

# The Great Complement Shift revisited

## The constructionalization of ACC-*ing* gerundives

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This paper examines the history of the ACC-*ing* gerundive, a subtype of verbal gerund differing formally from both bare gerundives (*I enjoyed reading the paper*) and POSS-*ing* gerundives (*I was surprised at Jane's arriving late*) in having an overt subject argument either in the common case, if it is a full noun phrase (*Two people worrying about each other, with no external diversion, brews a deadly atmosphere*) or in the accusative case, if it is a personal pronoun (*You can't prevent me telling the truth*). Findings from a corpus-based study show that early instances of ACC-*ing* gerundives most often functioned as preverbal sentential subjects and served as arguments to causative predicates such as *brew*, *make* and *oblige*. Based on this evidence, it is argued that ACC-*ing* gerundives have emerged as an intersection of a number of pre-existing constructions, most especially a subtype of absolute participle, now obsolete, that encoded causative (factive) semantics and preceded its superordinate clause. The development of the new gerundive subtype from this participial source, which proceeded as a succession of small discrete steps, can be fruitfully accounted for as a case of constructional change, along the lines proposed in Hilpert (2013) and Traugott & Trousdale (2013).

### 1. Introduction

Throughout its history, the English system of complementation has been undergoing change, as discussed in Warner (1982), Fischer (1988, 1989), Fanego (1990, 1992, 1996a, 1996b, 1998, 2004a, 2004b, 2010), Rohdenburg (1995, 2006, 2014), Los (2005), Rudanko (1998, 2000, 2011), Miller (2002), Vosberg (2006), and De Smet (2008, 2009, 2010, 2013, 2014), among many others. This large-scale restructuring of sentential complements or, to use the terminology in Rohdenburg (2006: 143), 'Great Complement Shift', accounts for major and minor changes at various levels, including, for instance, those outlined in (1–4):


- (1) Finite clauses largely supplanted by infinitive clauses in many environments (Rohdenburg 1995)  
c1599 Shakespeare, *Henry V* 4.3.84–85  
The Constable desires thee *thou wilt mind / Thy followers of repentance*
- (2) Infinitive clauses of the AcI type extended to verbs of knowing, thinking and declaring (Warner 1982: 134–157)  
Wyclif, *Sermons* i.170.25 (quoted from Warner 1982: 136)  
And þus seiþ Crist, ‘þat he seiþ *hise apostlis to be hise frendis...*’
- (3) The emergence and subsequent spread to all clausal slots of *for* NP *to*-infinitives (Fischer 1988; Garrett 2012: 55–66; De Smet 2013: 73–101)  
?a1425 *Chauliac(1)* (NY 12)171b/b (quoted from Garrett 2012: 59)  
It is better for to induce somewhat of noying ... þan *for to late a man dye for aking*  
‘It is better to induce some pain than for a man to die too late of aching.’
- (4) *-ing* action nominals, as in (a) below, developing verbal features from Late Middle English onwards, thus leading to the availability in English grammar of a second type of nonfinite sentential complement — the verbal gerund, or ‘gerundive’, as in (b) —, alongside infinitives (Tajima 1985; Fanego 1996a, 2004a):
  - a. ?a1300 *Kyng Alisaunder*, 558 (quoted from Tajima 1985: 62)  
Wiþouten *doying of any harme*  
‘without doing any harm’
  - b. c1303 (MS a1400) *Handlyng Synne*, HS 408 (quoted from Tajima 1985: 76)  
yn *feblyng þe body* with moche fastyng  
‘in weakening the body by too much abstinence’

My concern in this paper will be a subtype of verbal gerund referred to henceforth as ACC-*ing* gerundive. This has, like all other gerundives, a characteristically nominal distribution, but differs from other subtypes of gerundives both in its chronology (its emergence in English being comparatively late) and its formal characteristics, in that it has an overt subject argument either in the ‘common’ case, if it is a full noun phrase (*the man* in (5)) or in the accusative case, if it is a personal pronoun (*him* in (6)). ACC-*ing* gerundives thus contrast both with ‘bare’ gerundives (4b), which lack an explicit subject, and with POSS-*ing* gerundives (7), whose subject argument is marked for the genitive:

- (5) COPC 1689 Stevens, *Journal*, 1Q17 0004/029–P0  
*The man being an Irishman and a Catholic* made his ill carriage towards us appear the more strange

- (6) COLMOBAENG 1861 Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 75  
I not only prevented *him getting off the marshes*, but I dragged him here
- (7) HC 1599–1601 Hoby, *Diary*, 78  
I Came hom to dinner, neccltinge my Costomarie manner of praier by  
*reason of my Lord Ewrie and my lades being there*

In what follows, I will relate the emergence of ACC-*ing* gerundives to developments both in the complement clause system and in participial clauses, in particular a subtype of absolute, now obsolete, that encoded causative semantics, preceded its superordinate clause, and ‘controlled’ its subject, so that this was expressed by means of a pronoun coreferential with the subject of the absolute (8), or was even deleted under identity (9):

- (8) ARCHER 1661 Flatman, *Don Juan Lamberto* (1661flat\_f2b)  
Now it fell out that *Sir Baxtero having heard how that Sir Ludlow wa*  
*departed out of Brittain, he* made great lamentation and moaning; 
- (9) ARCHER 1628, *Hipolito and Isabella* (1628anon\_p1b)  
*these letters finding her leaning more to loue then dutie, ø* forced her through  
all the doubts that could oppose themselues,<sup>1</sup>

The discussion is structured as follows. Sections 2 and 3 offer, respectively, an overview of the corpus material used in this study and a brief outline of the development of English gerundives since Old English times. Section 4 focuses specifically on the gerundive subtype (the ACC-*ing* gerundive) which is the concern of this article and provides evidence on its usage in Early and Late Modern English. Section 5 reviews in detail the literature on the early stages of English participial clauses, both adverbial and relative. Section 6 briefly presents the constructional model of language serving as framework for the analysis, and considers the relationship between ACC-*ing* gerundives and their participial source. Section 7 is the conclusion.

## 2. The corpus

My earlier research (Fanego 1998:100–104, 2004a:41–45) on ACC-*ing* gerundives relied on a 392,110-word sample from the Early Modern English section of the Helsinki Corpus, but for the present analysis this sample has been expanded through the incorporation of material from other corpora and periods. The primary source of diachronic evidence, detailed in Table 1, now consists of 945,413

1. The use of the empty set ( $\emptyset$ ) in these and subsequent examples is to indicate that the covert subject of the superordinate clause is identical to the subject of the participle that precedes it.

words of British English covering the time span 1500–1750, since it was clear from my prior findings that this is the crucial period for the formation of the construction. It has been supplemented with queries in the F-LOB and Frown corpora of contemporary British and American English, and with evidence derived from Söderlind’s (1951–1958) monumental analysis of verb syntax in John Dryden’s prose, comprising altogether 54 works published over the second half of the 17th century (see Söderlind 1951–1958: I, xvii–xx).

With respect to the composition of the corpora in Table 1, the inventory of genres represented does not remain constant across the three subperiods

**Table 1.** Range of corpora and subperiods examined

Subperiod I: 1500–1640	Subperiod II: 1640–1700	Subperiod III: 1700–1749
A Representative Corpus of Historical English Registers (ARCHER, version 3.2): 29,697 words from 1600–1640; genre: Early Prose <sup>a</sup>	A Representative Corpus of Historical English Registers (ARCHER, version 3.2): 115,797 words from 1650–1699; 5 genres (Diaries, Fiction, Journals, Letters, Sermons)	A Representative Corpus of Historical English Registers (ARCHER, version 3.2): 118,809 words from 1700–1749; 5 genres (Diaries, Fiction, Journals, Letters, Sermons)
Helsinki Corpus of English Texts (HC): 261,630 words from subperiods EModE1 (1500–1570) and EModE2 (1570–1640); 11 genres (Comedies, Diaries, Fiction, Handbooks, Letters (private), Philosophy, Science, Sermons, Statutes, Travelogue, Trials)	Helsinki Corpus of English Texts (HC): 130,480 words from subperiod EModE3; 11 genres (Comedies, Diaries, Fiction, Handbooks, Letters (private), Philosophy, Science, Sermons, Statutes, Travelogue, Trials)	Corpus of Late Modern British and American English Prose (COLMOBAENG): 200,000 words from 1700–1726; genres: Fiction and Non-Fiction <sup>b</sup>
	Century of Prose Corpus (COPC): 89,000 words from decades 1680–1700 <sup>c</sup>	
<b>TOTAL: 291,327 words</b>	<b>TOTAL: 335,277 words</b>	<b>TOTAL: 318,809 words</b>

<sup>a</sup> ARCHER is an ongoing project and continues to expand its diachronic coverage of genres. For the first half of the 17th century it still does not contain samples of Diaries, Fiction, Journals, Letters or Sermons (the genres used in the two later subperiods of my study). ARCHER’s Early Prose, however, proved very useful for my purposes, in that it includes both fiction and non-fiction texts and is thus largely comparable to the rest of the corpora examined.

<sup>b</sup> Like COPC, COLMOBAENG (Fanego 2012) is biased towards texts written by literate members of English and American society in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The 200,000 word sample used for the present study contains 124,000 words of fictional prose and 76,000 words of non-fiction representing the same genres that make up COPC.

