

CURRENT ISSUES IN
LINGUISTIC THEORY | 113

**English Historical
Linguistics 1992**

Edited by Francisco Fernández,
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Offprint

JOHN BENJAMINS PUBLISHING COMPANY

This is an offprint from:

Francisco Fernández, Miguel Fuster and Juan José Calvo (eds)

English Historical Linguistics 1992

John Benjamins Publishing Company

Amsterdam/Philadelphia

1994

(Published as Vol. 113 of the series

CURRENT ISSUES IN LINGUISTIC THEORY)

ISSN 0304-0763

ISBN 90 272 3616 X (Eur.)/1-55619-567-2 (US)

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INFINITIVE MARKING IN EARLY MODERN ENGLISH*

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1. Introduction

As is well known, a number of scholars in the recent and not so recent past have explored the difference in usage between the plain and (*for*) *to*-infinitives in the Middle English period. I have in mind, in particular, the studies of Ohlander (1941), Kaartinen & Mustanoja (1958), Mustanoja (1960), Quirk & Svartvik (1970), Warner (1982) and, more recently, Fischer (forthcoming; cf. also Fischer 1992:317-324). Though the conclusions reached by these several authors at times vary widely, it can generally be said that the choice of infinitive marking in ME seems to have been controlled by factors such as: a) the grammatical function of the clause, that is, whether this is a subject, an object, or other; b) metre; c) the separation between the infinitive and its governing verb; d) the fronting of an element within the infinitive clause; and e) semantic factors of various kinds, as recently discussed by Fischer in her forthcoming article "Factors influencing infinitive marking in late ME".

Unlike the studies mentioned so far, the present paper will concentrate on the Early Modern English period, rather than on Middle English. Needless to say, by that time it is clear that the distribution of (*for*) *to* and *zero* has been largely standardized and that the amount of variation tolerated is considerably less than a couple of centuries earlier, yet it seems reasonable to assume that the variables identified for ME will still remain relevant in the later period.

* The research which is here reported on has been funded by the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science through its Dirección General de Investigación Científica y Técnica (DGICYT), grant no.PB90-0370. This grant is hereby gratefully acknowledged.

A second difference with respect to previous studies is that I will only be concerned with non coordinated infinitives¹ functioning as complements of higher predicates, whether these be verbs, nouns, or adjectives; in other words, I have disregarded infinitives in adverbial function, which is also true, on the other hand, of some of the research mentioned earlier in this paper, notably Fischer (forthcoming). Finally, I will only explore the effect on infinitive marking of some of the factors mentioned in connection with Middle English. Thus, I will leave out of my discussion the influence of metre, which is obvious enough in some cases and generally beyond question, and the same can be said of the grammatical function of the infinitive clause; in ME as in eModE, infinitives with *zero* are chiefly associated with the complements of transitive verbs, while clauses in subject function and complements to adjectives and nouns almost invariably take a *to*-infinitive. In addition to these two factors, I will not be concerned either with the type of semantic factor discussed by Olga Fischer, since I have examined this at length elsewhere (cf. Fanego 1992:43-48) and do not find it wholly convincing. This means, therefore, that I will restrict myself to factors *c* and *d* as mentioned at the beginning, that is, separation between matrix verb and infinitive, and fronting.

As a source of data I have investigated in detail four plays in the Shakespeare canon, namely *Romeo and Juliet* (1594?), *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1597), *King Lear* (1608), and *The Winter's Tale* (1609?)². Altogether, these total approximately 100,000 words, of which about 40,000 are prose and the rest verse. In addition, this primary corpus has been supplemented with other writings from the period, in particular other plays by Shakespeare, Marlowe's complete plays and poems, and the prose works of John Dryden.

As regards the Shakespeare corpus, this yielded a total of 734 non coordinated infinitive complements. Table 1 below shows the overall distribution of the markers (*for*) *to* and *zero*:

¹ It seems quite clear, as suggested by Mustanoja (1960) and other scholars, that the factors controlling infinitive marking in the case of coordinated infinitives differ somewhat from those at work in all other cases, hence the decision to leave them out of the discussion.

² The modern-spelling text of *The Oxford Shakespeare* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), under the general editorship of Stanley Wells & Gary Taylor, has been used throughout. In this edition, the title *The History of King Lear* corresponds to the text of *King Lear* which first appeared in print in a quarto of 1608, as distinct from *The Tragedy of King Lear*, the heavily revised version of the same play printed in the 1623 Folio.

