

“Relative Pronouns in The Cloud of Unknowing”

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1. Introduction

In Modern English relative pronouns are grouped into two series: wh-pronouns (who, whom, whose, which, and what), and that or zero.⁽¹⁾

Surveying the historical development of relative pronouns from Old English to Modern English, we see the following changes in each stage.

1. 1. Old English Period (700–1150)

In the Old English period, the Demonstrative Articles se, seo and þæt were used as relative pronouns, either by themselves or in connection with the indeclinable particle pe.⁽²⁾ The following are some examples.

- 1) þæt wæs deaðes beam, se bær bitres fela—Cædmon, Genesis, 470⁽³⁾
- 2) ge to deape þone deman ongunnon, se ðe of deaðe sylf worn aweht—Elene, 303⁽⁴⁾
- 3) Ðone Nazareniscan Hælend ðæt wæs afandon wer—Pastoral Care, 443/5⁽⁵⁾

1. 2. Middle English Period (1150–1500)

In the early Middle English period, pe (pa) and pat (pet) were common relative pronouns. The former goes back to the Old English indeclinable particle pe and the latter to the Old English relative þæt.⁽⁶⁾ The following are some examples.

- 1) pat defte meiden, Marie bi name, pe him bar to manne frame—Best. 24⁽⁷⁾

2) þe corn þat ʒe to cave bereth—Best. 211⁽⁸⁾

After þe disappeared in the 13th century, þat (that) became the prevailing relative pronoun in Middle English. Moreover, þat (that) was used indifferently with both animate and inanimate antecedents, and is found not only in restrictive clauses but also in non-restrictive clauses.⁽⁹⁾

On the other hand, a series of wh-relatives (which, what and who) came into being in the Middle English period.⁽¹⁰⁾ Among these wh-relatives, which, being used dependently and independently, rivalled þat (that) in some functions; however, who, as strictly a relative pronoun, was hardly found before the 15th century⁽¹¹⁾ and what was not common at all.⁽¹²⁾

Besides these relatives, combinations like the which, which as or which that were found in Middle English. The which was especially common in Gower's work and far more frequent than plain which in many prose works in the 15th century.⁽¹³⁾

1. 3. Early Modern English (1500-1750)

Though that was still frequently used as a relative pronoun during the early stage of Modern English (1520-1560), there is a growing tendency in literature to use wh-relatives, judging from the ratio (that : (the) which : who = 50.7% : 40.5% : 8.8%) determined by Kazuo Araki and Masatomo Ukaji (1984 : 343).

Since the latter half of the 16th century when wh-relatives superseded that in colloquial style, that has decreased in number and the proportion worked out by K. Araki and M. Ukaji shows this further tendency in the 19th century (that : which : who = 20.9% : 41.3% : 37.8%).⁽¹⁴⁾ It is also worth noting that the Present English distinctive usage between which (with non-personal antecedents) and who (with personal antecedents) was established around the latter half of the 17th century.⁽¹⁵⁾

1. 4. Present Day English

In Present Day English there is a trend for who in the nominative case with personal antecedents to overcome that in fre-

quency; however, who in the objective case with personal antecedents is used equally with that. In other words the nominative who tends to be frequently used while the objective whom is much less used.⁽¹⁶⁾

2. The purpose of this paper

This paper examines relative pronouns in The Cloud of Unknowing,⁽¹⁷⁾ a religious prose work in the late 14th century, in order to show the characteristics of Middle English relative pronouns and to compare some differences between Middle English relative pronouns and Present English relative pronouns in the context of the historical development of relative pronouns mentioned above.

3. Four major questions for analysis

Examples of relative pronouns in The Cloud of Unknowing will be focused on and discussed mainly from the viewpoint of the following questions.

- 1) What is the distribution of relative pronouns in The Cloud of Unknowing?
- 2) Are there any relative pronouns which are peculiar to this work or to Middle English? That is, are there any relative pronouns in this work which have disappeared in Modern English?
- 3) Is there any specific relationship between antecedents and relative pronouns?
- 4) Is there any specific regulation in some relatives (e. g. the relationship between a preposition and a relative pronoun or the use of restrictive and non-restrictive use of relative pronouns)?

