Chapter Seven
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SYNTAX AND GRAMMAR

Even though systematic, theoretical study of poetic syntax really began only in the last two decades, word-position and word-order have been traditional topics of discussion in versification ever since the Renaissance. The essence of the conservative criticisms of the heroic couplet in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, for example, was an objection to the syntactic dislocations entailed by close-range rhymes. And the traditional, slightly blurry concepts of enjambment and end-stopping reflect an attempt to account for the fundamental "overlay" of line-structure upon sentence-structure in poetry. All these notions were usually treated under the loose rubric of metrics, even though strictly speaking they are matters of syntax. We must insist on the differentiation even as we insist on keeping sight of the larger sequent integration. The larger theory of verse-structure requires a linguistic (syntactic) component matched against a purely formal (metrical) component even as the sharp focus of our vision is the resultant of binocular integration.

Contrary to Fowler's view (F63), Aarts believes that readers interpret deviant sentences by searching for "well-formed parts" rather than any "new structure in general."

Part 1 treats Grammar, Part 2 (sections 452–515) Prosody. Abbott's textbook gives the standard account of the structure of Elizabethan English as well as the traditional foot-verse description of the iambic pentameter. But N.B.: Abbott's "rules" are supple enough to yield to almost any construing of the meter one might make, and his scansion is exceedingly unreliable. He allows monosyllabic and trisyllabic feet, and feet composed of a rest (sec. 508), and he will expand or contract syllables shamelessly to fill up a foot. Superseded by Franz (F66, F67).

Mainly on determiners and verb tense.

Explication of the knotty eighth stanza of "Christ's Reply."


A compendious tome, organized by grammatical element; it seems to examine verb constructions almost exclusively.

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F9 Austin, Frances O. "Time, Experience, and Syntax in Wordsworth's Poetry." Neuphilologische Mitteilungen 70 (1969): 724–38. Wordsworth had "a tendency to use full or expanded forms of syntax," the chief of which is of + noun phrase, to express possession, instead of apostrophe + s. This form tends to slow down the tempo of a passage and provide psychic distancing, effects which are jointly the principal determiners of that mood of "reflectiveness" so frequent and so central in Wordsworth. In other passages, such as those of direct narration or excitement, the form practically disappears. For metrical reasons, the form frequently occurs at the beginning of the line.

F10 Austin, Timothy R. "Constraints on Syntactic Rules and the Style of Shelley's 'Adonais': An Exercise in Stylistic Criticism." PTL 4 (1979): 315–43. Passages in the critically admired "Adonais" show the same three types of violations of syntactic constraints (the Tensed S Condition, Up-to-Ambiguity Constraint, and Center-Embedding), producing convoluted, awkward, even ungrammatical lines, that passages in the critically denigrated Laon and Cythna show, the difference being that in the latter case the violations are "repeated and consistent," whereas in the former they appear solely in the first twenty stanzas of the fifty-five stanza poem, i.e. precisely in the passage where Shelley portrays the world that is "untransmuted by poetic vision." In "Adonais" he controlled and turned to expressive use a technique hitherto uncontrolled. This essay is too long by half, but the section on the ambiguity of NP-NP-V constructions as lines of verse is enlightening.

F11 -----. "A Linguistic Approach to the Style of the Early Romantic Poets." DAI 38 (1977): 3441A (Massachusetts). A search for dominant linguistic features as specific characteristics of style: a "mirror-image" syntactic feature in Coleridge, triads and syntactic "contortion" in Shelley, and deletions in the couplets of Byron. These syntactic devices are then correlated to particular thematic elements in the passages in which they occur: symbolic landscape in Coleridge, elegiac adoration in Shelley, and satire in Byron.


Draws an extended analogy between the poet's use of verb tense in a poem and the tonality of key in a musical composition: both allow construction of a sense of perspective, a spatial and hierarchical deployment, a figure, via departures from and return to a major key, tensions, contrasts, subordinations, etc. Demonstrated in "Elegiac Stanzas," "The Solitary R reaper," and "Resolution and Independence."

The "union of process and stasis" which W. J. B ate and other critics have found in the poem may be verified in the tenses of its verbs and the forms of its syntax.