Table 1: Marking in non coordinated infinitives in the corpus

	<i>to</i>	<i>for to</i>	<i>zero</i>
Subject clauses	103		6
Predicative clauses	9		
Object clauses	285	1	194
NP complement clauses	65		3
Adj. complement clauses	68		

2. Separation between infinitive and governing verb

The effect of separation on infinitive marking has been explored by authors such as Ohlander (1941), Mustanoja (1960) and Quirk & Svartvik (1970). Thus Mustanoja asserts that "when the two verbs (i.e. the superordinate verb and the infinitive) are separated by a word or group of words, the infinitive is preceded by *to*" (1960: 522). His examples involve, in most cases, the second of two infinitives in a coordinative or comparative construction, as illustrated in (1)-(2):

- (1) *he gan prikie and to grede an hei.* (RGlouc. 11709)
- (2) *and he hath levere talken with a page /Than to comune with any gentil wight.* (Chaucer CT F Sq. 692-3)

Quirk & Svartvik (1970:403ff) make a similar claim for the predominance of *for to* over *to*, and of *to* over *zero* in Chaucer, but this time their evidence is not drawn solely from coordinated structures, but, more generally, from subjectless infinitives in which the infinitive has been separated from its governing verb by the presence of one of three possible elements: a) the infinitive object, as in (3); b) the prepositional object/complement of the infinitive, as in (4); c) the adjunct of the infinitive, as in (5):

- (3) *the merlioun, that payneth /Hymself ful ofte the larke for to seke.* (PF 340)
- (4) *And what to arten hire to love he soughte, / And on a song anon-right to bygyne.* (Tr 389)
- (5) *I gan astoned to beholde.* (PF 142).

Despite the evidence adduced by Ohlander, Mustanoja and Quirk & Svartvik, Warner (1982:127ff) is of the opinion that separation from the matrix verb is in fact of little importance as a factor motivating the occurrence of stronger marking, and suggests that perhaps the explanation for

this may be found elsewhere, for instance in the presence of fronted material belonging to the infinitive clause (see further section 3). A similar opinion is entertained by Fischer (forthcoming:19-20), who quotes the following example as the only one in her extensive corpus that she would consider to definitely show the effect of separation:

- (6) *Paston Letters* 157, 20-23. ... *that it plese yow to don Jon Paston or Thomas Playter or sume othyr that ye thynk that cane vndyr-stonde the mater for to speke to the seyd Hwe of Fen therof in hyr name.*

Comparable examples in my material are not numerous, and seem to be restricted to the following two:

- (7) *Rom* 3.5.159. *Good father, I beseech you on my knees, /Hear me with patience but to speak a word./* (Figures for *hear* in the corpus: 16 zero / 1 to.)
 (8) *ibid.* 3.5.185. ... */And then to have a wretched puling fool, /A whining maumet, in her fortune's tender, /To answer 'I'll not wed, I cannot love' /* (Figures for *have* in the corpus: 13 zero / 1 to.)

At first sight, the paucity of the evidence thus appears to confirm that, if we leave out of account coordinated infinitives, separation is indeed of only minor importance for infinitive marking. Yet I would like to suggest that such is not really the case, and that in eModE, and presumably also in earlier periods, the type of marking is often determined by the relative weight of the material intervening between matrix verb and infinitive. Obviously, this conditioning factor will be relevant chiefly for predicates occurring in the complementation pattern **V NP (to)Inf**, and this is in fact the only one I have examined in detail. Specifically, my claim is that, in the case of those few verbs of causation, perception and the like with which a choice of marker remains possible in eModE, a light intervening NP consisting of only a pronominal tends to correlate with *zero*, whereas *to* is more likely to be triggered by nonpronominal NPs, or by those containing a pronoun plus some additional material; witness in this respect examples (9)-(13) and the data adduced in section 2.1 below:

- (9) *Wiv* 4.3.8 (prose). *They shall have my horses, but I'll make them pay; I'll sauce them.*
 (10) *Wint* 4.4.199 (prose). *and where some stretch-mouthed rascal would, as it were, mean mischief and break a foul gap into the matter, he makes the maid to answer, 'Whoop, do me no harm, good man';*