4. Examples of pat (=that) (368 in total)

4. 1. pat with personal and non-personal antecedents (311 ex-

amples)⁽¹⁸⁾

4. 1. 1. personal antecedents (154 examples)

- 1) 128. 3/4⁽¹⁹⁾ we haue Moyses, pat first bot seeldome ... mizt not see þe maner of þe arke
- 2) 123. 10 For he, pat abidiþ felip somtyme som coumforte
- 3) 99. 18 pat man pat dop hem
- 4) 85. 9/10 a ʒong disciple, pat hap not ʒit ben wel vsed
- 5) 67. 12/13 as þe fader dop þe childe pat is in poynte to perische
- 6) 20. 11/12 God pat is þe reowler of kynde
- 7) 21. 21/22 A schort excusacion of him pat maad þis book
- 8) 64. 19/20 & þis is þe mercyful myracle of oure Lorde, pat so specyaly ʒeuiþ his grace
- 9) 32. 22 a man pat sat in his meditacions
- 10) 21. 17 Lady Seinte Mary, pat full was of alle grace

4. 1. 2. non-personal antecedents (157 examples)

- 1) 6. 6/7 Of þe wonderful loue pat Crist had to Mari
- 2) 9. 15/16 þe deseites pat folowen þer-on
- 3) 64. 10/11 clennes pat he lost for synne
- 4) 123. 22/23 he schal fynde it a cloude of vnknowyng pat is bitwix hym & his God
- 5) 93. 21 a loue pat is chaste & parfite
- 6) 57. 4 oure needful pinges pat longen to þis liif
- 7) 33. 17/18 þe scharp steryng of þin vnderstondyng, pat wile alweis prees apon þee
- 8) 84. 10 þe pyne pat he hap of þe wetyng
- 9) 23. 14 þe humours pat fleen in þe ayre
- 10) 87. 2 þoo pat fallyn vnto þee

4. 2. pat with antecedents of superlative expression (12 examples)

- 1) 44. 6 þe frelest man pat is here in þis wored
- 2) 59. 3 þe holiest creature pat euer God maad
- 3) 59. 14 þe homliest freende pat he hap

- 4) 17. 15 for it is pe schortest werke of alle pat man may ymagyn
- 5) 59. 10/11 it was pe best werke of alle pat man miȝt do
4. 3. pat with antecedents of indefinite character⁽²⁰⁾ (69 examples)
- 1) 60. 16/17 alle men, pat wiȝ werke wil witnes peire wille of saluacion
- 2) 21. 19/20 alle pe seintes in heuen & in erpe, pat by pe grace of Ihesu kepen tyme
- 3) 4. 3/4 alle pe creatures pat euer haue ben, ben now, or euer schal be
- 4) 69. 12/13 ani soule pat is vnable perto
- 5) 131. 18/19 alle peire myndes contynowely pat ben clepid to worche
- 6) 91. 17/18 any fals opynion pat may befall to man in pis liif
- 7) 9. 4/5 alle sounes, counfortes, & swetnes, pat mowe falle in pis liif
4. 4. pat with antecedents of personal pronouns (107 examples)
- 1) 58. 3 For to peime pat ben parfiteley mekid
- 2) 101. 21/22 & ȝif he, pat haȝ a pleyn & an open boystous voice by kynde
- 3) 9. 22/23 How pei ben disseiued, pat folowen pe feruour of spirite
- 4) 127. 18/19 on pe same maner may he be deceyuid pat may haue it
- 5) 101. 14/15 it is sittyngly & semely to hem pat ben meek wiȝ-inne
- 6) 97. 13/15 Many wonderful contenaunces folowen hem pat ben disseyuid in pis fals werk
- 7) 74. 2/3 For pei pat ben trewe worchers
- 8) 126. 20 by hem pat most medelid hem aboute pis arke
4. 5. pat in connection with prepositions (14 examples)

- 1) 126. 4/6 after peire abilnes in soule pat pis grace of contemplacion & of goostly worching is zouen to
- 2) 117. 7 pe ping pat it worchep in
- 3) 48. 8. scheo had anoper werk to do pat Martha wist not of
- 4) 132. 8/9 pis is one of pe rediest & soureynist tokin pat a soule may haue to wite bi
- 5) 24. 20/21 pe ize of a schoter is apon pe prik pat he schotep to

4. 6. pat in restrictive clauses and non-restrictive clauses out of 311 total examples

[Restrictive Use : Non-restrictive Use = 278 : 33]

Some examples of each clause have already been listed.