<sup>c</sup> COPC is organized in terms of decades and covers the span 1680–1780. It is intended to constitute “an inventory of the daily language of the literate members of English society” in the eighteenth century (Milic 1995: 329) and comprises samples of the following ten genres: Biography, Periodicals, Education, Essays, Fiction, History, Letters and Memoirs, Polemics, Science, Travel.

examined, but it is unlikely that this has greatly influenced the findings: the specific type of nominalization under analysis here is associated with expository and academic writings in their various forms, and with narrative texts, whether imaginative (Fiction) or non-imaginative (Diaries, Letters, Journals, Travelogue). Statutory writings (Statutes) and texts written to be spoken (Comedies) are thus the only text categories not in principle welcoming of the ACC-*ing* construction, and that is why they have not been included in my corpora for subperiod III (1700–1749). Note also in this connection Thompson’s (1983) and Kortmann’s (1995) finding that the token frequency of English adverbial participial clauses — which, as discussed in this paper, are intimately related to ACC-*ing* gerundives — correlates “not with the distinction between formal and informal discourse” (Kortmann 1995: 191), but rather with the type of discourse that Thompson has labelled *depictive*, i.e. “descriptive discourse whose purpose is to describe events” (Thompson 1983: 46).

### 3. Origins and early history of the English verbal gerund

The precursor to the English verbal gerund was an abstract noun of action formed through the addition of the suffixes *-ung* or *-ing* to a verb stem, as in *sceawung* ‘observation’ (< *sceawian* ‘observe’) and *wending* ‘turning’ (< *wendan* ‘turn’); see Kastovsky (1985: 241–243) for details. These nouns behaved like any other noun in all relevant respects, and could therefore take nominal dependents of various kinds. The following Middle English examples illustrate their use with determiners (*the, his*) and with *of*-phrases serving as their notional objects (see also (4a) above):

- (10) 1472–1488 *Cely Letters*, 94/5 (Tajima 1985: 68)

at the makyng of thys lettyr  
‘when writing this letter’

- (11) c1385 Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, V 1833 (Tajima 1985: 70)

And thus began his loving of Criseyde

In Early Middle English, the suffix *-ung* rapidly died out and *-ing* became the regular form (*OED* s.v. *-ing*<sup>1</sup>). Also over the course of Middle English, *-ing* nominals began to acquire verbal properties. According to Tajima’s analysis (1985, 1996), which is based on a very large sample of Middle English writings covering the span 1100–1500, the verbalization of the gerund proceeded as follows. Around 1300 the

first instances with direct objects appeared (12); subject arguments in non-genitive form (13–14) occurred sporadically from Late Middle English onwards, but remained very rare for a long time afterwards, as will be shown later in this article.

- (12) c1300 (MS a1400) *English Metrical Homilies*, 112/2–4 (Tajima 1985: 76)  
 Sain Jon was ... *bisi In ordaining of priestes, and clerkes, And in casting kirc werkes*  
 ‘Saint John was ... busy ordaining priests and clerics, and in planning church works’
- (13) c1400 *Laud Troy Book*, 6317–18 (Tajima 1996: 574)  
 he was war of *hem comyng* and of here malice  
 ‘he was informed of them coming and of their wickedness’
- (14) a1425(?a1400) Chaucer, *RRose* (Htrn 409) 2062 (Tajima 1996: 574)  
 Sire, ... I merveile *the* (= ‘thee’) *askyng this demande*.<sup>2</sup>

Two other aspects of the grammar and development of the gerund are relevant to the present research. One is that throughout its history the English gerund, whether nominal or verbal, appears to have been used mostly after prepositions, the one environment where it did not face competition from the infinitive, as this was unable to combine with prepositions other than *to*. More work is still needed regarding the exact frequency of prepositional gerunds in Old English, but the association of the gerund with prepositional use since at least Middle English times seems clear in light of evidence adduced by Houston (1989), Expósito (1996) and De Smet (2008). Houston (1989: 176) examined 1,464 *-ing* forms dating from the tenth to the seventeenth centuries and found that “across time, there is a fairly constant trend for them to occur as the objects of prepositions”. Likewise, Expósito’s research (1996: 173–180), which provides data only on nominal or partly nominal gerunds in Chancery English c1400–1450, found that 81.50% of the 135 gerundial structures occurring in her 48,000-word corpus were found after a preposition, 12.60% were objects and a further 5.90% subjects. These figures are in agreement with my own findings for the Early Modern period: in a sample of 317,621 words in the Early Modern English section of the Helsinki Corpus of English Texts, I recorded 1,286 gerunds (= 79.50%) functioning as prepositional complements, compared to 332 (= 20.50%) in other clause functions (Fanego 1996b: 122–123).

Secondly, as made clear by Donner (1986), Houston (1989: 181) and De Smet (2008: 61–62), the gerund’s acquisition of direct objects started with those gerunds that were dependent on a preposition, as in (12) above. In other syntactic positions

2. Cf. *OED marvel* v. 3. *trans.* ‘To wonder or be astonished at’ (Obs.)

the use of direct objects and other verbal features was very slow to develop, as I have shown in previous research (1996a, 1996b, 1998, 2004a).

With all this in mind, let us now consider in the next section the gerundive subtype which is the concern of this paper and its chief characteristics both in Present-Day English and during the early stages of its development.

#### 4. ACC-*ing* gerundives in synchrony and diachrony

Unlike *for* NP *to*-infinitives, whose diachronic development and present-day usage have been discussed exhaustively (see Fischer 1988; Mair 1990: 40–54; Garrett 2012: 55–66; De Smet 2013: 73–101, and references there), ACC-*ing* gerundives have received very little attention to date. In this section I will first briefly review their use in Present-Day English (Section 4.1) and subsequently the diachronic evidence on their course of development.

##### 4.1 Current usage

The ACC-*ing* pattern is mentioned, in greater or lesser detail, in all the major reference grammars of Late Modern and Present-Day English (Poutsma 1904: 596–602, 710–719; Quirk *et al.* 1985: 1063–1067; Declerck 1991: 493–519; Biber *et al.* 1999: 739, 750; Huddleston & Pullum *et al.* 2002: 1191–1193), which note its characteristically nominal distribution and consequent ability to occur as sentence subject, object, predicative or prepositional complement. The construction is also briefly discussed in Duffley's (2006) specialized monograph on the English 'gerund-participle', where a few examples are provided of its occurrence as object (2006: 7–8, 153–154) and sentence subject (2006: 17–18); concerning the latter use, Duffley observes, interestingly, that sequences such as (15) "resemble the absolute free adjunct use, except that the function of the absolute construction here is noun-like rather than adverbial" (2006: 17).

- (15) In turn she was anxious about him, and *two people worrying about each other, with little or no external diversion*, brews a deadly atmosphere.

In order to supplement the information on the ACC-*ing* pattern offered in the literature, I examined two 70,000-word samples from the parallel corpora F-LOB and Frown, which consist of written material of British and American English dating back to the early 1990s. Despite the limited size of these samples, the results displayed in Tables 2 and 3 confirm what is hinted at in other sources, namely that the ACC-*ing* pattern most commonly occurs as a prepositional complement, a syntactic function in which it does not have to face the competition from either finite

clauses or *for* NP *to*-infinitives. Data on the occurrence of the related POSS-*ing* type (e.g. *John's arriving late*) are also provided in the tables, as well as a few examples (16–18) illustrating the use of the ACC-*ing* pattern as sentence subject and object.

**Table 2.** POSS- and ACC-*ing* gerundives in F-LOB (70,000 words, 7 text types)

	Preverbal subject <sup>a</sup>	Extraposed subject	Predicative	Object <sup>b</sup>	Prepositional complement	TOTAL
ACC- <i>ing</i>	2	–	–	9	19	30
POSS- <i>ing</i>	1	–	–	0	4	5
TOTAL	3	–	–	9	23	35

<sup>a</sup> The higher predicates co-occurring with the examples as preverbal subjects are *be a bit like trying to stop the ship*; *put sb. right off one's groove*; *be but a step away from ...*

<sup>b</sup> The verbs governing ACC-*ing* objects are *mean*, *prevent* (4 tokens), *remember*, *show*, *stop* and *want*.

**Table 3.** POSS- and ACC-*ing* gerundives in Frown (70,000 words, 7 text types)

	Preverbal subject <sup>a</sup>	Extraposed subject	Predicative	Object <sup>b</sup>	Prepositional complement	TOTAL
ACC- <i>ing</i>	1	–	–	3	5	9
POSS- <i>ing</i>	–	–	–	–	5	5
TOTAL	1	–	–	3	10	14

<sup>a</sup> The higher predicate co-occurring with the example of ACC-*ing* as preverbal subject is *be bound to draw a flock of reviewers*.

<sup>b</sup> The verbs governing ACC-*ing* objects are *hate*, *like* and *remember*.

