development under scrutiny, which took place in a culture which we do not completely understand because of our own enculturation, may not be explained sufficiently by modern theories because we do not have the filters to see the patterns born out of the other culture. Especially while employing modern theories of pragmatics, we must appreciate the aid of advanced theories and technologies without attempting to force every *T*/*Y* instance into a retroactively applied theory.

We must also keep in mind that this study is particularly concerned with fiction. Fiction as a data set provides many potential hazards when studying it for linguistic developments because fictional speakers do not always speak according to their fictionalized statuses or circumstances. Indeed, as Burnley reminds, we cannot even be sure if the romance authors of this study intend to portray their characters as realistic: "Fictional sources may seek to reproduce spoken language with greater or lesser verisimilitude, they may reflect the values and social milieu of author, audience or both,

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but also the fictional social milieu of the work, as for example when sophisticated authors write *fabliaux*" (Burnley 29). Because of the various factors which might influence an author's *T/Y* choice, we should be cautious if we seek to apply theories derived from fiction to assumptions about real-life interactions. While most authors of fiction seek to apply actual linguistic practice to their works, very few speakers—especially Middle English speakers—analyze literary works so that they might model their speech after the characters. In this paper, I am particularly concerned with the circumstances which may have influenced an *author's* choice of *T/Y* for characters' direct address. As long as we keep this concern in mind while studying the linguistics of fiction, we will escape the danger of assuming that all Middle English speakers followed the standards of *T/Y* use which authors employ for their characters.

Despite these reservations, the genre of Middle English romance still provides a useful set of linguistic samples. Even though authors might not seek to reflect the precise speech patterns of the general populace, they still have the same linguistic possibilities available to their characters as the speakers of the language. If anything, the speech patterns of fictional characters are usually a few years behind the speech patterns of the general populace because authors tend to govern their characters' speech according to accepted standards rather than cutting-edge possibilities. Romances especially provide an interesting picture into actual language usage because of their popularity:

> [T]he popularity of the Middle English romance is clear over a period of
> several hundred years: through the survival of more than one hundred
> romances, often in several manuscript versions; in the choice of many
> such narratives for early printing, and the enthusiastic work of printers . . .

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who made personal, vital contributions to the genre; and by the sustained

reprinting of certain favorites into the seventeenth century and the

enthusiastic praise of many of England's great poets as well as critics like

Sidney, Puttenham and Dr. Johnson. (Richmond 3)

Such popularity might necessitate (or reflect) the author's use of standard rather than

innovative language. Thus, rather than providing an inaccurate picture of the influence of

pragmatics on the *T/Y* choice of Middle English speakers, these romances provide a

picture of the language that has been filtered through actual usage. Indeed, Middle

English romances were specifically interested, as a genre, in preserving and reflecting the

past as much as possible: "For Middle English romance, the emphasis is on tradition,

both literary and social: romances have a primarily conservative function. They

emphasise not only the values of the past but even the validity of its literary forms"

(Fewster 30). Instead of providing snapshots of various idiolects, which might be the only

result of a small study of real-life speeches, fiction in general and Middle English

romances in particular might present language patterns as they have been regularized

through everyday speech.

This paper largely ignores issues of translation, adaptation, and manuscripts,

issues which are arguably very important to studies of Middle English romances,

although I do note the possible relevance of these topics in the introductions to the

applicable romances. I have made this editorial decision because I have chosen to focus

on the internal, relational influences which would shape the author's choice between *T*

and *Y* for his or her characters. In my conclusion, I will briefly compare the data, based

around the internal influences, to some of the possible outside influences on pronoun

choice, such as audience and date. I am primarily concerned with understanding the

Middle English literary process as much as we can access it, as opposed to understanding

the actual speech-patterns of Middle English speakers. Therefore, my exclusion of the

issues of translation, adaptation, and manuscripts should not hinder the productivity of

this study if we keep in mind the aforementioned caution to avoid forcing apparent

aberrations into a rule-bound theory.

1.4 The Paper's Theories: Pragmatics and Politeness

The broad category of pragmatics can be defined as "the study of those relations

between language and context that are grammaticalized, or encoded in the structure of a

language" (Levinson 9). However, Stephen C. Levinson, the author of one of the first

textbooks on this discipline, even finds his own definition somewhat limiting because it

ignores "the side [of pragmatics] concerned with principles of language usage" (11), so

he further defines pragmatics by its primary areas of study, namely: "deixis (at least in

part), implicature, presupposition, speech acts, and aspects of discourse structure" (27).

These topics are very applicable to my current study of Middle English second-person

address pronouns because they connect the cultural and situational context to choice of

words. Early pronoun studies take these contextual influences broadly into consideration,

especially the "relations between language and context that are grammaticalized"

(Levinson 9) because they pay attention to the influence of relational power and

solidarity on language choice. More recent studies, though, use the developing discipline

of pragmatics to further examine other possible contextual influences which might have

shaped pronoun usage, even to the point of grammaticalization in the Early Modern era.

Although the application of pragmatics to Middle English texts has its limitations since pragmatics usually applies to real speech acts, many scholars believe that historical pragmatics is indeed a valid area of study and that modern theories of pragmatics can be applied accurately to historical texts (Taavitsainen and Juker "Speech Acts" 2). The theories of pragmatics apply particularly well to fictional dialogue studies such as mine: a study of the pragmatics of dialogue in conjunction with study of the external textual influences show to what extent the author had control of something like pronoun choice and to what extent the author's apparent choice was nearly inevitable because of grammaticalization. Application of theories of pragmatics to historical texts is a promising but largely undeveloped discipline. Pragmatics goes beyond the realm of historical linguistics in order to show "how meaning is negotiated and how more is conveyed than is said, and it takes language users into account" (Taavitsainen and Juker "Speech Acts" 3). These are relatively unplumbed depths of study in Middle English texts, making my study of more importance.

One of the most important aspects of pragmatics to the study of address pronouns is the realm of deixis, "a term used in linguistic theory to subsume those features of language which refer directly to the personal, temporal or locational characteristics of the situation within which an utterance takes place, whose meaning is thus relative to that situation" ("Deixis"). In studying the influences on the pronoun choice of Middle English authors, I assume that some kind of deictic encoding has taken place in the development of the language and that similar encoding has taken place across Middle English dialectal lines.

Social deixis is specifically "the encoding of social distinctions that relate to

participant roles (speaker-addressee, etc.), as encountered in such matters as pronouns, honorifics, vocatives, and forms of address" ("Deixis"). This realm of deixis, then, has obvious implications for pronoun study. Levinson says that within social deictic encoding relevant to interpersonal relations, a few different relationships are typically encoded in address systems, namely the relationships between "speaker and referent," "speaker and addressee," "speaker and bystander," and "speaker and setting (e.g. formality levels)" (90). The relationships between the speaker and the setting, bystander, and addressee are the most relevant to address pronoun study. The connection between the speaker and the setting is the most commonly studied of these three relationships in relation to Middle English pronoun choice because it corresponds to Brown and Gilman's study on the influence of solidarity, pronoun differentiation based on the formality of the occasion or of the intimacy of the relationship.

The relationship between the fictional speaker and the bystander, or audience, might have influence on authorial pronoun choice if the speaker is being obviously overheard by a person or a group of people who are different than the addressee in social class or intimacy with the speaker. As a Modern English example, imagine a student responding to a teacher who has just asked the student a question. If the conversation had no audience and the student and teacher had developed a familiar rapport, the student might respond to the teacher's question with "mmhmm" or "yeah." If, however, the student's parent or the school's headmaster was overhearing the conversation, the student might be sure to address the teacher politely by saying, "yes, sir" or "yes, ma'am." This example demonstrates how audience/bystander expectations can influence a speaker's form of address even without any shift in relationship between the speaker and the

addressee.

The relationship between the speaker and the addressee had the most influence on the pronoun a Middle English romance author chose to give to a character. Brown and Gilman's traditional explanation of the influence of power on pronoun choice fits into this relationship of social deixis. However, the complexities of this relationship has other potential influences on pronoun choice. My study will focus on some these other factors in the relationship between the speaker and the addressee as well, specifically the influence of politeness and the rhetorical play with the grammaticalized influence of social power.

At first blush, expectations of politeness between people holding a conversation may not seem to be one of Levinson's "principles of language usage" which might influence word (or pronoun) choice (11). Typical speakers of Modern English assume that politeness rests in social expectations taught by parents and teachers and does not have much influence on the words or manner with which we choose to speak beyond the simple "please" and "thank you." Part of the reason for our limited view of the influence of politeness is that, in Modern English, we have very few grammaticalized aspects of politeness, unlike other languages like Tamil which have complicated structures of politeness built into their grammars (Levinson 70). However, even speakers of Modern English, according to Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson, have standards of polite interaction and cooperation which influence the way we speak, think, and feel during a social interaction.

Brown and Levinson examine politeness, a subset of pragmatics, as the means by which a speaker communicates in order to affirm and not impose on an addressee's

"face," defined as "the public self-image that every member [of a society] wants to claim for himself" (Brown and Levinson 321). In other words, what we call polite communication is really the society's accepted means for reassuring the addressee that the speaker does not wish to sully and wishes to affirm the addressee's social identity. In a round about way, preserving someone else's face through politeness is also maintaining one's own face:

> [N]ormally everyone's face depends on everyone else's being maintained, and since people can be expected to defend their faces if threatened, and in defending their own to threaten others' faces, it is in general in every participant's best interest to maintain each other's face, that is to act in ways that assure the other participants that the agent is heedful of the assumptions concerning the face. (322)

Thus, according to Brown and Levinson, a polite society (or rung of society) ultimately results from all of the members desiring to maintain their own positive social identity. They desire for their "actions to be unimpeded by others," called negative face, and for their "wants [to] be desirable to at least some others," called positive face (322). Both of these kinds of face can be threatened by different kinds of acts. Speakers threaten positive face when they show "disapproval, criticism, contempt or ridicule" because they imply that they do not appreciate "one or more of [the addressee's] wants, acts, personal characteristics, goods, beliefs or values" (324). Negative face can be threatened by acts like "orders and requests" because they impose some obligation on the addressee's future actions (324). Negative politeness and positive politeness, on the other hand, are the methods by which speakers cooperatively affirm and avoid impositions on the

addressee's face. In Modern English, for example, we are very careful to compensate for a potential threat to face with a request through a conciliatory phrase like, "I'm sorry to bother you," or "I don't mean to impose." This hedging in of threat is called negative politeness.

Brown and Levinson's insight into the importance of polite communication for a hierarchical society is especially interesting in light of my study of Middle English pronoun choice. For speakers of Middle English, because of the courteous culture which develops around the English court, **"**[w]illingness to show respect where it is due is considered to reflect well on the speaker, and it reinforces the self-esteem of the addressee, and this is part of those medieval ideals of refinement summed up in the word *curteisie*" (Burnley 32). Middle English speakers want to use polite language in order to build their own face. Using *Y* as a positive politeness strategy eventually becomes grammaticalized, to the point that Modern English now only uses *Y*. The polite use of *Y* overlaps with Brown and Gilman's understanding of power's influence on choice of *Y* towards social superiors. Barbara M. H. Strang says that Middle English courtly speakers often err on the side of caution by using *Y* in circumstances where they are unsure whether their addressee deserves respect because "in all cases of doubt one would rather be polite than risk giving offense, and every precedent widens the range of cases of doubt" (qtd. in Mazzon 144). Interestingly, the results of my study do not match this caution that Strang says courtly speakers hold. The instances of *T* far outweigh the instances of *Y*, implying that the influence of politeness on *T/Y* choice extends beyond the use of *Y* towards social superiors.

Connecting the power dynamic (influence of relative social standing on pronoun

choice) to confrontation or affirmation of face does not solidify until the Early Modern

Period, when the connection between *Y* and respect becomes so grammaticalized that

speakers often considered it impolite to address anyone with *T* (Burnley 31). Middle

English does not seem to grammaticalize *T* as an attack of face to the extent that Early

Modern English does; however, in later Middle English, I will show that *T* is sometimes

used in connection to face-threatening acts. This use of *T* implies that Middle English

speakers were shifting their understanding of the power influence *T/Y* choice by

beginning to associate *T* with an attack of face rather than just the singular second person

pronoun absent of any relational implications. In the study of the pronoun use in the

romances, I will also more broadly show how politeness and face-threatening acts often

have influence over pronoun choice based on whether or not the speaker desires to

conciliate the face-threatening act or to reinforce it.