- (11) *Dryden Satires* 7. *some secret graces [...] have made whole poems of mine to pass with approbation* (quoted from Söderlind 1958:II, 45.)
 (12) *Rom* 4.2.34. *Nurse, will you go with me into my closet /To help me sort such needful ornaments /As you think fit to furnish me tomorrow?*
 (13) *A Midsummer Night's Dream* 4.1.23 (prose). *Nothing, good monsieur, but to help Cavalieri Peaseblossom to scratch.*

2.1 The evidence

2.1.1. *Data from Shakespeare*: I have checked the behaviour in Shakespeare's complete works of the verbs **COMMAND**, **DESIRE**, **ENTREAT**, **GET** and **HELP**. In addition, I examined all the occurrences of the base form *make* (but not those of *makes*, *made*, *making*, etc.). The results obtained are as follows:³

COMMAND

5 ex. with *zero*, all with pronominal NPs; 7 ex. with *to* (5 pronominal / 2 nonpronominal).

DESIRE

3 ex. with *zero*, all with pronominal NPs (cf., for instance, *King Lear* 19.35 "I pray desire her call her wisdom to her."/); 41 ex. with *to*.

ENTREAT

13 ex. with *zero*, all with pronominal NPs (cf. *Romeo and Juliet* 5.3.259 "She wakes, and I entreated her come forth/"); 23 ex. with *to*, of which 9 contain nonpronominal NPs.

GET

6 ex. with *to*, 3 with nonpronominal NPs; 2 ex. with *zero*, one with pronominal NP (*Two Noble Kinsmen* 3.5.75, verse), and one (*Merry Wives of Windsor* 2.2.74 prose "they could never get her so much as sip on a cup with the proudest of them all") where the presence of material between verb and infinitive might lead one to expect *to* rather than *zero*.

HELP

4 ex. with *zero*, all with pronominal NPs; 7 ex. with *to* (2 pronominal / 5

³ Here and in the rest of this section 'nonpronominal' is used as a cover term to indicate that NP₂ is headed by a noun, or that there is additional material of any kind intervening between matrix verb and infinitive, as in, for instance, Marlowe 2 *Tamburlaine* 4363 "And make him after all these overthrows, /To triumph over cursed Tamburlain".

nonpronominal)⁴

MAKE

50 corpus examples with *zero* / 2 with *to*. One of these, with a non-pronominal NP, has been cited above as (10); the other is *Wint* 5.3.71 (verse), with an intervening pronominal: "O sweet Paulina, /Make me to think so twenty years together/".

Over 200 occurrences of the form *make* in the rest of Shakespeare's works, of which only 10 contain marked infinitives, as follows: pronominal NPs + *to*-infinitives occur in *Troilus and Cressida* 4.5.137, *Hamlet* 3.4.170 and *Othello* 3.3.369; nonpronominal NPs + *to*-infinitives in *Pericles* 5.1.144, *Coriolanus* 5.3.197, *Richard III* 3.2.11, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* 2.1.38, *Love's Labour's Lost* 5.2.549, *The Merchant of Venice* 1.1.68, and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* 5.4.161. All ten examples are found in verse.

2.1.2. *Data from Marlowe*: For Marlowe, I looked at all the verbs used in the pattern **V NP (to)Inf**, as listed in Ando (1976:517-534). The results of this survey are given below, with the verbs appearing in the same order as in Ando:

SEE

49 *zero*; 6 *to*, all with nonpronominal NP₂.

WISH

3 *zero*, all pronominal; 1 *to*, nonpronominal.

WILL

7 *zero*, 4 pronominal / 3 nonpronominal; 8 *to*, 5 pronominal / 3 nonpronominal.

BID

26 *zero*; 1 *to*, nonpronominal (*Dido, Queen of Carthage* 2.1.114 "/A woeful tale bids Dido to unfold./").

CHARGE

5 *zero*, all pronominal; 4 *to*, evenly divided.

