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Krogull, A.

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Author: Krogull, A.

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Morphosyntactic variables (1)

Neuter relative pronouns

The analyses of five orthographic variables presented in Chapters 5–9 generally signalled a strong normative influence of Siegenbeek's (1804) spelling prescriptions on actual language practices. Shifting the focus to morphosyntactic issues, Chapters 10–12 examine the effectiveness of Weiland's (1805) official grammar norms. First, two central aspects of the Dutch relativisation system will be taken into account. The present chapter focuses on neuter relative pronouns, followed by an analysis of masculine and feminine singular and plural pronouns in Chapter 11.

While the complexity and variability of relative pronouns certainly justify the split into two separate, though closely related variables, the history of Dutch relativisation is best treated as a whole, as the major developments in the relativisation system affected neuter as well as masculine and feminine forms. Therefore, Section 1 of this chapter provides a general outline of relativisation in Dutch, covering the forms of both case studies under investigation. Moreover, grammarians and other language commentators did not strictly distinguish between different types of relativisers in their discussions, but typically addressed relativisation strategies under the same heading. This is why the present chapter includes a general outline of metalinguistic comments for both neuter and masculine/feminine forms, discussing norms and preferences in Weiland's (1805) grammar (Section 2) and in the preceding eighteenth-century normative tradition (Section 3). Bringing together the findings drawn from the two case studies, a comprehensive conclusion on variation and change in the use of Dutch relative pronouns will be drawn at the end of Chapter 11.

1 Relativisation in Dutch

Both synchronically and diachronically, relativisation in Dutch can be characterised as a highly complex morphosyntactic issue. Like other West Germanic languages such as English and German, Dutch has an extensive system of relative pronouns, which are generally grammaticalised forms of the demonstrative and interrogative pronouns. The situation in present-day Dutch, in fact, reflects the age-long competition between these two subsystems of originally demonstrative, so-called *d*-forms on the one hand, and originally interrogative, so-called *w*-forms on the other.

Historically, Dutch relativisers derive from demonstrative pronouns. In the Old and Middle Dutch periods, the *d*-forms *die* and *dat* were the default forms for masculine and feminine (i.e. present-day common gender) and neuter referents, respectively (van der Horst 2008: 172–173, 377). These pronouns were sensitive for

case marking, resulting in additional declined forms *diens* in the masculine and neuter genitive singular, *dier* in the genitive plural and the feminine genitive and dative singular, and *dien* in the dative plural.

From the late Middle Dutch period onwards, however, the competing *w*-forms *wie* and *wat* have increasingly replaced *die* and *dat* in specific contexts, for instance as free relatives. Moreover, the declined genitive forms *wiens* in the masculine and neuter genitive singular, and *wier* in the feminine singular and the plural have been used since the Middle Dutch period (van der Horst 2008: 602). These genitive forms are, in fact, still used in present-day Dutch, although they are commonly considered to be restricted to written and/or formal language (cf. ANS, Section 5.8.6).

Table 1 presents a diachronic overview of the main variants of masculine/feminine and neuter relative pronouns in the nominative singular. For reasons of simplification, the spelling of all forms was normalised.

Table 1. Main variants of relative pronouns across periods (nominative singular).

	Masculine/feminine	Neuter
Old Dutch before 1150	<i>die</i>	<i>dat</i>
Middle Dutch 1150–1500	<i>die, wie, welke, dewelke</i>	<i>dat, wat, welk, betwelk</i>
Modern Dutch 1500–1900	<i>die, wie, welke, dewelke</i>	<i>dat, wat, welk, betwelk, hetgeen</i>
Present-day Dutch 1900–present	<i>die, wie</i> (formal/archaic: <i>welke</i>)	<i>dat, wat</i> (formal/archaic: <i>welk,</i> <i>betwelk, hetgeen</i>)

In addition to the competition between *d*-forms and *w*-forms, the history of Dutch relativisation also saw the rise of alternative pronominal forms such as masculine and feminine *welke* and *dewelke*, as well as neuter *hetgeen*, *welk* and *betwelk*. These additional forms will also be a crucial part of the corpus analysis presented in the present and following chapter.

Already in the Middle Dutch period, *welc* or *welk*, derived from the originally interrogative *welk(e)*, was used as a relative pronoun alongside *die* and *dat* (van der Horst 2008: 380). Moreover, the extended forms *dewelke* for masculine and feminine referents, and *betwelk* for neuter referents also emerged as early as the thirteenth century, probably under influence of Latin and/or French *lequel* (van der Horst 2008: 381). Both *dewelke* and *betwelk* were particularly frequent in usage in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (van der Horst 2008: 830).

Another neuter form is *hetgeen*, originally a demonstrative pronoun. The relative use of *hetgeen* is usually dated to the sixteenth century, when the common combination of demonstrative *hetgeen* + relative *dat* was probably reinterpreted as relative *hetgeen* + (optional) subordinating conjunction *dat*, ultimately giving rise to the new stand-alone relative pronoun *hetgeen* in the seventeenth century (van der Horst 2008: 1115–1116, 1396). Schoonenboom (1997) shows that in Bible

translations from the fourteenth to the twentieth centuries, *betgeen* was absent to begin with, but then became a relevant variant – and strong competitor of *wat* (van der Horst 2008: 1116) – in the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, before it declined again in the twentieth century. Generally, *develke*, *betwelke* and *betgeen* have become archaic or restricted to highly formal language from 1900 onwards (van der Wal 2002b: 34; van der Horst 2008: 1686).

Apart from the emergence (and subsequent decline) of these additional pronominal forms, the Dutch relativisation system has undergone a major shift from *d-* to *w-*forms⁶⁸. This change affects both pronominal and adverbial relativisers, occurring in both restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses, as well as in dependent and independent (i.e. free or headless) relative clauses (Rutten & van der Wal 2014: 290). The change from *d-* to *w-*relativisation in Dutch comprises the following three developments:

- *die* > *wie*
- *dat* > *wat*
- *daar* > *waar*

The third change affects the relative adverbs *daar* and *waar*, as well as relative pronominal adverbs, consisting of a relative adverb and a preposition, for instance *daarin* and *waarin*.

It is striking that these three similar changes have a different chronology (van der Wal 2002b: 32; van der Wal 2003: 364). In the case of relative adverbs and relative pronominal adverbs, the development from *d-* to *w-*forms was completed by around 1900. Compared to the relatively rapid change from *daar* to *waar*, the pronominal relativisers have progressed far less. The change of the neuter relative pronoun is currently nearing its completion, at least in subject and object position, where *wat* is replacing *dat* (van der Horst 2008: 1683). With regard to the masculine and feminine relative pronouns, the change from *die* to *wie* is still ongoing. For free relatives, *wie* has become the current form, but it has not yet replaced *die* in other contexts, at least not in accepted Standard Dutch (van der Wal 2002b: 32). In fact, *wie* is still relatively rare in the common gender in subject and object position, although examples can be found easily (van der Horst 2008: 1683).

In sum, all three major developments in the Dutch relativisation system are slow and gradual processes, resulting in an age-long (and historical-sociolinguistically intriguing) situation of variation and change. The occurrence of alternative relativisers such as *welk(e)*, *develke*, *betwelke* and *betgeen* diversify this situation even more.

Due to the complexity of relativisers and their competing forms, I decided to focus on the two types of relative pronouns. The two case studies presented here and in Chapter 11 investigate variation and change in the neuter as well as in

⁶⁸ The change from *d-* to *w-*relativisers appears to be a broad West Germanic development, also attested for English (from invariant *that* to originally interrogative *who*, *what*, *which*), for instance.

the masculine and feminine relative pronouns, respectively. This means that the relative adverbs and relative pronominal adverbs will not be taken into consideration. For a detailed corpus-based study focusing on these adverbial relativisers, see Rutten & van der Wal's (2014: ch. 8) analysis of relative clauses in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Dutch private letters. The central aim of the two case studies in this dissertation is to shed light on variation and change in the use of relative pronouns in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Dutch. Moreover, by taking into account the normative discussion, both in Weiland's (1805) national grammar (cf. Section 2) and in the works of his eighteenth-century predecessors (cf. Section 3), the possible normative influence on actual language practice will be examined and assessed.

2 Discussion in Weiland (1805)

With regard to relativisation, Weiland's (1805) national grammar can be considered as a turning point in the Dutch normative tradition. As pointed out by van der Wal (2003: 367-369), the elaborateness of Weiland forms a sharp contrast to his eighteenth-century predecessors (cf. Section 3). In fact, he provided relatively detailed information on Dutch relativisers⁶⁹: not only a definition and paradigms, but also explicit norms and rules for usage, observations on stylistic or register differences, and numerous examples, from which further (more implicit) norms and rules can be deduced.

Starting with a general definition of relative pronouns, Weiland (1805: 119-120) listed *welke*, *denwelke*, *die* and *wie* as possible forms:

De *betrekkelijke* voornaamwoorden zijn zulke, welke betrekking hebben op personen of zaken, van welke te voren gesproken is. Hiertoe behooren *welke*, *denwelke*, *die*, *wie*.

‘The relative pronouns are those, which refer to persons or things of which it was spoken before. *Welke*, *denwelke*, *die*, *wie* belong to this.’

