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Que-deletion: the rise and fall of a syntactic fashion

CHRISTOPHER J. POUNTAIN

Queen Mary, University of London

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of *que*-deletion in Castilian is an intriguing example of a change which is not ultimately successfully embedded in the language, and its study may therefore shed light on one of the classic questions in historical linguistics identified by Weinreich / Labov / Herzog (1968: 102), that is, why some potential changes are realised, or actuated, while others are not.

By *que*-deletion, I mean the omission, or apparent omission, of the *que* complementiser in such sentences as (1b):

- (1) a. Rogamos_{v1} **que** disculpen_{v2} las molestias
 b. Rogamos_{v1} ~~que~~ disculpen_{v2} las molestias¹

I speak of *que*-deletion in such cases as (1b) and regard the presence of *que* as the default option because there appears to be no environment in which the presence of *que* cannot be an alternative to its absence, and because the absence of *que* always appears to have been overall a minority construction.

Historical accounts customarily move forward in time, but in this case I will start with the present day and work backwards, since this has the advantage of going from the known and relatively fully described to the unknown and hitherto scarcely documented.

1 In all the examples given, I indicate a deleted / omitted *que* by double strike-through. V1 is the main clause verb and V2 the complement clause verb.

2. Modern Spanish

There is a general view, conveniently summarised in *NGLE* (3230), that in modern Spanish *que*-deletion is (a) associated with certain formal written registers, (b) most common with the subjunctive complements of verbs of command and influence (1b), though also found with the indicative complements of some verbs of thinking (2), (c) subject to surface contextual constraints, notably (i) resistance to material other than clitic pronouns or *no* intervening between V1 and V2 (compare 3a–b), and (ii) the requirement that V1 is itself in a subordinate clause (compare 4a–b).

- (2) Es una profesión que **creo**_{V1} **que puede**_{V2} compararse con la suya
(*La Vanguardia*, cit Subirats-Rüggeberg 1987: 170)

(Note that this environment, where the verb and its complement constitute a relative clause, the antecedent of which is the subject of the complement verb, is one in which *that*-deletion is actually obligatory in English: compare *It is a profession which I think (*that) can be compared with his*. It should be insisted that (2) is in fact a case of *que*-deletion and not simply a parenthetical use of *creo*; (2) can be uttered, or rather, read, with no intonational junctures surrounding *creo*, and no commas surround *creo* in its written representation. *Que*-deletion is actually favoured where, as in this example, the construction is itself embedded in a relative clause (Keniston, 1937b: 272), when the absence of a second *que* is sometimes thought of as due to considerations of ‘euphony’ (Benot, 1991 [1910]: 355–7).)

- (3) a. Se **asegura**_{V1} **que desembarcará**_{V2} mañana el presidente
but
b. *Se **asegura**_{V1} **que** el presidente **desembarcará**_{V2} mañana
(Benot, 1991 [1910]: 355–7; see also Delbecque / Lamiroy, 1999: 2026)
- (4) a. Un asunto que **considero**_{V1} **que tendríamos**_{V2} que tratar ahora
b. ***Considero**_{V1} **que tendríamos**_{V2} que tratar ahora ese asunto

Another apparent context of *que*-deletion in modern Spanish, which we shall have further occasion to discuss in 4, is that of the complements of verbs of fearing. Here, however, we have to do not with *que*-deletion as such so much as with the substitution of *que* by *no*, often described (Butt & Benjamin, 2000: 330) as ‘redundant’ or ‘pleonastic’ because *no* does not actually negate the complement verb. However, unlike the cases of *que*-deletion we have so far examined, (5a), in

which both the *que* complementiser and *no* are present, is different in meaning from (5b), in which *que* does not appear, which is synonymous with (5c); furthermore, (5d), in which neither *que* nor *no* is present, is unacceptable. The *no* in (5b) is therefore most appropriately viewed as being itself a complementiser in its own right rather than simply a negative.

