Gerunds in Shakespearean English

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First we will dicuss the usage of gerund in ME. When a gerund has the object in ME, Tajima found some different constructions.

Tajima(1985) found 4,960 examples of gerund with the object in ME, among which he found six different types.

Tajima mentioned about gerund in ME as follows:

> The gerund developed in the OE period as a pure noun. Its logical object (i.e. the object of the verbal concept implied in it) was, therefore, expressed in the genitive (possessive), and later, as a result of the tendency to use analytic patterns in place of synthetic ones, in the periphrastic genitive with *of*. This object also formed the first part of a compound (e.g. blood- letting). In the course of the ME period, however, the gerund also began to take an "accusative" or direct object without the help of the preposition *of*. In ME, therefore, constructions of the gerund with its object may roughly be classified into the following six types:

> Type I =objective genitive (possessive)+gerund (e.g. Bevis 4566 at *pe kinges couroning ; Launfal* 78 He most to *hys beryynge*) ;
> Type II=object+gerund (e.g. Rolle Prose 22/19-20 be *other pennaunce doynge*) ;
> Type III= gerund+of-adjunct (e.g. *Allex.Maced.* 430 He was chosen for cheefe in *chesing of were*) ;
> Type IV=determiner+gerund+of-adjunct (e.g. Morte Arth. 2377 for *the*

beryenge of his bolde knyghtez);

Type V＝gerund＋object (e.g. Dest.Troy 11230 in *sauyng horlyuis*);

Type VI＝determiner＋gerund＋object (e.g. Caxton Reyn. 24/7－8 *The wythholdyng you fro it* can doo yow no good).

In Types I and II the object has front-position; in III and IV it has post-position and is preceded by the preposition of; and in V and VI it has post-position and is directly joined to the gerund. Of these six types, I, III, and IV are obviously strongly nominal in character, the -ing form having no syntactical verbal force at all, whereas in V and IV the-ing form is syntactically verbal in that it governs an object without a preposition. Type II, which retains vestiges of OE synthetic expressions as will be discussed

Occurrence of Gerund with Object by Half- Centuries

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	Total
1100–1200	12 (23.1)	9 (17.3)	23 (44.2)	8 (15.4)	0 (0)	0 (0)	54 (100%)
1200–1250	22 (51.2)	9 (20.9)	3 (7.0)	9 (20.9)	0 (0)	0 (0)	43 (100%)
1250–1300	17 (26.6)	22 (34.4)	19 (29.7)	5 (7.8)	1 (1.5)	0 (0)	64 (100%)
1300–1350	82 (19.5)	51 (12.1)	160 (38.0)	103 (24.5)	23 (5.4)	2 (0.5)	421 (100%)
1350–1400	35 (3.5)	60 (6.0)	595 (59.4)	250 (24.9)	59 (5.8)	4 (0.4)	1003 (100%)
1400–1450	82 (4.8)	227 (13.4)	717 (42.1)	414 (24.4)	253 (14.9)	7 (0.4)	1700 (100%)
1450–1500	74 (4.4)	102 (6.1)	562 (33.5)	594 (35.4)	328 (19.6)	17 (1.0)	1677 (100%)
Total	324 (6.5)	480 (9.7)	2079 (41.9)	1383 (27.9)	664 (13.4)	30 (0.6)	4960 (100%)

(Tajima, *The Syntactic Development of Gerund in Middle English,* 1985, pp. 31～32)

later, is transitional from nominal to verbal, sometimes verbal, sometimes nominal, depending upon the context in which it occurs. Of incidental interest in the fact that in Present-day English only Types IV and V are regular constructions when the gerund has an object, the former being 'nominal' and the latter 'verbal'.

The texts examined provide 4,960 examples of the gerund with its object (Types I-VI). The following is a tabular statement of the frequency of each type in the respective text examined;

According to the Tajima's point of view about the usage of gerund in ME, types I, II, III, and IV are found in early ME. Types V and VI, appeared only in late ME. referring to his statistical count of the number of gerund by half centuries, gerund increases from the earlier period to the later, but not completely established.

Now we will discuss the usage of gerund in Shakespearean English. When a gerund has the object in Shakespearean English, we find 2,699 examples and they are classified into four constructions: the following table shows how many times gerunds are used in Shakespeare's comedies, histories, tragedies and poems.