- (16) Frown 1992 Romance and Love Story P03 158  
 She'd called Zach as soon as she'd heard that he'd lured Nick De Salvo to town. *The Prince of Young Hollywood daring to tackle the Bard* was bound to draw a flock of reviewers from every element of the media.
- (17) F-LOB 1991 General Fiction K04 147  
 There was a ship sailing past, ... and I looked at the ship, and I thought that *me trying to stop the war* was a bit like trying to stop the ship would have been.
- (18) F-LOB 1991 Press Reportage A03 122  
 It would almost certainly mean *US troops re-entering Iraq*

## 4.2 Diachronic evidence

The literature on the history of the gerund published in recent years (e.g. De Smet 2008:60, 2013; Fonteyn *et al.* 2015, etc.) idealises the data by excluding from the



discussion both ACC-*ing* gerundives and gerundives introduced by a genitive NP or possessive pronoun. Tajima (1996), therefore, remains the most comprehensive analysis of ACC-*ing* gerundives to date. Based on a vast corpus consisting of 183 Middle English verse and prose texts covering the period 1100–1500, Tajima (1996: 572–575) records twenty-eight Middle English examples of common case NPs or objective pronouns seemingly used as subjects of a gerund, as in (13) and (14) above; he acknowledges, however, that many are doubtful and allow a different interpretation, so that only nine of his examples (his numbers 10, 11, 12, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, and 28) might be accepted as possible instances of the ACC-*ing* construction. Out of these, eight function as prepositional complements and one, somewhat doubtful, as object (see (14) above, where the form *the* is interpreted by Visser 1963–1973: II, §1124 as representing the definite article, rather than the pronoun *thee*).<sup>3</sup>

The paucity of the Middle English evidence on ACC-*ing* is in agreement with the data retrieved from my sources, as displayed in Table 4. This confirms what

3. Four other examples among those adduced by Tajima deserve comment. One is the following, with the sequence NP + *-ing* form in subject position:

- (i) c1378 *Piers the Plowman* (B-text), VIII 31–2 (Tajima 1996: 573)

The wynde and the water and *the bote waggynge* Maketh the man many a tyme to falle  
‘the wind and the water and the boat rocking often make a man fall’

It is not clear, however, that this can be accepted as a genuine verbal gerund: the noun *boat* is recorded already in Old English as the first element of nominal compounds such as *batswegen* ‘boatswain’ and *batweard* ‘boat guard’ (DOE s.v. *bat* n.), and was frequently used “in compounds and combinations” throughout Middle English (MED s.v. *bot* n.<sup>1</sup> 3), some of them formed on *-ing* nouns, such as *batespyking* ‘spikes or nails for a boat’ (< *spiking*). *Bote waggynge* might therefore be interpreted as a compound noun, rather than a clause. Note too that the variant reading of this passage in the A-text of *Piers the Plowman* supports an analysis of the form *wagging* as purely nominal:

- (ii) c1400(a1376) *PPLA(1)* (Trin-C R.3.14) 9.268 (MED s.v. *wagging(e)* ger. (a))

Let bringe a man in a bot amydde a brood watir; þe wynd & þe watir & þe waggynge of  
þe boot Makeþ þe man many tymes to falle & to stande, For stande he neuere so stif he  
stumblþ in þe waggynge.

The other three examples are from Caxton, *Prol. & Epil.* (1474–1490), and involve the set expression *to pardon me so presuming*, where the sequence *me so presuming* is probably not to be interpreted as a single constituent (and hence as an early instance of ACC-*ing* in object position), but as two separate objects. The verb *pardon* (from OF *pardoner*; first recorded in English in 1433) was consistently used as a ditransitive; compare Shakespeare, *Two Noble Kinsmen* 3.1.106 “Plainly spoken, / Yet pardon me hard language”; *1 Henry IV* 1.3.167 “O, pardon me that I descend so low...”. In the course of time, however, it has developed clear monotransitive uses (e.g. OED s.v. *pardon* v.4.b: 1988 Spark, *Far Cry from Kensington* x.119 “If you’ll pardon *my saying* so you look ten years younger”; see also footnote 17 below).

was already clear from my earlier research on the gerund, namely that the ACC-*ing* pattern, though found from Late Middle English, only becomes noticeable from the seventeenth century onwards. Secondly, my findings also suggest that plurals and other kinds of phrases which were ambiguous between a reading as common case phrases or as genitive phrases must have contributed greatly to the rise and expansion of the ACC-*ing* pattern, since they may have strengthened the feeling that a common case might be used as the subject of the gerund, as already pointed out by Jespersen (1909–1949: V §9.4). Essentially, the phrases in question could be of the following types:

- a. Nouns ending in the fricatives /s, z/ (e.g. *Moses*, *mistress*, *Highness*), with which the genitive form was often avoided in Early Modern English on phonotactic grounds, as Visser (1963–1973: §1101), Altenberg (1982: 45–48) and others have noted.

(19) ARCHER 1666 Allin, *The Journals of Sir Thomas Allin* (alli\_j2b)

I went aboard, where I received the news of *his Highness going to the Royal James to the westward*.

- b. The plural form of most nouns, which beginning in Middle English fell together formally with the possessive. In writing, an apostrophe came to mark the ‘genitive’ and was prescribed in the (late) eighteenth century, “thus establishing a distinction (in the written form only) between singular and plural possessive (*boy’s*, *boys’*) and the plural (*boys*)” (Brinton & Arnovick 2011 [2006]: 420). In gerundial structures such as (20), therefore, it was impossible to ascertain whether the subject of the *-ing* form was intended as a possessive phrase in the ‘genitive’ singular or plural, or as a noun phrase in the common case:

(20) HC 1689–1690 Evelyn, *Diary*, 900

... people began to talke of *the Bishops being cast out of the House*<sup>4</sup>

- c. The pronoun *her*, with which there is no formal distinction between the possessive and the accusative form, so that in (21), *her* could be interpreted either way.

(21) HC 1619 Deloney, *Jack of Newbury*, 81

Moreouer, *her prattling to Mistresse Winchcombes folks of their mistresse*, made her on the other side to fall out with her

- d. Various sorts of complex NPs with which a genitive form would prove awkward or simply impossible (for discussion, see Visser 1963–1973: §1101); this accounts for the absence of the clitic *-’s* in an example like (22):

4. The overall context shows that in this example *Bishops* is plural, not singular.

- (22) HC 1665 Hooke, *Micrographia*, 13.5, 211  
 it [= a louse] is troubled at nothing so much as at a man that scratches his head ... that makes it oftentime skulk into some meaner and lower place, and run behind a mans back ...; *which ill conditions of it having made it better known then trusted*, would exempt me from making any further description of it

A third noteworthy aspect revealed by Table 4 is the high proportion of ACC-*ing* gerundives functioning as clausal subjects, which is exceptional if one bears in mind that, as noted in Section 3 above, there is a constant trend over time for all subtypes of gerunds to occur chiefly as prepositional complements (e.g. *by John's looking at me*), to the extent that in Fanego (1996b: 116, 122), in a sample of 317,621 words from the Early Modern English section of the Helsinki Corpus, I found only 8.7 per cent (= 141 tokens) of gerunds used as subjects, out of a total of 1,618. The skewed distribution of ACC-*ing* gerundives, at least in the early stages of their development, is also confirmed by data from Dryden's usage: Söderlind (1951–1958: II, §§514, 516), in his detailed analysis of Dryden's extensive collection of prose writings, found only 10 instances of ACC-*ing* gerundives, five of which function as sentence subjects, as against only five used as prepositional complements.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, a fourth finding also meriting attention relates to the information in Table 5, which shows that the ACC-*ing* constructions used as sentence subjects in my material are predominantly governed by causative predicates (for the corresponding information on POSS-*ing* nominalizations as sentence subjects, see Table 6 in Section 4.3). This was not expected, since we know from the literature on the topic (e.g. Noonan 1985: 118) that there is a strong preference across languages for subject clauses to depend on commentative predicates, that is, predicates providing “a comment on the complement proposition that takes the form of an emotional reaction or evaluation ... or a judgement” (Noonan 1985: 116–118), this trend being a corollary of the cross-linguistic tendency to code evaluations and comments in the form of nominal or adjectival predicates, which usually operate, at the syntactic level, within copular sentences, as illustrated in (17) above.

5. Söderlind (1951–1958) in fact adduces seven examples of ACC-*ing* gerundives as sentence subjects, but I have excluded from the count two examples (namely *NSat* 237 and *Rym* 387 in Söderlind's §514) which look to me ambiguous between a gerundive and a participial reading. Likewise, in §516 and §518, where he gives the data for the ACC-*ing* gerundive as prepositional complement, a total of 11 examples are listed, but in six the nominal is either in the plural (e.g. *of his homely Romans jesting at one another*) or is a classical proper noun ending in /s, z/ (e.g. *for Cleomenes not accepting the favours of Cassandra*). Since, as Söderlind points out (§518), “the apostrophe alone is never used as a sign of genitive” in Dryden, these six cases are ambiguous between a reading as PossPs with a ‘zero’ genitive (i.e. *of his homely Romans*) or as common case NPs, and hence have also been left out from the statistics.

In the case of English, the prevailing association of subject clauses with commentatives is clear from my own corpus-based research on Early Modern English *that*-clauses (Fanego 1990:132) and infinitives (Fanego 1992:81–82), from De Smet’s (2013:80–81) data on *for* NP *to*-infinitives between 1500 and 1990, and from Mair’s (1990:29–30, 45–46) detailed analysis of infinitival usage in Present-Day English. Mair shows that infinitival subject clauses in his corpus are governed in the vast majority of cases by adjectival and nominal predicates falling into the semantic classes “of ‘potential’ (*possible, impossible*), ‘difficulty’ (*easy, hard*, etc.), ‘frequency’ (*common, exceptional*, etc.), ‘value judgment’ (*alright, desirable*, etc.), and ‘necessity’ (*essential, vital*, etc.)”.

