PRONOUNS IN THE CELY LETTERS

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1. Introduction – general information on the corpus

The Cely letters are one of the less known collections of early (i.e. Middle English and Early Modern English) epistolary documents. In contrast to the Paston, Stonor and Plumpton letters, they are not of aristocratic origin. They were written by representatives of the middle class, and more precisely, by English wool-merchants. Understandably, the subject matter of the Cely letters covers mostly details concerning the financial dealings of the family. Yet, the documents provide also some general socio-historical information about the period of their creation, e.g., some political (see letters no. 11, 19 and 20) or social events, such as the higher mortality rate caused by the plague (see letter no. 39), which are referred to by the authors of the letters insofar as they affect the trading conditions (see the letters no. 11, 19 and 20). The correspondence also provides information about some daily matters such as e.g., reprimands, greetings, apologies, and requests for intercession (see especially letter no. 8). More importantly, because of their specific social provenance, the Cely letters prove to be of great interest to the linguist, as they are likely to represent the writing as well as the speech usage of the contemporary middle-class in London.

The only complete edition of the extant Cely letters comes from the year 1975 and was prepared by Alison Hanham. It includes 247 documents from 1472-88, ordered chronologically. The authors of the majority of the letters were: Richard Cely the elder and his sons, Robert, Richard and George. Most of the remaining letters were written by William Maryon (Richard the father's contemporary, a stapler and family friend), John Cely (Richard senior's brother), William Cely (an apprentice to the family and probably also a relative), John Dalton (a friend of the young Celys), Thomas Kesten (Richard the elder's fac-

tor) and Margery Cely (George's wife) (Hanham 1975: x-xviii; Raumolin-Brunberg – Nevalainen 1997: 493-496).[1]

The corpus constituting the basis of the following linguistic analysis comprises the earliest forty-three letters of the collection – from the years 1472-78, with the exception of the document marked number 14, which was excluded from the analysis as it is not written in English. There are sixteen letters written by Richard Cely the elder, of which twelve are written to George Cely, one to Robert Cely and one to Richard Cely the younger.[2] Two remaining letters are drafts in the name of Richard Cely, not the actual missives. One of the drafts was written to the "Lieutenant of the Staple" (no. 16) and the addressee of the other is unknown. Robert Cely wrote four letters and Richard Cely the younger wrote six. George was the recipient of all of them. William Maryon wrote four letters (with George and Richard the younger as the recipients). The authors of the remaining letters were George Cely (three letters), John Dalton (two letters), John Dycons, Thomas Kesten, Thomas Miller, John Spencer and the Vicar of Watford, one letter each. There is also a collective letter (no. 29) serving as an official invitation to a social event.[3]

2. Pronouns in the Cely letters

Perhaps more than any other type of document, letters constitute a potentially rich source for analysing pronouns. This results from the function of correspondence and the subjects with which it usually deals. Firstly, a letter always has a sender and a recipient. Hence, first and second person pronouns are predominant in the majority of the letters. Secondly, letters treat of the activities involving people and objects, and consequently include numerous pronouns of different kinds: personal, possessive, reflexive, demonstrative, interrogative, indefinite and relative.

The groups mentioned above constitute morphological classificatory categories. So do the notions such as e.g., case, number or person. These are represented by specific orthographic exponents in the actual texts. Because the gener-

ally accepted orthographic standard was still absent in Middle English and there was no one-to-one correspondence between a morphological category and its exponent, one can notice a striking number of pronoun forms in the letters. Different variants are observable even in the text(s) written by one and the same author. Therefore, apart from the overall division of pronouns into groups and discussing their function in the sentence (e.g., subject vs. object distinction), in this paper attention is drawn to the variety of their orthographic realisations considered as the exponents of the morphological categories.

Differences detectable between the alternatives are of varying degree. In certain cases they are very slight and almost negligible, as they result merely from the specific orthographic conventions adopted (whether consciously or unconsciously) by the authors and probably do not reflect any phonological or etymological variation, e.g., the first person singular oblique case forms *vs* and *ws* (see 2.1.1) or the variants *avll* and *aull* of the indefinite pronoun (see 2.3). In other cases contrasts are more noticeable and presumably exhibit differences in pronunciation and etymological provenance, e.g., the second person singular oblique case forms *the* and *ȝou* (see 2.1.2). Unfortunately, it is not always possible to determine clearly the degree and importance of the orthographic variance. Therefore, in the present paper the forms showing even the slightest contrasts are indicated and analysed individually. Particularly salient differences are additionally emphasised.

2.1. Personal pronouns

Personal pronouns in the Cely letters have three persons, two numbers, three cases, i.e., nominative, oblique and possessive, and three genders, i.e., masculine, feminine and neuter – distinguishable only in the third person singular.

2.1.1. First person

There are two orthographic variants of the first person pronoun singular: the usual form is *I* in the nominative; there are also occurrences of the form *Y*, mostly in Maryon's letters, where the proportion between the occurrences of *I* and *Y* is the following (see Fig. 1):

Figure 1. The nominative singular – the first person in William Maryon's letters

Number of the letter	*I* – no. of occurrences	*Y* – no. of occurrences
5	3	4
9	4	9
39	2	15
40	–	6

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[1] The abbreviations for the names of the authors, used below, are the following: RCI – Richard Cely the elder, RCII – Richard Cely the younger, GC – George Cely, WM – William Maryon, TK – Thomas Kesten, TM – Thomas Miller, Robert C. – Robert Cely, R. Radclyff – Robert Radclyff, J. Dalton – John Dalton, J. Dycons – John Dycons, J. Spencer – John Spencer.

[2] Letters to George Cely considerably outnumber the ones directed to other recipients. There are two possible reasons for this fact (not mutually exclusive). Firstly, George was probably the main representative of the Celys' firm on the Continent; secondly, most of the documents in the collection were the property of George's wife, Margery, and his brother, Richard, who had a dispute in 1489 (entered in the Public Record Office) over the payment of the firm's debts after George had died (see Hanham 1975: viii).

[3] See the appendix for details about the writers, recipients and dates of the letters.

