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Future time reference expressed by *be to* in Present-day English[1]

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This article argues that *be to* is primarily a modal auxiliary expressing the necessity of future actualization of the 'residue-situation' (= the situation referred to by the clause minus *be to*). Eight possible 'M-origins' (= origins of the necessity) are identified. The 'futurish' use of *be to* in present-day English is closely related to these modal uses, especially to the use in which the M-origin is an official arrangement.

The modal interpretation shifts to a futurish interpretation when the emphasis shifts from the present existence of the necessity to the future actualization of the residue-situation. This shift of emphasis is accompanied by a loss of doubt about this future actualization.

In other words, the futurish reading comes to the fore when the (strong or weak) origin of the necessity is bleached, so that the hearer's attention is directed to the future actualization of the residue-situation. Various cases of such bleaching are treated. In some cases (e.g. when *be to* collocates with *still* or *yet*, as in *He is still to keep the first of his promises*), the bleaching of the M-origin is complete, so that only the sense of futurity (and hence of 'not-yet-factuality') is left. In some examples there is no clear difference between *be to* and *will* any more, so that the two are interchangeable within the same sentence.

1 Introduction

The purpose of this article is to discuss the use of *be to* as an auxiliary in verb forms that are interpreted as referring to the future, as in *I am to clean my room*. This is a corpus-based study in which conclusions are drawn from an analysis of about two thousand authentic examples, most of which come from the Cobuild corpus (University of Birmingham).

It follows that this is a purely synchronic study. For an excellent diachronic treatment I refer the reader to Visser (1970), who traces back a number of structures with *be to* to their Old English origin. See also Nesselhauf (this issue).

I have not found any monographs or articles dealing specifically with the synchronic use of *be to* with future time reference. English grammars mostly restrict themselves to the statement that *be to* can be used as a kind of future tense auxiliary with the connotation of 'arrangement', especially 'official arrangement' (e.g. *The guests are to arrive soon*, *The Queen is to visit Zimbabwe in June*). They usually distinguish this use of *be to* from its modal uses to express an order or prohibition and some other ideas

[1] I wish to thank Susan Reed and Caroline Gevaert for the great preparatory work they have done. They have collected, screened and interpreted a large number of corpus examples. If my interpretations, which sometimes differ from theirs, are mistaken I am the only one to blame for these mistakes. Thanks are also due to the referees who commented on the first draft of this article.

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that can be subsumed under the heading of 'necessity', such as 'destiny' (e.g. *He left twenty years ago and I was never to see him again*).

Distinguishing between a temporal use of *be to* and modal uses is in keeping with Visser's (1970: §368) claim that in Old English there were two main uses of '*be to* + infinitive', viz. the 'futurity' use corresponding to Latin '*esse* + future participle' (e.g. *ic eom to rædenne boc* = *lecturus sum librum* = 'I am to read the book') and a use as an expression of 'obligation, duty or necessity' corresponding to Latin '*esse* + gerund' (e.g. *me is to erigeanne* = *arandum est mihi* = 'I am to plough'). A sentence like *He is to leave at 6 o'clock* is said to correspond to the former use, while *You are to go there at once* is said to correspond to the latter. However, from a synchronic point of view, it is difficult to distinguish between these uses. *He is to leave at 6 o'clock* clearly implies that there is something (such as an arrangement) that necessitates 'his' leaving. So, the only difference between the two sentences seems to be the factor determining (= making necessary) the future actualization of the infinitive clause situation, viz. an arrangement (in *He is to leave at 6 o'clock*) versus an order (in *You are to go there at once*). Both these factors represent some kind of 'necessity'. From a synchronic point of view it therefore seems best to treat *be to* as an essentially modal auxiliary,[2] expressing the necessity of the future actualization of the situation denoted by the main verb. As we will see, the difference between *be to* and other auxiliaries expressing necessity (like *must* or *have to*) is to be found in the nature of the necessitating factor.

I can close off this introduction by pointing out that Nesselhauf (2006: 517) has found that '*be to* steadily decreases from 1700 to 1990, while *be going to* steadily increases'. However, there are thousands of examples with *be to* in the Cobuild corpus, which means that the auxiliary is still far from moribund.

2 Terminological preliminaries

2.1 The semantics of tenses: temporal domains

In Declerck et al. (2006a) I argue that the semantics of a tense is the structure of temporal relations expressed by the tense in question. These relations hold between the situation time that is to be located in time by the tense and one or more orientation times. The tense structure may specify a relation between the situation time and t_0 (= the 'TEMPORAL ZERO-POINT', which is nearly always the time of speech). Such tenses are 'ABSOLUTE' tenses. An absolute tense form creates a 'TEMPORAL DOMAIN', i.e. a set of times which are temporally related to each other by means of tenses. (When there is no tense form besides the absolute one, the domain contains only one situation time, which means that the set is a singleton. This is the case, for example, in *John left yesterday*.)

[2] From a morphosyntactic point of view *be to* is arguably a 'semi-auxiliary' or 'quasi-auxiliary' (like *have to*) rather than an auxiliary. However, since I will be concerned with its interpretations only, I will call it an 'auxiliary' for convenience. See also section 3 below.

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Tenses can also express a temporal relation between the situation time and an orientation time other than t_0. These are 'RELATIVE' tenses. They do not establish a temporal domain but expand one. For example, in *Bill said that Jane had left*, the absolute tense form *said* represents its situation time as past relative to t_0 and in doing so establishes a past domain, while the relative tense form *had left* represents its situation time as anterior to the situation time of *said* and in doing so expands the domain established by *said*. Although a relative tense does not relate a situation time directly to t_0, its tense structure does reveal the nature of the temporal domain in which the situation time is located: the use of the past perfect form *had left* presupposes the existence of a past domain. The nature of the temporal domain (past or future, for example) is determined by how the absolute tense form establishing the domain locates its situation time relative to t_0.

In sum, a temporal domain is a set of times which are temporally related to each other by means of tenses. At least one of these times is a situation time, since any tense form locates a situation in time. A domain is normally established by an absolute tense form and expanded by one or more relative tense forms. For example:

(1) John *said* he *felt* exhausted because he *had worked* hard and that he *would have* a rest first.