Table 1 Instances of gerund in Shakespeare' works

Title	Date	Genre	Number of examples
1H6	1592-93	history	38
2H6	1589-90	history	67
3H6	1590-90	history	35
R3	1592-93	history	50
VEN	1593-	poetry	56
ERR	1594-95	comedy	31
SON	1594-	poetry	54
LUC	1594-	poetry	53
TIT	1593-94	tragedy	24

SHR	1593–94	comedy	54
TGV	1594–	comedy	49
LLL	1594–95	comedy	79
STM			5
JN	1595–96	history	35
R2	1594–95	history	58
ROM	1595–	tragedy	63
MND	1595–96	comedy	28
MV	1596–97	comedy	82
1H4	1596–97	history	86
WIV	1597–	comedy	57
2H4	1598–	history	80
ADO	1598–99	comedy	69
H5	1599–	history	61
JC	1599–	tragedy	34
AYL	1599–	comedy	89
HAM	1600–01	tragedy	84
PHT		poetry	0
TN	1601–	comedy	67
TRO	1600–1603	comedy	80
AWW	1601–03	comedy	74
MM	1604–	comedy	78
OTH	1602–1603	tragedy	84
LR	1605–	tragedy	85
MAC	1607–08	tragedy	49
ANT	1607–1608	tragedy	69
COR	1608–	tragedy	77
TIM		tragedy	59
PER	1606–1608	comedy	60
CYM	1609–	tragedy	113
WT	1609–	comedy	108
TMP		comedy	65
H8	1613–	history	87
TNK	1611–	comedy	74

The examples in the table 1 can be classified in to four constructions:

a. *the* + **-ing** + *of* + **object**

(1)	I wish **the having of** it;	(PER 2.2.139)
(2)	Between **the acting of** a dreadful thing	
	And the first motion, all the interim is	
	Like a phantasma	(JC 2.1.63)
(3)	before | to signify th' approaching of his lord,	(MV 2.09. 88)
(4)	from point, to the full arming of the verity.	(AWW 4.03. 62)
(5)	call you that backing of your friends?	(1H4 2.04. 150)
(6)	this factious bandying of their favorites, | but	(1H6 4.01. 190)
(7)	or the baring of my beard, and to say it was in	(AWW 4.01. 49)
(8)	thee more than ever the bearing of letter did.	(TN 4.02. 112)
(9)	whence hast thou this becoming of things ill,	(SON 150. 5)
(10)	skill, | that is the true beginning of our end.	(MND 5.01. 111)

b. **-ing** + *of* + **object**

(11)	I mean your voice for **crowing of** the King	(R3. 3.4.28)
(12)	I neither lend nor borrow by taking nor by **giving of** excess	(MAC. 1.3.63)
(13)	comes warwick, backing of the duke of york,	(3H6 2.02. 69)
(14)	end of a fray and beginning of a feast	(1H4 4.02. 79)
(15)	"blessing of your heart, you brew good ale."	(TVG 3.01. 304)
(16)	blessing of his heart !	(WIV 4.01. 13)
(17)	there's goodly catching of cold.	(ADO 3.04. 66)
(18)	and churlish chiding of the winter's wind,	(AYL 2.01. 7)
(19)	strike my gentleman for chiding of his fool?	(LR 1.03. 54)

(20) whom i left cooling of the air with sighs, | in   (TMP 1.02. 222)

c. *the* + **-ing** + **object**

(21) for on **the reading** it he chang'd almost into another man.   (AWW 1.3.5)

(22) You need not fear Lady **the having** any of these Lords   (MV 1.2.89)

(23) fair | when the bearing them is just.   (1H4 5.02. 88)

(24) but, in the cutting it, if thou dost shed | one   (MV 4.01. 309)

(25) hangs on the cutting short that fraudful man.   (2H6 3.01. 81)

(26) wit, and therefore i will attempt the doing it.   (OTH 3.04. 22)

(27) thou mine, |and that's a feeling disputation,   (1H4 3.01. 203)

(28) but take a taste of my finding him, and relish   (AYL 3.02. 233P)

(29) hang'd a man for the getting a hundred bastards,   (MM 3.02. 117 P)

