THE GERUND IN EARLY MODERN ENGLISH:
EVIDENCE FROM THE HELSINKI CORPUS[1]

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1. Introduction

This paper reports work in progress on the gerund in Early Modern English (eModE), as illustrated in the Helsinki Corpus of English Texts. The label 'gerund' is used here for any *-ing* form having. roughly. the same distribution as nouns or noun phrases. and thus capable of functioning as subject (*the shooting of starlings is forbidden/watching television is O.K.*), object (*he enjoys playing practical jokes*). predicative (*his job was selling computers*), appositive (*his current research, investigating attitudes to racial stereotypes, takes up most of his time*). or prepositional complement (*he voiced his objections to their receiving an invitation*). From the point of view of their internal syntax, eModE constructions involving a gerund (henceforth also referred to as 'gerund phrases'. a purely ad hoc term with no theoretical implications) can be of one of the types illustrated in (1)-(3):

> (1) E2 1615 Markham *Countrey Contentments* 109: the maine point belonging therunto is the Hus-wiues cleanlinesse *in the sweet and neate keeping of the Dairy house,*
> (2) E3 1689-1690 Evelyn *Diary* 927: The whole nation now exceedingly alarm'd *by the French fleete braving our Coast even to the very Thames mouth:*
> (3a) E3 1671 Tillotson *Scoffing at Religion* 429: to adore that great mystery of Divine Love (which the Angels. better and nobler Creatures than we are. desire to pry into) *God's sending his onely Son into the world to save sinners,*
> (3b) E3 1689-90 Evelyn *Diary* 897: the Bishops of Scotland [...] were now coming about to the True Interest. more to save themselves in this conjuncture. which threatned *the abolishing the whole Hierarchy in that Kingdome*. than for Conscience:

In (1), the *-ing* form behaves, to all intents and purposes, like a noun or nominal, as is clear from the fact that it takes two adjectival modifiers (*sweet and neate*) and its notional object surfaces as an *of*-phrase. In (2), by contrast, *braving* governs a direct object, and the construction as a whole shows, rather, the internal structure of a clause. Finally, in (3a-b), *sending* and *abolishing* exhibit both verbal and nominal features; that is, they are followed by direct objects (*his onely Son* and *the whole Hierarchy* respectively), but preceded by typically nominal modifiers like the possessive phrase *God's* and the article *the*. It is thus possible to characterize the gerunds in (1)-(3), and the corresponding constructions, as being respectively nominal, verbal, and mixed nomino-verbal, the main difference with respect to Present-day English usage being that the mixed, or hybrid, subtype seen in (3b), where the gerund is preceded by an article, is now no longer available. According to van der Wurff (1993), this pattern became obsolete by the late nineteenth century (see also Visser 1963-1973: §1124).[2]

Historically, all four kinds of gerund go back to an abstract noun of action obtained through the addition of the suffix *-ing* (earlier also *-ung*) to a verb stem (cf. Marchand [2]1969: 302 ff), as in OE *huntung*, 'hunting' or ME *chastisyng(e)* 'punishment'. As is well known, from Middle English onwards, this type of noun gradually acquired a number of verbal properties,[3] namely, a) it became capable of governing an object or a predicative complement (e.g., "I hate *playing tennis*", "I don't like *being ill*"); b) it could be modified by adverbs and/or adverbials restricted to co-occurring only with verbs (e.g., "my *quietly* leaving before anyone noticed"); c) it showed tense and voice distinctions (e.g., "of *having done it*", "the necessity of loving and *being loved*"); d) it could be negated by the VP-negating particle *not* (e.g., "my *not* leaving"); and e) it could take a subject in a case other than the genitive (e.g., "I didn't know about *the weather* being so awful in this area"). The preliminary stages of this process of increasing verbalization can be detected as early as in the second half of the twelfth century (see Tajima 1985: 137), but,

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2 It has to be acknowledged, however, that occasional vestiges of this type of gerund can be found even in contemporary English; see Dienhart – Jakobsen (1985), who adduce instances from the 1960's and 1970's. Also Pullum (1991: 797, note 5), who quotes the phrase *the being too weak to make it through a complete rehearsal*, from the gay literary magazine *Long Shots* (Vol. 10, 1991: 1), an example that he is inclined to dismiss as "simply a word-processing or editing error".

3 On the development of the gerund, see, among others, Jespersen (1909-1949: V, Chapters VIII-IX), Visser (1963-1973: §§1035-1124), Wik (1973), Tajima (1985), Donner (1986), Koma (1987), Jack (1988), Houston (1989), Bourcier (1992), van der Wurff (1993), and Fanego (1996 a,b,c).

as recent research has made clear (cf. in particular Donner 1986), the regular and systematic use of the gerund with fully verbal characteristics was not an established feature of Middle English syntax; as Donner notes (Donner 1986: 400):

> no [ME] writer except Pecock uses [verbal] gerunds regularly, normally, and naturally as part of his syntactic repertoire. Where they do occur, if not occasioned by Latin or French gerunds, they look rather more like solecisms than signs of a developing syntactic innovation. The true development is to be sought among later writers.

It seems worthwhile, therefore, to investigate the extent to which the various gerundial patterns available in the language since Middle English times became stabilized in the course of the Early Modern period. To address this issue, I will first discuss the nature of the corpus on which the present research has been based (Section 2). Sections 3 and 4 are concerned, respectively, with the distinction between gerund phrases and other related constructions, and with a number of problematic issues in the classification of gerunds. The long Section 5 focuses on three aspects of the grammar of the gerund, namely, a) the expansion in the use of gerund phrases in eModE; b) their distribution according to syntactic function; and c) their process of increasing verbalization. Finally, a summary of the main conclusions is given in Section 6. Since this study is only meant as a preliminary approach to the topic, a number of issues central to the grammar of the gerund have been left for discussion in a future paper; among others, the interrelation between verbalization and text type, the discourse function of gerunds, and, tied up with this, the variability between gerunds and absolute participles on the one hand and between gerunds and infinitival constructions on the other, the nature of control in gerundial phrases and clauses, the distinction between factive and action gerunds (e.g., *his being a policeman alters everything* vs. *shooting wild geese is not allowed here*; cf. Declerck 1991: 495 ff), or, lastly, the factors controlling the form adopted by the gerund's notional subject (e.g., *John('s) knowing the truth* vs. *the coming of the Prince of Wales*).

2. The corpus

As already noted, this study is based on the Early Modern English section of the Helsinki Corpus of English Texts (cf. Kytö [2]1993; Kytö – Rissanen 1993). The Early Modern English section of the Helsinki Corpus (551,000 running words) is divided into three subsections covering the

years 1500-1570 (E1), 1570-1640 (E2) and 1640-1710 (E3). To ensure text type continuity and representativeness, all three subsections contain samples of the same 15 genres,[4] viz. Law, Handbooks, Science, Educational Treatises, Philosophy, Sermons, Trial Proceedings, History, Travelogue, Diaries, Biography, Fiction, Comedy, and Private and Official Letters (for the principles of compilation and other details, see Nevalainen – Raumolin-Brunberg 1993). For this research, however, only part of this material was examined, as indicated in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Number of words analysed per genre and subperiod

	E1	E2	E3	Total
Diaries	13,060	12,520	11,210	36,790
Private letters	10,640	11,590	13,140	35,370
Fiction	11,550	12,490	12,040	36,080
Comedies	10,570	11,810	12,740	35,120
Law (Statutes)	11,790	11,780	13,180	36,750
Philosophy	9,890	6,880	8,820	25,590
Science	12,880	13,040	11,280	37,200
Handbooks	10,000	12,290	11,370	33,660
Trials	7,637	7,691	8,544	23,872
Sermons	5,724	5,007	6,458	17,189
Total	103,741	105,098	108,782	317,621

For eight of the genres (Diaries, Private Letters, Fiction, Comedies, Statutes, Philosophy, Handbooks, and Science), I analysed the whole of the relevant samples represented in the eModE section of the Helsinki Corpus. These eight registers can thus be seen as a primary corpus, which I supplemented with shorter excerpts from Trials and Sermons (see Appendix I for the specific passages examined in the case of these last two genres; for details on the other texts, see Kytö [2]1993).

Diaries, Private Letters, Comedies and most of the Fiction samples (the exception being Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*, for which see below) are classified as 'informal' by the compilers of the Helsinki Corpus. Statutes, Sermons and Trials are coded as 'formal', while the value X (= "parameter not applicable or irrelevant") is assigned to the novel *Oroonoko*

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4 In addition, subsections E1 and E2, but not E3, contain excerpts from the Bible.

and to the other text types examined, namely Philosophy, Handbooks and Science. From the point of view of their relationship to the spoken language, Trial Proceedings are characterised in the Helsinki Corpus manual as speech-based, Comedies as written to be spoken (= code value 'script'), and all other genres as written texts. Finally, in terms of the traditional classification (see, e.g., Werlich 1976: 39-41) into forms of discourse such as description, exposition, argumentation, etc., the texts examined can be classified as expository (Science), statutory (Statutes), imaginative narration (Fiction), non-imaginative narration (Diaries), religious instruction (Sermons), and secular instruction (Handbooks). The X value would apply to the remaining four genres investigated. At this stage, however, not much use has been made of these various textual parameters; as already noted in Section 1 above, their interrelation with the grammar of gerundial constructions will be examined in another paper.

3. Gerunds and related constructions

One of the major problems in quantitative studies lies in the fuzzy edges of linguistic structures. Gerundial constructions constitute no exception in this respect, so in this section I will briefly try to clarify exactly which -*ing* forms are to be considered gerunds (in the rather special sense defined above), and hence as falling within the scope of this investigation.

From what has been said so far, it is clear that this paper is concerned only with those deverbal nouns in -*ing* capable of undergoing the process of verbalization detailed in Section 1; in other words, a distinction must be made between, on the one hand, abstract -*ing* nominals and, on the other, deverbal nouns in -*ing* used concretely, such as *lynyng* and *binding* in the following examples. These latter have naturally been excluded from the analysis:

> (4) E1 1511-1512 *Statutes* III 34: The cappe made of the seid fynest Leemynster woll to be marked in the *lynyng* of the same cappe with a le<tter> L.
> (5) E3 1699 Langford *Plain and Full Instructions* 33: About a month after the inoculating, or sooner, if you perceive the bark swell where *the binding* is, cut off *the binding*.

A rather more difficult task is drawing the borderline between gerunds and present participles. As is well known, in Old English the inflection of the present participle was -*ende*, while the verbal noun was formed, as already noted, with -*ung* or -*ing* and was clearly distinct. In the course

of the Middle English period, however, both forms coalesced as *-ing* (see Mustanoja 1960: 547 ff; Visser 1963-1973: §§1021-38; Lass 1992: 145-146). This coalescence, according to some scholars, ultimately led to the transference of verbal properties from the present participle to the verbal noun, thus bringing about the syntactic development noted in Section 1 of this paper (see Jack 1988: 24-27 for a useful summary of this view; also Houston 1989). Recently, however, Jack (1988: 27) has argued quite convincingly that

> the fact that the gerund is found at an early date in Northern ME, where the verbal noun and the present participle remained distinct [i.e., respectively *-ing* and *-and(e)*], shows that the development of the gerund could take place quite independently of any merger between the verbal noun and the present participle.