From the evidence just mentioned it follows that there seems to exist an interesting functional contrast between, on the one hand, the most common type of *for* NP *to*-infinitive as subject, which both today and in earlier stages of English tends to occur extraposed and be governed by commentatives,<sup>6</sup> and, on the other hand, ACC-*ing* gerundives, which even today occur mostly preverbally, are not normally extraposed (Quirk *et al.* 1985:1064; Huddleston & Pullum *et al.* 2002:1254) and, at least in their early stages, were most often governed by causative verbal predicates. Compare in this regard (3) above and (23) here with (5) and (15–16) quoted earlier:

- (23) 1711 Addison, *Spectator* no. 45 (quoted from Fanego 1992:54)  
It was then looked upon as a piece of Ill Breeding, *for a Woman to refuse to see a Man*, because she was not stirring.

**Table 4.** ACC-*ing* gerundives, per subperiod and syntactic function, based on a 945,413-word sample

1500–1640 (291,327 words)	1640–1700 (335,277 words)	1700–1749 (318,809 words)
As subject: 2	As subject: 11	As subject: 20
As object: 1	As object: 1	As object: 2
As prep. complement: 2	As prep. complement: 17	As prep. complement: 18
TOTAL: 5	TOTAL: 29	TOTAL: 40
(2 morphologically ambiguous)	(11 morphologically ambiguous)	(4 morphologically ambiguous)

6. This reflects the historical development of the *for* NP *to*-infinitive from an earlier benefactive construction; for discussion, see Fischer (1988), Garrett (2012:55–66) and De Smet (2009, 2013:77ff).

Table 5. Matrix predicates governing ACC-*ing* gerundives functioning as sentence subject or object

Predicates governing ACC- <i>ing</i> as sentence subject:	
Causatives (25)	<i>cast (an impediment); deprive (sb. from sth.); draw (sb. to do sth.); exempt (sb. from V-ing); expose (sb. to sth.); give (sb. reason to do sth.); give (sth. a calm and continued impulse); give (apprehensions of sb.'s danger); give (content); induce (sb. to do sth.); introduce (a thought), i.e. 'bring about, occasion (a thought)'; make (sb./sth. do sth.; 10 tokens); oblige (sb. to do sth.); occasion (sth.); put (sb. into consternation); stay (sb.'s flight), i.e. 'check, hinder (sb.'s flight)'</i>
Commentatives (8)	<i>be a daily miracle; be the effect of duty; be a sufficient demonstration; be a continual snare; be a great article; be looked on as...; be the better; prove the best means of...</i>
Predicates governing ACC- <i>ing</i> as sentence object (dates of occurrence in parentheses):	
	<i>hinder (1554), prohibit (1677), interrupt 'hinder' (1705; s.v. OED interrupt v. 4.obs.), like (1705)</i>

### 4.3 Summing up

In light of the evidence presented in the preceding section, the question emerges as to what exactly were the sources behind the rise of the ACC-*ing* pattern. We know that for all other subtypes of verbal gerunds, the sources were the corresponding nominal subtypes, which underwent a prolonged process of accretion of verbal features whose effects can best be seen by comparing the pairs of gerunds in (24–26):

- (24) a. HC 1550–52 *Diary of Edward VI*, 367  
 The lord admiral toke his leave to goe into Fraunce, *for christening of the French kinges soone*.  
 (bare nominal gerund: *of*-phrase as notional object)
- b. HC 1624 *Oxinden Letters*, 14  
 I thanke you for your Care and paines *abowt enquireing and provideing Sheepe for mee*,  
 (bare verbal gerund: NP object)
- (25) a. HC 1554 *The Trial of Sir Nicholas Throckmorton*, P.I, 66.C1  
 Moreouer, to accompte *the taking of the Tower* is uery dangerous by the Law.  
 (definite nominal gerund: determiner combined with *of*-phrase as notional object)
- b. HC 1629 *Barrington Family Letters*, 92  
 ... that all the distempers of our bodys, which must need be many while we live here, may be a means *of the cureing the great distempers of our soles*  
 (definite hybrid gerund: determiner combined with NP object)

- (26) a. HC 1567 Harman, *A Caveat or Warening for Commen Cursetors*, 70  
 As *your pacient bearinge of troubles*, your honest behaiour among vs  
 your neyghbours ... doth moue vs to lament your case  
 (nominal POSS-*ing* gerund: possessive determiner combined with  
*of*-phrase as notional object)
- b. HC 1666–7 Pepys, *Diary*, VIII.319  
 and then heard from Sir R. Ford the good account which the boys had  
 given *of their understanding the nature and consequence of an oath*  
 (hybrid POSS-*ing* gerund: possessive determiner combined with NP  
 object)

In the case of the ACC-*ing* pattern, the greatest affinity is evidently with the POSS-*ing* subtype, since both share the feature of having an explicit subject argument (respectively, the common case NP and the possessive determiner). That POSS-*ing* indeed contributed to the formation of ACC-*ing* has already been mentioned above; however, POSS-*ing* gerundives, like all other gerundives, were uncommon as subjects — there are only 17 instances used with this function in my data from subperiod I (1500–1640; see Table 6). But, more importantly, they differed markedly from the ACC-*ing* type in terms of their internal syntax. Specifically, the majority of my examples of POSS-*ing* as sentence subject in that first subperiod are purely nominal structures lacking an explicit patient argument or any other kind of post-head dependent (an adverbial, a prepositional phrase, and so on), and hence not providing a good model for the development of a typically clausal structure such as ACC-*ing*; witness the following examples, and also (26a) above:

- (27) HC 1534 More, *Letters*, 545  
 For Christen charitie and naturall loue and *your verie daughterly dealing* ...  
 both binde me and straine me therto.
- (28) HC 1608 Armin, *A Nest of Ninnies*, 10  
 he [the knight] loued the foole aboute all, and that the household knew, else  
 Jack had paid for it, for *the common peoples dauncing* was spoiled

There are only a couple of examples, such as (29) below, exhibiting a greater degree of internal complexity and thus resembling the more versatile and extended gerund structures that become common from subperiod II (1640–1700), coinciding with the widespread verbalization of -*ing* nominals. For, as I have shown in earlier research (Fanego 1996b: 119–121), as gerunds moved away from noun phrases over the course of the Early Modern English period, a noticeable increase took place in the frequency of post-head dependents inside gerund phrases, which thus

came to mirror VP structure much more closely. This trend, however, is chiefly observable from subperiod II onwards.<sup>7</sup>

(29) HC 1554 *The Trial of Sir Nicholas Throckmorton*, PI, 75.C2

*Your adhering to the Queenes Enimies within the Realme* is evidently proued:

All things considered, then, it seems worthwhile to explore whether a source other than, or additional to, POSS-*ing* gerundives can be found to help us account satisfactorily for the intriguing features of the grammar of the ACC-*ing* pattern discussed in Section 4.2, namely, its high incidence as sentence subject and its predominant correlation with causative predicates. The notion that linguistic changes can often result not just from one, but from different source constructions simultaneously, has recently been explored and formalized in work by Van de Velde *et al.* (2013) by looking at developments in phonology, semantics and morphosyntax. This possibility will be examined in what follows with respect to the specific construction under consideration here.

**Table 6.** Semantics of matrix predicates governing POSS-*ing* nominalizations functioning as sentence subjects<sup>a</sup>

1500–1640 (291,327 words)	1640–1700 (335,277 words)	1700–1749 (318,809 words)
Causatives: 5	Causatives: 6	Causatives: 7
Commentatives: 12	Commentatives: 4	Commentatives: 10
		Other: 6 <sup>b</sup>
TOTAL: 17	TOTAL: 10	TOTAL: 23

<sup>a</sup> Note that the data on this table relate to all types of POSS-*ing* nominalizations, whether fully nominal, such as **the common peoples dauncing** in (28), or hybrid (i.e. combining verbal and nominal features), such as ARCHER 1707ste2\_x3b: **‘their having a Safe One** at last look’d like a matter of Extraordinary Good Fortune.”

<sup>b</sup> This label covers a few examples which are difficult to classify, most of them cases where the higher verb is *be* followed by a *to*-infinitive functioning as purpose complement (see Huddleston & Pullum *et al.* 2002: 1256). For instance:

(iii) COLMOBAENG 1719 Barker, *The amours of Bosvil and Galesia*, 59

I did not in the least believe that *his going to London* ... was to be marry’d, but look’d upon it as a meer Jest or Banter,

These are causative only in the Aristotelian sense, since they denote the ‘final’ cause, but not causative in the sense of ‘efficient’ cause which is relevant here (for the distinction, see Noonan (1985: 125), among many others). If anything, such predicates border on commentatives, as they express a judgement or evaluation on the sentence subject.

7. The tendency for more complex syntax to correlate with the increasing verbalization of gerunds has also been noted by De Smet (2008: 90–95) with reference to the period 1350–1640.

## 5. Possible sources of the ACC-*ing* gerundive

The coalescence from Early Middle English of the Old English ending of the present participle (*-ende*) with the *-ing/-ung* suffix of the abstract deverbal noun, and the subsequent verbalization of the latter (see Section 3 above and also Lass 1992: 144–147; Swan 2003) has resulted in a blurring of the gerund/participle divide and the formal identity of a number of constructions which are, however, mostly functionally distinct (for discussion, see Fanego 1996b: 101–106; De Smet 2010: 1172–1174, 2014, among many others). Those relevant to the present research include the three discussed below.