(30) had your eyes, you might fail of the knowing me;   (MV 2.02. 76 P)

d. **-ing** + **object**

(31) In **spending** your wit in the praise of mine.   (LLL 2.01.19)

(32) by **observing** him,   (2H4 5.01.6)

(33) me, and went surly by, |without annoying me.   (JC 1.03. 22)

(34) married my daughter without asking my good will?   (SHR 5.01. 134)

(35) in asking their good loves, but thou wilt frame   (COR 1.06. 65)

(36) in asking their goods loves, but thou wilt frame   (COR 1.06. 65)

(37) when i shall., first asking you pardon thereunto,   (HAM 1.02. 46)

(38) wits again, |or lose my labor in assaying it.   (ERR 5.01. 97)

(39) by spying and avoiding fortune's malice, | for   (3H6 4.06. 28)

(40) no, you shall have it for bearing the letter.   (TGV 1.01. 118)

Of these only (a) and (d) are still used in PE.

The gerunds in all the constructions in Shakespearean English mentioned above correspond to the whole process of the development Gerund. Gerund in Shakespearean English was on the point of transition from an earlier verbal noun to the gerund of Present-day English with a substantival and verbal function. However, it is not clear to what degree the gerund in Shakespearean English acquired its substantival and verbal characteristics. First of all, I will show some examples of gerund.

Gerunds with substantival function in Shakespearean works.

    a. as the subject of a sentence

        O, burn her ,burn her

        Hanging is too good.   (1H6 5.04.33)

        Him that you magnify'st with all these titles

        Sitinging and fly-blown lies here at our feet.   (1H6 4.07.76)

        No **reck'ng** made, but sent to my account with   (HAM 1.05.78)

        plac'd it safety, the **changing** never known.   (HAM 5.02.53)

        but my **rejoicing** at nothing can be more.   (TMP 3.02.93)

        a pox o' your bottle! This can sack and **drinking** do. (TMP 3.02.80)

        I must uneasy make, lest too light **winning**

        Make the prize light   (TMP 1.02.452)

        o, what **learnin**g is!   (ROM 3.03.160)

        O friar, the damned use that word in hell

        Howling attends it.   (ROM 3.03.48)

b. modified by an adjective

till by **broad spreading**	(1H6 1.02.135)
the envious barking of your saucy tongue	(1H6 1.02.133)
Mars his **true moving**	(1H6 1.02.1)
of **sulphurous roaring** the most might Neptune	(TMP 1.02.204)
to thy **strong bidding**, task ariel,	(TMP 1.02.192)
To most **ignoble stooping**.	(TMP 1.02.116)
Of **honorable reckoning** are you both, and pity	(ROM 1.02.4)

(**Honorable** is adjective and modifies **reckoning**.)

c. the object of a preposition

To keep the horsemen off **from breaking** in.	(1H6 1.01.119)
and he may well **in fretting** spend his gall	(1H6 1.02.16)
and take foul scorn to fawn on him **by spending**.	(1H6 4.04.35)
in mincing with his sword her husband's limbs,	(HAM 2.02.514)
to fust in us unus'd. Now whether it be	
Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple,	
Of **thinking** too preciously on th' event	(HAM 4.04.41)
continue in it five weeks **without changing**.	(TMP 32.01.184)
smote the air **for breathing** in their faces;	(TMP 4.01.173)
Nor fetch in firing **at requiring,**	(TMP 2.02.180)
because musicians have no gold **for sounding**.	(ROM 4.05.141)

d. as the object or predicative of a verb

take therefore **shipping**, past, my lord , to	(1H6 5.05.87)
to give me **hearing** what I shall reply.	(1H6 3.01.28)

Ambiguous Examples

In the following examples it is difficult to tell whether they are gerunds, substantives or participles.

     i. Jul. Yet me weep for such a **feeling** loss.   (ROM 3.05.74)

According to the *Shakespeare Lexicon, loss* works as a substantive. Therefore, *feeling* can be regarded as a gerund. However, *feeling* can be interpreted as a substantive. In the OED we find:

     Feeling, vbl.sb. [feel v. + –ing]

       a. The action of the vb. feel in various senses;

       b. The faculty or power by which one feels

     C1175 Lamb.Hom.75 hore blawing, hore smelling, heore feling wes al iattret.

