

A diachronic approach to extraposition

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0. Introduction (1)

- in **synchronic** reference grammars:
'traditional' definition of **extraposition** (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 1403)

"In the basic version, the subject position is filled by a subordinate clause. [...] In the version with extraposition, the subject position is filled by the pronoun *it* and the subordinate clause appears at the end of the matrix clause [...]. Semantically, the subordinate clause stands in the same relation to the verb (or verb + predicative complement) [...], but syntactically the switch [...] transfers the subject properties from the subordinate clause to *it*."

→ extraposition restricted to construction with subject *it*

→ structural analysis assumes as basic version 'non-extraposited' variant, which emerges later and remains marked variant in PDE (Kaltenböck 2000)

0. Introduction (2)

- in **historical** studies, implicit broader view of extraposition:
(Visser 1970: §60; Mitchell 1985: §1963-1964; Hulk & van Kemenade 1993; Van linden 2012: 129)

1. precursors of *it's Adj/Noun that* + complement:

structures with post-verbal or 'extraposed' clause with:

a) 'subjectless' matrix (when syntactic subject not obligatory)

- (1) And la *hwilc wundor is* þeah þe to life arise an mann þurh hyne
'And lo! What wonder is (it) that one man [i.e. Lazarus] arises to life through him [i.e. Jesus]!' (YCOE 950-1050)

b) matrix with **cataphoric *that*** as subject, with distinct discourse-pragmatics;

that "claims ... audience's attention and anticipates that something of high information value follows " in complement clause (Möhlig-Falke 2012:176)

- (2) *þæt is wundor*, þæt ðu swa ræðe forhæfdnisse & swa hearde habban wilt.
'that is wonder, that you want to have fierce and harsh abstinence.' (YCOE, 850-950)

0. Introduction (3)

2. precursors of *there is Noun that* + complement:

structures with post-verbal or 'extraposed' clause with:

a) 'expletiveless' matrix: these are glossed as existential cxns:

(3) *forþon nis nan tweo þæt*

'therefore there is no doubt that ...' (Traugott 1992: 271)

(4) *And þe nis nan neod þæt...*

'And there is no need to you that ...' (Mitchell 1985: I, 625)

b) matrix with **existential *it/there*** (when subject became obligatory), with *there* taking over when existential *it* became obsolete (Williams 2000, Van linden 2012, Davidse et al fthc, cf. López-Couso 2006, 2012, Breivik 1983)

(5) *For it is no doute þat in þe song þat þe wisdom of God made, ... ne ben fele sotile and swete notes.* (PPCME, c1450(c1400))

(6) *And of thise thinges ther nis no doute that thei ne ben doon ryghtfyllly and ordeynly, to the profit of hem to whom we seen thise thingis betyde.* (PPCME, c1450)

0. Introduction (4)

→ historical perspective

- argues for:

including **predicative** and **existential** matrices

into **one, more schematic, extraposition cxn**, because they

- both go back to ‘expletiveless’ matrices
- but select different matrix nouns (in strong tendencies):
 - existential: e.g. ‘there is’ *doubt, question, need*
 - predicative : e.g. ‘it is’ *wonder*

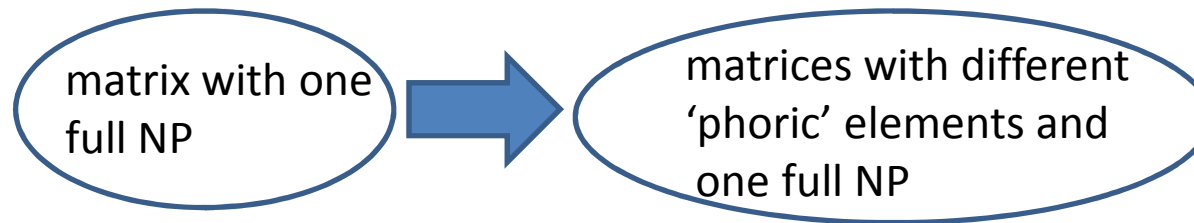
- argues against:

viewing *it* – and *there* - as meaningless dummies, rather than elements contributing to semantics of matrix clause (cf. Bolinger 1973, 1977)

0. Introduction (5)

Aims of talk:

1. Reconstruct diachronic development of 'broader' extraposition cxn:



- in Old English
- from Middle to Present-day English

2. Offer diachronically informed redefinition of extraposition, with alternative structural analysis, which can accommodate
 - predicative and existential matrices
 - lexical and grammatical uses

Structure of talk

1. Data
2. Extraposition in Old English
3. Extraposition from Middle to Present-day English
4. Redefinition of 'extraposition'
5. Prospects for further research

1. Data

- Old English: exhaustive extractions from York-Toronto-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old English Prose (YCOE) on *wonder*, *tweo* ('doubt'), *wen* ('chance'), *thearf* ('need'), *neod* ('need')
- Middle English: exhaustive extractions from the Penn corpora of Historical English for Middle (PPCME) and Early Modern English (PPCEME), the Corpus of Late Modern English texts (CLMETEV) and random samples (250 tokens) from Present-day British English subcorpora of WordBanksOnline on *wonder*, *doubt*, *question*
→ manually sorted 'extraposition' constructions
- specific subtype with typical form *it/there is no* + noun that p
→ conclusions at this stage can only be tentative

2. Extraposition in Old English (1)

we predict different distribution of (potential) elements besides full NP in **predicative** and **existential** matrices of extraposition:

Matrix + post-verbal complement	Predicative <i>wundor</i>	Existential <i>tweo, wen, þearf, need</i>
Subjectless/ expletiveless	∅ <i>BE</i> ADJ/N	∅ <i>BE</i> N
<i>hit</i>	<i>hit BE</i> ADJ/N	<i>hit BE</i> N
Cataphoric pronoun (marked-focus variant)	<i>þæt</i> <i>BE</i> ADJ/N → NOM case	<i>þæs</i> <i>BE</i> N → GEN case
<i>there</i>	EXCLUDED	<i>þær BE</i> N
Excluded	* <i>þæt hit BE</i> ADJ/N (* <i>þær BE</i> ADJ/N)	* <i>þær hit BE</i> N * <i>þæt BE</i> N

→ ∅ & *hit*: same surface structure, but distinct function:
subject of predicative vs. expletive of existential

2. Extraposition in Old English (2)

1. Subjectless/expletiveless

(1a) **Micele mare wundor is** þæt he wolde beon mann on þisum life, and alysan us þurh hine, þone þa wundra wæron þe he worhte betwux mannum.

'Much more wonder (it) is that he wanted to be a human in this life, and redeem us through himself, than were the wonders that he produced among humans.' (YCOE, 950-1050)

→ subjectless + lexical Complement to (unexpressed) Subject

(1b) **Wen is** þæt þu gemete sumne þe þe gemiltsige.

'There is a chance that you meet someone who will show mercy to you.' (YCOE, 950-1050)

→ 'expletiveless' containing only Existent NP as subject

2. Extraposition in Old English (3)

2. *Hit*

(2a) Nu cwæð se halga Beda [...], þæt **hit nan wundor nys**, þæt se halga cynincg untrumnyse gehæle nu he on heofonum leofað

‘Now said Bede the Holy [...] that it is no wonder that the holy king heals weaknesses now that he lives in heaven.’ (YCOE 950-1050)

→ *it*: unstressed weakly cataphoric definite pronoun pointing to complement clause

(2b) ða cwæð he: For ðæm **hit is nan tweo** þæt ða goodan beoð symle waldende, & þa yflan nabbað nænne anwald.

‘Then he said: Therefore there is no doubt that the good ones are always powerful, and the evil ones do not have any power.’ (YCOE, 850-950)

→ existential *it*: minor variant in early stages of existential *there* (Breivik 1983: 257)

2. Extraposition in Old English (4)

3. Cataphoric pronoun

(3a) Forþon **nis þæt nan wundor** þeah se hea Cyning & se eca Drihten hine sylfne let lædon on þa hean dune [...]

‘Therefore that is no wonder, that the high King and the eternal Lord let himself be led onto the high hill, [...]’ (YCOE, 950-1050)

→ *þæt* ‘that’: cataphoric pronoun pointing to complement clause

(3b) **Nis ðæs** ðonne **nan tweo**, gif suelc eaðmodnes bið mid oðrum godum ðeawum begyrded, **ðæt** ðæt bið beforan Godes eagum soð eaðmodness, [...]