4. 7. other features of pat (57 examples)

- 1) 131. 7/8 3if pei haue done pat⁽²¹⁾ in hem is before (19 examples)
- 2) 43. 11 pen is pat pe whiche is reysid of pe mynde (3 examples)
- 3) 114. 3/4 pou conceyte not bodely pat pat is mente goostly (9 examples)
- 4) 6. 25/26 before pe tyme pat⁽²²⁾ he be lawfully clensid (2 examples)
- 5) 131. 12/13 per is any maner of ping pat pei do, bodely or goostly, pat⁽²³⁾ is sufficiently done (16 examples)
- 6) 94. 10 som per ben pat pei⁽²⁴⁾ ben so weike in body (1 example)
- 7) 5. 8/9 A schort profe azens peire errour pat⁽²⁵⁾ seien pat per is no parfiter cause (7 examples)

5. **Examples of pe whiche (=the which) (127 in total)**

5. 1. pe whiche with personal and non-personal antecedents (117 examples)⁽²⁶⁾

5. 1. 1. personal antecedents (18 examples)

- 1) 129. 1 Aaron, þe whiche had it in keping
- 2) 107. 17/18 Not as þees heretikes done, þe whiche ben wel licned to wode men
- 3) 44. 5 an aungel in heuen, þe whiche neuer felid
- 4) 61. 18/19 þe hande of Almizty God, þe whiche is euer-more redy to wirche

5. 1. 2. non-personal antecedents (99 examples)

- 1) 125. 8/9 an vnmaad goostly þing, þe whiche is nouzt bot God
- 2) 84. 5/6 þat ioye, þe whiche reuip fro a man alle wetyng
- 3) 114. 7/8 speche is a bodely werk wrouzt wip þe tonge, þe whiche is an instrument of þe body
- 4) 117. 15/16 fantasye, þe whiche is nouzt elles bot a bodely conseyte of a goostly þing
- 5) 36. 24 ʒif it be a þing þe whiche greueþ or haþ greuid þee before
- 6) 116. 5/6 wip bodely instruments, þe whiche ben oure fue wittes
- 7) 46. 16/17 a þing þe whiche sche miȝt not se cleerly

5. 2. þe whiche with antecedents of superlative expression (5 examples)

- 1) 18. 11/12 þe heizest wilnable þing, þe whiche is God
- 2) 52. 20/21 þe best partye, þe whiche schuld neuer be taken fro hir
- 3) 54. 9/10 þe best partye, þe whiche schal neuer be taken from hir

5. 3. þe whiche with antecedents of indefinite character (4 examples)

- 1) 11. 3/4 alle þoo þinges in þe whiche²⁷ þei worchen
- 2) 115. 17/18 alle þoo þinges in þe whiche þei worchen ben departable

5. 4. þe whiche with antecedents of personal pronouns (5 examples)
- 1) 119. 14/15 þoo þe whiche knowyn not 3it þe my3tes of þeire soules
 - 2) 18. 17/19 & oure soule, bi vertewe of þis reformyng grace, is mad sufficient at þe fulle to comprehend al him by loue, þe whiche is incomprehensible to alle create knowable mi3t
5. 5. þe whiche in connection with prepositions (36 examples)
- 1) 95. 18/19 goostly worching, of þe whiche he heriþ men speke
 - 2) 112. 23 it were vnto 3one bodely heuen, in þe which þe elementes ben fastnid
 - 3) 63. 17/18 for þis is þat werk in þe whiche a soule schuld trauaile alle his liif-tyme
 - 4) 117. 6 Imagynacion is a mi3t þorow þe whiche we portray alle ymages
5. 6. þe whiche in restrictive and non-restrictive clauses out of 117 total examples
 [Restrictive Use : Non-restrictive Use=31 : 86]
 Some examples of each clause have already been noted.
5. 7. other features of þe whiche²⁸⁾ (10 examples)
- 1) 126. 8/10 in special callyng of oure Lorde ... : þe whiche callyng is clepid rausching
 - 2) 96. 7 a ful goostly werk wip-inne in here soule; þe whiche werk, & it be trewly conceyuid
 - 3) 66. 17 anoper þing : þe whiche þing is God
 - 4) 83. 3/4 a nakid wetyng & a felyng of þin owne beyng : þe whiche wetyng & felyng behouip alweis be distroied