The developing connection between politeness and address pronouns in Middle

English allows speakers to employ the cultural acceptance of the power dynamic for

rhetorical purposes. Because *Y* has begun to be used by Middle English speakers as a

"reverential or polite address" by the thirteenth century (Wales 108), we know that power

relationships had begun to influence second person pronoun choice. Brown and Gilman's

theory regarding the influence of power on pronoun choice does not take into

consideration, though, instances where a speaker holds a traditional position of power but

uses *Y* towards an inferior or where a speaker switches between *T* and *Y* in the same

conversation. These seeming discrepancies with Brown and Gilman's theory might better

be explained by the influence of politeness on Middle English speakers. Since many

speakers were aware by the mid-thirteenth century of the polite use of *Y*, they might

employ *Y* towards an inferior in order to conciliate the addressee during a face-threatening act. Conversely, if the speaker wanted to attack the addressee's face because of a failure of social relationship, he or she could employ *T* to an equal or superior addressee in order to threaten positive face. In these instances, the speaker rhetorically exploits society's developing understanding of the power dynamic of *Y* in order to maintain his or her own social face by appearing courteous. Note that this use of *T*/*Y* goes beyond Brown and Gilman's understanding of the influence of power on pronoun choice because it necessitates that the speaker and the addressee are conscious of the power dynamic and use it for purposes other than solidifying social distinction.

1.5: Overall Pronoun Distributions of the Primary Sources

In each of the texts I have examined, the characters employ *T* in singular address much more often than they employ *Y*. Figure 2 depicts the general trend throughout the romances that despite date of composition, material, or elements of the plot, the characters in the romances use *T* in singular address much more often than they use *Y*. Out of the 1,413 uses of *T* or *Y* in singular address in the six romances of this study, 81.7% of those pronouns are *T* while only 18.3% are *Y*.

This trend towards heavier usage of *T* seems consistent with the development of the usage of *Y* for singular address in English, which started in the late thirteenth century (Burrow and Turville-Petre 41); Middle English speakers used *Y* as a plural pronoun of address before they began to use it in singular address, making it "obvious," as Gabriella Mazzon states, "that the further back in time we go, the less use of the singular Y we should find. . ." (137). The application of Mazzon's observation to the romances of this

study has held true; the earlier romances have fewer instances of singular *Y* than the later romances.
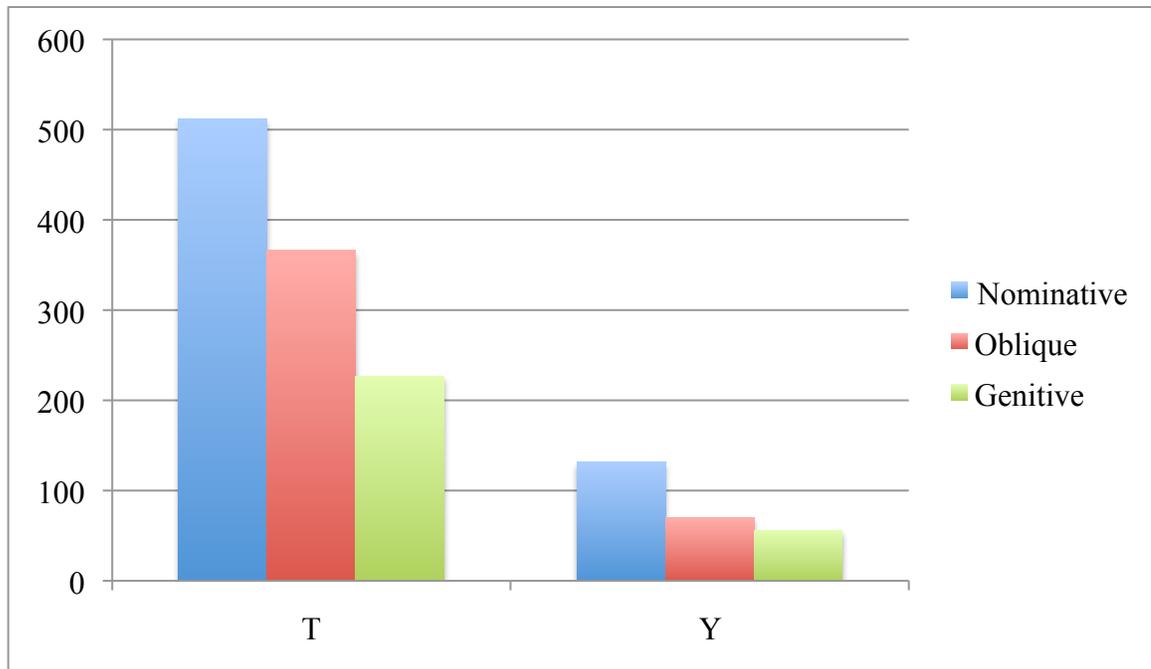
Figure 2: The instances of T *and* Y *in singular address by case in all of the study's romances.*

As Figures 3 through 8 in Section 2 will show, however, the converse of Mazzon's observation does not necessarily hold true: neither the early nor the late romances use *Y* in singular address nearly as regularly as they employ *T*. Even though this trend towards more *T* overall seems consistent with the development of the English pronoun system, this trend's application in the later romances is inconsistent with other late fourteenth century works. Chaucer in the *Canterbury Tales*, for instance, uses *T* 1,734 times and *Y* to a singular addressee 1,436 times, giving *T* only a slim majority of being used 54.7% in situations of singular second person address (Mazzon 136). Mazzon states that by the time Chaucer wrote his *Canterbury Tales*, "the use of Y, if certainly not

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predominant, is already widespread" (137); however, in the next section I will show that in at least some late fourteenth century texts, *Y* to singular addressees is still not widespread or at least not as widespread as in Chaucer.

In Section 2, I will also show some instances of second person singular address pronoun usage which do not fit into the standard explanation that, by the late thirteenth century, Middle English speakers commonly use *Y* to politely address "individuals of higher rank" (Lutz 191) in the social hierarchy, as a form of respect (Kennedy 22). Despite the sometimes elaborate circumstances which scholars say usually guide an author's choice between *T* and *Y* in singular address, characters in these six romances do not use *Y* in every situation where the addressee is superior or deserves politeness, and they sometimes employ *T* where relative social status, "*curteis speche*," or the intimacy of the relationship would usually call for *Y* (Burnley 32).

There are two different types of second person pronoun usage which are of interest to this study: instances where characters change (sometimes switching back and forth) between *T* and *Y* towards the same single character, which are telling because they might mark a change of pragmatic context, and instances where the pronoun choice does not seem to fit into the standard explanation based on the relationship between the characters, which are noteworthy when they correspond either to internal shifts of pragmatic context or external differences, like genre, between the text and other Middle English texts. I will clearly differentiate between which type of usage happens in each interesting instance. Also, I have tried to bring to light most uses of *T* and *Y* which fit into the previously noted two circumstances; however, for the longer romances, especially *Ywain and Gawain*, I have only chosen to focus on the most interesting instances of *T*

and *Y*. Finally, in my calculations, I have ignored forms of *T* and *Y* which appear in verbal contractions. In no instance have these contracted *T* and *Y* forms contradicted the precedent set for pronoun choice within the rest of the specific speech act.

2   Analysis of *T* and *Y* in the Romances

2.1   *Floris and Blancheflour*

  Floris and Blancheflour, an early Middle English romance of the east midlands

dialect written around 1250 (French and Hale 823), survives in four manuscripts, a

testament to the wide-spread popularity of the folk story that serves as the source for the

Middle English *Floris and Blancheflour* in Europe during the Middle Ages (Kooper 13).

In fact, it is probably "the second oldest romance in English" (Kooper 13). For this study,

I have used Walter Hoyt French and Charles Brockway Hale's transcription of the

Egerton 2862 manuscript, which they have elected to use because it is more complete

than the other manuscripts (French and Hale 823).

  This romance is exceptional within the corpus of Middle English Romances not

only for its early date but also for its primary subject matter. *Floris and Blancheflour*'s

action takes place in Spain and the Middle East instead of the English or French settings

typical to Middle English romances. In this story, a young prince, Floris, grows up with

and eventually falls in love with a girl who happens to share his birthday but who is also

the daughter of a servant. Floris's parents, especially the king, see Blancheflour, the

young woman of Floris's affections, as a threat to their son's strength as an heir to the

throne. After attempting less desperate methods, the monarchs sell Blancheflour to a

slave trader, while telling their son that Blancheflour has died. Blancheflour ends up in

the harem of an emir; she is well treated and well favored by the emir, but she longs for

Floris. In the mean time, Floris threatens suicide, so his mother reveals Blancheflour's

true fate. The young prince finds Blancheflour after much secrecy and travail, and the

two enjoy their secret rendezvous until they are discovered between the bed sheets by the emir himself! The emir recognizes the strength of their young love after an appeal by Floris, and he permits the young couple to go freely. The couple marries, returns to Spain, and is crowned king and queen.
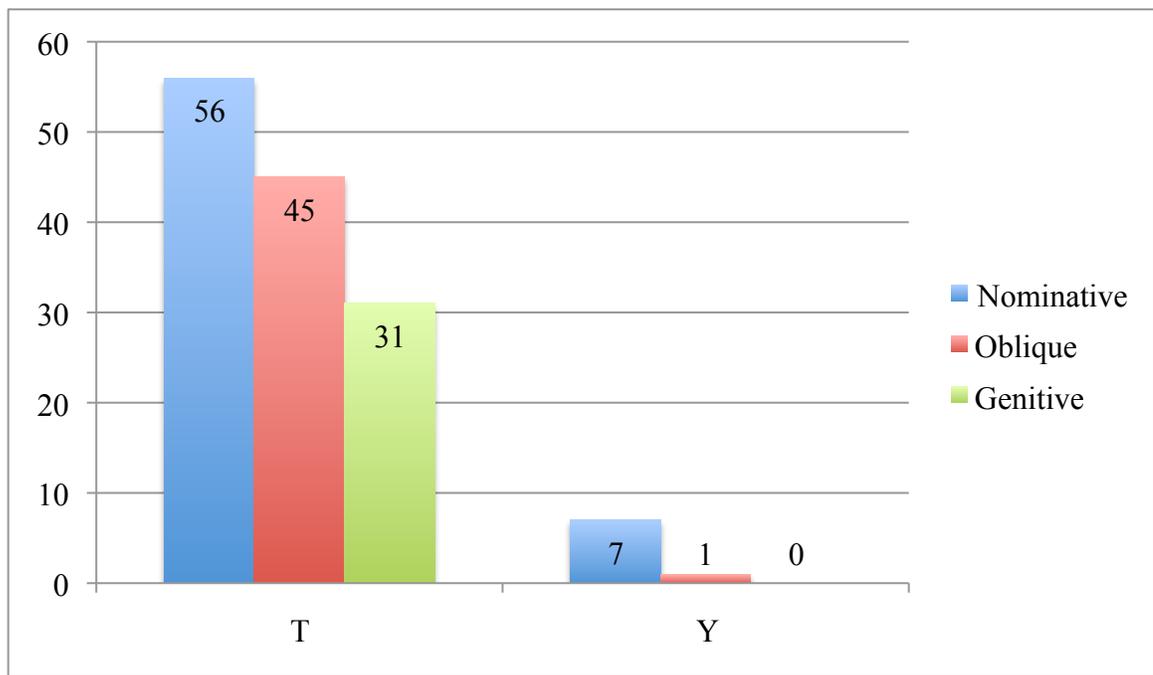
Figure 3: The instances of T *and* Y *in singular address by case in* Floris and Blancheflour.

In *Floris and Blancheflour*, *T* is used 132 times (94.3%), and *Y* is used in singular address eight times (5.7%), as shown in Figure 2. This high proportion of *T* to *Y* is consistent with the development of *Y* as a singular form of address since *Floris and Blancheflour* was probably written in the middle of the thirteenth century. The romance's few instances of *Y* do not discount it from consideration in this study because, interestingly, a few of those instances speak to a shift in pragmatic context. In one, the speaker, Floris, earlier addresses his father with *Y* but then later changes to *T*. Also,

Floris's mother, the Queen, addresses her husband with *Y* in one instance, a usage which initially seems to fit within Brown and Gilman's schema but, on closer look, appears to be an exploitation of the power associations with *Y* for rhetorical purposes.

Floris's use of *T* and *Y* to his father the king could be seen as "'erratic', 'casual', or unexplainable" (Mazzon 136) when viewed in terms of the standard explanation. Floris addresses his father four times with *T* and four times with *Y* over the course of the romance. While Floris consistently has addressed his father with *Y* in lines 85-95, he addresses his father with *T* four times in lines 339-51. The relative social hierarchy has not changed between Floris and his father at this point in the story; the king is still the king, and Floris is still the king's son. Despite their static social relationship, Floris makes a definitive shift in the address pronoun he uses towards his father. While the typical explanation of inferiority/superiority does not explain Floris's shift to *T* towards his father, examining the shift in light of pragmatics provides a better explanation.

Although Floris's speeches include polite and endearing address terms, such as "Sir" (333) and "Leue ffader" (339), the content of the speeches is actually quite threatening. First, Floris reproaches his father, after the king asks Floris to stay at court instead of searching for Blancheflour (332), by saying to his father's desire that he desist from his search, "Me to bydden it were grete synne" (334), threatening his father's positive face (his desire for his "wants [to] be desirable to at least some others" [Levinson 322]) in response to his father's own threat to Floris's negative face (his desire for his "actions to be unimpeded by others" [Levinson 322]). The king then relents, presumably in an attempt to heal their relationship and ignore the face-threats made by both men, with a generous offer to supply Floris with whatever he needs for his journey (335-38).