‘Then about this there is no doubt, that if such humility is encompassed with other good manners/virtues, that that is true humility before God’s eyes, when [...]’ (YCOE, 850-950)

→ *þæs* ‘of that’: cataphoric pronoun pointing to complement clause

2. Extraposition in Old English (5)

4. *There*

(4a) -

(4b) Mid þy þa seo gesomnung eall gehyrde swa openlice þa stefne, þa **næs þær nænig tweo**, þæt hit nealæhte þara forðfore, þe þær gecigde wæron.

‘[Anastasias and 7 brothers are called by their names by a voice from a high cliff] While the whole congregation then heard the voice so openly, there was no doubt then that it drew near to the death of them who were named there.’ (YCOE, 1050-1150)

→ *there*: unstressed weakly cataphoric indefinite pronoun announcing indefinite Existent NP (Halliday & Hasan 1976: 101, Bolinger 1977)

2. Extraposition in Old English (6)

- our predictions for distribution of (potential) elements besides full NP were confirmed for
 - **predicative** matrices with *wonder*
 - **existential** matrices with *tweo* ('doubt') *wen* ('chance'), *thearf* ('need'), *neod* ('need')on the basis of about 270 complement patterns
- moreover, quantitative development of these elements follows general syntactic trends of these clauses throughout different stages of OE:

2. Extraposition in Old English (7)

Predicative

	\emptyset <i>BE</i> N	<i>hit</i> <i>BE</i> N	<i>pæt</i> <i>BE</i> N	TOT
OE2	2	4	9	15
OE3	13	2	7	22
OE4	8	5	14	27
TOT	23	11	30	64

Existential

	\emptyset <i>BE</i> N	<i>hit</i> <i>BE</i> N	<i>pæs</i> <i>BE</i> N	<i>pær</i> <i>BE</i> N	TOT
OE2	64	7	6	0	77
OE3	59	4	0	0	63
OE4	46	15	2	2	65
TOT	169	26	8	2	205

2. Extraposition in Old English (8)

Predicative

	\emptyset <i>BE</i> N	<i>hit</i> <i>BE</i> N	<i>pæt</i> <i>BE</i> N	TOT
OE2	13.33	26.67	60.00	100
OE3	59.09	9.09	31.82	100
OE4	29.63	18.52	51.85	100
TOT	35.94	17.19	46.88	100

Existential

	\emptyset <i>BE</i> N	<i>hit</i> <i>BE</i> N	<i>pæs</i> <i>BE</i> N	<i>pær</i> <i>BE</i> N	TOT
OE2	83.12	9.09	7.79	-	100
OE3	93.65	6.35	-	-	100
OE4	70.77	23.08	3.08	3.08	100
TOT	82.44	12.68	3.90	0.98	100

2. Extraposition in Old English (9)

- **∅ BE N**: EX have larger shares of expletiveless structures (82%) than PRED of subjectless ones (36%);
→ expletiveless type was predominant with simple EX clauses in OE (Traugott 1992: 217–219)
- **hit BE N**: similar shares (17%, 13%); increased frequency across OE with EX
→ increase of subject *it* in simple EX clauses in OE-ME (Breivik 1983: 257)
- **cataphor BE N**: ***pæt*** predominant in PRED (47%), ***pæs*** marginal in EX (4%)
→ *that* realizes subject function (on way to becoming obligatory) in PRED
- ***pær* BE N**: marginal option with EX (1%) in OE
→ subject *there* marked option in simple EX in OE (Breivik 1983: 320ff)
→ moreover, lower proportion of *there* in negative existentials in OE (López-Couso 2006: 182)