- (5) a. **Temo**_{V1} **que** **no venga**_{V2} Pepe
 'I'm afraid Pepe won't come'
 b. **Temo**_{V1} ~~**que**~~ **no venga**_{V2} Pepe
 'I'm afraid Pepe will come'
 or
 c. **Temo**_{V1} **que venga**_{V2} Pepe
 'I'm afraid Pepe will come'
 but
 d. ***Temo**_{V1} **venga**_{V2} Pepe
 'I'm afraid Pepe will come'
 (Sánchez López, 1999: 2628–9)

The extent and frequency of *que*-deletion in modern spoken Spanish is unclear. Despite the fact that Subirats-Rüggeberg (1987: 168) claims that it is 'widespread' (no statistics are given), it is not mentioned as a feature of colloquial Spanish by either Steel (1976) or Kany (1951); Maldonado González (1999), on the other hand, characterises it as belonging exclusively to the written language. On the basis of an admittedly very limited preliminary statistical survey, I am inclined to consider both Subirats's and Maldonado's positions extreme: in the Madrid *habla culta* corpus of 134,452 words (Esgueva / Cantarero, 1981), I have counted only two examples of *creo* with a *que*-deleted complement as opposed to 434 with a *que* complement, which suggests that while it is not absent from the spoken register it is extremely uncommon; in a similar search in the PRE-SEEA corpus based on material from Spain, 257 cases of a *que* complement were returned as against 3 clear cases (excluding hesitations and occurrence with intonational junctures which suggest parenthetical use of *creo*) of a *que*-deleted complement.

Que-deletion is puristically castigated in modern Spanish only to the extent of not being a preferred usage, the traditional academic view being that use of *que* makes syntactic structure clearer (Sarmiento, 1984, 336–7; *Esbozo*, 517; *DPD*, §2.1.2, and see 5 below); this may inhibit its use in what we may regard as the standard educated language (the *norma culta*). The consistently indulgent prescriptive attitude towards *que*-deletion (because it is a cultured rather than a

popular variant) and the fact that the variable is register- and context-dependent rather than being associated with age, sex, class or style, means that speakers themselves do not take up an attitude towards it, so allowing and even encouraging a situation of reasonably stable variation in which no immediate change is due (Silva-Corvalán, 1988: 159).

3. *Que*-deletion in 16th-century Spanish

3.1. Textual evidence

I now contrast with the modern situation that of 16th-century Spanish, where *que*-deletion is certainly encountered more frequently than subsequently (*Esbozo*, 517; Delbecque / Lamiroy, 1999: 2026 note), though this impression has never to my knowledge ever been rigorously quantified. What is immediately apparent is (a) that *que*-deletion occurred in a much more extended range of contexts, and (b) that some authors are more prone to it than others. I have analysed two nearly contemporaneous texts of rather different genres in which, impressionistically, *que*-deletion seems to achieve its heyday: Santa Teresa's (1515-82) spontaneously written spiritual journal *Libro de la vida* (1562) and the first two books of Tomás de Mercado's (?-1575) *Suma de tratos y contratos* (1571), a treatise on business ethics. The list of verbs and verbal expressions for which *que*-deletion either in object or subject complements is attested in these texts is impressively long and is given in Table A, together with the mood (ind[icative] or subj[unctive]) of the complement verb and any other relevant syntactic information:

	<i>LIBRO DE LA VIDA</i>	<i>SUMA DE TRATOS Y CONTRATOS</i>
VERBS AND OTHER EXPRESSIONS OF ORDERING AND INFLUENCE		
<i>buscar</i>		✓ subj
<i>cometer</i>		✓ subj
<i>ser cómodo</i>		✓ subj
<i>compeler</i>		✓ subj
<i>consentir</i>		✓ subj
<i>convenir</i>		✓ subj
<i>decir</i>	✓ subj	
<i>desear</i>	✓ subj	✓ subj
<i>encargar</i>	✓ subj	
<i>enseñar (lo primero que enseña es...)</i>		✓ subj
<i>hacer</i>	✓ subj	✓ subj
<i>ser impedimento</i>		✓ subj