The order in which Weiland listed the forms is interesting and might indicate his preferences for the more ‘written’ forms *welke* and *denwelke*, which are mentioned first, followed by the more ‘common’ *die* and *wie*. Although this list only comprises the masculine and feminine forms, more relativisers, i.e. their neuter counterparts (viz. *dat*, *wat*, *welk*, *betwelk*), were presented in the subsequent description and examples. Surprisingly, a more comprehensive inventory of relative pronouns – including the neuter forms – had been presented in Weiland (1799: 123):

⁶⁹ Given the focus on relative pronouns in this chapter, metalinguistic comments with regard to relative adverbs and relative pronominal adverbs will be left out of consideration (both in Sections 2 and 3).

De voornaamwoorden, welken betrekking hebben op personen, of zaken, waarvan te voren gesproken is, worden *betrekkelijke voornaamwoorden* genoemd. Zij zijn *welke, welk, dewelke, betwelk, die, dat, wie, en wat*.

‘The pronouns, which relate to persons or things of which it was spoken before, are called *relative pronouns*. They are *welke, welk, dewelke, betwelk, die, dat, wie, and wat*.’

Like in his 1805 grammar, Weiland listed the typically written forms *welke, welk, dewelke, betwelk* before the more common *d-* and *w-*forms.

Furthermore, it is striking that Weiland (1805) did not provide information on the alternative neuter pronoun *betgeen*, whereas we can find a comment on its use in Weiland (1799: 123):

Doorgaands wordt ook het onzijdige *betgene*, onder de betrekkelijke voornaamwoorden gesteld; doch verkeerdlijk, dewijl het eigenlijk zoo veel zegt, als *dat, betwelk*; en dus past het nergens wel, zegt HUYDECOPER, [...] dan waar het deze omschrijving kan lijden. Gelijk *degene*, zoo ook behoort *betgene* tot de *aanwijzende*, en niet tot *betrekkelijke* voornaamwoorden; want men zegt wel *degene, die mij eert*, maar nimmer, *die, degene mij eert*; en dus ook wel *betgene, dat ik wil*, maar niet *dat, betgene ik wil*. [...] Intusschen is *betgene*, in de beteekenis van *betgene dat*, reeds door het gebruik gewettigd, b. v. *betgene ik zeg, is waarheid*.

‘Generally, the neuter *betgene* is placed among the relative pronouns, but wrongfully, while it actually means the same as *dat, betwelk*. Therefore it fits nowhere, says HUYDECOPER, [...], except for where it meets this description. Like *degene, betgene* belongs to the *demonstrative*, and not to the *relative* pronouns, because one says *degene, die mij eert*, but never *die, degene mij eert*; and thus *betgene, dat ik wil*, but not *dat, betgene ik wil*. [...] In the meantime, *betgene*, in the meaning of *betgene dat*, is already sanctioned by usage, e.g. *betgene ik zeg, is waarheid*.’

Referring to Huydecoper (1730), Weiland thus initially rejected the neuter *betgene* (equivalent to *degene*) as a relative pronoun. However, he did acknowledge (and accept) its function as free relative as legitimised in language practice.

Either explicitly from norms and rules, or implicitly from examples, it is possible to deduce preferences for specific forms in different contexts. First of all, in Weiland’s (1805: 120-121) view, only *w-*forms – but not *betgeen* (or *betgene*), as argued in Weiland (1799) – can function as free relatives:

Het betrekkelijke voornaamwoord *wie* wordt dikwerf zoo gebruikt, dat het betrekking heeft op iets, dat volgt; doch daar dit volgende zich gevoeglijk vooraan laat plaatsen, zoo blijft *wie* een waar betrekkelijk voornaamwoord, en slaat eigenlijk op het voorgaande. Zoo zegt men, bij voorbeeld: *wien ik mijn woord geef, dien zal ik niet misleiden*; het welk men ook dus kan omkeeren: *dien zal ik niet misleiden, wien ik mijn woord geef*. Hetzelfde heeft plaats ten aanzien van het onzijdige *wat*: *wat mij gebeurd is, dat zal ik u verhalen*; waarvoor men ook kan zeggen: *dat zal ik u verhalen, of: ik zal u verhalen, wat mij gebeurd is*.

‘The relative pronoun *wie* is often used that it relates to something that follows. But since what follows can be simply placed in front, *wie* remains a proper relative pronoun, and actually refers to the preceding. Thus one says, for example: *wien ik*

mijn woord geef, dien zal ik niet misleiden, which one can thus also turn around: *dien zal ik niet misleiden, wien ik mijn woord geef*. The same happens with regard to the neuter *wat*: *wat mij gebeurd is, dat zal ik u verhalen*, for which one can also say *dat zal ik u verhalen*, or: *ik zal u verhalen, wat mij gebeurd is*?

In the case of a sentence or clause as antecedent, Weiland (1805: 244) referred to the neuter forms *dat* and *hetwelk* as possible options:

Wanneer eene uitdrukking naar eene geheele rede te rug gevoerd wordt, dan wordt het betrekkelijke voornaamwoord in het onzijdige geslacht gebezigt: *zij spraken over dengd en godsvrucht, dat mij zeer aangenaam was. Die zaak heeft eenen slechten keer genomen, het welk ik wel gevreesd had.*

‘When an expression refers back to a complete sentence, the relative pronoun in the neuter gender is used: *zij spraken over dengd en godsvrucht, dat mij zeer aangenaam was. Die zaak heeft eenen slechten keer genomen, het welk ik wel gevreesd had.*’

This choice in favour of *dat* and *hetwelk* actually raises the question about Weiland’s attitude towards the remaining forms *wat*, *hetgeen* and *welk* in these cases.

In the indefinite pronoun combination with *alles*, the neuter form *wat* is the preferred choice, as can be inferred from the examples *alles, wat van hem gezegd wordt, is waar* ‘all that is said about him, is true’, and *Alles, wat ik daarvan weet, zal ik u verhalen* ‘all that I know thereof, I will tell you’ (Weiland 1805: 121). For nominalised adjectives as antecedents, Weiland preferred *dat* or *hetwelk* (and *welk*), although the *w*-form *wat* may occur as well: “*Het goede, wat gij mij bewezen hebt, beter dat, of het welk enz.*” (1805: 246). Weiland (1805: 246) was even more prescriptive in the case of relative pronouns referring to noun phrases, either indefinite or definite, explicitly rejecting the use of *wat*:

Is echter het voorwerp, waarop het betrekkelijke voornaamwoord slaat, een zelfstandig naamwoord, dan wordt ook, wanneer het van het onzijdige geslacht is, *welk*, of *het welk*, in plaats van *wat* gebezigt, als: [...] *Het huis dat, of het welk gij gekocht hebt, nooit wat.*

‘If the object, which the relative pronoun refers to, is a noun, then one also uses, if it is of the neuter gender, *welk*, or *het welk*, is used in place of *wat*, as: [...] *Het huis dat, of het welk gij gekocht hebt, never wat.*’

Furthermore, we can find a clear rule for the use of the genitive forms *niens* and *welks*, both of which were frequently used for neuter antecedents. Weiland (1805: 120) explained that *niens* is the appropriate form for genitive singular masculine, whereas *welks* is used for genitive singular neuter:

Dikwerf worden *niens* en *welks* onverschillig in het onzijdige geslacht gebruikt, schoon *niens* alleen de tweede enkelvoudige naamval van het mannelijke, en *welks* die van het onzijdige geslacht is. Men zegge derhalve: *de man, niens geleerdheid enz; het land, welks uitgestrektheid enz.*

‘Oftentimes *wiens* and *welks* are indifferently used in the neuter gender, although *wiens* is only the second case singular of the masculine, and *welks* that of the neuter gender. Therefore one says: *de man, wiens geleerdheid* etc., *het land, welks uitgestrektheid* etc.’

Weiland (1805: 245) also commented on the case-dependent use of *die*, *wie* and *welke* after personal pronouns: *die* in the nominative case (e.g. *hij, die mijn vriend wil zijn*), and *wie* or *welke* in the other cases (e.g. *Hij, wien ik dit gezegd heb*) and after prepositions (e.g. *Zij, van welke ik dit gehoord heb*). Weiland (1805: 246) further clarified that the choice between *wie* and *welke* is due to the common use of *wie* (rather than *welke*) in the genitive and dative masculine singular and after prepositions (e.g. *hij was de man, wiens vriend ik wilde wesen, wien ik zoo veel verschuldigd was, van wien ik zoo veel goed ontvangen had*).

Finally, a remarkable part of Weiland’s discussion on relativisation concerns his awareness of stylistic or register differences. Referring to the terminology introduced by his eighteenth-century predecessor ten Kate (1723; cf. also van der Wal 2002a), Weiland (1805: 244) distinguished between forms either used in the solemn style (*deftig*) or in the plain style (*gemeenzaam*):

Welke, of dewelke, wordt, als het eigenlijkste betrekkelijke voornaamwoord, meest in den deftigen stijl, het kortere die, dat ook voor een ander voornaamwoord gebezigd wordt, in den gemeenzamen stijl gebruikt, als: de gelukzaligheid des tegenwoordigen en toekomstenden levens, welke langs verschillende wegen gezocht word. Hij woont in het huis, dat zijn vader gebouwd heeft.

‘*Welke, or dewelke, as the most proper relative pronoun, are mostly used in the solemn style, the shorter die, which is also used for another pronoun, in the plain style, as de gelukzaligheid des tegenwoordigen en toekomstenden levens, welke langs verschillende wegen gezocht word. Hij woont in het huis, dat zijn vader gebouwd heeft.*’

This indicates that, according to Weiland, *welke* and *dewelke* belonged to a higher register, whereas *die* was mostly used in common writing (van der Wal 2003: 369). Previously, Weiland (1805: 121) had noted that *dewelke* was a less frequently used variant. Although he did not refer to the neuter counterparts explicitly, the example with *het huis, dat* (illustrating the ‘plain’ style) signals a similar stylistic difference, i.e. *dat* used in the ‘plain’ style, as opposed to *welke* and *hetwelke* in the more ‘solemn’ style.

