

Tracing Paths of Conventionalization from the Bible to the *BNC*: A Concise Corpus-based History of the *not that* Construction

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1. Introduction

Like many other modern European languages, Modern English provides its speakers and writers with a conventionalized linguistic strategy allowing them to deny an inference that is potentially suggested by, or at least not unlikely to be drawn from, the preceding context. A typical example from Present-day English fiction taken from the *British National Corpus (BNCweb)* is given in (1):¹

- (1) Other people have friends. I have enemies. **Not that** I care. (*BNCweb*, ALH 2640)

In this example, the expression *not that* introduces a sentence that denies an assumption which could be inferred from the two previous sentences, i.e. that the speaker is concerned about the somewhat unpleasant situation regarding the nature of his interpersonal relationships. Huddleston/Pullum in *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* discuss *not + that*-clauses in the section on “*Not* as a marker of non-verbal negation” (Huddleston/Pullum 2002, 807ff) and describe their meanings as “this is not, however, to say/suggest that ...”, adding that “the *not* calls up a proposition that might be naturally assumed or expected in the context, and denies that it is in fact true” (Huddleston/Pullum 2002, 811).

This linguistic strategy will be referred to as the ‘*not that* construction’ in what follows without any theoretical commitment to the tenets of the framework of construction grammar (cf., e.g., Croft/Cruise 2004, 225-90, or Ungerer/Schmid 2006, 244-56). Essentially, the *not that* construction exists in two variants: the ‘zero *not that* construction’ found in (1) and the type *it + BE + not that* illustrated in (2).

- (2) [...] in the country where Great-Granny comes from they don’t eat some of the things we eat. **It’s not that** they’re fussy, it’s because they think it’s wrong. (*BNCweb*, FRH 1343)

As we shall see, in spite of their surface similarities the two variants are by no means identical with regard to their distribution and function.

Formal and functional quasi-equivalents of the two constructional variants can be found in many other modern European languages, for example in German (*nicht dass, es ist (ja) nicht, dass*), French (*pas que, non pas que, ce n’est pas que*), Spanish (*no que*), Portuguese (*no que, não é que*), Rumanian (*nu că, nu e că*), Dutch (*niet dat*),

1 All references to the *BNCweb* in this paper have the same format consisting of letters (indicating text IDs) and line numbers.

Norwegian (*ikke det at*), Swedish (*inte för att, det är/var inte/icke det att*), Finnish (*ei niin että*) and Russian (*ne to chtoby*). Some non-European languages, among them Modern Persian and Arabic, also seem to have similar constructions.² The extent to which these constructions in other languages are indeed functionally and distributionally identical with, or similar to, the variants of the English *not that* construction would constitute a subject for several detailed contrastive studies, which cannot be supplied here. The reason why the spread of relatively similar constructions across languages has nevertheless been emphasized is that it raises some questions concerning their historical source(s) and development: were the constructions taken over from a common source language by all these modern languages or did they emerge independently, supported as it were by their undisputable pragmatic utility? Is there one language that can be identified as the original donor language? Can similar historical developments be observed across languages?

Keeping these larger questions in mind, this paper can do no more than take a first step by trying to trace back important aspects of the history of the *not that* construction in English. The focus will be on identifying the first attested use of the construction in English and charting its spread across genres and text-types, as well as its diffusion in the speech community, measured in terms of frequency of usage. This historical development, from innovation to diffusion and the gaining of more or less widespread currency, is conceptualized here as a process of an increasing *conventionalization*. This process will not only be investigated in terms of the construction as such but also for a number of specific semi-fixed lexico-grammatical patterns which seem to be conventionalized chunks in Present-day English, such as *not that I know of* or *not that it matters*. Another issue which will be addressed is the question of whether the more expanded constructional variant *it + BE + not that* is a historic precursor of the shorter and clearly less transparent and compositional variant dubbed ‘zero *not that*’.

2. Sources

The evidence for this brief historical survey is largely taken from resources accessible on the Internet. Of utmost importance is the wealth of quotations collected in the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED online)*, accessible online for automatic searches (cf. Hoffmann 2004). Equally rich, but limited to a smaller time span, is the *Middle English Compendium (MEC)* provided by the University of Michigan, which allows for online searches of the massive quotation database of the *Middle English Dictionary (MED)* and the *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse*. These databases are supplemented by the *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus (DOEC)* provided by the University of Toronto. In addition, and especially in order to assess the later development in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, a corpus of classic and canonical texts has

2 I would like to thank the following colleagues for sharing their knowledge about languages other than English and German with me: Ulrike Krischke, Benjamin Meisnitzer, Peter-Arnold Mumm, Monika Petrica, Elena Skribnik and Wolfgang Schulze (all from Munich), Dirk Geeraerts (Leuven), Gaëtanelle Guilquin (Louvain), Dmitrij Dobrovolskij (Moscow), Terttu Nevalainen (Helsinki) and Stig Johansson (Lund).

been compiled by means of downloading e-books provided by *Project Gutenberg* via the website <<http://manybooks.net/>> (McClintock). This collection of texts, referred to here as the *Classics Corpus*, begins with Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (1387-1400) and Thomas More's *Utopia* (1515) and ends with George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, published in 1871. The work of Shakespeare is not included in this corpus as such, but was taken into consideration separately, using the online *Concordance of Shakespeare's Complete Works* (Johnson 2003-10). The entire sample of texts, whose precise composition is detailed in the Appendix, comprises roughly 8.3 million running words. Finally, as it will emerge that Bible translations may have had an important effect on the spread of the *not that* construction in English and other languages, material taken from the website *Bible Gateway* will be used to compare renderings of Greek and Latin precursors of *not that*.

