CHAPTER 6

'Tis goodly language this, what would it mean?
Demonstrative ProTags in the History of English

Louise Mycock and Sharon Glaas

6.1 Introduction

The ProTag construction is a feature of non-standard dialects of British English and of colloquial spoken British English (Mycock 2019). It is infrequently attested, making it non-canonical according to a frequency-based approach to non-canonicity (see the Introduction to this volume). Its defining feature is a demonstrative or personal pronoun attached to an anchor constituent, which may but does not have to be a full clause. A ProTag therefore represents an addition to a 'basic' structure which is already syntactically and semantically complete and coherent, making it non-canonical according to a theory-based approach to non-canonicity. The one major restriction on a ProTag's position is that it must appear after any verb(s) in the anchor constituent. Within the anchor, there may be a coreferential antecedent (the anchor point). For example, in each of the sentences in (1) the antecedent of the demonstrative ProTag *that* (i.e., the anchor point) is the subject: *that* in (1a) and *it* in (1b). (ProTags are given in bold throughout.)

(1) a. That looks very very impressive by the way, **that**. (BNC-H61–1952)[1]
b. it's gonna be <pause> the dirtiest election that there's ever been, **this**. (BNC-KCF-255)

Notice that, were the ProTag to be omitted, the anchor would be complete both syntactically and semantically. A ProTag therefore represents an addition to a minimal structure that is otherwise grammatically complete and may stand alone. The anchor to which a ProTag is attached is most

[1] For each example from the *British National Corpus* (*BNC*), the citation includes a text identifier followed by the sentence number.

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often declarative in Present Day British English (PDBE), but question anchors are also attested, as in (2):

(2) was it a big air raid shelter **that** (DECTE-PVC07/246)[2]

A ProTag adds no new information to supplement its anchor – it is not some kind of afterthought with a clarificatory function or self-repair structure such as a right-dislocated constituent like *Lily* is in *She's a smart woman, Lily*.[3] In fact, a right-dislocated constituent with clarificatory function (in square brackets) can co-occur with a ProTag such that it clarifies the referent of the ProTag and its anchor point, as in (3).

(3) it$_i$'s a good place **that**$_i$ isn't it$_i$ [the record library]$_i$ (DECTE-TS20/241)

A ProTag therefore does not share the clarificatory function that other nominal expressions located in the right periphery have. The antecedent in a ProTag construction is referred to as the anchor point (Mycock 2019). The anchor point is optional (i.e., it can be covert) when it bears the grammatical function subject, as the examples in (4) show. In such cases, the subject can be omitted (4a) or a subject-verb sequence can be omitted (4b, 4c). The result is a ProTag attached to a constituent smaller than a clause: a noun phrase in (4b), an adjective phrase in (4c).[4]

(4) a. Got right up my nose, **that**. (BNC-HTU-3919)
b. He was naked except for a bow tie – a nice touch, **that**. (BNC-AC3–2510)
c. Spooky, **that**. (BNC-GOL-1931)

The anchor point need not be the subject though: the ProTag construction in PDBE can have an anchor point which is a direct object (5a, 5b), a possessor within a prepositional phrase (5c), or an indirect object (5d).

(5) a. he kinda dumped it on me **this** (*Oh! Brother: a podcast about The Fall*, 25/4/2022, https://youtu.be/CtQxN-4Yb5g)
b. [What's your favourite simple pleasure?]
Spritzing something nice smelling on my scarf. I can smell it all day **that**.
(www.mumsnet.com/talk/am_i_being_unreasonable/4491226-What-s-your-favourite-simple-pleasure)
c. burns a hole in his pocket, **him**. (DECTE-PVC18/1029)
d. I'll give him a good hiding, **him**, if he doesn't shut up. (Mycock 2019: 263)

All personal pronouns can be used as ProTags with the exception of *it*; *this* or *that* is used instead. For a full overview of personal ProTags, see Mycock

[2] For each example from the *Diachronic Electronic Corpus of Tyneside English* (*DECTE*), the citation includes an interview file identifier followed by the line number identifying the speaker turn.
[3] See also Ashby (1988) and Fretheim (1995).
[4] Hoffmann (2006: 35) observes similar elliptical anchor clauses in English tag questions.

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(2019). All demonstrative pronouns can be used as ProTags. Examples of ProTag *that* are given in (1a) and (4). Examples of ProTag *this* are given in (1b) and (5a). ProTag *these* and ProTag *those* are exemplified in (6).

(6) a. they tend to be a bit ignored in history, **these**. (BNC-DCJ-169)
b. They're nice, **those**. (BNC-KC9/855)

Demonstrative ProTags, and in particular singular demonstratives, appear to be a feature of colloquial spoken British English, albeit one that is relatively infrequently attested: Biber et al. (2021: 143, 349) provide examples of ProTag *this* and ProTag *that*. Personal ProTags, on the other hand, appear to be more restricted in their distribution and are used by a smaller group of speakers. Whether the distribution of personal ProTags is determined by social factors, regional factors, or a combination of both in PDBE is as yet unclear, though there are works in the sociolinguistic literature which examine the ProTag construction's use in the language of specific groups of speakers (Snell 2008; Moore & Snell 2011) and the construction is documented in works on certain dialects of British English (for example, for Bolton in Shorrocks 1999 and Timmis 2009, and for New Mills in Fyne 2005).

Mycock (2019) represents the first systematic investigation of the form and functions of the ProTag construction in PDBE. This study was based on data from four corpora: two comprised written data (*GloWbE* and *NOW*), one comprised spoken data (*DECTE*), and one comprised a combination of spoken and written data (*BNC*). With the exception of *DECTE*, a corpus of data solely from a non-standard dialect (Tyneside English), the corpora primarily comprised data from the standard variety of British English.

With respect to form, Mycock (2019) reported the following major findings. Demonstrative ProTags are more common in PDBE than personal ProTags: 80.6% vs. 19.4% of all occurrences. Even if one considers only the data from the corpus of Tyneside English – one variety in which personal ProTags are definitely attested – this strong tendency is still identifiable; in *DECTE*, demonstratives represent 70% of occurrences of ProTags and personal ProTags represent 30%. The most commonly used personal ProTag in all four corpora is *me* (12.5% of all occurrences; 15% of occurrences of ProTags in *DECTE*). The most commonly used demonstrative ProTag across all corpora is *that* (56.2% of all occurrences; 65% of occurrences in *DECTE*). The grammatical function of the anchor point is overwhelmingly subject (ranging from 98%–100% in the four corpora examined in Mycock 2019).