In sum, Weiland’s (1805) national grammar provided remarkably detailed information on the contemporary use of relativisers, also indicating preferences and even some explicit rules for particular forms. In the corpus analyses of neuter (Section 5 of this chapter) as well as masculine and feminine relative pronouns (Chapter 11), I will investigate whether and to what extent Weiland’s normative influence on early nineteenth-century language usage can actually be attested.

3 Eighteenth-century normative discussion

In comparison with the elaborate discussion found in Weiland's (1805) national grammar, relativisation did not appear to be a core topic in the eighteenth-century normative tradition (cf. van der Wal 2003). Although a number of grammarians did refer to relativisers more or less sporadically, mainly in the form of short descriptions or paradigms, specific rules and/or guidance for their use were generally lacking.

To begin with, the inventory of relative pronouns listed in eighteenth-century grammars appears to be highly variable. Sewel (1708: 121; 1712: 236), for instance, only mentioned *nie* and *welk*. Only *die*, *dat*, *nie* and the genitive forms *wiens* and *wier* were mentioned in the grammar published by *Kunst wordt door arbeid verkregen* (1770: 140).

Moonen (1706: 125), one of the leading grammars in the eighteenth century, presented *die*, *dat*, *nie* in his definition of relative pronouns:

De Betreklyke hebben hun opzicht op iemand of iet waer van voorhene gesproken is; en zyn *Die, Dat, Wie*, quae, quod; als in deeze redenen, *Hy slaept nu, die altyt waekte; het zwaert, dat ik ontkoomen ben; de vyant, wiens maght te vreezen is; de vrou, wiens man gestorven is.*

'The relative [pronouns] refer to someone or something of which it was spoken before, and which are *Die, Dat, Wie*, qui, quae, quod, as in these sentences, *Hy slaept nu, die altyt waekte; het zwaert, dat ik ontkoomen ben; de vyant, wiens maght te vreezen is; de vrou, wiens man gestorven is.*'

Additionally, *welke* (for masculine and feminine) and *welk* (for neuter) were also mentioned as both interrogative and relative pronouns (Moonen 1706: 131).

The same inventory of relative pronouns recurred in Elzevier (1761: 64, 69, 71) and van der Palm (1769 II: 46, 49-50) more than half a century later. In addition to *die*, *dat*, *nie*, *welk(e)*, a few grammarians also mentioned the additional forms *dewelke* (e.g. *Rudimenta* 1799: 27), *betgeen* (Tollius 1776: 70), or both *dewelke* and *betgeen* (Stijl & van Bolhuis 1776: 96; van Bolhuis 1793: 51).

The neuter form *betgeen* in particular attracted some more prescriptive commentary throughout the eighteenth-century. Argued to be used exclusively as a free relative, Verwer (1707: 50a) rejected instances of *bet gene* in other contexts, for instance with nominal antecedents, as unacceptable mistakes:

Zoals die, dewelke terugslaat op wat voorafgaat, zo hebben de Nederlanders een bijzonder relatief, uitsluitend voor wat volgt – geen enkele andere taal heeft dit, voor zover ik weet –, te weten het gene in het onzijdig: “Sy pleegden alle ongebondenheit, ende (’t gene selfs alle menschelijkheid te buiten gaet) sy en spaerden geenen suigelingen aen ’s moeders borsten”. Het gene verwijst hier naar wat volgt, en dat is altijd het geval. Bijgevolg is de fout geenszins te dulden van hen die het gene gebruikten als relatief voor wat voorafgaat in het onzijdig geslagt, zeggende “het hart, ’t gene reikhalst”, “het swaert, ’t gene geslepen was”. En dit zult ge ook wel nergens door de ‘usus’ bevestigd vinden.

Like *die*, *dewelke* refer back to what precedes, the Dutch people have a specific relative pronoun, exclusively for what follows – not a single other language has this, as far as I know –, namely *het gene* in the neuter: “Sy pleegden alle ongebondenheit, ende (’t gene selfs alle menschelijckheit te buiten gaet) sy en spaerden geen en suigelingen aen ’s moeders borsten”. Here *het gene* refers to what follows, and that is always the case. Consequently, the mistake by those who used *het gene* as a relative pronoun for what precedes in the neuter gender, saying “het hart, ’t gene reikhalst”, “het swaert, ’t gene geslepen was”, is by no means tolerable. And you will also not find this confirmed by the use anywhere.’

Like Verwer (1707), Huydecoper (1730: 620) also prescribed *dat* or *’t welk* instead of *’t geen* with a nominal antecedent (here: *het werk*):

Omtrent het Onzydige *het gene*, merken wy hier kortelyk aan, dat men niet wel zegt, *het werk*, ’T GEEN *ik begonnen heb*: moet zyn, DAT, of ’T WELK *ik beg*. Maar zeer wel zegtmen, ’T GEEN, *ik doe, is een zwaar werk*: daar alleenlyk *’t geen*, zo veel zegt, als *dat het welk*, in ’t Latyn, *id quod*.

‘With regard to the neuter *het gene*, we briefly comment that one does not say well, *het werk*, ’T GEEN *ik begonnen heb*. It must be DAT, or ’T WELK *ik beg*. But one says very well, ’T GEEN, *ik doe, is een zwaar werk*: because only *’t geen* means as much as *dat het welk*, in Latin *id quod*.’

Similarly, Tollius (1776: 74-75) considered *’t geen* as a less acceptable option referring to nominal antecedents:

het geen by ’t onzydig geslacht dikwerf by enige onzer schryvers voorkomt voor het relativum *dat* of *’t welk*, daar echter deszelfs oud gebruik aan anderen schijnt te vereischen, dat het alleenlyk op het volgende en niet op het voorgaande gepast worde, b.v. “Zy pleegden ongebondenheit, en *’t geen* alle palen van menschelijckheit te buiten gaat, zy spaerden zelfs geen zuigelingen.” Minder goed zou men zeggen: “Het kwaad, *’t geen* alle begrip overtreft.”

‘Among some of our writers, *het geen* in the neuter gender often occurs in place of the relative pronoun *dat* or *’t welk*, because its old usage seems to demand from others, that it only refers to the following and not to the preceding, e.g. “Zy pleegden ongebondenheit, en *’t geen* alle palen van menschelijckheit te buiten gaat, zy spaerden zelfs geen zuigelingen.” One would say less well: “Het kwaad, *’t geen* alle begrip overtreft.’

Ten Kate (1723 I: 489-492) was more tolerant towards the use of *hetgeen*, suggesting it as a possible neuter form alongside *dat* and *hetwelk* in his paradigms. Generally, ten Kate (1723 I: 489) treated relativisation in a relatively fine-grained and elaborate way, listing *die*, *welke* and *dewelke* as masculine and feminine forms, and *dat*, *welk*, *het welke* en *’t gene* as neuter forms. According to ten Kate, the *w*-form *wie* was not used in the nominative case, but restricted to forms declined for other cases such as *wiens* or *wien* (cf. 1723 I: 491).

Ten Kate distinguished between three styles or rather registers of language, viz. the sublime style (*hoogdravend* or *verbeven*), the solemn style (*deftig* or *statig*) and

the plain style (*gemeenzaam*) (cf. also van der Wal 2002a: 56-59). Interestingly, the solemn and the plain style later recurred in Weiland's (1805) national grammar (Section 2). Despite his detailed paradigms, ten Kate did not make clear correspondences between particular relativisers and these styles, though. In fact, most relativisers are listed as options for all three styles. For the nominative case, for instance, we find *die, welke, de welke* (for masculine and feminine referents), and *dat, het gene, het welke* (for neuter referents) for all three styles. For other cases, forms of *develke* and *hetwelke* seem to belong mainly, but not exclusively, to the two higher (i.e. sublime and solemn) styles. Moreover, it is striking that forms of the neuter pronoun *hetgeen* occur in all three registers, whereas *wat* is completely absent. Generally, it appears that ten Kate's differentiation with regard to style or register mainly implies different degrees of case marking rather than the choice of exclusive relativisers. In other words, the higher the register, the more case endings we find.

With regard to relative pronouns functioning as free relatives, not all forms of the inventory were acceptable according to ten Kate (1723 I: 492):

Want ons WELKE *M* & *F*, en Welk *N*, en DE WELKE *M* & *F*. erkent men nu in dat ampt niet; dog het laetste alleen in *Neutro*. Dus zeid men niet WELKE of DEWELKE, *het ons overgaf, was de Man of Vrouw*; dog DIE 'T ONS OVERGAF, WAS DE MAN OF VROUW; gelijk ook DAT of 'T WELK, of 'T GENE ONS QUELDE, WAS HET WATER, enz.

'Because one does not acknowledge our WELKE *M* & *F*, and Welk *N*, and DE WELKE *M* & *F*. in that position, but the latter only in neuter. Thus one does not say WELKE or DEWELKE, *het ons overgaf, was de Man of Vrouw*; but DIE 'T ONS OVERGAF, WAS DE MAN OF VROUW; also like DAT or 'T WELK, or 'T GENE ONS QUELDE, WAS HET WATER, etc.

Thus, he gave preference to masculine and feminine *die*, rejecting the use of *welke* and *develke*. The neuter pronouns *dat*, *'t welke* and *'t gene* could all function as free relatives.