It does not follow from this, however, that the coalescence of the *-ing* noun with the participle had no role in furthering the verbalization of the former; as Jack (1988) also admits, "in practice it is likely that merger of the two forms did promote the use of the [verbal] gerund", even though it may not have been its ultimate source. At any rate, from Middle English onwards, one comes across a number of constructions that testify to the lack of a clear dividing line between at least certain uses of the gerund and of the present participle. Those relevant to the purposes of the present study are examined in the sections that follow.

3.1. Type "he was writing of a letter"

This type represents a variant of the progressive in which the object of the verb surfaces as an *of*-phrase, thus resembling the object of a nominal gerund. The construction, which has been extensively discussed in the relevant literature (see, for instance, Jespersen 1909-1949: IV §12.3(4); Visser 1963-1973: §1869; Denison 1993: 388 ff; Elsness 1994: 14-15), is recorded since the late fourteenth century and becomes "substandard about the beginning of the nineteenth" (Visser 1963-1973: §1869); for some time, it coexisted with the progressive proper (i.e., *he was writing a letter*), and also with a gerundial type of similar function in which

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5   In a paper devoted to the progressive as illustrated in the eModE section of the Helsinki Corpus, Elsness asserts (1994: 22) that all of his recorded examples of this *BE in/a* V-*ing* pattern "either express a passive meaning or they are intransitive", from which he concludes that "the *-ing* form in these cases was felt to retain some of its gerundial status; even though gerundial verbs may also take objects, such objects are less likely in constructions of the original prepositional

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the *-ing* form is preceded by a preposition, usually *in*, *an* or *a*, as in examples (6)-(8):[5]

> (6) 1523-1525 Berners *Froissart* VI, 54 [Visser §1870]: he had been a hunting of the hare.
> (7) 1533 St. Thomas More. *Wks.* (1557) 962 H4 [Visser §1871]: euen while I was in wryting of thys Chapiter.
> (8) E3 1688 Behn *Oroonoko* 157: it gave him also an opportunity, one day, when the prince was a hunting, to wait on a man of quality.

Though the three types just discussed are closely interrelated, on purely formal grounds I have decided to accord gerund status, and thus to include it in all statistical counts, only to the pattern mentioned in the last place (i.e., *he was in/an/a writing [of a letter]*). As regards the hybrid construction *he was writing of a letter*, this occurs 6 times in the corpus, as follows: 1 ex. in Henry Machyn's *Diary* (1553-59: 45), 1 ex. in Armin's *Nest of Ninnies* (1608: 14), 2 ex. in Samuel Pepys' *Diary* (1666-67: 316; 320), 1 ex. in Pepys' *Penny Merriments* (1684-85: 117), and, lastly, 1 ex. in Latimer's *Sermon on the Ploughers* (1549: 26), in a passage markedly colloquial in tone. On the whole, in its association with informal registers like Diaries and Fiction, the distribution of this type is analogous to that of the pattern with a weakened prepositional remnant *a*, as in (6) and (8) above (5 ex. of this latter pattern in Letters, 4 in Fiction, and 3 in Comedies).

3.2. Type "they came carrying of torches"

It can be argued that in structures like *he stood looking at the crowd* or *she came singing songs*, in which the matrix verb is one of rest or movement, the *-ing* form represents, historically, the present participle; cf. in this connection OE *starigende stodon, com fleogende* (see Mitchell 1985: 412). According to Visser (1963-1973: §1121), the gerundial variant of such constructions, with *of* preceding the object of the *-ing* form, "first appears in the fourteenth century, remains rare until the end of the fifteenth century, but then becomes remarkably frequent in the sixteenth century and the first decades of the seventeenth century [...] nowadays

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type". This statement, however, is inaccurate: though it is true that all the instances of this type appearing in the Helsinki Corpus happen to contain intransitive *-ing* forms, this was by no means mandatory, as can be inferred from examples like (6)-(7) above and from the evidence adduced by Visser (§1870).

6   It must be borne in mind, however, that, as noted by Dal (1952: 101-102), already in OE there existed a parallel structure after verbs of rest and movement involving the preposition *on* + a verbal noun in *-ung/-ing*, as in *com on ridinge*.

it is only dialectal or sub-standard".[6] In the corpus, there are only two examples of the *of*-pattern (see [9]-[10] below), both in the diary of Henry Machyn; elsewhere, *-ing* forms after verbs of rest and movement are treated participially, as in (11). In view of this, and also because of the obvious affinities between this construction and the progressive type *he was writing of a letter* discussed in the previous section, it has seemed advisable not to include Machyn's two examples in the overall count of gerunds.

> (9) E1 1553-59 Machyn *Diary* 101: then *cam* the men rydyng, *carehyng of torchys* a lx bornyng, at bowt the corsse all the way;
> (10) *Ibid.* 198: The xxv day they wher browt to the cowrt with musyke to dener, for ther was gret cher; and after dener to b[ear] and bull baytyng, and the Quen['s] grace and the embassadurs *stod in the galere lokyng of the pastym* tyll vj at nyght;
> (11) E2 1608 Armin *Nest of Ninnies* 14: Ile quence ye anone Sir Willies pie, sayes he; and straight, very subtilly, leapes into the moate up to the arm-pits, and there *stood eating the pie.*

3.3. Gerunds and absolute participles

More generally, the tendency for gerunds and participles to merge can be observed in a number of structures involving absolute uses of the participle. Consider in this respect the following examples:

> (12) 1676 Walton *Angler* 204 [Jespersen §V 5.1(2)]: they are to be fish'd for there, *with your hook alwaies touching the ground.*
> (13) E3 1675-76 Boyle *Electricity* 27: When one of these Beauties first shew'd me this Experiment, I turn'd it into a Complemental Raillery, *as suspecting there might be some trick in it,*

Here *with* and *as* function as particles that serve to introduce, or 'augment' (for this label, cf. Kortmann 1991: 194 ff), an absolute participle.[7] In principle, then, these structures are outside the scope of the present study; yet it is clear in the light of (14)-(16) below, where the object of the *-ing* form surfaces as an *of*-phrase, that these common participial constructions could at times be treated gerundially:

> (14) E1 1553-59 Machyn *Diary* 47: and then cam the corpse with

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7 In fact, the structures introduced by *with* and *as* ought to be distinguished as absolute participles and free adjuncts respectively (cf. Kortmann 1991: 17-23); for ease of reference, however, I will go on using the term 'absolute participle' for both. On this use of *with*, cf. further Jespersen (1909-1949: V §5.1 ff); Mustanoja (1960: 116-117); Visser (1963-1973: §§1083, 1156). On *as*, see Söderlind (1958: 168-170).

iiij penons of arms borne a-bowt her... stayffes torchys bornyng a-bowt her *with xij of ys servands beyryng of them*;
> (15) E2 1603 Raleigh *Trial* I.216.C1: My Lord Cobham confesseth Sir Walter Raleigh to be guilty of all these Treasons. The Question is, whether he be guilty as joining with him, or *instigating of him*?
> (16) E2 1593 Queen Elizabeth *Boethius* 91: Then *as begynning of an other theme*, thus she disputed:

Whether such cases should be included or not in the statistical results is difficult to decide; with some diffidence, I opted for counting the gerundial examples, which are the three quoted above, and excluding the participial ones, as in (12)-(13).

The various constructions examined in this and the previous sections testify, as already noted, to the lack of a clear dividing line between gerunds and participles in earlier stages of English. Though this is a topic that deserves more detailed investigation, I would like to mention in passing that, apart from the formal identity between the gerund and the present participle, another factor that must have contributed to erode the distinction between them, and thus to promote the acquisition of verbal syntax by the gerund, is the fact that in Middle and Early Modern English there were, apparently, no limitations on the inventory of lexical items that could serve as augmentors of absolute past participles (cf. Jespersen 1909-1949: V §5.3 ff; Mustanoja 1960: 563-64; Visser 1963-1973: §1156). In other words, particles like *after, at, before, by*, and so forth were freely used to introduce structures like the following:[8]

> (17) E1 1550-52 Edward VI *Diary* 354: Wherupon the duke sent him a lettre of defiaunce, and called Paulmer, who *after denial made of his declaracion* was let goe.
> (18) E2 1592-1593 *Statutes* IV 857: sundrie p<er>sons [...] have craftelye and deceytfullie uttered and soulde the same [i.e., cables and cordage], beinge tarred, as newe good and stronge [...] by tarringe of them *before the same putt to sale,*

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8 In OE, the use of particles as augmentors of absolute past participles was apparently much less extensive than in ME or eModE. Mitchell (1985: 919-921) notes only four cases of *aefter* in this function, regarding which he "suspects Latin influence", though he admits the possibility that the idiom may have been "if not native, at least naturalized". In addition, *mid* (later superseded by *with*) could also be used in the same way; cf. Mustanoja (1960: 116-117).

9 The affinities are particularly obvious as regards gerunds with a preposed object, as in (19), an arrangement that was frequent in Middle English (cf. Tajima 1985: 45 ff; also Foster – van der Wurff 1995: 318 ff). In E1, it is occasionally met with; see footnote 22 below.

These sequences have much in common with gerund phrases functioning as complement of a preposition[9] and, in fact, the following passage from Statutes, where gerunds occur in combination with an absolute past participle (= "...other thyng put therunto deceyvably"), shows the extent to which both constructions could be felt as interchangeable:

> (19) E1 1511-12 *Statutes* III 28: And that the breker or kember to delyv<er> agayn to the seid Clothier the same Woll [...] the wast thereof excepted *without any part therof concealyng* or *eny more oyle water or other thyng put therunto deceyvably* [...] all the same yerne as the Clothier or eny p<er>sone for hym shall delyv<er> to the same Wev<er> with his usyd mark put to the same *without changyng or any p ar cell therof levyng out of the same webbe* or that restore to the same Clothier the surpluis of the same yerne if eny be left [...] *without eny more oyle brene moistur dust sonde or other thyng deceyvably puttyng to or castyng to the same Webbe*

Even more remarkable is (20): if the phrase *Capt. Trevanions* is in fact marked for the genitive, as it appears to be, then this looks like an extreme case of confusion between a prepositional gerund and an augmented absolute past participle:[10]

> (20) E3 1673 *Haddock Correspondence* (Richard Haddock, Sr.) 21: I wrote the [i.e., 'thee'] two dayes since of God's goodnes to mee in o<u>r late bataile. I gave the acct<oun>t *of Capt. Trevanions suposed to be killed*, but he is well; and also Capt. Courtney, w<hi>ich was reported to be killed, is alive and well.

4. Problematic issues in the classification of gerunds

Giving an account of the grammar of the gerund in Early Modern English necessarily involves devising some system of classification of the gerunds recorded. As will become clear in later sections, the specific system

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10 Another noteworthy example is the following:

> E1 1534 Fitzherbert *Husbandry* 100: you muste spare at the brynke, and not at the bottom, that is to vnderstande, in the begynnynge of the yere, *sellynge of thy cornes*, or spendynge in thy house, vnto the tyme that thou haue sowen agayne thy wynter-corne.

Here the absolute participle *sellynge* appears to govern an *of*-phrase, as though it were a gerund; but, alternatively, *of* might be interpreted not as the preposition, but rather as the adverb *off* (i.e., *selling off...*).