### 5.1 NP V-*ing* complementing verbs of perception

The substitution of the participle for the infinitive after verbs of physical (*feel, find, hear, see, etc.*) and mental (*consider, imagine, etc.*) perception begins in Old English under Latin influence, but, as noted in the relevant literature (Mustanoja 1960: 552–553; Visser 1963–1973: §§2084, 2097), the use of the participle made slow progress, and “even in ME it is less common than the infinitive” (Mustanoja 1960: 553). In the course of time, however, the pattern has grown much more frequent and has been analogically extended to many new verbs, as is evident from Visser’s long lists of Modern English examples.

The increasing frequency of sequences such as *I heard them screaming, I discerned a rustic train trooping slowly up the village lane, She pictured herself confessing these things*, and the like, most probably assisted in the expansion to object position of ACC-*ing* gerundives, once this construction had become established in the language. This granted, the diachronic evidence presented in the previous sections, though limited, suggests, first, that the object environment played a minor role in the transmission of the ACC-*ing* pattern outside its original slot as oblique complement; note in this regard the data in Tajima (1996) discussed earlier (Section 3), the modest numbers (4 tokens) of ACC-*ing* gerundives as objects attested in the 945,413-word sample which forms the basis of the present study (see Table 4 above), or the fact that no instances of the construction are recorded in Dryden’s prose (see Söderlind 1951–1958: II, §515). Secondly, the specific verbs (*hinder, prohibit, interrupt* ‘hinder’ and *like*) governing in my data the few tokens of ACC-*ing* gerundives as objects (see Table 5 above) are not semantically related to perception verbs, as might have been expected if these had played a major role in the development of the construction under discussion. Instead, the governing verbs correspond quite closely to the verb classes (verbs of avoidance and emotives) that were involved in other changes affecting gerunds at about the same time; as I have demonstrated elsewhere (Fanego 1996a), over the period 1400–1760 the



replacement of *to*-infinitives by bare gerundives with verbs of subject control was implemented first with verbs of avoidance (*avoid, escape, forbear, cannot/could not help, etc.*; e.g. 1561 *hee can not refraine telling them*; see Fanego 1996a: 38), and subsequently with emotives (*fear, hate, like*) and a few other verb classes.<sup>8</sup>

## 5.2 Participial relative clauses

Participial clauses functionally equivalent to a relative clause, as in Present-Day English *The train **approaching Platform 3** is the 11.10 to Bath*, can be traced back to Old English (Mitchell 1985: §§1434–1435; Mustanoja 1960: 555; Swan 2003: 182), where, as noted by Mitchell (1985: *ibid.*), they may often be difficult to distinguish from the use of the participle as an equivalent of an adverbial clause providing supportive commentary about the time, manner, cause, means, etc. of a higher clause. This syntactic and semantic indeterminacy applies at later stages of English, too, as has often been pointed out in the relevant literature (e.g. Killie & Swan 2009: 354–357); (30) is a case in point:

- (30) HC 1672–1681 Fryer, *A New Account of East India and Persia*, I, 193  
 The Portugals *striving to possess themselves of Muschat*, were put to such stress, that had not their Armado come to their relief, they must have desisted their Enterprize: [?’who were striving...’; ?’while they were striving...’]

Participial clauses, both relative and adverbial, have been exhaustively examined by Kohnen (2001, 2004) in two studies concerned, inter alia, with the role played by genre on the spread of those constructions across the language. For this purpose, his 2004 monograph examines six text types (chronicles, religious treatises, homilies, statutes, narrative prose and private letters) and five centuries (12th–17th), based on a total corpus of 639,693 words, of which 287,146 date from the 16th–17th centuries (Kohnen 2004: 118). In an earlier analysis (Kohnen 2001), Kohnen focuses on three of those text types (statutes, private letters and narrative prose) over the period 1450–1700. He shows that participial relative clauses are very frequent in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In the statutes their numbers remain fairly stable along the chronological dimension, as this text type provides, according to Kohnen (2001: 176), “a static and inflexible scene in Early Modern English” with respect to participial usage. But in the other two text types examined,

8. A supplementary search in a 200,000-word sample from ten novels in Chadwyck-Healey’s *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* yielded a similar picture: the four tokens of ACC-*ing* gerundives recorded in object position depended on the avoidance verbs *prevent* (2 occ.) and (*can’t*) *help*, and on the verb *pardon* (1863 Mrs. Oliphant, *Salem Chapel*, 133: “I hope Mrs Tozer will pardon *me withdrawing so early*, but I am not very well”); on this latter verb, see footnote 10 above.

participial relative clauses lose in importance in the course of the period: “[i]n both letters and narrative prose the frequency of postmodifications [i.e. participial relative clauses] is lower towards the end of the seventeenth century” (Kohnen 2001: 179); and this decrease correlates, crucially, with a marked increase in the use of adverbial participial clauses located in initial position relative to their matrix clause, as shown in Table 7, based on Kohnen (2001: 179). Concerning this table, note that the figures for adverbial participial clauses refer to *both* free adjuncts (as defined in Section 5.3 below) and absolutes, since Kohnen (2001: 174 n10) subsumes all instances of both structures under the label *front construction*.<sup>9</sup> In light of his findings, Kohnen (2001: 180–183) concludes his overview of participial developments with the important observation that “front constructions do not simply turn up ‘out of the blue’ ... It can be inferred from the data that ... postmodifying constructions contributed significantly to the development of front constructions.”

This view of ‘postmodifications’ (i.e. participial relative clauses) as lying behind the emergence and spread of adverbial participial clauses is endorsed by Killie & Swan in their 2009 study of the grammaticalization of English adverbial *-ing* clauses and has some bearing, too, on the specific construction, the ACC-*ing* gerundive, which is the concern of this paper. For the very many participial structures (whether adverbial or relative) which, as shown by Kohnen (2001, 2004) and Killie & Swan (2009), came to mark the style of Early Modern English prose, inevitably produced surface sequences which could be syntactically ambivalent between a reading as participial relative clauses, as adverbial participial clauses, or as *-ing* nominalizations (i.e. gerunds). In a later section (Section 5.3) I will refer at greater length to the indeterminacy between adverbial participial clauses and gerundives; here I will draw attention specifically to (31–32) from my own data, two instances included in the figures for ACC-*ing* gerundives given in Table 4, but for which a relative interpretation cannot be ruled out. (33) is an analogous contemporary example.

(31) ARCHER 1664 Bulteel, *The History of Merame* (bult\_f2b)

The pleasure I took in beholding her [i.e. the captive], made me insensibly waste much time there, ... *Themira returning to the Court* drew us with her, for my part, I left not Coupava, but with much repugnance, and before I went, I would needs be acquainted with the fair Captives name,

?‘the fact that Themira was returning to the court...’

?‘Themira, by returning to the court,...’

?‘Themira, who was returning to the court,...’

9. However, in his Table 7 Kohnen (2001:185) gives separate figures for absolute constructions in narrative prose, and these confirm a much increased use of absolutes in Early Modern English, relative to Middle English: 1481–1526 (15,190 words): 7 tokens; 1567–1619 (17,610 words): 43 tokens; 1688–1692 (12,626 words): 21 tokens.

- (32) COLMOBAENG 1719 Bell, *St. Petersburg to Peking*, 4Q10(1719)0008/019–P0  
 We travelled to the city of Mosco in small parties, the more easily to procure  
 post horses. *The weather being very hot* obliged us to make short stages,  
 confining us mostly to the mornings and evenings.  
 ?‘the fact that the weather was very hot...’  
 ?‘the weather, since it was very hot,...’  
 ?‘the weather, which was very hot...’
- (33) F-LOB 1991 Fiction (Humor) R04 181  
 For a start, club DJs do not speak. Ever ... You actually leave your DJ  
 absolutely alone because he has his headphones clamped to his ear and he’s  
 working out the next ‘seamless mix’ ... Timing is crucial and *some goon*  
*coming up, prodding you in the ribs and asking if you’re going to “play some*  
*decent music”* can put you right off your groove.  
 ?‘the fact of some goon coming up...’  
 ?‘some goon who comes up...’

**Table 7.** Distribution of adverbial and relative participial clauses in private letters and narrative prose (based on Table 5 in Kohnen (2001); in brackets: frequencies normalized per 10,000 words)

	1448–1547 41,780 words	1567–1632 39,133 words	1662–1706 25,755 words
Adverbial participial clauses in sentence-initial position	6 (1.44)	93 (23.76)	42 (16.31)
Participial relative clauses	61 (14.6)	86 (21.98)	24 (9.32)

### 5.3 Adverbial participial clauses

In Present-Day English, adverbial participial clauses, as in (34–36), are set apart from their matrix clause by an intonational break which is “more often than not ... indicated by commas in writing” (Kortmann 1991:1). Comma punctuation, however, was often absent in earlier stages, as Early Modern English punctuation differed from that of Present-Day English in many respects (Salmon 1986; Río-Rey 2002: 309–310, 321).