There are some more interesting comments on relativisers in usage. Ten Kate (1723 I: 491) pointed out that the neuter pronouns *het welke* and *'t gene* have reduced forms, viz. *'t welke* and *'t geen*, which even occur in the sublime and solemn styles. Another observation concerns the use of *welke* for masculine referents, which had become quite uncommon, in contrast to the still very common *het welke* (*ibid.*), indicating differences in frequency in contemporary usage.

Whereas ten Kate presented relative pronouns according to different styles or register, van Bolhuis (1793: 51-52) distinguished between common and less common relative pronouns:

Gewoonlijk gebruikt men daar toe *welke, de welke, die*, en de verbogene naamvallen van *wie*, en *wat*: - minder gebruikelijk is *wie, wat, het* [sic], *hetgeen*, en de verbogene naamvallen van *die*.

'Normally one uses *welke, de welke, die*, and the declined cases of *wie* and *wat* for this. Less common are *wie, wat, het* [sic], *hetgeen*, and the declined cases of *die*.'

From this distinction, it might be concluded that the oblique *d*-forms *diens* and *dien* were giving way to their *n*-counterparts *wiens* and *wien*. For some reason, *wie*, *wat* and *hetgeen* in subject and object position were less commonly used. Van Bolhuis (1793: 51-52) presented a fairly elaborate discussion of relative pronouns, illustrating the best usage of these forms by examples for each of the three genders and for the various cases. Nonetheless, it is difficult to deduce clear norms or rules from these examples. In the nominative case, for instance, van Bolhuis seemed to prefer *die* over *welke* and *dewelke*: “God, (*dewelke*, of liever *welke*, en liefst) *die groot is*” (1793: 51). In other cases, forms of *welke* were the favoured options. In fact, these examples are probably best considered as suggestions rather than prescriptive rules. Van Bolhuis (1793: 52) himself added: “Om te weten, wat best vloeit, plege men raad met zijn gehoor” – literally: ‘in order to know what flows best, one should consult one’s ear’.

Van Bolhuis (1793: 52) also addressed the question of free relatives, allowing a wide range of forms in this function, viz. masculine/feminine *wie*, *die* and neuter *wat*, *dat*, *het welk* and *het geen*:

Enige van deze voornaamwoorden kunnen ook zo gebruikt worden, dat zij *betrekkelijk schijnen* te zijn, niet op het voorgaande, maar *op het volgende*. Deze zijn *wie*, *die*, *wat*, *dat*, *het welk*, *het geen*, doch *in de daad* wijzen zij, gelijk alle betrekkelijke voornaamwoorden *op het voorgaande*

‘Some of these pronouns can also be used in a way that they *seem* to be *relative*, not referring to the preceding, but *to the following*. These are *wie*, *die*, *wat*, *dat*, *het welk*, *het geen*, but *indeed* they refer to the preceding, like all relative pronouns.’

Recall that Weiland (1805) presented a more limiting choice of free relatives, only listing the *n*-forms *wie* and *wat*.

To sum up, there is little evidence for (explicit) norms, rules or guidelines for the use of relative pronouns in the eighteenth-century normative tradition. Only a few grammarians, for instance ten Kate (1723) and van Bolhuis (1793), addressed the topic on a comparatively detailed level. Generally, it appears that normative works published before Weiland (1805) did not comment on the choice between *d*- and *n*-forms. As van der Wal (2002b: 33) argues, “it is not until the nineteenth century that explicit prescriptive rules are given which could have either stimulated or delayed the ongoing D->W-developments”. Probably the most explicitly discussed aspect of relativisation concerns the use of *hetgeen*, which was restricted to free relatives and mostly rejected in other contexts.

Given the general scarcity of norms and rules for relative pronouns, it is doubtful whether the eighteenth-century grammar could have an influence on the use of relativisers in actual language practice at all⁷⁰. Making use of the *Going Dutch Corpus*, the analyses of neuter as well as masculine and feminine relative pronouns

⁷⁰ With regard to the lack of explicit norms, van der Wal (2003: 372) concludes that if there was normative influence before 1800, it must have been restricted to actual language use of prestigious authors.

will shed light on the situation in actual language use before and after Weiland (1805).

4 Previous research

The history of Dutch relativisation has gained a considerable amount of attention in the literature. To begin with, van der Horst (2008) provides a diachronic overview of relative pronouns from the Old Dutch period to the situation in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Modern Dutch, illustrated with plenty of examples for each period.

Apart from this chronological outline, a number of pioneering articles, for instance by van der Horst (1988), Schoonenboom (1997, 2000), de Schutter & Kloots (2000) and van der Wal (2002b, 2003), have addressed different aspects of Dutch relativisation from various theoretical and methodological perspectives. Van der Horst's (1988) seminal study on the neuter pronouns *dat* and *wat* introduces the generalisation that the (in)definiteness of the antecedent plays a crucial role in the change from *d*-relativisers to *w*-relativisers. He claims that *w*-forms have spread from the most indefinite to the most definite contexts. In a modified form, this internal conditioning also recurs in Schoonenboom's (1997, 2000) diachronic studies on the Dutch neuter relative pronouns *dat*, *wat* and *betgeen*, based on a corpus of Bible texts from the fourteenth to the twentieth centuries. Adding the possible influence of genre as an external factor, de Schutter & Kloots (2000) investigate relativisers, both pronominal and adverbial forms, in seventeenth-century literary texts by prestigious Dutch writers.

A more exploratory approach to relativisation in the history of Dutch is taken by van der Wal (2002b), who particularly focuses on the major shift from *d*-forms to *w*-forms. Furthermore, van der Wal (2003) presents another study on relativisation in the Dutch normative tradition from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries, pointing out the elaborateness of Weiland (1805) as compared to his predecessors. One of the central questions, which will also be addressed here, concerns the possible influence of normative publications and writing conventions. With respect to the absence of explicit rules before Weiland's grammar, van der Wal (2003) suggests that normative influence on the change from *d*- to *w*-relativisers can only be attested from the nineteenth century onwards.

Whereas the previously mentioned articles generally support van der Horst's (1988) claim with respect to the definiteness of the antecedent, Rutten (2010) critically reassesses this generalisation by taking an alternative approach based upon construction grammar. One of his main arguments is that *w*-relativisers first occurred in specific constructions, before they were generalised to a more abstract level. From a historical-sociolinguistic perspective⁷¹, the most extensive

⁷¹ The inherent variability of relativisation has also attracted considerable interest from historical sociolinguists working on other languages than Dutch. See, for instance, Romaine

corpus-based analyses on Dutch relativisation so far are reported in Rutten & van der Wal (2014: chapter 8) and the follow-up study in Rutten & van der Wal (2017). Based on the *Letters as Loot* corpus of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Dutch, they take into account sociolinguistic factors and constructional diffusion. First of all, Rutten & van der Wal (2014: chapter 8) point out that writing experience is a relevant factor affecting distributional patterns, showing that the change from *d-* to *w-*forms was a change from above, led by men from the upper ranks. Moreover, by investigating different epistolary formulae with relative clauses, they also confirm Rutten's (2010) preliminary conclusion with regard to the diffusion via specific constructions.

The primary focus of both Rutten & van der Wal (2014: chapter 8) and Rutten & van der Wal (2017) is on the change from *d-* to *w-*forms in the case of relative adverbs and relative pronominal adverbs. For relative pronouns in Late Modern Dutch, much less research has been conducted, certainly from a historical-sociolinguistic perspective. It is the purpose of the two corpus-based case studies presented in this dissertation to fill this gap in the research literature by investigating neuter relative pronouns in Section 5, followed by masculine and feminine relative pronouns in Chapter 11.

5 Corpus analysis⁷²

5.1 Method

This case study investigates the Dutch neuter singular relative pronouns in subject and object position. The focus on these positions is mainly due to the fact that in other paradigms, particularly in combination with prepositions, the pronominal paradigm mixes with forms of the pronominal adverbial paradigm (e.g. pronominal *met wie* versus adverbial *waarmee*).

The occurrences of the following neuter forms (in nominative and accusative) were extracted:

- *dat, wat, hetgeen, welke, hetwelke.*

Possible spelling variation was also taken into account. In the case of *hetwelke*, for instance, the pronoun might also occur as *het welk*, *het welke*, *'t welk* or *twelk*.

All non-relative occurrences were filtered out by hand, including tokens of *dat* (e.g. functioning as a subordinating conjunction or demonstrative pronoun) and *wat* (e.g. as an indefinite pronoun meaning 'something' or in the construction *wat x betreft* 'as regards x'). As discussed by Schoonenboom (2000: 91-108) and Rutten (2010: 8-9), the distinction between the relative and the interrogative interpretation

(2009 [1982]), Bergs (2005: chapter 5) and Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg (2003) for English, and Negele (2012) for German.

⁷² Parts of this case study were also presented in Krogull, Rutten & van der Wal (2017).

of *wat* is not always clear-cut and thus difficult to keep apart (cf. also Fischer 1992: 297-298 for the English case).

For the purpose of this case study on relative pronouns, all unambiguous instances of interrogative *wat* were removed. An example taken from the *Going Dutch Corpus* is (1), in which the construction of the type *niet weten wat* ‘not knowing what’ expresses the unknowingness of the writer, typically indicating the interrogative interpretation of *wat* (Rutten 2010: 8). Another example is (2), in which the writer asks for unknown information (viz. ‘what other young ladies do’). I did include those occurrences of *wat* in which both relative and interrogative interpretations are theoretically possible. Examples (3) and (4) illustrate two more ambiguous cases, in which some degree of indefiniteness or unknowingness is present, but an interpretation of *wat* as free relative is (also) possible. In fact, *wat* can be replaced by, for instance, *datgene wat* or *hetgeen* here. This is also true for example (5), in which *wat* has first and foremost a relative interpretation.