<i>impedir</i>		✓ subj, pleonastic <i>no</i>
<i>incitar</i>	✓ subj	
<i>mandar</i>	✓ subj	✓ subj
<i>ser lo mejor</i>		✓ subj
<i>ser menester</i>	✓ subj	✓ subj
<i>ser (lo) necesario</i>		✓ subj
<i>ordenar</i>		✓ subj
<i>pedir</i>	✓ subj	✓ subj
<i>permitir</i>	✓ subj	✓ subj
<i>persuadir</i>	✓ subj	✓ subj
<i>pretender</i>		✓ subj
<i>procurar</i>	✓ subj	✓ subj
<i>querer</i>	✓ subj	✓ subj
<i>requerir</i>		✓ subj
<i>rogar</i>	✓ subj	✓ subj
<i>suplicar</i>	✓ subj	✓ subj
<i>ser útil</i>		✓ subj
<i>vedar</i>		✓ subj, pleonastic <i>no</i>
<i>era voluntad divina</i>		✓ subj
VERBS OF THINKING AND SAYING		
<i>ser cierto</i>		✓ ind
<i>tener por cierto</i>	✓ subj	
<i>creer</i>	✓ ind (also with <i>no creer</i>)	✓ ind (also with <i>no creer</i>)
<i>decir</i>	✓ ind	✓ ind
<i>entender</i>	✓ ind	✓ ind
<i>caer en entendimiento</i>		✓ subj (negated)
<i>dudar</i>	✓ ind	
<i>imaginar</i>		✓ ind
<i>parecer</i>	✓ ind	✓ ind
<i>pensar</i>	✓ ind (also with <i>no pensar</i>)	✓ ind (also with <i>no pensar</i>)
<i>saber</i>	✓ ind	✓ ind
<i>estar seguro</i>		✓ ind
<i>ver</i>	✓ ind	
VERBS OF FEARING		
<i>temer</i>	✓ subj, 'pleonastic' <i>no</i>	✓ subj, 'pleonastic' <i>no</i>
<i>traer temor</i>	✓ ind	
VERBS OF 'EMOTION'		
<i>quedar admirado</i>		✓ subj
<i>hacerle al caso</i>		✓ subj (V1 negated)
<i>espantarse</i>	✓ subj	✓ subj
<i>gustar</i>	✓ subj	
<i>holgarse</i>		✓ subj
<i>ser gran lástima</i>		✓ subj
<i>pesar</i>		✓ subj
<i>placer (plega / pluguiera)</i>	✓ subj	✓ subj
<i>ser justo</i>		✓ subj
<i>ser servido</i>	✓ subj	
<i>tener por menos mal</i>		✓ subj

OTHER		
<i>aguardar</i>		✓ subj
<i>bastar</i>		✓ subj
<i>concertar</i>		✓ ind, subj
<i>dar</i> 'admit'		✓ subj
<i>esperar</i>		✓ ind, subj
<i>no era mucho</i> 'it was not difficult'	✓ subj	
<i>poder ser</i>	✓ subj	✓ subj
<i>restar</i>		✓ subj
<i>ser (conforme a) razón</i>		✓ subj
CONJUNCTIONS		
<i>caso</i>		✓ subj
<i>por condición</i>		✓ subj
<i>de cualquier manera</i>		✓ subj
<i>dado</i>		✓ subj
<i>por + adj (concessive)</i>		✓ subj
<i>sino</i>		✓ ind

TABLE A: VERBS AND OTHER ELEMENTS EXHIBITING *QUE*-DELETION IN SANTA TERESA AND TOMÁS DE MERCADO

It can be seen that, while the majority of items are verbs of ordering with subjunctive complements (the class which still exhibits *que*-deletion to the greatest extent in modern Spanish), verbs of thinking and saying with indicative complements are also strongly evidenced. In *Suma*, *que*-deletion even extends to some conjunctions (6):

(6) Toda esta doctrina católica es tan verdadera que, **dado que** nos la enseñen estos santos doctores, los mismos gentiles autores la enseñan más largamente [...] (*Suma*, I.i)

The main constraint on *que*-deletion proposed for modern Spanish, that there should be no intervening material between V1 and V2, appears not to hold for the 16th century (7), even though the V1 V2 pattern (8) is preponderant:

(7) [...] que **parece**_{V1} en queriendo comenzar a tener oración **que** **hallamos**_{V2} con quién hablar [...] (*Vida*, 27.4)

(8) [...] porque días había que **deseaba**_{V1} **que** **fuera**_{V2} posible a mi estado andar pidiendo por amor de Dios y no tener casa ni otra cosa (*Vida*, 35.2)

An even more striking feature of *Vida* is that *que*-deletion actually appears to be the more frequent variant with some verbs (*creer*, *parecer*, *suplicar* and *temer*: see Table C). The only item for which I have been able to establish a similar

preference in *Suma*, which has a wider range of *que*-deleting contexts though not proportionally so many tokens of complementation, is the conjunction *dado-dado que* (see (6)), which shows an overwhelming 226 cases of deletion as against 54 of non-deletion (this conjunction is not used in *Vida* at all).