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adopted in these pages is based, primarily, on the recognition of three sets of distinctions, as follows:

a) From the point of view of their internal syntax, gerundial constructions are seen as either nominal (see [21] below), verbal (see [22]), or mixed nomino-verbal. Further, within mixed gerunds two subtypes have been distinguished, namely: a) POSS-*ing* constructions, where the (otherwise verbal) gerund is modified by a possessive pronoun or phrase, as in (23): and b) mixed gerunds proper (henceforth abbreviated MIX), where the gerund is mixed by virtue of combining verbal properties with nominal properties other than premodification by a possessive phrase (cf. [24] below and also [3b] above). As noted in Section 1 of this paper, it is this second subtype of mixed gerund that is disallowed by the grammar of Present-day English.[11]

> (21) E3 1666-1667 Pepys *Diary* VII, 416: And among other things, I to my chamber and there to ticket a good part of my books, *in order to the Numbring of them* [...]
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> (22) E3 1666 *Oxinden Letters* (Elizabeth Oxinden) 308: I have used my utmost indeavour to get som [oysters] in order to your command but cannot posible get any as yet, they being so very rare, *by reason the seamen being all prest*, that there is none left to get them.
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> (23) E3 1675-1676 Boyle *Electricity* 18: [we] then brought the Electric, as soon as we could, to settle *notwithstanding its hanging freely at the bottom of the string.*
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> (24) E2 1599-1601 Hoby *Diary* 72: I went to church and, from thence returninge, I praised god both *for the inableinge the minister so profettably to declare the word as he had* [...]

b) Gerund phrases can also be classified according to whether they have: a) no other constituents apart from the head gerund itself, as in (25) (henceforth Type I); b) pre-head dependents only (= Type II; cf. [26]); c) post-head dependents only (= Type III; cf. [27]); d) both pre- and post-head dependents (= Type IV; cf. [28]):

> (25) E2 1608 Armin *Nest of Ninnies* 10: The knight demaunded

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11 The label MIX has also been applied to an example like the following, where the gerund phrase contains, apart from a possessive determiner, another nominal feature (= the adjective *easy*) combined with a verbal one (= the direct object *them*):

> E3 1666-1667 Pepys *Diary* VII, 416: I to my chamber and there to ticket a good part of my books [...] *for my easy finding them to read*, as I have occasion.

the reason of his laughing [...] -for *laughing* could neuer come in a better time-

(26) *Ibid.* 12: Upon a time he had a great charge from his Lady to make her a quince pie of purpose *for Sir Williams owne eating* [...]

(27) E3 1688 Behn *Oroonoko* 161: she cou'd only sigh and weep there, and think of Oroonoko; and oftentimes cou'd not forbear *speaking of him,*

(28) E2 1625 Markham *Countrey Contentments* 106: For the depth of milke in Kine (which is *the giuing of most milke*) being the maine of a Hus-wifes profit, shee shall bee verie carefull to haue that quality in her beasts.

c) Lastly, according to their function in the superordinate structure, gerundial constructions can be: a) subjects (cf. [25]); b) objects (cf. [27]); c) predicatives (cf. [28]); d) prepositional complements (cf. [26]); and e) appositives, as in (29) below. Marginally, they can also occur absolutely, that is, without being formally dependent on a higher matrix, as in (30)-(31):

(29) E3 1671 Tillotson *Scoffing at Religion* 429: to adore that great mystery of Divine love (which the Angels, better and nobler Creatures than we are, desire to pry into) *God's sending his onely Son into the world to save sinners,*

(30) E1 1550-1552 Edward VI *Diary* 255: Removing to Grenwich from Whestmuster.

(31) E3 1689-1690 Evelyn *Diary* 901: E. of Notingham & about 20 Lords and many Bishops, entred their protests &c. but the Concurrence was greater against them -The Princesse hourely Expected: *Forces sending to Ireland* [i.e., 'sending of forces to Ireland'], that Kingdome being in great danger, by the E. of Tyrconnells Armie, & expectations from France:

Whereas identifying the function of gerund phrases proves generally unproblematic, their classification according to the parameters listed under *(a)* and *(b)* above involves a number of analytic difficulties. These are examined in the remainder of this section.

4.1. Disambiguating between nominal, verbal and mixed gerunds

As noted in Section 1 of this paper, gerunds can be characterized as verbal rather than nominal on the basis of properties such as, for instance, compatibility with a subject in a case other than the genitive ("*Emma*

reading the poem"), with a predicative complement or a NP object ("I don't like being *ill*", "I hate playing *tennis*"), and with the auxiliaries *have* and *be* ("of *having* done it", "the necessity of *being* loved") and the VP-negating particle *not* ("punished for *not* doing it"); cf. for further details on these and other related features Pullum (1991) and Blevins (1994). Also crucial is the ability of the verbal gerund to co-occur with certain adverbs or adverbial adjuncts not allowed by nominal categories; compare in this connection "my *quietly* leaving" vs. "*her *quietly* voice". However, despite these abundant clues as to category, the analysis of actual examples in the corpus has often proved problematic, as will become clear from the discussion that follows.

4.1.1. Gerunds modified by locative and temporal adverbials

Not rarely, the reliability of the data adduced in research on the development of the gerund is seriously impaired by the treatment given to locative and temporal adverbials. Thus Tajima opens his discussion (1985: 95 ff) of the gerund with adverbial adjunct by pointing out that the "verbal nature of the gerund asserts itself when the gerund is modified by an adverbial adjunct [...] which can only be used together with a verb." Yet a great many of the examples he adduces as illustration involve locative and temporal adverbials, and cannot, therefore, be accepted as showing that the -*ing* form had acquired a verbal character. For, as noted by Visser (§1035), Donner (1986: 395), and Jack (1988: 56-58), adverbials of time and place can freely co-occur with nouns and verbs, both in Present-day English and in earlier stages of the language; witness in this respect ME sequences like "the way thiderward" (*Pr Consc* 7539), "his tenants there" (*Lond Eng* 225/16; see Jack 1988: 56), or, from Present-day English, "the shop on the corner", "an hour before our departure", "the journey back", "circumstances today", etc. Corpus examples like (32)-(33) below are, therefore, syntactically opaque, in that they cannot be uniquely classified; as a consequence, in statistical information they have been assigned the label 'ambiguous':

(32) E3 1684-1685 Pepys *Penny Merriments* 160: provided she would when her Husband and she was *a walking in the Garden,* pretend to Long for some Fruit [...]

(33) E2 1625 Lady Brilliana Harley *Letters* 2: which ascurance of your health is the beest nwes I can heare, except that *of your comeing home.*

4.1.2. Gerunds modified by quantifying and manner adverbs

Adverbs of 'quantification' (*frequently, rarely, often*) and manner are incompatible with nominal categories in Present-day English, and the same seems to be generally true of Early Modern English. The main exception to this rule concerns items like *once, twice, thrice, often* and *well*, which in the corpus and in other writings from the period occur as premodifiers not only of gerunds, but also of deverbal nouns in general; thus, constructions like "the well payment", "the twice returne" or "hys often comfortes" are quoted by the *OED* in the relevant places (s.v. *Often* B.adj.; *Twice* adv. 4; *Thrice* adv. 4; *Well* adj. 8b and *Well* adv. 30). A comparable example from the corpus is (34), while (35)-(38) illustrate the use of these items in combination with a noun in *-ing*:

> (34) E1 1568 Turner *Wines* B6V: Galen I graunt in his booke of good and ill iuices, writeth that *the often vse* of such medicines [...]
> (35) E2 1603 Raleigh *Trial* 215.C1: I am afraid *my often speaking* (who am inferiour to my Lords here present) will make the World think I delight to hear my self talk.
> (36) E1 1534 More *Letters* 546: The blessed apostle S. Paule founde such lacke of strength in himself, that [...] he was fain thrise to call and cry out vnto God, to take that temptacion from hym. And yet sped he not of his prayer. [...] For God [...] wolde not *at his thrise praying*, by and by take it from hym [...]
> (37) E2 1615 Markham *Countrey Contentments* 78: if he [i.e., the horse] refuse to drinke it, yet care not but let him fast without drink till he take it, which assuredly he will doe *in twice or thrice offering*.
> (38) *Ibid*. 109: Touching *the well ordering of milke* after it is come home to the Dairie, the maine point belonging therunto is the Hus-wiues cleanlinesse [...]

In view of their compatibility with non gerundial nouns, as in (34), it seems safer to say that in all of the examples above the items under discussion are to be categorised as adjectives, rather than as adverbs, from which it follows that the gerunds in (35)-(38) and in similar instances must be considered nominal, and not verbal or mixed. With some diffidence, this is the approach I have adopted in the six cases of this type recorded in the corpus (2 involving *often*, 2 with *well*, and 2 with *twice/thrice*). But, whatever decision is taken, what is clear is that such sequences testify to the structural instability in Early Modern English of *-ing* nouns and, more generally, of deverbal nouns. They also reflect the well known fact that in earlier stages of the language the use of adverbs

as premodifiers in the noun phrase was not so restricted as today (cf. Jespersen 1909-1949: II §§12.271, 14.9; Raumolin-Brunberg 1991: 104, note 5); eModE collocations like *thy heere approach, our now reasons* (cf. Barber 1976: 232), or the already quoted *the often vse* (see [34]) illustrate a type of construction which looks alien from a contemporary perspective, when adjectives and adverbs have become categorially more sharply distinguished.

4.1.3. Gerunds of prepositional and phrasal verbs

Examples of gerunds formed on prepositional verbs (*call upon, look for, presume on*, etc.) have been on record since early Middle English times (cf. Tajima 1985: 106 ff). Instances from the corpus include the following:

> (39) E1 1567 Harman *A Caveat* 42: Thus, being moued with pytie, and loked in his purse to finde out a penye; and *in loking for the same*, he plucked oute viii. shyllinges [...]
> (40) E2 1603-1604 *Statutes* IV 1026: suche cruell and bloodie Malefactors, whoe heretofore have bene thereunto imboldened *by presuming on the benefit of Cleargie*;

These and similar cases have not been interpreted as indicating adverbial modification of the *-ing* form (as is done, for instance, by Tajima 1985: 106-109), but, rather, as being obtained through direct derivation from the verb-preposition combination. This implies that, in the absence of other clues as to categorial status, such gerund phrases have been considered ambiguous between the verbal and nominal categories.

For much the same reasons, gerunds derived from phrasal verbs, as in (41)-(43) below, do not provide satisfactory evidence of the verbalization of the gerund, as both Donner (1986: 395) and Jack (1988: 57) aptly note. Hence their classification as either nominal or verbal has been done on the basis of contextual clues like, for instance, the type of object following them (i.e., *of*-phrase vs. noun phrase). Thus, (41) below has been considered nominal, (42) verbal; where no object follows, as in (43), the sequence has been interpreted as nominal and has been assigned to the group of gerund phrases containing only pre-head dependents (i.e., Type II; cf. Section 4 above):

> (41) E1 1554 Throckmorton *Trial* 66.C1: Thus much *for the sending down of Winter*.
> (42) E3 1699 Langford *Plain and Full Instructions* 115: Hares and Rabbets are very mischievous to Nurseries, and young Orchards, *by peeling off the bark of the Plants:*

(43) E2 1582 Madox *Diary* 134: And Captain Skevington was the fyrst that sowght to bring anye quarel *to the ripping up*, [i.e., 'to disclosure']¹²

4.2. Gerunds and coordination

In the present study, coordinate constructions involving gerunds are treated statistically as separate units; in other words, in any given sequence of two or more coordinated gerunds, these have been counted separately. This applies even to cases of unitary coordination (cf. Quirk et al. 1985: 955; Raumolin-Brunberg 1991: 80-81; 85-86), that is, those in which the conjoins are so closely linked in meaning as to be roughly synonymous or repetitive, as in PE *law and order* or in the following corpus examples:

(44) E1 1511-1512 *Statutes* III 27: And that ev<er>y Capteigne [...] shall uppon the payne afore seid pay to the retynue of Souldeour or Souldeours [...] the Wag<e> ratably as is allowed unto theym by the Kyng [...] without *lessing or withdrawing* of any parte therof.