- (1) *terwyl ik niet weet **wat** er gebeuren zal*
‘while I do not know what will happen’
- (2) *schrijft mij eens **wat** andere juffw doen*
‘write to me what other young ladies do’
- (3) *de Heere weet **wat** hy an mijn zjfel gedaan heeft*
‘the Lord knows what he has done to my soul’
- (4) *dat het onmooglyk is te beschryven **wat** men hier gevoelt*
‘that is impossible to describe what one feels here’
- (5) *verstond ik direct **wat** den Inlander my gezeyd had*
‘I directly understood what the native had said to me’

Ultimately, 1,009 occurrences of neuter relative pronouns in subject and object position were extracted from the *Going Dutch Corpus*. Before the corpus results will be presented and discussed in Sections 5.2 and 5.3, I give an overview of the occurring forms in different contexts, taking into account the concept of definiteness.

The (in)definiteness of the antecedent has traditionally been regarded as a crucial internal factor affecting variation and change in the Dutch relativisation system. An early generalisation, mainly by van der Horst (1988: 196), claims that relative *w*-forms entered the language from indefinite to definite contexts, depending on the definiteness of the antecedent (cf. also van der Wal 2002b). In this generalisation, different types of antecedents are located on a cline from the most indefinite to the most definite contexts:

- (I) free relatives > (II) clauses or sentences > (III) indefinite pronouns > (IV) nominalised adjectives > (V) indefinite noun phrases > (VI) definite noun phrases.

These different contexts, depending on the definiteness of the antecedent will be illustrated by authentic language usage examples taken from the *Going Dutch Corpus*.

The first and most indefinite context (I) comprises free (or headless) relatives, i.e. which lack an antecedent altogether (*ingesloten antecedent*). In the corpus data, the *w*-form *wat* (6) as well as *betgeen* (7) occur as neuter free relatives:

- (6) **Wat** de Montenegrijnen willen, is bekend
‘What the Montenegrins want, is known’
- (7) **het geen** ik u gezegd heb herhaal ik u
‘What I have told you, I repeat to you’

In examples (8–10), illustrating context II, the antecedent is a sentence or clause. All five variants of the neuter relative pronoun occur in the corpus data:

- (8) *Ik hebbe reets alhier bet plain ront gewandelt, dat my volmaakt wel bekoomen is*
‘I have already walked around the square here, which I completely enjoyed’
- (9) *hier is bet ten minsten geducht koud, wat bet ergste is voor de armen*
‘here it is at least terribly cold, which is the worst for the poor’
- (10) *Hij diende by eene weduwe voor knecht, t geen ons aanleiding gaf hem te raaden zijn best te doen*
‘He worked as servant for a widow, which caused us to advise him to do his best’
- (11) [...] *mooije gezichten op bet grazende vee door lieten welk een en ander door eene heerlyke avond begunstigd werd*
‘let through beautiful views on the grazing cattle, which was also favoured by a beautiful evening’
- (12) *deze menschen spraken gedurig van de slechte wegen hetwelk ons eenigsinds bevreest maakte*
‘these people talked continually about the bad roads, which somewhat frightened us’

Context III comprises a fairly heterogeneous group of indefinite pronouns, including the idiomatic combination of *al(les)* + *wat* (cf. Schoonenboom 2000: 35-46; Rutten 2010: 9-10). Hence, I propose a split of context III into IIIa (*alles*) and IIIb (remaining indefinite pronouns such as *iets*, *niets*, *veel*, *weinig*). The former (sub-)context is illustrated by examples (13–16), attesting the use of *wat*, *dat*, *betgeen* and *betwelk*. In (sub-)context IIIb (see examples (17–19)), *dat*, *betgeen* and *betwelk* – but not *wat* – occur in the corpus data:

- (13) [*een lysje van*] *alles dat gy hebt*
‘[a list of] everything that you have’

- (14) *alles, **wat** wy gezien en genoten hadden*
'everything that we had seen and enjoyed'
- (15) *al **het geen** verder tot kindergoed behoort*
'all that further belongs to baby's clothes'
- (16) *[naar] al **het welke** ik zeer verlangende*
'all which I much longed [for]'
- (17) *iets **dat** na een ligtje van een kaars lykende*
'something that resembled the light of a candle'
- (18) *iets **'t geen** byna nooit gebeurd is*
'something which almost never happened'
- (19) *iets **hetwelk**, naar zijn oordeel, ook bij de onafhankelijkheid der geestelijken
volstrekt geene zwaarigheid zou baren*
'something which, in his opinion, would cause no difficulty at all, also
in the case of the independence of the clergymen'

In context IV (see examples 20–22), the antecedent is a nominalised adjective, mostly a superlative. In the corpus data, occurrences of *dat*, *wat* and *hetwelk* are found:

- (20) *'t liefste **dat** ik ooit in dien aart bygewoond heb*
'the loveliest that I have ever attended of this sort'
- (21) *het edelste **wat** den mensch bezit*
'the noblest that the human possesses'
- (22) *het voornaamste **hetwelk** er bij mijne ziekte is voorgevallen*
'the main thing which happened during my illness'

The full inventory of all five neuter relative pronouns occurs in context V (examples 23–27), referring to an indefinite noun phrase:

- (23) *een steigertje **dat** Papa en ik reeds gezien hadden*
'a small jetty that Dad and I had already seen'
- (24) *boumland **wat** zeer vruchtbaar is*
'farmland that is very fertile'
- (25) *een zeer oud gebouw, **'t geen** geschikt is tot den koophandel*
'a very old building, which is suitable for the trade'
- (26) *een paard, **welk** ben de nacht naar Coblenz mocht brengen*
'a horse, which had to bring them to Coblenz that night'
- (27) *een oud kasteel **'t welk** voormaals tot gevangenis diende*
'an old castle, which formerly served as prison'

Moreover, all five possible relative pronouns also occur in the most definite context VI (see examples 28–32), in which the antecedent is a definite noun phrase:

- (28) *het beelderige mooye mandje dat zy voor my gemaakt heeft*
‘the lovely beautiful basket that she has made for me’
- (29) *Ons rytuig wat wy om 8 Uur besteld hadden*
‘our coach that we had ordered at eight o’clock’
- (30) *het gure en regenachtig weder, het geen reeds den geheelen dag had gebeurd*
‘the biting and rainy weather which had already lasted the whole day’
- (31) *het geheim welk er gaande was*
‘the secret that was happening there’
- (32) *Het schoon gezicht t welk men nog lang van deze zyde op de stad’ blijft genieten*
‘the beautiful view of the city that one keeps enjoying from this side for a long time’

The main purpose of this overview is to illustrate eighteenth- and nineteenth-century usage of the various neuter relative pronouns in different contexts, as they occur in the *Going Dutch Corpus* data. The quantitative analysis will be presented and discussed in Sections 5.2 and 5.3.

5.2 Results

To begin with, the general results presented in Table 2 give evidence of a high degree of variation in terms of frequently occurring neuter relative pronouns in both diachronic cross-sections (P1 = 1770–1790, P2 = 1820–1840).

In the entire *Going Dutch Corpus*, the two most frequent variants are *hetwelk* (32.5%) and the *d*-form *dat* (30.8%), whereas *hetgeen* (17.5%) and the *w*-form *wat* (15.6%) are somewhat less frequent in both diachronic cross-sections. The fifth variant, viz. *welk*, turns out to be a comparatively marginal form.

Table 2. Distribution of neuter relative pronouns across time.

	<i>dat</i>		<i>wat</i>		<i>hetgeen</i>		<i>welk</i>		<i>hetwelk</i>		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
P1	177	32.9	77	14.3	102	19.0	22	4.1	160	29.7	538	100
P2	134	28.5	80	17.0	75	15.9	14	3.0	168	35.7	471	100
Total	311	30.8	157	15.6	177	17.5	36	3.6	328	32.5	1,009	100

Diachronically, the results indicate a remarkably stable distribution of variants across periods. Some tendencies with regard to the most frequently used variants are notable, though. In the late eighteenth-century data, the *d*-form *dat* (32.9%) is slightly more frequent than *betwelk* (29.7%), while the latter becomes the prevalent variant in the early nineteenth century (35.7%), outnumbering *dat* (28.5%). Further developments are less notable. The relative frequency of the *w*-form *wat* only slightly increases from 14.3% to 17.0%. The additional pronominal forms *hetgeen* and *welk*, on the other hand, lose ground in the second period.

In sum, *dat* and *betwelk* prove to be the two predominant neuter relative pronouns, both in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century usage. The corpus data do not show evidence of the rise of the *w*-form *wat*. As outlined in Section 2, Weiland (1805) explicitly rejected the use of *wat* in certain contexts, depending on the definiteness of the antecedent. In the following, a closer look will be taken at the supposed influence of this internal factor.

Definiteness of the antecedent

This part of the case study has two aims: First, van der Horst's (1988) generalisation with regard to different types of antecedents, claiming that *w*-forms entered the language from indefinite to definite contexts (i.e. from left to right on the definiteness cline), will be tested on corpus data. Secondly, the corpus results will also be compared with the prescriptions in Weiland's (1805) national grammar. The preferred forms per context in Weiland (1805) are as follows: I: *wat*; II: *dat*, *betwelk*; IIIa: *wat*; IIIb: no indications); IV: preferably *dat*, *betwelk*, *welk* (*wat* may occur in usage); V/VI: *dat*, *betwelk*, *welk* (cf. also Section 2).