3.2. Register, text type, style

Given the strong correlation between *que*-deletion and register in modern Spanish, it would be logical to try and establish such data for the 16th century too. This, however, is a daunting task because of the relative infrequency of the construction and the difficulty of identifying examples by automated search procedures. I have obtained some preliminary data from CdE by the strategy of searching for patterns of *rogar* and *rogar que* followed directly by a clitic pronoun (*rogar* is a common verb known to favour *que*-deletion in the 16th century: see Table D). This retrieves a relatively large number of sequences in which *rogar* is followed by a complement verb without an intervening *que* (9a) and with *que* (9b) in a similar context.

- (9) a. *rogar*: V1 V2
 ... te **ruogo**_{V1} ~~que~~ me **digas**_{V2} la disposición del lugar.
 (CdE: Cristóbal de Villalón, *El Crotalón*, 1552–3)
- b. *rogar*: V1 *que* V2
 ... más vos **ruogo**_{V1} **que** me **digades**_{V2} si está el infante mal indignado
 contra mí...
 (CdE: *Platir*, 1533)

For this more manageable dataset, the source of each example was then classified according to genre (text-type); the cumulative results are given in Table B:

GENRE	<i>QUE</i>		<i>QUE</i>		<i>QUE</i> AS % OF TOTAL	
Novels of chivalry	98		9		8.26%	
Other novels	27		6		18.18%	
Picaresque novels	6		3		33.33%	
Pastoral novels	6	137	3	21	33.33%	13.13%
Commercial documents	1		3		75%	
Chronicles	71		24		25.26%	
Travelogues	15	87	1	28	6.25%	24.35%
Religious works		67		42		38.53%

GENRE	QUE		QUE		QUE AS % OF TOTAL
Dialogues		13		11	45.83%
Drama		11		2	15.38%
Letters		23		5	17.86%
Mythology		1		3	75%
Poetry		6		1	14.29%
Proverbs		4		6	60%
Overall		349		119	25.43%

TABLE B: *QUE*-DELETION WITH *ROGAR* + (*QUE*) + CLITIC PRONOUN
+ VERB SEQUENCES IN CDE

What emerges is that *que*-deleted examples are overall in a minority, as is to be expected (119: 349, or, with *que*-deletion expressed as a percentage of the total, 25.43%). The genres showing a significantly higher percentage of *que*-deletion are religious works and dialogues; those showing a significantly lower percentage are novels of chivalry and, possibly, drama. These preliminary results indicate that a relation between *que*-deletion and text-type is likely and possible to trace, and encourage further investigation along these lines.

In Table C I illustrate a different investigative strategy, that of comparing figures for *que*-deletion with certain verbs in a purpose-built corpus consisting of *Vida, Suma* and three other roughly contemporaneous texts: the picaresque novel *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554), Juan de Valdés's *Diálogo de la lengua* (1535) and the first Book of Antonio de Guevara's *Epístolas familiares* (1526). As in Table B, in each cell the raw occurrences of *que*-deletion and non-deletion are given, followed by the expression of this ratio as the percentage of *que*-deletion of the total; in addition, the final figure shows the frequency of both *que*-deleted and non-deleted instances in the whole text, expressed per thousand words (‰). It can be seen that there are very marked statistical differences among these texts, in terms not only of the proportions of *que*-deleted and non-deleted instances, but also in the frequency of the verbs concerned, both cumulatively and individually. It can probably be concluded that Teresa is confirmed as the most prolific *que* deleter, while Guevara is the least prolific, and that hence not only text-type but also author are likely to prove important variables.