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It is important to highlight that a ProTag has a function distinct from the possible functions of the ProTag construction as a whole. The extremely strong tendencies for an overt anchor point (i) to be a pronoun itself (and thus to represent 'old' information) and (ii) to bear the grammatical function subject (which is strongly associated with the discourse function topic) have been linked to information structure, and specifically to a possible topic-marking function of the ProTag (Mycock 2019; Mycock & Misson 2020). With respect to the entire ProTag construction, it has multiple possible functions of its own, as explored in Mycock (2019) and Mycock and Pang (2021). The most common primary function of a ProTag construction is SUBJECTIVE; that is, the construction is speaker-oriented and strongly associated with the indication of the speaker's attitude. This analysis is supported by the frequent co-occurrence of ProTags and evaluative expressions, both positive and negative, as many of the examples already provided demonstrate; for instance, (1a) *very very impressive*, (1b) *dirtiest*, (3) *good*, and (6b) *nice*. Mycock and Pang (2021: 95) define the core, subjective meaning of the ProTag construction as '[expressing/reinforcing] a speaker's commitment to [a proposition] *p*'. The ProTag construction can also be used with INTERSUBJECTIVE meaning, though this occurs much less frequently in PDBE (Mycock 2019). Used with intersubjective meaning, the ProTag construction is addressee-oriented and encodes attention to the addressee's social self and their processing needs (Haselow 2012). Mycock (2019) identifies subtypes of intersubjective functions with which ProTag constructions are used based on the functional classification system for tag questions presented in Barron et al. (2015). These include CHALLENGING, which represents an attack in order to gain power by undermining the positive face of the subject of the attack, as in (7a), and ACKNOWLEDGING RESPONSE, which acknowledges the addressee's preceding assertion thus signalling interpersonal accord, as in (7b).

(7) a. Challenging
A grieving mother pointed an accusing finger across a courtroom at the man accused of murdering her daughter and shouted: "He is mine, **him**." (BNC-K4E/820)

b. Acknowledging Response
A: Erm, you see the quality.
B: It's good quality, **that**. (BNC-KSN/648)

While distinct subjective and intersubjective uses of the ProTag construction can be identified, this does not mean that the two functions are mutually exclusive. The inherent multi-functionality of these and similar constructions is acknowledged in the literature (for example, Holmes 1982; Pichler 2013;

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Mycock 2019). However, as Holmes (1982: 47) states in relation to another discourse-pragmatic construction (tag questions): 'Nevertheless, it has generally been possible to assign utterances to categories which represent their primary or predominant function in a particular context'. It is on this basis that work on the ProTag construction has identified its primary discourse-pragmatic function when it is employed (Mycock 2019; Mycock & Misson 2020; Mycock & Pang 2021). As well as subjective and intersubjective functions, the ProTag construction in PDBE can have a discourse-oriented function (Mycock & Misson 2020), consistent with the construction having reached the final stage of grammaticalisation (Narrog 2016).

The focus of this chapter is the occurrence and properties of the demonstrative ProTag construction in the history of English. This is the most common of the two types of ProTag construction found in PDBE and the one whose form is not affected by changes relating to morphological case over time. We seek to evaluate the findings in Mycock and Misson (2020) regarding the ProTag construction in Early Modern English and determine whether they hold for a larger corpus that extends over a greater time period. The result is the most comprehensive examination of the history of the ProTag construction in English to date.

6.2 Previous Work on ProTags in the History of English

Beyond passing mention in a handful of works, the ProTag construction as it appears in historical varieties of English was not subject to systematic investigation before Mycock and Misson (2020) examined data from three Early Modern English (EModE) playwrights: Shakespeare, Jonson, and Marlowe. Of the three playwrights whose works were considered in Mycock and Misson (2020), Jonson was the most prolific user of ProTags. Interestingly, Tottie and Hoffmann (2009) identified Jonson as the most prolific user of question tags in the *Chadwyck–Healey English Drama Collection* in an investigation of question tag use in the sixteenth century.

Earlier works tended to characterise the ProTag construction as some kind of pronoun repetition for emphasis, often describing it as a 'doubling' construction restricted to subject pronouns (see, for example, Einenkel 1916: 132; Partridge 1953: 29; Schlauch 1959: 99; Visser 1963: 56). Examples such as (8a) and (8b) have been cited as examples of 'subject doubling'.

(8) a. These are my brothers consorts **these**, these are his Cumrades, . . . (Ben Jonson, *Every Man in his Humour*, 1616; cited in Partridge 1953: 29)
b. Come, let's go: this is one of my brother's humours, **this**. (Ben Jonson, *Every Man in his Humour*, 1616; cited in Visser 1963: 56)

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However, Mycock and Misson (2020) demonstrated that the subject doubling characterisation is not accurate: the anchor point and the ProTag are not required to be identical (doubled), as the examples in (9) make clear.

(9) a. S'lud, it's a Hogs Cheeke and Puddings in a Peuter field **this** (Ben Jonson, *Every Man out of his Humour*, 1616)
b. They are prettie waking dreames; **these**. (Ben Jonson, John Marston & George Chapman, *Eastward Ho!*, 1605)

Mycock and Misson (2020) also showed that it was not accurate to claim that the ProTag construction necessarily involved repetition of a subject pronoun: In (10), the anchor point is the direct object *thee* rather than the subject *I*. Example (10) also provides further evidence that ProTags do not involve doubling of a pronoun. Despite both referring to second person singular, the anchor point and ProTag appear in different cases and thus have different forms.

(10) I shall forestall thee Lord Vlysses, **thou**: (William Shakespeare, *Troylus and Cressida*, 1623)

As in PDBE, anchor points are overwhelmingly subjects in this sample of EModE, but Mycock and Misson (2020) observe that direct object anchor points are possible, as (10) exemplifies, though the latter are even more rarely attested than in PDBE.

A property that the ProTag construction in EModE does not share with its PDBE counterpart according to the Mycock and Misson (2020) study is that the most commonly used demonstrative ProTag is *this*. Mycock and Misson (2020) report that the EModE sample contains more examples of singular demonstrative ProTag *this* than *that* (15.6% vs. 4.9% of all ProTags), in contrast to the proportions reported in Mycock (2019) for PDBE: 22.2% singular demonstrative ProTag *this* vs. 56.2% singular demonstrative ProTag *that*.

Mycock and Misson (2020) examined data from three EModE playwrights. While this provides a useful snapshot of the ProTag construction in that period, a fuller exploration of the ProTag construction from a historical perspective demands a larger corpus investigation.