In the drafts mentioned above as attributed to Richard Cely the elder (documents 16 and 17), *Y* is the only choice (apart from two instances of *I* in document 17). Occasionally this form appears also in the letters written by George (see Fig. 2), by the Vicar of Watford (33, 5)[4] and by Thomas Miller (7, 16).

Figure 2. The nominative singular – the first person in George Cely's letters

Number of the letter	*I* – no. of occurrences	*Y* – no. of occurrences
4	14	1
22	12	10
41	13	7

The common oblique form of the first person singular is *me* (about 120 occurrences). The possessive pronouns, corresponding to the genitive case, occur rarely in the letters taken into consideration in the present study. The recorded forms are *myn*[5] (10, 10; 27, 15) and *myne* (4, 20; 16, 28 and 30).

In the plural, which appears much more rarely than the singular, the recorded nominative forms are *we* and *whe*. The oblique occurs in a variety of forms: *vs*, *ws*, *wus* and *vsse* (see Fig. 3). No possessive pronoun forms have been found in the sample under examination.[6] In all the analysed letters only one plural possessive pronoun has been found, i.e. *howrs* (41, 11f.) in a letter by George Cely.

Figure 3. The nominative and oblique plural – the first person

	Variants	Total number of occurrences	Authors and number of occurrences in their letters
Nominative	*we*	15	Robert C. (2); J. Dalton (1); RCI (5); RCII (5); collective letter – no. 29 (2)
	whe	14	GC (9); RCII (5)

	Variants	Total number of occurrences	Authors and number of occurrences in their letters
Oblique	*vs*	9	GC (5); RCII (1); RCI (3); collective letter – no. 29 (1)
	ws	4	Robert C. (1); RCI (1); RCII (2)
	wus	1	RCII
	vse	1	J. Dalton

2.1.2. Second person

In the second person singular a high degree of variation can be observed. The most frequent nominative forms are *ye* and *ʒe*. There are also three occurrences of *you* and three occurrences of *ʒee* (see Fig. 4).

Figure 4. The nominative singular – the second person

Variants	Total number of occurrences[7]	Authors and number of occurrences in their letters
ye	62 (64)	RC I – 35 (37); WM – 27
ʒe	57 (60)	RC II – 26 (27); GC – 19; R. Radclyff – 4; J. Spencer – 3; TM – 2; RC I – 1 (2); WM – 1; the married freemen of the Staple (a collective letter) – 1
you	3	J. Dalton – 2; WM – 1
ʒee	3	Robert C.

Interestingly, the nominative variant *thou*, listed in the grammars of Middle English (cf. e.g., Mustanoja 1960: 124 ff.) and of Early Modern English (cf. e.g., Barber 1997: 152; Görlach 1998: 106 ff.), and in other works on the language of the period in question (e.g., Carstensen 1959: 190 ff.) does not appear in the forty-three analysed Cely letters.[8]

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[4] Hereafter, unless explained otherwise, the indications in brackets refer to the number of the document and the line in Hanham's edition of the letters.

[5] The form *myn* occurs many times in the letters, but in the cases not mentioned here it functions as a possessive adjective, not a pronoun (e.g., *in myn oncles paryche* in 19, 26).

[6] The possessive adjectival forms (*our, owr, howr, oure, howre* and *ovr*) abounding in the text are not taken into consideration in the present analysis.

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[7] See below for an explanation of the results in brackets.

[8] Hanham (1985: 14) provides a possible reason for the absence of *thou*. She claims that in the times when the letters came into existence the employment of this form between adults was instantly perceived as intentionally insulting. Apparently no insult was intended in the correspondence under consideration.

The usual oblique variant is *you*, though Richard Cely senior shows a special predilection for another variant, namely, *the*. This form appears in the opening formula *I grete the wyl(l)* in 13 of his letters, always at the beginning. It does not occur in letters no. 16 and 17 at all, and in 37 *the* is replaced by *you*.[9] *The* can also be found in non-formulaic clauses (e.g., 2, 1b; 11, 6 and 10, and 23; 12, 21; 20, 11 and 14, and 16). Apart from *you* and *the*, also the forms *yow* and, occasionally, *yowe* and *ʒou* appear in the oblique case. The form *ʒe* is an exception (see Fig. 5).

Figure 5. The oblique singular – the second person

Variants	Total number of occurrences[10]	Authors and number of occurrences in their letters
you	122 (131)	found in the majority of the letters
yow	74 (78)	GC – 27; Robert C. – 22 (26); WM – 15, RC II – 5; the Vicar of Watford – 2; the freemen of the Staple – 2; J. Spencer – 1
the	35 (41)	only RC I (occurring in all the letters with the exception of 37)
yowe	7	J. Spencer
ʒou	5	The Vicar of Watford
ʒe	1	RC II

Although it is usually quite easy to judge whether a given form is in the nominative or oblique case, certain cases may cause problems of identification. This concerns the following expressions (in order of occurrence):

(1)   *I pray you may be well and truely content* (1, 6f.)
(2)   *I besek ʒe gew me leffe to say for myselffe* (7, 2)
(3)   *I pray you recomend me to my brother Robard* (8, 24)
(4)   *I pray the be wyse* (11, 6)
(5)   *I pray yow speke scharply to John* (15, 10)
(6)   *I pray you send me word whom you wyll that I schall leyff such thengys of yours* (18, 13b)

(7)   *I pray ʒe say to hym* (19, 44)
(8)   *I pray the send me wrytyng as sone as ye can* (20, 27)
(9)   *I pray yow send me worde* (21, 17)
(10)   *I pray yow delyver hym no more of my mony* (21, 19f.)
(11)   *I pray yow tell ytt hym* (21, 21f.)
(12)   *I wyll ye delyuer to ys man before hony hoder man* (23, 12f.)
(13)   *I pray you send me word* (25, 12f.)
(14)   *I pray the haue this matter yn mynd* (27, 14)
(15)   *I pray you send me a cope of the payyng of the frayfte* (31, 13f.)
(16)   *I pray the doe in thys pertys as wyll as ye can* (31, 21)
(17)   *... take you no thowe therefore* (31, 23)
(18)   *I pray the make salle to svre men* (31, 28)
(19)   *I pray ʒe recomend me to Wylliam Roberdys* (34, 23f.)
(20)   *I pray you se a fayre weder* (37, 6)
(21)   *I pray the beware of lose* (38, 19)
(22)   *I pray you speke to Thomas Kesten* (38, 35)
(23)   *I wyll ye rede all thys clase to hym* (38, 48f.)
(24)   *I pray you by for me* (42, 16)