\overline{QUE}/QUE AS % OF TOTAL TOTAL AS ‰ OF WORD-COUNT	CREER	PARECER	QUERER	SUPPLICAR	TEMER	TOTAL
Suma	11/11	3/21	12/16	1/0	2/1	29/49
75,019 words	50%	12.5%	42.86%	100%	66.67%	37.18%
	0.29‰	0.32‰	0.37‰	0.01‰	0.04‰	1.04‰
Vida	74/46	376/156	61/54	40/6	12/4	563/327
112,868 words	61.67%	70.68%	53.04%	86.96%	75%	63.25%
	1.06‰	4.71‰	1.02‰	0.41‰	0.14‰	7.89‰
Guevara	2/123	1/19	3/127	8/6	0/2	14/277
294,268 words	1.6%	5%	2.31%	57.14%	0%	4.81%
	0.42‰	0.06‰	0.44‰	0.05‰	0.00‰	0.99‰
Lazarillo	0/5	2/9	1/8	5/2	2/0	10/24
18,475 words	0%	18.18%	11.11%	71.43%	100%	29.41%
	0.27‰	0.60‰	0.49‰	0.38‰	0.11‰	1.84‰
Valdés	2/40	6/31	3/39	1/0	1/0	13/110
38,473 words	4.76%	16.22%	7.14%	100%	100%	10.57%
	1.09‰	0.96‰	1.09‰	0.00‰	0.00‰	3.20‰

TABLE C: *QUE*-DELETION FOR SELECTED VERBS IN FIVE 16TH-CENTURY TEXTS

4. *Que*-deletion prior to the 16th century: its origins and rise

Prior to the 16th century, *que*-deletion is too infrequent to make the study of individual texts productive, and I have therefore used the strategy, already outlined, of searching for instances of a number of verbs thought likely to be prone to *que*-deletion in the light of their subsequent histories, but this time exploiting CdE as a whole. Table D shows the results obtained for nine verbs in the 13th–15th centuries, the limitations of the data being indicated in the note to each verb:

EXAMPLES OF \overline{QUE}	1200s	1300s	1400s
<i>creer</i> ¹	0	2	69
<i>dudar</i> ²	0	0	6
<i>guardar no(n)</i> ³	4	12	34
<i>parecer</i> ²	0	(1)	27
<i>pedir</i> ⁴	0	0	1
<i>querer</i> ⁵	0	2	12
<i>rogar</i> ²	0	(1)	38
<i>suplicar</i> ⁶	0	0	133
<i>temer no(n)</i> ⁷	0	0	3

- ¹ Based on a full survey of *creo* and the pattern *cre** followed by a subjunctive verb.
² Based on a full survey of all occurrences of the pattern *du(b)d**.
³ Based only on occurrences with *no(n)*; the pattern *guard** followed by subjunctive verb returned no tokens.
⁴ Based on a search for the patterns *pid** and *ped** followed by subjunctive verb.
⁵ Based on a survey of *quiero* and the patterns *quier**, *quer** and *quis** followed by a subjunctive verb.
⁶ Based on a full survey of all occurrences of the pattern *sup(p)lic** and *sup(p)liqu**. *Sup(p)licar* is rare before the 15th century.
⁷ Based only on occurrences with *no(n)*; the pattern *tem** followed by subjunctive verb returned no tokens.

TABLE D: *QUE*-DELETION, 13TH–15TH CENTURIES (DATA FROM CdE)

It can be seen that *que*-deletion is practically non-existent before the 15th century, with the striking exception of *guardar no(n)*, which merits further investigation as a possible model for subsequent developments. *Guardar* has complementation patterns with both *no(n)* and *que no(n)* which are apparently identical in meaning, the same negative polarity of *no(n)* holding in both constructions (i.e. *guárdate no(n)* + subjunctive and *guárdate que no(n)* + subjunctive are synonymous, as shown by the English glosses in (10a-b)):

- (10) a. **Guardate**_{v1} **que non digas**_{v2} njnguna cosa errada contra Jacob (13th century: Alfonso X, *General estoria*)
 ‘Take care that you do not say anything false against Jacob’
- b. **guardate**_{v1} **que non peques**_{v2} con muger virgen (13th century: Sancho IV, *Castigos y documentos para bien vivir*)
 ‘Take care that you do not sin with a woman who is a virgin’