3. 'Zero *not that*' in Present-day English

In addition to the semantico-pragmatic regularities described above, the Modern English zero *not that* construction has a number of interesting properties with regard to the lexico-grammatical patterning of elements in the immediate linguistic environment. As shown in Schmid (forthcoming), the large majority of occurrences of the construction identified in the *BNC* have a personal pronoun, rather than a full noun phrase, filling the subject slot in the *that*-clause. What is more, in the corpus section containing material from spoken conversation, more than 50% of the subjects in the *that*-clauses are realized by the first person singular pronoun *I*. More specific lexico-grammatical patterns, which can be identified in the *BNCweb* material, can be subsumed in five major groups, which can be glossed by rough paraphrases of their semantic and pragmatic impact:

- a) denial of inference related to epistemic basis: *not that I know (of), not that I (can) recall/remember/think of, not that I'm aware of*
- b) denial of inference concerning the relevance of previous utterances: *not that it (much/really) mattered/matters, not that it makes any difference, not that it's any of your (damn[ed]) business*
- c) denial of inference concerning speaker's psychological state (concern): *not that I care/cared*
- d) denial of inference concerning speaker's psychological state (objection): *not that I'm against, not that I have/had anything against, not that X mind/minds/minded*
- e) denial of inference related to the reason for making a previous utterance: *not that I'm complaining/saying/suggesting/blaming*

The situation in Present-day English will serve as a backdrop for the historical data to be looked at now, beginning with an attempt to identify the first attested uses of *not that* in English.

4. First attestation in English

The *OED online* provides sub-entries on *not that* in the entries for both *not* and *that*. However, the earliest quotations given in these entries in the online edition at the time of writing do not seem to be the oldest ones attested, even within the *OED* itself.³ An automatic search for the string *not that* in the quotations in the *OED online* shows that the first identified quotation conveying the meaning and serving the function in question comes from the Wycliffite translation of the Bible dated 1382. This quotation is included in the entries for both *sufficient* and *sufficiency* and reads as follows:

- (3a) 1382 WYCLIF 2 *Cor.* iii. 5 Not that we ben sufficient for to thenke ony thing of vs, as of vs, but oure sufficiencye is of God. (*OED online*, s.v. *sufficiency* 2.)

The preceding context given in (3b), quoted from *Bible Gateway*, clearly indicates that this usage has the general meaning of ‘this is not to say that’ or ‘this does not mean that I’m claiming’. The *not that* clause rejects the assumption which could be inferred from the previous utterance that believers are self-sufficient in their trust in God.

- (3b) and made open [and *ye be* made open], for ye be the epistle of Christ ministered of us, and written, not with ink, but by the Spirit of the living God; not in stone tables [not in stony tables], but in fleshly tables of heart. For we have such trust by Christ to God; Not that [...]. (“Wycliffe New Testament”, *Bible Gateway*)

What may be as important and consequential for the later conventionalization of zero *not that* is the fact that the construction was also used more than a dozen times in marginal glosses in one manuscript of the Old Testament, known as Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 369, part 1 (Forshall/Madden 1850, 1: xxiv). According to Forshall/Madden (1850, 1: xvii), while this manuscript is an early copy of the oldest extant manuscript of the Wycliffite Bible (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 370), which can safely be attributed to Nicholas de Hereford (fl. 1390), the glosses were added by a second unknown hand. There is no doubt that these glosses and their content can be traced back to the richly annotated *Postillae litteralis super totam Bib-*

3 In the entry for *not*, *not that* is treated in the section “II. Negating other syntactic elements” (*OED online*, s.v. *not*) and specified as “8. Preceding a sentence, clause, or word”, and more specifically as “b. In introductory phrases, as *not but (that)*, *not that*, †*not for-thy*, etc.”. The first quotation given for *not that* in this sub-entry dates from 1593 and reads: “1593 B. BARNES *Parthenophil & Parthenophe* 67 Not that I prosper worse Then earst of yoare, for I the state inherite”. The sub-entry on *not that* included in the entry for *that* is found in the section headed “II. 2.a. Introducing a clause expressing the cause, ground, or reason of what is stated in the principal clause” (*OED online*, s.v. *that*) and reads: “(5) b. *not that ...* (ellipt.): = ‘I do not say this because ...’; or ‘It is not the fact that ...’, ‘One must not suppose that ...’”. The first quotation provided for this here is taken from Dryden: “1681 DRYDEN *Abs. & Achit.* 381 Such virtue’s only given to guide a throne. Not that your father’s mildness I contemn”.

liam written by the influential French theologian Nicolas de Lyra (1270-1349), as Lyra is mentioned as a source in the glosses in question by means of the reference “Lire here” and his input is acknowledged in John Purvey’s *General Prologue* to the Old Testament.⁴ The translator also says in the *General Prologue* that glosses were inserted particularly when Lyra’s comments indicated that the Latin translation was not true to the Hebrew manuscripts.⁵ A typical example taken from Judges 6:18 is given in (4), where additional comments rendered by Forshall/Madden are omitted in the first three lines:

- (4) And Gedeon seide, If Y haue foundun grace bifor thee, 3yue to me a signe [...], that thou, that spekist to me, art *sente of Goddis [...]* part; go [...] thou not `awei fro [...] hennus, til Y turne a3en to thee, and brynge sacrifice, and offre to thee*. [*brynge sacrifice and offre to thee*; not that Gedeon wolde that the sacri|fice be offr|id to him that ap|peride to him, for it is to offre to God aloone, sithen Gedeon wiste not 3it, wher he were a man ether an aungel sent of God; but Ge|deon wolde asaye bi a signe 3ouun of God in accepting of the sacrifice bi him that ap|peride to him to offre, wher he were verily sent of God; and Gedeon synnede not in this. *Lire here*. C.].