⁴ All four examples of HELP + bare infinitive occur in the sequence *to help NP Inf* (cf. *Richard III* 1.3.244, 4.4.80, *Titus Andronicus* 2.4.10 and *Romeo and Juliet* 4.2.34 "Nurse, will you go with me into my closet /To help me sort such needful ornaments /As you think fit to furnish me tomorrow?"). It has been shown by Göran Kjellmer (1985:159-160) for Present-day English that, in that particular context, HELP is now reluctant to take a *to*-infinitive; though the same tendency might well be at work in Shakespeare, the *to*-infinitive is also found on one occasion, but, interestingly enough, it happens to be preceded by a nonpronominal NP₂. Witness *A Midsummer Night's Dream* 4.1.23 (prose), quoted above as (13).

COMMAND

1 *zero*, pronominal⁵; 5 *to*, all nonpronominal.

ENTREAT

2 *zero*, evenly divided; 9 *to*, 3 pronominal / 6 nonpronominal.

FORBID

2 *zero*, pronominal; 6 *to*, 1 pronominal / 5 nonpronominal.

PRAY

1 *zero*, pronominal; 3 *to*, 1 pronominal / 2 nonpronominal.

ENFORCE

2 *zero*, both pronominal; 3 *to*, all nonpronominal.

HELP

1 *zero*, pronominal; 3 *to*, 2 pronominal / 1 nonpronominal.

CAUSE

4 *zero*, evenly divided; 10 *to*, 1 pronominal / 9 nonpronominal.

MAKE

24 *to*, 3 with pronominal NPs and 21 with nonpronominal ones; 155 *zero* (pronominal NPs clearly predominate; cf. Ando p. 532).

HAVE

18 *zero*; 4 *to*, 3 nonpronominal and 1 pronominal, but with fronting of the infinitive object.

2.1.3. *Data from Dryden*: In this case, I checked the behaviour of all the relevant verbs listed in Söderlind (1958 II,31-47). Though by Dryden's time most verbs had become restricted to just one type of marker, the rare exceptions generally confirm the distributional pattern observed in both Shakespeare and Marlowe.

CAUSE

1 *zero*, with pronominal NP₂; 17 *to*.

HAVE

50 *zero*; 10 *to* (though Söderlind gives only 5 quotations with *to*-infinitives, 4 out of these contain nonpronominal NPs).

MAKE

310 *zero*; 14 *to*, all with nonpronominal NPs except the example quoted below, where the selection of *to* is obviously intended to mark a clear boundary between the perfect infinitive itself and the perfect verb form that precedes it:

⁵ Ando adduces *Dido* 1283 as a second instance without *to*, but this in fact involves a finite clause rather than an infinitive construction. I have also left out of account 3 examples with *command NP Passive Infinitive*, since passive infinitives seem to constitute a special case from the point of view of the *to/zero* distribution; cf. in this connection Fischer (forthcoming:16ff).

Dedication to Aureng-Zebe 190 "no necessity of mine could **have made me to have sought** so earnestly, and so long, to have cultivated your kindness".

Though the preceding lists contain some apparent exceptions (cf., for instance, the example from *Wint* 5.3.71 cited under MAKE), and even a few verbs which, like GET (in Shakespeare) or WILL and ENTREAT (in Marlowe), do not seem to conform to the overall norm, the correlation between *to* and the presence of a nonpronominal NP before the infinitive seems reasonably clear. In this respect, it seems to me that object infinitives have an interesting parallel in the behaviour of *that* and *zero* clauses in object function. Elsness (1984), working on a corpus of American English, found that the nature of the first element in a finite object clause is greatly influential in the selection of complementizer, pronominal subjects clearly favouring *zero*, nonpronominal ones *that*, as in examples (14a)-(14b):

(14a) *I know she is a fool.*

(14b) *I know that Mary is a fool.*

Warner (1982:171ff) and Rissanen (1991) obtained similar results for late Middle English and early Modern English, though the first differs from Elsness in his interpretation of the role of *that*-deletion. For Warner, *that* "helps to mark a clause boundary, and it tends to be deleted more as this function is less useful" (p.175); deletion is thus frequent before pronouns, since several of them have distinctive nominative forms and so provide some clause boundary marking. Elsness, however, finds no definite difference in the incidence of *zero* with those pronouns which have distinct nominative forms (*I, he, she, we, they*), and with those which do not (*you, it*), and this leads him to postulate that object clauses "with personal pronoun subjects are felt to be more closely attached to the preceding matrix clause, because of the lighter subject" (p.525); *zero* is therefore selected, in preference to *that*, as a means of marking that closer clause juncture. As I see it, an explanation along these lines might also do for the object infinitives considered in this section. That is, the frequent selection of *zero* after a pronominal NP may be intended to signal the close association between infinitive and matrix clause; as that association decreases, because a nominal or some other material intervenes, a stronger, more unambiguous, infinitive marker is felt to be called for, and *to* tends to be preferred.