3. Middle English to Present-day English

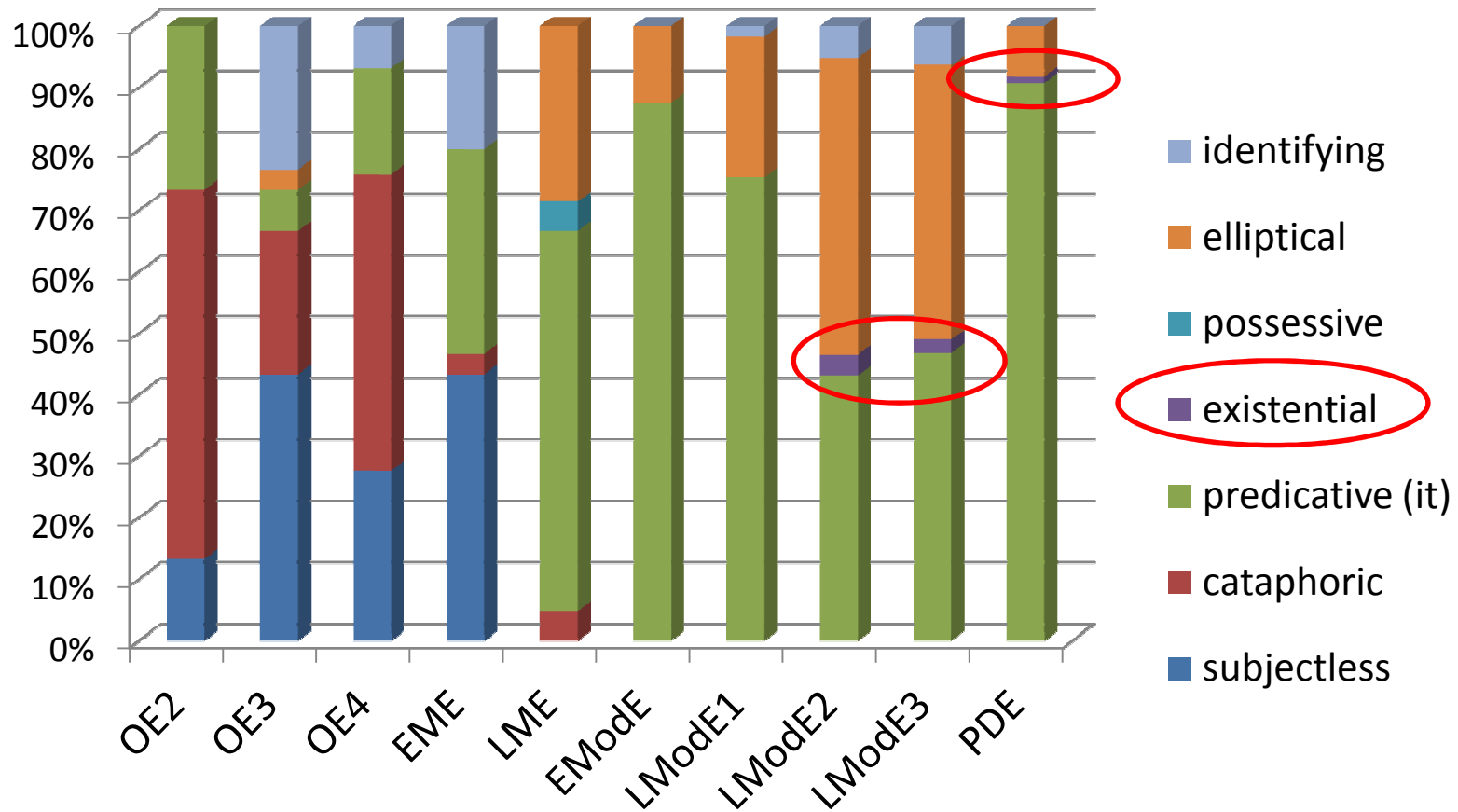
- reconstruction of two cases from ME to PdE:
 1. **PRED**: with *it's no/what/a/etc. wonder*
 2. **EX**: *it/there's no/little/etc. doubt*
- different nouns: continued strong preference for PRED or EX
 - schematic **semantic** differences between matrices
- matrices follow general **syntactic** trends of their clause types
- whole constructions, and their components, constitute very similar **form-function pairings**

3. Middle English to Present-day English

1. *(it)'s no/what/a/etc. wonder*

- subjectless matrix: last attested in ME (c1275)
- EX *there's no wonder*: marginal alternative appeared in 1780-1850, after which it declined
(5) That the king of Kandy did not reside at Newera Ellia *there is little wonder*, as a monarch delighting in a temperature of 85 Fahrenheit would have regarded the climate of a mean temperature (CLMETEV, 1850-1920). (CLMET)
- 2 possible semantic analyses of this **late** and **marginal** appearance of EX:
 - 1) slight meaning difference with PRED:
 - PRED: refers to (degrees of) '**wonderfulness**' (OED wonder, *n.* I.1.b)
 - EX: describes '**emotion** excited by the perception of something novel and unexpected' (OED wonder, *n.* II.7.a)
 - 2) because of entrenchment of PRED and EX in extraposition structures
→ occasional uses of alternative without much semantic difference