What is of interest here is the point in the marginal gloss – here rendered in square brackets – where a sequence of words from the scripture is repeated in italics (“*brynge sacrifice and offre to thee*”), followed by a comment which is introduced by *not that*. Apparently this serves as a correction of a potential misinterpretation of the main text (viz. that Gedeon was committing himself to offering a sacrifice to the angel, rather than to God Himself), and is thus more or less identical in function with the modern zero *not that* construction. As all but two of these uses of *not that* in the marginal glosses end with the reference “Lire here”, it is possible that the linguistic strategy is simply translated from Lyra’s work. We will follow up on this in the next section exploring potential sources of *not that* in older languages.

Before that, however, the claim that the Wycliffe attestations are indeed the first uses of the *not that* construction in English must be checked against the available evidence from corpora of earlier centuries. Automatic searches in the *DOEC* using the search strings *ne þæt* and *na þæt* produced 73 and 180 corpus hits respectively, but none of these sequences – identified mechanically on a purely formal basis but then checked manually – proved to be similar in meaning or function to the Modern English

4 “First, this symple creature hadde myche trauaile, with diuerse felawis and helperis^[...], to gedere manie elde biblis, and othere doctouris, and comune glosis, and to make oo^[...] Latyn bible sumdel trewe; and thanne to studie it of the newe, the text with the glose, and othere doctouris, as he mi3te gete, **and speciali Lire on the elde testament, that helpide ful myche in this werk;**” (Forshall/Madden 1850, 1: 57; my emphasis).

5 “[...] and where the Ebru, bi witnesse of Jerom, of Lire, and othere expositouris dicordith fro oure Latyn biblis, I haue set in the margyn, bi maner of a glose, what the Ebru hath, and hou it is vndurstondu in sum place” (Forshall/Madden 1850, 1: 58).

not that construction.⁶ Despite references to a large number of semi-fixed expressions including *not* or *that* in the *MED* in the respective entries, *not that* is not mentioned there either. Searches in the quotation database of the online *Middle English Dictionary* also produced a large number of matches, of which however only very few could possibly be interpreted as instantiating the construction in question here, and none of which predates the Wycliffe Bible.

As a consequence of this negative evidence, it seems legitimate to treat the 1382 quotations from Wycliffe's New Testament as the first attested extant use of the *not that* construction in English. It should not go unnoticed, however, that there are expressions of the type "I say not that ...", which are possible formal precursors of the zero *not that* construction in early English texts, serving the function of denying possible inferences and repairing potential assumptions concerning the impact of previous utterances. Two typical examples taken from the *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse*⁷ are given in (5) and (6), possibly written before 1223 and 1349 respectively.

- (5) And thus sayd to his fellowis: "Lordynges, what is vs to done wyth oure wrechid' presoners? I Sey not that man shal on any maner spare his enemys; [...]"⁸
- (6) And yf thou haue ony lykyng in ghostly werkes, that vnstablenes wyll put it awaye; therefore be ware & flee suche maner of occasyons yf thou wyllt be stable. I saye not that þou shalt flee bodely from þe world or fro [þi] worldely goodes for they be pryncypall occasyons / but I [...]"⁹

5. Precursors of *not that* in potential source languages

As the first attested use of zero *not that* in English comes from a translation of the New Testament, translations of the Bible provide a good basis for investigating the potential precursors of the *not that* construction in ancient languages. Keeping the cross-linguistic evidence in mind, and taking into consideration that both the dedicatee of this Festschrift and the author of this contribution are German and that Martin Luther's translation of the Bible has been instrumental in shaping Modern German, I will not only compare English translations from various centuries to their Latin source versions but also Luther's translation from Erasmus' Greek edition into German. A good starting-point for this comparison are all relevant occurrences of *not that* found in either *New International Bible (NIB)*, the King James Bible or Wycliffe's New

6 I would like to thank Gaby Waxenberger (Munich) and Mary Blockley (Austin, Texas) for going through the corpus material and sharing their expertise on Old English.

7 *The Corpus Of Middle English Prose and Verse* (<<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/c/cme/>>) is part of the *MEC* (see Works Cited).

8 Original source as indicated in the corpus: Giraldus Cambrensis (1146?-1223?), *Expugnatio Hibernica*, part I (c. 1189).

9 Original source as indicated in the corpus: Wynking de Worde's edition of Richard Rolle (c. 1290-1349), *Contemplations of the Dread and Love of God* (1506).

Testament. We focus on seven passages that have been translated with the help of the *not that* construction in at least one of these Bible versions. A survey of this data is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Survey of translations of passages from the Bible rendered by the zero *not that* construction¹⁰