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Floris's next speech contains the switch from the earlier *Y* to *T*, using *T* four times in a single speech of fifteen lines. Floris's endearing use of "Leue fader" (339) appears to indicate that he has accepted his father's resignation and generosity graciously; understanding the speech as such a response would indicate that his use of *T* shows his desire to enforce their solidarity, their intimacy and love, by addressing his father with the familiar form of the second-person pronoun. The content of the rest of his speech, however, raises questions about his motive behind the pronoun switch. He responds to his father's offer with requests that indicate a presumptuous, decadent imposition on his father's generosity, thus constituting a threat to the king's negative face. Specifically, Floris asks for seven expensive horses, two laden with silver and gold, two piled with spending money for the trip, and three decadently arrayed with the best riding gear in the kingdom (342-48). He also asks for seven men to accompany the horses, three servants, and even the king's own "wel nobel" (352) chamberlain (349-54). His last request for the chamberlain is even a threat to the king's positive face amidst his speech of negative threats; Floris's commandeering of the king's chief means of maintaining his household shows that the young prince does not care that his father's desires and needs are maintained in his absence. Floris's overall threat to the king's negative face is heightened by the manner in which he asks for these gifts:

> "Leue ffader," he seide, "*y telle þee*
>
> Al þat þou *shalt* fynde me:
>
> Þow *mast* me fynde, *at my deuyse*,
>
> Seuen horses al of prys." (339-42; emphasis added)

Taken with Floris's authoritative, demanding words, which emphasize his power to control his father's actions, his address of "leue fader" takes a condescending tone and his use of *T* perfectly accompanies the manipulative power he uses on his father. Instead of trying to soften his request with negative politeness, which would have included means of "social 'distancing'" (Brown and Levinson 130), he uses familiar *T* and boldly asserts his power over his father.

Not only does Floris's use of *T* threaten negative face, but it also reflects his own emotional growth. He has matured enough to be able to traverse great distances for a noble purpose and to pursue a sexual relationship with the woman he loves (a task for which he was not always old enough within the story). His use of *T* towards his father reinforces this emotional growth because it shows that he recognizes some his own maturity. He no longer has to address his father as a needy and submissive child looking up to his father, using *Y,* but as an equal who has the power (and the rhetorical flair) to attain his desires, using *T*. Admittedly, Floris has reason to be angry with his father; his father has faked his beloved's death and then has sold her into slavery without any concern for the girl's safety. When read in the light of these circumstances, Floris's unwillingness to yield to his father's conciliation shows a deep concern for standards of virtue and love. He remains true to Blancheflour even though the highest powers in multiple kingdoms have conspired to keep them apart.

The lens of Floris's perspective also reveals some of his other possible motives for threatening his father's face through a shift in pronoun usage. By addressing his father with *T,* he demonstrates his own power in their relationship, a power that successfully obtains even its most elaborate desires. His assertion of power also proves to his father,

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whose position as king forces him always to consider who should succeed him, that he can be an effective leader. The king's disposal of Blancheflour was an attempt to keep his son, the heir he hoped to have, from marrying the daughter of a servant (39-40). Thus, it would seem that Floris's desire to find Blancheflour would displease his father; however, the prince negotiates the situation in such a way as to get what he wants (Blancheflour) and the means to secure what he wants from the very man who had previously disapproved of the relationship. His use of *T*, then, reflects his own shift in attitude and even influences the king's attitude toward his son.

Floris's mother, who shows compassion for her son's love of Blancheflour much more often than her husband, only uses a second person pronoun once in address to her husband, *Y* at line 149. The only other person towards whom she uses a second person pronoun is Floris; she only and often uses *T* towards her son. This difference in pronoun frequency and type seems to be consistent with Brown and Gilman's theory of pronoun usage. However, when one notes how often the queen speaks to her husband before this line and that she consistently uses the first person plural pronoun towards him, her choice of *Y* speaks to the possible influence of external factors.

At the king's first mention of his desire to kill Blancheflour in order to keep his son from marrying the daughter of a servant, the queen responds, after the narrator states that the queen's motive is to protect the girl from death, twice with the pronoun *we* combined with a suggestion for their mutual action: "we auȝt to fond / Þat Florens lyf with menske in londe " (55-56) and "we shul oure soon Florys / Sende into þe londe of Mountargis" (65-66). In order not to reveal her desire to save Blancheflour's life, the

queen carefully softens her ideas with the combination of *we* and a modal, crafting the propositions into their only mutually beneficial and logically obvious options.

After the queen's plan to distract Floris by sending him to a different kingdom fails, the king's temper erupts into a wrathful call for Blancheflour's beheading (139-41). At this point, the narrator explains that the queen is "ful woo" (142) and desperate to find a means to preserve Blancheflour's life. Out of this desperation springs her pronoun switch. She no longer has the leisure to hint at mutually satisfying solutions; instead, she appeals directly to the king's desire for personal gain:

> For Goddes love, sir, mercy!
>
> At þe next haven þat here is,
>
> Þer ben chapmen ryche ywys,
>
> Marchaundes of Babyloyn ful ryche,
>
> Þat wol hur bye blethelyche.
>
> Than may ȝe for þat lovely foode
>
> Haue muche catell and goode;
>
> And soo she may fro vs be brouȝt,
>
> Soo þat *we* slee hur nouȝt. (144-52; emphasis added)

The queen's previous and present (152) uses of the first person plural pronoun reveal that her use of *Y* functions as a direct appeal to the king's unique desires as an individual. *Y* is here being used as a specifically, emphatically singular pronoun. The *Y* cuts through the queen's established semblances of politeness in order to underscore the king's own monetary gain. By using *Y*, the queen cuts herself off from the financial benefit, but she still aligns herself with the king's original desire for Floris's separation from

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Blancheflour in the last two lines of her speech. By delineating her gains with such

nuance, the queen achieves her secret goal of saving Blancheflour's life and at the same

time ensures that her husband will not suspect her of possessing ulterior motives counter

to his own desires. Her use of *Y* works within the power semantic (although not the

solidarity semantic, since the intimate *T* would most likely be used in a situation of such

intense emotion). She uses the developing cultural expectations for pronoun use which

allow speakers to use *Y* as a singular pronoun towards those with authority, but she

flatters and emphasizes her husband's ego with *Y* out of an apparently deliberate

rhetorical choice.

The examples of Floris and his mother should make obvious that although this

romance was composed early in the development of Middle English, it still uses *Y* in

singular address and in very specified ways. Both Floris's and the queen's uses of *T* and

Y correspond at least partially to the power or solidarity semantics, but both of their

switches to *Y* also constitute rhetorical expansion upon the foundation of those semantics.

The already explored evidence of the text stands in direct contrast to assertions by

scholars like Blake who contend that Middle English did not have enough room for

variance to allow for interesting, intentional uses of *T/Y* by authors or speakers:

> Only very broad distinctions between polished and vulgar speech were
>
> possible; subtleties were impossible. It has, however, been suggested that
>
> many authors may have used *thou*/*thee* or *you* carefully to indicate how a
>
> person was regarded by the speaker, just as speakers of modern French or
>
> German distinguish the polite from the informal forms. While this is
>
> possible, the general absences of other markers and the irregularity of the

use of *thou/thee* and *you* in most Middle English works indicate that

contemporary writers and readers did not expect this kind of distinction in

their literature. (Blake 44)

Perhaps the writers and readers did not *expect* this kind of distinction, but the evidence in

this romance implies that people in medieval England were familiar enough with this

distinction that they understood the speaker's moves if he or she used a more or less

respectful form of address. The evidence in *Floris and Blancheflour* and the other

romances of this study implies that, at the very least, the power and solidarity semantics

were engrained enough in the language that speakers could choose between *T* and *Y*

depending on their rhetorical purpose, even fairly early on in the language's

development.

2.2   *Havelok the Dane*

The Lay of Havelok the Dane, an early Middle English romance of the north-

midland dialect written around 1285 (French and Hale 73), survives in only one

manuscript, Laud Misc. 108 (Mehl 161). This paper uses Walter W. Skeat's EETS

edition of the romance. The English *Havelok* does seem to be based on a French version

of the story (Mehl 162), but the author's adaptation takes a different approach to most

other English adaptations of French romances; instead of shortening and simplifying the

French text, *Havelok* is "by far the longest of all the early versions of the saga" (Mehl

162). In addition to lengthening the French accounts, the English author seems to have

added to the literary nature of the story. As is important in relation to the following

exploration of the romance's pronouns, Dieter Mehl notes that the romance's author

appears to have strong command over the communicative and persuasive power of the language:

> There is abundant use of alliteration, anaphora, formulaic patterns, and other comparatively simple ornaments of style, belonging with the *ornatus facilis*. Often such repetitions sound like the primitive mannerisms of an oral style, and this may in some cases be true, but they also belong to a rhetorical tradition and show a degree of conscious artistry which accords very little with the picture, often drawn, of a popular minstrel entertaining a group of illiterate peasants in a market-place or tavern. (Mehl 165)

While the genre and even the language is less developed at the writing of *Havelok* than some of the later romances of this study, *Havelok*'s author seems to have had more than mere entertainment as his purpose.

Havelok the Dane tells the parallel stories of two young heirs to thrones whose parents die and who are left to the mercy of evil guardians. The English heiress, Goldeboru, gets locked away from society. Meanwhile, the Danish heir, Havelok, begs his captor, Godard, to allow him to live; instead, Godard charges a fisherman, Grim, with the execution of the young prince. Grim realizes that he has the prince in his possession when light streams from the boy's mouth. The fisherman decides to raise the boy, moving the whole family to England in order to protect Havelok from Godard. After many happy years, Havelok travels into the kingdom in order to support himself. Goldeboru's captor, Godrich, seeks to punish Goldeboru by marrying her to Havelok, whom Godrich assumes is a mere menial laborer. Goldeboru marries the young man, but she is surprised to discover his royal heritage by the same luminous means as Grim. Goldeboru and

Havelok, united against the injustice which Godrich and Godard enacted against them and their kingdoms, eventually regain their rightful thrones.

Havelok has a distribution of T/Y that looks similar to that of *Floris and Blancheflour*. Out of the 206 uses of the second-person pronoun of address, *T* is used 192 times (93.2%), and *Y* is used in singular address fourteen times (6.8%), as shown in Figure 3.
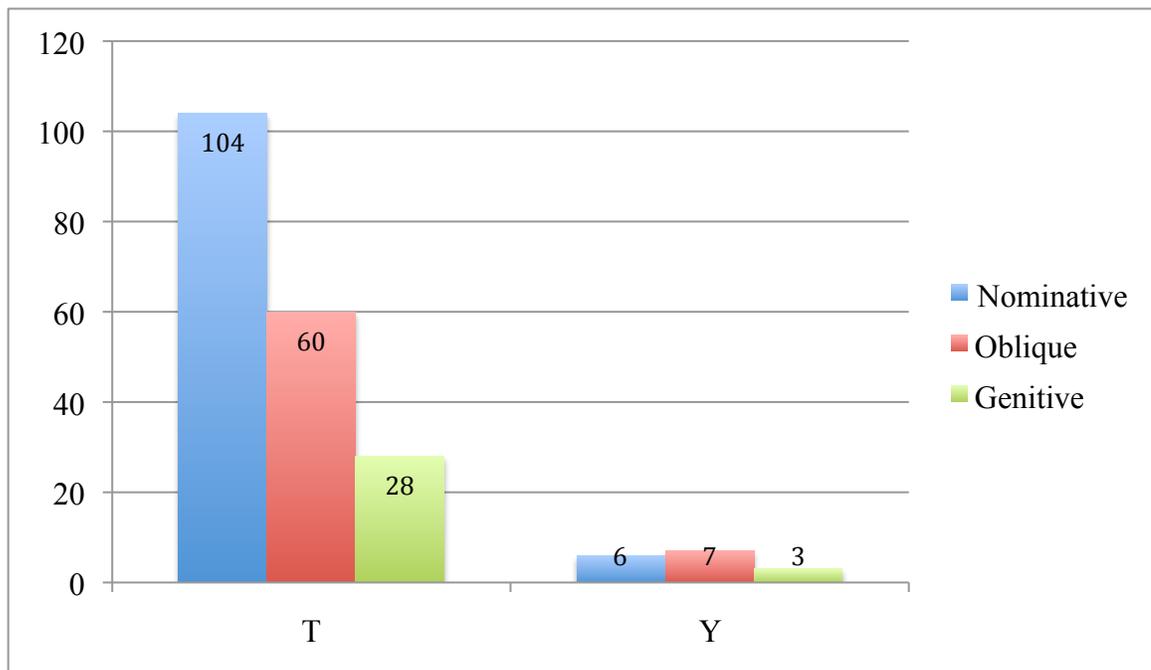
Figure 4: The instances of T *and* Y *in singular address by case in* Havelok the Dane.