6.3 Methodology

The greatest challenge when it comes to the investigation of the ProTag construction in earlier varieties of English is the fact that it is predominantly a feature of spoken English. Contemporary drama, and in particular

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comedy, is identified in Culpeper and Kytö (2000) as the closest available approximant to speech for earlier varieties of English. The present study takes as its corpus the *Chadwyck–Healey English Drama Collection*. This collection of 3,874 plays spans the late thirteenth to the early twentieth century and comprises approximately 56 million words of verse and prose (Hoffmann 2006).

Searching for ProTags in corpora always represents a challenge. The flexibility of their position affords little opportunity to distinguish ProTags from other uses of pronouns. In order to keep the number of search results to a size with which it was feasible to work, we searched for all demonstrative pronouns that were followed by some form of punctuation. This approach does not guarantee that all demonstrative ProTags in a corpus will have been identified. It is rather, out of necessity, a conservative approach to isolating examples of ProTag use. Searches were carried out using Corpus Query Language (CQL) syntax. The corpus was automatically tagged with the *English TreeTagger Part-of-Speech Tag Set* (Marcus et al. 1993) with modifications by *Sketch Engine* (Kilgarriff et al. 2014).

All results were downloaded into MS Excel spreadsheets and checked to determine that they were examples of ProTags. We excluded 'true' demonstrative uses of pronouns, which were clear from the context or an accompanying stage direction; instances of interruption; cases consistent with incomplete production of an utterance/phrase/word (stammering, death throes, etc.); and instances where it was impossible to determine whether the pronoun was being used as a ProTag or was rather an instance of left dislocation of a pronoun with respect to the following phrase/sentence/utterance.

6.4 Results

6.4.1 Overview

In total, we identified 1,155 examples of demonstrative ProTag use in the *Chadwyck–Healey English Drama Collection*. This included a number of examples used in translations into English from other languages. To mitigate the possible influence of the original language and its features in such cases, we excluded all examples from works that were clearly translations. This left 1,037 examples of demonstrative ProTag constructions used in 675 individual works by a total of 284 writers.[5] The earliest

[5] This total excludes multi-authored works and any works attributed to an anonymous author.

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Table 6.1 *The most prolific users of the demonstrative ProTag construction in the* Chadwyck–Healey English Drama Collection

Writer	Year of birth–death	No. of demonstrative ProTags identified
Ben Jonson	1572–1637	43
Thomas D'Urfey	1653–1723	40
Aphra Behn	1640–1689	37
John O'Keeffe	1747–1833	28
W. T. Moncrieff	1794–1857	19

example attested was from 1594[6] (11a) and the latest – excluding reprints of earlier works – was from 1925 (11b). This gives us a span from the late sixteenth century to the early twentieth century.

(11) a. Ill tidings for my Lady **these**. (Robert Wilson, *The coblers prophesie*, 1594)
b. Very striking poems **those**, don't you think, Miss Taylor? (John Drinkwater, *Robert Burns*, 1925)

Within the *Chadwyck–Healey English Drama Collection*, the most prolific users of demonstrative ProTags are those listed in Table 6.1. As the dates of birth and death show, these writers' lives span from the late sixteenth century through to the mid-nineteenth century.

Using the estimated word counts provided in Hoffmann (2006), which examined tag questions in Early and Late Modern English as attested in the *Chadwyck–Healey English Drama Collection*, it is possible to calculate the frequency of ProTag constructions per million words in the corpus; see Figure 6.1.

As Figure 6.1 shows, frequency counts are modest in the corpus – far smaller than for tag questions in the same corpus (Tottie & Hoffmann 2009). The demonstrative ProTag construction is rare, but it is attested from the late sixteenth century onwards. From a frequency count of 1 pmw in the period 1550–1599, there is an increase to 26 pmw a century later. Relative frequency remains fairly stable from that point until another increase to 32 pmw in the period 1850–1899. Finally, a slight dip in frequency to 28 pmw is recorded for the period starting 1900, though it must be noted that for this period only 21 examples were identified and the latest recorded example is 1925, so this figure is not fully comparable to those for preceding periods.

[6] There is an earlier example from 1540, but this was set aside because it appears in a translation.

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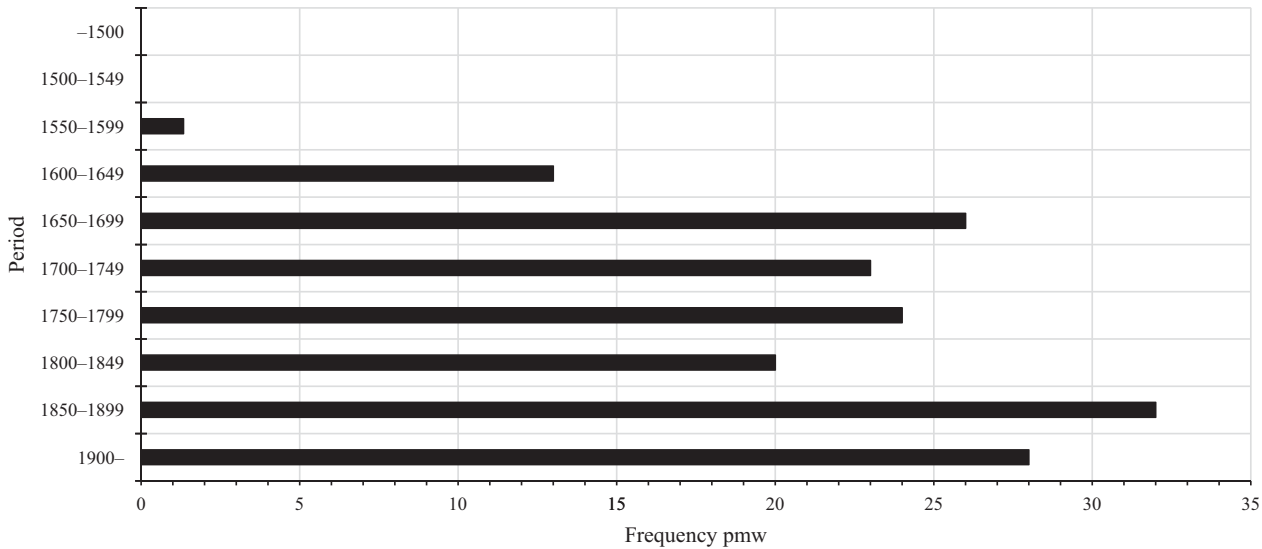


Figure 6.1 The occurrence of demonstrative ProTag constructions in the *Chadwyck–Healey English Drama Collection*, including the frequency per million words (pmw); N = 1,037

6.4.2 *The ProTags*

We find the same range of examples for each demonstrative ProTag in the *Chadwyck–Healey English Drama Collection* as has been identified previously in PDBE (Mycock 2019) and in the smaller sample of EModE data examined in Mycock and Misson (2020). For singular demonstratives, we find ProTags *this* and *that* used with both overt (12a–b, 13a–b) and covert anchor points (12c–d, 13c–d).