(45) E1 1566 Udall *Roister Doister* 1037: What *gaudyng and foolyng* is this afore my doore;

(46) E2 1588-1589 *Statutes* IV 810: whiche have not wrought soe good effecte for the *repressinge or avoydinge* of Horsestealinge as was expected:

This approach involves taking a number of decisions as regards the interpretation of the pre- and post-head dependents within each coordinated phrase. Basically, I ended up by recognizing the following three possibilities:

a) The conjoins are full, non elliptical, structures. In such cases, the analysis proves straightforward, since each gerund phrase can be classified and described in terms of its own constituents, as in (47) below; here I would speak of two gerund phrases, each containing its own pre- and post-head dependents:

(47) E3 1692 *Haddock Correspondence* (Richard Haddock, Jr.) 41: This is to acquaint of our ingaging with yᵉ French and of our haveing gott yᵉ victory.

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12 The corpus provides 10 instances of this kind. In addition, there are two -*ing* forms also derived from phrasal verbs that lack any pre- or post-head constituents (E2 1602 Clowes *Struma* 15: "by revulsion or *drawing back*"; E3 1684-85 Pepys *Penny Merriments* 149: "from holding forth [i.e., 'preaching']"). These have been classified as Type I (= gerund phrases without dependents).

b) The coordinated construction involves ellipsis, but it seems reasonable to postulate that whatever dependents are present are shared by both gerund heads, as in (48)-(49):

(48) E3 1685 Lisle *Trial* 121C2: he told me particularly of all the Passages and Discourses of his being beyond Sea, and coming from beyond Sea:

(49) E3 1688 Behn *Oroonoko* 193: all endeavours were us'd to exercise himself in such actions and sports as this world afforded, as [...] hunting and fishing, chasing and killing tygers of a monstrous size,

In (48), the assumption is that the possessive *his* serves as determiner for the two gerunds, hence they have been analysed as both containing pre- and post-modification, even though the pre-head dependent (*his*) is explicit only before the first conjoin. As regards (49), *hunting and fishing* are seen as two gerunds without dependents (Type I; see Section 4 above), while *chasing and killing tygers* have been counted as two gerunds of Type III, that is, with only post-head constituents.

c) The coordinated construction involves ellipsis and is, in addition, 'asymmetric'. This ad hoc label has been applied to various kinds of sequences for which the unitary treatment expounded under *(b)* above seems inadequate. Witness, for instance, the following corpus examples:

(50) E2 1615 Markham *Countrey Contentments* 79: After your horse hath beene exercised, either with *hunting*, running traine-sents or otherwise, you shall euer coole him well in the fielde [...]

(51) E2 1602-1603 *Statutes* IV 1027: And be it further enacted by the authoritie aforesaide, That if the Constables or Churchwardens doe neglecte theire duetie *in levyinge*, or do not levie the saide severall Penalties, [...]

(52) E2 1599-1601 Hoby *Diary* 76: then to the church, wher, after the hearing of the word and *receauinge the sacrementes*, I Came home and did praie:

Under the most natural interpretation of (50), *traine-sents* belongs only with *running*, and not with *hunting*, which would thus be a gerund without any dependents (= Type I). However, the fact that, according to the *OED* (s.v. *Train-scent* sb. Obs.), the noun *train-scent* usually occurred in the phrase 'hunt (or run) a train-scent' suggests that in the passage in question it might as well be functioning as the shared object of both -*ing* forms (i.e., *hunting* and *running*). As a consequence, the classifica-

tion of *hunting* in terms of whether it has, or does not have, dependents of its own proves difficult; a case like this has to be accounted for separately, at least for statistical purposes. Much the same applies to (51) and (52). In the former, given the change of construction (i.e., *in levyinge, or do not levie*), it would be inaccurate to describe the gerund as verbal; for, if the noun phrase object *the saide severall Penalties* had immediately followed *levyinge*, it is conceivable that the preposition *of* would have been inserted in between, to yield a nominal construction, that is, *in levyinge of the saide severall Penalties*. The same is true of (52): if the determiner *the*, with its strong suggestion of nominal syntax, had been repeated in front of the second conjoin, the result would probably have been a nominal construction rather than a verbal one, viz. *the receauinge of the sacrementes*. These and similar cases (44 in number in the corpus as a whole), many of which testify to the structural instability of the gerund in Early Modern English, have therefore been given separate treatment. In statistical information, they have usually been excluded from the results, unless otherwise stated.

5. Findings

With the exclusions noted in Section 3 above, the figures for occurrences of gerunds in the three subperiods examined are shown in Table 2. As the registers under study are of different sizes, I have also provided, in brackets, a normalised number for a text length of 10,000 words.[13] Tables 3 and 4, in their turn, give statistics for types of gerund phrase according to syntactic function and according to the presence of pre- and/or post-head dependents; in Table 3, the label 'oblique' stands for prepositional gerunds. Finally, Table 5 shows the distribution of gerunds in asymmetric coordination. For the breakdown of gerund phrases in each individual text type, see Appendix II, Tables 13-22. In the remainder of this section, the data shown in these various tables will be discussed in greater detail, starting first of all with the expansion in the use of gerunds in the course of the Early Modern English period.

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13 These normalised frequencies are computed as follows: divide the actual frequency count by the total words in the text, then multiply by 10,000. For instance, the normalised frequency of gerunds in E3 Philosophy is: (41:8,820) x 10,000 = 46.5. See Biber (1988: 14).

Table 2. Number of gerunds per text and subperiod, and normalised per 10,000 words (asymmetric gerunds included)

	E1	E2	E3	Total
Diaries	47 (36.0)	42 (33.5)	86 (76.7)	175 (47.6)
Letters	42 (39.5)	52 (44.9)	73 (55.5)	167 (47.2)
Fiction	34 (29.4)	47 (37.6)	63 (52.3)	144 (39.9)
Comedies	29 (27.4)	27 (22.9)	57 (44.7)	113 (32.2)
Statutes	110 (93.3)	101 (85.7)	97 (73.6)	308 (83.8)
Philosophy	23 (23.2)	24 (34.9)	41 (46.5)	88 (34.4)
Science	45 (34.9)	88 (67.5)	82 (72.7)	215 (57.8)
Handbooks	46 (46.0)	72 (58.6)	93 (81.8)	211 (62.7)
Trials	37 (48.4)	34 (44.2)	32 (37.4)	103 (43.1)
Sermons	45 (78.6)	15 (30.0)	34 (52.6)	94 (54.7)
Total	458 (44.1)	502 (47.8)	658 (60.5)	1,618 (50.9)

Table 3. Types of gerund phrase according to syntactic function

		E1	E2	E3	Total
NO DEPENDENTS	SUBJECT	9	6	5	20
	OBJECT	6	4	7	17
	OBLIQUE	64	61	81	206
	OTHER	3	3	2	8
PRE-HEAD DEPENDENTS	SUBJECT	16	13	10	39
	OBJECT	21	13	11	45
	OBLIQUE	48	60	27	135
	OTHER	6	–	–	6
POST-HEAD DEPENDENTS	SUBJECT	2	5	4	11
	OBJECT	2	6	11	19
	OBLIQUE	129	152	286	567
	OTHER	3	1	6	10
PRE- & POST-HEAD DEPENDENTS	SUBJECT	17	29	21	67
	OBJECT	26	18	23	67
	OBLIQUE	98	113	132	343
	OTHER	–	6	8	14
ASYMMETRIC PHRASES	SUBJECT	1	–	3	4
	OBJECT	1	2	1	4
	OBLIQUE	5	10	20	35
	OTHER	1	–	–	1
TOTAL		458	502	658	1,618

Table 4. Overall figures for types of gerund phrase, and normalised per 10,000 words

a) In primary corpus:

	E1	E2	E3
TYPE I (no dependents)	58 (6.41)	65 (7.03)	89 (9.49)
TYPE II (pre-head dependents)	77 (8.52)	75 (8.12)	40 (4.26)
TYPE III (post-head dependents)	117 (12.95)	145 (15.69)	282 (30.07)
TYPE IV (pre- & post-head dependents)	116 (12.83)	156 (16.88)	157 (16.74)

b) In corpus as a whole:

	E1	E2	E3
TYPE I (no dependents)	82 (7.90)	74 (7.04)	95 (8.73)
TYPE II (pre-head dependents)	91 (8.77)	86 (8.18)	48 (4.41)
TYPE III (post-head dependents)	136 (13.11)	164 (15.60)	307 (28.22)
TYPE IV (pre- & post-head dependents)	141 (13.59)	166 (15.79)	184 (16.91)

Table 5. Gerunds in asymmetric coordination

	E1	E2	E3
Diaries	2	1	4
Letters	–	1	1
Statutes	4	5	16
Fiction	1	–	–
Philosophy	1	–	–
Handbooks	–	1	–
Science	–	4	3
Total	8	12	24

5.1. Frequency of gerund phrases along the chronological dimension

Previous research on the development of the gerund has paid little attention to the question of its increase or decrease in frequency in the course of time; the main exception in this respect is Donner (1986), who, after examining the *-ing* forms quoted in the volumes of the *Middle English Dictionary* running from *A* through *O*, notes (p. 398) that in the fifteenth century there are almost twice as many citations for gerunds as in the fourteenth. In passing, he attributes this rise in the absolute frequency of *-ing* forms to "their utility as a ready means of deriving a noun from any verb, notably the torrent of French verbs that had come into the language" (Donner 1986: 398). Whether this latter observation is correct or not remains to be proved, but the data from the eModE section of the Helsinki Corpus indeed confirm the trend for gerunds to become more frequent in the course of time.

As Table 2 shows, in seven out of the ten registers examined, namely in Diaries, Private Letters, Fiction, Comedies, Philosophy, Handbooks and Science, the use of gerunds increases considerably from the sixteenth to the seventeenth centuries, and specially in subperiod E3 (1640-1710). Trials, Sermons, and Statutes do not share in this tendency, but it seems likely that the deviation of Sermons is more apparent than real, and should be put down to the stylistic peculiarities of one of the samples from subperiod E1, namely Latimer's *Sermon on the Ploughers* (2,985 words). This text alone contains 44 *-ing* forms (out of a total of 45 in E1 Sermons), a great many of which are short gerund phrases that occur several times through the sample; thus *ploughing*, as a metaphor for the duties of a preacher, is used 9 times; *lording* and *preaching* 4 times each, and so on. These repetitions are an important feature of Latimer's vivid and powerful style, which relies heavily on the insistent use of a few rhetorical devices like ironic questioning, verbal and syntactic parallelism, and synonymy. The following is a characteristic passage; gerunds (14 in number) appear in italics:

> (53) E1 1549 Latimer *Sermon on the Ploughers* 24-25: And I feare me thys lande is not yet rype to be ploughed. For as the saying is, it lacketh *wethering* this geare lacketh *wetheringe* at leaste way it is not for me to ploughe. For what shall I loke for amonge thornes but *prickyng and scratchinge*? what among stones but *stumblyng*? What (I had almost sayed) among serpenttes but *stingyng*? But thys muche I dare say, that sence *lording and loytrying* hath come vp, *preaching* hath come downe contrarie to the Apostells times. For they preached and lorded not. And now

they lorde and preache not. [...] Thei hauke, thei hunt, thei card, they dyce, they pastyme in theyr prelacies with galaunte gentlemen, with theyr daunsinge minyons, and with theyr freshe companions, so that *ploughinge* is set a syde. And by *the lordinge and loytryng, preachynge and ploughinge* is cleane gone.