	<i>NIB</i>	King James Bible	Wycliffe's NT	Greek version	Vulgate	Luther Bible
Acts of the Apostles 28:19	<i>not that I had any charge to bring</i>	<i>not that I had ought to accuse</i>	<i>not as having any thing to accuse</i>	<i>ουχ ως</i> 'not as, not like'	<i>non quasi</i> 'not as (if)'	<i>nicht, als hätte ich mein Volk um etwas zu verklagen</i>
John 5:34	<i>not that I accept human testimony</i>	<i>but I receive not testimony from man</i>	<i>but I take not witnessing of man</i>	<i>εγω δε ου παρα ανθρωπου</i> 'I but not from human'	<i>ego autem non</i> 'I however not'	<i>ich aber nehme nicht Zeugnis von Menschen</i>
Philippians 4:17	<i>not that I am looking for a gift</i>	<i>not because I desire a gift</i>	<i>not for I seek gift</i>	<i>ουχ οτι</i> 'not that, not because'	<i>non quia</i> 'not because'	<i>nicht, daß ich das Geschenk suche</i>
2Corinthians 1:24	<i>not that we lord it over your faith</i>	<i>not for that we have dominion over your faith</i>	<i>not that we be</i>	<i>ουχ οτι</i> 'not that, not because'	<i>non quia</i> 'not because'	<i>nicht, daß wir Herren seien</i>
2Corinthians 13:7	<i>not that people will see</i>	<i>not that we should appear approved</i>	<i>not that we seem approved</i>	<i>ουχ ινα</i> 'not so that'	<i>non ut</i> 'not (so) that'	<i>nicht, auf daß</i>
2Corinthians 2:4	<i>not to grieve you</i>	<i>not that ye should be grieved</i>	<i>not that ye be sorry</i>	<i>ουχ ινα</i> 'not so that'	<i>non ut</i> 'not (so) that'	<i>nicht, daß ihr solltet betrübt werden</i>
2Corinthians 3:5	<i>not that we are competent</i>	<i>not that we are sufficient</i>	<i>not that we be sufficient</i>	<i>ουχ οτι</i> 'not that, not because'	<i>non quod</i> 'not because, not that'	<i>nicht, daß wir tüchtig sind</i>

What the information collected in Table 1 shows first of all is that the six instances found in the *New International Bible* have different sources in Latin (and Greek), which were not all translated the same way in earlier Bible translations into English. The Greek forms *ουχ οτι* 'not that, not because', *ουχ ινα* 'not so that' and *ουχ ως* 'not

¹⁰ The English, Latin and German versions of the Bible can be accessed via *Bible Gateway*. For the Greek version see TITUS Project in Works Cited.

as, not like', corresponding to Latin *non quia/non quod*, *non ut* and *non quasi*, share causal, final and comparative meanings respectively. In Wycliffe's New Testament only two of the three passages with causal meanings and the two passages with final meanings are rendered by *not that*, but the third causal passage, the comparative one and the adversative one in John 5:34 is translated differently. The King James Bible, which like Wycliffe's New Testament is translated from Latin, does render the comparative passage from Acts of the Apostles 28:19 by *not that*, but employs the construction in a smaller number of the passages with causal meaning. The *New International Bible*, on the other hand, has an infinitival construction for the passage with final meaning in 2Corinthians 2:4, which was translated with the help of *not that* in the two earlier English translations. Interestingly, Martin Luther, who translated from Greek, reserved *nicht dass* for the passages with causal and final meanings but did not use it in the other contexts.

As mentioned above, *not that* not only occurs in the text of the Bible translation but also in 16 marginal glosses taken over and translated from Lyra's *Postillae*. Interestingly, however, the original passages in Lyra's glosses are far from uniform. Depending on the context and the passages to be commented on, the gambits used by Lyra – and translated as *not that* – range from the fairly explicit *non est intelligendum quod* and *non est per hoc intelligendum quod* to the much shorter expressions *non ad hoc* and, indeed, a small number of uses of *non quod*.¹¹ Despite the diversity of the expressions in the original, the translator(s) of these glosses apparently found it useful (and perhaps economical) to render their shared pragmatic function by means of *not that* and in doing so may indeed have contributed more or less considerably to the conventionalization of this expression in English.

Keeping in mind that this is only a very restricted dataset, we can still venture some tentative conclusions at this point. Both Greek and Latin had conventionalized, conjunction-like, clause-initial elements which were used in functions comparable to Modern English *not that*. The dominant meanings are causal, epistemic/factual (presumably derived from causal) and final. It is of course far from clear whether John Wycliffe and his followers and Martin Luther actually were the first to render these expressions by English *not that* and German *nicht dass* respectively, but it is by no means impossible that the two expressions entered English and German by means of loan syntax and gained currency with the support of the authority of these early Bible translations. With regard to the cross-linguistic data mentioned in section 1, this would also indicate that the Bible was instrumental in spreading equivalents of *non quod/non quia* and their Greek counterparts to other languages.

With regard to meaning, while there is a weak trend of an expansion of the construction in the younger Bible translation into English to include adversative and comparative contexts, one of the two passages with a meaning of purpose is not translated by *not that* in the most recent English version looked at. This is in line with observations on the material in the *BNCweb* where only one candidate for a use of *not that*

¹¹ I would like to thank Gaby Waxenberger, Inge Milfull and Claudia Wiener for their help in reading and translating Lyra's glosses in the manuscript provided by *Uppsala University Library* (= Lyra in Works Cited).

with final meaning was found. The causal meanings of *οὐχ οὐτι* and *non quia/quod* had apparently already begun to bleach to a more general factual or epistemic meaning in Greek and Latin; while this trend continues in English, possibly supported by the form *that* (rather than *because*), remnants of the causal meaning are not only present in the semantic description provided by the *OED online* (cf. section 4) but also in a small number of attested uses in the *BNCweb* where *not that* is coordinated with *not because*.

Further evidence for the religious origins of *not that* and for the thesis that it entered English as a piece of loan syntax comes from early stages of its subsequent conventionalization, to which we will now turn.