It would be easy to assume that in such an early romance, the few uses of *Y* occur as non-rule-governed whims of the author who was not particularly concerned with exploring the nuance of relationships through language; in actuality, that assumption appears to hold true in most of the romance. As I will show, there are pronoun switches in *Havelok* which are largely unexplainable according to either the standard explanation or the lens of pragmatics. However, even this early romance shows evidence that, while

readers may not have expected the distinctions between *T* and *Y*, the authors had the linguistic tools available to communicate more than mere direct address through a pronoun. Establishing that early authors made regular distinctions between *T* and *Y* is important in order to explore the increasing subtlety, born through increasing grammaticalization, which other authors give their characters.

If the authors of *Havelok* and *Floris and Blancheflour* made no rule-bound choices of *Y* over *T*, my argument based around polite and rhetorical uses of generally adopted grammaticalization would have no weight, no historical legs upon which to stand. The text of *Havelok* provides two interesting circumstances which evidence early grammaticalization of positive politeness with *Y*. The first, in which the young Havelok begs Goddard for his life, is an example of both the romance's apparently ungoverned switches between *T* and *Y* and also its occasional use of the formulaic predecessors of later grammaticalization. The other circumstance, in which the English earls pay homage to Goldeboru as their new queen, shows that *Y* had enough associations of politeness at this point to make it the consistent choice for a scene of reconciliation like this one.

After the evil Godard slits the throats of Havelok's two sisters, the young heir to the throne of Denmark voices an impassioned plea to the man who is supposed to be the guardian of the children.

> But þe knaue, þat litel was,
>
> He knelede bifor þat iudas,
>
> And seyde, "louerd, merci nov!
>
> Manrede, louerd, biddi *you*:
>
> Al denemark i wile *you* yeue,

To þat forward *þu* late me liue;

Here hi wile on boke swere,

Þat neuer more ne shal i bere

Ayen *þe*, louerd, sheldne spere,

Ne oþer wepne that may *you* dere." (481-90; emphasis added)

Notice that young Havelok uses *Y* three times and *T* twice in this same speech. No lasting change in the relationship that might be reflected in pronoun use transpires in these few lines, most evidenced by the fact that Havelok switches from *Y* to *T* and then back to *Y*. Some scholars, like Mazzon (149-51), note that in Chaucer the use of *Y* often accompanies polite forms of address, like "*sire*, *lord*, *lady*, *dame*, and *madame*" (Mazzon 149); however, that observation apparently does not apply to this speech since Havelok's *Y*s are not always accompanied by *loured* and his *loured*s are sometimes paired with *T*. Neither does the young prince use *T* for one function in the sentence and *Y* in another; he uses *Y* twice as an object (both direct and indirect) and once as a subject, and he uses *T* once as an object of the preposition and once as a subject. This speech is an excellent example of an instance where attempting to fit even a pragmatic frame on the pronoun switches would force the speaker and his words into an unsuitable interpretation. If there were any influences other than aesthetic flow on Havelok's pronoun switches, they seem to beyond our modern means of interpretation.

Even though we are unable to account for the pronoun variance in this instance, we do have insight into one of Havelok's pronoun choices, which in turn provides a means for understanding the pronoun use within the larger context of the romance. At the beginning of his plea, Havelok makes an interesting offer to Godard: "Manrede, louerd,

biddi you" (484). The editors of one edition of this text call readers to notice a subtle

cultural reference which the boy makes: "Note the pathetic and very ironic scene here:

the boy, to save his life, offers feudal homage (*manrde*) to a lord whose last thought is to

protect the child" (Herzman, Drake, and Salisbury 168). By offering a "pledge of service,

homage" to Godard ("Manrēden"), Havelok willingly places himself in a socially

subservient position to the man in an attempt to preserve his life. His inappropriate use of

manrede indicates that he is, at least partially, mimicking forms that he heard spoken

around the court. His pairing of *Y* with the pledge of homage could function as a

politeness strategy; as he gives up his own rights in recognition of Godard's current

superiority, he recognizes the developing power dynamic associated with *Y* and chooses

to use it in order to heighten his positive politeness. Havelok's pronoun uses and switches

imply that *Y* was not used universally towards all people of authority, since he would

have presumably absorbed such usage from the court and would have used *Y* consistently

towards Godard, but the connection of *Y* with the pledge of homage shows at least that it

was sometimes used to heighten the positive politeness of a formal speech act. Havelok

likely chose *Y* with his offer of *manrede* not because he was aware of the power of

rhetorically nuanced pronoun choice but because the men whom he had at some point

heard pledge *manrede* to his father had purposefully paired their promise with the added

politeness of *Y*. Havelok does not appear to be consciously employing pronoun switches

for his own purposes, but perhaps his use of *Y* inherits the rhetorical intent which might

be grammaticalized to the point of a regular formula.

This interpretation of Havelok's pronoun use is corroborated by the pledge the

English earls make to Goldeboru after the malfeasance against her has been exposed. The

earls, pledging to Goldeboru that "[E]nglond auhte forto ben youres, / And we youre

men and youres" (2800), consistently employ *Y* five times in their address. Their pronoun

choice fits succinctly into Brown and Gilman's power semantic since their speech, given

as they "falle / O knes" (2795-6), acknowledges Goldeboru as ruler and begs her

forgiveness for their lapse in judgment. Politeness also influences their choice to

acknowledge Goldeboru's power through their pronouns. They have injured her positive

face by rejecting her as queen and allowing her to be so maltreated; thus, they soften their

begging for forgiveness—itself a potential threat to negative face—by using *Y* when they

acknowledge her right to the throne and their service to her. The earls use *Y* as the

deferential form of the pronoun, showing that *Y* at this time held the possibility of

communicating more than simple address.

At this time, both *Y* and *T* seem to be used in the contexts of politeness and

power, as evidenced by at least two of Havelok's uses of *Y* towards Godard and five other

instances in the romance where characters use *Y* after having just set the precedent of *T*.

However, by the time of *Havelok the Dane*, speakers of Middle English apparently have

begun to associate *Y* with specific acts of politeness, associated with politeness even to

the extent that a young boy—flustered and distressed—would automatically employ *Y*

with a pledge of honor to a superior.

2.3   *Ywain and Gawain*

The long work *Ywain and Gawain* is an Arthurian romance written sometime

after 1350 in the northern dialect (French and Hale 485). Only one copy of this romance

exists in the manuscript Cotton Galba E. ix (Braswell 77). The Middle English *Ywain and*

Gawain is an adaptation or "abridged free translation" (Albert B. Friedman and Norman

T. Harrington, qtd. in Richmond 121-22) of a romance by Chrétien de Troyes. In fact,

Ywain is the only Middle English version of a romance by Chrétien (Richmond 120).

Ywain and Gawain focuses mainly on the knight Ywain, who decides to avenge

his kinsman, Colgrevance, by seeking out a knight who has unjustly attacked

Colgrevance. Arthur decides to take a retinue to follow Ywain on his journey. Ywain

quickly finds and wounds the unjust knight, following him back to his castle but getting

stuck in between the castle's two gates. As he waits in between the gates, he hears sounds

of mourning which indicate that his wound has killed the knight of the castle. Into this

situation steps Lunette, the lady-in-waiting to Alundyne, the dead knight's wife. Lunette

takes Ywain into her care and hides him until she can convince Alundyne that they need

Ywain's help in the inevitable confrontation with Arthur and his men. In the meantime,

Ywain falls in love with Alundyne from afar; he convinces Alundyne to marry him, and

he successfully keeps Arthur from taking any retribution against Alundyne or her

possessions. As Ywain entertains the courtly retinue in his newly acquired castle, Gawain

convinces the knight to accompany him on adventures in order to advance his renown so

that his wife Alundyne will admire him more. Ywain asks Alundyne for permission, and

she agrees, on the condition that he will be gone no longer than a year. A year passes, and

Ywain does not return to Alundyne. She denounces him, revoking his rights to her or her

property. Dejected and near the point of mental break, Ywain finds healing at the hands

of another compassionate woman, but he will not stay with her because he feels he must

still be faithful to his wife. Ywain makes a name for himself as "the Knight with the

Lyoun" (2662), accomplishing many great feats and saving many people with his faithful

lion, whom he has also saved, by his side. One of the people Ywain saves from death is

Lunette, who promises to reunite him with Alundyne for his service. Lunette succeeds,

and Alundyne, Ywain, Lunette, and the lion "[i]n joy and blis . . . led thaire live" (4024).

Ywain and Gawain provides the largest sampling of character combinations and

T/*Y* instances in this study: 607 second-person pronouns of address. With *T* comprising

71.8% (436 instances) and *Y* contributing 28.2% (171 instances) as shown in Figure 4,

the romance also has the most widespread use of *Y* as a singular pronoun out of the

romances of the study.
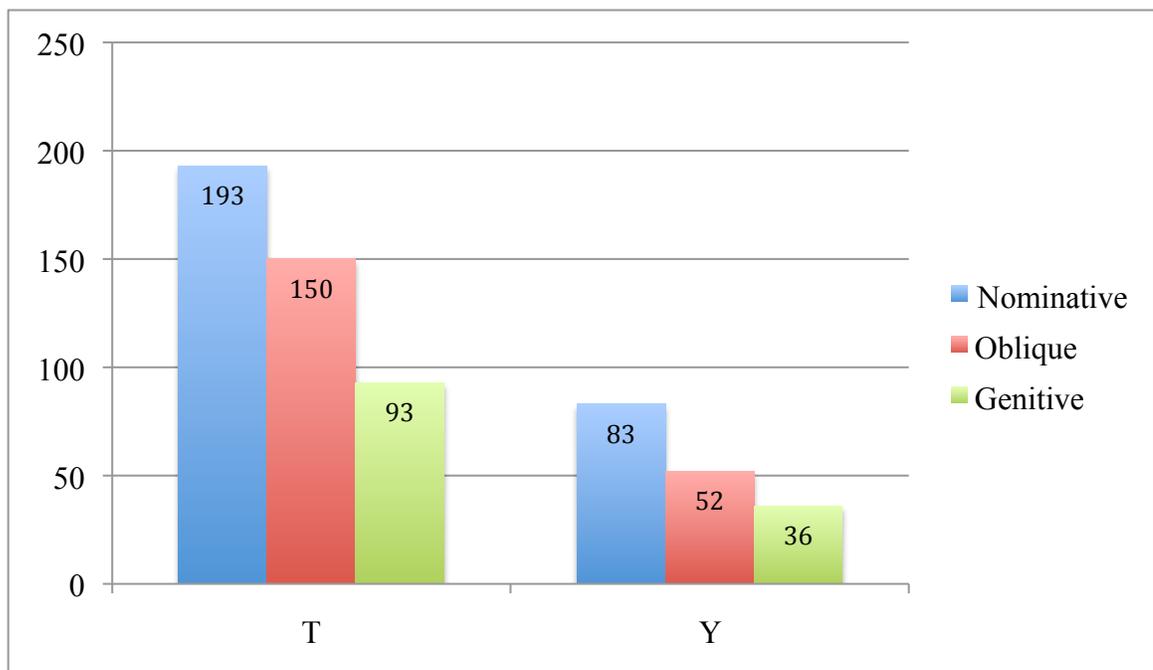
Figure 5: The instances of T *and* Y *in singular address by case in* Ywain and Gawain.

This romance's many characters use *T* and *Y* in ways which, in many instances,

seem to defy explanation through the standard formulae. The limitations of this project

keep me from evaluating all of the interesting uses of *T* and *Y* in *Ywain and Gawain*, so I

will focus on the major patterns of insufficiently explained usage. Lunette, the lady-in-

waiting to Alundyne, uses *T* and *Y* in apparently non-standard ways towards two of her

superiors, Ywain and Alundyne. Before the dialogues between Ywain and Lunette, the

T/Y usage in the romance very consistently follows the model of inferiority/superiority;

however, Lunette thwarts that model. Towards Ywain, Lunette uses *T* 64 times before

switching to *Y*, which she uses eight times towards the knight. Both her initial use of *T*

and her later switch suggest that they have a unique and changing relationship or

pragmatic context. Lunette's addresses to Alundyne are even more variable than those

towards Ywain: she regularly uses *Y* towards her lady (49 times), but she intersperses ten

instances of *T* in the same dialogues where she regularly employs *Y*. Again, pragmatics

will provide insight into Lunette's choice of pronoun. Lunette's pronoun choices, though,

are not alone in their seeming incongruities. Some of the patterns she establishes hold

true with two other ladies-in-waiting towards Ywain: both the maidens at the Castle of

Heavy Sorrow and the messenger-maiden for the younger sister at the end of the romance

begin speaking to the knight with *Y* but then switch to *T*.

 The date, courtly setting, and fairly educated audience, an audience highly

conscious of noble practice even if not wholly practicing (Braswell 79) create the space

for a greater variety of pronoun use. Through this variety, more discernable patterns of

regularity become evident, especially patterns that fit into Brown and Gilman's concepts

of power and solidarity. The sheer quantity of second-person pronoun use allows also for

a greater number of discrepancies than some of the previously addressed romances have

afforded, many of which make sense when viewed through the lens of pragmatics.