Here all the tenses locate their situation times in the same past domain. This is established by the preterit form *said*, which is an absolute tense form. The other tense forms are relative tense forms: *felt* [*exhausted*] represents its situation time as simultaneous with the situation time of *said*; *had worked* represents its situation time as anterior to the situation time of *was* [*exhausted*], and *would have* [*a rest*] relates its situation time as posterior to the situation time of *said*. (For more details, see Declerck et al. 2006a: 154–5.)

2.2 Future tense forms vs 'futurish' tense forms

The future tense ('*will*/*shall* + infinitive') can be used as an absolute tense, to locate a situation time posterior to t_0 and in doing so establish a 'POST-PRESENT' (= future with respect to t_0) domain. It can also be used to express posteriority in a post-present domain. For example, in *If you ask him about next week's meeting he will say that he will attend it*, the absolute tense form *will say* establishes a post-present domain, whereas *will attend* indicates a temporal relation in that domain: it represents the attending as posterior to the saying.

For some time it has been a commonplace in mainstream linguistics to reject the existence of a 'future tense' in English (see e.g. Huddleston & Pullum et al. 2002: 208–10). For most people, the future 'is not a tense at all, but a mode' (Cygan 1972: 9). In Declerck (1991a: 8–13; Declerck et al. 2006a: 102–6) I offer substantial evidence against this claim and argue that the future tense is a genuine tense in English. This is not to say that there is nothing modal about it. Whenever there is reference to the post-present, there is an aspect of modal meaning because the situation referred to is

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'NOT-YET-FACTUAL' at t_0. 'Not-yet-factual at a given time' is an epistemic modal notion – see Declerck et al. (2006a: 102–3; Declerck 2006b: 57–70; 2009).

Apart from the future tense ('*will*/*shall* + infinitive'), which (from a temporal point of view) does no more than locate a situation time in the post-present and which therefore has 'single time reference' (i.e. future time reference only), there are also verbal expressions which effect 'DUAL TIME REFERENCE', viz. a combination of post-present time reference and present time reference. Such expressions are referred to as 'FUTURISH' tense forms in Declerck et al. (2006a). These forms link the future actualization of a situation to a particular kind of present state. For example:

(2) [I have bought a computer because] I am going to write a novel. (= *'I have the present intention of writing a novel in the future.'*)
(3) [Look at those clouds!] There is going to be a storm in a minute. (= *'There are signs in the present that there will be a storm soon.'*)
(4) I'm leaving in a minute. (= *'There is a present plan or arrangement for me to leave in a minute.'*)
(5) [Look at her!] She is about to faint. (= *'You can see now that she will faint in the very near future.'*)
(6) The Queen is to leave for Canada tomorrow. (= *'There is an official arrangement for the Queen to leave for Canada tomorrow.'*)

In the last three examples, the forms *am leaving*, *is about to faint* and *is to leave* will not be treated as lexical realizations of the future tense. However, they are 'futurish' tense forms because they clearly locate the situation of leaving or fainting in the future (and in doing so establish a post-present temporal domain).

The observation that futurish forms link the future actualization of a situation to a present state and therefore have 'dual time reference' does not mean that they refer to two different situations (one present, the other future). Only lexical verbs can denote situations. All the futurish forms contain only one lexical verb, which refers to the situation that is located in the post-present. In this respect a sentence like *I'm going to help her* differs from (the semantically similar) *I intend to help her*, which involves two lexical verbs and therefore refers to two different situations.

With the possible exception of *is*/*are going to*, which is also often used to express 'PURE FUTURE' (i.e. to talk about the post-present without relating it to present circumstances, as in *I wonder if it is going to rain tomorrow*), futurish tense forms are less prototypical expressions of post-present time reference than the future tense ('*will*/*shall* + infinitive') because they do imply a link with the present. This accounts for the fact that *is*/*are to* is not normally substituted for *will* in more complex tense forms like future perfects or progressive future tense forms:

(7) Tomorrow the Queen {*will* have been / **is to* have been}in Canada for four days.
(8) I can't receive you at three. I {*will* be having / **am to* be having}guests then.

In such complex verb forms *will* always expresses pure future.

In sum, while the future tense is used to express 'pure future' (i.e. to make a mere prediction and in doing so refer to the post-present only), futurish tense forms typically

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effect dual time reference and therefore have more specific meanings involving an element of present time reference. For example, *The Queen is to leave for Canada tomorrow* refers to an official arrangement which exists at t_0 and is expected to be acted on tomorrow. This sentence is not primarily used to predict the Queen's departure but rather to state the present existence of an arrangement which is expected to lead to a post-present actualization (viz. the Queen's leaving for Canada).

3 Is *be to* an auxiliary?

3.1 The modal auxiliary be to

Coates (1983: 4) points out that 'a modal auxiliary has the following characteristics':
(a) It has what Huddleston (1976: 333) calls the NICE properties (Negation, Inversion, Code, Emphasis), i.e. it does not allow *do*-insertion in negative sentences, in sentences with inversion, in 'code' (i.e. when a PRO-form is needed for a verb or verb phrase) and when the verb needs to receive a heavy accent. *Be to* satisfies each of these criteria:

(9) (a) The Queen {is not / *doesn't be} to leave until tomorrow.
(b) '{Is she / *Does she be} to leave for Canada tomorrow?' – 'Yes, she {is / *does}.'
(c) 'The Queen is to leave for Canada tomorrow.' – 'No, she {isn't / *doesn't be}!'

(b) A modal auxiliary has no *-s* form in the third person singular (e.g. **musts*). *Be to* satisfies this criterion in so far as there is no form **bes*. On the other hand, *be to* differs from auxiliaries like *must*, *can*, *may*, etc. in that it has three present tense forms: *am*, *are*, *is*.
(c) Modal auxiliaries have no nonfinite forms. *Be to* shares this characteristic:[3]

(10) What I hate most in this job is {to have to / *to be to / having to / *being to} get up in the middle of the night.