6. Early stages of conventionalization

To the extent documented by the *OED online* quotations, the use of *not that* during the 200 years following the first attested use quoted above seems to have been restricted to ecclesiastical texts and dominated by translations (see Table 2, next page). The construction apparently did not diffuse and spread into other registers and text-types to begin with. A notable exception, however, as it comes from a non-religious source, is the second quotation attested in the *OED online*, which dates from around 1430 and is taken from a poem entitled *The Pilgrimage of the Lyf of the Manhode*, an anonymous translation of Guillaume de Deguileville's *Le Pèlerinage de Vie Humaine* (c. 1375). Here is the passage, taken from the *Internet Archive*¹²:

- (7) And therfore he is the strengere ayens thee and the more fers and of the
grettere beringe But if in oothere places thou haddest him in thi cuntree
thou shuldest be strengere there He shulde not mown with sitte thee ne
ayens stonde thee Not that j sey thee thus for to putte thee in to faitourye
ne that j wole sey that thou ne miht mate him and supplaunte him.

Interestingly, the discursive function of *not that j say thee thus*, which explicitly rejects an assumption concerning the communicative intention behind a previous utterance, is still very typical of the use of *not that* today, *not that I'm saying* (cf. type e, section 3), and found frequently in the material collected in the *BNCweb*. From the point of view of language contact, it is important to emphasize that this passage translates the Middle French expression *non pas que*, which is very likely also derived from or modelled on Latin *non quod*. This suggests that, as so often, the direct effect of Latin on English may have been supported by the influence of translations from French sources during the Middle English period.

Of the following eight attestations that can be extracted from the *OED online* database, all but one originate in religious texts. The remaining one, which is also the most recent in this sequence, comes from a piece of instructive writing from the field of medicine, *The Haven of Health* by Thomas Cogan, dated 1584.

¹² <<http://www.archive.org/details/pilgrimageoflyfo00guilrich>>.

Table 2: Earliest occurrences of zero *not that* (following the 1382 one) included in the *OED online* quotations, with sources and text-types

date of quotation	quotation	<i>OED</i> entry	source	text-type
c. 1454	<i>Not þat y meene doctouris fyndyngis ... to be dispisid, or to be ouer litil sett bi.</i>	<i>over-little</i> , adj., n., and adv., C.	Reginald Pecock, <i>Folewer to Donet</i>	religious instruction
1552	<i>Not that the sunne it selfe of her [ed. 1607 his] substance shalbe darckened</i>	<i>sun</i> , n. ¹ , b.	Hugh Latimer, <i>Sermon on St Stephen's Day</i>	sermon
1560	<i>Not that we vendicat any thing to our selues aboute the least of our brethren</i>	<i>vendicate</i> , v., 1.	Bible (Geneva)	religious
1563	<i>Not that the sufferaunce of thys transitory lyfe, shoulde be worthy of that glory to come</i>	<i>sufferance</i> , I.4.	Anonymus, <i>Homilies II. For Good Friday</i>	homily
1579	<i>Not that they should alwayes remaine as subject thereunder [i.e. the ordinance of the Lord], but vntill the appoynted tyme, vntill the manly old age in the godly vnderstanding of the holy word.</i> [the same quotation is also given in the entry on <i>thereunder</i>]	<i>manly</i> , adj., 6.	William Wilkinson, <i>A Confutation of Certaine Articles Deliuered vnto the Familye of Loue</i>	theological treatise
1583	<i>Not that hee was vnable to let them, or withstande them, if hee had would</i>	<i>will</i> , v. ¹ , B. V. †49	Arthur Golding, <i>The Sermons of J. Calvin upon Deuteronomie</i>	theological treatise
1584	<i>Not that the ayre is venomous of it selfe, but through corruption hath now gotten such a quality</i>	<i>venomous</i> , a., 2.	Thomas Cogan, <i>The Hauen of Health</i>	medical manual

The last quotation also marks the beginning of a number of attestations from non-religious sources, among them Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* (c. 1586),¹³ Sir John Harrington's translation *Ariosto's Orlando Furioso in English Heroical Verse* (1591; *OED online*, s.v. *cock-sure*), Josuah Sylvester's translation *Du Bartas' Triumph of Faith, the Sacrifice of Isaac, the Shipwracke of Jonas* (1591, *OED online*, s.v. *lusk*) and Robert Wilmot's play *The Tragedie of Tancred and Gismund* (1591, *OED online*, s.v. *reck*).

With every reservation that is in order because of the slim data basis and the known preponderance of texts on religious topics in the Middle English period, one might

13 The quotation from *Arcadia* quoted in the *OED online* entry on *purple* is not a valid record of *not that* as discussed here, since *that* functions as a demonstrative pronoun, but another pertinent attestation was identified in this work: "Which humour perceiuing to ouer-rule me, I straued against it; not that I was vnwilling to depend vpon him in iudgeme[n]t" (Sidney 2010, 229).

conclude from the material adduced here that it was not before the end of the 16th century that *not that* began to emancipate itself from the domain of religious writing and diffuse in other genres and text-types.¹⁴

7. *Not that* vs. *it BE not that*

It is in *As You Like It* (1599) III.ii that we witness Phebe's reaction following Silvius' confession of his love for her:

- (8) Phebe. Thou hast my love; is not that neighbourly?
 Silvius. I would have you.
 Phebe. Why, that were covetousness. Silvius, the time was that I hated thee; And yet it is not that I bear thee love; But since that thou canst talk of love so well, Thy company, which erst was irksome to me, I will endure; and I'll employ thee too.

This record predates the first attestation to be found in the quotation database of the *OED online* (s.v. *witness*), which was uttered by the defendant Hugh Peters in 1660 in the course of the *Trials of Twenty-nine Regicides, at the Old Bailey, for High Treason*, the minutes of which were published in 1783 by Thomas Jones Howell. Nevertheless, there is a gap of more than two centuries between the first attested use of zero *not that* in Wycliffe's New Testament (c. 1382) and the first use of *it is not that* that could be identified, i.e. the 1599 passage from *As You Like It* provided in (8). This finding renders it highly unlikely that the longer form *it BE not that* is older and a possible historic precursor of the shorter, and potentially elliptical form zero *not that*.