As we have seen, this is unlike the behaviour of *temer* in MSp, where *no* with *que*-deletion (5b) indicates positive negative-polarity and *que no* (5a) indicates negative negative-polarity. The same appears to be true of *temer* in 16th-century Spanish too:

- (11) a. **Temía**_{v1} **que no había**_{v2} de haber con quién me confesar [...] (Vida, 28.14)
 ‘I feared there would not be anyone I could confess to’
- b. [...] me tenían mucho amor y **temían**_{v1} **que no fuese**_{v2} engañada (Vida, 25.14)
 ‘They loved me greatly and feared (that) I was deceived’

Despite the change of lexical item, *guardar no(n)* could be seen as the semantic inheritor of the function of Latin *CAVĒRE*, for which the complementiser was *NĒ*, and the variation observable in Old Castilian between *guardar no(n)*

and *guardar que no(n)* may represent conflicting pressure from the exemplary force of Latin *CAVĒRE NĒ* versus the overwhelmingly general rule that verbal complements are introduced by *que*.

However, not all the heirs of verbs which took *NĒ* as a complementiser in Latin (verbs of preventing, forbidding and fearing) initially follow the model of *guardar*. *Embargar*, the most frequent verb of preventing in Old Castilian, with a number of attestations from the 13th century onwards, appears not to undergo *que*-deletion, although there are a number of examples of a 'pleonastic' *no(n)* being used after the *que* complementiser with positive negative-polarity:

- (12) Ca estos siempre punnan de los **embargar**_{V1} **que** se **no saluen**_{V2}
(CdE: *Siete partidas*, 13th cent.).
'For these people always strive to prevent them from being saved' (not:
'prevent them from not being saved')

The verb *impedir*, of which there are no convincing examples before the 15th century, shows just one or two examples of *que* + 'pleonastic' *no* complementation in that century (13); and by the late 16th century there are examples of *impedir* with *que*-deletion both with and without *no* (14–15), as well as with plain *que* (16):

- (13) y otrosy en el capitulo dezeno ay veynte auctoresy veynte y siete auctoridades que aprueuan el vino blanco ser prouechoso para **impidir**_{V1} **que** la piedra **no** se **engendre**_{V2} (CdE: Julián Gutiérrez de Toledo, *Cura de la piedra*, 15th cent.)
'and also in the tenth chapter there are twenty authors and twenty-seven authorities who approve white wine as being beneficial for preventing the stone from forming' (not 'preventing the stone from not forming')
- (14) o **impedirle**_{V1} ~~que~~ **no consiga**_{V2} lo que tan honestamente apetece (Tomás de Mercado, *Summa de tratos y contratos*, 16th cent.)
'or prevent him from obtaining what he so honestly desires' (not 'prevent him from not obtaining')
- (15) [...] para que, sacando todos, haya abundancia y se **impida**_{V1} ~~que~~ **crezca**_{V2} el precio (*ibid.*)
'so that, if they all take it out, there will be plenty and the price will be prevented from rising'
- (16) y no quiere que los dioses puedan **impedir**_{V1} **que** **crezcan**_{V2} (CdE: Lope de Vega, *La bella Aurora*, end of 16th cent.)
'and does not want the gods to be able to prevent them growing'

Vedar is attested only with a *que* complementiser before the 16th century. I have found just one example of *prohibir* with *que*-deletion and a ('pleonastic') *no* in the 15th century (17); a 'pleonastic' *no* is also possible with *que* (18):

- (17) ...el qual mucho tiempo cercaron los fijos de israel porque les **fue** de dios **prohibido**_{v1} **que no** le **tocassen**_{v2} (CdE: Bernardo de Breidenbach, tr. Martín Martínez de Ampíes, *Peregrinatio in Terram Sanctam; Viaje siquier peregrinación de la tierra*, 15th cent.)
'which the children of Israel camped around for a long time because it was forbidden to them by God to make contact with it' (not 'forbidden not to make contact')
- (18) quando **prohibe**_{v1} **que no salga**_{v2} la orina (CdE: Julián Gutiérrez de Toledo, *Cura de la piedra*, 15th cent.).
'when it stops the urine coming out' (not 'stops the urine not coming out')