It follows that we should not refer to the auxiliary *be to* as **to be to*: the auxiliary never occurs in the latter form.
(d) A modal auxiliary cannot co-occur with another modal auxiliary in Standard English: **He may can do it*; **Can she must work as a hooker?* Unlike the semi-auxiliaries *need to* and *have to*, *be to* also satisfies this criterion:

(11) He may {have to / need to / *be to} leave tomorrow.

A further criterion we could appeal to is that modal auxiliaries are not linked to the main verb by *to*: *He {must/may/could}(*to) be the man the police are looking for*. One might argue that *be to* does not share this characteristic, but one may also argue that it does, because, as in the case of *used to* and *ought to*, the *to* forms part of the auxiliary

[3] This conclusion only concerns Present-day English. The entry for *be to* in the *Oxford English Dictionary* contains some examples from the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in which the nonfinite form *being to* is used.

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itself and is not the *to* that is used as an 'infinitive marker', as in *I intend to help him* (which alternates with *I intend helping him*). This analysis is supported by the fact that, unlike *intend*, *be to* loses its lexical meaning when *to* is omitted.

In sum, *be to* has all but one of the characteristics of a modal auxiliary, including the characteristics (c) and (d) which 'semi-auxiliaries' like *have to* or *need to* do not share. It is therefore surprising that *be to* is often excluded from discussions of modal auxiliaries, sometimes even from treatments of English modality altogether (see e.g. Coates 1983; Biber et al. 1999). In what follows I will treat *be to* as an auxiliary.[4]

3.2 *The futurish auxiliary* be to

The auxiliaries of tense (*have*), aspect (*be*) and voice (*be*) do not share characteristics (b)–(d) of modal auxiliaries, but they do have the NICE-properties (= characteristic (a)) and are not followed by *to*. The same is true of the tense auxiliary *will*, which in addition shares characteristic (b), i.e. no *-s* is added in the third person singular.

The futurish auxiliary *be to* has exactly the same formal and syntactic characteristics as the modal auxiliary *be to*.

3.3 *One or two auxiliaries* be to*?*

I have just distinguished between the modal auxiliary *be to* and the futurish auxiliary *be to*, but this distinction is really a simplification. As noted in the introductory section, there is no synchronic evidence for the existence of two different (but homophonous) auxiliaries *be to* in present-day English. Rather, there appears to be one auxiliary *be to*, which is basically a modal auxiliary but also allows a futurish use. I will attempt to substantiate this claim below. But first I have to introduce some terminology in connection with modal auxiliaries.

4 Talking about sentences involving a modal auxiliary

The meaning of *John must give in* is something like 'It is obligatory for John to give in', which means that the logical form of the sentence can be represented as 'MUST [John give in]' or 'Obligatory [John give in]'. This shows that such a sentence really involves reference to two situations: the 'MODAL STATE' expressed by the auxiliary (in the above example: the state of it being obligatory that John should give in) and the situation referred to by what Huddleston (1984: 167–8) calls the 'RESIDUE', i.e. what

[4] Palmer (1990: 4, 164) also comes to the conclusion that sufficient criteria are satisfied to speak of an auxiliary, but he calls the auxiliary in question IS TO, saying that 'because there are no non-finite forms, it is not appropriate to refer to it as *be to*; *be to* does not occur'. I will not follow this practice because (a) it is an arbitrary choice to label the auxiliary IS TO rather than AM TO or ARE TO, (b) it suggests that IS TO and WERE TO are unrelated auxiliaries, and (c) *is to*, *am to*, *are to*, *was to* and *were to* are naturally felt to be forms of one and the same verb *be to*.

Huddleston & Pullum et al. (2002: 206) speak of the 'quasi-modal *be*'. Since this *be* cannot be used without *to* (except in code), I find it better to refer to it as *be to*.

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is left of a clause with a modal auxiliary when the auxiliary is abstracted from it, viz. the subject plus the (nontensed and nonmodal) proposition which has the form of an infinitival clause. In the above example [*John must give in*] the residue is 'John give in'.

For ease of reference we can refer to the two situations as the 'MODAL STATE' and the 'RESIDUE-SITUATION', respectively. The propositions underlying them can be called the 'MODAL PROPOSITION' and the 'RESIDUE-PROPOSITION'. The modal state is represented as a factual situation, whereas the residue-situation is conceptualized as a situation whose potential actualization is posterior to the time of the modal state. Thus, *Sharon is to be back at five* can be used to refer to a present arrangement for Sharon to be back at five. (Note that unlike *Sharon will be back at five*, the sentence does not actually predict that this will be the case. There may be an expectation of actualization of the residue-situation, but this is partly determined pragmatically by what we know about the world, especially about Sharon's habit of keeping or not keeping arrangements.)

It will be pointed out in the next section that the basic meaning of the modal auxiliary *be to* is to express necessity which can follow from various factors ('M-ORIGINS'), which are partly different from those determining the necessity expressed by *must*. What *be to* shares with *must* (but not with *have to* or *need to*) is that in negative clauses it is not the modal proposition that is negated but the residue-proposition. In other words, the negation has no effect on the existence of the modal state. Compare:

(12) John does not {have/need} to know that. (*absence of necessity: 'It is not necessary for John to know that.'*)
(13) John {mustn't/isn't to} know that. (*necessity of nonactualization of the residue-situation: 'It is necessary that John should not know that.'*)
(14) You {mustn't/aren't to} touch that switch! (*prohibition, i.e. necessity of nonactualization of the residue-situation*)
(15) Hermits must keep to their cells; they *are not to* be aroused by sensual sights or sounds. (Cobuild)
(16) No fires *are to* be lit in places exposed to the South, no doubt for fear of forest and grass fires. (Cobuild)
(17) However, the disciple *is not to* expect 'pennies from heaven'. (Cobuild)

5 Futurity-related meaning(s) of the auxiliary *be to*

5.1 Necessity

In the case of *be to* the modal state is typically the existence of some kind of necessity. What distinguishes *be to* from other markers of necessity (like *must*, *have to* or *need to*) is the kinds of necessity it can express, i.e. the origins of the necessity – the 'M-origins'. The main M-origins have been identified in most historical and traditional grammars, as well as in recent grammatical work. There is a widespread consensus that they can be summarized under the first five of the following eight headings:

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(a) The actualization of the residue-situation may depend on destiny:

(18) Several years later I *was to* meet him again at a conference in Amsterdam. (*destiny's arrangement*)
(19) Plans were made which *were* never *to* be carried out. (= *which were destined never to be carried out*)
(20) *Are* we ever *to* meet again? (*future in the hands of fate*)
(21) The day broke, the day which *was to* decide the fate of India. (Poutsma 1928: 49)

It is worth noting that this use of *be to* differs from all its other uses in that there is a sense of actualization of the residue-situation: in all these sentences the situation referred to by the main verb is interpreted as having actualized in the past. (Substituting *would* for *was*/*were to* would have the same effect. See Declerck (2003: 97–8) for a discussion of this exceptional use of *would* and *was*/*were to* meaning 'being destined to'.)[5]

(b) *Be to* can express obligation or necessity resulting from an arrangement, plan, agreement, decision:

(22) Helen *is to* appear on television tomorrow.
(23) The mother has emphasised she wants nothing to do with him and I have told him he *is not to* go near the family. (Cobuild)
(24) Volkers, too, was in touch with his lawyers and *is to* appeal. (Cobuild)
(25) Teenagers too young to drink alcohol *are to* be allowed to serve drinks in pubs and hotels under government proposals for a three-year apprenticeship. (Cobuild)
(26) Last week it was announced that Sheila Gunn, a Times diarist and former political correspondent, *was to* join the Smith Square press office. (Cobuild)

In this use, *be to* usually implies an official arrangement or decision, but it may also be a personal one:

(27) New year, new resolution. With heavy heart, I'm finally giving in to the unavoidable march of progress. I'm going metric. Pounds and ounces *are to* be banished from my recipes. (Cobuild)

(c) *Be to* can express compulsion resulting from an order or prohibition:

(28) Our instructions were explicit. We *were to* shoot at anything that moved.
(29) I'*m to* be in the barracks before midnight. (= *a reported command*)
(30) Nobody asks me if I like the bloody suit. I'*m not to* open my bloody mouth. I'm just a parcel of shit that has to be tarted up. (Cobuild) (*prohibition: 'I've been told not to open my mouth.'*)
(31) Further, they *are not to* criticise the Council, and not to pass on to outsiders any information concerning the work of the commissions. (Cobuild)

(d) *Be to* can also express the order or prohibition itself:

(32) You there! You *are to* return to your post at once!
(33) [Constable speaking:] You *are not to* leave now. You *are to* stay here till the inspector arrives.

[5] Because *would* can replace *was*/*were to* in this use, one might argue that we have to do here with the futurish tense auxiliary *be to* rather than with the modal auxiliary.

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(34) The old man said softly, 'You'*re to* pretend Olly is your sister. You'*re not to* get her with child.' (Cobuild)

(e) Sometimes *be to* simply expresses what is fitting (suitable, appropriate). In this use it can be replaced by *should*:

(35) The costume designers *are to* be complimented. (www)
(36) The whole cast is truly dedicated to this production, and we also *are to* applaud Immigrants Theatre's commitment to exposing American audiences to international and immigrant plays. (www)
(37) The pioneering work conducted in the field of embryo research is gaining pace at a dizzying rate, and much of it *is to* be commended. (Cobuild)
(38) You *are to* congratulate Miss Medway too on her approaching nuptials with Mr. Branville. (www)

(f) A similar (but generally neglected) use is that in which *be to* expresses a reasonable or advisable course of action. Here too, *should* can be used instead:

(39) These drug addicts *are to* be helped rather than arrested. (www) (*are to* = *should*)
(40) He has broken wide open the shell of Western cultural exclusiveness by insisting that from the religious point of view Western societies *are to* be 'confronted with the gospel no less relentlessly than Third World societies'. (Cobuild)
(41) Shoppers by now may have heard something about mercury in fish and may shy away from purchasing fish altogether if they don't get a clear message about which fish they *are to* avoid. (www)
(42) Fresh pasta *is to* be eaten fresh, not frozen. (Cobuild)

In the following sentences too, *be to* could be replaced by *should*:

(43) Who *is to* be blamed for this misconduct? (Cobuild)[6]
(44) Therefore, all of the acts of morality by the Shin devotee . . . *are to* be considered as thanksgiving to Amida Buddha for His Love and Mercy. (Cobuild)
(45) People are learning to be more experimental with clothes . . . They are throwing off the shackles of wearing only designer labels, and feeling that their patronage *is to* be deserved, rather than taken for granted. (Cobuild)

In the following examples, *be to* resembles *should* in that the M-origin of the necessity is some social or moral standard:

(46) And there's a big row going on at the moment anyway between social services and health authorities about what'*s to* be funded. (Cobuild)
(47) The worth of individual animals is not to be measured in terms of their utility for us. And just as I truly recognize your worth or dignity as an individual only when I come to realise that I *am not to* use you merely in order to advance my own interests or those of the group I favour, so I truly recognize the worth and dignity of individual animals only if I come to this same realization in their case. (Cobuild)

[6] *Is to be blamed* alternates with *is to blame* in such examples. The latter expression is stereotyped. Other passive infinitives following *be to* cannot normally be replaced by their active counterpart: *Fresh pasta is to* {*be eaten* / **eat*} *fresh*. See also section (i) below.