All these clauses are intended to be requests, as the introducing words (*pray*, *wyll*, *besek*, and *take*) suggest. They were written by different authors, more or less proportionally to the number of the letters that they wrote, i.e. there are twelve occurrences by RCI, four by RCII, four by Robert Cely and one each by: John Dycons, Thomas Miller, John Dalton and Robert Radclyff. Although the clauses seem almost identical with regard to their syntactic structure, the forms of the second person singular are not used consistently by their authors. On the one hand, in four of the clauses, typical nominative forms occur – *ye* in example (12) and (23), and *ʒe* in (2), (7) and (19). On the other hand, in four clauses ((5) and (9-11)) one finds the form *yow*, and in five others ((4), (8), (14), (16), (18) and (21)), the form *the*. Both *yow* and *the* are invariably used as exponents of the oblique case in the letters under consideration. Likewise, the variant *you* (see examples (1), (3), (6), (13), (15), (17), (20), (22) and (24)) is usually employed in the oblique case elsewhere in the letters. Apparently, the occurrences of typically oblique forms in the analysed clauses outnumber those of the forms customarily employed as the nominative variants.[11]

Interestingly, in both clauses where the nominative variant *ye* appears it is preceded by the verb *wyll*, and the form *ʒe* is once preceded by *besek* and twice

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[9] Letter 37 was written to RC II. *You* may in this case express social solidarity between RC I and RC II (an adult son), In contrast, *the* in the letters to George (who probably has not reached majority yet) may be an expression of paternal superiority. However, in other letters to George, RC I is not consistent – he uses *the* interchangeably with *you*, e.g., in letter no. 31 (see Raumolin-Brunberg – Nevalainen 1997: 497 ff.)
[10] See below for an explanation of the results in brackets.

[11] According to Allen (1995: 210) "*you* does not commonly begin to invade the territory of the nominative (*ye*) until the late fifteenth century". One cannot entirely exclude the possibility of such an "invasion" in the letters either.

by *pray*, while the typically oblique forms have the verb *pray* (*take* appears once) arising before them. One might consider the occurrences of *pray* before *ʒe* in examples (7) and (19) to be the letter writer's errors or simply misprints. Then, the choice of the nominative and oblique forms of the pronouns could be explained by existing collocations, i.e. the verbs *wyll* and *besek* may have taken the nominative case and the verb *pray* – the oblique case. Such a view would eliminate ambiguity from the morphosyntactic interpretation of clauses (1-24). Yet, if one rejects this option, the ambiguity will remain.[12]

This ambiguity might be due to the letter writers' hesitation concerning the grammatical case in clauses of this kind. It could also have resulted from the syntactic ellipsis employed in order to avoid repetition of the second person singular form in the same phrase (perhaps for stylistic reasons). If the latter is true, one will be dealing with object/complement ellipsis in examples (2), (7), (12), (19) and (23), and with subject ellipsis in all the other clauses. To illustrate this problem, let us compare the ambiguous clauses (1-24) with those showing no ambiguity with regard to the grammatical case of the pronoun (25-30).

(25) *I pray you to delyuer* (3, 6; 6, 7f.)
(26) *I pray you that ye woll ressayue them* (5, 14)
(27) *I pray you that ye woll pay the freyght* (5, 15f.)
(28) *I pray you that ye woll recomaunde hem vnto my mastere* (5, 16f.)
(29) *I pray you to be good ffrende to my wyffe* (6, 8f.)
(30) *I praye you to recomend me to hym* (19, 51)

Apparently, in the second group of clauses, all the *you* forms are exponents of the oblique (accusative) case and all the *ye* forms – of the nominative. Ambiguity is avoided by means of using *to* as the indicator of the infinitival clause in (25), (29) and (30), and introducing the relative marker *that* in relative clauses (26-28). In the clauses (1-24), where the syntactic structure lacks clarity, the ambiguity remains. One may conclude that the paradigmatic choice (concerning the exponents of the grammatical case) may become affected (or disturbed) by syntagmatic (i.e. syntactic) considerations. Hence, only a comprehensive approach to the text, covering both the level of morphology and the level of syntax, can provide a plausible explanation of the linguistic phenomenon in question.

The possessive second person pronoun appears seven times in the letters; three times as the complement of the pronominal phrase (the so-called double possessive), i.e. *(of) yours* (18, 14 and 15) and *(off) yours* (42, 20); and four times as a direct complement of the verb (22, 45; 25, 31; 28, 7; 41, 50).[13]

As the senders of the letters under consideration seem invariably to address one person, and not two or more people, no forms of the second person plural have been found in their letters.[14]

2.1.3. Third person

The most frequent third person form is the singular masculine pronoun. Four nominative variants are recorded, namely, *he, a, hee, ha*, with the most common one being *he* (74 occurrences). The number of occurrences of the remaining variants is only 7 altogether. The forms *ha* and *a* are most probably weakly stressed or unstressed variants, whereas *hee* and *he* are stressed forms (Mossé 1952: 56; Fisiak 1968: 80 ff.). In the oblique case the variant *hym* prevails (55 occurrences). Other forms include *hem* (10 occurrences, all in WM's letters) and *hyme, him* and *hy* (4 occurrences altogether). The old accusative form *hine*, still recorded in some Middle English southern texts (Mossé 1952: 55 ff.; Fisiak 1968: 80 ff.), does not appear in the analysed letters.

The feminine nominative appears in the shape *sche* five times and once as *she*, both typical East-Midlands forms (Mossé 1952: 55 ff.; Fisiak 1968: 80 ff.); the oblique forms are *her* (four times) and *here* (once). The reason for such scarce evidence of the feminine forms is the fact that the correspondence dealt mainly with business affairs, in which women were typically not directly involved (see Figs. 6 and 7).

