

The Contractions of *not*: A Historical Note

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Otto Jespersen states, "The contracted forms [of *not*] seem to have come into speech . . . about the year 1600" (1966:117). The only evidence he provides is composed of two lines from *Othello* where the contractions might be inferred on metrical grounds. Jespersen goes on to say, "In writing, the forms in *n't* make their appearance about 1660 . . ." These two statements are echoed by Barbara Strang (1970) and others. Barber does not find *-n't* "recorded until the middle of the 17th century" and says that it is "rare until late in the century" (1976:254). Pyles (1964:205–7) considers instances of the contraction, but for the most part places their advent rather later than my data indicates. This is also true of most citations from the OED. Aside from such passing comments, I have found no intensive studies of the advent and development of our contraction. By the end of the seventeenth century we find it widely represented in the plays of Congreve, Farquhar and Wycherley, at least the monosyllabic forms *an't*, *ben't*, *can't*, *don't*, *han't*, *shan't*, and *won't* as well as to a very limited extent the disyllabic forms *hadn't* and *mayn't*. Most of the remaining present-day standard contracted forms—*aren't*, *can't*, *couldn't*, *daren't*, *didn't*, *doesn't*, *don't*, *hadn't*, *hasn't*, *haven't*, *isn't*, *mayn't*, *mightn't*, *mustn't*, *needn't*, *oughtn't*, *shan't*, *shouldn't*, *wasn't*, *won't* and *wouldn't*—appeared before the end of the eighteenth century. Up to the beginning of the eighteenth century the sources of information are, with the exception of Pepys' collection of street ballads, restricted almost entirely to plays. Contractions of *not* are most at home in comedies and only occasionally found in tragedies. Indeed, although they abound in Congreve's comedies, they are entirely absent from *The Mourning Bride*, his only tragedy (Mann 1973). Some information can be found in grammars, letters, and other prose of the period, but these sources yield meager results. The eighteenth century saw the beginning of an interest in spoken language in England, starting with Swift's *Polite Conversation* (1704–1717; Partridge 1963 is the most reliable modern version), augmented by the beginnings of the novel and culminating in a genuine interest in regional dialects (*Exmore Scolding*).

The purpose of this note is to investigate the development of these forms from their advent in print to the nineteenth century, when all the standard forms were present, and to try to form some hypotheses concerning their advent in speech. Such a study is hampered by the loose orthographic conventions of the early part of the period under investigation, by dramatic conventions and by constantly changing editorial conventions. I will first treat the question of implicit contractions of *not* in the Shakespeare canon, showing that contraction in all cases is not necessary in order to render metrical the line the contraction appears in, and then consider those other portmanteau forms involving *not*—*donnot*, *hannot*, *shannot* and *wonnot*—and their relation in time to our contractions. The rest of the essay follows the historical development of the forms beginning with the first explicit appearance of *-n't* in print, its development after the Restoration, its proliferation in the eighteenth century, and finally attitudes taken towards it during the nineteenth century.

Shakespeare used no explicit contractions of *not*. *Don't* and *can't* appear in the canon, but they mean 'done it' and 'can it' (cf. Spevack 1968 for Shakespeare citations). However, some authors have posited the existence of some implicit contractions. In particular, Kökeritz lists a number of instances where he deems it likely that forms written out were meant to be contracted when spoken (1953). In a previous note, I observed a steady increase in explicit contracted forms involving pronouns in Shakespeare's writings (Brainerd 1980:223). If, as I believe, this represents a trend in dramatic writing of the period, then explicit rendering of implicit contracted *not* may well have been deferred until later.

In any case, let us consider Kökeritz' examples (1953:280 ff.) one by one in the light of Sipe's (1968:32) five metrical licenses for acceptable distortion of the basic iambic pentameter line:

- (1) Initial truncation of the first unstressed syllable of the line.
- (2) Inversion of the first foot and/or the foot immediately following a caesura.
- (3) Feminine endings.
- (4) Substitution of trimeter, tetrameter and hexameter lines.
- (5) Irregularity at the caesura by
 - a) Addition of a syllable before it,
 - b) Addition of a syllable after it,
 - c) Addition of a syllable which could be regarded as either before or after.

Bléss thīs ůnwórhŷ húbānd? Hě cānnōt thrīve (AWW 3.4.26)

| 2 | 5b

This line is by Sipe's criteria metric without the contraction of not. Consider the same line with the contraction explicit:

Bléss thīs ůnwórhŷ húbānd? Hě cān't thrīve

| 2 | | 2 |

The line seems to be metrical either way and so contributes nothing to the argument.