(12) a. 'Tis good tabacco **this**! (Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist*, 1616)
b. This is a fellow of some sense, **this**: come, good Uncle. (Anonymous, *The London prodigal*, 1664)
c. A plaguy dull fellow **this**, that can sleep in so good Company as we are. (Aphra Behn, *The younger brother*, 1696)
d. Awfully good place to meal in, **this**, don't you find? (H. V. Esmond, *The wilderness*, 1901)

(13) a. oh take heed sir, 'Tis against nature **that**, (Thomas Middleton, *The widdow*, 1652)
b. it must be a queer dress **that**! (Lady Emmeline Stuart-Wortley, *Ernest Mountjoy*, 1844)
c. A very pleasant fellow **that**. (Thomas D'Urfey, *A common-wealth of women*, 1686)
d. Very barbarous **that**, in my Mind. (Nicholas Rowe, The biter, 1705)

Examples (12a) and (13a–b) show that it is not accurate to describe the ProTag construction as involving doubling: the anchor point and ProTag need not be identical in form. This is even more clearly illustrated by the examples in (14), in which the demonstrative ProTag appears to co-refer with a third person singular male personal pronoun.

(14) a. He's a strange chap, **this**! (Henry J. Byron, *War to the knife*, 1866)
b. He's a deuced good servant **that**, if he wouldn't talk so much. (Charles James Mathews, *Patter versus Clatter*, 1881)

Both plural demonstratives are employed as ProTags in the corpus. *These* is used with both overt (15a–b) and covert (15c–d) anchor points. By contrast, *those* is only attested with a covert anchor point (16a–c).[7]

(15) a. These are the trophies of your treachery, **these**. (Shackerley Marmion, *A fine companion*, 1633)
b. Sure, they'ar' caues Of sleepe, **these**; or els they'ar'graues! (Ben Jonson, *Oberon*, 1616)
c. A Pleasant Couple **these**! (Colley Cibber, *Woman's wit*, 1697)
d. Uncommon talents **these**. (Thomas Vaughan, *The hotel*, 1776)

[7] (15b) is another example which undermines the doubling analysis of demonstrative ProTag constructions.

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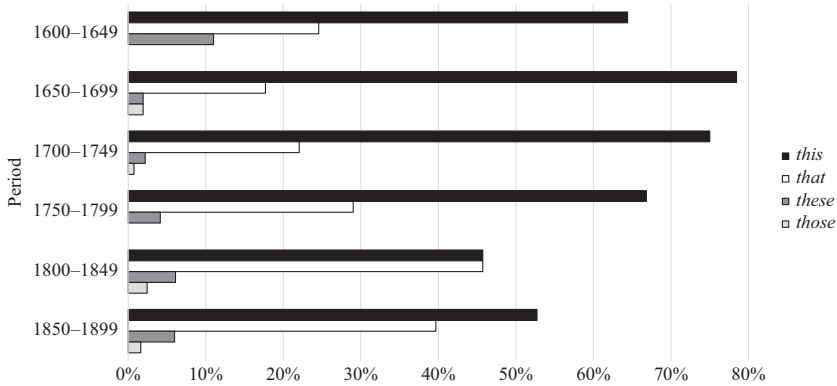


Figure 6.2 The relative frequency in percentages of each demonstrative ProTag in the *Chadwyck–Healey English Drama Collection*

(16) a. Good Lads **those**, They kill themselves: Give me such Foes. (Sir Richard Fanshawe, *To love only for love's sake*, 1670)
b. Mighty pretty Eyes **those** — mighty pretty Eyes truly (Christopher Bullock, *Woman is a riddle*, 1717)
c. Strange girls, **those**! (W. T. Moncrieff, *Tom and Jerry*, 1821)

The relative frequency of each demonstrative ProTag varies over time; see Figure 6.2.[8]

The most noticeable trend shown in Figure 6.2 is a decrease in the frequency of ProTag *this* alongside an increase in the frequency of ProTag *that*.

We examined the usage of the four demonstrative ProTags by author in the corpus. A large number of authors use a demonstrative singular ProTag (*this* or *that*) but do not use either demonstrative plural ProTag (*these* or *those*) in their works: 237 in total (excluding multi-authored or anonymous works). A small number of authors – 15 in total – only use a plural demonstrative ProTag; their works do not include singular demonstrative ProTags. These authors are not confined to a particular period. Their dates of birth range from the mid-sixteenth century to the late nineteenth century.

[8] From this point onwards, data for the period 1550–1599, in which only four examples of demonstrative ProTags were identified, and data for the period 1900–(1925), in which only 21 examples of demonstrative ProTags were identified, are excluded. We also note that there are fewer texts in the corpus for these two periods compared to each of the periods spanning 1600–1899.

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6.4.3 *Anchor Points*

Demonstrative ProTags have overt and covert anchor points in the corpus. Their relative frequency exhibits variation over time. Figure 6.3 shows that covert anchor points increased from 45.2% in 1600–1649 to 93.4% in 1700–1749, before dropping slightly to 89.1%–91.7% in the subsequent 100+ years. ProTag *those* is only attested with a covert anchor point in the corpus; see (16).

It is an interesting question whether the two trends identified – the increase in frequency of ProTag *that* and the increase in frequency of covert anchor points – are linked.[9] The relative frequency of each ProTag occurring with a covert anchor point is represented in Figure 6.4.

If the increase in the frequency of covert anchor points were linked to the increasingly common occurrence of *that* in ProTag constructions, we would expect to see a consistently high proportion of instances of ProTag *that* with a covert anchor point over time. An increase in the relative frequency of ProTag *that* would then account for an increase in the overall relative frequency of covert anchor points. However, this is not what we find. The greatest increase in the relative frequency of covert anchor points comes between the periods 1600–1649 and 1650–1699, jumping from 45.2% to 75.1%. However, at the same time the number of ProTag constructions with a covert anchor point and ProTag *that* actually decreases from 26.9% to 15.9%. Furthermore, from the start to the end of the seventeenth century, the relative frequency of ProTag *that* falls: *that* accounts for 24.6% of all occurrences of ProTags in the period 1600–1649 but 17.7% in the period 1659–1699. By contrast, the relative frequency of ProTag *this* rose: from 64.4% in 1600–1649 to 78.5% in 1650–1699. Thus an increase in the relative frequency of ProTag *that* does not seem to be responsible for the general increase in covert anchor points that is observed.