The third person neuter singular variants in the nominative are *yt, ytt, it, hyt* and, occasionally, *hit* and *het*. In the oblique case the same variants are found, with the exception of the last two (see Figs. 6 and 7). The predominance of the first three variants implies that the loss of the initial *h-* must have been well established at the time and did not apply only to those forms in unstressed positions.[15] Analogically to the ambiguity concerning the case of the second person singular forms in some structures, the case of the third person singular neuter pronouns also cannot always be determined with absolute certainty. The problematic phrases, often formulaic,[16] include, e.g.,

(31) *Fordyrmor, plesythe yt yow to vnderstonde I hawe resseywyd an letter ffrom yow* (4, 2f.)
(32) *Farthermore pleese yt yow to wette that I heue ressayuyd fro yow a letter* (15, 2f.)

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[12] Because of the ambiguity that they cause, the occurrences of the forms in clauses (1-24) are added to the total count presented in Figs. 4 and 5 only in brackets.
[13] Twice preceded by the indefinite pronoun, *all yowrs* (in 22, 45; 41, 50).

[14] Plural forms do appear in approximately 30 later letters. Most of them were written by William Cely, representing the firm on the continent (in Calais) in the years 1482-4, and one was written by RCI. Analogically to the second person singular, a clear functional distinction between nominative (ʒe/ye) and oblique (yow/you) forms can be found in those letters.
[15] The variant *him* as a neuter form is not recorded here either (cf. Mossé 1952: 56; Fisiak 1968: 81).
[16] For similar examples concerning *it* in formulaic phrases see Carstensen (1959: 196 ff.).

(33) *Fordyrmor plesyth yt yow to vnderstonde Y resseywed an lettyr ffrom yow* (22, 3f.)

(34) *Plesyth ytt yow to whett Y ffelle by yowr wryttyng the schyp at London* (22, 20f.)

(35) *Plese hyt you to wet at the makyng of thys my godfadyr and I wer in good hell at Calles.* (34, 1ff.)

(36) *Brother, plesse ytt yow to wette that I ressayuyd ffrome yow by William Cely a letter* (35, 4f.)

(37) *Plesythe ytt yow to vnderstond that I hawe latly made an ssalle* (41, 39f.)

All *yt* (*ytt, hyt*) forms in the clauses and phrases quoted above occur after the predicate, i.e. in the position typical of the object. However, they should proba-bly be considered exponents of the nominative case acting as the subjects of the clauses.[17] One seems to find the confirmation of such an interpretation in the following examples of similar structures, where *yt* (*it*) appears in the normal subject position, even though it can be called an *empty subject* (see Denison 1993: 61-63):

(38) *Federmor, and yt plesse you, ye schall vnderstond* (5, 2)

(39) *Syr, and yt pless yowr masterschypp ... thys man has sayd ffor hymselff* (7, 1f.)

(40) *Syr, and yt plessyth yowr masterschypp there beth devars of my mastyrs her* (7, 4f.)

(41) *Y hertly thancke you that it pleasyd you so to doo* (17, 7f.)

(42) *And it wold pleyse yow for your dysport and plesur opon Thursday next comynge to meyt wyth vs* (29, 1f.)

(43) *Ferdermor, and yt plesse yow to wete* (39, 2)

Still, there is a slight possibility of interpreting *yt* (*ytt, hyt*) in the examples (31-37) (and possibly in some of the following ones) as appearing in the oblique case and acting as the direct object of the verb (*plesyth, plesythe, plese* etc.).[18] Then the clauses in question have to be considered subjectless. Such an interpre-tation seems to be reasonable, as verbs with the meaning 'please', including, e.g., *cweman, mislician* and *ungelican* in Old English, are often classified as *im-personal verbs* not requiring an overt subject (see Denison 1993: 61-102; Traugott 1992: 208-212). This can, in turn, be confirmed by the following subjectless constructions:

(44) *ye schall vnderstond that plesse yowre fader nothyng* (39, 18)

(45) *Ferdermo plessed yow to wete that ma master yewre fader ... and al faryt well* (40, 1ff.)

(46) *Me semyth yff ytt cowd be browght anbowght that whe myght hawe an quyne at Calles agen* (22, 11f.)

(47) *Syr, me thynk the kenred ys kumbrus* (25, 23)

Indeed, due to their inconsistency, the authors of the letters make the task of grammatical analysis of the presented clauses even more difficult. However, given the lack of well-established grammatical standards, it is understandable that each author applied his own rules.

While the nominative and oblique pronoun forms are more or less easily identifiable in the Cely letters, the neuter possessive singular pronoun seems to lack a generally accepted exponent. The variant *its* did not yet exist in the times of the Celys; it was first recorded around the year 1600 (Barber 1997: 150). The form *his*, functioning as both the masculine and neuter possessive pronoun in Middle English (Mustanoja 1960: 157), must have lost most of its semantic links with the neuter gender by the end of the fifteenth century, because it can-not be found in this role in the analysed letters. Instead, the authors use the postnominal adverbs *thereof* and *hereof* in the forms *therof(f)* (4, 4; 5, 16; 8, 14; 39, 12 and 15), *þerof* (16, 23), *her(e)of* (1, 8; 3, 9), and *therfor* ('for it' 40, 22).

Figure 6. The nominative singular – the third person

	Variants	Total number of occurrences	Authors and number of occurrences in their letters
Masculine	*he*	74	This form can be found in 22 of the letters by different authors, i.e. by RCII – 28; WM – 18 (occurs in all his letters); RCI – 10; GC – 8; J. Dalton – 5; J. Spencer – 3; Robert C. – 1; TM – 1
	a	4	RCII – 3; GC – 1
	hee	2	Robert C.
	ha	1	RCII

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[17] In the count presented in Fig. 6 and 7 these forms have been considered as nominative ones.

[18] The second person oblique singular *yow* (*you*) remains in the function of the indirect object whichever interpretation of *yt* (*ytt, hyt*) one adopts.