Thěse wárs dětérmiĕ. If Í cānnōt pěrsuáde thěe (COR 5.3.120)

| 5c | 4

This line appears to be metric as it stands by Sipe's criteria. With the contraction it would be

Thěse wárs dětérmiĕ. If Í cān't pěrsuáde thěe

| 2 | 4

Again it can be made metrical using Sipe's licenses and so offers no evidence either way.

Buť névěř taínt mŷ lóve. Í cānnōt sǎy "whóre". (OTH 4.2.161)

2

is metrical as is using Sipe's license 2. It is clearly metrical without benefit of licenses if the contraction is made.

Cānnōt my Lórd Stánlěy sléep thěse tédĭous níghts? (R3 3.2.6)

| 2 |

is clearly metrical if "my Lord" is rendered *m'Lord* and "tedious" is rendered with two syllables. With the contraction and the same renderings it is metrical by truncation. With the contraction and "my Lord" two syllables it is metrical using license 2.

variants of *wonnot*); *wou'not* 1629 ('would not'); *ha'not* ('has not') 1614, ('have not') 1605; *do'not* ('does not') 1599, 1609. Partridge notes in regard to *sha'not* that "the combination apparently remains disyllabic" and presumably this applies to the other forms as well (1953:252). He further observes that, "The earliest of the modern combinations *shan't* and *won't* came just after the Restoration" (1964:176). As we shall see, this date is somewhat late.

Other playwrights of the period commonly used the forms. For example, in four plays appearing in the 1630s, James Shirley used *shannot* 21 times and *wonnot* 32 times, in various orthographic forms. Although Shirley is not so orthographically daring as Jonson, we find an instance of *woo'not* ('would not') in Act III of his *The Lady of Pleasure* (1637) and a *ha'not* ('have not') in Act I of *The Traytor* (1631). An inspection of metrical lines indicates that in most cases Shirley meant these forms to be disyllabic. The forms can also be found in various orthographic forms in the Beaumont and Fletcher canon (Hoy 1959), for example in *The Maid's Tragedy* (1611) *wonnot* and *ha not* (Act II), *hannot* (Act III), and in *Cupid's Revenge* (1615) *wonnot* thrice in Act IV. One other form of interest is *donnot* ('do not') to be found *The Two Merry Milkmaids* (Clavell 1620). I found 23 instances used analogously to *cannot*. This work also contains an instance of *wonnot* at line 4.1.185. Finally, two *ha'not's* can be found in the Shakespeare canon: JC I.iii.19 and WT I.ii.267, both standing for 'have not'.

The OED gives us evidence that these forms were already in use in late Middle English, 1420 *wynnot* and 1400 *cannot*, although the bulk of the citations for *wonnot* and *shannot* are from the late sixteenth and the seventeenth century. A 1742 *wo'not* citation comes from Richardson's *Pamela* and is used for emphasis: "I cannot, I wo'not sit down at Table with her."

In *Respublica*, a play of 1553, we can find the following forms that point to future contractions: *wilnot* and *willnot* (178, 632), *shallnot* (1605), *didnot* and *dydnot* (290, 1039). Some dialect forms hark back to Old English: *nylnot* (693), *nylnnot* (1604), and *ninnat* (1822), all meaning 'ne will not'. *Chamnot* ('ich am not') can be found in *Gammer Gurton's Needle* (1553:II.i.63).

It appears safe to posit the following developments during the late Middle English period: *shall not* → *shannot*, *wol not* → *wonnot*, and *can not* → *cannot*, as well as *do not* → *donnot*. Assuming a stress on the first syllable, it is not difficult to see that the vowel might weaken, metathesize with the *n* and be lost some time after 1400 and, as we shall see, before 1630, when the first concrete evidences of *-n't* began to appear.

The following forms were in use before the theaters closed in 1642: *ben't*, *can't*, *don't*, *han't*, *shan't*, and *won't*. As we have seen earlier, with the exception of *ben't* there was a corresponding form of the *wonnot* type in each case. There seem to be two distinct possibilities: 1) parallel derivations, *wol not* → *wonnot*, *wol not* → *won't*, the former at least taking place some time before the beginning of the seventeenth century; or 2) a serial derivation, *wol not* → *wonnot* → *won't*, starting in the late Middle English period and partially complete by the 1630s.