                                  (*OED*. feeling)

From this explanation of OED, the substantive *feeling* is already found in 1175. However, it is difficult to say whether the *feeling* in "Yet me weep for such a feeling loss" is a substantive, because it is followed by the substantive **loss**. Which rule does *feeling* take? It can also be interpreted as a compound, as in *dancing shoes, a winning game*.

     ii. Is there no pity **sitting** in the clouds,

       That sees into the bottom of my grief?   (ROM 3.05.196)

It seems that *sitting* is used as a participle, because in this sentence it can be paraphrased as "while he is **sitting** in the clouds".

iii. an **understanding** simple and unschool'd (HAM 1.02.97)

According to the *Shakespeare Lexicon, understanding* works as a substantive (= intellectual faculty, judgement). Therefore, it can be interpreted as a gerund with a nominal function.

iv. Yet here she is allow'd her virgin crants,

Her maiden strements, and **the bringing** home

Of bell and burial. (HAM 5.01.232–234)

In this sentence, *home* is an adverb, and *bring* with the *of* is accompanied by the object, *bell and burial*. Therefore, *bringing* works as gerund with a substantival function.

v. At last, a little **shaking** of mine arm, (HAM 2.01.89)

vi. Sure He that made us with such large discource,

Looking before and after, gave us not

That capability and god like reason

To fust us unus'd (HAM 4.04.36–39)

In these two sentences above, *shaking* seems to be used as a noun. Schmidt refers to *look* in the *Shakespeare Lexicon* as follows:

look, vb. 1) to use the eye, to set the organ of seeing to work : (...) With adverbs or preposition= to use the eye in a particular direction, to cast the eye to or from an object; a) with adverbs; after: *-ing before and after*, Hml. IV, 4, 37 (=in to past)

(Schmidt, *Shakespeare Lexicon, look*)

Looking is regarded as a participle.

    vii. Eyes without feeling, **feeling** without sight,   (HAM 3.04.78)

Schmidt (1962) says that *feeling* is a substantive:

    Feeling, subst. 1) the sense of touch: Hml. III, 4, 78

    viii. Ham. Gods bodkin, man much better: use every

        Man after his desert, and who shall scape **whipping?**

                                    (HAM 2.02.529-530)

Schmidt (1962) explains that *whipping* is used substantively as a gerund.

    Whip.V.b. To strike with a lash, to punish with a whip

    The gerund substantively: Hml. 2.2.556

Jespersen (1909, p.112) explains this problem, mentioning the following example:

        Like other nexus-substantives gerund was originally indifferent to the
distinction between active and passive meaning; accordingly in some contexts
they are still understood passively. A passive import is frequently found in SH,
e.g. HMl II.2.556 Vse eurie man after his desart, and who should scape
whipping.

                (Jespersen, *Modern English Grammar, V*, 1909, p.112)

Later, Jespersen continues about this problem:

        Like other nouns the -ing was also at first incapable of expressing the

verbal distinction between the active and passive voice. The simple −ing is still often neutral in this respect, and in some connections assumes a passive meaning, as in 'it wants mending', 'the story lost much in the telling'. This is extremely frequent in old authors, e.g. 'Use everie man after his desart, and who should scape whipping' (Hamlet II, 2, 554), 'Shall we⋯excuse his throwing in to the water?' (Wiv. III, 3, 206＝his being, or having been, thrown), 'An instrument of this your calling backe' (Oth. IV, 2, 45). But about 1600 a new form came in to existence, as the old one would often appear ambiguous, and it was felt convenient to be able to distinguish between 'foxes enjoy hunting' and 'foxes enjoy hunted'. The new passive is rare in Shakespeare ('I spoke⋯. of being taken by the insolent foe', Oth. I, 3, 136), but has now for a long time been firmly established in the language.

(Jespersen, *Growth and Structure of the English Language*, 1905, p.109)

According to the *Shakespeare Lexicon, whipping* is a substantival gerund. However, the construction which has a passive meaning with an active form, are found in Shakespearean English, as Jespersen mentioned. Therefore, *whipping* can be interpreted as a gerund with a verbal function, forming the passive.

    ix. It is as easy as **lying**.   (HAM 3.02.357)

Schmidt explains that *lying* is used as a substantive verb, i.e. a gerund.