3. Middle English to Present-day English



3. Middle English to Present-day English

(it)/(there) is no doubt

Structure Type	1150–1500 ME		1500–1710 EModE		1710–1920 LModE		1993– PDE	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
<i>there is no doubt</i>	2	18	16	76	314	99.5	92	100
<i>it is no doubt</i>	5	45.5	5	24	1	0.5	0	
<i>is no doubt</i>	4	36.5	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	11	100	21	100	315	100	92	100

3. Middle English to Present-day English

2. *(it)/(there) is no doubt*

- existential throughout:
 - lexical ‘there not being any doubt’ → grammatical-modal meaning ‘certainty’
 - existential *it* as alternative of *there*: most common in Middle and Early Modern English (Breivik 1983, 257; 1990, 228)
 - matrices with *it* virtually disappeared after 1570 and were replaced by *there is no doubt*
- note:
- on the internet:
- attestations of *it is no doubt* and semantically similar *it is no question* (Davidse & De Wolf 2012)
 - clearly occasional uses of alternative without semantic difference

3. Middle English to Present-day English

Conclusion:

- historically first and sustained **default choice** for either PRED or EX is semantically motivated, e.g.
 - PRED *it's no/a/great/what wonder that p*
 - ascribes (degrees of) wonderfulness to p
 - EX *there's no doubt/question*
 - presence or absence of attitude
- PRED or EX appear as later and **marginal alternative**, e.g. *it's no doubt/question, there's no wonder*
 - due to entrenched association of both forms with this type of extraposition
 - semantically less motivated
 - bound to disappear again (as seems to be happening with *there's no wonder*)

4. Redefinition of ‘extraposition’ cxn

Traditional analysis (e.g. Huddleston & Pullum 2002):

- = analysis not of extraposition structure itself, but of **alternate**, known as ‘non-extraposited’ form in which complement clause is subject of matrix
(basic) *that p* (syntactic + semantic subject) *is no/little/a/etc. wonder*
→ *it is no/a wonder that p* (= semantic subject)

historically, for subtype considered here:

- first, and persistently unmarked, form: zero/*that*/*it’s no wonder (that) p*
→ this structure is **form-meaning pairing** in own right, (Goldberg 2002):
shared syntagmatic structure → shared semantic generalizations
- note: *that p is/was no wonder*: very rare in WB
more common variant with PRED or EX as **thetical** (initial, medial, final position)
which may emerge contemporaneously with extraposition form (Kaltenböck, Heine, Kuteva 2011)

4. Redefinition of 'extraposition' cxn

- to analyse syntagmatic structure of 'extraposition' in its own right, two contrasts seem revealing:

(i) matrix with **personal** subject: describes **subject**'s specific experience of fear

(6) *I have grete doute* that my trew felyshyp shall never mete here more agayne

'I 'fear' that my true fellowship will nevermore meet here again'

→ *that*-clause: DO of predicate *have doubt*, constituent of clause structure

↔ **impersonal** matrix in extraposition: conveys **speaker**-attitude

(7) *For it is no doute* þat in þe song þat þe wisdom of God made, ne ben fele sotile and swete notes.

'For it is no doubt that in the song which the wisdom of God made there are not many subtle and sweet notes.' (PPCME, c1450(c1400))

→ *that*-clause: not straightforwardly parsable as 'constituent' of *it is no doubt*-clause

4. Redefinition of ‘extraposition’ cxn

(ii) secondary clause which is **appositive** to **NP** in matrix

(8) After this *were there certaine questions among his counsell proponed*, whether the king needed in case to have any scruple at all, and if he had, what way were best to be taken to deliver him of it. (PPCEME, 1500-1570)