Now let us look at some of the evidence. *Ben't* can be found twice in *The Soddered Citizen* (1629–31, ll. 1783, 1788), both spoken in southwestern dialect, and in Richard Brome's *Antipodes* (1638) II.ix.8, also in a dialect speech, in this case spelled *bean't* perhaps indicating a disyllabic pronunciation.¹ The only other instance that I found in the period appears in *The Ordinary* (1635) by William Cartwright (l. 1780), in this case not in a dialect speech.

The Ordinary also accounts for three instances of *can't* (ll. 981, 1339, 1583). It occurs twice in *The Seige* (1638, ll. 1263, 1706) and once in *The Royal Slave* (1636, l. 518), all also by Cartwright. Brome's *Antipodes* contains a *can't* (II.i.51), as does the Prologue of his *A Mad Couple Well Match'd* (1639) and his *The Weeding of Covent Garden* (1632:III.i.126). *A Fine Companion* by Shakerly Marmion (1633) contains four instances, all in the Prologue. Instances from prologues may be suspected of being added later than the first appearance of the play; however, the editors make no mention of this. Finally, *The Rivall Friends* (1631–32) by Peter

¹ There is some controversy about the authorship of *The Soddered Citizen*, but that is of no concern to this study.

The editor suggests that the relevant passage from *Antipodes* may have been in "Midland dialect, but Brome more likely is suggesting a child's talk."

Hausted contains nine more instances of *can't* (IV.ix and x). The earliest reliable instance of *can't* comes from Pepys' *Ballads* No. 46 (1625)². The majority of the above instances are from non-dialect speech, so we might conclude that the form was well established among at least some speakers of the standard language of the time.

The earliest instances of *don't* also come from the *Ballads*, Nos. 38 and 51, both from 1625. No. 38 is in Hertfordshire dialect. The earliest dramatic instances occur in *The Soddered Citizen* (ll. 1768, 1769), with three instances all uttered by dialect speakers. Four non-dialect instances occur in *The Rivall Friends* (III.ii). Five other occurrences in the play are uttered by country types and hence non-standard speakers (II.ii, IV.viii, twice in IV.x). We also find it in Brome's *The Sparagus Garden* (III.vii, dialect), *The New Academy* (1635:II.ii), and *The New Ordinary* (1638:I.i, III.ii). The instance in *Sparagus Garden* is of especial interest: "But if I don't your errand to your brother and tell'n now you do v'lout'n . . ." Here the contraction is used with the verb and not the auxiliary. Cartwright's use of *don't* is far less restrained than Brome's. In *The Ordinary* it is used at least ten times. *The Seige* has two instances (ll. 460, 784) and *The Royal Slave* has four (546, 591, 751, 775).

With the possible exception of the instance on line 1580 of *The Ordinary*, all *don't*s stand for 'do not'. That instance no doubt also stands for 'do not', as it appears in a position where speakers of the time would be likely to employ a subjunctive.

The only instances of *han't* that I have been able to find for the period come from the plays of Brome and Cartwright. Brome uses both *han't* and *ha' not*. *Ha' not* is used twice in *The Northern Lass* (1629:III.iii.45, IV.iii.61), both for 'have not'. In *The Sparagus Garden* (IV.v.33), Tom, a rustic, says, "Han't she tole you, and ha'not I told you . . ." The partially expanded form is presumably used for emphasis. This citation is a clear indication that the two forms were not pronounced alike. In *The Antipodes* again both forms appear used by speakers of the standard language: *ha'not* (III.iii.27) and *han't* (III.ix.78) occur for 'have not'. The Prologue also contains a *han't*. Two *ha'nots* occur in *The New Academy*, II.ii 'have not' and

² The OED contains an instance of *can't* under "adjective" in a quotation dated 1597, but in the source document it is *cannot*. The compiler used a later edition.

IV.i 'have not' (subjunctive). Finally, in *The Ordinary* (l. 2365) we have, ". . . if he han't ill luck." Again, if the speaker is using the subjunctive it is 'have not'. Since the subjunctive was commonly in use at the time, all the *han't*'s I have observed, with the exception of the possibly nonstandard instance in Tom's speech, stand for 'have not'.

The first instance of a *shan't*, written *sh'ant* appears in *The Rivall Friends* (II.ii) first played in 1631. It is also found in four plays of Brome: in *the New Academy*, spelled *sha'n't* (V.ii); in *The English Moore* (1637:IV.iv.153) with the same spelling, uttered by an "old servant"³; *The Antipodes* with same spelling (V.iv.9), and two instances written *shan't* (II.ix.8, spoken by a dialect speaker); and finally in the Prologue of *The Mad Couple*. Cartwright's *Ordinary* has one instance (l. 138) and *The Siege* has two (ll. 40, 2363).