 Lunette, the attendant to the Lady Alundyne, sometimes serves as a confidante to

the lady. Their close relationship might allow for Lunette to use a *T* of solidarity towards

her mistress; however, Lunette's first recorded speech to Alundyne uses *Y*, a pattern

which she maintains for most of her interactions with the noblewoman. Her respectful *Y*

is not strange for their relationship, especially because of the tale's Arthurian cast, which

includes well-known, noble characters as the main actors, whom audiences might assume

deserve respect from all people not in Arthur's circle. Thus, it is Lunette's occasional use

of *T* towards her mistress (ten instances occurring in two speeches) which calls for closer

attention.

Lunette's first use of *T* towards Alundyne accompanies a threat to the

noblewoman's face:[6]

> "Madame," she said, "ȝe er a barn;
>
> Þus may ȝe sone ȝowre self forfarn."
>
> Sho sayd, "Chastise þi hert, madame;
>
> To swilk a lady it es grete shame
>
> Þus to wepe and make slike cry;
>
> Think opon þi grete gentri.
>
> Trowes þou þe flowre of chevalry
>
> Sold al with þi lord dy
>
> And with him be put in molde?
>
> God forbede that it so solde!
>
> Als gude als he and better bene." (975-85)

---

[6] Although the two feminine pronouns and speech tags in the following quotation might prove confusing, both speeches are undoubtedly spoken by Lunette, as the context makes clear.

The first three second-person pronouns accompany a threat to Alundyne's positive face because the insult of calling the woman "[a]n infant [or] a child" ("Bārn") shows that Lunette does not consider Alundyne's choices or desires to measure up to an acceptable level of maturity and responsibility. The rest of Lunette's speech constitutes a threat to Alundyne's negative face because her suggestions, reminders, and orders "predicate some future act of the addressee, and the addressee is pressured to perform something which the speaker predicates" (Shimonomoto 34). Lunette's shift from criticism to orders corresponds to her switch from *Y* to *T*; however, neither of these pronouns politely soften the attacks of face since an softened attack to positive face usually calls for "'approaching' behaviour," within which fits the *T* of solidarity, and a softened attack to negative face usually calls for "respect behaviour," within which fits the *Y* of power (Brown and Levinson 37, 129).

Comparing this anomalous speech with Lunette's first speech to her mistress (940-58) further marks the second speech's avoidance of politeness. The first record of Lunette speaking to Alundyne shows the lady-in-waiting indirectly chiding her mistress's excessive mourning for her husband by telling the noblewoman that she should instead think of her own protection and preparation for Arthur's arrival. Such censure primarily threatens Alundyne's positive face since instead of "express[ing] criticism [or] insults" (Shimonomoto 35), she primarily makes suggestions and reminds Alundyne of her duty. The accompanying *Y* is a negative politeness strategy to demonstrate "respect" and to "minimiz[e] the particular imposition that the FTA [face-threatening act] unavoidably effects" (Brown and Levinson 129). As noted above, Lunette's later correction, even though it primarily takes the form of advice and reminders, does not use *Y* as a

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politeness strategy. Why does she change her approach later in the same day for a similarly purposed speech?

Towards an answer to that question, consider the following insights from Keiko Shimonomoto. She notices that, particularly with the upper class speakers in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, "[t]he basic assumption in doing face-threatening acts . . . is that they ought to be done, most of the time, indirectly" (81). As a result of this assumption, she further notes that, in *Troilus and Criseyde*, "the clear bald-on-record remark stands out, signaling some unusual state of the speaker, or change in his attitude to the addressee" (81). In fact, she earlier explains that one of the few instances where speakers might bluntly make a face-attack without polite hedging is

> the case of great urgency where maximum efficiency is most important in communication: in such occasions, there is a tacit agreement between the speaker and the addressee that the relevance of face demands may be suspended in the interests of urgency or efficiency, and the speaker performs the act in the most direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way possible. (Shimonomoto 39-40)

Perhaps Lunette's pronoun usage in lines 975-85 seems incompatible with standard politeness strategies because she purposefully relinquishes all attempts to cater to Alundyne's face in an effort to effectively communicate by cutting through the elaborate, indirect statements associated with politeness.

This explanation for Lunette's pronoun choice fits with the change in circumstances between the two speeches. After Lunette's first speech, Alundyne asks Lunette to leave and not to speak to her again in such a way (961-63). After Lunette

leaves, Alundyne realizes that there might be some truth to Lunette's words. Even then, she is unable to make a decision; she sits "in stody lang" (972), meaning that she sits in "[a] state of mental perplexity" ("Stude"), and it is in such a state that Lunette again finds her mistress. The emotional complexity of the situation and the weight of the choices the woman must make seem to cripple Alundyne into a state of distress and inaction. The faithful Lunette realizes that someone must make decisions to save both of their lives and reputations, so she attempts to shock her mistress into reality and responsibility. She has honored Alundyne by obeying the demand for her departure and by giving the lady enough time to come to her own decision; however, once she sees that Alundyne has taken no action and is in a state of mental distress, she realizes that the time for politeness has ended. As noted above, Lunette attacks both Alundyne's positive and negative face (975-85) without attempt at softening the attacks, even going out of her way to avoid softening the attacks by switching pronouns at the appropriate times. Lunette's previous attempts at helping Alundyne have failed, so out of desperation she bluntly frames Alundyne's actions and responsibilities, constituting a "case of great urgency where maximum efficiency is most important in communication" (Shimonomoto 39). Thus, Lunette's switch to *T* stems from an understanding of the rhetorical possibilities of the second-person pronouns in service of politeness, a thorough enough understanding to allow her the choice to break the norm and ignore those possibilities for the purpose of effective communication.

Lunette's pronoun usage towards Ywain is also atypical, but its variance takes a different form than Lunette's pronoun usage towards Alundyne. Instead of establishing a precedent of formal *Y*, Lunette starts her interactions with Ywain by using *T* towards the

knight. Only later, after Ywain saves Lunette from certain death, does Lunette begin to use *Y* towards Ywain. More surprising than her later switch to *Y*, which derives from a pragmatic switch in their power dynamic and from a desire to create distance in the relationship to represent her debt to the knight, is her initial use of *T* to a man who does not know her. The key comes, once again, in Lunette's understanding of the developing standards for pronoun regularity and her exploitation of those standards for her own purposes.

The first encounter Lunette has with Ywain takes place in between the two gates of the castle where she is employed. Ywain mourns his desperate situation because he is stuck with no way into or out of the castle, but Lunette appears out of a hidden door behind him (696-98). In the first sentence she speaks to the knight, she warns him that sheltering in the castle of the man whom he has just slain will lend him "febil ostell" (702). A warning is a threat to negative face (Brown and Levinson 65-6), but Lunette does not use her pronouns to soften the attack with a respect behavior. Lunette's pronoun choice also does not stem from any lack of knowledge she might have about Ywain's status or even his identity; she admits that she has previous knowledge or acquaintance with Ywain when she was at Arthur's court as a young girl and that Ywain paid her every courtesy (719-30). Because of his courtesy, she feels that she is in debt to Ywain and promises, "I aw þe honore and servyse" (720) and "[for Ywain's courtesies] sal I now quite þe" (730). Expressing a debt to the knight is also a potential threat to Ywain's negative face because it "predicate[s] some positive future act towards the addressee, and the addressee is pressured to accept or reject it" (Shimonomoto 35). Why, then, does

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Lunette not use the distance of *Y,* especially since she uses *Y* as a distancing and respect strategy towards Ywain later in the romance when he saves her life?

Her use of *T* might be justified by the setting of their first conversation. Lunette finds Ywain, after he has killed her master, stuck between the two gates of the castle. His life would be in danger if anyone else realized his presence. Thus, the *T* could reflect the intimacy of the situation and a need to communicate quickly and effectively. However, it seems more likely that Lunette's use of *T* towards Ywain is based upon another factor since she continues to address him with *T* until line 2201, after which she consistently uses *Y,* but only eight times compared to the 64 times she uses *T* previously.

Lunette here draws upon the associations of *T* born through the power semantic. By using *T*, Lunette reminds Ywain, through the pronoun's associations of servitude in the power semantic, that he needs her assistance (and thus he is in a position of reliance or subservience towards her). Even as she admits that she is in his debt and will thus repay him for his kindness to her, she also reminds him that he should feel a debt to her because of her attempt to preserve his life. Even though she does not have power over him within the social hierarchy, Lunette does have real power over Ywain at this time, within this specific pragmatic context. Her use of language, then, reinforces and reminds the knight of their relative positions.

Notice that Lunette's uses of *T* according to the power and solidarity semantics do not always reflect the status of her relationship to Ywain within a larger social context. Ywain does not remember Lunette from her days at court, allowing the possibility that she is wrong in assuming that their relationship ever had any depth or that Ywain's courtesy towards her was anything but the kindness he would show to any woman at

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court; however, Lunette uses his ignorance to her advantage. Whether or not their previous acquaintance constitutes a foundation of trust, Lunette's position of power—garnered through Ywain's current vulnerable position and his inability to remember their relationship—allows her to shape the reestablishment of their relationship to her advantage. Also, she says that her actions are an attempt to repay the debt that she feels towards Ywain, which under normal circumstances would imply that Ywain would be under no obligation to repay Lunette for any aid she gives him. However, Lunette's actions seem to insinuate that she nevertheless attempts to use these false assumptions to her advantage. The familiarity of their relationship creates an environment where Ywain feels safe staying in the one place in England where he should not be safe, allowing him the comfort to fall in love with Alundyne and to confide in Lunette about his love. Lunette does not seem surprised about his emotional state: "Sone sho saw him pale and wan, / Sho wist wele what him ayled þan" (913-14). She promises to help Ywain (once more threatening his negative face), but she fulfills this promise by approaching Alundyne in the aforementioned manner, shocking her out of her mourning by reminding her that they no longer have anyone to defend them and their lands with the coming of King Arthur. Lunette's remindings about their desperate plight prompts Alundyne to demand, "Lat se if þoue me tel kan, / Whare es any so doghty man, / Als he was þat wedded me" (987-89). Lunette has a ready answer and solution to their woes; she suggests that Ywain, whom she has been conveniently hiding in her bedroom, is the perfect knight to defend them since he has bested even Alundyne's husband (996-1010).

While both Alundyne and Ywain gain through Lunette's actions, Lunette has orchestrated the whole situation to ensure that she will not lose her position in

Alundyne's household because some other knight takes the castle from the defenseless lady. Lunette's *T* towards Ywain, then, works to ensure he will feel comfortable enough and indebted enough to remain at the dangerous castle and to defend the wife of the man he has just killed, ultimately working towards Lunette's safety. Even though she has neither an intimate relationship with Ywain or a position of social authority over him, she addresses the knight with second-person pronouns which suggest she has both, showing that she chooses to draw on the narrow pragmatic context to shape her language. She uses the standard deictic encoding of the power and solidarity semantics in *T*—even though the broader context of society does not call for the application of that deictic encoding— to shape and reinforce the pragmatic dynamics of the situation for her own safety with rhetorical and linguistic means. Just like Lunette's abnormal pronoun usage towards Alundyne, her pronoun usage towards Ywain shows that she understands the encoded possibilities of the pronouns enough to allow her the choice to use those possibilities even when the relationship might not, under usual circumstances, call for them. Her *T* towards Ywain shows that the power and solidarity semantics do not always follow the requirements of the pragmatic context; speakers are able to use those semantics for their own rhetorical purposes.

Two maidens other than Lunette address Ywain with varying *T*s and *Y*s. These ladies do not have nearly as familiar a relationship with Ywain as does Lunette, so their varied use of *T* and *Y* towards Ywain has even less basis in the standard familiarity/inferiority explanation. A closer examination of both of these speeches will reveal the women's use of second-person pronouns for complex politeness strategies,

lending even more credence to the previous arguments based on Lunette's understanding and exploitation of power, solidarity, and politeness encoded into *T* and *Y*.

The maiden of the lady who needs a knight to defend her right to her inheritance from her older sister seeks out Ywain's assistance on behalf of her mistress. She shows that she is aware of *Y* as a marker of respect because she begins her address to Ywain with *Y*. However, after she begins to tell Ywain of her mistress's distressing plight, she transitions into *T* even as she begins to threaten his negative face:

> Men dose to hir ful grete outrage,
>
> Þai wald hir reve hyr heritage;
>
> And in þis land now lifes none
>
> Þat sho traystes hyr opone
>
> Bot anly opon God and þe,
>
> For þou ert of so grete bounté;
>
> Thorgh help of þe sho hopes wele
>
> To win hyr right everilka dele. (2905-12)

The maiden's words constitute an obvious threat to Ywain's negative face; she is complimenting and admiring Ywain for his trustworthiness, forcing him either to "protect the object of the speaker's desire, or give it to the speaker" (Shimonomoto 35), either of which do not allow for Ywain's actions to be unimpeded by others. However, the maiden does not here attempt to soften this threat to Ywain's face through her pronoun choice. She is not oblivious to the possibility of using pronouns to soften such attacks of face, though. Only a few lines later, she seems to check herself after this outburst of emotion and switches to *Y* again: "Þarfore ȝowre answer wald I here, / Whether ȝe wil with me

wend, / Or elswhare ȝow likes to lend" (2920-22). *Y* here functions as a politeness

strategy, "minimizing the particular imposition that the FTA unavoidably effects"

(Brown and Levinson 129) by paying Ywain respect and distance so that he feels free to

make his own decision. The maiden's switch to politeness implies that her earlier use of *T*

is an irregular speech act in which her expression of intense emotion, which is a threat to

the addressee's positive face because it implies that she "does not care about, or is

indifferent to" Ywain's wants (Shimonomoto 35), takes precedence over the threat to his

negative face. This woman uses the connection between *Y* and politeness to minimize her

threats to Ywain's face, serving her desire that he will trust her and her lady enough to

serve as the lady's defender.