Figure 1a. Distribution of neuter relative pronouns across context (1770–1790).

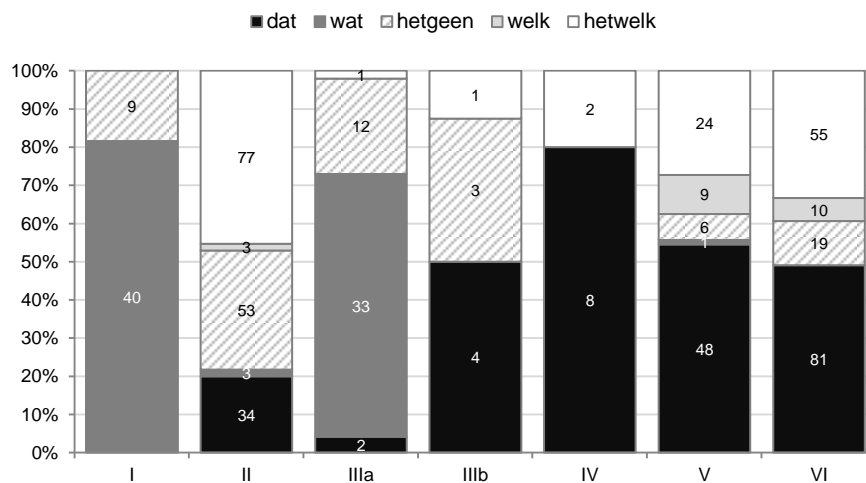
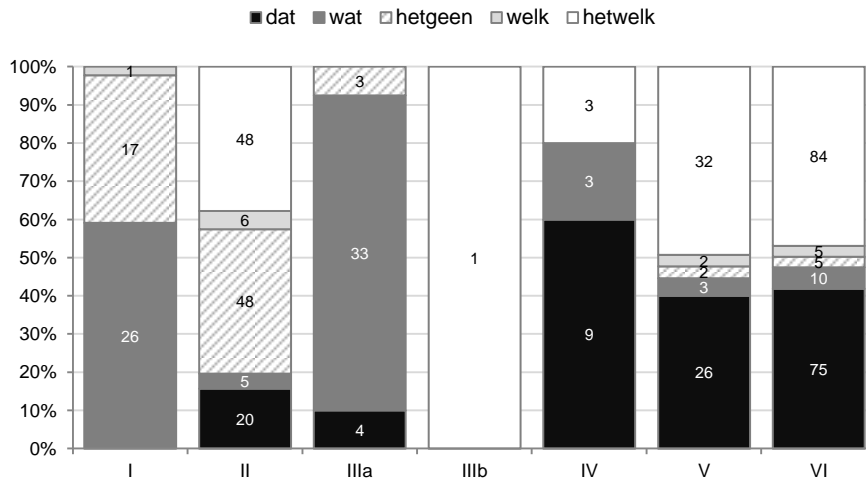


Figure 1b. Distribution of neuter relative pronouns across context (1820–1840).

In general, the results presented in Figures 1a and 1b certainly show similarities between the most frequently occurring variants per context and the variants preferred by Weiland (1805). However, as already indicated in the overview of forms in Section 5.1, both late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century language practice reveal much more variation than Weiland acknowledged.

In both periods, the *w*-form *wat* turns out to be the most frequently used free relative (context I), occurring in 81.6% in the late eighteenth century and in 59.1% in the early nineteenth century. This largely corresponds to Weiland's (1805) preference for *wat* as a free relative. In the corpus data, however, the alternative relative pronoun *betgeen* also occurs in 18.4% in the first period and even increases to 38.6% in the second period. As pointed out earlier, Weiland's stance on *betgeen* remains implicit in his 1805 grammar, although he did acknowledge it as a legitimate variant in usage in Weiland (1799: 124). The *d*-form *dat*, on the other hand, is completely absent in context I, where it had been replaced by the *w*-form by that time.

In the case of a sentence or clause as antecedent (context II), the main variants in both periods are *betwelk* and *betgeen*, although *dat* also occurs to a lesser extent. In the nineteenth century, *betwelk* and *betgeen* have an equally high share of 37.8%, outnumbering *dat* (15.8%). Weiland (1805) suggested the use of *dat* and *betwelk* in these cases, but not the *w*-form *wat*, which is a minor variant in the results. Moreover, the surprisingly high share of *betgeen* in context II contradicts the eighteenth-century normative tradition, according to which *betgeen* is only acknowledged as a free relative (I).

The combination with the indefinite pronoun *al(les)* (context IIIa) typically appears with *wat*, apart from a few attestations with *betgeen* or *dat*. Particularly in the nineteenth-century period, *wat* consolidates its dominant position in this context, increasing from 68.8% to 82.5%. Weiland (1805) also illustrated this context by two

examples with *alles wat*. Unfortunately, there are too few tokens for context IIIb, but what these tentative results indicate is that the antecedents *iets*, *niets*, *veel* and *weinig* do not occur with the *w*-form *wat*, but with either *dat*, *hetgeen* or *hetwelk* – in contrast to *al(les)*. This supports the decision to split context III on the definiteness cline into two subcontexts.

Similarly, the limited number of tokens for context IV (nominalised adjectives) does not allow for a detailed evaluation. What becomes apparent, though, is that *dat* occurs in most instances (80.0% in period 1; 60.0% in period 2), with some additional attestations of *hetwelk* and *wat*. Despite the low number of tokens, it is notable that the distribution of variants in this context is rather stable.

In many respects, the corpus results for contexts V (indefinite noun phrases) and VI (definite noun phrases) are similar. In the eighteenth century, *dat* is the main variant with a relative frequency of 54.6% (V) and 49.1% (VI), respectively. In both cases, *hetwelk* turns out to be the second most frequent variant in usage: 27.3% (V) and 33.3% (VI). Except for one single attestation of *wat*, the *w*-form does not occur in the eighteenth-century data. In the nineteenth century, one can witness a change in the distribution of variants in these two contexts: *dat* drops from 54.6% to 40.0% (V) and from 49.1% to 41.9% (VI). In contrast, the use of *hetwelk* increases from 27.3% to 49.2% in context V and from 33.3% to 46.9% in context VI. There are a few more nineteenth-century attestations of relative *wat* referring to indefinite and definite noun phrases than in the eighteenth century, but they are still relatively marginal. Weiland (1805) explicitly rejected the use of *wat* in contexts V/VI, only allowing for *dat*, *hetwelk* and *welk* as ‘legitimate’ options.

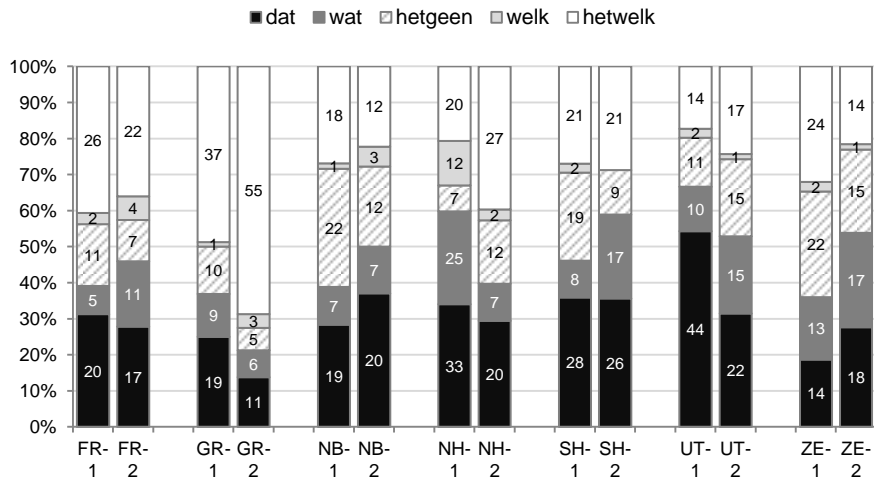
Although the *w*-form does not gain ground in early nineteenth-century usage, the results indicate that *wat* occurs in more contexts other than contexts I (free relatives) and III(a) (grammaticalised *al(les) wat*) – in both periods. In general, the distribution of variants in most contexts is stable across time, except for the increase of *hetwelk* in contexts V/VI.

The corpus data do not give evidence that *w*-relativisers enter the language from the most indefinite to the most definite context. Relative *wat* does occur in contexts I and IIIa, but not in II, which disproves the assumption of a linear spread on the definiteness cline from left to right. Furthermore, the *w*-form seems to appear, at least as a marginal variant, in contexts IV, V and VI in the nineteenth-century data. This suggests that *wat* spread to these contexts simultaneously rather than successively. With respect to the diachronic stability across contexts, I will leave this internal factor out of consideration in the corpus analyses of the external variables, i.e. spatial variation, gender variation and genre variation.

Regional variation

Figure 2 presents the relative distribution of Dutch neuter relative pronouns across the seven selected regions of the Northern Netherlands (FR = Friesland, GR = Groningen, NB = North Brabant, NH = North Holland, SH = South Holland, UT = Utrecht, ZE = Zeeland).

Figure 2. Distribution of neuter relative pronouns across region and time.