The earliest explicit contraction of *not* that I have observed is *won't* in II.i.23 of *The Witch of Edmonton* (1621) under the joint authorship of Dekker, Ford, and Rowley. *The Rivall Friends* provides eight instances of *won't*—two in II.ii spelled *wo'nt*, and six more spelled *won't* (IV.ix, four times in Iv.x, V.xi) all uttered by non-standard speakers. In Brome plays, *Weeding* contains two instances (II.i), *The New Academy* one (III.ii), *Sparagus Garden* two (II.iii, II.viii) as well as a *wo'not* in broad dialect (VI.i). *The New Ordinary* contains one instance (III.ii) and *The Mad Couple* one (II.ii.74). In Cartwright plays we find four instances in *The Ordinary* (ll. 142, 1893, 1946, 2465), one in *The Siege* (l. 81), and one in *The Royal Slave* (l. 1163).

A closer look at *The Rivall Friends* as a whole reveals its 27 contracted *nots* occurring, with one exception, in three clumps: II.ii, which involves the playing of "cheekstones" by Mistress Vrsely, who is "deformed and foolish", and Merda, a country girl; III.ii, a conversation among educated males; and IV.x (together with the two short scenes leading up to it), which is concerned with coaxing a reluctant character to dance. All three scenes are meant to be broadly comical, the first and third involving bucolic characters and the second boasting males. As there are 48 scenes in all, the author appears to have consciously restricted his use of *n't* to certain types

³ The editor collated the 1659 printed version with Brome's manuscript; she notes that the 1659 version has *sha'not*.

of humorous events. There are other equally comical scenes with town characters where *n't* does not appear. This, together with the evidence of the preceding paragraphs, supports two conjectures: 1) these contracted forms were at that time not quite respectable, and 2) they were introduced into the standard language from regionally or socially nonstandard versions of the language.

The fact that *won't*-type forms coexisted during the 1630s with *wonnot*-type forms and that the latter forms were uncommon after the Restoration indicates a transition period where, in the end, the fully contracted forms replaced the partially contracted in the standard language. After the Restoration, the fully contracted forms already mentioned became well established and new forms began to appear, created presumably by analogy with the older ones. Abraham Cowley's play *The Guardian*, published 1650 and acted 1641, was later revised after the Restoration under the title *Cutter of Coleman-Street* (published 1668 and acted 1661). The following table shows the distribution of our contractions in the two versions:

| | 1650 | 1668 |
|----------------|------|------|
| <i>ben't</i> | 0 | 1 |
| <i>can't</i> | 9 | 10 |
| <i>don't</i> | 6 | 3 |
| <i>han't</i> | 1 | 3 |
| <i>won't</i> | 4 | 4 |
| <i>ha'not</i> | 0 | 1 |
| <i>sha'not</i> | 1 | 0 |
| <i>wo'not</i> | 3 | 7 |
| TOTALS | 24 | 29 |

Although the revision was extensive, the number of our contractions was little changed. The following exchange in *Cutter* (III.ix) shows an emphatic use of *wo'not*:

Thum. Jun. I wo'nt marry, Sir.
Thum. Sen. What do you say, Sir?
Thum. Jun. I wo'not marry, Sir.

The Country Wife of William Wycherley, acted sometime in the period 1673–75, contains 74 *n't*s distributed as follows: *ben't* 1, *can't* 25, *don't* 20, *han't* 4, *shan't* 9, and *won't* 15. If we look at the distribution among characters, we find that Mrs. Pinchwife, the Country Wife, has 29 of the 74 in approximately 254 lines of dialogue (on average once every 8.75 lines), while Horner, a representative of the new social order, has 14 in 559 lines (once every 40 lines), and Sir Jaspas, representing the old order, has 6 in 161 lines (once every 26.8 lines). The two characters involved in the “true love” subplot and only minimally satirized utter none of our contractions. These observations support the two claims stated in relation to *Rivall Friends*, i.e. the bucolic origin and unrespectability of the contractions.