The other maiden who varies her pronouns towards Ywain is one of the

imprisoned women forced to work with "silk and gold-wire" (2967) at the Castle of

Heavy Sorrow. The noble Ywain asks them to explain their situation so that he can help

them if possible (3003-4). A representative of the many maidens replies, using polite

forms such as "sir" (3009) and *Y* in her address. This pattern continues until she speaks

directly to Ywain about his role in the situation:

> What knight so herbers here a nyght,
>
> With both [of the supposed sons of the devil] at ones bihoves him fight.
>
> So bus þe do, by bel and boke;
>
> Allas, þat þou þine yns here toke. (3021-24)

The maiden here presents unexpected, new intelligence about Ywain's danger. Her

speech does not threaten Ywain's negative face because her information does not take the

form of a warning and does not express her desire for Ywain to face such a dangerous

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fight. She simply presents the facts, which have resulted from Ywain's independent

choice to enter the Castle of Heavy Sorrow. Her speech, then, threatens Ywain's positive

face because it "bring[s] . . . bad news about the addressee" which could "show that [she]

does not care about, or is indifferent to, the addressee's positive face" (Shimonomoto 35).

Her switch to *T* is an attempt to soften her attack of Ywain's positive face by using the

pronoun as an "'approaching' behaviour" (Shimonomoto 37), attempting to "imply

common ground" (Shimonomoto 37) and to highlight their common plight so that she

might prove that she did not wish this upon him because she is bound to a similarly

negative fate. This situation, also, shows that pronouns often correspond to attempts at

politeness in order to soften face-threatening acts, lending textual support to my earlier

assumption that Lunette had such pronoun encoding available to her for rhetorical usage

or strategic ignoring.

Ywain's own pronouns usually align with the expectations of the standard

explanation; he speaks to most other knights, Lunette, ladies-in-waiting, and his squire

with *T*, and he uses *Y* towards Arthur, Gawain, and a lord he assists. He has the most

variation in his addresses to Alundyne, using *T* 19 times and *Y* eight times. He uses three

of those eight instances of *Y* towards the lady when she is unaware of his identity as her

husband and only knows him as "the Knight with the Lyoun" (2662); he takes on the role

of a stranger to Alundyne, using even the distancing *Y* to mask his identity. The other

instances of Ywain using *Y* towards Alundyne are also easy to explain according to

pragmatic influences.

During Ywain's first meeting with Alundyne, he uses both *Y* and *T* in address to

the lady, a switch which directly corresponds to his relative position and his rhetorical

purposes. He begins speaking to her with *Y* (1149-50), taking a deliberately subservient position "[o]n knees" (1148) to place his life at her disposal. Interestingly, he does not ask for forgiveness, an act which has the possibility of being denied or misconstrued. He instead says, "I ȝelde me ȝow until / Ever to be at ȝowre wyll" (1149-50). His pronouns, combined with his physical stance and deliberate words, acknowledge the real power Alundyne has over him within this pragmatic context. By relinquishing his power and acknowledging hers, he shows that he trusts her good nature enough to make a merciful decision without him having to play his own power card, his connection with the quickly approaching Arthur. After Alundyne grants Ywain the unasked for forgiveness, she invites him to share "[w]hy [he] ert þus debonere" (1160); Ywain responds with a change in his pronoun and his strategy:

> "Madame," he said, "anis with a luke
>
> Al my hert with þe þou toke;
>
> Sen I first of þe had syght,
>
> Have I þe lufed with al my might.
>
> To mo þan þe, mi lady hende,
>
> Sal never more my luf wende;
>
> For þi luf ever I am redy
>
> Lely forto lif or dy." (1161-68)

With *T* as his pronoun of address, Ywain takes the opportunity at this emotionally charged moment to declare his love to Alundyne. Even though his pronoun does not follow the precedent of Chaucerian f*in'amors* love pledges, Ywain's switch to *T* still reflects the shift from penitence to declarations of love. Having gained Alundyne's

forgiveness, he feels free to embrace and capitalize on the developing intimacy of their

relationship in his pronoun choice. For rhetorical purposes, Ywain chooses to switch to *T*

in order to use its associations, articulated in the solidarity semantic, with familiarity,

intimacy, and trust. Although the wider society or court would not have acknowledged a

change in their relationship, an attitudinal change has taken place in their immediate

pragmatic context, reflected in Ywain's change of address pronoun.

     Later, before he leaves for his adventures, Ywain switches from *T* to *Y* towards

his now-wife Alundyne. She allows him to go on his adventures as long as he promises to

return within a year; he makes the promise, but he switches to *Y* to make one final

request:

> Bot, madame, þis understands,
>
> A man þat passes divers landes,
>
> May sum tyme cum in grete destres,
>
> In preson or els in sekenes;
>
> Þarefore I pray ȝow, or I ga,
>
> Þat ȝe wil out-tak þir twa.[7] (1519-24)

Ywain's choice of *Y* over *T* reflects his desire to soften the threat to Alundyne's negative

face, a threat made by his request for her to change her demand—in other words, a threat

made by his request for her willingly to impede her actions for his benefit. His polite

pronoun accompanies a more elaborate negative politeness strategy, found in his

"conventional indirectness [and] hedges on illocutionary force" (Brown and Levinson

130) of "þis understands" and "I pray ȝow" (1519, 1523). In most of his conversations,

---

[7] Braswell translates this phrase as "exclude these two [possibilities]" (123).

Ywain's address pronouns fit into the categorization of the standard explanation; even his occasional variances from that norm can be neatly explained by the added influence of pragmatics.

The complex pronoun usage in *Ywain and Gawain* reflects, to a certain extent, the desires and language use of its English audience. The text's use of pronouns for politeness and rhetorical persuasion would have no meaning if its audience was not comfortable with the linguistic possibilities of Middle English's second-person pronouns. Brown and Gilman's power and solidarity semantics do account for many pronoun choices in the romance, but the pronouns' associations with politeness also appear to be regularized enough to allow both for polite uses in layers of complex face-threatening acts and also for rhetorical uses which exploit or ignore the polite pronoun for personal gain or effective communication.

2.4   Sir Launfal

Sir Launfal is a romance composed in the southern dialect (French and Hale 345), definitely written before 1450 and most likely in the late thirteenth century (Bliss 14-15). Unlike any of the other romances of this study, the author of this Middle English tail-rhyme romance names himself: "Thomas Chestre made þis tale" (1039).[8] Unfortunately, history leaves no further information about Thomas Chestre (Bliss 12). Scholars generally recognize three possible textual influences on *Sir Launfal*: Marie de France's Anglo-Norman *Lanval*, the earlier Middle English *Sir Landevale*, and "the anonymous

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[8] Tail-rhyme is "[t]he measure associated in particular with a group of Middle English romances in which a pair of rhyming lines is followed by a single line of different length and the three-line pattern is repeated to make up a six-line stanza" ("Tail-Rhyme.").

Breton lay of *Graelent"* (Bliss 2). *Sir Landevale* seems to have been Chestre's main source, "from which whole lines and fragments of lines are taken over bodily" (Bliss 2), although Chestre does not feel total loyalty to any one text, as evidenced by the extensive additions and omissions he makes to the earlier versions of the story. There exists only one manuscript containing *Sir Launfal*, MS Cotton Caligula A. II (Bliss 3). I have used A.J. Bliss's definitive edition.

Sir Launfal tells the story of a knight who is slighted in Arthur's court by the king's new wife. Guinevere gives gifts to all of Arthur's knights except for Launfal. Launfal, feeling very wounded, uses the excuse of a false letter to leave court. He travels to Karlyoun, where he attempts to stay with the mayor of the city. Once the mayor hears that Launfal has broken fellowship with the king, however, he attempts to shake the acquaintance, but he eventually offers Launfal a place to stay. Launfal, who is very poor at this point in his journey, rejects the society of other people in favor of a ride in the forest. As he naps in the forest, two beautiful maidens appear who lead him to a decadently arrayed tent in which is the most beautiful woman Launfal has ever seen. The woman, Tryamour, asks Launfal to become her lover; she promises to bless him with all the riches he desires and as many secret meetings with her as he would like, as long as he keeps her existence secret. Launfal and Tryamour enjoy this arrangement for a while, until his prowess at a tournament prompts Arthur to ask Launfal to return to court. Once he is back, Guinevere tries to seduce Launfal. He responds, without thinking of the consequences, that he has loved a woman so beautiful that even her ugliest servant girl is more beautiful than Guinevere. Offended, Guinevere makes an accusation to Arthur that Launfal tried to seduce *her* and that Launfal has insulted her beauty. Realizing that his

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boast about Tryamour has lost him his ability to see her, Launfal does not resist capture or try to defend himself with anything but the truth during his trial. The court agrees that within a year Launfal should produce his beloved to prove that his boast was accurate. As the end of the year approaches and Launfal appears to be condemned, a train of ten beautiful women approach, none of whom are Tryamour, who say that their lady is coming. Another train of ten beautiful approach, this time declaring that Tryamour will soon arrive. When the fairy-lady finally does approach, everyone realizes the truth of Launfal's boast. Tryamour demands that Launfal be set free and tells Arthur that Guinevere had in fact attempted to seduce Launfal, not the other way around. Launfal jumps onto Tryamour's horse, and they ride off into the land of Faery.
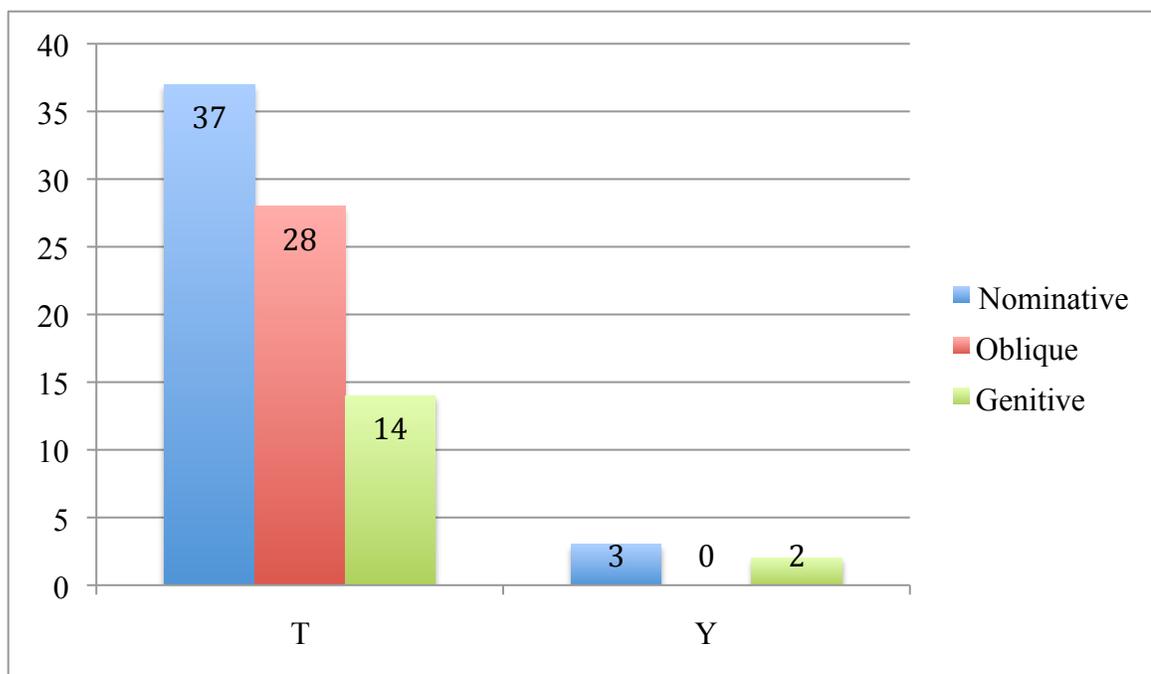

Figure 6: The instances of T *and* Y *in singular address by case in* Sir Launfal.