It is not unlikely, however, that *it is not that* itself is an elliptical form of an extra-positional epistemic focus construction of the type *it is not true that*. This construction is indeed attested earlier, to be precise in Reginald Pecock's *Folewer to Donet* (c. 1454), which was already mentioned above (see Table 2):

- (9) For if 'makyng of nouzt' schulde be take and be undirstonde propirli, it is not trewe þat god þanne made Adam of nouzt, forwhi þe mater of his bodi was bifore (quoted from *MED*, s.v. *properly*).

14 Incidentally, one of the most famous passages including *not that*, the beginning of Brutus' monologue in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* III.ii, is not an example of the *not that* construction of interest here, because it elliptically takes up the cataphoric pointer "this is my answer": "If then that friend demand why Brutus rose against Caesar, this is my answer: Not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more". An expanded version would therefore read something like 'my answer is not that I loved Caesar less, but [...]', which does not match the denying function characteristic of the uses of *not that* at issue here. However, there are as many as a dozen other occurrences of *not that* in Shakespeare's work that are indeed attestations of the zero variant of the *not that* construction (cf. *All's Well That Ends Well* IV.iii; *As You Like It* III.v; *Comedy of Errors* III.ii; *Coriolanus* II.iii; *Hamlet* II.ii, and IV.vii; *Henry VI*, Part III II.v and III.iii; *Julius Caesar* V.i; *King John* II.i; *Measure for Measure* V.i; *Troilus and Cressida* III.i; Sonnet 102). In addition, Shakespeare's work also contains the first occurrence of the more expanded form *it is not that* (see section 7).

The quotation from *As You Like It* in (8) and many other early uses of *it is not that* are still fairly clear examples of such purely epistemic uses, which reject the truth of the proposition expressed by the *that*-clause. However, this seems to have changed over the subsequent centuries. This emerges from the observation that moving the negator in the sentence with concomitant changes in the scope of negation (10) is freely possible for the example from Shakespeare quoted in (8), but restricted for the present-day example taken from the *BNCweb* given as (2) above and repeated as (11a) here for the sake of convenience:

- (10) a) the time was that I hated thee;
 And yet it is **not** that I bear thee love; [= (8)]
 b) And yet it is **not the case** that I do bear thee love.
 c) And yet it is (the case) that I do **not** bear thee love
- (11) a) in the country where Great-Granny comes from they don't eat some of the things we eat. **It's not that they're fussy**, it's because they think it's wrong.
 b) It is **not** the case that they're fussy, [...]
 c) *It is the case that they are **not** fussy, [...]

While (10a) can be paraphrased by both the expressions with maximum scope of external negation in (10b) and with the smaller-scope internal negation in (10c), the internal negation of (11a) rendered in (11c) does not seem to keep the semantic impact of (11a) intact. (11a) does not explicitly assert that *they're not fussy*, but denies that this is the reason for their behaviour or the main point to be emphasized. From a logical point of view, example (11a) could be truthfully stated even if the referents of *they* were fussy after all. (11c), on the other hand, explicitly states that *they're not fussy* and is thus an unequivocal commitment to the truth of this proposition. What this indicates is that the *it BE not that* construction has to some extent reduced its compositionality and developed a more distinct focus on the negation of the matrix clause than before. From a modern synchronic point of view, this property of *it BE not that*, which sets it semantically and functionally apart from zero *not that*, is a second indicator that zero *not that* is not an elliptical form of *it BE not that*.

8. A glimpse of the later stages of the conventionalization of the *not that* construction

According to Schmid (forthcoming), the genre in the *BNC* which boasts the highest frequency of occurrence of the *not that* construction is 'fiction and verse'. With a relative frequency of 51.35 instances per million words, the construction is almost twice as frequent as in the corpus section taken from spoken conversation (27.16 per million words) and almost three times as frequent as the newspaper material in the corpus (19.43 per million words). Given that a large proportion of the texts collected in the *Classics Corpus* indeed comes from the genre of fiction, especially in the material from the 18th and 19th centuries, it seems legitimate to consider a comparison of rela-

tive frequencies of occurrence as an indicator of degrees of the conventionalization of the construction in this genre. Table 3 lists the scores for the three centuries included in the *Classics Corpus* in juxtaposition with evidence from the *BNCweb* rendered in Schmid (forthcoming).

Table 3: Relative frequencies of occurrence of the *not that* construction in different centuries in the *Classics Corpus* and the *BNCweb*

Century	Occurrences of <i>not that</i> construction	Number of words in corpus section	Frequency per million words
17 th , incl. Shakespeare	37	2,082,808	17.76
18 th	35	3,436,342	10.19
19 th	44	2,828,214	15.56
<i>BNC</i> , 'fiction and verse'	829	16,143,913	51.35

While there is clearly no consistent trend to be observed for the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, it is remarkable that the *not that* construction occurs roughly three times more frequently in the data from Present-day English than in any of the historical datasets. This suggests that the construction has gained massively in currency in the genre 'fiction' and thus increased its degree of conventionalization. What is interesting, however, and can be gleaned from the scores given for the individual authors and works in the Appendix, is that certain authors seem to have taken a fancy to using the construction fairly early. Even disregarding high relative scores based on small samples, such as the 87.95% calculated from two occurrences in the 22,765 words in Jane Austen's *Lady Susan*, we find scores approaching the *BNCweb* benchmark, such as 49.94% in Aphra Behn's *Love-letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister* (1684), 43.36% in Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1770) and 43.68% in George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871). While it would be tempting to look for common features of these three authors and texts – for example the fact that two of them are women,¹⁵ or the impression that they share a somewhat verbose style reflecting meandering thoughts, which could be considered conducive to the use of *not that* – I would rather not engage in such speculations on the basis of no more than three samples. On the other hand, authors of very long texts, such as Samuel Richardson – whose nine-volume work *Clarissa* (1748) is generally considered the longest novel written in English – and Ann Radcliffe (*The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 1794), have found the construction hardly, or not at all, useful. What this could point to, within the framework used in Schmid (forthcoming), is that despite a considerable degree of conventionalization across the speech community and in particular contexts of usage (i.e. the writing of fiction), the con-