6. Examples of whiche (=which) (2) and whiche pat (=which that) (1)

- 1) 6. 20/21 in pis werk, whiche is þe werk of þe soule holpen by grace, & whiche is þe werk of only God
- 2) 28. 15 Cheese þee wheþer þou wilt, or anoþer as þe list; whiche pat⁽²⁹⁾ þee likeþ best of o silable

7. Examples of who⁽³⁰⁾

7. 1. Examples of whos (=whose) (1) and whom (9)

- 1) 3. 3/4 þe priue sperit of God, whos domes ben hid
- 2) 51. 16/17 Oure louely Lorde Ihesu Crist, vnto whom no priue þing is hid
- 3) 55. 17 oure Lorde wham þou sekist is resyn
- 4) 58. 4/5 þei haue God, in whom is alle plente
- 5) 107. 12/14 þei vnto whome þei were schewid, or we for whome þei were schewid, had ben so goostly

7. 2. Examples of whoso (euer) (36), who pat (=who that) (1) and pat who (=that who) (1)

- 1) 11. 13/14 who-so knowep not þe miȝtes of a soule
- 2) 70. 4 who-so felip þis werk is abbil þerto
- 3) 38. 6/7 he, pat who-so-euer pat he be
- 4) 104. 17/18 I trowe pat who pat wil not goo þe streyte way to heuen
- 5) 38. 5 pat who chargeþ not, or setteþ lital bi þe first þouȝt

8. Examples of what (4) and what-so-euer (1)⁽³¹⁾

- 1) 76. 22 what schal þis worde be?
- 2) 15. 11 see what þee faileþ, & not what þou haste
- 3) 1. 9 what-so-euer þou be pat þis book schalt haue in possession

9. Results

The following results may be noted :

- 1) While several relative pronouns are used in The Cloud of Unknowing, pat (=that) is the predominant relative in this text, followed in frequency by pe whiche (=the which). The ratio among these uses is as follows :

<u>pat</u>	<u>pe whiche</u>	<u>whiche</u>	<u>whos, whom</u>
368	127	3	10

Furthermore, who and what are used as compound relatives in such forms as who pat, pat who, whoso (euer) and what (soeuer).

- 2) The usage of two main relatives, pat and pe whiche, can be compared from six different points of view :
 - (1) The proportion of pat and pe whiche in terms of their antecedents—personal or non-personal is as follows :

	personal	non-personal
<u>pat</u>	154	157
<u>pe whiche</u>	18	99

- (2) The ratio between pat and pe whiche with superlative antecedents is as follows :

<u>pat</u>	<u>pe whiche</u>
12	5

- (3) The proportion between pat and pe whiche with antecedents of indefinite character is as follows :

<u>pat</u>	<u>pe whiche</u>
69	4

- (4) The rate between pat and pe whiche with antecedents of personal pronouns is as follows :

pat	pe whiche
107	5

- (5) The ratio between pat and pe whiche in relation to whether prepositions come before or after each relative pronoun is as follows :

	before	after
pat	0	14
pe whiche	36	0

- (6) The proportion between pat and pe whiche in restrictive clauses or in non-restrictive clauses is as follows : ³²

	pat	pe whiche
restrictive	278	31
non-restrictive	33	86

10. Conclusion

Taking these ratios into consideration, we can come to the following conclusion :

- 1) The distribution of relative pronouns in The Cloud of Unknowing is as follows: pat: pe whiche: whiche: who (whos, whom)=368: 127: 3: 10.

Thus, it is clear that pat is the most predominant relative pronoun, followed by pe whiche. There is no difference in usage between pe whiche and whiche; however, pe whiche is generally preferred in this work. Furthermore, who as the subject relative pronoun is not found in this work except in compound relatives such as whoso, whosoever and who pat, though whos and whom are found as relative pronouns in a few examples. This suggests who was not yet established as a relative pro-

noun at this stage of English, but þat and whiche or þe whiche filled that function.