Yeats was "not a syntactic innovator, he was a master of syntax," as Barton shows, moving through an analysis that is "grammatical rather than linguistic" and that keeps close to the individual poems themselves. A traditional method appropriate for a poet traditional in syntax.

A miscellany of studies of verb tense and mood (mainly the interesting Sub- junctive), pronouns (mainly the second-person familiar form), and prepositions in English poetry from medieval drama to T. S. Elliot, with full-chapter studies on Shakespeare, Keats, and Shelley. In contrast to the many later linguistic studies of poetic grammar--highly technical, very narrow, self-conscious of theory and method--Berry's approach is best termed speculative: his forte is his delicate yet incisive thinking into the implications and the assumptions behind grammatical forms and specific grammatical usages.

Berry is searching for a persuasive motivation for the distribution of the intimate form vs. the formal form of the pronoun in the sonnets.

Results are compared to current critical estimations of cummings.

Explicates Yeats's "A Prayer for My Daughter" in terms of the underlying case-schemes of change-of-state verbs vs. surface-contact verbs: the former require agent, instrument, and object, the latter agent or object, and goal.

F21  -----, "Parameters of Poetic Inversion in English." Language and Style 12 (1979): 13-25. Poetic inversions are of two types--stanzaic inversions for metrical compliance and displacement inversions for foregrounding--for two purposes--order and marking--and via two means--verb or auxiliary shift, or noun-phrase inversion.
Bivens shows that "the extent to which poetic inversion obeys the rules of ordinary language... is not generally appreciated" by mapping out the transforms. But more importantly, his study avoids the gaudy, ephemeral, and idiosyncratic in a steady and patient search for basic principles, such as "the larger question of how new and old information is distributed within the sentence" [this has applications in scansion] and the rather amazing effects of the Traces Convention proposed by Selkirk.

F22 Bliss, Frank W., and Earl R. MacCormac. "Deep Structures in Poetry." PTL 2 (1977): 227–40. Tries to show that the deep structure of Shakespeare's Sonnet 116 is "reasonably standard." A line by Dylan Thomas is also derived by tree-diagrams in order to point up the relations of semantics to syntax in interpretation.


F31 Chatman, Seymour. "Milton's Participial Style." PMLA 83 (1968): 1386–99. One important aspect of the phrasal style in English poetry identified by Josephine Miles is the poet's "disposition to convert verbs into noun-modifying particles," thereby gaining themselves the compression and ambiguity inherent in such constructions. Milton's practice is here compared to that of the other major English poets in a nearly model study which demonstrates again how much can be shown about poetic effects by attention to only a single device.

Extended analysis of cummings' "what if a much of a which of a wind."

A structural approach is compared with a transformational.

Chapter 3 is on poetic syntax.

A rebuttal of Levin's argument (F124) that nonrecoverable deletion rules in poetry create an effect of "compression": Coppay argues that the rules do not exist, that the cause of the stated effect is semantic not syntactic, and that Levin's method is "a gloss, pure and simple" of the Dickinson poem. The preferred method is that of Riffaterre.

Actually a Contrast. Syntactically, Frost's lines tend to be balanced between two parts, and they are often relatively end-stopped. He has some single-sentence poems and some poems where grammatical elements are packaged in separate stanzas.

The irregularities in the poet's syntax are attributable to rules learned from a Latin grammar.

Analyzes "nominal sentences"--sentences with a missing verb--in Shakespeare, on the assumption that they more readily suggest emotional intensity. Shakespeare is then compared to his predecessors and contemporaries (Kyd, Marlowe, Lyly, Peele, and Greene). Long bibliography.

In syntax and lexical matters, Milton "holds to the idiom and vocabulary of our common speech as the groundwork of his diction."

In the first full-length monograph on the subject, Davie examines the views of
T. E. Hulme (syntax is unnecessary in poetry), Susanne Langer (syntax like music traces the form of experience), and Fendlosa (syntax symbolizes action), finding them all unsatisfactory; he then produces a typology of his own: syntax may be subjective (it shows us the form of the author's thought), dramatic (the form of someone else's thought), objective (the form of an experience or emotion), like music (showing us the form of a thought without defining it), or like mathematics (it can give pleasure in and of itself). Applications follow in several very short and eclectic studies.