	Variants	Total number of occurrences	Authors and number of occurrences in their letters
Feminine	*sche*	5	WM – 4; TK – 1
	she	1	RCI
Neuter	*yt*	27	WM – 8 (used in all his letters); GC – 6; RCII – 4; RCI – 3; Robert C. – 3; TM – 2; J. Dalton – 1
	ytt	22	GC – 19; WM – 1; Robert Cely – 1; Thomas Miller – 1
	it	9	RCI – 7; Robert C. – 1; letter no. 29
	hyt	8	RCII – 6, the Vicar of Watford – 2
	hit	1	R. Radclyff
	het	1	R. Radclyff

Figure 7. The oblique singular – the third person

	Variants	Total number of occurrences	Authors and number occurrences in their letters
Masculine	*hym*	55	RCII – 26; RCI – 13; GC – 8; Robert C. – 5; J. Dalton – 2; J. Spencer – 1
	hem	10	WM – 10
	hyme	2	TM – 1; J. Spencer – 1
	hy	1	GC
Feminine	*her*	4	RCI – 3; TK – 1
	here	1	RCI – 1

	Variants	Total number of occurrences	Authors and number occurrences in their letters
Neuter	*yt*	11	RCI – 3; Robert C. – 2; WM – 2; GC – 1; TM – 1; J. Dalton – 1; RCII – 1
	ytt	7	GC – 3; Robert C. – 3; TM – 1
	hyt	7	RCII
	it	3	J. Dalton – 2; RCI – 1

The most frequent form of the third person plural nominative is *thay* (cf. Barber 1997: 152; Mustanoja 1960: 134 ff.; Lass 1992: 120 ff.[19]). *They* is slightly less common (see Fig. 8). *Tay* occurs only once and may possibly be a misprint. The main exponent of the oblique case is *them*, although *thym* occurs once as well (in 8, 19).

Figure 8. The nominative and oblique plural – the third person

	Variants	Total number of occurrences	Authors and number of occurrences in their letters
Nominative	*thay*	16	RCII – 12; RCI – 2; Robert C. – 1; WM – 1
	they	12	GC – 4; WM – 3; RCI – 2; J. Dalton – 2; TM – 1
	tay	1	RCII
Oblique	*them*	18	RCI – 6; RCII – 6; WM – 4; Robert C. – 1, TM – 1
	thym	1	RCII

In Fig. 8 one can notice the differences in usage between Richard Cely the younger and George Cely. Although they were brothers and as such belonged to the same generation, RCII always employs *thay* as the exponent of the third person plural nominative, while GC uses *they*. *Thay* is a northern variant and could be considered one of RCII's northernisms, due to his earlier stay in the North (Samuels 1981: 49). However, no differentiation among the authors is found in the use of the oblique form, except for one occurrence of *thym* in a letter by

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[19] None of whom mentions the orthographic variant *thay*.

RCII. Apparently, no third person plural possessive pronouns appear in the text under consideration.[20]

2.2. Reflexive pronouns

Reflexive pronouns appear only sporadically in the analysed letters. The recorded forms of the first person singular are: *myselffe* (7, 3) and *my selffe* (41, 39). There are four instances (in three variants) of pronouns in the second person: *yourselve* (2, 18), *yoursellff* (18, 13) and *thyselve* (27, 8; 30, 2) all with singular referents; five in the third person masculine singular: *hymselff* (7, 2), *hymselve* (11, 22; 38, 39) and *hemselffe* (39, 36; 40, 22). Two occurrences of the third person plural *themselve* are recorded (both in 30, 7). Interestingly enough, while the combinations in the first and second persons are compounds that consist of the attributive (adjectival) forms of possessive pronouns and the morphemes *-sel(l)ff* or *-selve* (in the case of *my selffe*, they are even orthographically separate), the examples for the third person reflexive pronoun have the oblique case form of the personal pronoun as their first component. Mustanoja's discussion of reflexive pronouns in Middle English (1960: 145-157) sheds some light on the possible reasons for this evident differentiation. Originally, expressions such as, e.g., *me self* (in the first person) and *þe self* (in the second person), with the dative forms (of personal pronouns) *me* and *þe*, were employed. The second element, i.e. *self/selve(s)* could then be interpreted as a post-pronominal adjective (Mossé 1952: 95) or a demonstrative (Mossé 1952: 61). Later, the elements *me* and *þe* developed into *mi* and *þi*, which came to be considered as possessives. Consequently, the attributive function shifted from the second to the first element. In our *hymselff* and *hymselve*, the original dative form of the pronominal element has been preserved.[21]

Although in the third person plural the only recorded second component of the compound is *-selve*, in the singular the morphemes *-sel(l)ff* and *-selve* are used interchangeably, so there cannot have been any valid functional number distinction between them. This confirms Barber's assumption (1997: 159) that the forms with *-selves* as the exponent of the plural were new formations (they became the norm in the middle of the sixteenth century).

The scarcity of observable instances of reflexive pronouns in the documents does not have to imply that reflexive relations were not expressed. The Middle English use of simple personal pronouns in that role (see Mustanoja 1960: 153;

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[20] Again, the forms *ther* (19, 5; 24, 7; 25, 3f.; 30, 9 and 41, 21) and *there* (11, 4; 12, 9; 24, 9 and 38, 19) with the attributive function are not taken into consideration.
[21] Possibly the merger of both elements of this composite form (and the concurrent reinterpretation of two free morphemes as one word) occurred earlier in the third person singular than it did in the first and second persons, thus impeding (or rendering irrelevant) the shift of the attributive function.

Barber 1976: 224) was continued in the letters. One of the examples available in the text is the phrase *I fere me* (12, 3 and 13; 36, 22), where the pronoun *me* seems to exhibit a reflexive relation. However, the emphatic function of this form cannot be excluded either. Furthermore, the majority of *self/selve(s)* forms mentioned above do not confirm the claim that "a true reflexive pronoun, identifiable by morphology, did not exist in ME" (Mossé 1952: 95),[22] clearly fulfilling a reflexive, not just a reinforcing, function in the text. Since we are dealing already with the end of the period in question, it is most likely that the times when the Cely letters were written witnessed the birth and "naturalisation" of a new rightful morphological category, i.e. the reflexive pronoun. The orthographic merger of the previously separate elements (the pronoun/possessive adjective and the morpheme *self/selve(s)* seems also to confirm the occurrence of a morphological and semantic reinterpretation.