In the late eighteenth century, *dat* occurs by far most frequently in the region of Utrecht (54.3%), but is also common in South Holland (35.9%) and North Holland (34.0%). It is least frequent in Zeeland (18.7%). In the two northernmost regions of Groningen and Friesland, *betwelk* is the dominant variant in late eighteenth-century usage with a share of 48.7% and 40.6%, respectively. The other alternative form *betgeen* is the prevalent variant in North Brabant (32.8%) and also among the most frequent variants in Zeeland (29.3%), both of which are the southernmost regions of the investigated language area. This possibly suggests a north–south difference with regard to the choice of alternative relative pronouns, viz. predominant *betwelk* in the north versus relatively high-frequent *betgeen* alongside *betwelk* in the south.

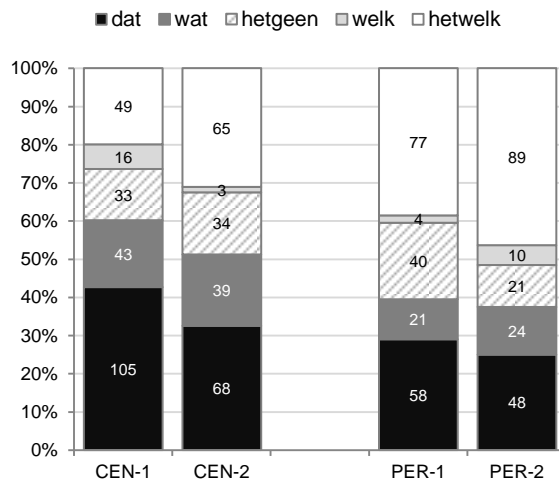
In the early nineteenth century, the high share of *dat* in Utrecht decreases from 54.3% to 31.4%. It also drops in Groningen (from 25.0% to 13.8%), whereas it remains rather stable in Friesland, North Holland and South Holland. In North Brabant and Zeeland, *dat* slightly gains ground. The *w*-form *wat* increases in some regions, particularly in South Holland (from 10.3% to 23.3%), Utrecht (from 12.4% to 21.4%) and Zeeland (from 17.3% to 26.2%). More generally, a diachronic stability can be attested in many regions, most notably in Friesland and South Holland, but also in North Brabant and Zeeland.

With regard to the alternative forms *betwelk* and *betgeen*, the suggested north–south difference is still visible in the nineteenth-century data. Particularly in the region of Groningen, the use of *betwelk* increases considerably from 48.7 to 68.8%, consolidating its position as the predominant neuter relative pronoun. In Friesland, the preference for *betwelk* (36.1%) over *betgeen* (11.5%) remains remarkable, too. In the southern regions of Zeeland and North Brabant, on the other hand, *betgeen* continues to be a comparatively strong variant in usage with 23.1% and 22.2%, respectively.

Variation across centre and periphery

The distribution of neuter relative pronouns across the second spatial dimension, viz. variation across the centre (CEN) and the periphery (PER), is presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Distribution of neuter relative pronouns across centre–periphery and time.



In the late eighteenth century, the prevalent variant used in the centre is the *d*-form *dat* (41.0%). The remaining variants are considerably less frequent: *betwelk* (21.5%), *wat* (16.8%), *betgeen* (13.6%) and *welk* (6.3%). In the periphery, however, *betwelk* is the main variant in usage (39.1%), outnumbering *dat* (28.0%), *betgeen* (20.7%) and the comparatively low-frequent *n*-form *wat* (10.1%).

In the early nineteenth century, the prevalence of *dat* diminishes in the centre (from 41.0% to 32.2%), whereas *betwelk* gains ground and becomes an almost equally frequent second variant in usage (30.8%). The use of *wat* increases from 10.1% to 18.5%. In the periphery, the share of *betwelk* grows even further, increasing from an already strong 39.1% to 45.6%. At the same time, *dat* slightly decreases from 28.0% to 24.6%.

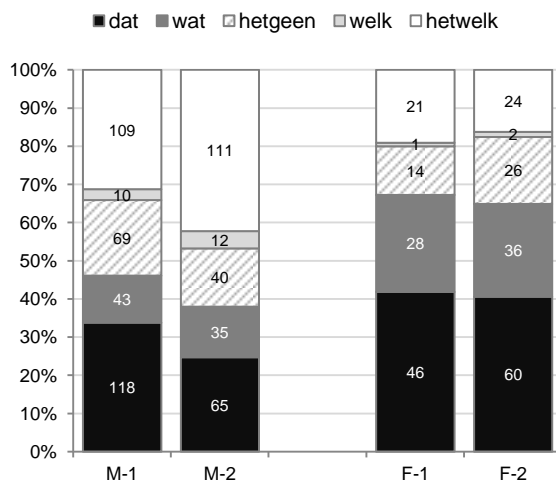
In sum, the general tendencies, i.e. less *dat*, more *betwelk*, are similar in both the centre and the periphery. However, the prevalence and increase of *betwelk* turns out to be more pronounced in the periphery, which may be largely due to the frequent use of this variant in the two northern regions of Friesland and Groningen. In contrast, the distribution of variants in the centre is rather balanced.

Gender variation

Presenting the distribution of variants across gender, Figure 4 reveals remarkable differences in the use of neuter relative pronouns between male (M) and female (F) writers.

In the eighteenth-century results, the most frequently occurring variants among male writers are *dat* (33.8%) and *betwelk* (31.2%). In the ego-documents by their female contemporaries, the prevalence of *dat* as the main variant is considerably stronger (41.8%), whereas *betwelk* occurs in only 19.1%. The use of the *w*-form turns out to be another gender difference in the first period. In fact, *wat* is only the fourth most frequent variant used by men (12.3%), but the second most frequent variant used by women (25.5%).

Figure 4. Distribution of neuter relative pronouns across gender and time.



The gender differences increase further in the nineteenth-century period. The distribution of variants in the texts written by women remains extremely stable. The *d*-/*w*-forms *dat* and *wat* only minimally decrease from 41.8% to 40.5% and 25.5% to 24.3%, respectively. In the texts written by men, however, the developments are more visible. The relative frequency of *betwelk* increases from 31.2% to 42.2% and takes the position as the main variant in usage at the cost of *dat*, which drops from 33.8% to 24.7%. Interestingly, the (varying) shares of *wat* do not change considerably in male and female texts.

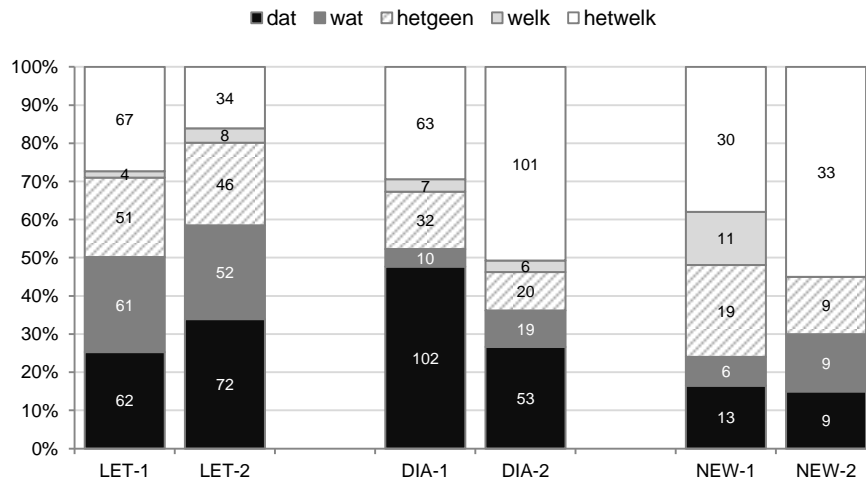
Genre variation

Investigating the last external variable, Figure 5 presents the distribution of neuter relative pronouns across the three genres in the *Going Dutch Corpus*, viz. private letters (LET), diaries and travelogues (DIA), and newspapers (NEW).

The results for the eighteenth-century period reveal notable genre differences. In private letters, no fewer than four similarly frequent variants are used: both the *d*-/*w*-forms *dat* (25.3%) and *wat* (24.9%) as well as the additional pronominal forms *betwelk* (27.4%) and, to a slightly lesser extent, *betgeen* (20.8%) occur in more than twenty per cent each. In contrast, diaries and travelogues from

the first period clearly have a prevalent variant. The *d*-form *dat* occurs in almost half of all instances (47.7%), whereas the *w*-form *wat* is used in only 4.7%. The alternative *betwelk*, however, also has a rather high share of 29.4% in this genre.

Figure 5. Distribution of neuter relative pronouns across genre and time.



The newspaper genre shows yet another distribution of variants in the late eighteenth century. In these printed and published texts, two of the additional forms, viz. *betwelk* and *betgeen*, are the predominant variants, occurring in 38.0% and 24.1%, respectively. They both outnumber *dat* (16.5%) and particularly *wat* (7.6%). Interestingly, the older alternative form *welk*, which is a marginal variant in both types of ego-documents, has the highest share in newspapers (13.9%). Furthermore, the comparison of the three genres suggests that the use of *wat* in the first period is restricted to private letters, whereas it rarely occurs in diary and newspaper texts.

The distribution of variants in the private letters seems to evolve from a range of similarly frequent variants in the late eighteenth century towards one slightly more dominant variant in the early nineteenth century. In fact, the *d*-form *dat* increases from 25.3% to 34.0%. At the same time, the use of *betwelk* drops from 27.4% to 16.0%, whereas *wat* (24.5%) and *betgeen* (21.7%) generally remain stable.

