



**Constructing villains and heroes through second-person pronouns in
the *Book of Margery Kempe***

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This paper aims to contribute to the understanding of the *Book of Margery Kempe* (henceforth the *Book*) as a historical text and enrich our vision of how Margery and the diverse other characters are constructed linguistically through second-person pronouns. Conventional politeness of the *Book* requires the default use of *ye* forms, especially when addressees are unfamiliar, older, or socially superior, but also in situations of mutual acceptance and deference. The use of *thou*, on the other hand, is typically marked, indicating social or intellectual superiority as well as, at the interactional level, condescension, contempt, annoyance, defiance, and abuse. The described system reflects on the protagonist and the other characters of the *Book*, who are constructed both through evaluative lexis of the narrator and their use of nominal and pronominal address terms. This combination of literary devices is particularly helpful in the representation of Margery's interlocutors, their attitudes towards her, and her own perception of the interactions as peaceful or confrontational. Margery herself is construed as a consistently polite and humble *creatur* who cannot be deluded by arrogance or provoked by anger into the use of *thou* forms. The paper will outline general tendencies in the distribution of *ye/thou* forms in the *Book* and then focus on individual pronominal profiles: Margery as speaker (addressing Jesus and human interlocutors), Jesus as speaker, other male and female interlocutors, and outliers (Richard the hunchback and the bishop of Lincoln). The episode with Richard will also be considered in detail during the workshop, i.e. Session 5 (see Excerpt 1 for more details).