2.3. Indefinite pronouns

Quite a few instances of indefinite pronouns can be found in the first forty-three Cely letters. Many of them are negative pronouns with non-human referents, e.g., the compound pronoun meaning 'nothing', whose orthographic variants are the following: *nothyng* (2, 7; 8, 6; 11, 4; 39, 11 and 18), *nothynge* (15, 8) and *notyng* (20, 13 and 20), and the one-morpheme 'none' reflected in the forms: *none* (7, 5 and 23; 16, 20; 19, 44; 22, 13 and 42), *non* (20, 9), *noyn* (two occurrences in 43, 10) and *noyne* (43, 10). Three instances of the compound pronoun with the present-day sense 'anything' have been found, i.e. *ony theng* (28, 7), *any thynge* (35, 9) and *hanything* (42, 20). 'Any' surfaces many times as a determiner (in the variants: *any, ony, onny, eny, hany* and *hony*), but only twice as a regular pronoun:

(48)   *Y woll knowe hym ryght whell þat shall hawe any at that day* (22, 40f.)
(49)   *... Rechard Cely schuld bryng hover anoder govshawke wyt hem, yeff ye covd bey any at Calles* (39, 33ff.)

There are about 30 occurrences of *all* in the letters of the different authors (e.g., in 7, 22; 21, 3; 34, 11 and 41, 50); four of *aull* (19, 32 and 51; 32, 18 and 43, 8), all in RCII's letters; one occurrence of *avll* (19, 25), one of *al* (40, 3) and one of *a* 'all' (43, 21), which can probably be considered simply orthographic variants of 'all'. However, in most cases these forms function in the text as determiners or quantifiers rather than pronouns (e.g., *aull the fellyschyp* and *aull*

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[22] Using the term "Middle English" in his book Mossé refers to it as "a period extending from the 12th century to the end of the 15th" (Mossé 1952: 41). The same temporal limits are adopted in the present work.

thyngys). All appears with the pronominal function only three times, and *aull, al*[23] and *a* once each:

(50)   *I beseke yowr masterschypp and my masterys all ʒe whyll menystyr yowr law vnto me ...* (7, 23)

(51)   *I haue payd my woll ... and fell, John Cely and all ...* (31, 27)

(52)   *... I understand wyll ... all ys solde.* (38, 5)

(53)   *... whe aull be, in good heyll ...* (43, 8)

(54)   *I pray you to recomend me to my nostes and all goyd frendys a be name.* (43, 21)

In the last example, one can clearly see the functional difference between *all*, a determiner, and *a*, an anaphoric pronoun.

'Another' appears five times as *anoder* (38, 23; 39, 34; 40, 12, 21 and 23), once as *annodyr* (41, 13) and once as *another* (8, 12), but only once (40, 12) does it have a pronominal function: *he schall have anoder therfor ayenst Ester.*

The indefinite pronoun, corresponding to the present-day sense '(the) other', appears in three forms in the text, i.e. as: *hoder, todor* and *othyr*:

(55)   *Y suppeowse my master the Leffetenant and hoder of the Feleschyppe.* (39, 27)

(56)   *... the ton hallff in havnde, the todor at Syncyon next ...* (18, 8)

(57)   *I do ys ffor none othyr but to deffravde thys man* (7, 5f.)

As one can conclude from the examples given above, the indefinite pronoun *hoder (todor, othyr)* may have either singular (18, 8; 7, 5f.) or plural referents (39, 27).

Elsewhere than in the examples given above, the words with the meaning 'other' are not pronouns, but determiners, e.g., *the toder letter* (38, 3), *vyth oder stofe* (34, 31), *the odur x li.* (10, 20), *all other Bachelerys* (29, 19), *vyth all odyr gowldys* (34, 11), *the tother ij* (8, 5), *none hodyr ways* (7, 24), *any hothyr man* (22, 24), *Y most do as hothyr men dothe* (22, 34) and *the tothyr halffe at Whyttsontyde* (22, 37). These modify singular (e.g., 22, 24) as well as plural (22, 34) nouns.

Interestingly, whether functioning as pronouns or as modifiers, the variants of 'other' are rarely preceded by the article *the*. The definite article occurs only once before *other* (*the other xiij*[xx] *tayllour ʒardys* in 29, 4) and almost every time before the variants beginning with *t-*, i.e. before *tother* (8, 5), *tothyr* (22, 37) and *toder* (38, 3; 20, 17; 23, 9). The exception to this rule occurs in *Thomas Kesten*

wyll sete me in worse case of asvrete nor be do toder men (38, 42f.) and may have resulted from the authors' tendency to alliterate.

A few other indefinite pronominal forms have been found, i.e., *bothe* (43, 14); *syche* (31, 31); *the same* (34, 34; 41, 43); *sum* 'some' (43, 22); *many* (41, 20); and *meche* (31, 30), *moch* (42, 6) and *mvch* (28, 2) 'much'.[24]

2.4. Demonstrative, interrogative and relative pronouns

The most common demonstratives occurring in the letters are *this* and *that*. They usually function as modifiers. The existing orthographic variants comprise: *thys*, a form which surfaces most often, i.e. ninety times altogether, in only twenty-three cases used as a pronoun; *this* appears ten times, but only once (29, 19) is it a pronoun; *þys* takes the function of a modifier three times (1,5 and 9 and 10, 14), and twice the function of a pronoun (8, 21 and 10, 23), and, finally, *tys* (21, 6) has only a pronominal function. All the instances mentioned above, except for *thys* (in 4, 18; 23, 7 and 40, 16), are singular forms. *That* occurs fifteen times as a demonstrative, but functions as a pronoun in merely six cases.