Linguistically more adventurous playwrights existed at the time, namely Thomas Duffett, who in *The Mock-Tempest* (1674) and *Psyche Debauch'd* (1675) introduced a number of new forms. The distribution of counts follows:

| | <i>Tempest</i> | <i>Psyche</i> |
|-------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| <i>be(e)n't</i> | 1 | 2 |
| <i>can't</i> | 9 | 11 |
| <i>don't</i> ('do not') | 10 | 15 |
| <i>shan't</i> | 1 | 3 |
| <i>won't</i> | 18 | 16 |
| Other | 7 | 5 |
| TOTALS | 46 | 52 |

Among the others that we find in *Mock-Tempest* are *arn't* (I.ii.24), *didn't* (IV.ii.169), *en't* ('is not', IV.ii.86), *hadn't* (IV.ii.176), *mayn't* (IV.ii.138), *shou'dn't* (IV.ii.84), *wouldn't* (IV.ii.55). In *Psyche Debauch'd* we find *didn't* (II.ii.118, II.iii.173), *dozn't* (I.413), *isn't* (IV.iii.113), and *shudn't* (I.250). With the exception of *mayn't* these represent the first occurrences that I have been able to find for these forms. The first *mayn't* I found comes from an OED citation dated 1652. An earlier dramatic instance can be found in *The Mulberry-Garden* (1668:159) by Charles Sedley.

Of the new forms in *Mock-Tempest*, Miranda uses *arn't* in a dialogue with Prospero while the others come up in conversations between Miranda (*en't*) and Dorinda (the other five) in IV.ii. There the girls are being somewhat childish and there is even a hint that Dorinda is using baby-talk (IV.ii.169). IV.ii

contains exactly half the *n'ts* in the play, fifteen for Dorinda, five for Miranda, two for Hypolito, and one for Prospero. In *Psyche Debauch'd* the contracted forms are more evenly distributed throughout the text and among the characters and, although there are dialect speeches, none of the new forms occur in them. The productive nature of *n't* formation appears still to be considered not quite respectable. It will be well into the next century before *n'ts* become widely used.

Closely related to *am't* are *an't* ('are not') and *aren't* both of which appeared at the same time as *am't*. *An't* can be found first in Joseph Arrowsmith's *The Reformation* (1673:48). His distribution is *an't* 1, *be(e)n't* 2, *can't* 9, *don't* ('do not') 12, *han't* 1, *shan't* 4, and, curiously, no examples of *won't*. Another *an't* ('are not') appears in *The Atheist* (1683:IV.106) and an *are'nt* can be found in Crown's *City Politiques* (1683:5).

An't for 'am not' also begins to appear at about this time, in Monfort's *The Successful Strangers*, acted 1689, published 1690 (29). Congreve used the form exclusively for 'am not' (Mann 1973). He used the same forms as Wycherley twenty years earlier with the addition of one instance each of *hadn't* and *wan't* ('were not'). Between 1693 and 1700 he produced four comedies and one tragedy, and in this last uttered no contractions of *not*, while he used over 400 *n't* forms in the comedies. All his *don'ts* were used for 'do not' except for three meaning 'done it'. *Han't* stood seven times for 'have not' and twice for 'has not'. At the turn of the century, George Farquhar used *an't* indifferently for 'are not' and 'am not':

| | 'are not' | 'am not' |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|----------|
| <i>The Recruiting Officer</i> (1706) | 4 | 2 |
| <i>The Beaux Stratagem</i> (1707) | 4 | 4 |

Wan't also does double duty as 'was not' in Pepys *Ballads* 128 (1685, l. 6) and as 'were not' in 387 (1692, l. 2).

Don't also begins to generalize to 'does not': *The Man of Mode* (1676:IV.i.7, in Mann 1985), *The London Cuckolds* (Ravenscroft 1682:III.ii), *The Successful Strangers* (49, 52), *The Married Beau* (Crown 1694:30), and John Vanbrugh's *The Provoked Wife* (1697:III.ii.7). This generalization seems likely to be related to the decline of the use of the subjunctive where *don't* with a third singular subject would have been natural.

Finally, at the close of the century, we find the first dialectal variants of our contractions in the plays of Mary Pix, *caunt* and *dan't* in *The Spanish Wives* (1696:26; 36, 43) and *dan't* in *The Innocent Mistress* (1697:11, 24).

So, at the end of the seventeenth century we find the major playwrights using, in addition to the contracted forms of the 1630s, *an't* for 'are not' and 'am not'; *hadn't*, *don't* for 'does not'; and *wan't* for 'were not' and 'was not'. Other curious forms attest to the productivity of our form: *shall n't* (III.i.347) and *shalln't* (IV.i.386) in Cibber's *The Lady's Last Stake* (1707). Presumably *willn't* will not be far behind.