The developments in diaries and travelogues are in sharp contrast to those in the private letters. The use of *dat* considerably decreases from 47.7% to 26.6%, whereas *betwelk* gains ground in period 2 and even becomes the main variant in this genre with 50.8%. A similar development in the use of *betwelk* can also be attested for early nineteenth-century newspapers, where this variant further consolidates its dominance, increasing from 38.0% to 55.0%. With regard to the *w*-form, *wat* remains a comparatively low-frequent variant in diaries and travelogues (9.6%) as well as in newspapers (15.0%), although its share increases in both genres.

Diachronically, this means that diaries and travelogues develop towards a distribution similar to newspapers. In order to trace the remarkable rise of *betwelk* in diaries and travelogues on a more detailed level, Table 3 zooms in on the distribution of variants across gender in this genre. Although it is important to take into account the overrepresentation of male writers (40 texts by 40 individuals) and thus a less representative number of female writers (10 texts by 10 individuals), the results indicate interesting tendencies.

Table 3. Distribution of neuter relative pronouns across gender and time (diaries and travelogues).

	<i>dat</i>		<i>wat</i>		<i>hetgeen</i>		<i>welk</i>		<i>hetwelk</i>		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
M-1	77	41.6	9	4.9	29	15.7	7	3.8	63	34.1	185	100
M-2	35	22.0	12	7.6	17	10.7	6	3.8	89	56.0	159	100
F-1	25	86.2	1	3.5	3	10.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	29	100
F-2	18	45.0	7	17.5	3	7.5	0	0.0	12	30.0	40	100

In the eighteenth-century data, male diarists prefer *dat* (41.6%) and *betwelk* (34.1%). In texts by female diarists, on the other hand, *dat* (86.2%) is predominant, whereas *hetgeen* and *wat* are rare, and *welk* and *betwelk* even absent. In the nineteenth century, male writers increasingly use *betwelk* (from 34.1% to 56.0%), at the cost of *dat* (from 41.6% to 22.0%). The *d*-form *dat* may remain the main variant used by female writers (45.0%), but the rise of *betwelk* can also be attested here, increasing from no attestations in the first period to 30.0% in second period. However, it seems that particularly men were establishing *betwelk* as the main variant in nineteenth-century diaries and travelogues.

6 Discussion

The case study in this chapter focused on the use of neuter relative pronouns in subject and object position. Like in other West Germanic languages, one of the major developments in the Dutch relativisation system is the change from originally demonstrative *d*-forms to originally interrogative *w*-forms. In the case of the neuter relative pronoun, this change has resulted in the gradual replacement of *dat* by *wat*. However, in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century period under investigation, the change appeared to be still in its incipient stage in most contexts. Apart from the fact that it may simply be a more recent change, another important factor of the comparatively slow rise of *wat* may be the presence of many more competing forms. In fact, the contemporary set of variants for the neuter relative pronoun comprised no fewer than five options. In addition to *dat* and *wat* as the traditional *d*- and *w*-forms, the alternative forms *welk*, *betwelk* and *hetgeen* occurred in

language practice, all of which already date back to the sixteenth century or even to the Middle Dutch period. Nevertheless, both *welke* and the extended variant *betwelke* are based on the interrogative pronoun *welke*, which means that even if the change from *d-* to *w-*forms of the neuter relative pronoun was not as advanced as in the case of adverbial relativisers, there was still a strong competition from originally interrogative forms.

One aim of this case study was to test the proposed generalisation with respect to definiteness on corpus data, in order to see whether *wat* enters the language from indefinite to definite contexts, as claimed by van der Horst (1988). It is clear that the differentiation between various types of antecedents is helpful to the extent that the *w-*form *wat* was indeed the dominant form in two contexts. One of these is the most indefinite contexts of free relatives (I), whereas the other one is context IIIa, comprising the idiomatic combination *al(les) wat*. This means that the corpus-based results did not confirm a simple left-to-right movement, as suggested on van der Horst's (1988) definiteness cline. At the same time, *wat* was a marginal form in almost all other contexts, again indicating that the change did not strictly follow the cline. For the period under investigation here, it can be concluded that this cline is of little relevance for the neuter relative pronoun⁷³. What is more remarkable about the suggested internal factor is the diachronic stability of the results.

Given the fact that *wat* was the main variant in context IIIa, one would have expected a similar pattern in context II, referring to a clause or sentence. It is notable, though, that *dat* is less frequent in context II (as it is in I and IIIa), compared to contexts IV–VI. However, the *d-*form was not only replaced by *wat*, but also by the additional forms *betgeen* and *betwelke*, particularly in context II.

The diachronic stability is not only striking with respect to the internal factor, but also in terms of the external factors of region and gender. The general distribution for the nineteenth-century period was, in fact, very similar to that for the eighteenth-century period. The most obvious difference was the increased frequency of *betwelke*, largely at the expense of *dat*. Similarly, the distribution in regions such as Friesland, Groningen, North Brabant (notably all regions of the periphery) and Zeeland was fairly stable across time. One surprising outcome indicating a possible regional pattern was the relative prominence of *betwelke* in the north, and the relative prominence of *betgeen* in southern regions. This finding calls for further investigation as it is interesting to see regional differences in variants which are considered formal or typical of written language. If confirmed in future research, it would also imply that the rise of *betwelke* is a change from the periphery to the centre, as suggested by the centre–periphery distribution across time.

The gender distribution was also relatively stable across time, particularly in the case of female writers. Male writers, in contrast, showed an increase in the use of *betwelke* at the cost of *dat*. However, the results for gender turned out to be slightly different when cross-tabulated with genre.

⁷³ The irrelevance of the type of antecedent as an internal factor has also been argued by Romaine (2009: 143–144) with respect to Middle Scots.

In general, genre was undoubtedly the most important external variable affecting the distribution of neuter relative pronouns. Nineteenth-century newspapers as well as diaries and travelogues showed a remarkable increase in the use of *hetwelke*. Furthermore, diaries in particular also showed a decrease in the use of *dat*. Interestingly, diaries and travelogues were more similar to private letters than to newspapers in period 1, at least with respect to the share of *hetwelke*, while diaries and travelogues from period 2 align with newspapers. Thus, from a diachronic point of view, the two ego-document genres diverged. Taking into account possible gender differences, the rise of *hetwelke* actually occurred in diaries and travelogues written by both men and women.

Against the background of a diachronically relatively stable distribution of neuter relative pronouns, the increase of *hetwelke* in diaries and travelogues is notable. Is it possible to relate this development to contemporary language norms? Recall that Weiland's (1805) national grammar was much more elaborate with regard to relativisation than any of its predecessors. Comparing the norms and rules for relativisation found in Weiland (1805) and the preceding eighteenth-century normative tradition to the usage patterns found in the *Going Dutch Corpus*, it can be concluded that the influence of the metalinguistic discourse on language practice must have been fairly limited. Weiland rejected *d*-forms (context I), which was also confirmed by the corpus results. Eighteenth-century grammarians and Weiland (1799) wanted to restrict the use of *hetgeen* to free relatives. In practice, however, it occurred in almost every context in both periods. Furthermore, Weiland (1805) proposed a distribution of forms in accordance with types of antecedents, for example *dat* and *hetwelke* for clauses and sentences as antecedent (context II), *wat* in combination with *al(les)* (IIIa), *dat*, *hetwelke* (and dispreferred *wat*) with nominalised adjectives (IV), and so on. In all these cases, actual language usage proved to be more variable with almost all possible variants occurring in almost all contexts. At the same time, there were considerable similarities between Weiland (1805) and usage patterns to the extent that frequently rejected forms were only marginally used in certain contexts. However, as already mentioned, the distribution across time remained relatively stable, which implies that the overlap with Weiland (1805) is already found in the late eighteenth century, when the influence of Weiland's grammar of the early nineteenth century can obviously be excluded.

At one point, the influence of Weiland (1805), either direct or indirect, can be assumed. He combined the traditional forms with the stylistic or register differences already proposed by ten Kate (1723). Weiland (1805) assigned forms such as the masculine and feminine pronouns *welke* and *develke* to the so-called 'solemn' style, whereas *die* and also neuter *dat* were described as forms of the so-called 'plain' style. Extending these observations to the neuter paradigms, the corpus results revealed that the 'solemn' form *hetwelke* gained ground in newspapers as well as in diaries and travelogues, at the cost of the 'plain' form *dat*. Although it is difficult to prove that this was a direct result of Weiland's (1805) intervention, it does signal a situation in which *hetwelke* was primarily associated with formality or

‘solemnity’ – in any case more strongly than other variants such as *dat*. Both Weiland and the corpus data testified to this situation.

In this respect, the diachronic results for diaries and travelogues are certainly remarkable. The developments in the distribution of neuter relative pronouns highlight the special position of these sources as a genre on the oral–literate continuum (cf. Section 3.1.2 in Chapter 4). Although diaries and travelogues have been typically categorised and treated as ego-documents like private letters, it has to be kept in mind that we are dealing with distinct subgenres of ego-documents (Elspaß 2012: 162). Moreover, they are usually less ‘oral’ and more ‘standard’-like (Schneider 2013: 66, cf. also Rutten 2012b for a Dutch example). Writers of ego-documents, both men and women, created a divergence of private letters on the one hand, and diaries and travelogues on the other, by adopting *betwelle* considerably stronger only in the latter type of ego-documents.

To sum up, this case study on neuter relative pronouns revealed a considerable amount of regional, gender and particularly genre variation, whereas the diachronic distribution appeared to be relatively stable across time. In the second case study on relativisation, presented in Chapter 11, I will investigate the masculine and feminine singular and plural relative pronouns. A more general conclusion of the results drawn from both case studies will be provided at the end of the following chapter.