When the anchor point is overt, its grammatical function is overwhelmingly subject (97.9%). Object anchor points are also attested – (17a–c) are examples – but are much rarer (2.1%).

(17) a. but you shall heare these$_i$ in her excellent white bosome, **these**$_i$. (William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 1623)
b. You mean it$_i$ for an Insult **this**$_i$, you do. (James Thomson, *Agamemnon*, 1738)
c. for I dare say you'l think it$_i$ no unwise discourse **this**$_i$, nor ill argu'd. (M. Clifford, *The rehearsal*, 1672)

[9] We are indebted to Douglas Biber for raising this issue.

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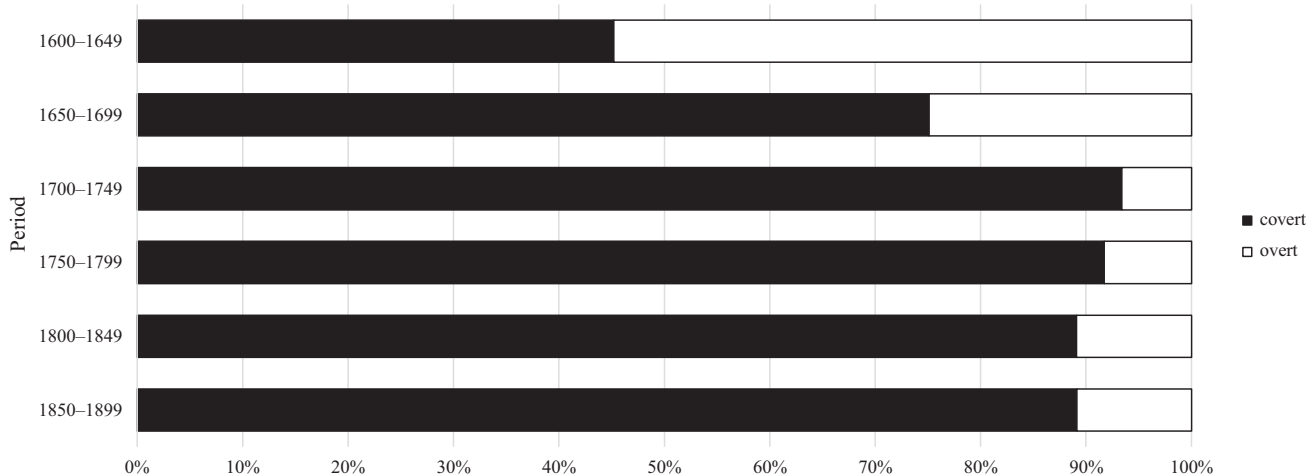


Figure 6.3 The relative frequency of overt compared to covert anchor points in demonstrative ProTag constructions in the *Chadwyck–Healey English Drama Collection*

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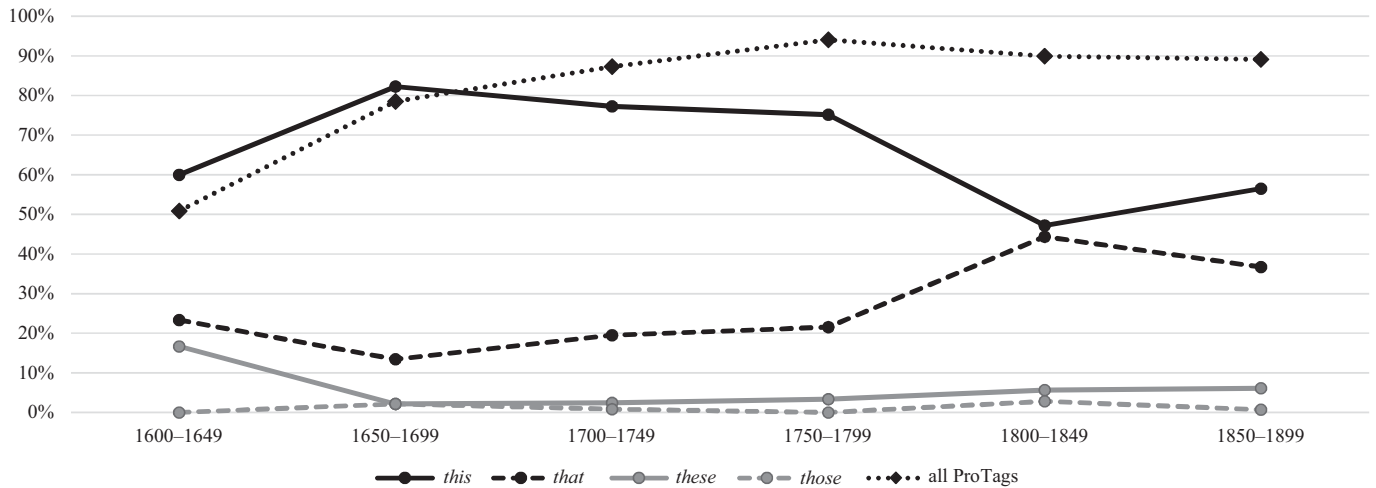


Figure 6.4 The relative frequency of (i) each ProTag with a covert anchor point and (ii) all ProTags with a covert anchor point compared to overt anchor points in demonstrative ProTag constructions in the *Chadwyck–Healey English Drama Collection*

Object is the only grammatical function other than subject attested as an overt anchor point for a demonstrative ProTag in the corpus. This is the same finding reported for EModE in Mycock and Misson (2020).

All overt anchor points are pronouns. This is consistent with the possible topic-marking function of the ProTag that has been discussed previously (Mycock 2019; Mycock & Misson 2020).

6.4.4 Anchors

A variety of different possible anchors are attested in the corpus. Anchors can be phrases or full clauses; see the examples in (12), (13), (15), and (16). Most anchors are declaratives, but questions are also found:

(18) a. is't not dark and dreadful proof Of madness **this**? (Lady Emmeline Stuart-Wortley, *Eva*, 1840)
b. What call ye him, **this**? (John Skelton, *Magnyfycence*, 1856)

The anchor in demonstrative ProTag constructions in this corpus seldom includes a verb: over 82% of anchors include no verb form of any kind. Coupled with the tendency for the anchor point to be covert, this means that the anchor is infrequently a full clause. The anchor is never a clause when the ProTag is *those*: all anchors in *those* ProTag constructions are NPs (for example, *very foolish reasons, good lads*, and *two short words*).

Elements included in the anchor of a demonstrative ProTag construction provide an indication of its function, which is most commonly subjective, that is, speaker-oriented and strongly associated with the indication of the speaker's attitude. Consistent with expressing the speaker's attitude to a proposition, there are many examples of ProTag constructions which contain lexical items with inherently subjective meaning signalling speaker orientation such as *dreadful, monstrous, pretty*, and *bad*, as in (19).