These forms had not been overlooked by the grammarians. Miege (1688:77) gives, in another context, an example sentence containing *han't* and in a section "Of the Appreviations" (111) he considers *don't*, *han't* ('have not'), *shan't*, *can't*, *ben't*, and *'ent*. In a section "Of Barbarous Dialect", Cooper (1687) mentions *e'nt* for 'is not'. By 1721 Isaac Watts listed among the possible contracted forms *mayn't*, *coodn't*, *shoodn't*, *woodn't*, and *'tishn't* (135).

During the eighteenth century the spoken language began to interest others beside the grammarians. A landmark in our study is what has come to be called Swift's *Polite Conversation (A Complete Collection of Genteel and Ingenious Conversation)*. It provides a perhaps satirical insight into upper-class dialogue of the time of writing (1704–14). It was not published, however, until 1738. In addition to a barrage of the clichés of the time, it carries a heavy load of contracted *nots*. Swift promises in the Introduction *can't*, *havn't*, *sha'n't*, *didn't*, *coodn't*, *woodn't*, and *e'n't*; however, what he produced were the following contractions (followed by their frequencies): *an't* ('am not') 2, *an't* ('are not') 2, *ben't* 4, *can't* 39, *don't* ('do not') 54, *han't* ('have not') 2, *ishn't* 1, *mayn't* 2, *shan't* 4, and *won't* 25. Perhaps he used Watts' list of forms when writing the Introduction, but the earlier original text showed through more conservatively. That at least some of these were part of his everyday vocabulary is attested to in his *Journal to Stella* (Vol. I). For example, *can't*, *don't*, and *won't* in the entry for 1 January 1711, "an't he" 24 December 1710, "an't I" 3 March 1711, "an't you" 18 January 1711, "han't you" 19 January 1711, and *en't* 29 March 1711. The "an't he" is the first of its kind I have been able to find. Possibly a similarity in the pronunciation of *an't* and *en't* led to the final disappearance of the latter as a written form. All the *don't*'s that I found mean 'do not'.

In plays published between 1700 and 1703, the playwright William Burnaby used all the contractions in the text of *Polite Conversation* (not the Introduction) except for *ben't* and *ishn't*, as well as *didn't*, in *The Reformed Wife* (1700:186), two instances of *daren't* in *The Ladies Visiting Day* (1701:206, 224), and *cou'd'n't* and *mustn't* in *The Modish Husband* (1702:331, 337). These are the first occurrences that I could find of *daren't* and *mustn't*.

In surveying the plays of the 1730s, I found all the *Polite Conversation* contractions in standard use together with the following others: in *Marina* (1738)

by George Lillo, *aren't* and *hasn't* (43), *couldn't* (18), and *wouldn't* (33); "she don't" (not subjunctive) in *Silvia* (1731:84) also by Lillo; *hadn't* and *shon't* ('shall not') in Bodens' *The Modish Couple* (1732:2; 3); *didn't*, *doesn't*, and *dostn't* ('dost not') in *The Mother-in-Law* (1734:73; 26; 34) and *shouldn't* in *The Man of Taste* (1735:60), both by James Miller. Both the *dostn't* and *hasn't* are the earliest I have observed. Jespersen (1940:434–35) notes instances of *don't* ('does not') and *wan't* ('was not' and 'were not') in the works of Defoe. The *dostn't* and the *shon't* indicate a growing interest in dialect forms. Squire Western in *Tom Jones*, written in the period 1744–49 (Fielding 1974:I), provides more dialect forms: *shatunt* ('shalt not', Book 7, Ch. 3) and *dustunt* ('dost not', Book 7, Ch. 5).

In 1746 two remarkable documents appeared in successive issues of *Gentleman's Magazine*—the *Exmore Scolding* and *Courtship*, consisting of dialogues between various residents of that part of Devonshire in their own local brand of English. These were edited and subsequently published by the English Dialect Society in a version that differs only slightly from the original and that consists of the documents in their original orthography and the editor's phonetic transcription on facing pages (Elworthy 1879). One need only consult the *English Dialect Dictionary* (Wright 1898–1905) to offset any suspicions concerning the "transcriber's" over-enthusiasm about the productiveness of *not* → *n't*. In addition to the by then standard forms *ben't*, *can't*, *couldn't*, *don't*, *didn't*, *hadn't*, *han't*, *shan't*, *shouldn't*, *won't*, and *wouldn't* in various orthographic guises, it contained the following: *caent* ('don't care', 540), *cassent* ('canst not', 127); various fusions with Old English *ich*, *chant* ('I shall not', 231), *chawnt* ('I will not', 245), *chont* ('I won't', 598), *chudent* ('I should not', 471); *es en et* ('isn't it', 362), *hassent* ('hast not', 114), *mussent* (295), *werent* (379), *wudsent* ('wouldst not', 468), and *wuttent* ('wilt not', 623). Now *n't* attaches itself not only to the more standard auxiliaries but also to the second singular forms, the Old English forms with *ch*, and to the non-auxiliary *care*. The only addition to the standard repertory of *n't* forms is *weren't*, which was to appear in the standard language at about the same time: Macklin's *The New Play Criticized* (1746:46). The first *wasn't* that I found is also in a Macklin play, in *Love a la Mode* (1759:67).