3. *Fronting of a constituent belonging to the infinitive clause*

That fronting may have some bearing on infinitive marking has been suggested by Anthony Warner (1982:131-133), though chiefly in connection with the choice between *zero* and (*for*) *to* in ME coordinated infinitives. Using evidence from the Wyclifite Sermons (henceforth, WSerE), he shows that the choice of *for to* over *zero* correlates not with mere separation from the matrix verb, as suggested by, e.g. Mustanoja and similarly by Quirk & Svartvik, but rather with the presence of material, generally subordinate to the infinitive, between the coordinating conjunction and the infinitive itself.

Outside coordinated infinitives, Warner also finds that the incidence of *for to*, as against *to*, is particularly high in the two restricted construction types specified below (cf. Warner 1982:123ff), both of which involve some kind of fronting or movement:

- a) BE + infinitive indicating obligation, where the subject of BE, if present, is the notional object of the infinitive, as in *Thus is this vice for to drede* (c 1390 Gower, C.A. II (Morley), p.125).
- b) BE + adjective, where the subject of BE is also notionally the object of the infinitive, or stands in some complement/adjunct relation to it, as in *For scheep ben goode for to ete* (Wyclif, *Sermons* ii. 46.17).

In addition, since, as noted earlier in this paper, Quirk & Svartvik (1970) found that the incidence of *for to* in non coordinated infinitives in Chaucer was high whenever elements of the infinitive clause preceded the infinitive, Warner goes on to point out more speculatively that "increased infinitive marking [...] may prove to be associated not so much with separation of matrix verb and infinitive, as with the fronting of some element within the infinitive clause" (p.131). He himself admits, however, that "this is not something that can be shown from WSerE" (*ibid.*).

In the remainder of this paper, I will take a brief look at infinitive marking in eModE structures involving some kind of fronting or movement. For this purpose, I will start from the following sets of PE examples containing causatives and verbs of perception:

(15a) *They made him understand*

(15b) **He was made understand*

(15c) *He was made to understand*

(16a) *I saw/heard Mary slam the door*

(16b) **Mary was seen/heard slam the door*

- (16c) *Mary was seen/heard to slam the door*
 (17a) *I have known John give better speeches*⁶
 (17b) **John has been known give better speeches*
 (17c) *John has been known to give better speeches*

As these sets illustrate, PE sentences of type *a* do not passivize, though a *to*-infinitival passive is usually available, as in the *c* examples.⁷ Similar pairs of structures, with the plain infinitive in the active, and the marked one in the passive, can also be found in eModE and even in earlier periods. Thus, Fischer (forthcoming:16-17) calls attention to the use of a *to*-infinitive in late Middle English passive constructions with the verbs *do* and *make*, while a few instances from Shakespeare's plays include the following:

- (18) *Wint* 5.1.63. *Were I the ghost that walked I'd bid you mark /Her eye.*
 (19) *Pericles* 3.6 (prose). *I perceive he was a wise fellow and had good discretion that, being bid to ask what he would of the King, desired he might know none of his secrets.*
 (20) *As You Like It* 1.2.57. *I was bid to come for you.*
 (21) *Macbeth* 5.1.28. *It is an accustomed action with her, to seem thus washing her hands. I have known her continue in this a quarter of an hour.*
 (22) *Macbeth* 3.4.122. *It will have blood, they say. Blood will have blood. /Stones have been known to move, and trees to speak, / ...*

In addition to its use with the passive, a *to*-infinitive is found in eModE with the same set of verbs in structures like those in (23)-(29):

- (23) *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* 3.1.5. */My gracious lord, that which I would discover /The law of friendship bids me to conceal./*
 (24) *Richard II* 2.2.115. */T'one is my sovereign, whom both my oath /And duty bids defend; t'other again /Is my kinsman [...] /Whom conscience and my kindred bids to right./*
 (25) Marlowe. *Dido, Queen of Carthage* 2.1.114. */A woeful tale bids Dido to unfold, / (i.e. 'Dido bids (Aeneas) unfold a woeful tale').*

⁶ KNOW is employed here with the meaning 'experience, see'. In this use, it approaches the verbs of physical perception and, like these, has been regularly followed by a bare infinitive, when in the active voice, since at least late Middle English. Cf. Visser (III/2:2312-13); Quirk et al. (1985:16-52).