(19) a. A dreadful affair **this**! (Thomas Morton, *Secrets worth knowing*, 1798)
b. 'Tis monstrous, **this**. (Richard Brome, *The Antipodes*, 1640)
c. a pretty Smile **that**; (Moses Browne, *All-bedevil'd*, 1723)
d. Bad fellow **that**. (T. W. Robertson, *Play*, 1890)

The tendency is for ProTags to co-occur with positive evaluative expressions (45%) rather than negative (18%) or non-evaluative (37%) expressions. (This is true of each individual demonstrative ProTag as well as ProTags as a group.) The ten most common evaluative expressions, which are adjectives, are presented in Table 6.2.

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Table 6.2 *The ten most common evaluative expressions that co-occur with demonstrative ProTags in the* Chadwyck–Healey English Drama Collection

Evaluative expression	with ProTag *this*	with ProTag *that*	with ProTag *these*	with ProTag *those*	Total no. with demonstrative ProTags
pretty (+ve)	49	11	1	1	62
good (+ve)	19	21	3	1	44
fine (+ve)	28	11	2	2	43
pleasant (+ve)	17	4	3	0	24
bad (−ve)	6	7	0	1	14
nice (+ve)	7	4	2	0	13
excellent (+ve)	8	0	3	0	11
well (+ve)	3	6	0	0	9
dreadful (−ve)	3	3	0	0	6
sad (−ve)	6	0	0	0	6

Note. +ve denotes a positive evaluative expression; −ve denotes a negative evaluative expression.

The adjectives with which ProTags co-occur mostly belong to the semantic type Value (*good*, *bad*, etc.) as identified in Dixon (1977), with the majority of others belonging to the type Human Propensity (*sad*, *honest*, etc.), which Dixon (1977: 74) notes can be applied to higher animals as well as humans. The presence of an intensifier is indicative of a strongly evaluative expression. In this corpus, ProTag constructions included intensifiers such as *very*, *devilish*, *mighty*, and *damned*.

Evaluative nominal expressions are also attested, though not as frequently; for example, *whore* (20a) and *fool* (20b).

(20) a. A Whore **this**! (Aphra Behn, *The revenge*, 1681)
b. 'Tis a poor loving Fool, **this**; (Thomas D'Urfey, *Love for money*, 1691)

Compatible with their core subjective meaning, demonstrative ProTag constructions in this corpus regularly include lexical items that indicate speaker orientation. The tendency is for these evaluative expressions to be positive.

6.5 Discussion

The diachronic perspective which the examination of data from the *Chadwyck–Healey English Drama Collection* affords us makes it clear that

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demonstrative ProTag constructions have been a durable feature of English since the early seventeenth century despite being relatively rare. All demonstratives are attested in use as ProTags in the *Chadwyck–Healey English Drama Collection*, with singular (*this, that*) far more common than plural (*these, those*) demonstrative ProTags (Figure 6.2). From first attestation in 1594, the occurrence of demonstrative ProTags in the corpus increases in the seventeenth century, then stabilises until the mid-nineteenth century when it undergoes another increase. Our findings support those reported in Mycock and Misson (2020), which indicated that the ProTag construction was a feature of EModE. They go further though, showing that the construction is present throughout the Modern English period. Frequency pmw counts are always very modest, reaching 32 pmw in the late nineteenth century, but the demonstrative ProTag construction persists as a feature despite neither making a semantic contribution nor having a classificatory or self-repair function. It is the pragmatic contribution which the presence of a ProTag makes that ensures its longevity.

Mycock and Misson (2020) identified similarities and differences in the relative frequency of demonstrative ProTags in EModE compared to PDBE as reported in Mycock (2019). A point of similarity is that plural demonstrative ProTags are far less frequently employed than singular ones in both varieties. A point of difference is the relative frequencies of the proximal and distal ProTags. ProTag *this* is more frequently attested than *that* in the EModE works of Jonson, Marlowe, and Shakespeare (67.9% compared to 21.4% of demonstrative ProTags). By contrast, Mycock (2019) states that in PDBE *that* is more frequent than *this* (69.8% compared to 27.5%), an observation also made in other works on British English (Rühlemann 2007; Timmis 2014). Figure 6.5 is a revised version of Figure 6.2 with data for PDBE, taken from Mycock (2019), added for the purposes of comparison. The previous predominance of *this* reported in Mycock and Misson (2020) is confirmed by the findings of the present corpus investigation, but our diachronic study is more revealing because we can pinpoint this change as being fairly recent, occurring in the twentieth century after a slow reduction in the relative frequency of the usage of *this*, which peaked in the period 1650–1699.

What explanation can there be for this shift from the proximal to the distal in the demonstrative ProTag construction? Rühlemann (2007) proposes that the more frequent use of ProTag *that* is due to a shift in deictic focus from speaker-origo towards listener-origo. However, the change we see in the use of demonstrative ProTags is more specific, involving as it

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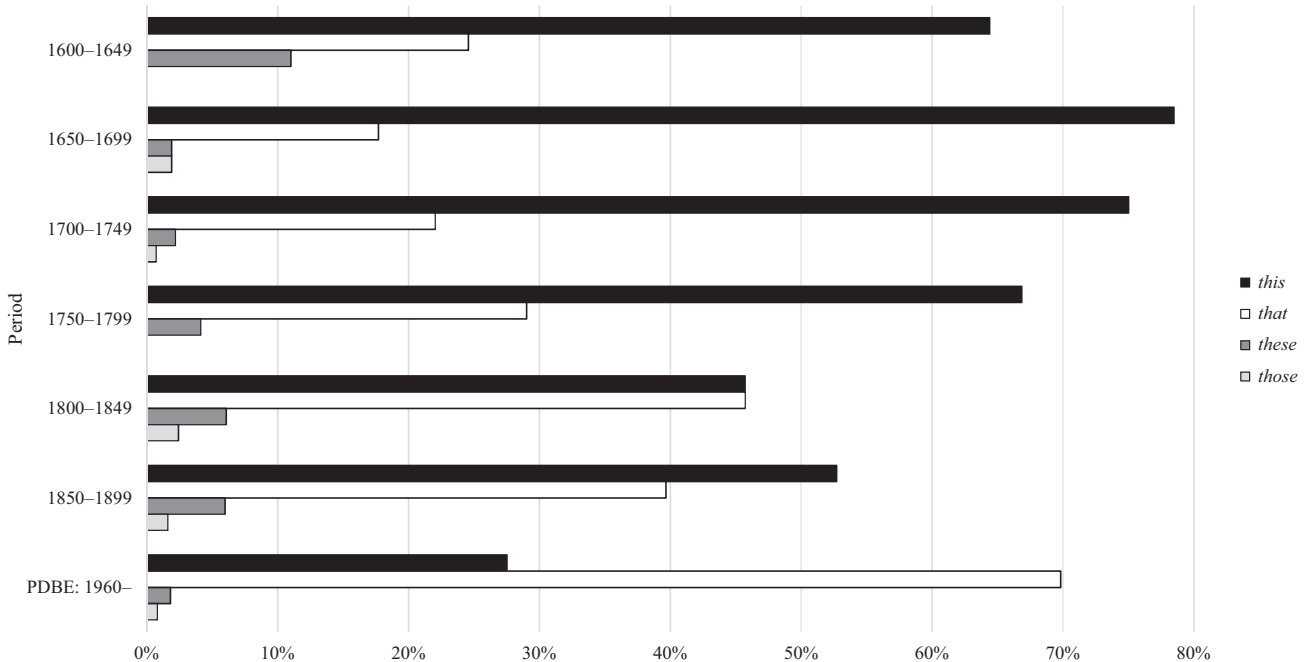