Relative pronouns are of special interest in the Cely letters because of the wide variety of forms which appear in that function. These relatives developed from words that originally functioned only as demonstratives or interrogatives. Undoubtedly, the most frequent relative pronoun is *that*, including the alternative orthographic forms *þat*, *at* (three instances), *taht* (one instance) and *tat* (one instance). Altogether, about 170 occurrences of this relative marker have been found.[25] It usually precedes a noun clause, which functions as the object of a verb, e.g.,

(58)   *... ye schall vnderstand that Y haue schypped ... ix packys d. of fellys* (5, 2)

(59)   *Lettynge yowe wyt that I haue mayd exchange wyth Thomas Abram* (10, 6)

(60)   *I honderstonde that ʒee haue lentte to the Plasse for me xx li.* (15, 13f.)

(61)   *Y call allmyghty God to wittnes and record þat Y never made report to any maner persone of any suche vngodely language* (16, 12ff.)

(62)   *Tomas has promysyd me in hys brothers name that hys brother schaull agre wyth me at London.* (32, 9f.)

That (þat) may also, albeit less often, introduce a relative clause which refers either to people (63 and 65) or things/abstract notions (64 and 66), e.g.,

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[24] Numerals have not been taken into consideration (cf. Lass 1992: 122) since they most often appear as Roman numerals in the text and therefore can be analysed neither morphologically nor orthographically.
[25] The instances where *that* functions as a determiner have not been included in the count.

(63) ... *say vnto owr ffathyr the next trosty man that comyth shall bryng hym x li.* (4, 23f.)

(64) ... *ʒe haue sent to Thomas Kesten for the letter that he wrat.* (8, 8f.)

(65) ... *ther ys no merchant þat spende an grott in the towne of Calles* (22, 15f.)

(66) ... *hertely thankyng yowe of the greht cheyr and welfayr þat I had wyth yowe* (10, 2f.)

Since only one direct question appears in the documents under consideration: *... who showld a ben callyd vppon ffor costom and sobsyde?* (7, 20f.), there is only a single instance of an interrogative. Other occurrences of 'who', 'whom' and 'which' can be functionally classified as relative pronouns introducing subordinate clauses. The available instances are, e.g., *who* (in 17, 14 and 28, 8), *ho* (in 33, 9 and 35, 11) (both forms with divine reference), *whom* (in 18, 14 – with a human referent); and *what* (in 8, 19; 22, 18 and 41) preceding object clauses.

Another *wh*-pronoun functioning as a relative marker is 'which', having alternative forms: *w(h)ech(e)*, *w(h)ych(e)* and *qwych(e)*. *Which* appears seven times in the text, four times as a pronoun introducing a relative clause (see 67-70), and three times as a demonstrative (71-73):

(67) *Y recomaunde me vnto you, desyryng to here of your prosperous welfare, which Jhesu preserue to th'accomplysshment of your hertys desire* (16, 3)

(68) ... *ther was betwene Thomas Blakham and my wyf causes vrgent, for the which Y haue had her in sharp examynacion* (16, 18f.)[26]

(69) *Y recommaunde me vnto your gode maystership, desiryng to here of your prosperous welfare, which Jhesu preserue to your cordyall desyre* (17, 1ff.)

(70) *I receyved a lettre from you ... for the which Y hertly thancke you* (17, 6f.)

(71) *The which xl li. ster. I pray you may be well and truely content and paid* (1, 6)

(72) *The tenour of which lettre Y vnderstode ryght wele* (17, 9f.)

(73) ... *by the which lettre* (16, 8)

The variant *w(h)ech(e)* is much more common in the letters (especially in those written by RCI), and is often preceded by the definite article. It occurs 69 times altogether, but in the majority, i.e. 39, of instances it acts as the conjunction 'wherefore' rather than a pronoun (see 74-76). Yet, there are 30 occurrences of *w(h)ech(e)* (including two of *wheche* and one of *whech*) with the function of relative pronouns introducing relative clauses, always preceded by a definite article (see 77 and 78).

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[26] It is also possible to interpret *for the which* here as a word cluster corresponding in meaning to the PDE *wherefore* and functioning as a conjunction.

In nearly all instances where *w(h)ech(e)* functions as a conjunction it is preceded by *for the* and constitutes part of a compound. One exception has been found (in 37, 12), where the bare form *weche* appears with the meaning 'wherefore'. A few instances of the demonstrative *(the) weche* have also been found (15, 3; 22, 5; 23, 2; 24, 2; 26, 2 and 31, 2).

(74) *The schepyng of woll and fellys ys begone at London, for the weche I am avysed for to schepe my woll* (26, 13)

(75) *I haue not schargyd the wyt a peny to paye for me, neder at Calys nor Bregys, nor at the marte, for the weche I pray the doe in thys pertys as wyll as ye can* (31, 19ff.)

(76) *I here saye the money in Flanderys schall be sete at a loer pryse schortely, for the weche be wyll ware kepe no money be the* (36, 13ff.)

(77) *I haue resayuyd a letter from the, ... the weche I haue wyll understand* (2, 2)

(78) ... *also say to Thomas Kesten that he promysyd to me that the x s. of sarplere scholl be payd to John Tate, the weche ys not payd, for the weche I haue grete callyng for the payment there* (11, 10ff.)

As concerns other orthographic variants of the relative marker, *w(h)ych(e)* occurs only occasionally, either as a pronoun introducing a relative clause (e.g., in 10, 5 and 18, 6) or as a demonstrative (e.g., in 5, 5 and 9, 5). Moreover, three examples of the northern form *qw(e)ych(e)* have been found (19, 7; 34, 26 and 42, 4) all of which introduce relative clauses. Two of them appear in RCII's letters and one in Robert Radclyff's.

Among relative markers there are also compounds, e.g., different orthographic variants of 'wherefore' (*wherfore* (16, 12 and 24), *werefor* (20, 21), *wherfor* (18, 13; 20 and 21)), of 'whereof' (*whereof* (4, 6; 10, 8; 16, 10; 17, 4), *werof* (15,4)) and 'wherein' (*wherein* (10,18)).

As can be inferred from the examples given above, relative pronouns were by no means uncommon. Yet, sometimes they were not expressed, as in *plesy the yow to vnderstonde I hawe resseywyd an letter ffrom yow* (4, 2f.), where the subordinate clause appears without a relative marker.