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(g) I have found some examples in which *be to* conveys a particular sense of intention or goal and allows the paraphrase 'be meant to':

(48) *Am* I *to* understand that a Macy employee doesn't know how to make a cash sale? (www)
(49) Keep your kitchen clean. Wash worktops and utensils between handling food which *is to* be cooked and food which is not. (Cobuild) (*is to be cooked = 'is meant to be cooked'*)
(50) Where products are supplied which *are to* be connected to a telecommunications network or circuit run by BT or a third party, it is the Customer's responsibility to arrange for such connection to be made . . . (Cobuild)

(h) In a number of examples that I have found there is some sense of necessity, but its origin is rather indefinable:

(51) Nobody asks 'Who *is to* say what murder is?' or 'Who *is to* define burglary?'. (Cobuild)
(52) I'm broke! I've lost everything. What *am* I *to* do now? (*The M-origin is as vague as in What am I supposed to do now?*)
(53) It *is to* be expected that the trade unions will react vehemently. (www) (*The contribution of is to to the interpretation of the sentence is minimal. The only difference between is to be expected and is expected is that the latter expresses a present fact and in doing so implies that the actualization of the residue-situation is generally expected, whereas the former does not: it is not because the speaker says that something is to be expected that the thing in question is actually expected by anybody else, let alone by everybody. This means that be to still implies a sense of necessity, even if it is so weak that the unqualified paraphrase 'It is necessary to . . . ' is no longer appropriate.*)
(54) Time will tell which administration officials *are to* be believed! (Cobuild)

Consider also:

(55) How many more of our children *are to* be attacked and beaten to near death before something is done? (Cobuild)

In this type of sentence the origin of the necessity is totally vague, which probably accounts for the fact that any auxiliary or semi-auxiliary expressing necessity can be used in such sentences:

(56) How many roads *must* a man walk down, before you call him a man? (Bob Dylan)
(57) How many frogs do you *have to* kiss before you find a prince? (www)
(58) How many lives *should* be lost before authorities enforce seat belts rule? (www)
(59) How many people *ought to* know a secret before it ceases to be one? (www)
(60) How many more peaceful Burmese *need* perish before a change happens? (www)
(61) How many calories *need to* be burned before they start adding up to pounds? (www)

(i) In the above sections (a)–(h) I have treated *be to* as a modal auxiliary expressing necessity of some kind. Intuitively, I would not extend this analysis to examples like the following:

(62) Who is to blame for the accident?

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(63) What is there to do?
(64) There is this to remember: he is dangerous!

In such sentences *is* seems to be a form of the copula *be* and '*to* + infinitive' seems to express necessity by itself. This is in keeping with the fact that '*to* + infinitive' can be used without *be*:

(65) The person to blame for the accident is the driver.
(66) I'm wondering about what to do.
(67) The thing to remember is that he is dangerous.

Of course, relative clauses with the modal auxiliary *be to* can also often be reduced to infinitival relative clauses, but this is usually possible only when the relative clause is passive (e.g. *John is the man* {*to be congratulated*/**to congratulate*} *on this job*). In the above examples the infinitival relative clause is in the active voice.

5.2 Be to *with futurish time reference*

The futurish use of *be to* in present-day English is closely related to these modal uses, especially to the use in which the M-origin is an official arrangement.[7] The modal interpretation shifts to a futurish interpretation when the emphasis shifts from the present existence of the modal state to the future actualization of the residue-situation.[8] This shift of emphasis is accompanied by a loss of doubt about this future actualization. For example, *Helen is to appear on television tomorrow* can be interpreted as merely reporting the existence of a present arrangement. In this case *be to* is a modal auxiliary. Depending on pragmatic factors, the speaker and/or addressee may or may not have doubts as to whether Helen will actually appear on television, but this is irrelevant to this interpretation, which is concerned with the present arrangement only. However, on the futurish interpretation of *is to appear*, the main point of the message is the future actualization of the residue-situation, which is treated as equally certain as in *Helen will appear on television tomorrow*. Like any post-present situation, the residue-situation is 'not-yet-factual at t_0' (see section 2.2), but the predominant idea is that its future actualization is confidently predicted. The only difference between *will appear* and *is to appear* (on the futurish reading) is that, unlike *will*, *is to* reveals the 'M-origin' (see section 5.1) on which the prediction is based, which is a present arrangement.

[7] Some people consider 'reference to future events that are planned or arranged' as the only 'temporal use' of a present tense form of *be to* (Palmer 1990: 165). However, as we will see, this is an oversimplification.

[8] Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech & Svartvik (1985: 143) claim that '*Be to* is an idiom expressing futurity, with varied connotations of "compulsion", "plan", "destiny", etc, according to context.' I argue that it is essentially the other way round. *Be to* is primarily a modal auxiliary referring to a present or past modal state, with a connotation of expected posterior actualization of the situation indicated by the infinitive clause. However, the emphasis may shift from the former element to the latter.

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5.3 Implications

It follows that the emphasis on the future actualization of the residue-situation is strongest when the sense of necessity forming the M-origin is strongest, i.e. when the actualization resulting from the necessity is considered as inevitable. This is the case if the M-origin is destiny, because destiny is generally treated as inescapable. This explains that, when the M-origin is destiny and is located in the past, the posterior actualization of the residue-situation (which is not-yet-factual at the time of the existence of the M-origin) can often be interpreted as a past fact (i.e. as factual at t_0):

(68) He was born as the son of an impoverished cab driver but *was to* become one of the wealthiest business men in the city.

The form *would become* can easily be used here instead of *was to become* (especially in American English). This is the only use of the tense auxiliary *would* that implies past factuality.

Next to destiny, official arrangements, decisions and orders constitute the strongest cases of necessity that can be expressed by modal *be to*. It is therefore not surprising that these M-origins are nearly always the ones that are implied on a futurish interpretation of *be to*. The idea that some course of action is appropriate, reasonable or advisable is a much weaker M-origin, so that sentences like the following do not so easily invite a futurish interpretation (i.e. they are not likely to be used as predictions based on a present M-origin):

(69) These drug addicts *are to* be helped rather than arrested.
(70) You *are to* congratulate Miss Medway too on her approaching nuptials with Mr. Branville. (www)
(71) We're trying to work out how the money *is to* be allotted. (www)
(72) Anything which encourages those people to protect themselves *is to* be applauded. (Cobuild)

5.4 Be to *expressing pure future*

In this subsection I will give a number of examples in which the (strong or weak) M-origin of the necessity is bleached, so that the hearer's attention is directed to the future actualization of the residue-situation. A common feature of all the examples is that the clause with *be to* is positive. This stands to reason. As remarked in section 4, when a clause with modal *be to* is negative (e.g. *I'm not to say this to anyone*), it always expresses the necessity of nonactualization of the residue-situation. In section 5.2 it was stated that a futurish interpretation of a clause with *be to* comes about when the emphasis shifts from the present existence of the modal state (necessity) to the future actualization of the residue-situation, and that this shift of emphasis is accompanied by a loss of doubt about this future actualization. Needless to say, there cannot be