- secondary clause: specifies content of *questions* → hence interrogative

↔ secondary clause in extraposition: not in constituency relation with NP

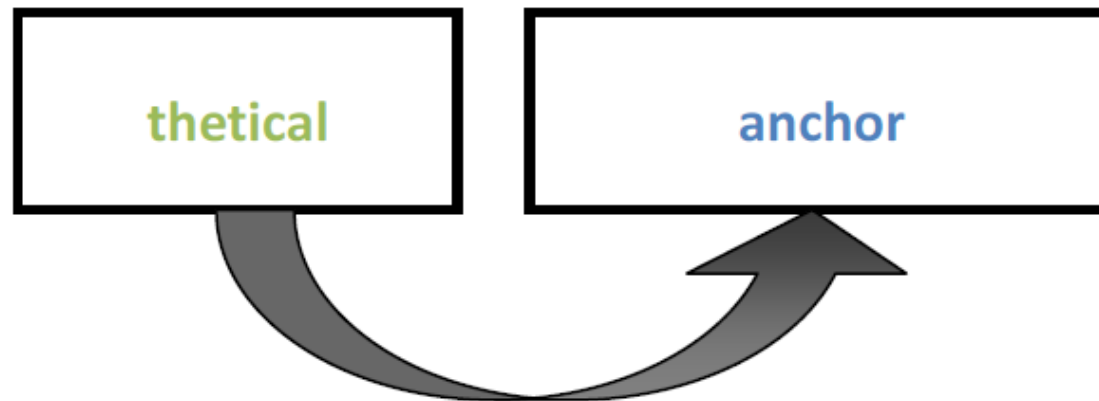
(9) *there is no question* but the regard to general good is much enforced by the respect to particular. (CLMETEV, 1710-1780)

- if anything, **related to whole matrix**
- McGregor (1997) **binary** structure captures meaning best: matrix (proposition)
- matrix is unit “that applies over a certain domain, leaving its mark on the entirety of this domain”, viz. speaker’s attitude to proposition (1997: 241-2)

4. Redefinition of ‘extraposition’ cxn

- if we analyse extraposition as **binary** structure: matrix (proposition),
- logical that unit whose semantics apply to extraposed proposition can be realized by various matrix types
 - various (historical) forms of PRED
 - various (historical) forms of EX
- also logical that matrix can assume thetical properties (Kaltenböck, Heine and Kuteva 2011)
- lexical and grammatical uses of extraposition can be naturally accounted for in terms of Boye & Harder’s (2012) discourse primariness and secundariness

4. Redefinition of 'extraposition' cxn



4. Redefinition of 'extraposition' cxn

a) **lexical** use: impersonal description of speaker's reaction to p:

- matrix: responds to Boye & Harder's (2012) tests of **discourse primariness**

(10) Brown stands accused of not promoting enough young players, Vogts of over-promoting them. Whatever happens to be the worst crime is open to debate, but *there is no doubt* that what transpired in the Faroe Islands was the punishment. (WB)

- Is there no doubt that what transpired in the Faroe Islands was the punishment?
- There is no doubt that what transpired in the F. Islands was the punishment, is there?
- There is no doubt Really?

b) **grammatical** use: qualification of p in terms of schematic grammatical value

- matrix: responds to Boye & Harder's (2012) tests of **discourse secondariness**

(11) *There's no doubt* Peter Mandelson is a disaster. Of all the people NOT to have in charge of Northern Ireland , he is top of the list . (WB)

- *Is there no doubt Peter Mandelson is a disaster?
- *There's no doubt Peter Mandelson is a disaster, is there?
- *There's no doubt Really?

5. Prospects for further research

- broadening definition of extraposition cxn to include **possessive** matrices?
- only **grammaticalized** uses come in for binary matrix (proposition) analysis
→ matrix with first person subject can become grammatical qualifier of p
(12) *Sothely I haue na wondyr if þe tempted fall þat puttes noghte þe name of Ihesu in lastande mynde* (PPCME2, 1420-1450)
'Certainly, I have no wonder that the tempted fall, (those) that do not put the name of Jesus in lasting mind'
- matrix (P) structure **formally and semantically similar** to extraposition
- POS early, persisting variant of EX extraposition with *doubt, wonder, need*
- **lexical** uses have ordinary sentence structure with composite predicate
(13) *I have grete doute that my trew felyshyp shall never mete here more agayne* (PPCME, a1470, Malory Wks.)

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