

NOTES ON THE INFINITIVES IN DELONEY'S ENGLISH

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Thomas Deloney (1543?—1600?) wrote neither for scholars nor for courtiers but for merchants and tradesmen. His three prose works — *Iacke of Newberie*, *Gentle Craft* I & II, and *Thomas of Reading* — accurately reflect Elizabethan life in Cheapside and Westminster, among the cobblers of Whitehall, and drapers of Candleweek Street.¹ His language, we may assume, reflects the everyday speech of London in the Elizabethan age. His language characterized by simplicity and directness may be worthy of notice in describing the general language of the Elizabethan age.

The present paper is an interim report on the observation of verb syntax in Deloney's language with special reference to the infinitive.

I. INFINITIVE AS SUBJECT AND PREDICATIVE

1. Subject

The infinitive as subject tends to be used denoting condition and futurity.

1) See Francis O. Mann (ed.), *The Works of Thomas Deloney*, (Oxford, 1912), Introduction xxvii. This is the text for this study. Quotations from this work will be shown hereinafter by the page and line numbers in parentheses attached immediately after the quotation.

- (1) I pray you hartily come neere, for *to haue* you come in my office, is my desire (153.13)
- (2) The position of "it" in the following quotation may be noteworthy.

to bee Sheriffe of *London* it is no little cost.²⁾

The term "anticipatory *it*" cannot be applied to the *it* in the above example, its function being resumptive.³⁾

- (3) The Infinitive Preceded by Anticipatory *it*
 it were reason *to gratifie* them in some sort (228.23) ;
 in vaine *it* is *to mourn* for a matter that cannot be
 helpt (204.40)⁴⁾
- (4) Perfect infinitive does not occur in the position of the subject.⁵⁾ The gerund is used to express a completed act instead.

But this hath your prodigality brought you to, your thriftlesse *neglecting* of your businesse, that set more by your pleasure than your profit (59.33)

2. Predicative

the policy she vsed most herein, was *to speak* altogether in *Richards* dispraise (144.47) ; her desire, which was *to marry* her man (9.48) ; my pennance is but *to serue* the hogs (40.8)

3. The type: *To see her is to love her*, in which both the subject and the predicative are infinitives, does not appear.

2) Merrit E. Lawlis (ed.); *The Novels of Thomas Deloney* (Bloomington, 1961), p. 155, l. 32. The referencee to this edition of Deloney's work will be shown hereinafter by "L" followed by the page and line numbers in parentheses attached immediately after the quotation.

3) In Mann's text, however, "it" is missing.

4) The type: *It is easier for the camel to go* will be discussed later.

5) Cf. *To have held* office confers a certain dignity even on mediocrity (Jespersen, *A Modern English Grammar*, V, 11.1₈). Hereinafter abbreviated as MEG.

II. VERB. + INFINITIVE

1. Be + Infinitive

The unit *be + infinitive* is used to denote futurity, possibility, necessity, obligation &c.

(1) Be + Active Infinitive

in regard of her good will, I *am* not *to scorne* her (148.45) ; seeing I *am* now *to hold* the place of a master (16.36)

This was good news to *Crispine*, who *was* not [= *had no need*] *to learne* to make profit thereof (106.2)⁶⁾

Cutbert, you *are too blame*, you find fault where none is (221.14)⁷⁾

(2) Be + Passive Infinitive

The unit is fairly in frequent evidence. Shakespeare, according to Franz (*Die Sprache Shakespeares*, Haale/Saale, 4. Auflage, 1939, § 623), does not seem to make frequent use of the construction.

man *is* not always *to be blamed* that sometimes takes counsell of his wife (113.13)

the bloody performanc thereof *was to be done* hard by that fair Fountain (85.2)

and look what other good chear *is to* [= *can or may*]⁸⁾ *be had* (132.31)

But *it is to be remembered*, *that*-clause (86.17)—a common syntactical unit found especially in the narrative parts.

2. Have + Infinitive

Neither Shakespeare nor Milton seems to know the construction *have to do*.