3. Conclusions

The present paper has aimed at outlining the pronominal system in the first forty-three of the Cely letters. Attention has mainly been focused on personal pronouns since these constitute the most substantially represented group in the letters. The main aim of the analysis has been the identification of specific morphological categories in the pronominal system. However, since the orthographic forms constitute the exponents of these categories and are indispensable

for identifying them, also the variety of orthographic variants appearing in the text has been taken into consideration as the basis for the morphological analysis.

Almost all pronominal types are represented by numerous alternative orthographic forms, of which some prove to be more common than others, e.g., the first person nominative singular *I* and *Y*, respectively. Orthographic heterogeneity results from the still small degree of standardisation of late fifteenth century English, which can be inferred from the high level of inconsistency on the part of all the authors. Additionally, a large number of homographs obscure the transparency of the pronominal system, e.g., *ther/there* both appear either as 'their' or 'there'; *myn* may have the meanings 'my' or 'mine'; *thys* functions either as a pronoun or a demonstrative followed by a noun.

Apart from idiosyncratic writing habits, such as Richard the elder's consistent use of *the weche* as a relative pronoun, some instances of the form variation may be considered as due to dialectal differences between the senders of the letters (e.g., *the qw(e)ych(e)*, used only by Richard junior and Robert Radclyff, and *thay* employed mostly by Richard junior, are northern forms). However, neither of these authors uses dialectal forms consistently – they are employed interchangeably with the remaining variants.

In this sample study it has also been possible to trace several important general tendencies concerning Late Middle/Early Modern English usage, such as, e.g., the predominance of *that* as the relative pronominal marker, or the inflectional and functional differentiation, though sometimes inconsistent, between the second person singular pronominal forms *ȝe/ye* and *you/yow*, which are exponents of the nominative (assuming the role of the subject in a clause) and the oblique case (acting as the object), respectively. Another important new process recorded in the course of the analysis is the rise of a new morphological category, i.e. the reflexive pronoun.

Apart from the abundance of orthographic variants and the appearance of the new tendencies identified above, the analysis has also revealed some unequivocalness with regard to the case assigned to the second person and third person neuter of personal pronouns. The ambiguity is to be found only in certain syntactic structures (often in formulaic phrases) and may be explained in different ways. Yet, none of the explanations seems entirely satisfactory.

The present treatment of the subject does not aspire to exhaustiveness. A detailed study of the other letters of the collection should contribute some additional information on the pronominal system employed by their writers, which may help to find a definite clarification for the structural and inflectional ambiguities identified above.

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APPENDIX

A LIST OF THE CELY LETTERS SUBJECT TO THE ANALYSIS

1. John Dycons to John Wode at London, 8-12-1472
2. Richard Cely the elder at London to Robert Cely at Calais, 5-7-1474
3. Robert Cely at London to George Cely, 13-04-1476
4. George Cely at Antwerp to Richard Cely the younger at Calais, 27-09-1476
5. William Maryon at London to George Cely at Calais, 28-09-1476
6. Thomas Kesten to George Cely, 1476
7. Thomas Miller (?), [1476]. Copy in G. Cely's hand (the copy was probably made by George)
8. Richard Cely the younger at London to George Cely at Calais, 28-10-[1476]
9. William Maryon at London to George Cely at Calais, 5-11-1476
10. John Spencer at London to George Cely at Calais, 2-12-[?1476]
11. Richard Cely the elder at London to George Cely at Calais, 26-01-1476/7
12. Richard Cely the elder at London to George Cely at Calais, 23-05-1477
13. Richard Cely the elder at London to George Cely at Calais, 26-06-1477
14. Jan Vanderheyden at Mechlin to George Cely at Calais, 9-10-1477 - excluded from the analysis since not written in English
15. Robert Cely at London to George Cely at Calais, 19-11-1477
16. Draft in the name of Richard Cely, 28-02-1477/8
17. Draft of letter in the name of Richard Cely to the Lieutenant of the Staple, 28-02-1477/8
18. John Dalton at Calais to George Cely at London, 24-03-1477/8
19. Richard Cely the younger at London to George Cely at Calais, 26-03-1478
20. Richard Cely the elder at London to George Cely at Calais, 1-05-1478
21. Robert Cely at London to George Cely at Calais, 5-05-1478
22. George Cely at Calais to Richard Cely the elder at London, 8-05-1478
23. Richard Cely the elder at London to George Cely at Calais, 18-05-1478
24. Richard Cely the elder at London to George Cely at Calais, 17-06-1478
25. Richard Cely the younger at London to George Cely at Calais or Bruges, 18-06-1478
26. Richard Cely the elder at London to George Cely at Calais, 10-07-1478
27. Richard Cely the elder at London to George Cely at Calais, 20-07-1478
28. John Dalton at Leicester to George Cely at Calais, 24-07-1478
29. Challenge to an archery match, from the married freemen of the Staple to the bachelors, Calais, 17-08-1478
30. Richard Cely the elder at London to George Cely at Calais, 17-08-1478
31. Richard Cely the elder at London to George Cely at Calais, 25-08-1478

32. Richard Cely the younger at Calais to George Cely at Bruges, [?27-08-]1478
33. The Vicar of Watford to George Cely, [?1478]
34. Richard Cely the younger at Calais to George Cely at Bruges or Antwerp, 25-09-1478
35. Robert Cely at London to George Cely at Calais, 6-10-1478
36. Richard Cely the elder at London to George Cely at Calis, 10-10-1478
37. Richard Cely the elder at London to Richard Cely the younger at Calais, 28-10-1478
38. Richard Cely the elder at London to George Cely at Calais, 6-11-1478
39. William Maryon at London to George or Richard Cely the younger at Calais, 8-11-[1478]
40. William Maryon at London to Richard Cely the younger at Calais, 23-11-[1478]
41. George Cely at Calais to Richard Cely the elder at London, 23-11-1478
42. Robert Radclyff at Calais to George Cely, 11-12-[1478]
43. Richard Cely the younger at London to George Cely at Calais, 15-12-1478