Out of the 84 uses of the second-person pronoun of address in *Sir Launfal*, *T* is used 94% of the time (79 instances), compared to *Y* only 6% of the time (5 instances), as

shown in Figure 6. The relatively few instances of *Y* in this romance do not, however,

eliminate *Sir Launfal* from consideration in this study. Chestre appears to have been

aware of the developing use of *Y* since three characters use *Y* respectfully according to

the standard explanation: Guinevere's maid towards King Arthur, Arthur towards Lady

Tryamour (deserving respect as both a beautiful noblewoman and a fairy), and Sir Hugh

and Sir Jon, Launfal's traveling companions, towards Launfal. If Middle English

speakers commonly use *Y* as a form of respect "from the late 13th century onwards"

(Lutz 191), well in advance of when Chestre wrote *Launfal* in the "late fourteenth

century" (Laskaya and Salisbury 201), then Chestre's marked avoidance of *Y* implies the

influence of outside factors.

Interestingly, the date of composition seems to have at least influenced Chestre's

characterization and thematic bent:

> The characters in *Launfal*, except for the mayor and his daughter, are all of
>
> the nobility, but their life is strangely unreal. . . . The most important
>
> possession of a knight is his wealth, and his most important virtue his
>
> generosity (see especially 421-32); once he loses his wealth he is no
>
> longer respected by anyone (97-120). There is no feeling against the
>
> established order of society, although *Launfal* belongs to the period of the
>
> Peasants' Revolt; yet the upper classes are treated with a marked lack of
>
> reverence. The authority of the king is not questioned, yet he is presented
>
> as hasty-tempered. The mayor, typical of the man in subordinate authority,
>
> is a hypocrite and a sycophant. (Bliss 42)

Since scholars identify outside influences, such as the Revolt of 1381 and the popularity of tail-rhyme romances, on Chestre's adaptation and expansion of Marie de France's *Lanval*, it follows that the resulting "marked lack of reverence" for nobility might extend to the author's relatively few instances of singular *Y*. By avoiding this linguistic mark of respect, Chestre might appeal to the developing middle class's desire for recognition from the nobility. *Launfal*'s audience could function as a kind of meta-pragmatic influence, a grammaticalization of "relations between language and context" where the influence of Chestre's own political and authorial context, rather than the context within his story, is "encoded into the structure" of his language and the language of his characters (Levinson 9). By only employing *Y* in the singular five times, Chestre perhaps engages in social deixis, as defined by Levinson (90), by taking into account both the setting and the addressee (audience) of the story.

Of course, Chestre's own influences only form part of the factors which have potential implications for his characters. The context which he fashions as the framework of the story also may influence some specific instances of pronoun usage. *Sir Launfal* contains one instance of a switch in address form between characters, specifically the mayor's address towards Launfal, which is of deictic interest because it might indicate a change within the pragmatic context. The mayor first greets Launfal with familiarity: "Syr, thou art well come! / How faryth our Kyng?—tel me!" (95-96). The close positions that the two men hold according to the medieval social estates (Singman and McLean 23; see also Table 1) and their apparent previous acquaintance both indicate that the mayor appropriately employs *T*. Note, however, the switch in the mayor's next pronominal address to Launfal:

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> Þe Meyr bad he schuld abyde,
>
> And seyde yn þys manere:
>
> "Syr, yn a chamber by my orchardsyd(e),
>
> Þer may ye dwelle wyth joye & pryde,
>
> Ʒyf hyt your wyll were." (122-26)

The mayor's switch to *Y* in address to Launfal does not last longer, though, than these few lines. When he next uses a pronoun in address to Launfal, he employs *T* (404, 408). This switch indicates a change in the context surrounding the linguistic exchanges between Launfal and the mayor. The audience to the conversation does not change in the twenty short lines between the first two pronoun uses; Sir Hugh and Sir Jon are both present throughout the whole conversation. Neither does the social relationship between the mayor and Launfal directly change; both the mayor and Launfal immediately recognize each other and build upon their past relationship, about which Launfal reminds the mayor with his remark, "Somtyme we knewe vs, yore" (108). What instead transpires between Launfal and the mayor is an intriguing volley of face-threatening acts and attempts at face-saving acts. As I will show, the mayor's switch in pronoun is an act of politeness towards Sir Launfal in order to repair his own damaged face.

Launfal responds to the mayor's initial greeting by telling him the truth of his estrangement from King Arthur and then makes the first potential threat to the mayor's negative face by making a request for lodging in spite of his recent change in circumstances (106-108). Launfal does not attempt to soften his impolite imposition with respectful address; he instead appeals to a debt of friendship which he assumes the mayor holds towards the knight. The mayor does not feel the debt that Launfal assumes he does;

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either Launfal has falsely understood the degree of their familiarity, or the mayor rejects Launfal on account of his loss of favor with Arthur. Whatever the reason, the mayor feels threatened by Launfal's assumptions and imposition and attempts to find a polite, non-threatening way to maintain his own negative face while still catering to Launfal's positive face. Remember that defending one's own face often results in threatening others' faces (Brown and Levinson 322). In order to protect his own threatened face by politely rejecting Launfal's imposition, the mayor concocts a lie about waiting for four knights to whom he has promised lodging. His deceit, though, does not escape Launfal, who feels—and expresses—a threat to his own positive face. He defends against the attack by in turn stomping on the mayor's positive face:

> Launfal turnede hymself and lowȝ,
>
> Þerof he hadde scorn inowȝ,
>
> And seyde to hys knyȝtes tweyne,
>
> "Now may ye se—swych ys seruice
>
> Vnþer a lord of lytyll pryse!—
>
> How he may þerof be fayn!" (115-20)

The men move very quickly from friendly greetings to snide disparagements; Launfal's poorly hidden aside becomes a direct attack on the mayor's positive face since he not only ridicules the mayor's status as a lord but he attempts to sway his companions' opinions of the mayor. This last, low blow is the one which prompts the mayor's aforementioned switch in address pronoun. Even as Launfal turns to ride away, physically exhibiting his rejection of the mayor's "wants, acts, personal characteristics, goods, beliefs, [and] values" (Levinson 324), the mayor decides to make one last attempt

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at preserving some of his face by using the last weapon he has left—politeness. Even though deferring to Launfal's "joye & pryde" (125) puts the mayor in an inferior position to the knight, he uses the negative politeness of *Y* combined with the purposefully unobtrusive phrase "Ȝyf hyt your wyll were" (126) to restore honor and humor to Launfal in order to shield his own face from further damage. Remember that "everyone's face depends on everyone else's being maintained, [so] . . . it is in general in every participant's best interest to maintain each other's face" (Brown and Levinson 322). By using politeness strategies—including a rhetorical switch to *Y* in order to show respect to an equal—the mayor regains some of his own societal footing. By showing honor through his language, he demonstrates that he knows how to use language according to the practices of the nobility and that he has rhetorical skill enough to employ nuances of language in his aid.

 Sir Launfal is not considered by many modern day critics to be a well-structured or well-adapted work of literature. In fact, one critic, A. C. Spearing, even goes so far as to call Chestre's adaptation "a fascinating disaster" (Spearing 106). Nevertheless, my analysis seems to indicate that Chestre places nuanced rhetorical strategies in the mouths of his characters. The implication of these facts, then, is that Chestre's notice and use of politeness would seem natural—even expected—to a less noble, more middle class audience at this time. The exchange between Launfal and the mayor seems to indicate that politeness was grammaticalized enough by this point in the development of English that authors could use pronoun variance for rhetorical heightening of a situation without being particularly concerned with literary integrity or social hierarchy.

At the earliest, *The Romance of Sir Degrevant* was written at the end of the

fourteenth century, but the two manuscripts (Lincoln Cathedral Library A. 5.2 and

Cambridge University Library Ff. I. 6) which preserve this story were made in the

fifteenth century (Mehl 93). *Degrevant* is also a tail-rhyme romance, but it adopts a

different stanza form, "the sixteen-line tail-rhyme stanza" (Diamond 82). The story has

no French sources, nor does either of the two manuscripts appear to be a copy of the other

(Mehl 93-94). Although the edition I have used of *The Romance of Sir Degrevant*, edited

by L. F. Casson, presents both texts in a parallel format, I have chosen to use the

Cambridge University Library text since it is more complete.

The story of *Sir Degrevant* starts out with conflict. Degrevant's neighbor, the

Earl, hunts and pillages Degrevant's forest while the young knight is away fighting.

When Degrevant returns, his army fights and defeats the Earl's army. The next day,

Degrevant goes to the Earl's house to challenge him to another battle, but while he is

waiting for an answer, he happens to meet the Earl's wife and daughter, whose name is

Melidor. Degrevant immediately falls in love with Melidor, so with the help of his squire,

he secretly waits for Melidor in her orchard in order to declare his love. When Melidor

finds Degrevant while out for a walk, she rejects his pleas. Apparently, Degrevant has

made a favorable impression on Melidor's maid, though, who sneaks the knight into the

castle in order to give him advice on how to win Melidor's heart. One of those steps to

success is defeating the Duke, whom the Earl wants Melidor to marry, in a tournament

and a duel, a task at which Degrevant succeeds. At that point, Melidor makes her favor

for Degrevant known and accepts him into her home. A forester sees Degrevant departing

from the castle and reports his sighting to the Earl's steward, who responds with a surprise attack on Degrevant and his squire. Degrevant, though, swiftly kills the Earl's steward and his band. The Earl discovers the death of his steward and blames Melidor and Degrevant for the deaths of his men. Melidor courageously declares her intention to marry Degrevant, so her mother the Countess persuades her husband to stop blaming the young couple and to bless their marriage since Melidor is their only child. The Earl relents, welcomes Degrevant into his home, and throws an elaborate wedding for Degrevant and Melidor.

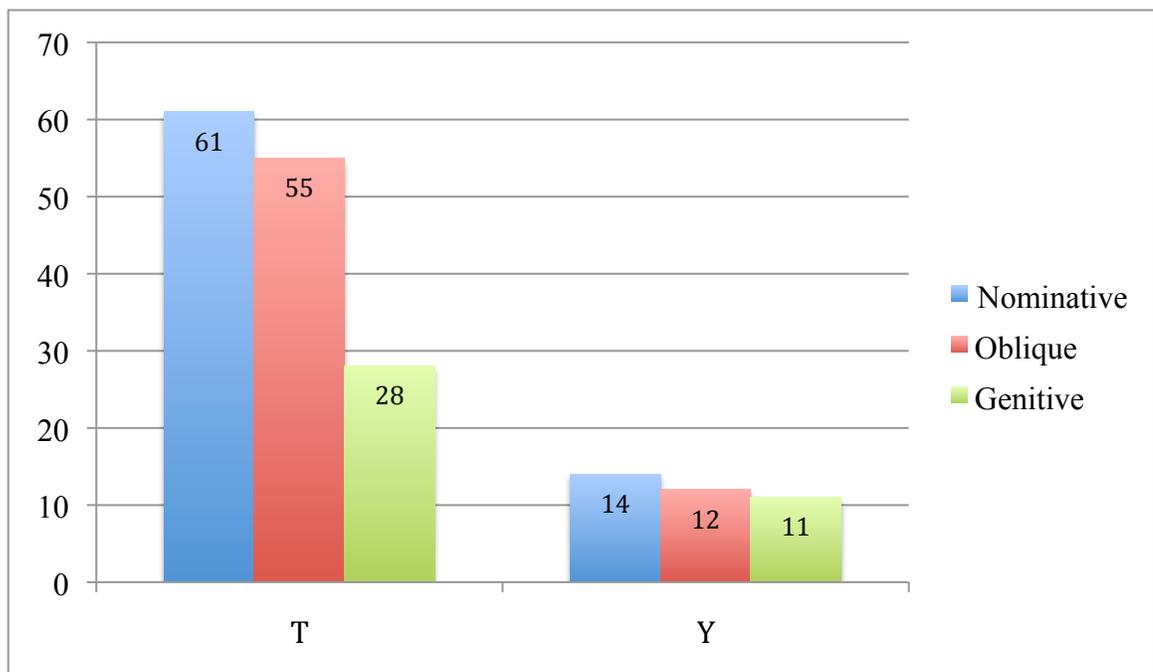*Figure 7: The instances of* T *and* Y *in singular address by case in* Sir Degrevant.