    Lying, mendacious, see Lie

    Lie, vb. −ing, subst. Hml, 3. 2.372

    x. 'Tis now the very **witching** time of night,,

        When churchyards yawn and hell itself [breathes] out

Contagion to this world.   (HAM 3.02.388–390)

In the sentence above, is *witching* a gerund or participle? Franz (1939) explains mentioning this example, that it is a gerund, combined with a substantive. However, according to OED, it is regarded as a participle:

Witching, ppl . A. [f. as prec. + ING2]

Spec. Of time: belonging or appropriate to the deeds of witches and witchcraft and hence to supposed supernatural occurrences. In later use echoing Shaks. 1602 Shaks. Ham .III. ii .406

(OED, witching)

xi. Sir, I will walk here in the hall.

If it please his Majesty,

It is the *breathing* time of day with me.   (HAM. 5.02.172–174)

Schmidt explains about *breathing* thus:

Breathe 4) to take exercise: 'tis the –ing time of day with me, Hml. V, 2, 181 (the time of taking a walk)

(Schmidt, *Shakespeare Lexicon*, 1962, breathe)

According to the *Shakespeare Lexicon, breathing* can be regarded as a gerund. Moreover, it can be interpreted as the first element of a compound. On the other hand, *witching* is also compounded with *time* and can be interpreted as a gerund.

As mentioned above, we considered to what degree the usage of gerund was established in Shakespearean English, by investigating all of his works. When a gerund has an object in Shakespearean English, we find four constructions. Table 1 below

shows some of the examples, how many times each construction is used in *HenryVI, Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet*, and *The Tempest*.

Table 2 Instances of a gerund with an object in four works of Shakespeare

	1H6	ROM	HAM	TMP	total
the + −ing + of + object	3	0	9	4	16
−ing + of + object	2	0	3	3	8
the + −ing + object	0	2	1	0	3
−ing + object	2	15	4	4	25

This shows that all the four constructions are found in Shakespearean English. There are gerunds with both nominal and verbal functions. It means the gerund in Shakespearean English was just on the point of changing from the substantival function to verbal function.

Summary

The gerund in OE was a noun with no verbal function at all. According to OED, in OE *-ing and -ung* were used as a noun to indicate something abstract, and then they were admitted as plural. OED mentions that the gerund with a verbal function which is followed by adverb, object and predicative appeared in the 14th century. Mosse thinks that verbal noun *-ing* was confused with the participle *-end(e)* in late OE and the gerund gave the *-ing* form to the participle which gave a verbal function to the gerund.

There are some constructions which maintain both the substantival and verbal function during the development of the gerund. Moreover, the gerund with *a̲ (-), i.e. lie a-bleeding* was found in Shakespearean English. The *a (-), on* originally, is a preposition. It was weakened and was dropped in PE. Therefore, there are some constructions in which *a (-)* is dropped in Shakespearean English. It seems that the

gerund, *-ing* in OE came to be regarded as a participle in PE. In short, the construction is involved with the development of progressive form.

The gerunds in all the constructions in Shakespearean English mentioned above correspond to the whole process of the development of the gerund. In *Hamlet*, the gerund may form the passive voice. The passive voice implies passive by the simple *-ing* construction in Shakespearean English, because gerund was a noun originally, so it does not matter whether it is passive or active at all. In addition, the corresponding placing *of not* before the gerund, i.e. *suffer not thinking*, begins in the time of Queen Elizabeth, Shakespeare's period.

The construction implies the gerund came to have a verbal function. The perfect form of the gerund is found in *The Tempest*. There are many examples of gerund with substantival function. However, interestingly, its verbal function, passive and perfect form, is found in *The Tempest*. This means that it has gradually obtained a verbal function. In addition, there are three constructions which have both substantival and verbal characteristics during its development.

The fact that the gerund was established in Shakespearean English can be seen from the research of *HenryVI, Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet,* and *The Tempest.*

When the gerund is followed by the object in Shakespearean English, there are four different constructions. This is because the gerund in Shakespearean English was on the point of transition from verbal noun to gerund in PE with substantival and verbal functions. In short, Shakespearean English was at the stage which gerund began to obtain the verbal function, passive and perfect, in the development of gerund.

On the other hand, the gerund with a verbal function came to be established in Shakespearean English. Therefore, by examining into Shakespearean English, we can trace the development of gerund.

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