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such a shift of emphasis to future actualization if the clause expresses the necessity of nonactualization of the residue-situation.[9]

(a) The idea of destiny is usually backgrounded when *be to* is used in the present tense. In the following examples *will* can be substituted for *are to* without a discernible change of meaning:

(73) The rest of the girls on the team are also the most gorgeous honeys you *are* ever *to* meet. (www)
(74) That, I feel, is the greatest compliment the SVR *are* ever *to* receive. (www)
(75) I think it may be a long time before we *are* ever *to* see their like again. (www)

(b) The following are examples with futurish *be to* in which the bleached M-origin is an official arrangement, plan, decision or order:

(76) Nelson Mandela *is to* address the Irish parliament today and *will* have talks with Prime Minister Charles Haughey before travelling to London, where he'*s to* meet Mrs Thatcher on Wednesday. (Cobuild) *(Note the alternation of be to and will.)*
(77) The Cuban government has announced that it *is to* allow young people in their twenties to travel abroad more easily in a further relaxation of its rules over who is allowed to leave the country. (Cobuild)

In the following examples the bleaching of the M-origin (viz. necessity) is virtually complete: the M-origin is no longer clearly discernible, so that *be to* expresses little more than a prediction, i.e. 'pure future':

(78) Still putting the fortune-tellers hat on the head, I would have thought that, well, within – over – during – I'm not quite sure which word to use – the framework of these next two years er you *are to* achieve a remarkable degree of success, a disproportionate degree of success. (Cobuild)
(79) This does not mean to say that you *are to* become a rich or a wealthy man but I think that certainly it is a potent and powerful indication that suggests that you *are to* acquire greater control over finances. (Cobuild)

(c) *Be to* also expresses pure future (without a clear idea of necessity) in questions like the following:

(80) Water for all – who *is to* pay? (Cobuild)
(81) How this *is to* be achieved varies from writer to writer. (Cobuild)

Here the speaker is not concerned at all with what might be the M-origin (i.e. the kind of necessity) of the future actualization of the residue-situation.

(d) There is also complete bleaching of the M-origin if *be to* collocates with *still* or *yet*:

[9] According to Palmer (1990: 165), when *be to* expresses pure future 'negative forms cannot be distinguished as negating either the modality or the [residue-]proposition, but simply deny the future event. (This is typical of future time markers – see 7.6.1.)' However, Palmer does not give a single negative example in which *be to* expresses pure future, and I have not found any in the about two thousand examples of *be to* that I have gone through.

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(82) The very best *is* {yet/still} *to* come.
(83) These problems *are* {yet/still} *to* be solved.

The predominant idea here is that of 'not-yet-factuality at t_0', which is typical of any clause referring to a situation that is posterior to t_0 – see section 2.2. The same interpretation sometimes suggests itself without *still* or *yet* (which could, however, easily be added):

(84) 'Are we talking about just sending the second pass proofs or assembling them at a set place for a colloquium?' – 'That*'s to* be debated.' (Cobuild)

When the idea of potential posterior actualization of the residue-situation has a past (rather than present) M-origin, '*still*/*yet* + *be to*' in fact expresses no more than 'not-yet-factuality at t_0'. In that case only the context can make it clear whether actualization in the future is still expected or not:

(85) He's made a lot of promises during his campaign and he *is* still *to* keep the first of them. (*Post-present actualization of the residue-situation is apparently no longer expected.*)
(86) We'*re* still *to* find the first clue as to who killed her. But it's still early days. We're bound to find something.

To summarize section 5.4, there exist examples in which the (strong or weak) M-origin of the necessity is bleached, so that the hearer's attention is directed to the future actualization of the residue-situation. As noted in section 5.2, this is the way a futurish interpretation of a clause with *be to* comes about: when the emphasis shifts from the present existence of the modal state (necessity) to the future actualization of the residue-situation. This shift of emphasis is naturally accompanied by a loss of doubt about this future actualization. There are some cases in which the bleaching of the M-origin is complete, so that *be to* can be said to express 'pure future' (and is sometimes interchangeable with *will*).

5.5 Modal meanings other than necessity

Apart from expressing necessity (resulting from various kinds of M-origins), modal *be to* also has a couple of other modal meanings. In section 6 I will discuss its uses in conditional clauses. There are also clauses in which *be to* expresses theoretical possibility or impossibility when it is followed by the passive infinitive of certain verbs. This use is rather old-fashioned, except in a number of idioms or stereotyped combinations (like *is to be found*, usually with an indication of location).

(87) French books *are not to* be found in this bookshop. (= *It is impossible to find . . .*)
(88) A lot of his work *is to* be seen in Tate Gallery. (= *can be seen*)
(89) Why should we not have time left this year in which to beat the Germans before Winter? If our Government would only stir themselves it *is to* be done. (Cobuild)
(90) The up-side *is to* be found by moving your position in both literal and figurative terms, and acting from the heart. (Cobuild)

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(91) Radzinsky makes much of the access he has had to the presidential and other archives which had been closed, but little more than juicy titbits *are to* be gathered from them. (= *It's not possible, given the nature of the archives, to gather much more than juicy titbits.*)

This use of *be to* need not be further examined here because it does not lead to a futurish use of the auxiliary. Like *can*, which could be used instead, *be to* just expresses a present modal state, without even implying actualization of the residue-situation. The statement that something 'is to be done' (in the sense of 'can be done') does not imply that it has ever been done, is actually being done or will ever be done. All that is said is that the action in question is 'do-able' (feasible), i.e. that it is theoretically possible to do it. It follows that, unlike *be to* expressing necessity, *be to* expressing possibility does not establish 'dual time reference' (see section 2.2): it just expresses present possibility. Consequently, there cannot be a shift of emphasis to the idea of post-present actualization of the residue-situation, because there is no sense of actualization of the residue-situation at all, unless it is induced by the context, in which case the actualization of the residue-situation may be located not only in the future but also in the past:

(92) It is also recognised that a united Ireland *is to* be brought about only by peaceful means and with the consent of the people. (Cobuild) (*It is common knowledge that there has not been actualization yet.*)

(93) But let's control our hysteria. Gill is 60 years dead. What *is to* be achieved by ripping his Stations of the Cross from the cathedral wall? (Cobuild) (*Used in a context which makes it clear that the ripping has already been done.*)

6 *Be to* in conditional clauses

In some types of conditional clause, *be to* can be used as a modal auxiliary expressing necessity (resulting from the above defined M-origins) or as a futurish form. It can also have some other uses, which are restricted to conditional clauses and are unrelated to the use of *be to* as a futurish auxiliary.