It is this type of rhetorical patterning that accounts for the inordinately high frequency of gerunds in this text, namely, 147.4 per 10,000 words. This figure exceeds by far the frequency of 105.0 yielded by Langford's *Plain and Full Instructions to Raise All Sorts of Fruit Trees* (1699), the text coming second to Latimer's in terms of gerund percentage. Considering, therefore, that the number of gerunds in Sermons is 45 in E1, 15 in E2 and 34 in E3, it seems probable that, had Latimer's sermon been replaced by another sample, this text category would, too, have shown an increase in the use of *-ing* forms from E1 to E3.

As regards Statutes, their failure to participate in this trend could perhaps be related to the fact that, as Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg aptly note (1994: 195-196), in Early Modern English legal language "could no longer be regarded as a good representative of the standard norm [...] and was on its way to becoming an LSP (language for specific purposes) and thus gradually disappearing from the registers generally commanded by well-educated Englishmen". As I see it, this marginal character of Statutes is reflected in a number of ways as far as gerundial usage is concerned. First, in their unusually high frequencies for gerunds in both E1 and E2, respectively 93.3 and 85.7, at a time when all other text categories have much lower figures; see Table 2. Second, in the extensive use of listings and coordinate structures involving *-ing* forms; coordination, moreover, is often unitary, that is, the conjoins are so closely linked in meaning as to be practically synonymous (cf. examples [44] and [46] above), a feature which largely helps explain the high ratios referred to above. Thirdly, in the fact that, by E3, Statutes are using gerunds more sparingly (= 73.6 normalised frequency) than in the two earlier subperiods, and thus seem to be moving in a direction opposite to that of the other registers.

Another aspect worthy of mention in connection with the increase in the use of gerunds from E1 to E3 is that it does not affect all types of gerund phrase in the same way. Rather, as is clear from Table 4, it is more marked as regards phrases containing only post-head dependents (Type III), as in quotation (27) above; these rise from 136 instances in E1 to 307 in E3, or from a normalised figure of 13.11 in E1 to 28.22 in E3; that is, their ratio more than doubles. Gerund phrases without

dependents, as in (25) above, or with both pre- and post-head dependents, as in (28), also become more frequent, though their rise is less noticeable (from 6.41 to 9.49 and from 12.83 to 16.74 respectively, in the eight registers making up the primary corpus of this investigation). By contrast, the normalised frequency of gerunds with only pre-head modifiers (Type II), as in (54)-(56) below, falls from 8.77 in E1 to only 4.41 in E3 (that is, from 91 instances to only 48); from Tables 13-22 in Appendix II, it can be observed that this trend towards a decrease in the number of Type II phrases applies to most text types, with the sole exceptions of Trials and Fiction.

The above mentioned data provide an interesting contrast to Raumolin-Brunberg's finding that one of the major differences between the noun phrase in St. Thomas More's writings and in Present-day English is that there seems to have been a shift in the structure of the complex noun phrase, in that "phrases with only post-head dependents are more frequent in EModE than in PE" (1991: 270; see also p. 275). Clearly, this is a comment that does not apply to gerund phrases with only post-head dependents, for these, as we have just seen, are far more common in the late seventeenth century than in the early sixteenth, and it seems reasonable to assume that in late Modern and Present-day English their numbers will have continued to increase. In my view, the different behaviour in this respect of gerunds and noun phrases reflects the increasing verbalization of the former from E1 to E3: as gerunds move away from noun phrases in the course of the eModE period, there takes place a rise in the number of Type III gerunds (e.g., *after reading the book*), as these constitute the pattern most closely mirroring VP structure. At the same time, this growing verbalization of the gerund also helps explain the marked decrease in the occurrence of the most nominal type of gerund phrase, namely, that containing only pre-head constituents, as in (54)-(56) below; as already noted, this pattern falls from a normalised frequency of 8.77 in E1 to only 4.41 in E3:

> (54) E1 1502 *Plumpton Correspondence* (Agnes Plumpton) 167: Sir, ye, and I, and my sone, was content *at your departing*, that my sone should take the farmes at Martingmas of his tenaunts,
> (55) E1 1511-1512 *Statutes* III 29: wherby outlandishe nacyons with the same drap<er>y been sett to labor and occupacyon *to their grete enrichyng*,
> (56) E2 1591 Smith *Of Usurie* B4V: if there were loue there would bee no Vsurie, no deceit, no extortion, *no slaundering, no reuenging*, no oppression, but wee should liue in peace and ioye and contentment like the Angels;

Though this is an aspect on which more work is needed, provisionally I would hypothesise that, from the seventeenth century onwards, many of these purely nominal -*ing* forms came to be replaced by other deverbal nouns not ending in -*ing*; for instance, in examples like those above, by nouns like *departure, enrichment, slander* or *revenge*.[14] In other words, it seems to me that -*ing* has gradually come to be less freely used in the derivation of abstract nominals, though, by contrast, its productivity has increased as regards the formation of verbal gerunds. In connection with this, note here Joseph Emonds' observations (1973: 187) that in his own usage "[verbal] gerunds or derived nominals with other endings besides -*ing* are preferred", so that he resorts to -*ing* nominalizations "almost exclusively when [...] no other nominal form is available". He thus opposes 'preferred' sequences like *achieving one's goals/the achievement of one's goals* to less preferred ones like *the achieving of one's goals*.

5.2. Distribution of gerund phrases according to syntactic function

As noted in Sections 1 and 4 of this paper, gerunds can occur in a variety of syntactic positions, including those of subject, object, predicative, appositive, and complement of a preposition. According to Houston (1989), however, this last function appears to have always been the most common: after examining a total of 1,464[15] -*ing* forms dating from the 10th to the 17th centuries, she finds (p. 176) that "across time, there is a fairly constant trend for them to occur as the objects of prepositions". Specifically, her Table 1 (p. 177) shows that the ratios of prepositional gerunds, as compared with those occurring in subject and object position, range from 42% and 54% in the 10th-11th centuries to about 75% in the 17th.

Unfortunately, Houston's paper is flawed by a number of important errors, which implies that her data must be handled with caution. More

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14 As is well known, many new formations of this kind appeared throughout the 16th-19th centuries; see Marchand (^{2}1969: 234 ff) and van der Wurff (1993: 372-373). With a climate favouring linguistic innovation in eModE, and the lack of a norm blocking the formation of competing coinages (cf. Görlach 1991: 172), pairs of deverbal nouns with and without -*ing*, formed on the same verb and with roughly the same meaning, were not uncommonly found: *appraisal/appraising, departure/departing, colonization /colonizing*, etc. But little by little, a principle of linguistic economy must have tended to favour one of the options at the expense of the other.

15 In fact, Houston speaks of 1,474 gerunds. The figure 1,464 is obtained after correcting the totals of her Table 1; cf. my comments below on the errors of this table.

in particular, several of the percentages and totals in her Table 1 are inaccurate; for instance, the column corresponding to the 13th century gives the figure 114, instead of 94, as the result of adding up 19 subject gerunds, 34 object gerunds and 41 as prepositional complement; even worse than this, the 19 gerunds in subject position are said to represent 34% of all those recorded in that century, while they in fact amount to a mere 20.2%.[16] Houston's statistics, therefore, cannot be taken at face value, yet her observations as regards the tendency for gerunds, whether nominal or verbal, to be used preferably after prepositions seem to be confirmed by my own data, as discussed below, and also by Expósito's research (1995) on the noun phrase in Chancery English c1400-c1450. Expósito notes (307 ff) that, of the 135 nominal (or partly nominal) gerunds recorded in her 48,000-word corpus, 81.48% occur after a preposition, 12.59% are objects and a further 5.92% subjects.

Turning now to Table 6 below (see also Table 3), this reveals that in my corpus the overall distribution of gerund phrases according to syntactic function is as follows: 1,286 gerunds (= 79.5%) are used obliquely, that is, as complements of a preposition; 141 (= 8.7%) are subjects, 152 (= 9.4%) objects, and a further 39 (= 2.4%) occur in various other syntactic functions, as follows: 25 are predicatives, 8 are appositives, and 6 belong to the absolute type illustrated in quotations (30)-(31) above. When each subperiod is considered individually, it appears that, across time, the association between gerunds and prepositional use becomes firmer, rather than the other way round: note in this respect that oblique gerunds rise from 75.1% in E1 to 83.0% in E3; by contrast, subject and object gerunds represent 22.0% in E1 as against only 14.6% in E3. In view of this, a topic that deserves further investigation is the extent to which prepositional gerunds have continued to be the dominant ones in later stages of English.

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16 Another indication of Houston's careless handling of her data and sources can be found in the fact that she consistently refers to Tauno F. Mustanoja as T. Mustanejo, and to his well-known *Middle English Syntax* as *A Handbook of Middle English Syntax*.

Table 6. Oblique vs. non oblique gerunds (asymmetric gerunds included)

	E1	E2	E3	TOTAL
Subject	45 (9.8%)	53 (10.5 %)	43 (6.5 %)	141 (8.7%)
Object	56 (12.2%)	43 (8.5 %)	53 (8.1 %)	152 (9.4%)
Oblique	344 (75.1%)	396 (78.9 %)	546 (83.0 %)	1286 (79.5%)
Other	13 (2.8 %)	10 (2.0 %)	16 (2.4%)	39 (2.4%)

A second aspect worthy of note is the fact that the correlation of gerunds with prepositional use applies more markedly to two types of gerund phrase (see Table 7), namely Type I (i.e., without dependents) and Type III (i.e., with post-head dependents only). In other words, it appears that gerunds of Types II and IV (see examples [26] and [28] above), that is, those overtly marked as nominal by the presence of determiners, adjectives and other nominal premodifiers are comparatively less restricted in distribution than those lacking such indicators of nominal category. But even with this qualification, the tendency to be used preferably after prepositions applies to all four kinds of gerund phrase.

Table 7. Relative frequencies of prepositional gerunds according to type of phrase

	E1	E2	E3
TYPE I	78%	82.4%	85.3%
	(64 out of 82)	(61 out of 74)	(81 out of 95)
TYPE II	52.7%	69.8%	56.2%
	(48 out of 91)	(60 out of 86)	(27 out of 48)
TYPE III	94.8%	92.7%	93.2%
	(129 out of 136)	(152 out of 164)	(286 out of 307)
TYPE IV	69.5%	68.1%	71.7%
	(98 out of 141)	(113 out of 166)	(132 out of 184)

In view of these findings, the question arises of whether there is any explanation for the close correlation of gerunds with prepositional use. Clearly, an answer to this would require an exhaustive investigation of

Middle English material, which is something beyond the scope of this paper; the discussion that follows, therefore, is only meant to be tentative.