6) A. F. Lange (*Palaestra XVIII, The Gentle Craft*, 1903) suggested a tempting emendation *was not [slow] to learne*, which, however, is not supported by Lawlis.

7) In the 16-17th c. the *to* was misunderstood as *too*, and *blame* taken as adj. = blameworthy, culpable. (*OED*: *Blame*, v. 6)

8) See *MEG*, V, 15.5,

The construction took a long time in becoming a settled usage. (See *MEG*, V, 13.5₂) Examples in Deloney are few.

- (1) thou *hast* greatly *to praise* God for making thee so proper a man (200.31)
- (2) In the following quotation the object of *had* is ambiguous. It may be the infinitive "to say" or the pronoun "what." [Gillian] would needs know of *Robin*, what it was he *had* to say to her (164.42)
- (3) In the following quotations are inserted words denoting duration of time between the verb *haue* and the infinitive.
so long as thou *hast a day to serue* thou shalt be thus imployed (195.20); I *haue three times longer to serue* then you (196.23)

3. Verb + To-Infinitive in Other Employments

Minimum units of the examples:

abide to eate (193.36)/*agreed to trauell* (81.48)/*appointed to come* (142.28)/*attempting to arrest* (248.1)/*began somewhat boldly to iest* (49.16)/*chanced...to light* (184.12)/*charged to wait* (37.34)/*chose to be* (195.25)/*command to haue* (45.2), Cf. hee *commanded and sent* [=c-ed to send] the Clothiers all to prison (46.7)/*consented to follow* (126.32)/*couet to gather* (79.30) *deigne to esteeme* (139.15)/*delighted much to learne* (71.8)/*desire to liue* (228.1)/*determined to be reuenged* (61.24)/*devised how to finish* (62.28)/*disdaine to bee gouerned* (8.30)/*doubt not but to marry* (128.15)—a frequent phrase/ *falling ...to dispaire* (75.6)/*feare to speak* (53.4)—anterior to the earliest quotation in the *OED*, dated 1603, Florio. (*OED*: fear, v. 5. b.)/*find in your hearts to hang* (246.31)/*forbare to loue* (48.40)/*forget not to bring* (149.32)/*hope to see* (266.40)/*intend to be* (29.3)/*knowing not how to excuse* (232.34)/*knew not what to do* (248.20)/*learne to speake* (48.40)/*like to stage* (Shaks., *Meas.* I. i. 69. Schmidt, *Shak. Lexicon*, like,

v. d)) (No example in Deloney)/*listed to marry* (15.3)/*longed to walke* (209.44)/*loue to see* (127.46)/*mean to visite* (29.11)/*neede not to feare* (55.9)/*please to depart* (13.53)/*practised to be* (202.11)/*presuming to come* (167.22)/*promised to give* (14.2)/*purposing to hazzard* (50.2)/*refuse to do* (193.3)/*request to haue* (38.3)/*resolved to be silent* (8.32)/*restraine to visit* (217.30)/*scornd to do* (201.29)—The earliest quotation of the construction in the *OED* is dated 1605./*seeking to forget* (77.31)—frequent. **N.B.** The construction *try to do* developed later. The earliest quotation in the *OED* is dated 1697. (*OED*: try, v. 16)/*spare to speak* (136.31)/*do not stick to say* (9.41)/*striue not to grow* (220.20)/*studying how to make* (112.19)/*sweare...to performe* (39.44)/*thinking to take* (9.10)/*threaten to turne* (65.4)/*vouchsafe to cast* (140.3)/*vowed to be reuenged* (48.44)/*used to send* (218.18)/*did vse to walke* (72.19), &c.

4. Examples of the rival construction of the gerund connected with a verb are rare. The construction developed later. For instance the verb *disdain* connected with infinitive is found as early as in M.E., whereas the combination with gerund does not appear until the eighteenth century, according to the *OED*.

c 1380 he *dedeynede to clepe*.