6.1 Clauses expressing a closed condition

A CLOSED CONDITION is 'a condition which the speaker treats as assumed to be fulfilled in the actual world (e.g. *If, as you say, you can't accompany me tonight, I'll have to look for someone else*)' (Declerck & Reed 2001: 477). In clauses expressing a closed condition 'the tense forms in both clauses have their normal temporal meanings – see also Dancygier (1988: 126) – and the temporal reference is expressed in the same way as in independent clauses' (Declerck & Reed 2001: 146). This explains why clauses expressing a closed condition and referring to the post-present make use of the future tense or a futurish tense form (establishing a post-present temporal domain – see section 2.2):

(94) If he *will* be in London from tomorrow onwards, it was pointless to send the files to his home address yesterday.

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(95) If, as is forecast, the river *is going to* rise as high as this, the meadows over there will be flooded.
(96) If Claude *will* be here tomorrow, there's no need to call him now. (Close 1980: 107)

As is to be expected, *be to* can also be found in such closed conditional clauses. The implication then is that the present necessity of future actualization of the residue-situation is taken for granted at t_0. The conditional clause can foreground either the present sense of necessity or the future actualization of the residue-situation. In the latter case it is used as a futurish auxiliary:

(97) If the players *are to* be congratulated, so is the coach.
(98) ['John's to address the General Assembly.'] – 'If John's *to* address the General Assembly, I'll make sure I'm there to support him.' (*present arrangement about the future*)
(99) If, as they say, the activists *are to* appear in court, the judge will have to condemn them. (*present arrangement about the future*)
(100) If the issue *is* still *to* be debated, we will not make any official statements. (*futurish form which virtually expresses pure future – see section 5.4*)

There is another use of *be to* in closed conditional clauses which is noted in most grammars: '*Be to* can be used in *if*-clauses where the hypothesis that is made concerns a goal which the referent of the subject may wish to attain' (Declerck 1991b: 376). The following examples allow this interpretation:

(101) If we *are to* make any progress at all, we must set about finding a solution to this problem. (= *in order to make . . . ; if we intend to make . . .*)
(102) If you *are to* learn more about it, you must ask Mr Broth for details. (Cobuild)
(103) Many young executives . . . believe they must behave like this if they *are to* accomplish anything and get ahead. (Cobuild)
(104) A US deal is essential for HSBC if it *is* ever *to* be the global banking group it aspires to be. (Cobuild)
(105) But changes are inevitable if Mr Marshall *is to* achieve the long-term goals he has set for the school. (Cobuild)

There are, however, also examples in which it is not the referent of the subject that wants to attain the goal:

(106) It is important that your lips are soft and well moisturised if your lipstick *is to* adhere successfully. (Cobuild)
(107) Adjustments simply have to be made if small bickerings *aren't to* develop into major rows. (Cobuild)
(108) You must be prepared to set aside about 20 minutes a day if the tapes *are to* bring results. (Cobuild)
(109) If any good *is to* come from the anguish of Michael Gray, then football's rule-makers will see to it no player ever again has to endure the humiliation of Sunderland's full-back at Wembley. (Cobuild)

For this reason, a better paraphrase of the use of '*if* + *be to*' in the above examples is 'if the future actualization of the residue-situation is seen as necessary or desirable'. The

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if-clause expresses a closed condition and refers to the assumed present desirability of a future actualization of the residue-situation.[10] 'Desirability' is more adequate as a general term than 'goal'.

6.2 Clauses expressing an open condition

Declerck & Reed (2001: 494) define an OPEN CONDITION as a condition expressed in a clause 'whose situation is assumed by the speaker to be one that may or may not actualise (or have actualised) in the real world. That is, the speaker treats fulfilment of the condition (supposition) as uncertain, but as a real possibility.' For example:

(110) I will be happy if we find a solution.
(111) [I hope Liverpool won their home match yesterday.] If they did, they still have a chance of winning the championship.

There are various ways in which the auxiliary *be to* can be used in open *if*-clauses.

Firstly, if the condition concerns the present necessity of actualization of the residue-situation, it is an open condition if the speaker states or implies that he/she does not know whether or not the necessity exists at t_0 (in other words, whether or not the condition is fulfilled at t_0). In that case both modal and futurish *be to* can be used.

(112) If the activists *are to* appear in court – which I doubt – the judge will have to condemn them. (*emphasis on the idea of present necessity resulting from a decision*)
(113) I don't know how many amendments have already been dealt with. If amendment 37 *is* yet *to* be debated, there will not be many MPs taking part in the debate. (*futurish form – see section 5.4*)

Secondly, the use of '*if* + *be to*' that was noted in section 6.1.2 and in which '*if* + *be to*' can be paraphrased as 'if the future actualization of the residue-situation is seen as necessary or desirable' is possible not only in closed conditionals but also in open ones. It suffices that the speaker does not know whether the condition is fulfilled or not.

(114) I don't know if that's your intention, but if you *are to* become a professional player, you will have to practise more.
(115) It is noticeable from the tournament forms that have been returned that a number of players are not keeping records of their matches played. If you *are to* become good tennis players you will need to keep a good record of every match played and

[10] In negative *if*-clauses, the desirability concerns the nonactualization of the residue-situation:

(i) If 'liberation' *is* not *to* become a meaningless slogan for the bulk of the population, these issues have to be tackled. (Cobuild)

The same is true of *unless*-clauses:

(ii) The news from the Mexican frontier has always to be sifted, unless we *are to* be led astray by its meaning and significance. (www)
(iii) Unless Christians *are to* conclude that God was fooled, the conclusion must be that it was the serpent alone that was responsible. (www)

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every tournament entered. (Cobuild) (*Most players presumably want to become good tennis players, but some might not have that ambition.*)

In such examples the sense of present desirability (of actualization of the residue-situation) is quite prominent, so that *be to* is more likely to be the modal auxiliary here than the futurish tense auxiliary.