- (34) HC 1608 Armin, *A Nest of Ninnies*, 48  
 This lusty jester, *ø forgetting himself*, in fury draws his dagger, and begins to  
 protest.

- (35) HC 1603 *The Trial of Sir Walter Raleigh*, I, 210.C1  
*The Lord Cobham being requir'd to subscribe to an Examination*, there was  
shewed a Note under Sir Walter Raleigh's hand; the which when he had  
perus'd, he paus'd,
- (36) HC c1535–1543 Leland, *Itinerary*, Sample 2, PI, 140  
Insomuch that *leade beyng made ther at hand* many houses yn the toune  
have pipes of leade to convey water from place to place.

Following the terminology in Kortmann (1991: 1–2, 1995), it has become customary to refer to the two subtypes of adverbial participial clause exemplified above as free adjuncts (34) and absolutes (35–36). These are distinguished in contemporary usage by two defining features. First, the presence of an overt subject NP in absolutes (*the Lord Cobham* and *leade* in the case of (35–36); henceforth: Sub<sub>A</sub>) versus its absence in free adjuncts. Secondly, the fact that in canonical instances the covert subject of free adjuncts is 'controlled' by the subject of the matrix clause (*this lusty jester* in (34); henceforth: Sub<sub>M</sub>), whereas in absolutes their explicit subject and the subject of the matrix clause are not coreferential. Thus, as Kortmann (1991: 103) notes, the default usage today is that "given referential subject identity, free adjuncts are to be employed, whereas absolutes are appropriate whenever non-coreference holds between the subject of the [participial] construction and the matrix subject".

There is evidence, however, that this neat distinction between free adjuncts and absolutes in terms of referential subject identity or lack of it did not apply in earlier stages of the language, so that the two constructions did not specialize in the fulfilment of complementary tasks until well into the Late Modern English period. Already in Old English, as pointed out by Mitchell (1985: §§3804, 3808, 3811), absolutes and 'appositive participles' (i.e. free adjuncts) are sometimes difficult to distinguish, since it is by no means uncommon to find examples "in which the same person or thing is involved, not only logically but also grammatically, in both elements" (§3808). Witness (37–38), which are adduced by Visser (1963–1973: §1014, 1075–1076) as examples of what he terms "quasi-absolute constructions":<sup>10</sup>

- (37) *Ælfric, Saints' Lives* ii, 38, 549  
ic heardlice mine breost cnyssende, þonne geseah ic leoht gehwanon me  
ymbutan scinende  
'I beating my breast strongly, then saw I a light from all sides shining about me'

10. In OE, Sub<sub>A</sub> was most commonly inflected for the dative (*þæm hælende*), but nominative subjects can also be found, such as *ic* in (37).

(38) *OE Gosp.*, Mt. 13, I

**þæm hælende** ut-gangendum of huse, **he** sæt wiþ þa sæ  
 ‘the Saviour going out of the house, he [i.e. the Saviour] sat by the sea’

Many similar examples of absolutes showing full coreference between the subject of the absolute and the matrix subject can be found in later periods of English, as is clear from the evidence adduced by Jespersen (1909–1949: V §6.2.2), Söderlind (1951–1958: II §502), Visser (1963–1973: §§1084–1085), Kohnen (2001: 180–183) and Río-Rey (2002: 318–321). (39) is an example from Kohnen (2001: 181):

(39) HC 1622 Knyvett, *Letters*, 58

**my cousin and my selfe** going to the steward of Lambeth, we found that by  
 Judds and my vncles vnderhand dealing, the Jury haue given in ther verdict  
 and found my vncke heier to the moitye

Absolutes of this kind, to which I will refer henceforth with the label *transitional*,<sup>11</sup> are also frequent in my material, where four subtypes exhibiting full coreference can be distinguished. All of them are obsolete in Present-Day English:

1. Sub<sub>A</sub> is a full NP; Sub<sub>M</sub> is a coreferential personal pronoun; see (8) above and (38–39).
2. Sub<sub>A</sub> and Sub<sub>M</sub> are two coreferential pronouns identical in form:

(40) ARCHER 1673 Kirkman, *The Counterfeit Lady Unveiled* (1673kirk\_f2b)  
 ... and **they** designing to live in all freedom as man and wife, **they** therefore  
 left that lodging and went to another at a convenient distance.

(41) ARCHER 1704 Dean, *The Journall of the Campaigne for the Yeare of Our  
 Lord God — 1704* (1704dean\_j3b)  
 But no sooner did our Forlorne Hope appear but the enemy did throw in  
 their volleys of canon balls and small shott among them ..., and **they being  
 strongly intrenched they** killed and mortyfyed abundance of our men both  
 officers and souldiers.

3. Subject identity between Sub<sub>A</sub> and Sub<sub>M</sub> could go as far as Sub<sub>M</sub> deletion, thus leading to a situation in which, as Kortmann (1991: 101, 1995: 214) notes, the subject of the absolute controls the empty subject position of the matrix clause. In such cases, the line between absolutes and free adjuncts becomes blurred to an even greater extent than in the two previous subtypes:

11. The term is adapted from Kohnen (2001), who uses it when discussing front constructions (i.e. adverbial participial clauses) as emerging out of various types of postmodifying clause.

- (42) HC 1554 *The Trial of Sir Nicholas Throckmorton*, P.I, 69.C1  
 ... and so *Vaughan's Testimonie being credited*,  $\emptyset$  may be the material Cause of my Condemnation, as the Jury may be induced by his Depositions to speak their Verdict
- (43) ARCHER 1628 *Hipolito and Isabella* (1628anon\_p1b)  
 A weake perswasion will carry a diuided and doubtfull minde, to that part whither it selfe inclines; so *these letters finding her leaning more to loue then dutie*,  $\emptyset$  forced her through all the doubts that could oppose themselves, and after some discourse with her selfe, ... reason at length gaue place to loue, and respect to passion
4. A subclass of the preceding subtype, also mentioned by Jespersen (1909–1949: III §10.1.4), Söderlind (1951–1958: II §502), Visser (1963–1973: §1086) and Río-Rey (2002: 319), involves relative clauses, thus giving rise to a construction which, as Söderlind notes, “is particularly bold”.<sup>12</sup>
- (44) HC 1526 *A Hundred Mery Talys*, Sample 2, 135  
 the frere and his felaw began Placebo and Dirige and so forth sayd the seruyse full deuowtly *which the wyues so heryng /  $\emptyset$  coude not refrayne* them selfe from lawghynge and wente in to a lytyll parler to lawgh more at theyr plesure.
- (45) HC 1619 Deloney, *Jack of Newbury*, 86–7  
 Whereupon hee willed him for two yeres space to take his diet and his Ladies at his house: *which the Knight accepting  $\emptyset$  rode straight with his wife to Newbery.*
- (46) ARCHER 1692 Congreve, *Incognita* (1692cong\_f2b)  
 ... and Hippolito having made a Visit to his Governour, dispatch'd a Messenger with the Letter and Directions to Leonora. At the Signal agreed upon the Casement was opened and a String let down, *to which the Bearer having fastned the Letter,  $\emptyset$  saw it drawn up, and returned.*

In Río-Rey's (2002: 318–321) study, which is based on seven genres<sup>13</sup> and a 252,110-word sample from the Early Modern English section of the Helsinki Corpus, transitional absolutes represent about 30 per cent (101 tokens) of the 336

12. Compare the type in (44–46) with its variant with two coreferential pronouns: HC 1612 Covert, *A Trve and Almost Incredible Report of an Englishman*, Sample 1, 16: “The 21. day in the morning, wee espied three saile being small boats, sleightly wrought together, called *Paugaias* which we made after and tooke, *which they on shore espying, they* sent out an Aduisor being also a *Paugaia*”.

13. Namely, Comedies, Fiction, Letters (private), Science, Sermons, Statutes and Travelogue.

absolutes recorded. The frequencies for subtypes 1 (24 tokens), 3 (65 tokens) and 4 (12 tokens) above (subtype 2 is not mentioned, so we can assume that no examples of this occurred in her data) are carefully charted on the chronological dimension, and she shows that full coreference becomes particularly common during the second (1570–1640) of the three subperiods of Early Modern English distinguished in the Helsinki Corpus.<sup>14</sup> She concludes her insightful analysis of participial usage by hypothesizing that the lack of a clear-cut distinction between free adjuncts and absolutes in Early Modern English “could be derived from the fact that both structures, specially absolutes, were rather scarce until their use became widespread in the EModE period, and therefore required some time to undergo a certain standardization towards PE usage” (Río-Rey 2002: 322).

These findings are relevant to the present research in that, as already hinted at in the opening section of this paper, it will be argued here that the subtypes of absolute with Sub<sub>M</sub> deletion constituted the major source for the emergence of ACC-*ing* gerundives as sentence subjects, an issue explored in detail in what follows.