The Symbolist interest in the "music" of poetry was in fact a concern with "linked sweetness long drawn out," as is the case with Milton, Spenser, and Yeats.

In an intrepid performance, Davie shows that although Miltonic syntax is capable of spectacular mimesis on occasion, leading the reader to a meaning by enacting it, in general neither the syntax nor the narrative structure itself in PL is designed to propel the reader forward or sustain his interest; indeed, "the splendidly elaborate syntax . . . in fact is employed characteristically to check narrative impetus and frustrate musical pleasure." Hence the "unifying structure" of the poem is neither syntactic nor narrative, nor can it be "musical" in the sense of music as a structure of expectation and resolution--i.e. sustained progression--in time; rather, "it is a matter of vocal colouring and skillful resonance. . . . the 'music delight' is all in sonority."

Gives modern transformational descriptions (or equivalents) for some of the traditional rhetorical schemes, drawing the conclusion therefrom that no sharp line can be drawn between "poetic" and "ordinary" transformations. Three motives or functions of inversion or deletion in the poetic line are identified: presentational (deployment of a word for effect), imitative (the syntax forcing the reader to enact what is being described), and prosodic (to effect a rhyme, conform to meter, or place a caesura). This last is given some further attention.

A demonstration that the traditional rhetorical schemes for deletion (thezeugma group) and re-ordering (anastrophe, hyperbaton, etc.) may be accounted for by optional transformational rules, thereby accounting for many constructions in Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton.

The difficult lines seven and eight may be infelicitous but they are not ungrammatical; the sense is:"And some words (were) played on between us to and fro which (words) lost the more by our love."
The odd use of the preposition on is defended historically and contextually.

A study of the means by which a poet can deploy syntactic features (here, the
verb) in order to control the sense of his metaphors and images. The verb fuses the subject and predicate terms in a metaphor and thus “transfers” sense, often forcefully, since verbs by nature express energy of action.


F51 Elgin, Suzette H. "A Transformational View of the Concepts of Compression and Closure in the Analysis of Poetry." English Record 20 (1970): 87–94. A full-scale demonstration of the process wherein a complete set of underlying "poem-constituents" is cut, elided, and compressed into a final ("surface") poem, wherein certain constituents are absent but referred to. "Closure" is the reader's ability to supply missing parts to complete a pattern. Text: the author's own poem.

F52 Emma, Ronald D. "Grammar and Milton's English Style." Language and Style in Milton. Ed. Ronald D. Emma and John T. Shawcross. New York: Frederick Ungar, 1967. pp. 233–51. Milton's grammatical style is less Latinate, less aureate than critics commonly think. He is not expressly imitating Virgil in his syntax; on the contrary, his usages are native English and relatively conservative, showing only the amount of Latinate influence one would expect in any cultivated English style.


F56 Erikson, Fred W. "Literary Style as Dialect: An Empirical Study of Syntactic Distinctions Between Neoclassic and Romantic Poetry." DAI 36 (1975): 2777a (Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute). Analyzing poetic syntax at the kernel level rather than at the surface level will show that the Neoclassic and Romantic period-styles can be clearly distinguished even though individual poets cannot be differentiated within each period.

Applies the methods of transformational syntax to Cummings (who better, and who easier?) in order to approach the issue of whether (and how) poetic language is "deviant" from standard language, and if so, whether a workable grammar for poetry is possible. Examines morphology and word-formation, orthography, and the syntactic features of deletion, repetition, and displacement.

Based on her dissertation at Harvard in 1971, "Syntactic Deviance in the Poetry of E. E. Cummings: A Stylistic Investigation," and on the following published essays:


F62 Fallis, Richard. "Language and Rhythm in Poetry: A Previously Unpublished Essay by W. B. Yeats." Shenandoah 26, no. 4 (1975): 77–79. Yeats wonders to himself why he prefers "a lyric that sings" to one that merely "talks," which leads him to reflections on "passionate syntax"; a little historical review shows how very few major English poets have preserved normal word-order and the authentic tone of an active man speaking intensely.