As the century wears on we find Sheridan using all the *Polite Conversation* contractions except *ben't* (now reserved for countrified types) plus the following from *The Rivals* (1775): *an't* ('is not', 61), *didn't* (27), *couldn't* (59), *doesn't* (60), *don't* ('does not', 68), *hadn't* (54), *mustn't* (29), *wan't* ('were not', 35), *wa'n't* (40, 'was not', though possibly subjunctive 'were not'—at this point the mood distinction has worn rather thin), *weren't* (34), and *wouldn't* (54); also *arn't*, *dar'n't*, *hasn't* (Rhodes 1928:1.241, 209, 296); *haven't*, *mighnt'n't*, and

wasn't (2.194), and *needn't* (2.238). At this point all the present-day contractions are firmly in place except for *oughtn't*.

Hugh Kelly, a playwright of the late 1760s and 1770s (Carver 1980), and Fanny Burney (*Evelina*, 1778) show an interesting contrast in choice of vocabulary with no overlap:

Kelly: *ar'n't*, *hasn't*, *hav'n't*, *isn't*.

Burney: *an't* ('am not'), *an't* ('are not'), *an't* ('is not'), *ben't*, *han't* ('have not'), *han't* ('has not'), *in't*.

Burney maintains the more archaic forms while Kelly uses the more modern. These archaic forms were carried on into the nineteenth century by upper-class speakers showing disdain for the social climbers' need for correctness.

The nineteenth century adds only *oughtn't* to complete the list of standard contracted forms. The first instance I observed was in a play by Dickens, *The Village Coquette* (1836:46). All the other standard contractions, with the possible exception of *daren't*, are used by Dickens together with the following: *ain't*, *an't*, *dursn't* ('durst not'), *son't* ("Be it so or be it son't"), and *han't* (Brook 1970:229, 242, 247). Some variant spellings are meant to signal dialect pronunciations: for 'don't', *d(e)ean't* to indicate Yorkshire speech, *doen't* Norfolk (?), and *doan't*; for 'won't', *wean't* from 'will not' (?), and *woan't*; for 'didn't', *deedn't*; for 'durstn't', *dustn't*; *should'n* and *would'n* (Gurson 1967:25, 115, 167, 170–71, 244–46). In *Picwick Papers* we find *worn't* ('was not', I.16), *worn't* ('were not', I.16), and *warn't* ('was not', I.22), and in *Martin Chuzzlewit* *warn't* ('were not', I.25). The presence of the *r* signals vowel length, not rhotic pronunciation. *Warn't* and *worn't* also appear in *Wuthering Heights* (1847) in the non-rhotic dialect of Haworth, Yorkshire (Sabol and Bender 1984).

Wuthering Heights accounts for other interesting Haworthisms, usually in the mouth of Joseph: *cahnt*, *known't* ('know not'), *munn't* ('mun not'; *mun* is a now obsolete modal), *shalln't* ('shalt not'), *sudn't* ('should not'), and *willn't* ('wilt not'). Charlotte Brontë also inserted a contracted 'know not', *knawn't*, into *Jane Eyre* (Sabol and Bender 1981).

The first *warn't* I observed is from *The Poor Gentleman* (Coleman 1802:5) for 'was not', the first *dursn't* from *Where to Find a Friend* (Leigh 1815:39) meaning 'dare not'.

The first dramatic *ain't*⁴ is from *The School for Friends* (Chambers 1805:9), spoken by Lucy, a servant who uses nonstandard English. It appears there in a stressed position. She later uses *an't* in an unstressed location (61) which points toward *ain't* /eint/ and *an't* /ant/. Hardy, a gentleman, uses *an't* in a stressed location (83), indicating that he used /ant/ in both cases. Thomas Dibden uses the form *e'ent* (/eint/?) for both 'am not' (1804:66) and 'are not' (1805:33), both for male characters. K. C. Phillipps (1984:68–69) paraphrases *The Vulgarities of Speech Corrected* (1826),

Yet what is more “offensive to a grammatical ear” was the expression “an't it”—“decidedly the more vulgar and incorrect expression in common use”. Moreover it was made worse “by sounding as is usual the “a” long and open, like the word faint rather than short like the word and.