⁷ On this topic, see further Visser (III/1:2139), Quirk et al. (1985:16.52), and Mittwoch (1990:118).

- (26) *Wint* 4.3.85. *Clown. What manner of fellow was he that robbed you? Autolycus. A fellow, sir, that I have known to go about with troll-madams.*
 (27) Spenser. *Faerie Queene* V.2.6. *For never wight he lets to passe that way* (quoted from Visser III/2:2295).
 (28) Marlowe *Faustus* 817 (prose) *Do but speake what thou't haue me to do* (quoted from Ando 1976:534. Out of 22 instances of HAVE in Marlowe only four contain marked infinitives: (28) here and three others containing intervening nonpronominal NPs; cf. section 2.1.2 above)
 (29) c1600 Ben Jonson. *Maia's Song* *New flowers, which you shall see to grow.* (quoted from Visser III/2:2254).

In all of these examples, a constituent belonging to the complement clause has been fronted, either through relativization, topicalization or some other related process; in transformational terminology, one might characterize sentences (23)-(29), and also the second passives cited earlier in this section, as involving movement. The constituent which is moved is often the notional subject of the infinitive, as in all the passive examples and in (26), (27) and (29), but it may also be its object, as in (23), (24), (25) and (28). At times, the regularity of the correlation between movement and increased infinitive marking is striking, as can be seen, for instance, from the behaviour of causative BID in Shakespeare and Marlowe. In the case of this latter, example (25) above is the sole instance of BID + *to*-Inf in his complete plays and poems, out of 27 occurrences of that verb (cf. Ando 1976:521-22). As regards Shakespeare, there are over 200 occurrences of BID + Inf in his complete works, of which only 7 contain marked infinitives. Out of these, 6 involve some kind of fronting, namely examples (19), (20), (23), and (24) cited here, and the two second passives in *Measure for Measure* 5.1.78 and *Titus Andronicus* 1.1.335. The only apparent exception is (30)

- (30) *Othello* 4.3.13. */He hath commanded me to go to bed, /And bid me to dismiss you*

where the parallelistic structure of the lines has probably been responsible for the selection of *to*.

Unfortunately, it has to be admitted that most of the examples cited in this section occur in verse, and this makes it difficult to ascertain the exact influence of metrical factors on the choice of marker, though it is clear from cases like (24) above, where the first of the two parallel *bid* clauses takes a

plain infinitive and the second one with *to*, that metre must not be underrated. With this in mind, I yet would like to suggest that in eModE, and presumably also in earlier periods, the fronting of some element within the infinitive clause correlates with stronger marking, or tends at least to favour it. Evidence for this is to be found not solely in the limited set of structures mentioned so far, but also in the data adduced by Warner for late ME, and which I have already mentioned here. In the same way, a survey of the infinitives collected in Visser (III/2:Sections 2066-2081) seems to point in the same direction, since it is often the case that in his lists of examples stronger marking is associated with the presence of fronted material as in, for instance, (31) and (32):

- (31) c1386 Chaucer. C.T.B. 4259. *The wynd.[...] made hem in a citee for to tarie* (quoted from Visser III/2:Section 2068).
 (32) 1548 John Bale. *Kynge Johan* 30. *Whom do they intyce for to do the injurye?* (quoted from Visser III/2:Section 2074).

Taking every thing into account, I would suggest by way of conclusion that in earlier periods of the history of English sequences involving fronting, of whatever kind, were probably felt to be perceptually confusing, and so in need of an unambiguous marker for the infinitive, *for to* rather than *to*, *to* rather than *zero*. With the regularization of infinitive marking and the final loss of *for to* in eModE, potential contrast with the few verbs (BID, KNOW, LET, MAKE, etc.) with which a choice of marker still remained possible became restricted to the opposition *to:zero*, as in the various examples adduced in this section. Finally, in PE the connection between movement and stronger marking seems to have been further restricted to structures with the second passive, like those cited in (15)-(17).

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