Against Levin and in support of Thorne (F210), Fowler argues that a grammar should not be expected to include or account for deviant sentences found in poems; rather, the competence which speakers show in interpreting poetic lines is "like learning a language," or better, like learning "an unfamiliar dialect of one's own language": "one seeks to discover regularities which imply rules which one has not yet internalized as a part of one's linguistic competence." This heuristic skill is thus simply a capacity to "LOOK FOR NEW STRUCTURE in general." Cf. Aarts (F1).

F64 Francis, Henry E. "The Adjectives of Donne and Wordsworth: The Key to a Poetic Quality." DAI 25 (1964): 1891A (University of Southern California). Donne's adjectives tend to emphasize temporality, absolute value, and concretion; Wordsworth's, timelessness, subjective value, emotion, and sensation.


F72  Gallagher, Michael P. "Yeats, Syntax, and the Self." *Arizona Quarterly* 26 (1970): 5–16. It was by crossing the limen, from "words alone" as "certain good" to a search for "the syntax of passionate speech," that Yeats elevated his work above that of every other poet of his generation. "Among School Children" is a poem which "explores a set of dualities in search of some fruitful and integrating vision."

F73  Gardiner, Judith K. "Syntax and the Platonic Ladder: Jonson's "though Beautie be
Concerning Poetry."
Concerning Poetry."

Complaining that Geoffrey Leech (F123) is short-sighted in refusing to allow semantics and context to affect judgments of grammaticality (deviance), Greenfield cites examples to show that the (syntactic) ellipsis of one element in a sentence can generate the possibility of ambiguity in other elements, which, lacking such a deletion, would otherwise not be open to multiple meaning. So the deletion of on in Hopkins' "fastened [on] me flesh" creates such an ambiguity, a "phonological ellipsis," namely "fashioned me flesh." In effect syntactic compression allows phonological expansion which enhances semantic richness.

A review essay surveying two major grammatical analyses of poetry made by linguists since 1960, those of S. R. Levin (B129) and J. M cH. Sinclair (F197). Greenfield wishes to show that pure linguistic description is useless without critical selectivity, and that grammatical analysis cannot produce meaning in the absence of lexical-contextual-semantic analysis as well.

The final verb Is, entailing predication, represents claiming that the latter fails the criterion of coherence.

    Argues that Stevens' poetry is in fact metapoetry (poetry about poetry), and hence it must consist primarily of "concepts about poetic language itself, of which grammar makes up a large part of the story." That is why Stevens' later poetry is so incredibly dense in nouns and adjectives - reifiers and descriptors - and nearly devoid of strong verbs. His close repetitions of a word or phrase can usually be explicated if we assume a shift in meaning in the second instance.
Illustration of the author's thesis that "syntax is poetic when grammatically equivalent constituents in connected speech are juxtaposed by coordination or parataxis, or are otherwise prominently accumulated" in the ninth stanza of The Man with the Blue Guitar and one other poem.


The equivocal ending to this both-afirming-and-doubting-love poem is achieved by particular deployment of personal pronouns, object complements, and repetition.


The grammatical approach of Thorne (F210) and the lexical approach of Riffaterre are criticized; Hendricks urges that they be supplanted with a "textual" approach, mainly lexical but grammatical in part, and focused on text not on any hypothesized "poetic language." Thorne replies on pp. 147–52.


Proposes two types of syntactic deviation in poetry, both of them relatively slight in terms of distortion of the normal grammar yet capable of considerable range and also capable of differentiating for us coherent poetic strategies from random and unintelligible poetic "cryptograms": in the one type, normal syntactic processes are simply carried to an unexpected extreme; in the other, an unexpected word has been substituted for a familiar one. Both types may be explicated by searching for the underlying "immediate source sentence"--i.e., the normal nondeviant form.

Syntactic analysis, to verify that the first of the two poems is "less successful" than the second, the second being more "complex" and "economical."