The first examples of the use of *temer* with *que*-deletion, accompanied by a 'pleonastic' *no*, are from the late 15th-century *Celestina* (19):

- (19) ...**temo**_{v1} **que no** la **ayan levado**_{v2}... (CdE: Fernando de Rojas, *Comedia de Calisto y Melibea*, 15th cent.).
'I fear they have taken it'

In summary, the *guardar no* construction, with its apparent *que*-deletion, is unusual in type in medieval Castilian. It is possible that it provided the pattern for the use of *no* as a complementiser without *que* for some other verbs of related semantic classes, beginning with *temer* and the 'learned' verb *prohibir* (the latter again perhaps in imitation of Latin PROHIBĒRE, for which the only complementiser classically was NĒ). Thus *Prohibió (que) no saliese* parallels Latin PROHIBUIT NE EXIRET (in the 16th century the modern *Prohibió que saliese* in the same sense is still a minority construction). But it seems unlikely (although more quantitative research on 15th century and early 16th century texts is needed to establish this definitively) that the use of *no* on its own as a complementiser, in imitation of Latin NĒ, provided a model for the suppression of *que* with other subjunctive-requiring verbs of forbidding and that *que*-deletion then diffused more generally to verbs of ordering, other verbs with subjunctive complements and verbs of saying and thinking with indicative complements, since the attestation of *que*-deletion with the verbs of saying and thinking *creer* and *parecer* is already substantial in the 15th century and antedates that of a number of verbs more similar semantically to *guardar*.

Another causal hypothesis for the acceleration of *que*-deletion in the 15th century is contact influence, Latin and Italian both being plausible candidates as such a contact source. With regard to Latin, deletion of the complementiser *UT* can be observed in the classical language with subjunctive-requiring verbs of command and influence such as *ROGŌ*, *MONEŌ*, *SUĀDEŌ*, *IMPERŌ*, *CŪRŌ*, *OPORTET*, *NECESSE EST*, *LICET* and, as we have seen, *CAVEŌ*, a phenomenon superficially very similar to that observable in Castilian. However, the problem is that the 15th century shows a much greater range of *que*-deleting verbs, as demonstrated in Table D, so there is no isomorphism between Old Castilian and Classical Latin in this respect, even setting aside the issue of lexical replacements. As regards contact with Italian, the Old Castilian data likewise suggest that *que*-deletion in Castilian is unlike *che*-deletion in Italian, either in type or in chronology. *Che*-deletion in Old Italian ranges over a much larger number of syntactic contexts: it is attested not only with verbal complements, but also with complex conjunctions, comparative structures and restrictive object and subject relative clauses (Wanner, 1981; Poletto / Cocchi, 2007). Although the significant expansion of complement *que*-deletion in 16th-century Spanish might plausibly have been the result of the example of Italian *che*-deletion, which was very frequent by the 15th century, such putative influence did not extend to the omission of *que* with comparatives and relative clauses in Spanish, neither of which to my knowledge is attested at all.

Given the inconclusive nature of such hypotheses as the above, it is possible that the motivation for *que*-deletion in Spanish was of a more general structural kind. *Que* was and continues to be the most commonly occurring word in Spanish, marking clausal subordination in complement and relative structures, involved in comparative constructions of inequality, and also serving, especially in the spoken language, as an introductory clause marker. Some pruning of this heavy functional load could be seen as a quite natural development, and in the area of complementation could be expected to occur in contexts where the identification of main verb and subordinate verb was clear through juxtaposition and/or difference in mood (this is consistent with Valdés's view (see 5 below) that the complementiser *que* is 'superfluous'). In particular, the avoidance of two instances of *que* in close proximity where a complement is embedded in a relative clause may be stylistically more 'euphonious' (see (2) above). The same factors pertain to Italian, where, as we have seen, *che*-deletion was further advanced.