In an oft-quoted paper, Jack (1988: 54 ff), on the basis of early Middle English data from Tajima (1985: 60-62; 75-76), argues as follows:

a) The pattern gerund + object is "found in prepositional phrases in almost two-thirds of the instances in texts before 1350", while "the construction with a verbal noun + a phrase with *of* equivalent to an object [...] is found in prepositional phrases in less than one-third of the instances in the period from 1100 to 1300" (Jack 1988: 55). It thus appears that, at the time of its emergence in Middle English, "the construction with a [verbal] gerund + object had an association with prepositional use that was not shared by the semantically equivalent construction with a verbal noun" (Jack 1988: 55).

b) From this difference in distribution, it can be inferred that a major (though not the only) motivation behind the development of the verbal gerund may have been the failure of the ME infinitive to be governed by prepositions, which "left English without a form of the verb that could readily be employed as a nominalized element" in that syntactic position; "the [verbal] gerund provided just such a form" (Jack 1988: 62).[17]

As I see it, the chief weakness in this suggested line of development concerns Jack's claim that there existed a significant difference between nominal and verbal gerunds as regards use following prepositions.[18] For, as shown on the previous pages, the cumulative evidence of Houston (1989) and Expósito (1995) appears to indicate that the prepositional function was the one favoured in Middle English by all kinds of gerund, irrespective of whether they were nominal or verbal. Jack's impression to the contrary may have resulted from the comparatively limited nature of his evidence, namely, a collection of 45 nominal gerunds and 17 verbal ones adduced by Tajima for the period prior to 1350.

With this in mind, I would now like to consider in greater detail Jack's second claim, expounded under *(b)* above, that the development of the verbal gerund may have been tied up with the resistance of the ME infinitive to use after prepositions; this hypothesis, I think, should be reworded slightly, to say, instead, that the restricted distribution of the infinitive may help explain the marked tendency, repeatedly alluded to in this section, for all kinds of gerunds to function as prepositional

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17 For a similar view, see also Anderson (1993: 19).

18 Like Jack (1988), Donner (1986: 397) notes that in ME verbal gerunds are mostly dependent on a preposition; this is, of course, largely true, given the fact that, as repeatedly mentioned in this section, the majority of all gerunds in ME occurred prepositionally.

complements. In other words, what I am suggesting is that the great expansion in the use of prepositions in the course of the Middle English period, as a consequence of the decay of the Old English inflectional system (cf. Mustanoja 1960: 348 ff), must have given rise to a situation in which a form of the verb capable of being used prepositionally was often called for; the gerund may have come to fill this gap. But this process, as I see it, could have been largely independent of whether the gerund was syntactically nominal or verbal, for in sequences like (57)-(59) below the advantage of the gerund over the infinitive does not depend on the nature of its object (i.e., *of*-phrase or noun phrase), but, rather, on its ability to occur in a syntactic position from which the infinitive was excluded:

> (57) c1375 *William of Palerne* 1024 [Visser §1120]: For drede *of descuueryng of that* was do there.
> (58) ?a1400 *Parlement of the Thre Ages* 443 [Tajima 1985: 63]: David... Was caughte *from kepyng of schepe.*
> (59) ?a1400 *'Gest Hystoriale' of the Destruction of Troy* 12204 [Tajima 1988: 76]: This Vlixes... callis hym the cavse *of cacchyng this toun.*

The development of the gerund from nominal to verbal may later have followed from a combination of various factors which need not concern us here; Jack himself discusses (1988: 62-64) ten such factors, of which at least five seem to have contributed something to the verbalization of the *-ing* noun. Clearly, the possibility exists that, in addition, this verbalization may have started earlier with the many gerunds functioning as prepositional complements than with those few that were subjects, objects, or predicatives. This is an issue to which I return in 5.3 below.

5.3. The syntactic development of the gerund in Early Modern English

As suggested in the closing lines of the previous section, a tendency for *-ing* nouns to be verbalized earlier when occurring as complements of a preposition seems to be indicated by Houston's research (1989) on the gerund's acquisition of direct objects; specifically, she finds that the number of direct objects associated with verbal nouns in subject/object position between c1500 and c1550 is lower than the number of direct objects associated with verbal nouns in prepositional object position during the same period; see in this connection Table 8, adapted from Houston (1989: 182). She notes, too, that from c1600 to c1650 the differences between both types of gerund (i.e., oblique and non oblique) are no

longer statistically significant, from which she concludes that a rise for verbal nouns with direct objects in the position of prepositional complements "can be seen about 50 years before the same rise for verbal nouns in subject and object position" (1989: 181); there is thus a "short-lived but nevertheless perceptible lead of the verbal nouns in prepositional object position" (Houston 1989: 182).[19]

Table 8. Distribution of direct objects after verbal nouns, by syntactic position [adapted from Houston 1989: 182]

	Sub/Obj		Oblique		
Date	%	N	%	N	Total
c1350	0	0/42	2	1/43	85
c1400	0	0/22	0	0/40	62
c1450	3	1/39	3	4/127	166
c1500	0	0/20	4	1/26	46
c1550	4	1/24	31	13/42	66
c1600	54	15/28	64	40/62	90
c1650	38	5/13	60	38/63	76
Total					591

It is unfortunate that Houston, in keeping with the careless handling of data that is apparent in several places of her study (cf. section 5.2 above), has not bothered to provide separate statistics for the verbal nouns

19 Houston suggests that the explanation for this lead of prepositional gerunds lies in their relationship to so-called appositive participles, in that both constructions can often share the same discourse function, viz. providing information on time, manner, cause, goal and other related circumstances. Thus, in *(a)* and *(b)* below the appositive participle and the gerund are used to express cause [examples from Houston 1989: 187]:

> *(a)* Sir Samuel Baguel is lately slain there, *being stabd by Sir Laurence.* (*Letters of John Chamberlain*, 16th century).
> *(b)* God zelde yow for zoure labore for me *for gaderyng of my mony.* (*Paston Letters*, 15th century).

This functional similarity could, according to Houston, have contributed to the increasing similarity between prepositional verbal nouns and participles also "with respect to syntactic traits" (Houston 1989: 189). In other words, "though the verbal noun originally possessed only a nominal structure, sharing a discourse function (adverbial) with a more clearly verbal element in the language (the present participle) could have enabled it to move closer to the verbal end of the spectrum" (Houston 1989: 191-192), and hence to acquire such verbal traits as the ability to govern objects, to passivize, or to take the perfective auxiliary *have*.

I have been referring to as Type III (i.e., with post-head dependents only) and Type IV (with both pre- and post-head dependents). The behaviour of these two classes of phrase exhibits important differences, as has already been noted in sections 5.1-5.2 above; hence, joint treatment of their syntactic development in Early Modern English can only obscure the facts about the way in which verbalization proceeded in each case. In what follows, therefore, I have distinguished between these two types of gerund, a procedure which makes comparison of my data with Houston's virtually impossible. In addition, instead of restricting analysis to the most obvious manifestation of verbalization, namely the acquisition of direct objects (see Table 9), in Table 10[20] I have provided information on other aspects of that process, such as: a) the acquisition by verbal nouns of predicative complements; b) negation by means of the VP-negating particle *not*; and c) expression of voice and tense distinctions. No separate treatment has been given to one other manifestation of verbalization, namely adverbial modification (see section 4.1 above), but, somehow, the data for this is implicit in Tables 11-12,[21] where I summarise the ratios of nominal, verbal and mixed gerunds in the three subperiods examined.

20 Whereas the statistics in Table 9 refer only, for obvious reasons, to gerunds of Types III and IV, Table 10 is based on data from all four kinds of gerund phrase. Thus, the following examples illustrate, respectively, *not*-negation with a Type II gerund and the passivization of a Type I gerund:

> *(a)* E2 1629 *Barrington Family Letters* (Thomas Barrington) 116: My wife offers her dewtie and love to you, humblye desyreing your excuse *for her not wrighting.*
> *(b)* E3 1707 Farquhar *Beaux Stratagem* 64: But how shall I get off *without being observ'd?*

21 For much the same reason, there is no separate table charting the occurrence of common case subjects (e.g., E3 Evelyn *Diary* 927: "by *the French fleete* braving our Coast"); besides, their choice over possessive phrases and pronouns does not seem to be conditioned by the variable 'oblique' vs. 'non oblique', but, rather, by factors like the (relative) weight and complexity of the phrase in question or the animacy/non animacy of its referent. Both these aspects can be seen at work in the following passage:

> E3 1703 *Haddock Correspondence* (Richard Haddock, Sr.) 44: Your letter of the 17th November past, giveing me account of the unhapy disaster of *your ship* being run ashore by a Dutch pilot and of *your* happy getting off againe, I received 3 or 4 ds. after its date;

Table 9. Distribution of direct objects vs. *of*-phrases

E1				
TYPE III GERUNDS	oblique with object oblique with *of*-phrase	47 (40.2%) 70	non oblique with object non oblique with *of*-phrase	0 2
TYPE IV GERUNDS	oblique with object oblique with *of*-phrase	1 (1.7%) 58	non oblique with object non oblique with *of*-phrase	0 22

E2				
TYPE III GERUNDS	oblique with object oblique with *of*-phrase	95 (75.4%) 31	non oblique with object non oblique with *of*-phrase	3 (60%) 2
TYPE IV GERUNDS	oblique with object oblique with *of*-phrase	7 (8.7%) 73	non oblique with object non oblique with *of*-phrase	2 (5.9 %) 32

E3				
TYPE III GERUNDS	oblique with object oblique with *of*-phrase	200 (94.8%) 11	non oblique with object non oblique with *of*-phrase	12 (100%) 0
TYPE IV GERUNDS	oblique with object oblique with *of*-phrase	50 (55.5%) 40	non oblique with object non oblique with *of*-phrase	17 (48.6%) 18

Table 10. Oblique vs. non oblique gerunds in relation to four verbal features

a) PREDICATIVE COMPLEMENTS

E1		E2		E3	
oblique	1	oblique	4	oblique	17
non oblique	1	non oblique	–	non oblique	2

b) *NOT*-NEGATION

E1		E2		E3	
oblique	2	oblique	5	oblique	10
non oblique	–	non oblique	–	non oblique	2

c) PASSIVE FORMS

E1		E2		E3	
oblique	–	oblique	4	oblique	17
non oblique	–	non oblique	–	non oblique	3

d) PERFECT FORMS

E1		E2		E3	
oblique	–	oblique	–	oblique	7
non oblique	–	non oblique	–	non oblique	2

Table 11. Verbal, nominal and mixed gerunds (Type III)

E1			E2		
oblique	verbal	50 (41.0%)	oblique	verbal	104 (75.9%)
	nominal	69 (56.6%)		nominal	33 (24.1%)
	mixed	3 (2.4%)		mixed	–
	ambiguous	7		ambiguous	15
non oblique	verbal	–	non oblique	verbal	4 (57.1%)
	nominal	3 (75.0%)		nominal	2 (28.6%)
	mixed	1 (25.0%)		mixed	1 (14.3%)
	ambiguous	3		ambiguous	5