Thirdly, we will see in section 6.3 that '*were to* + infinitive' (and, in an informal style, the past tense form '*was to* + infinitive') can replace the past tense in 'tentative conditionals' like *I would be lucky if she chose me*, in which the actualization of the *if*-clause situation is seen as not impossible but rather unlikely. The addition of *were to* tends to strengthen the sense of improbability:

(116) I would be lucky if she {*were to* / *was to*} choose me.

Occasional examples can be found in which a present tense form of *be to* is similarly inserted into a clause expressing an open condition:

(117) Heathrow's an international airport megastar and it must stay that way. If you *'re to* ask people who live outside Europe where is their chosen destination, over fifty per cent of them say Heathrow. (Cobuild)

(118) Here too there are accusations of discrimination and a feeling that Russians have become second class citizens. But a Russian backlash, if it *is to* come, need not be restricted to Moldavia and the Baltic republics. There is a large Russian community in the Ukraine and in Central Asia too. (Cobuild)

This use of *be to* is quite grammatical but appears to have gone unnoticed. However, the present tense of *be to* can certainly not be systematically used in this way in open conditional clauses, and this use cannot underlie the use of *be to* as a futurish tense auxiliary.

6.3 Clauses expressing a tentative condition

Declerck & Reed (2001: 508) call a condition TENTATIVE if its proposition forms part of a 'tentative suppositional world'. A tentative world is mostly assumed by the speaker to be unlikely to be (or become) the actual world. In other words, the speaker treats fulfilment of the supposition as a rather unlikely possibility (e.g. *I would be happy if she came*). A suppositional world can also be represented as tentative for reasons of tact, politeness, etc. (e.g. *I would appreciate it if you gave me a hand*).

In a tentative *if*-clause,[11] the past subjunctive or past tense of *be to* can be inserted into the verb form in order to strengthen the sense of improbability (of actualization) or to render a request more polite:

[11] Examples with *unless* are also easily found. In some of them there is no clear reference to the future:

(i) Unless Scalia *were to* dissent or concur in almost every case, he has to compromise. (www)

(ii) A fuss erupts when he heals someone and, whoops, it's the Sabbath: 'You can't do that!' His guys don't do the washing ritual right before they eat. He lets a menstruating woman touch him; he touches people who are dead – both of which, unless he *were to* go through extensive purification ritual, are violations of the Bible itself! (www)

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(119) What would you say if she *were to* ask you about your profession?
(120) If you *were to* move your chair a little to the left, we could pass through more easily.

Although the residue-situation is interpreted here as lying in the post-present, *were to* cannot be analysed as a futurish form. For one thing, the residue-situation is also interpreted as lying in the post-present if we do not insert *were to*, as in *What would you say if she asked you about your profession?* and *If you moved your chair a little to the left, we could pass through more easily*. For another, there are examples in which the *if*-clause with *were to* refers to the present rather than the future: *I would be surprised if he were to be the man the police are looking for.*

6.4 Counterfactual conditions

There are no recent major grammars that note the possibility of inserting *be to* into clauses expressing a COUNTERFACTUAL (unfulfilled) condition, but the following are some of the examples that are to be found on the internet:

(121) If I *had been to* consult my own feelings, I should have been more willing to produce an enlarged edition. (www, UK)
(122) If I *had been to* judge from the effects it had upon Boots, I would have been led to form but a poor opinion of his talents. (www, UK)
(123) If I *had been to* guess before-hand, I should have conjectured that . . . (www, UK)

This use (in which '*had been to* + infinitive' replaces a past perfect form) is archaic, and even more so is the use of '*had been to* + perfect infinitive':

(124) He said that if he *had been to have made* an incision as a surgeon, he could not have made a clearer wound; the instrument must be very sharp. (www) (*dated 1790*)

Since there is no sense of posterior actualization of the residue-situation at all in any of the examples given in this subsection 6.4, this use of *be to* is quite unrelated to the present-day use of *be to* as a futurish auxiliary.

7 Conclusion

The following are the main findings of the above synchronic analysis of *be to*:

(a) *Be to* satisfies all but one of the morphosyntactic characteristics of true auxiliaries like *must* or *should*. It can therefore safely be treated as an auxiliary.

(b) *Be to* is primarily a modal auxiliary expressing the necessity of future actualization of the residue-situation. Eight possible M-origins (= origins of the necessity) have been identified.

(c) The idea of future actualization of the residue-situation is stronger according as the sense of necessity forming the M-origin is stronger. The strongest sense of necessity is destiny (which is considered as inevitable). Official arrangements, decisions and orders constitute the next strongest cases. The idea that some course of action is appropriate,

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reasonable or advisable is a much weaker M-origin, so that sentences using *be to* to express such an idea do not so strongly imply a sense of future actualization of the residue-situation.

(d) The futurish use of *be to* in present-day English is closely related to these modal uses, especially to the use in which the M-origin is an official arrangement. The modal interpretation shifts to a futurish interpretation when the emphasis shifts from the present existence of the modal state (necessity) to the future actualization of the residue-situation. This shift of emphasis is accompanied by a loss of doubt about this future actualization.

In other words, the futurish reading comes to the fore when the (strong or weak) M-origin of the necessity is bleached, so that the hearer's attention is directed to the future actualization of the residue-situation. What all the examples have in common is that the clause with *be to* is positive. Various cases of such bleaching have been treated in section 5.4. In some cases (e.g. when *be to* collocates with *still* or *yet*), the bleaching of the M-origin is complete, so that only the sense of futurity (and hence of not-yet-factuality-at-t_0) is left. In some other cases there is no clear difference between *is to* and *will*, so that they can alternate with each other within the same sentence.

(e) The use of '*be to* + passive infinitive' to express that the actualization of the residue-situation is theoretically possible cannot lead to a future time interpretation.

(f) Neither can any of the uses of *be to* in any of the several types of conditional clauses that have been distinguished.

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