- 2) The relationship between relative pronouns (þat and þe whiche) and antecedents is classified as follows: first, þat takes both personal and non-personal antecedents equally, while þe whiche takes mostly non-personal antecedents. Next, þat is far more predominantly used than þe whiche after antecedents which are superlatives, indefinite character or personal pronouns.
- 3) In the relationship between a preposition and a relative pronoun, þe whiche comes just after a preposition, while þat is separated from a preposition. In restrictive and non-restrictive clauses þat is more frequently used in restrictive clauses while þe whiche is more frequently used in non-restrictive clauses; however, this distinction was only established clearly after this period.
- 4) As a minor compound relative pronoun, what is found only in a few examples, because its role is generally played by þat.

The present study has dealt mainly with relative pronouns and shown some of the various uses of the relative pronouns. In a future study I hope to concentrate on relative adverbs and zero-relative pronouns (in which relatives are omitted in a certain situation). After that I hope to continue the discussion of all relative markers from Old English to Modern English.

NOTES

- (1) Quirk et al. (1972: 215); see, also Quirk et al. (1985: 366).
- (2) Kellner (1956: 202)
- (3) *ibid.*
- (4) *ibid.*
- (5) *ibid.*
- (6) Mustanoja (1960: 188).
- (7) *ibid.*

- (8) Mustanoja (1960: 189).
- (9) Mustanoja (1960: 190).
- (10) Traugott (1972: 153).
- (11) Mustanoja (1960: 199) and Traugott (1972: 155) say that the non-nominative forms whose and whom came to be used as relatives in early Middle English, and Traugott (1972: 156) mentions that who was not established as a relative before the 15th century.
- (12) Mustanoja (1960: 194).
- (13) Mustanoja (1960: 187 and 199).
- (14) Araki and Ukaji (1984: 345).
- (15) *ibid.*
- (16) Araki and Ukaji (1984: 348).
- (17) The source of the data is The Cloud of Unknowing (EETS, 218) ed. Phyllis Hodgson (Oxford University Press, London, 1944; repr. in 1958). In investigating the examples, I sometimes refer to Ira Progoff's Modern English translation of The Cloud of Unknowing (London: Rider and Company, 1959).
- (18) Hereafter, examples of þat (=that) from 4. 1. 1 to 4. 6 are some out of total 311 examples. The other 57 examples among total 368 examples shown in 4 are excluded from this personal and non-personal antecedent classification because of their specific features being discussed in the following part.
- (19) Hereafter 128 indicates the page number and 3/4 shows the line number.
- (20) Here indefinite character means modifiers such as all or any.
- (21) Þat is used as a compound relative pronoun in this type of example.
- (22) Þat is used as a relative adverb, so in Modern English when should be used in this function.
- (23) Two þat's take the same antecedent.
- (24) This form looks like þe hie (indeclinable relative pronoun þe + personal pronoun hie) in Old English.
- (25) In this unusual example, a possessive pronoun is used as an antecedent of a relative pronoun.
- (26) Examples from 5. 1. 1 to 5. 6 are some of the total 117 examples of þe whiche (=the which).
- (27) Compared with examples of þat with indefinite antecedents such as

all or any, only 4 examples of þe whiche are exceptionally used with all. This is probably because a preposition is strongly related to þe whiche rather than þat.

- (28) The usage of þe whiche in the following examples can be regarded as a relative adjective.
- (29) This is used to mean “whichever” in Modern English.
- (30) There are no examples of who as a nominative relative pronoun except for compound relative pronouns such as whoso (ever), who þat and þat who; however, a few examples of whos and whom as a possessive and an objective relative pronoun are found.

There are only a few examples in which who may be used as an interrogative pronoun as follows:

- 1) 6. 22/23 Who schuld worche in þe gracious werk of þis book
 - 2) 63. 1 I wil telle þee who schuld worche in þis werke
 - 3) 63. 3 ȝif þou aske me who schuld worche þus
- (31) Although it is difficult to distinguish a relative pronoun and an interrogative pronoun what, the number of times what is used as a compound relative pronoun is much smaller than that of þat (18 examples) mentioned above. This is probably because what was not as well established as a compound relative pronoun as þat (=that) in this period.
- (32) It is said that punctuation marks such as commas, or periods in Middle English works are quite arbitrarily used by the editors (Nakao 1972: 193), so the chart showing the restrictive or non-restrictive distinction in terms of punctuations like commas may not be completely authentic. Therefore, another approach should be used for my future study.

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