E3		
oblique	verbal	239 (95.6%)
	nominal	10 (4.0%)
	mixed	1 (0.4%)
	ambiguous	36
non oblique	verbal	14 (100%)
	nominal	–
	mixed	–
	ambiguous	7

Table 12. Verbal, nominal and mixed gerunds (Type IV)

E1			E2		
oblique	verbal	2 (2.5%)	oblique	verbal	–
	nominal	76 (96.2%)		nominal	90 (89.1%)
	poss-*ing*	–		poss-*ing*	5 (4.9%)
	mixed	1 (1.3%)		mixed	6 (5.9%)
	ambiguous	15		ambiguous	12
non oblique	verbal	–	non oblique	verbal	1 (2.0%)
	nominal	40 (97.6%)		nominal	46 (93.9%)
	poss-*ing*	–		poss-*ing*	–
	mixed	1 (2.4%)		mixed	2 (4.1%)
	ambiguous	2		ambiguous	4

E3		
oblique	verbal	7 (5.9%)
	nominal	49 (41.2%)
	poss-*ing*	36 (30.3%)
	mixed	27 (22.7%)
	ambiguous	13
non oblique	verbal	4 (8.3%)
	nominal	23 (47.9%)
	poss-*ing*	11 (22.9%)
	mixed	10 (20.8%)
	ambiguous	4

Starting then with Table 9 and the acquisition of direct objects,[22] on

22 For this table, I have only taken into account those *of*-phrases which can be considered semantically equivalent to an object, as in E3 1695 *Hatton Correspondence* (Anne Hatton) I,212: "The King sent yesterday for all the Queens chief officers, and, *upon seeing of them*, fell into a great passion". In other words, subjective *of*-phrases, like *of the Lord Governor* in E3 1688 Behn *Oroonoko* 193 "the coming of the Lord Governor" (cf. "the Lord Governor comes"), have been excluded from the statistics.

In addition, in the figures for Type IV oblique gerunds in subperiod E1, I have not included in the count four examples in which the pre-head element is a preposed object, as in 1534 More *Letters* 509: "...stirred by mine owne conscience (without *insectacion or reproch* laieng to any other mans) I suffre and endure this trouble". Such cases, which will be discussed at greater length in another paper, lack articles or other typically nominal modifiers, and hence do not properly constitute instances of the verbalization of Type IV; if anything, they would have to be computed among Type III gerunds with an object. The statistics for this latter type, however, would not vary significantly with such an addition.

the whole it can be said that the data confirm Houston's claim (p. 189) that objects first begin to occur with prepositional verbal nouns. Table 10 shows, moreover, that these are also the first to exhibit other verbal features, like *not*-negation and passive forms. At present, the exact implications of this earlier verbalization of prepositional gerunds are not clear to me (but see footnote 19 above).

A second aspect worthy of mention in connection with Table 9 is the time lapse existing between Type III and Type IV gerunds as regards the acquisition of direct objects: whereas with the former type objects are well represented already in E1, with the latter type they do not become common until E3, to the extent that, by E2, the percentage of Type IV gerunds with an object is still less than 10%.

This chronological difference in the process of verbalization of Types III and IV can be observed also as regards other verbal traits. Thus, predicatives and negative forms are found in E1 with Type III; in E2 with Type IV. Passive forms, in their turn, are instanced since E2 in the case of Type III, but not until E3 in that of Type IV. It can be said, then, that verbalization, as might have been expected, starts with the less nominal type of gerund, that is, that lacking nominal premodifiers, and is later extended to the more nominal Type IV.[23] By E3, the verbalization of Type III has nearly been completed, as can be seen specially from Tables 9 and 11: it has gone so far, in fact, that this type allows combinations of perfect and passive marking on the *-ing* form, as in the following corpus instance of a perfect passive gerund, a form which does not occur in Dryden (cf. Söderlind 1958: 201-202) and which is usually assumed to be a 19th-century development (see Jespersen 1909-1949: IV §7.8(4); Tajima 1985: 116):

> (60) E3 1688 Behn *Oroonoko* 161: He was troubled, for *having been forc'd*, by an irresistible passion, to rob his son of a treasure, he knew, cou'd not but be extremely dear to him;

Also significant in relation with Type III gerunds is the fact that, though verbal features, as already mentioned, are first found with prepositional gerunds, by E3 the ratio of verbalization among non prepositional ones has reached 100% (see Tables 9 and 11) and is thus higher than the ratio of verbalization among gerunds dependent on a preposition (=

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23 Compare Donner's observations (1986: 399) on Reginald Pecock's gerundial usage: "in some 330 instances when an *-ing* noun preceded by an adjective or determiner has another noun as [its notional] object, he virtually never treats it gerundially but, except for just two omissions, always links the object to it prepositionally."

94.8% as regards selection of direct objects vs. *of*-phrases; 95.6% for all verbal traits considered together).[24] These figures appear to indicate that the spread of verbal traits among non oblique gerunds, once it has started, proceeds at a faster rate than among oblique ones.[25] However, in view of the small numbers of non oblique gerunds of Type III in the corpus, this aspect needs to be confirmed by inspecting a larger collection of instances.

To conclude this preliminary approach to the gerund in Early Modern English, I would like to call attention to the path followed by verbalization in the case of Type IV gerunds. These, it will be remembered, comprise sequences in which the *-ing* form is accompanied by both pre- and post-head dependents, as in (61):

> (61) E1 1554 Throckmorton *Trial* I.66.C1: Moreouer, to accompte the taking of the Tower is uery dangerous by the Law.

Post-head dependents are the first to become verbal, that is, they exhibit verbal traits at a time when the pre-head constituents are still predominantly nominal, thus giving rise to POSS-*ing* and MIX structures like those in (62)-(67). In other words, the development of Type IV gerunds from nominal to verbal takes place via hybridization:

> (62) E3 1685 Lisle *Trial* IV, 122C2: I never knew of Nelthorp's coming, nor any thing *of his being Nelthorp*;
> (63) E2 1599-1601 Hoby *Diary* 72: I went to church and, from thence returninge, I praised God both *for the inableinge the minister so profettably to declare the word as he had* [...]
> (64) E3 1666-1667 Pepys *Diary* 416: And among other things, I to my chamber and there to ticket a good part of my books, in order to the Numbring of them -for *my easy finding them to read*, as I have occasion.
> (65) E3 1673 Taylor *The Marriage Ring* 13: but of all these the noblest End is *the multiplying children*,
> (66) E3 1676 Walton *Compleat Angler* 211: and I can tell you there is *brave hunting this Waterdog* in Cornwall,

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24 In Tables 11 and 12 all percentages are exclusive of ambiguous gerunds.
25 With respect to Present-day English usage, Houston (1989: 190) suggests just the opposite. She points out that in a collection of twentieth century prose samples she examined, subject and object gerunds seemed to be more nominal than prepositional ones, while the verbal gerunds occurred "most frequently in the prepositional object position"; she acknowledges, however, that "this issue must await further investigation". Certainly, if the faster rate of verbalization among subject and object gerunds observed in my corpus can be confirmed by further research, then this trend is unlikely to have been reversed in PE.

(67) E3 1698 *Statutes* VIII 458: Provided alwaies That in case *upon such breaking open any such Door or House* no such Private or concealed Back Still or other Vessell [...] shall be found

Hybridization is not impossible with gerunds of other types, as (68) below demonstrates, but it is less likely to occur, and is rarely instanced in the corpus (see Table 11):

(68) E3 1666-1667 Pepys *Diary* VII, 414: he commends the song, not knowing the words, but says the ayre is good, and believes the words are plainly expressed. He is of my mind, *against having of eighths unnecessarily in composition.*

Summing up, Type IV gerunds start from a situation in which most instances of the class are still purely nominal: this is the case in E1 (see Table 12). In E2 there takes place a slight, yet noticeable increase in the ratio of hybrid gerunds, which now amount to 8.7% if the figures for both POSS-*ing* and MIX phrases are considered together (= 13 ex. out of a total of 150); verbal gerunds, with only 1 instance, represent a mere 0.7%. Finally, by E3 hybrids have become the dominant pattern, with a ratio of 50.3% (= 84 POSS-*ing* and MIX gerunds, out of a total of 167), as against 43.1% for nominal gerunds (= 72 ex. in all) and a still very low 6.6% for verbal ones (= 11 ex.). It can be said, therefore, that it is only by the second half of the seventeenth century that MIX structures like those quoted in (63)-(67) above become at all common, despite frequent statements to the contrary, such as, for instance, Visser's (§1124), who asserts that "from the beginning of the fourteenth century to the end of the nineteenth century constructions with *of* and those without *of* before the complement of a form in -*ing* preceded by *the* were used side by side -after 1500 with almost equal frequency-". This, as shown by my data, is clearly incorrect.

6. Discussion and conclusions

6.1. As noted in Section 3, in Early Modern English the borderline between gerunds and participles is not always well defined. More specifically, it was suggested in that section that Middle and Early Modern English constructions involving an augmented absolute past participle (e.g., *after denial made*) were formally and functionally very close to gerunds dependent on a preposition, and hence may have contributed, together with other factors mentioned in the relevant literature (see in particular Jack 1988), to the eventual verbalization of the -*ing* noun.

6.2. During the period examined, and specially in E3, gerund phrases become steadily more verbal (see section 5.3), and, at the same time, they increase considerably in frequency (see section 5.1). Taking into account the formal and functional affinities between the gerund and the progressive (see sections 3.1-3.2; also Fanego 1996a: 55, 58), it is tempting to relate such changes to the development of the progressive over the same period. As recently shown by Elsness in research (1994) based on the Helsinki Corpus, the frequency of the progressive, too, increases very markedly from E1 to E3, and particularly in this latter subperiod: specifically, from only 33 examples in E1 to 52 in E2 and 100 in E3.

6.3. Gerunds, whether nominal or verbal, occur predominantly as prepositional complements, both in Early Modern English and in earlier stages. In section 5.2, it was argued that this somewhat restricted distribution of the gerund might ultimately be related to the expansion in the use of prepositions in the course of the Middle English period, which must have given rise to a situation in which a nominal form of the verb capable of functioning as prepositional complement was often required. Because of the inability of the infinitive to occur in that syntactic position, the verbal noun may have come to fill this gap.

6.4. As shown in section 5.3, the verbalization of the gerund proceeds at different rates, and along different paths, depending on the type of phrase involved. By E3, the verbalization of Type III gerunds (i.e., those with only post-head dependents) has nearly been completed; Type IV gerunds, by contrast, have only reached a stage of hybridization, that is, their post-head dependents exhibit verbal traits in a good number of cases, while the pre-head dependents remain prevailingly nominal. Since then, Type IV gerunds have been steadily moving farther away from the nominal category: mixed structures like those quoted in (63)-(67) above are no longer allowed by the grammar of Present-day English (cf. Pullum 1991; van der Wurff 1993), and there seem to be also increasing restrictions on the occurrence of POSS-*ing* gerunds. In relation with this, if one compares the data adduced in studies on the gerund like Riikonen (1935), on Jane Austen's usage, Lindelöf (1933), on early 20th-century narrative, and Hantson (1972; 1983: 58), on post-war British English,[26]

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26 In Lindelöf's corpus, the common case is already the unmarked form for phrases functioning as gerund subjects. With respect to pronominal subjects, Riikonen (1935: 214) notes that in Jane Austen's writings there are 1,303 examples, and that "in 1,299 of them the pronoun appears in its possessive form". Lindelöf (1933: 8-9), in his turn, lists some 46 objective pronouns, out of a total of 350 pronominal subjects. Finally, Hantson (1983: 58) finds that in his corpus "possessive and personal pronouns were equally current". In my own corpus, there is only one instance

it becomes clear that common case phrases and objective pronouns, as in *by John knowing the truth/by him knowing the truth*, have been advancing at the expense of possessive phrases and possessive pronouns respectively (i.e., *by John's knowing the truth/by his knowing the truth*; cf. also Quirk et al. 1985: 1063-1064; 1194). It seems reasonable to think, therefore, that this process of verbalization will go on even farther, so that the gerund, which started its history as a purely nominal form, may eventually come to survive only as a predominantly verbal one. In connection with this, see also my comments in section 5.1 above on the decrease in frequency, from E1 to E3, of nominal gerunds of Type II, such as *at your departing*.