1769 the Roman general *disdained granting* him. (*OED*: disdain, v. 1. b)

Examples follow:

Fall: The goodman heareing this, ran vp in all hast and there *fell to rubbing* and *chafing* of her temples (239.25)

if you *fall a singing* I will sing with you (229.38)

Forbear: She *could not forbear laughing* (48.4); they *could hardly forbear laughing* many times (184.10)

III. SUBJECT + INFINITIVE AS OBJECT OF MAIN VERB⁹⁾

In such a sentence as "I hear him sing" the nexus group "him sing" as a whole serves as the object of the verb "hear." This nexus group is commonly called "Accusative with Infinitive." The term, however, is not supported by Jespersen because of the loss of case distinction in Modern English (MEG, V, 18. 1₂).

The usage of the construction in Deloney is fairly variegated.

1. Immediate Perception

See: he will not *see me lack* any thing (54.21)

To-infinitive occurs only in the participial construction:

The fellow *seeing the king ... to bend* his browes, ... he answered thus (215.8)

Hear: His wife *hearing him say so*, began *to change* her opinion (225.12)

To-infinitive tends to occur in the participial construction:

The men *hearing their wiues so well to plead* for themselves, knew not how to answer (217.41)

Perceive: this wanton *perceiued her selfe to be* with childe (64.27)

Spy: he *spied his keepers come* to take him (263.47)

2. Mental Perception

Feel: he *felt her draw* her breath very short (53.10) I *feel my heart to faint* (86.10)

Find: (Usually with *To*-infinitive) *finding it to be* something thin in the going down, she said (128.4)

Doubt: she *doubts her selfe to be* with childe (65.22)

Consider: hee *considered her yeares to be* unfitting to his youth (8.28)

⁹⁾ Cf. MEG, V, 18. 1 ff.

Know: I know your wordes in many things to be true
(56.27)

Suppose: supposing some Adder to lie lurking under the
fair flowers of their proffered pleasures, he...(79.3)

Take: I take you to be my friend (143.42)

Think: Iohn thought himselfe at that time to be a man of
reputation (117.40)

Cf. Iohn being thus preferred, thought himselfe a Gentleman
(15.21)

3. Affirmation, etc.

Jespersen (MEG, V, 18.2₅) adduces examples of the construction accompanied by such verbs as: *acknowledge, proclayme, announce, show, reveal, take, prove, pronounce, affirm, assert, maintain, report, say, tell, define, conclude, trust.*

The following quotations from Deloney may be classified here.

Profess: [Iacke of Newberie] profest himselfe to bee a
defender of true Labourers (45.8)

Report: a vertuous wife, which is repotred to be a treasure
inestimable (96.6)

Repute: who...were reputed to be the best seruants (141.39)

Vow: It is master Benmedicke...which for my loue have
left the loue of our kinswoman, and hath vowed himselfe
to liue my seruant (51.21)

4. Emotion

The construction connected with such verbs as *like, love, hate* seems to be undeveloped in 16th century. No example has been found in Deloney.

5. Permission

Allow: (No example)

Let: (Frequent) let him never hope to be helpt by me
(48.23)

Leaue: master *Eyer*, who...committed the Gouernment of
of his shop to *Iohn* the Frenchman, *leauiing him to be*
guide to his other seruants (117.38)

Forbid: our owne Merchants ... *were forbidden to haue*
dealings with *France* (43.12)

Permit: but *to go* with you my selfe, you see my businesse
will not *permit me* (234.4)

Suffer: and now *sufferest thou me to be deuoured* of wild
beasts? (81.2)

N.B. The infinitival nexus *me to be deuoured* is clearly the object
of the verb *sufferest* (See *MEG*, V, 18.3₇).

6. Wish and Request

Beseech: (Usually with *To*-Infinitive)

I *beseech your Highness to grant* me the life, and liberty
of my mother (106.32) I *beseech your Grace let mee liue a*
poore Clothier among my people (38.20)

Bid: (Usually with Bare Infinitive)

Sirra, remember you *bade mee go* to the Constable to get
lodging (18.32); *bid him to command* that his Ship may be
brought downe the Riuer (115.14)

Charge: I *charge thee* on paine of loues displeasure, *to get*
you downe about your businesse (199.40)

I *charge you leaue* the shop and *get* you into the kitchen
(195.12)

N.B. In the above quotation it is possible to take the base
forms "leaue" and "get" as imperatives.