15 The speculation concerning a gender effect would indeed be in line with the finding by Schmid (forthcoming) that female writers of fiction use the *not that* construction slightly, but still statistically significantly more often than male writers.

struction was not equally firmly entrenched in the minds of different individual writers.¹⁶

9. Some observations on the increasing formulaicity of uses of *not that*

In section 3 above it was pointed out that in Present-day English, we find a number of recurrent lexico-grammatical patterns, including

- a) *not that I know (of)/remember/recall,*
- b) *not that it matters/mattered/makes any difference,*
- c) *not that X care/cares/cared,*
- d) *not that I'm against it/ not that X mind/minds/minded,* and
- e) *not that I'm complaining/saying/suggesting/blaming.*

These lexico-grammatical patterns, as well as the pragmatic functions underlying them, which were sketched out in section 3, seem to have been fairly slow in becoming stabilized and conventionalized. The only exception is pattern e), the denial of inferences related to the reason for making a previous utterance, which has been one of the major motives for the use of the *not that* construction right from the start. Let us look at the evidence for each of the other four patterns in turn.

The pattern *not that I know (of)* is found only once in the quotation database of the *OED online*, namely in the exact form “not that I know” in *Hamlet* (1602) II.ii. In the *Classics Corpus*, there are five further attestations: in Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764; “not that I know anything of the matter”), Laurence Sterne’s *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* (1770; “Was he going there? Not that I know”), Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park* (1814; “No, no that I know of”), Charles Dickens’ *David Copperfield* (1849; “not that I knew anything about it”) and George Eliot’s *Middlemarch* (1871; “Not that I know of”).

The first and only attestation of the pattern *not that it matters/mattered* in the *OED online* is the title of a collection of essays by Alan Alexander Milne, *Not That It Matters*, published in 1919. In the *Classics Corpus*, no instantiation of this pattern is found. It may well be the case that the title of Milne’s publication had an effect on the conventionalization of this phrase suggested by its frequency in the *BNC*.

The pattern *not that X care/cares/cared* is in evidence both in the *OED online* and, to a lesser extent, in the *Classics Corpus*. Timewise, the eight quotations found in the *OED online* range from 1760 to 1977. What is particularly remarkable about these attestations, especially the early ones, is that the phrase *not that X care/cares/cared* tends to be complemented by objects with intensifying meanings such as *three damns* (1760), *a brass bodle* (1820), *two straws* (1922) and, more recently, *a fuck* (1977). The only attestation in the *Classics Corpus*, which is also quoted in the *OED online* (s.v.

¹⁶ I am well aware of the possibility that some writers may have had the construction ready in mind, and thus deeply entrenched, but decided not to use it in their own writing for stylistic reasons or simply because they did not like it.

notice), is an instance of *it BE not that* taken from Jane Austen's *Persuasion* (1818): "It is not that mamma cares about it [...]".

The pattern *not that X mind/minds/minded* is neither attested in the *OED online* nor found in the *Classics Corpus*. It is either too rare to occur in the material or fairly recent. Despite their massive sizes, even the *OED online* and *MED* databases are of course limited and skewed data sources, and the 8.3 million words collected in the *Classics Corpus* (including Shakespeare) are not much to speak of either. Nevertheless, one may conclude from the findings rendered in the previous paragraphs that the emergence of semi-fixed quasi-formulaic lexico-grammatical phrases including the *not that* construction seems to be a comparatively recent phenomenon in the history of English.

10. Conclusion

I have not been able to accomplish much more in this paper than to collect evidence which throws some light on the historical spread and diffusion of what I have called the '*not that* construction'. The major results of this effort will now be summarized in the order of the trust that I have in their validity.

Given the evidence adduced, I would regard it as a more or less proven fact that the zero *not that* construction is not derived historically from the more expanded construction *it is/was/'s not that*, which is also common in Modern English. Even if there is considerable uncertainty as to whether the precise dates of the first attestations found are correct, the gap of more than two centuries is too large to have occurred by chance. With not much less confidence I would argue that zero *not that* entered English as a piece of loan syntax from Latin, possibly via Wycliffe's New Testament and to some extent supported by functionally similar earlier expressions such as *I say not that*. It is by no means unlikely that the practice of using *not that* in glosses that were aimed at rejecting potential misunderstandings of the scripture, which were taken over from Nicholas de Lyra (but only in few cases expressed by him in terms of *non quod*) contributed to the conventionalization process. Backed up by the authority of the Bible and further tokens of the construction occurring in translations from Latin and French in the subsequent period, the construction seems to have gained currency, albeit slowly and gradually, first in other religious texts and, probably beginning with the Elizabethan Golden Age, in other text-types such as learned exposition, poetry and drama.

While *not that* seems to have acquired a reasonable degree of spread and conventionality in fiction texts over the 17th, 18th and especially 19th centuries, relative frequencies of usage observed for these periods are still markedly lower than in Present-day English fiction.