5. Demise

Why did *que*-deletion eventually recede? The first factor may be that it was in all probability an élitist usage which did not successfully embed in lower echelons of society and in everyday usage. Keniston (1937a: 676), in one of his characteristic tantalisingly insightful thumbnail sketches, says that Santa Teresa, in using *que*-deletion so prodigally, cannot be reflecting popular usage, since *que*-deletion is rare in Lope de Rueda, hence supporting the hypothesis that it is an essentially cultured phenomenon. (We must beware, however, of assuming that Rueda only reflects popular usage, since many of his upper-class characters use the high-style *retórica*. Yet what is interesting in this connection is that while Rueda characterises *retórica* with a number of its stereotypical syntactic and lexical features — verb-last order, preposed adjectives, absolute constructions — he indeed does not seem to exploit *que*-deletion for this purpose, which would suggest that *que*-deletion was not archetypically associated with *retórica* but was rather a matter of personal preference, or fashion; it may also be that *que*-deletion was more of a written than a spoken phenomenon.)

Another factor in the recession of *que*-deletion may be the increasing favouring of transparency over economy and euphony. Prescriptive views in the 16th century cannot of course be of the same order as the Academic pronouncements of the 18th century and later, but we do have at our disposal two interestingly contrasting observations. The first, prioritising economy, is Juan de Valdés's (1535) view that the use of *que* is 'superfluous':

VALDÉS. Diríale primeramente que guardasse lo que al principio dixé de los artículos, porque esto pertenece así para el hablar bien como para el escribir. Avisaríale más que no curasse de un *que* superfluo que muchos ponen tan continuamente, que me obligaría quitar de algunas escrituras, de una hoja, media dozana de *quees* superfluos.

MARCIO. Dadnos algunos exemplos para que entendamos esso.

VALDÉS. De refrán no se me ofrece ninguno que tenga este *que* demasiado, y creo lo causa la brevidad con que stán escritos, pero, si miráis en lo que leéis, hallaréis ser verdad lo que os digo en partes semejantes que ésta: creo que será bien hazer esto, adonde aquel *que* stá superfluo, porque diría mejor: creo será bien hazer esto. [my underlining] (Lope Blanch, 1969: 154)

It is difficult to know to what extent Valdés is reflecting the Toledan usage he ostensibly admired and how much is a matter of idiosyncratic personal preference; what is certain is that he did not apply the principle consistently himself

(see Table C above which demonstrates quite clearly that in Valdés's own writing *que*-deletion is a minority construction). But what this opinion probably shows that *que*-deletion was held in some regard in the first half of the century. Nearly a hundred years later, however, in 1625, we find Gonzalo de Correas soundly castigating the omission of *que* and exalting its presence as lending clarity to Spanish (hence prioritising transparency), giving, so he considers, Spanish an advantage in this respect over Latin:

Algunos quitan la *que* en muchas ocasiones, ó caiendo ello ansi sin rreparar, ó por que se enfadan de ir á lo claro, i llano, i quieren buscar sainete i modo nuevo de hablar; pero sepan que se engañan los que ansi lo hazen de industria, i que dexan la rrazon manca i confusa, i que con todo se deve suplir i entender la *que*, i en esto de poderse quitar, i suplirse se conozerá tambien que es partezilla... Da esta partezilla *que* tanta grazia i claridad á la orazion que con ella corre descansada i rredonda, i queda el animo satisfecho i quieto. Tiene mas, que rreduze las oraciones de infinitivo á los tiempos i modos finitos de indicativo i subiuntivo, i en esta *que* por ello tiene doblada claridad y fazilidad la lengua Castellana mas que la Latina. [my underlining] (Alarcos García, 1954: 174)

Correas's view may perhaps be seen as the beginning of the Academic preference for the use of *que*; the reference to Latin may indicate that *que*-deletion was associated with formal written Latin prose. It may also indicate a change of attitude towards the construction which arrested its development even in educated writing. In other words, *que*-deletion becomes unfashionable. Wanner (1981) similarly suggests that the demise of Italian *che*-deletion was the result of a change in taste of which Bembo was typical.

6. Conclusions

Que-deletion is a syntactic fashion which has its heyday in the 16th century. Its origins may lie in contact with Latin or Italian, or may reflect an evolutionary tendency towards economy, but there is at present insufficient evidence to judge the relative strength of these causal hypotheses. Its demise is most likely the consequence of its never having become sufficiently firmly embedded socially, and of a purist insistence on clarity and transparency. It continues today in some registers of Spanish, but has only the status of a stylistic indicator, and coexists with presence of the complementiser in a situation of stable variation.

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