Clearly there were two “acceptable” pronunciations in the early nineteenth century.

In 1839 a verse dialogue, “John Noakes and Mary Styles”, was composed in Essex dialect with the following contractions: *ain't* (ll. 35, 117, 169), *cain't* (70), and *shain't* (47, 168), but *han't* (131, 162); *coon't* (18), *coodn't* (82) and *cu'dn't* (132, 148), all ‘couldn't’; *shoon't* (51) and *shudn't* (12), ‘shouldn't’; *'oodn't* (13, 97, 108), ‘wouldn't’; *den't* (39, 40, 70, 96, 165), ‘didn't’; *dorn't* (12, 46, 47, 113), ‘do not’; *dom't* (48), ‘does not’; *worn't* (48), ‘was not’; *don't* (41, 140), ‘does not’; and *oon't* (140) and *oan't* (176), both ‘will not’ (Skeat 1895–96:69–108). Since this is a non-rhotic dialect, the *r* must signify vowel lengthening. Note the analogous *ain't*, *cain't* and *shain't*, but the lack of a *hain't*. The orthographic *han't* in the strong form would have been /heint/ already. *Hain't* appears explicitly in Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851) as does *daresn't* spoken by a non-rhotic speaker, Stubbs, with the pronunciation /de:snt/ or /dæ:snt/ (Irey 1982).

Warn't is used in Trollope both by Bassetshire rustics (Clark 1975:84) and Irish (Trollope 1979:1.38, 79, 172; also 286 *worn't* in “If it worn't that . . .”). Since the Bassetshire speech seems to modelled on Southwestern, which is rhotic as is of course Irish, it must have been meant to be pronounced /warnt/

⁴ There is a 1795 citation under *ain't* in *A Dictionary of American English on Historical Principles* (Craigie and Hulbert 1938–44) in which it is described as vulgar and improper.

by the same process by which *aren't* is pronounced /arnt/ by rhotic speakers of standard English.

John W. Clark remarks, "It is perfectly clear from Trollope's novels that ain't was common and entirely acceptable—in the familiar speech of the educated and upper classes" (1975:36–37). For *ain't*, he "recorded" 14 each in the first and second person singular, 7 in the third plural, 1 in the second plural, 2 in the third singular, and one case for the combined "I and he". Clark further remarks, "ain't for am not and are not (or aren't) was very generally acceptable, ain't for is not (or isn't) was certainly not." He observed four instances of *an't*, which he considers to have two pronunciations "ant" and "ahnt"; he takes these to be older, to go with "cahnt" in RP.

K. C. Phillipps notes the same tendencies in Thackeray where *ain't* is a locution of the gentry (1978:121). However, in a reading of *Vanity Fair* (1847–48) I found 3 *an't* and 21 *ain't* forms. Of the former, two were unstressed for 'is not' and used by Rawdon Crawley, the other was stressed and used by Mrs. O'Dowd. Of the *ain't*s only one was uttered by a female character, Becky, for 'are not'; 6 signified 'are not', 2 'am not', and 15 'is not'. Those whose sole output of the two forms signified 'is not' were all soldiers, and were the butt of a certain amount of satire. The characters that appeared to have the author's sympathy did not use either form. The case for *don't* ('does not') follows a similar pattern in both authors. It is put in the mouths of non-dialect speakers as well as dialect speakers.

Jespersen cites other examples of the extraordinary productiveness of *not* → *n't* (1940): *amn't*, *bettern't*, *usen't*, *whyn't*. We have noted instances of *caren't*, *known't*, and *son't*, to which we can add *deedn't* ('don't need to', Trollope 1980:319).

In this essay I have tried to outline the progress of contracted *not* from its first explicit appearance at the beginning of the seventeenth century in monosyllabic forms through its linguistically productive phase in the eighteenth to its general acceptance in the nineteenth. There is no concrete evidence for its existence before the beginning of the sixteenth century—at least among literate users of the language—and some evidence that it evolved at around that time from intermediate, non-contracted, and partially contracted portmanteau forms like *cannot* and the now obsolete *wonnot*, *shannot*, and *donnot*. From the dramatic evidence presented here it would appear that fully contracted *not* originated among speakers of nonstandard English, later to be appropriated by the educated classes. The salient feature in the above discussion is the extraordinary productivity of the form both among standard and nonstandard speakers.

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