Finally, the data collected indicates that the more or less fixed lexico-grammatical patterns which are found in the present-day material collected in the *British National Corpus* emerged comparatively late in the conventionalization history of the construction. While early uses, e.g. of the pattern *not that I know of*, were found, their overall frequency of occurrence in the historical data is clearly quite low. Other patterns such as *not that it matters* appear to be not much more than a century old.

I have no alternative but to end this paper with the highly conventionalized remark that more research is needed to corroborate some of the more tentative observations made here.

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Appendix

Table 4: Composition of the *Classics Corpus* downloaded from <<http://manybooks.net/>> and absolute number of occurrences of the *not that* construction (empty cells indicate zero attestations)

Title	Author	Year	Word count	<i>not that</i> absolute frequency	<i>not that</i> frequency per million words
<i>Canterbury Tales</i>	Chaucer, Geoffrey	1430	277,328		
<i>Utopia</i>	More, Thomas	1515	43,456		
<i>Complete Works</i>	Shakespeare, William	1589- 1613	884,647 ¹⁷	13	14.69
<i>The Proficiency and Advancement of Learning</i>	Bacon, Francis	1605	83,714	2	23.89
<i>The New Atlantis</i>	Bacon, Francis	1627	15,628		
<i>Essays of Francis Bacon or Counsels, Civil and Moral</i>	Bacon, Francis	1627	53,627		
<i>The Compleat Angler</i>	Walton, Izaak	1653	65,005	2	30.77
<i>The Diary of Samuel Pepys</i>	Pepys, Samuel	1669	371,437	5	13.46
<i>Paradise Lost</i>	Milton, John	1667	80,055		
<i>Paradise Regained</i>	Milton, John	1667	15,918		
<i>Love-letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister</i>	Behn, Aphra	1684	180,208	9	49.94
<i>Two Treatises of Government</i>	Locke, John	1688	56,425	2	35.45
<i>An Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i>	Locke, John	1690	276,144	3	10.86
<i>An Essay Towards a New Theory of Vision</i>	Berkeley, George	1709	28,311	1	35.32
<i>The Bickerstaff-Partridge Papers</i>	Swift, Jonathan	1709	12,815		
<i>The Battle of the Book and Other Short Pieces</i>	Swift, Jonathan	1710	41,393		
<i>An Essay on Criticism</i>	Pope, Alexander	1711	9,273		
<i>An Apology for the Study of Northern Antiquities</i>	Elstob, Elizabeth	1715	12,914		
<i>Robinson Crusoe</i>	Defoe, Daniel	1719	123,261	1	8.11
<i>Moll Flanders</i>	Defoe, Daniel	1722	139,268	3	21.54
<i>Gulliver's Travels</i>	Swift, Jonathan	1726	52,977		
<i>A Discourse Concerning Ridicule and Irony in Writing</i>	Collins, Archie Frederick	1729	30,234		

¹⁷ The number of words given for *Shakespeare's Complete Works* is taken from the website of the Folger Shakespeare Library (see Works Cited), which quotes it from Marvin Spevack's classic concordance (1973).

Title	Author	Year	Word count	<i>not that</i> absolute frequency	<i>not that</i> frequency per million words
<i>Pamela, Vols. I and II</i>	Richardson, Samuel	1740	440,800		
<i>Clarissa, Vols. I to IX</i>	Richardson, Samuel	1748	972,242	2	2.06
<i>The Adventures of Roderick Random</i>	Smollett, Tobias	1748	190,813	2	10.48
<i>Amelia</i>	Fielding, Henry	1751	215,980	2	9.26
<i>Works of Samuel Johnson, Vol IV</i>	Johnson, Samuel	1751	90,146	2	22.19
<i>The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle</i>	Smollett, Tobias	1751	317,828	6	18.88
<i>The Castle of Otranto</i>	Walpole, Horace	1764	36,231	1	27.60
<i>A Sentimental Journey</i>	Sterne, Laurence	1768	41,118		
<i>The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy</i>	Sterne, Laurence	1770	184,496	8	43.36
<i>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i>	Hume, David	1777	57,544		
<i>An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals</i>	Hume, David	1777	48,562	1	20.59
<i>The Mysteries of Udolpho</i>	Radcliffe, Ann	1794	294,433		
<i>Lady Susan</i>	Austen, Jane	1795	22,765	2	87.85
<i>The Age of Reason</i>	Paine, Thomas	1796	72,938	1	13.71
<i>Sense and Sensibility</i>	Austen, Jane	1811	119,053	1	8.40
<i>Pride and Prejudice</i>	Austen, Jane	1813	121,763	2	16.43
<i>Mansfield Park</i>	Austen, Jane	1814	159,450	4	25.09
<i>Emma</i>	Austen, Jane	1815	159,601	3	18.80
<i>Northanger Abbey</i>	Austen, Jane	1818	78,187	1	12.79
<i>Persuasion</i>	Austen, Jane	1818	83,085	3	36.11
<i>The Pickwick papers</i>	Dickens, Charles	1836	301,877	1	3.31
<i>Oliver Twist</i>	Dickens, Charles	1839	161,784	1	6.18
<i>Jane Eyre</i>	Brontë, Charlotte	1847	189,391	1	5.28
<i>Wuthering Heights</i>	Brontë, Emily	1847	119,192	2	16.78
<i>David Copperfield</i>	Dickens, Charles	1849	366,098	2	5.46
<i>Bleak House</i>	Dickens, Charles	1853	354,149	2	5.65
<i>A Tale of Two Cities</i>	Dickens, Charles	1859	135,788	1	7.36
<i>Great Expectations</i>	Dickens, Charles	1861	158,258	6	37.91
<i>Middlemarch</i>	Eliot, George	1871	320,538	14	43.68