Out of the 182 instances of the singular second-person pronoun of address in *Sir Degrevant*, *T* is used 145 times (79.7%), and *Y* is used in singular address 37 times (20.3%), as shown in Figure 6. Unsurprisingly, *Sir Degrevant*, as the latest romance of the study, does not have many instances of *T/Y* usage that seem to disagree with the

inferiority/superiority model. In the early fifteenth century, around when *Sir Degrevant* was written (Diamond 82), the Middle English second-person pronoun system had made significant changes in the direction of regularization of second-person pronoun usage, which solidifies by the Elizabethan era (Burnley 31). L.F. Casson, the editor of one of the major modern editions of *Sir Degrevant*, provides a summary of the standard scholarly view of the second-person pronoun usage in the romance:

> In conversation the distinction between the 2nd sg. and the 2nd pl. forms is fairly consistently maintained. The pl. form is used for the sg. when the Countess addresses her husband (378, 1773); when the squire addresses Sir Degrevant (782); and when the maid addresses her mistress (782). The sg. form is used in talking to an inferior (e.g., Melidor and the maid, 1366), to an equal (e.g., the Duke and the Earl 1038, 1042), and in moments of passion (the Earl and his daughter 1738, 1756). (Casson lvi)

Interestingly, Casson also admits that there are instances of *T* and *Y* in *Degrevant* for which the standard explanation does not sufficiently account. He asserts that "it is more difficult to account for . . . the use of sg. and pl. forms in the same speech" (lvi). As the rest of this section will prove, expanding the possible influences on a speaker's pronoun choice to include pragmatic influences accounts for many of these pronouns which earlier scholars have seen as discrepancies, implying that pragmatics influenced *T/Y* choice even in the later stages of the development of Middle English.

The pronoun exchange between the two eventual lovers of the romance shows how pronoun switches at this time can reflect complex emotions and unspoken attitudes towards the addressee and the culture. When Degrevant and Melidor first see each other,

the narrator makes clear that both of them are initially attracted to the other; Degrevant is

"joy to be-hold" (472), and Melidor "[w]yth loue . . . w(o)ndus þe kniȝt" (477) because of

her beauty. After that first meeting, Degrevant declares, with elaborate and courtly

language typical of *fin'amors*, his intention to love Melidor to his squire, calling her

"[f]ere feyrest of all" (538) and declaring, "Y had leue(re) she were myn / Than all þe

gold in þe Reyn, / Fausoned on floren" (541-43).[9] By making such a formal declaration

and using poetic hyperboles and comparisons, Degrevant implies that he will pursue

Melidor within the formal expectations for such a relationship.

Remember the *T/Y* precedent within *fin'amors* that scholars have assumed based

on the Chaucerian corpus: "[C]ourtly relationships between men and women . . . are

almost always marked by the avoidance of *T* forms. The reason is partly in the desire not

to proclaim or presume upon an intimacy but more importantly in the desire to avoid the

implication of servitude which may be present . . . in the intimacy of *T* forms" (Pearsall

76). Interestingly, this precedent does not seem to hold true for the relationship between

Degrevant and Melidor. The first time they speak to each other, Degrevant appears in

Melidor's orchard when she and her maid are on a walk (685-88). He has been hiding in

the garden in order to find an opportunity to declare his love to her and to avoid the wrath

of her father. Before Degrevant speaks, the narrator explains that "godlyche he hyr gret"

(691), implying that the knight speaks his following words "graciously, courteously"

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[9] These lines can be paraphrased as, "I would rather have her as my love than possess all of the gold in the
Rhine minted into coins." The reference to the Rhine derives from the Middle High German work
Nibelungenlied (Kooper 109), which includes a huge stolen treasure hidden in the waters of the Rhine
("Nibelungenlied").

("Gōdlī"). Despite both the narrator's introduction and the Chaucerian precedent,

Degrevant uses *T* in his first words to Melidor:

> C(orte)ys lady and fre,
>
> Jhesu save þee, and see
>
> Þi seruaunt wold I be,
>
> My trou ȝth I þee ply ȝth. (693-96)

Degrevant apparently ignores the possible "implication[s] of servitude" of using *T*

towards a woman in a courtly relationship. In fact, he seems to find no association

between *T* and the addressee's servitude because he promises his own servitude towards

Melidor.

Two complementary pragmatic influences seem to have taken precedence in

Degrevant's mind over any cultural influences. Using *Y* in the context of *fin'amors* is a

negative politeness strategy because the deferential pronoun would communicate to the

woman that the speaker does not intend to inhibit her actions or demand control of her

affections. In ignoring the threat to Melidor's negative face by using *T*, Degrevant shows

that his desire to express his feelings excels his desire to be culturally acceptable (recall

"bald-on-record remarks" [Shimonomoto 81]). He, however, does not ignore the threat

his emotional outburst might pose to Melidor's positive face because *T* can function as an

"'approaching' behavior" of positive politeness, "used to imply common ground"

(Shimonomoto 37). Degrevant views his violent emotions as a larger (or more

detrimental) threat to face than the corresponding demand to intimacy communicated

through the culturally unusual *T*. Paying positive politeness serves his ultimate end of

securing her love better than paying negative politeness. Degrevant's choice of politeness

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strategies implies that politeness and rhetorical ends might have more immediate influence over pronoun choice than broad societal hierarchies or expectations.

Melidor's response to Degrevant provides corroboration for this distinction between the demands of personal politeness and socially expected politeness. The narrator notes that Melidor is pleased by Degrevant's approaches despite her initial fear (701-702). Dieter Mehl also believes that Melidor begins to love Degrevant at this early point in their relationship, despite her following "reproaches" (Mehl 96-97). Even though she is impressed by Degrevant, Melidor "answerus on hyȝth" (705), which can be translated as "in a loud voice" (Kooper 77), a response which suggests that she is establishing a distance between her words and her feelings; her words are putting on a show, establishing a façade, painting a veneer of cultural acceptability. She then reproaches the knight, saying, "Me þenkus þou not dost ryȝth" (707). This reprimand allows Melidor to maintain the expected appearances of a noblewoman, who presumably should feel some disdain at such an imposition, but her choice of *T* allows her to soften the threat to negative face which "expressions of disapproval, criticism, [and] insults" (Shimonomoto 35) communicate. The content of her words follows what society might expect of a woman in her position, but she allows her pronoun to match Degrevant's and to convey an implicit acceptance of the intimacy and affection he establishes.

Having established reasons for an initial use of *T* between Degrevant and Melidor, I may now examine an instance of the problem that causes Casson's confusion, pronoun switches within the same dialogue and even within the same speech. Degrevant's changes in second-person pronoun can largely be explained by the standard of politeness.

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Degrevant's response to Melidor's reprimand shows him switching from the *T* that began

the encounter, back to *T*, and finally back to *Y*:

> Medame, yf hit be ȝour wyll,
>
> I graunt I haue done yll,
>
> I may not a-geyn-say;
>
> As God saue me of synne,
>
> I myȝth with non oþer gynne
>
> Tyl ȝour spech for to wynne,
>
> By day ne be nyȝth.
>
> Fro I tell *þee* my name
>
> I am not for to blame.
>
> And yf hit turne me to grame
>
> I shal a-non-ryȝth.
>
> Hyt is I, Syr Degryuaunt.
>
> And hit wer ȝour auenaunt
>
> I wold be ȝour seruaunt,
>
> As Y am trew knyȝth. (718-32; emphasis added)

Degrevant's pronoun changes almost every time he switches to a new sentence,

suggesting that there must be some reason or structure underlying the switches. The *Y*

which the knight uses to begin this speech, combined with his getting down on his knees

(717), aligns with an acceptance of Melidor's reproach. By using *Y* to frame his apology

and excuse, Degrevant willingly steps into an inferior position and uses the distancing

strategies of negative politeness to his advantage, to acknowledge that he has impeded on

Melidor's actions and to show respect for her by softening and healing that face-threat through the pronoun's associations with the addressee's power. His switch to *T* in line 725 also has clear justification through the lens of politeness. Using *T* is positive politeness, which is necessary because Degrevant is about to contradict Melidor's opinion, threatening that he does not care about her desires or beliefs. Degrevant's final switch in this speech, this time to *Y* in line 730, reflects his negative politeness. Degrevant's pronoun corresponds to another negative politeness strategy he employs, the hedging phrase, "hit wer ʒour auenaunt" (730). "[C]onventional indirectness, hedges on illocutionary force, [and] polite pessimism (about the success of requests, etc.)" support the "social 'distancing'" of negative politeness (Brown and Levinson 130). Degrevant's promise to serve Melidor necessitates this switch to negative politeness because such a promise "pressure[s] [her] to accept or reject it" (Shimonomoto 35). This speech, which at first seems to deserve Casson's confusion because of its near constant pronoun switches, appears very orderly, well-spoken, and well-reasoned when the pronouns are read through the lens of pragmatics.

Other second-person pronouns in *Sir Degrevant* that reveal inexplicable discrepancies under the sole guidance of Brown and Gilman seem reasonable with the added insight of pragmatics. The Earl's wife uses *T* to Degrevant five times, but she later switches to use two instances of *Y* (450-51). Her high social status accounts for her initial use of *T*, and her switch to *Y* corresponds to her giving advice to the knight, a threat to Degrevant's positive face. In another instance, Melidor and her maid appear to have a familiar relationship, because they use *T* towards each other a combined total of 25 times, excluding the one time the maid uses *Y* in address to Melidor. This deviation also fits

under the account of a politeness strategy because she uses *Y* in the context of reminding Melidor of a favor she had promised to the maid, an obvious threat to Melidor's negative face.

Sir Degrevant's late date of composition certainly accounts for the small set of deviances from Brown and Gilman's inferiority/superiority model for pronoun choice. Perhaps that date of composition might also account, though for the fact that the few deviances from the standard explanation can be explained with the aid of politeness. As the amount of years that speakers have used such deictic encoding increases, the regularity of using pronouns to support politeness strategies should also increase. *Sir Degrevant* also implies that, as speakers use pronouns to support their politeness strategies, they also have the ability to choose between layers of politeness—personal over cultural and vice versa—depending on their desired conversational outcomes.

3   Findings and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to account for anomalies in second person pronoun variance left by the standard explanation advanced by Roger Brown and Albert Gilman by evaluating pronoun choice in a set of Middle English romances. The theories of politeness, which have served as my primary lens of interpretation, have proven effective in explaining some of those anomalies. Also, the consideration of broader pragmatic influences has revealed nuanced understandings of relational or contextual shifts which extend the efficacy of the standard explanation for second person pronoun choice.

As a frame of interpretation, the theory of politeness developed by Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson has proved enlightening. Although Brown and Levinson developed this theory primarily with modern languages and cultures in mind, the concepts of face, face-threatening acts, and positive and negative politeness often apply to the characters of these Middle English romances. Some characters have chosen pronouns in order to soften inevitable face-threatening acts, such as Lunette's first speech towards Alundyne in *Ywain* or the earl's begging for forgiveness of Goldeboru in *Havelok*. Other characters' pronouns reflect their having ignored standards of politeness in order to insult, as in the case of Launfal to the mayor, or in order to communicate efficiently, as in the case of Lunette's second speech towards Alundyne.

The research has shown that social deixis has taken place in the Middle English second person pronoun system. Such encoding certainly has not extended to the openly acknowledged level of some other languages, such as modern French, which even has a verb, *tutoyer*, which means to use *tu* (the informal second person pronoun) towards an

addressee; nevertheless, many pronoun uses in these five romances seem to correlate with shifts, often subtle, in the relationships between "speaker and addressee" or "speaker and setting" (Levinson 90). These subtle shifts show that a simple acceptance of Brown and Gilman's theories cannot account for all of the influence of power or solidarity over pronoun choice because the pragmatic changes that correspond to shifts in pronouns do not just take place on a societal level or even for the long term on a relational level. Momentary shifts in power and solidarity can account for apparently inappropriate pronoun choices, such as the *T* chosen by Lunette, a lady-in-waiting, towards Ywain, a knight of the Round Table. Such pronoun choices even sometimes establish or reinforce, along with other linguistic changes, otherwise shaky claims to power or intimacy, as also evidenced by Lunette's claims to Ywain's acquaintance.

The close study of these romances has also revealed that at least a functional understanding of the power and solidarity semantics must have existed on a conscious level for speakers (or authors) of Middle English because they exploit these semantics for their own rhetorical purposes. Even where no change has taken place in the relationships between the speaker and either the addressee or the setting, the speaker occasionally uses the pronouns as distancing or approaching strategies, playing off the understanding of a pronoun's connection to power and solidarity in order to please the addressee for his or her own purposes. *Floris*'s Queen, for one, uses pronouns in this way, switching from an inclusive *we* to the power-associated *Y* when she wants to highlight her husband's gain.

While my research shows that pragmatic influences—specifically politeness—had significant influence over an author's choice of second person pronoun, the data still leaves some questions open. Were these pronoun shifts based around pragmatics

conscious decisions, or otherwise, were they near inevitabilities based on the grammaticalization of power, solidarity, and politeness? What is the influence of the French text on second person pronoun use in Middle English translations or adaptations? What influence do the larger meta-pragmatic contexts of audience, date, and genre have on pronoun choice, especially in comparison to the pragmatic contexts internal to the story? At what point in their relationships do characters, especially lovers, switch pronouns to reflect the developing intimacy of the relationship?

Admittedly, a few of these questions may never be answered by scholars simply because we have no means of accessing the author's thought processes or, in some cases, of even knowing definitively who is the author and where or when that author lived. Others of these questions can be answered by serious students of the literature and language of Middle English. For now, I must leave these questions with those students and scholars, trusting that both my expansion of the data set into less studied, non-Chaucerian romances and my analysis of the pronouns in light of the pragmatic contexts of those less studied romances sufficiently add to the asking and answering of these and similar questions.

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