### 5.3.1 *The early stages of adverbial participial clauses*

Killie & Swan (2009) have addressed in an important article the development and growth in frequency of adverbial participial clauses from Middle English to the end of the Early Modern English period, based on the relevant sections in the Helsinki Corpus.<sup>15</sup> In keeping with the information in reference works such as Mustanoja (1960: 554–556) or Kisbye (1971–1972: I, §§B1–16, B2–19, B3–12), Killie & Swan (2009: 338) show that the use of adverbial participial clauses was “very restricted in Middle English”, but rose dramatically in Early Modern English, from 56 tokens in the period 1420–1500, to 359 in 1500–1570, 574 in 1570–1640, and 681 in 1640–1710. They also show that the only adverbial participial clauses occurring with some frequency in Middle English were those denoting an addition or accompanying circumstance, as in (47), or exemplification/specification, as in (48), since ‘central’ adverbial relations such as time, cause or condition were “rarely expressed by way of *-ing* clauses in ME” (Killie & Swan 2009: 339):

- (47) Dodo joined him, two laden bellboys following like acolytes behind a goddess. (Cited from Kortmann 1995: 217)

14. Table 6 in Kohnen (2001: 182) gives figures for occurrences of subtype 1 (under the abbreviation P1fT2), based on a much smaller sample comprising 45,426 words of narrative prose and covering a period of two centuries (1481–1692). He records 8 examples of the construction, the earliest dating from 1526 and the latest from 1688.

15. Note that the participial clauses (or, to use their preferred terminology, ‘converb’ clauses) discussed by Killie and Swan subsume *all* kinds of adverbial *-ing* clauses, that is, both free adjuncts and absolutes; this is clear from both Killie & Swan (2003: 337–338) and Killie (2006: 448).

- (48) Mr Nyerere again attacked the International Monetary Fund, calling it ‘an instrument of the capitalist powers’. (Cited from Kortmann 1991: 167)

In Early Modern English, however, there takes place “a marked rise in temporal and causal clauses, and in particular the latter category becomes more and more frequent in the course of the EModE period, both in absolute and in relative terms” (Killie & Swan 2009: 344; see also the quantitative information provided in their Table 1 on p. 342). This important development in the kinds of semantic relations that came to be preferably expressed by adverbial participial clauses was accompanied by a positional shift: “the converb-like clauses in the ME corpus almost without exception occur clause-finally, while EModE converb clauses frequently occur sentence-initially” (Killie & Swan 2009: 346); this finding thus ties in with Kohlen’s data, discussed in Section 5.2 and Table 7 above, on the marked increase, during the seventeenth century, of adverbial participial clauses located in initial position relative to their matrix clause.

Even more interestingly for the present research, Killie & Swan (2009: 358) note, too, that the clauses which occur in initial position “are almost exclusively temporal and causal ones, and a large proportion of the temporal and causal clauses in the corpus are found here”. Killie & Swan (2009) do not provide the exact figures for sentence-initial causal and temporal clauses in each of the Early Modern English subperiods, but Table 8, which is based on my own data from the Helsinki Corpus and relates *only* to transitional absolutes of subtype 3, as defined earlier, can serve as an indication of the frequency of causal and temporal participial clauses located in sentence-initial position. It is this specific subtype of transitional absolute having a causative or, alternatively, a temporal reading (time and cause being semantic relations that easily shade into each other) that constituted, in my view, the major source for the rise of the ACC-*ing* pattern as sentence subject, an issue examined in greater detail in the next section.

**Table 8.** Semantic relations expressed by transitional absolutes with Sub<sub>M</sub> deleted under identity with Sub<sub>A</sub>, based on four genres (Fiction, Travelogue, Science, Trials) in the Helsinki Corpus. Size of sample: 156,590 words

	1500–1570 (54,500 words)	1570–1640 (54,540 words)	1640–1710 (47,550 words)	TOTAL
Cause	7	26	14	47
Time	1	6	0	7
Other relations, including condition	3	2	0	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	11	34	14	59



## 6. ACC-*ing* gerundives: A constructional view

This paper assumes a model of language that accords with a constructional view of grammar such as that expounded in Langacker (1987: 57–63, 2008), Goldberg (1995, 2006) and Croft (2001), among many others. Central to this view is the idea that knowledge of language consists of a large network of constructions, or stored pairings of form and meaning, of varying levels of generality and productivity, and termed in various ways, depending on each individual author. Thus, labels such as *schemas*, *subschemas*, *micro-constructions* and *constructs* (i.e. empirically attested tokens) have become familiar from work by Traugott & Trousdale (2013: 16–17). It is important to bear in mind, though, that the use of these terms does not imply that the constructional network is viewed as discretely divisible into three or four levels of abstraction. Rather, it is simply “assumed that constructions are mentally represented along a continuum of schematicity” (Hilpert 2013: 5) and are not unordered, but rather highly structured by means of various kinds of *inheritance links* (Goldberg 1995: 72–98) which either relate higher and lower levels of abstraction in the constructional network, or link a given construction to other constructions in the network (in which case a construction may inherit properties from more than one ‘supra’ construction).

Constructions can change over time, and be “altered in terms of their form, their function, any aspect of their frequency, their distribution in the linguistic community, or any combination of these” (Hilpert 2013: 16). Further, it is also assumed here that changes in the features of a construction proceed as “a succession of small discrete steps” (Traugott & Trousdale 2013: 74) which are “consistent with gradualness, given a theory of continuity over time” (Traugott & Trousdale 2010: 25). Synchronically, gradualness “is manifest in small-scale variation and ‘gradience’ ... This means that at any moment in time changing constructions contribute to gradience in the system” (Traugott & Trousdale 2013: 75).

With all this in mind, we can now examine again the features of the ACC-*ing* construction outlined in the previous sections. As shown in Section 4.1, the construction, which is itself part of a vast network including not solely other gerundive constructions but also complement clauses of various kinds (finite, infinitival) and even, on a broader level, participial constructions generally, is comprised today of three main constructional types,<sup>16</sup> namely a prepositional type (49) and two non-prepositional ones functioning as core complements<sup>17</sup> in clause structure (50–51):

16. Needless to say, these do not exhaust all the functional possibilities today, which include less common uses such as subject predicative and (marginally) extraposed subject (e.g. *It’s no use him asking for special consideration*).

17. For the label, cf. Van Valin & LaPolla (1997: 29) and Huddleston & Pullum *et al.* (2002: 216).

- (49) Prepositional type:
- a. F-LOB 1991 Mystery and Detective Fiction L06 33  
more often than not, the ploy was frustrated *by the plane being two or three hours late*
  - b. HC 1554 *The Trial of Sir Nicholas Throckmorton*, PI, 64.C2  
no exceptions were to be taken to them, but only for their upright Honesties, *notwithstanding the Attorney prompting Sergeant Dier.*
- (50) Non-extraposed subject (see also (52–60) below):  
F-LOB 1991 General Fiction K04 147  
... and I thought that *me trying to stop the war* was a bit like trying to stop the ship would have been.
- (51) Object:
- a. Frown 1992 General Fiction K02 163  
Because I don't like *people telling me what to do.*
  - b. HC 1554 *The Trial of Sir Nicholas Throckmorton*, PI, 70.C1  
the said Sir *Peter Caroe* sayd, the matter importing the *French King* as it did, he thought the *French King* would work to hinder *the Spanyards coming hither,*

As already noted in Section 4.2, reasonably clear instances of the prepositional type can be found from late Middle English, though its frequency, at least in writing, remains very low until well into the 17th century (see Table 4). With respect to the object type, the corpus employed in this paper is too limited in size to allow definite conclusions; in addition, two of the few instances of ACC-*ing* objects recorded in my material are morphologically ambiguous, as is the case with (51b) above, which might simply be interpreted as a POSS-*ing* construction (see the discussion in Section 4.2).<sup>18</sup> But on the whole, as noted in Section 5.1, the evidence at hand suggests that the transmission of the ACC-*ing* pattern to the object slot started with negative implicative verbs of avoidance (*hinder*, *prohibit*, *interrupt* 'hinder') and was thus connected to developments affecting, at about the same time, other members of the gerundive network, specifically bare gerundives, which from the sixteenth century came to be used with increasing frequency after negative implicative verbs such as *escape*, *forbear*, *refrain* and the like.

Turning last of all to the non-extraposed subject subtype which is the main concern of this paper, the surface resemblances between some of the examples in my data and the transitional absolutes cited as (42–43) above are striking, and constitute a prime illustration of the fact that, as first argued by Naro (1981:63),

18. (51b) is also syntactically ambiguous, as locative adverbials such as *hither* can occur as modifiers in both noun phrase and clause structure; for discussion, see Fanego (1996b: 109).

morphosyntactic change is ‘sneaky’ and advances most easily “where surface differentiation between the old and new systems is zero (or nearly so)”, apparently thriving “on structural ambiguities and ... superficial resemblances to existing patterns” (De Smet 2012: 607; see also Warner 1982: 134–157; Fanego 2010: 217–218, and Bolinger’s 1977: 124–134 related notion of ‘apparent constituents’ in surface structure). Thus, based on their degree of indeterminacy between a gerundive and a participial reading, the 33 instances of ACC-*ing* gerundives occurring as sentence subjects in my material can be ascribed to the following subgroups:

- a. The NP coding the subject argument of the *-ing* form is semantically compatible with the matrix predicate. An interpretation of such *-ing* forms as participial (rather than gerundial) is therefore not impossible, but seems highly unlikely in view of the overall context, which makes it clear that the focus is on the entire propositions functioning as subjects of the higher verbs. Thus in (52) it is not *grass* that ‘will occasion the greatest increase of milke’, but rather the fact itself of grass being in ‘its perfect goodness’ in springtime. So also in (53), where it is the fact of there living so many people in the town that is held responsible for the scarcity of food or provisions:

(52) HC 1615 Markham, *Countrey Contentments*, 107

The best time for a Cow to calue in for the Dairie, is in the later ende of March, and all Aprill; for then *grasse beginning to spring to its perfect goodnesse* will occasion the greatest increase of milke that may be:

(53) HC 1698 Fiennes, *Journeys*, 152

There are a great deale of Gentry which lives in town tho’ there are no good houses but what are old rambling ones ...; its a very dear place *so much Company living in the town* makes provision scarce and dear,

- b. The *-ing* construction is semantically gerundial, but hybrid in terms of its internal syntax. Thus (54) starts with a pronoun (*she*) in the nominative case, which corresponds to an absolute; but as one reads on, it becomes clear that the *-ing* clause has to be interpreted gerundially: ‘[the fact of] her being now a woman, and her father’s age and some infirmities ... induced him to entertain her with discourse on marriage’, etc.<sup>19</sup>

19. See further Jespersen (1909–1949: V §9.8.3) and De Smet (2010: 1174) for a few similar examples. A closely related example in my data, which I excluded from the count of ACC-*ing* subjects, is (iv), where the *-ing* clause seems more participial than gerundial; note, though, that it is resumed later in the sentence by the pronoun *it*:

- (54) COLMOBAENG 1725 Haywood, *The Fatal Secret*, 209  
 she went a great way in the Mathematicks; understood several Languages perfectly well; and had she presever'd [sic] in Application, might have been as eminent for her Learning, as the celebrated Madam Dacier: But *she being now a Woman, and her Father's Age, and some Infirmities incident to it, making him believe he had not long to live, and consequently desirous of seeing his beloved Child dispos'd of before his Death*, induced him to entertain her often with Discourse of Marriage.

Hybrids can also originate in the subtype of absolute with continuative *which* that was discussed in Section 5.3, a pattern that must have proved cognitively very complex. It appears to lie behind three of the hybrid instances in my data, including (55–56). Note that an appropriate gloss for (55) would be '[the fact of] Oliver knowing [which] and sending a messenger about it put the French into a great consternation, etc.'

- (55) ARCHER 1717 Tomlinson, *The Diary of John Tomlinson* (1717toml\_y3b) 1717. Aug. 8th. Oliver Cromwell kept a correspondence with the French king's secretary, thô they had promised to deliver Mardyke to the English, yet they had formed secret counsels not to do it — *which, Oliver knowing and sending a messenger about it* — putt the French into a great consternation, it made them think he had consulted the devil, for there were but two or three persons conscious to it.
- (56) COLMOBAENG 1725 Haywood, *The Fatal Secret*, 245  
 he wounded two or three of these Fellows, before they could disarm him: But his Father's Servants coming in to their Assistance, at last he was overpowered, and forced into a Coach; *which being guarded on each side*, made it impossible for him to escape. [i.e. 'the fact that the coach was guarded on each side made it impossible for him to escape']

- c. In a third group of examples, there is a mismatch between the semantics and morphosyntax of the original construction (the transitional absolute) and the new construct, so that only the gerundial interpretation is possible. This suggests that a new form–meaning pairing has been established (see Traugott & Trousdale 2013: 22, 92) at the more abstract levels of the constructional hierarchy and not simply “at the level of specific constructs” (De Smet 2014: 225). In

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(iv) HC 1619 Deloney, *Jack of Newbury*, 85

At length he watcht her so narrowly, that finding her going forth in an euening, hee followed her, *shee hauing one man before, and another behinde: carrying a verie stately gate in the street, it draue him into greater liking of her*, beeing the more vrged to vtter his minde.

(57), for instance, the pronoun *there* is a dummy, and cannot be an argument of the higher predicate *made it appear*; in (58–59) a reading of *God* and *The man* as the subjects of, respectively, *was a daily miracle* and *made ... appear* would be semantically incoherent; and in (60) *the ladies* is in the plural, while *exposes* is singular.

- (57) HC 1698 Fiennes, *Journeys*, 151  
 a mile off by a little village I descended a hill which made the prospect of the town still in view and much to advantage; its but two parishes; the Market Cross has a dyal and lanthorn on the top, and *there being another house pretty close to it high built with such a tower and lanthorn also, with the two churches towers and some other buildings pretty good* made it appear nobly at a distance
- (58) ARCHER 1680 Long, *A Sermon against Murmuring* (1680long\_h2b)  
 They acknowledged that God as well as his father designed him for the Crown, and setled it on his head against all opposition, for Adonijah usurped the kingdom, Abiathar, Joab and Shimei abetted the Usurpation and were all defeated: *God appearing for Solomon not once or twice for the preservation of him from such enemies*, was a daily miracle
- (59) COPC 1689 Stevens, *Journal*, 1Q17(1689)0004/029-P0  
 Here first of all we found difficulty in getting quarters, and ... were refused not only beds, but fire and meat and drink for our money, ... *The man being an Irishman and a Catholic* made his ill carriage towards us appear the more strange
- (60) ARCHER 1716 *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu to Pope* (1716mmon\_x3b)  
 The theatre is so large that 'tis hard to carry the eye to the end of it, and the habits in the utmost magnificence to the number of one hundred and eight. No house could hold such large decorations; but *the ladies all sitting in the open air*, exposes them to great inconveniences; for there is but one canopy for the imperial family

## 7. Summing up

The possible role of present participles in the first appearance of verbal gerunds, though hard to verify, has been discussed in the literature at various times in the past, for instance by Jack (1988), Houston (1989), Killie (2006: 463–464) and Killie & Swan (2009: 339, 358–359), among others. More recently, the related question of the (partial) categorial collapse of the participle/gerund distinction in the

Late Modern period has also been tackled in important work by De Smet (2010, 2013: 102–130, 2014). This paper ties in with this line of research and explores the development over the Early and Late Modern English periods of the ACC-*ing* gerundive, the gerundive pattern most closely resembling participial clauses.

Sections 4.2 and 4.3 presented corpus evidence showing that in the early stages of their development ACC-*ing* gerundives exhibited distinctive properties that cannot be accounted for simply by reference to the morphological indeterminacy in Early Modern English of noun phrases without overt genitive marking (even though the existence of these must have greatly contributed to strengthening the feeling that a common case might be used as the subject of a gerund), nor to the prolonged process of accretion of verbal features that has led to the replacement of various types of nominal gerundives (e.g. *doing of harm*) by the corresponding verbal types (e.g. *doing harm*). Chief among those distinctive properties of ACC-*ing* gerundives were two; namely: (a) the high proportion of examples occurring as sentence subjects; (b) the fact that these were predominantly governed by causative verbs, unlike infinitival and finite subject clauses, which are most often dependent on commentative predicates.

This combined evidence suggested that it was worthwhile to explore whether the ACC-*ing* gerundive might be traced back to a source other than an earlier (nominal) gerundive pattern. To this end, Section 5 examined in detail the historical development of English participial clauses, both relative and adverbial, from Middle English times, based on a large body of data retrieved from the corpora detailed in Section 2 and from earlier research on the topic, particularly Kohnen (2001, 2004), Río-Rey (2002) and Killie & Swan (2009). It was shown that over the period in question adverbial participial clauses grew greatly in frequency, reaching a peak in the seventeenth century and then entering a phase of decline (see Tables 7–8 above and footnote 17; also Río-Rey 2002: 315; Kohnen 2001: 189, 2004); this process correlated with their ability to express new semantic functions (such as the causal motivation for the situation or event in the superordinate clause), with important positional changes (adverbial participles came to be frequently located sentence-initially, rather than sentence-finally) and, most crucially for the present research, with remarkable variability in the structural patterns employed to code the referential identity between the subject of the adverbial clause (Sub<sub>A</sub>) and the matrix subject (Sub<sub>M</sub>). As shown in Section 5.3, during the stages discussed in this paper it does not seem possible, nor fruitful, to approach adverbial participial clauses in terms of the neat binary distinction between free adjuncts and absolutes which can be seen at work today. Early Modern English adverbial participial clauses were still undergoing a process of standardization and stabilization towards current usage, and it is in this light that one has to interpret the frequent occurrence of the ‘transitional’ participial patterns discussed earlier on.

As abundantly exemplified in both Section 5.2 and Section 6, those patterns provided an analogical model for the expansion of the ACC-*ing* gerundive outside its original prepositional environment, to the subject slot. In this new use, the ACC-*ing* pattern naturally ‘inherited’ the causative (factive) semantics of its participial source.

To conclude, this paper has been concerned solely with the history of the ACC-*ing* gerundive up to 1750. A number of questions have therefore been left unanswered and remain to be determined by future research. One of them is the exact course of development followed by (sentence-initial) absolutes and ACC-*ing* gerundives from the late 18th century to the present day. In principle, a reasonable assumption is that the decline in frequency undergone by absolutes from the end of the 17th century will have been mirrored by a decline of ACC-*ing* gerundives as preverbal subjects, as seems to be suggested by the limited data from Present-Day English adduced in Tables 2 and 3 above. A second question is whether ACC-*ing* gerundives as sentence subjects continue to be as firmly associated today with causative predicates as they were in earlier periods of English; if such were the case, it would imply the existence of an interesting functional contrast, grounded in their respective historical origins, between two kinds of subject clauses in English: *for* NP *to*-infinitives (which are predominantly dependent on commentatives) on the one hand, and ACC-*ing* gerundives on the other.

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