Command: *Iacke* of *Newberie* was *commanded ... to set out*
sixe men (23.12); If thou wilt *command me to bee* silent,
I will be dumbe (53.3)

Desire: I *desire you to clap* him vp to answer this matter
in the morning (130.29)

Entreat: let mee *intreat you both to come* home to my
house on Thursday next (12.2)

Have: *To*-infinitive (8 exx.), Bare infinitive (15 exx.)

I will haue my husband to buy me a London gowne (238.8)

I would haue him creep into no corner of yours (160.45)

Pray: *To*-infinitive preceded by *I pray you* (1 ex.)

I pray you to sit downe (54.1)

N.B. "to sit" is Q_{2,3} reading. The other editions read "sit", which M.E. Lawlis adopts. See (L 69.12)

The base form followed by *I pray you (thee)* may be taken either imperative or infinitive.

I pray you good Gossip eate (54.10)

Request: she *requested them to sit downe* (12.29)

Teach: thou *taughtest me to loue* (85.28)

Trouble: *trouble my selfe to restraine* (19.14)

Want: (Not frequent)

She *wanted one to pleade* her Sute (134.36)

Will: therefore *will him to come* to me (27.41)

Wish: I would *wish you* as soon as you can *to wed* (14.12)

Warn: her Master had *warned her to call* her selfe (66.13)

N.B. The unit *ask a person to do* is not in Deloney. The *OED* adduces examples from *a* 1300 *Cursor M.*, and *c* 1400 *Destr. Troy*. Then no example is adduced until 1860. Frequent employment of this unit seems to be a later one. (*OED*: *ask*, *v.* 13)

7. Causation

Ail: What *ailles the foole to laugh?* (33.4)

Bind: you shall *bind me to think* the better of you (192.29)

Bring...to pass: they could not *bring their vile purpose to passe* (256.22)

Cause: (Usually with *To*-infinitive)

The Widow *caused the best cheare in the house to be set on the Table* (16.18)

Constrain: though *I be constrained* of force to forsake you (162.16)

Force: it was loue that *forced his tongue to bewray* his hearts ardent affection (49.32)

Frame: I will *frame my heart to embrace* humility (222.35)

Get: a springing Fountain, from whence no man could *get her to go* (75.33)

Help: *helpe me to seeke* it (18.10)

Make: With *To*-infinitive (14 exx.), Bare-infinitive (43 exx.) that *makes me* indeed *to want* fauour (5.15)
out you durty heeles, you will *make your husbands haire* grow through his hood I doubt (231.25)

Moue: tell me what is the cause that *moues thee to desire* my fauour...? (198.39)

Persuade: hope against hope *perswaded me to labour* for your loue (198.48)

Put: they would neuer *put me forth to know* any thing (223.11)

Set: The Widow...*set her maide to dressè* it incontinent (12.17)

Temper: we will *temper our tongues to giue* him that title (117.35)

Vrge: neuer a one in the world would haue *vrge me to* be friends with him but your selfe (197.13)

8. Appointing

[His Highness] *appointed him to be kept* in Cardife castle prisoner (240.41) Cf. He *ordered (commanded) the prisoner to be shot* (MEG, V, 18.3₇); *foure he ordained to be* Pages (38.7)

9. Hear say (cf. MEG, V, 18.5₄₋₆)

I *heard say* that your husband would now put you in your hood and silke gowne, I pray you is it true? (54.32)

10. Let go, fall, slip, drop + object (*MEG*, V. 18.5₁)

An example of the unit *let slip* + object:

he thought it best not *to let slip* that good occasion
(8.26)

11. Verb + Object + Clause

Examples in which the object of the main verb is followed
by a clause instead of the infinitive:

she earnestly *beheld her man how he bestirred himselfe*
in his busines (195.44)

yet is there one aboue the rest that *causes me I cannot*
loue you (252.9)