Figure 6.5 The relative frequency in percentages of each demonstrative ProTag in the *Chadwyck–Healey English Drama Collection* and in PDBE from the second half of the twentieth century as reported in Mycock (2019)

does only singular demonstrative ProTags: there is no concurrent shift in the relative frequency of *these* compared to *those*. Figure 6.5 shows that the relative frequency of *those* never surpasses that of *these*, even in the twentieth century. If there is a shift of the deictic centre from speaker to addressee in the ProTag construction, it would be necessary to treat singular and plural demonstrative ProTags as being fundamentally different. This is a proposal not without merit. As noted in Section 6.4.2, authors who use plural demonstrative ProTags do not use either of the singular demonstrative ProTags, indicating what may be a fundamental difference between the two sets of demonstrative ProTags.[10]

It is important not to lose sight of the wider context when considering the shift from dominance of *this* to *that* in the demonstrative ProTag construction. In PDE conversation, *that* is far more common than *this*. *This* can be used to refer to the preceding text, while *that* can be used to refer to the general situation. Mycock and Misson (2020) propose that the ProTag construction has developed a discourse-oriented use in PDBE, which Narrog (2016) identifies as the final stage of grammaticalisation following speaker orientation and hearer orientation. Increase in the occurrence of the distal ProTag in the twentieth century may reflect the construction's development of an additional discourse-oriented use to which *that*, with its capacity to refer to the general situation rather than just the immediately preceding text, is particularly well suited. Further research considering the relationship between each ProTag construction and the discourse in which it appears is required to test this hypothesis.

The types of anchor points and anchors that can appear in demonstrative ProTag constructions show a similar range of possibilities throughout the *Chadwyck–Healey English Drama Collection* and in PDBE. In both, anchor points can be elided, along with verb forms. Overt anchor points are almost exclusively pronouns and therefore represent 'old' information. They bear the grammatical function subject and, far less frequently, object. Anchors are most often declarative, but interrogative anchors are also found.

The issue of interrogativity leads us to an interesting difference in function between ProTag constructions in PDBE and in our corpus. In PDBE, Mycock (2019: 266) reports that ProTag constructions are not used with a questioning function: 'I have found no evidence that

[10] An interesting question for future investigation is whether both sets of authors – those who only use plural demonstrative ProTags and those who use only singular demonstrative ProTags – also use personal ProTags and, if so, if there are any differences in their usage of personal ProTags.

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ProTag constructions are used to seek/elicit information'. Mycock and Misson (2020: 393–4), on the other hand, do find some evidence of ProTag constructions being used with this function in their sample of EModE plays. Data from the *Chadwyck–Healey English Drama Collection* support Mycock and Misson's (2020) findings. Notice in (21) that the addressee Pat provides the information that the captain seeks in response to the ProTag construction which the latter employed. Such data illustrate an intersubjective function that the ProTag construction once had, but which it apparently lost over time.

(21) CAPTAIN: Good morrow, brother soldier – A good handsome girl **that**?
PAT: She is thought so, Sir. (John O'Keeffe, *The poor soldier*, 1784)

Mycock and Pang (2021) identify the core meaning of a ProTag construction as being subjective in PDBE, stating that its occurrence serves to express/ reinforce the speaker's commitment to a proposition *p*. An intersubjective meaning, on the other hand, encodes 'the speaker's attention to the self of the addressee . . . and his/her needs concerning the processing of the message' (Haselow 2012: 190). Examples of demonstrative ProTag constructions with subjective core meaning are plentiful in our corpus and there is an association with evaluation, as shown by the co-occurrence of ProTags and evaluative expressions; see Section 4.4. The association of the ProTag construction and 'right-dislocated' elements more generally with evaluation has been commented on in several works, including Aijmer (1989) and Timmis (2014). Timmis' (2014) observation that there is a general tendency towards positive evaluation in ProTag constructions in his corpora of British English and Irish English also holds for our findings.

As well as subjective core meaning, there are examples of ProTag constructions used with non-core intersubjective meanings. For example, in (22), the woman sarcastically mocks Sir Thomas, undermining his positive face with this challenging use of the ProTag construction (see Section 6.1; Barron et al. 2015; Mycock 2019).

(22) WOMAN: Sir, I neither regard your Age nor your Person: And your Anger would do better to be shewn among them that fear you, than here, where you're so little welcome.
SIR THOMAS: Why Huzzy? I'm a Gentleman.
WOMAN: 'Tis a very improper employment **this**, if you are so.
SIR THOMAS: Look you, my Lady's Gentlewoman, I will be not be popp'd off with the flap of a Fox Tail, I come with a Message from the King, do you mark? I must have an Answer from your betters e'er I return. (John Bancroft, *Henry II*, 1693)

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In (23), Chalcot acknowledges Sir Alexander's assertion that it is unfortunate that the woman has found out about something known to them both, signalling interpersonal accord. (This would be classified as an acknowledging response function according to the classificatory system proposed in Barron et al. 2015 and adopted in Mycock 2019).