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of an objective pronoun functioning as the subject of a gerund:

> E3 1666 *Oxinden Letters* (Elizabeth Oxinden) 309: I am really sorry my sister W: servant came noe more of the family of the Johnsones; *it* coming to nothinge it is looked one as my one [= 'own'] invention to draw the other one;

Note the awkwardness of the construction, with the gerund clause displaced by left dislocation and resumed by a recapitulatory, pleonastic, *it* serving as the actual grammatical subject of the sentence.

APPENDIX I: TRIALS and SERMONS

a) TRIALS:

E1 *The Trial of Sir Nicholas Throckmorton* (1554). Pp. L63-L70.C1. 7,637 words.
E2 *The Trial of the Earl of Essex* (1600). Pp. 8-15. 3,064 words.
E2 *The Trial of Sir Walter Raleigh* (1603). Sample 2. 4,627 words.
E3 *The Trial of Titus Oates* (1685). Sample 2. 4,370 words.
E3 *The Trial of Lady Alice Lisle* (1685). Sample 2. 4,174 words.

b) SERMONS:

E1 John Fisher. "Against Luther" (1521). 2,739 words.
E1 Hugh Latimer. "Sermon on the Ploughers" (1549). 2,985 words.
E2 Henry Smith. "Of Usurie" (1591). Sample 1. 2,527 words.
E2 Richard Hooker. "Two Sermons upon Part of S. Judes Epistle" (1614). Sample 1. 2,480 words.
E3 John Tillotson. "The Folly of Scoffing at Religion" (1671). Samples 1 & 2. 3,334 words.
E3 Jeremy Taylor. "The Marriage Ring" (1673). Pp. 8-17. 3,124 words.

APPENDIX II: TABLES 13-22

Table 13. Diaries

		E1	E2	E3	TOTAL
	SUBJECT	1	1	–	2
	OBJECT	–	–	–	–
NO DEPENDENTS	OBLIQUE	4	6	3	13
	OTHER	–	–	–	–
	SUBJECT	2	–	1	3
PRE-HEAD	OBJECT	1	1	1	3
DEPENDENTS	OBLIQUE	7	8	3	18
	OTHER	–	–	–	–
	SUBJECT	–	–	–	–
POST-HEAD	OBJECT	1	1	1	3
DEPENDENTS	OBLIQUE	13	13	37	63
	OTHER	3	–	–	3
	SUBJECT	1	2	2	5
PRE- & POST-HEAD	OBJECT	3	1	5	9
DEPENDENTS	OBLIQUE	9	8	25	42
	OTHER	–	–	4	4
TOTAL		45	41	82	168

Table 14. Private letters

		E1	E2	E3	TOTAL
	SUBJECT	–	–	2	2
	OBJECT	–	–	2	2
NO DEPENDENTS	OBLIQUE	4	3	5	12
	OTHER	–	–	–	–
	SUBJECT	1	1	1	3
PRE-HEAD	OBJECT	–	2	3	5
DEPENDENTS	OBLIQUE	12	14	1	27
	OTHER	–	–	–	–
	SUBJECT	–	1	–	1
POST-HEAD	OBJECT	–	–	4	4
DEPENDENTS	OBLIQUE	8	12	28	48
	OTHER	–	–	–	–
	SUBJECT	1	3	3	7
PRE- & POST-HEAD	OBJECT	–	5	3	8
DEPENDENTS	OBLIQUE	16	10	20	46
	OTHER	–	–	–	–
TOTAL		42	51	72	165

Table 15. Fiction

		E1	E2	E3	TOTAL
NO DEPENDENTS	SUBJECT	–	1	1	2
	OBJECT	1	–	–	1
	OBLIQUE	5	7	14	26
	OTHER	2	–	–	2
PRE-HEAD DEPENDENTS	SUBJECT	1	2	1	4
	OBJECT	1	2	5	8
	OBLIQUE	3	7	4	14
	OTHER	–	–	–	–
POST-HEAD DEPENDENTS	SUBJECT	–	–	–	–
	OBJECT	–	–	1	1
	OBLIQUE	13	15	28	56
	OTHER	–	1	–	1
PRE- & POST-HEAD DEPENDENTS	SUBJECT	4	3	–	7
	OBJECT	–	4	4	8
	OBLIQUE	3	3	5	11
	OTHER	–	2	–	2
TOTAL		33	47	63	143

Table 16. Comedies

		E1	E2	E3	TOTAL
NO DEPENDENTS	SUBJECT	–	–	1	1
	OBJECT	2	–	5	7
	OBLIQUE	5	5	8	18
	OTHER	–	2	–	2
PRE-HEAD DEPENDENTS	SUBJECT	1	–	4	5
	OBJECT	7	4	1	12
	OBLIQUE	4	3	3	10
	OTHER	2	–	–	2
POST-HEAD DEPENDENTS	SUBJECT	–	1	–	1
	OBJECT	–	–	–	–
	OBLIQUE	5	6	26	37
	OTHER	–	–	2	2
PRE- & POST-HEAD DEPENDENTS	SUBJECT	–	2	2	4
	OBJECT	–	1	–	1
	OBLIQUE	3	3	5	11
	OTHER	–	–	–	–
TOTAL		29	27	57	113

Table 17. Statutes

		E1	E2	E3	TOTAL
NO DEPENDENTS	SUBJECT	–	–	–	–
	OBJECT	–	–	–	–
	OBLIQUE	10	8	–	18
	OTHER	–	–	–	–
PRE-HEAD DEPENDENTS	SUBJECT	1	–	–	1
	OBJECT	–	2	–	2
	OBLIQUE	7	8	–	15
	OTHER	–	–	–	–
POST-HEAD DEPENDENTS	SUBJECT	–	2	2	4
	OBJECT	–	2	–	2
	OBLIQUE	40	30	39	109
	OTHER	–	–	–	–
PRE- & POST-HEAD DEPENDENTS	SUBJECT	3	4	3	10
	OBJECT	9	3	4	16
	OBLIQUE	36	37	33	106
	OTHER	–	–	–	–
TOTAL		106	96	81	283

Table 18. Philosophy

		E1	E2	E3	TOTAL
NO DEPENDENTS	SUBJECT	–	–	–	–
	OBJECT	–	–	–	–
	OBLIQUE	7	4	11	22
	OTHER	–	–	–	–
PRE-HEAD DEPENDENTS	SUBJECT	–	1	–	1
	OBJECT	–	–	–	–
	OBLIQUE	–	–	1	1
	OTHER	–	–	–	–
POST-HEAD DEPENDENTS	SUBJECT	–	–	–	–
	OBJECT	–	–	–	–
	OBLIQUE	9	12	25	46
	OTHER	–	–	–	–
PRE- & POST-HEAD DEPENDENTS	SUBJECT	3	5	–	8
	OBJECT	1	–	–	1
	OBLIQUE	2	1	4	7
	OTHER	–	1	–	1
TOTAL		22	24	41	87

Table 19. Science

		E1	E2	E3	TOTAL
NO DEPENDENTS	SUBJECT	–	2	–	2
	OBJECT	–	–	–	–
	OBLIQUE	10	11	9	30
	OTHER	–	–	–	–
PRE-HEAD DEPENDENTS	SUBJECT	4	–	1	5
	OBJECT	5	–	–	5
	OBLIQUE	7	5	3	15
	OTHER	–	–	–	–
POST-HEAD DEPENDENTS	SUBJECT	–	1	–	1
	OBJECT	–	1	3	4
	OBLIQUE	10	33	44	87
	OTHER	–	–	–	–
PRE- & POST-HEAD DEPENDENTS	SUBJECT	1	3	3	7
	OBJECT	5	3	2	10
	OBLIQUE	3	23	14	40
	OTHER	–	2	–	2
TOTAL		45	84	79	208

Table 20. Handbooks

		E1	E2	E3	TOTAL
NO DEPENDENTS	SUBJECT	2	–	1	3
	OBJECT	–	1	–	1
	OBLIQUE	5	13	25	43
	OTHER	–	1	2	3
PRE-HEAD DEPENDENTS	SUBJECT	3	3	2	8
	OBJECT	3	1	–	4
	OBLIQUE	4	11	5	20
	OTHER	1	–	–	1
POST-HEAD DEPENDENTS	SUBJECT	1	–	1	2
	OBJECT	–	2	2	4
	OBLIQUE	14	12	39	65
	OTHER	–	–	–	–
PRE- & POST-HEAD DEPENDENTS	SUBJECT	4	4	4	12
	OBJECT	–	1	3	4
	OBLIQUE	9	21	9	39
	OTHER	–	1	–	1
TOTAL		46	71	93	210

Table 21. Trial proceedings

		E1	E2	E3	TOTAL
	SUBJECT	–	1	–	1
	OBJECT	–	–	–	–
NO DEPENDENTS	OBLIQUE	5	1	6	12
	OTHER	–	–	–	–
	SUBJECT	1	2	–	3
PRE-HEAD	OBJECT	–	1	–	1
DEPENDENTS	OBLIQUE	1	3	4	8
	OTHER	–	–	–	–
	SUBJECT	1	–	–	1
POST-HEAD	OBJECT	–	–	–	–
DEPENDENTS	OBLIQUE	6	17	9	32
	OTHER	–	–	–	–
	SUBJECT	–	3	–	3
PRE- & POST-HEAD	OBJECT	8	–	1	9
DEPENDENTS	OBLIQUE	15	6	12	33
	OTHER	–	–	–	–
TOTAL		37	34	32	103

Table 22. Sermons

		E1	E2	E3	TOTAL
	SUBJECT	6	1	–	7
	OBJECT	3	3	–	6
NO DEPENDENTS	OBLIQUE	9	3	–	12
	OTHER	1	–	–	1
	SUBJECT	2	4	–	6
PRE-HEAD	OBJECT	4	–	1	5
DEPENDENTS	OBLIQUE	3	1	3	7
	OTHER	3	–	–	3
	SUBJECT	–	–	1	1
POST-HEAD	OBJECT	1	–	–	1
DEPENDENTS	OBLIQUE	11	2	11	24
	OTHER	–	–	4	4
	SUBJECT	–	–	4	4
PRE- & POST-HEAD	OBJECT	–	–	1	1
DEPENDENTS	OBLIQUE	2	1	5	8
	OTHER	–	–	4	4
TOTAL		45	15	34	94

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