(23) CHALCOT: Did she find it out?
SIR ALEXANDER: Unfortunately she did.
CHALCOT: Ah! Nuisance **that** – being found out. Is the cause removed now? (T. W. Robertson, *Ours*, 1889)

While they do not represent lexico-grammatical constructions which express evaluation like stance devices such as comment clauses (see, for example, Biber & Zhang 2018), ProTag constructions are grammatical structures which can include lexical expressions of evaluation. Lexical marking of evaluation often co-occurs with the presence of a ProTag, but as Biber et al. (2021: 961) observe, 'there is nothing in the grammatical structure of [expressions including such lexical marking] to show that they mark stance ... Stance is in a sense embedded in these structures, dependent on the addressee's ability to recognize the use of value-laden words'. The ProTag construction is a grammatical structure whose core meaning is subjective ('express/reinforce speaker's commitment to *p*') and therefore is associated with expressing the speaker's attitude. Use of the ProTag construction can serve to identify an expression as providing evaluation and thus possibly enhance the addressee's ability to recognise it as such.

Interestingly, increases in the frequency of demonstrative ProTag occurrence do not appear to track particularly closely the expansion of tag question usage, which Hoffmann (2006) reports increases dramatically from 1750 onwards in the same corpus (the *Chadwyck–Healey English Drama Collection*). The data do not indicate an especially close shared history in the development of demonstrative ProTag constructions and tag questions beyond their initial occurrence in the same time period. What the corpus does show is that demonstrative ProTags and question tags can co-occur in the right periphery, as shown by the examples in (24).

(24) a. Strange tricks **these**, are they not? (Nathan Field & John Fletcher, *Four playes or morall representations in one*, 1647)
b. 'Tis a pretty sad talking Boy **this**, is He not? (George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, *The restauration*, 1715)
c. It's fancy **that**, George, – an't it? (Charles Dickens, *The village coquettes*, 1836)

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In all cases, a ProTag precedes a question tag when they co-occur. Mycock and Pang (2021), discussing PDBE data, identify ProTag>question tag as the default sequencing of the two kinds of tags and analyse this relative order as the result of the two having distinct core meanings: subjective for ProTags and intersubjective for question tags. Mycock and Pang (2021) argue that Shinzato's (2007) ordering principle of subjective pragmatic markers>intersubjective pragmatic markers applies at the right periphery in British English, thus accounting for the default ProTag>question tag sequence in PDBE. Tottie and Hoffmann (2009: 154) state that 'in the sixteenth century, tag questions had already developed all the pragmatic functions that they have in PDE'. The functions identified in Tottie and Hoffmann (2009) indicate that the core meaning of question tags in the sixteenth century is intersubjective; only 13% of question tags are identified as having a subjective (attitudinal) function. This being the case, it is unsurprising to find question tags follow demonstrative ProTags when they appear together in the right periphery in our corpus. The default sequencing pattern identified in Mycock and Pang (2021) is thus attested from the earliest co-occurrence of demonstrative ProTags and question tags.

Tottie and Hoffmann (2009) examine a subset of the data presented in Hoffmann (2006), comprising 197 sixteenth-century plays, and provide details (in the Appendix) of all plays in which tag questions appear. Cross-referencing this information with our findings relating to demonstrative ProTag use in the same corpus, it emerges that only seven authors in Tottie and Hoffmann's (2009) subset use both demonstrative ProTags and question tags; 15 authors use only question tags. This echoes a difference in usage in PDBE: question tags are a feature of standard PDE, whereas ProTag constructions are considered to be a feature of non-standard PDBE. A matter for future research is whether relative frequencies of personal ProTags in the *Chadwyck–Healey English Drama Collection* behave in the same way as their demonstrative counterparts or differently, and what this might tell us about the overall development of tag constructions in the history of English.

6.6 Conclusion

Our findings support those presented in Mycock and Misson (2020), but provide a much fuller picture of the demonstrative ProTag construction in the history of English. This study has shown that, though rare, the demonstrative ProTag construction is a long-standing feature of

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non-canonical English syntax. It is attested in 675 works written by 284 authors in our corpus, the *Chadwyck–Healey English Drama Collection*. In this corpus, the construction is first attested in the EModE period. There is an increase in its usage in the seventeenth century and then again in the second half of the nineteenth century. All demonstrative ProTags are attested in the corpus, though there are periods when ProTag *those* is not attested at all. Plural demonstrative ProTags are much rarer than singular ones generally. The singular demonstrative ProTags exhibit changing frequency relative to one another over time. *This* is more common initially, with its relative frequency peaking in the period 1650–1699. Preponderance of *that* is attested in the twentieth century after decline in use of *this* starting in the eighteenth century. ProTag *that* continues to be more common than ProTag *this* in PDBE (Mycock 2019). The anchor point of a demonstrative ProTag demonstrates a growing tendency to be covert: The number of covert anchor points jumped from 45.2% in 1600–1649 to 75.1% in 1650–1699 and is in the range 87.2%–94% for the 100+ years from the first half of the eighteenth century. Overt anchor points, when they occur, usually have the grammatical function subject; a small number of object anchor points are also attested. As in PDBE, the core meaning of the demonstrative ProTag construction is subjective, expressing speaker attitude. Consistent with a core subjective meaning, demonstrative ProTag constructions regularly include lexical items that indicate speaker orientation. The tendency is for these evaluative expressions to be positive.

From both a theory-based and a frequency-based perspective, ProTags are non-canonical. They are an addition to a structure that is already grammatically complete and meaningful. In terms of the proposition expressed they are also superfluous, neither adding nor changing meaning. It is on the pragmatic level that they make a contribution to communication, but that contribution is never obligatorily expressed via the use of the ProTag construction. In terms of frequency, they are relatively rare, both in PDBE and in the historical varieties of English examined in this study. Their relative (in)frequency is inextricably linked to their status as an optional addition and to the nature of the ProTag construction's functions: If ProTags are a part of a speaker's grammar, whether to add them to the expression of any particular proposition or not is a matter of user choice. Just because the construction *can* be used and a ProTag included, does not mean they must or even will be. This is key to understanding why this non-canonical form is employed, albeit rarely. Its contribution is pragmatic: In its core subjective use, it expresses or reinforces the speaker's

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commitment to the proposition with which it occurs. Its intersubjective and discourse-oriented uses build on this function of expressing/ reinforcing the statement of speaker attitude (because pragmatic markers are inherently multi-functional), extending it to undermining positive face (Challenging) or signalling accord with the addressee's own evaluation (Acknowledging Response), for instance. These are functions that the ProTag construction shares with question tags, indicating similarities despite differences in their respective patterns of frequency over time. The history of the demonstrative ProTag construction in English reveals the potential durability of an aspect of non-canonical English syntax which simultaneously satisfies both of the definitions of non-canonicity explored in this volume. From the late sixteenth century to the present day, the demonstrative ProTag construction has existed outside the canon of English syntax, enduring thanks to its utility as a device for signalling communicative intentions.

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