The iconic text for illustration of the full array of effects possible in enjambment is of course Paradise Lost. Hollander formalizes some earlier suggestions
by devising a graded continuum of the cuts into syntax made by enjambment, ranked from "hardest" (worst dislocation, as between determiner and noun) to "softest," (respectively) six to one numerically. Determinations of hardness, however, are complex matters, given the syntactic ambiguities which Milton systematically exploits at line-end: we have learned very well how a following line can force a revision of the semantic construal tentatively made at the end of the previous line. Such "revisionist" cuts are other than what they seem. Behind this article there is a very good book waiting to be written.

A lucid and reflective critique of linguistics applied to literature: phrase-structure rules are useless, but transformational rules, and indeed "the idea of the rule itself," are not. "Transformations" (inversions) considered: rhyme, word-order, metaphor, antithesis, diction.

R other mechanical analysis of syntax and structural grouping.

Some non-technical observations followed by an analysis of an MacLeish poem and panel discussion.


A list of syntactic idiosyncrasies and first known occurrences.

An effective pedagogical technique for teaching the importance of syntax in poetry is sector analysis, wherein "written English is perceived as a system of visual signals which overlaps rather than replicates the system of spoken English. . . . During analysis each unit (filling sector or slot) is identified on each successive layer of structure in terms of a correlation between its positional function and form."

Varieties of Syntax as structure:
• Tennyson: gorgeous words displayed within a plain syntax;
• Jonson: his verse structure as indispensable as the diction;
• Mallarmé: the complex unfolding of subordinations ordering and routing
our perceptions;

Yeats: calculated syntactic deceptions and feints.

But the relevant facts or images of the poem may be held in place also by meter, or by the repetition and variation of "musical" motifs. With these examples in co-ordination, Kenner constructs his marvelously instructive and graceful sketch of Post-Symbolist poetic ordering. Closes emphasizing Eliot.


F105 Kintgen, Eugene R. "Is Transformational Stylistics Useful?" College English 35 (1974): 799–824. A general review article on the published work of Levin and Ohmann. Surveying closely Levin's book and seven articles on poetic grammar, Kintgen discounts both the theoretical validity and literary applicability of transformational grammar: it can ask good questions, but "has no answers; at best it can parrot back our intuitions, expressing them without explaining them; the danger is that the expression, formal as it is, looks like an explanation an is likely to be taken for one."


F108 Korg, Jacob. "Hopkins' Linguistic Deviations." PMLA 92 (1977): 977–86. Students of sonal mimesis, recognizing Hopkins as a prime source, will be interested in the philosophical assumptions underlying the whole concept that language "represents" reality. Korg argues that "language that is occupied with the self-conscious investigation of its own properties cannot also be referential"; indeed, "the most referential language is that which adheres to convention," and in as much as the poet "amplifies the corporeality of his language, he actively pursues the dissociation of words and things" (Gerald Bruns).


F110 Kroeber, A. L. "Parts of Speech in Periods of Poetry." PMLA 73 (1958): 309–14. Appraisal, extension, and refinement of the methods and findings of Miles (F147), with speculations on the cultural and literary causes of the phenomena she discerns. Kroeber accepts her conceptions and finds her method "potentially productive" though he is more dubious about her conclusion that such changes occur cyclically.


A purely linguistic analysis of the 1805 and 1850 versions of The Prelude, which concludes that the later version produces a "less personal, less immediate, less direct style."

General types of syntactic ambiguity in Dickinson's poetry are distinguished from specific syntactic idiosyncrasies in an effort to characterize her attitude toward grammar.

Transformational analysis uncovers 8% syntactic deviance and 10% lexical deviance.

F116 -----. "The Grammatical Description of Poetic Word-Order in English Verse." Language and Style 1 (1968): 194–200. Responding to Levin (B128), Landon suggests that the sequential ordering of elements in the production of a grammatical sentence takes place very late, and to say that deviations in word-order "violate a rule" of English grammar is too simple: in one case that is too strong to a claim, in another too weak. A better strategy would be to introduce into the grammar a device which "scrambles" the elements of the sentence.


F119 Lawler, Justus George. "Enjambement: A Structure of Transcendence." College English 39 (1978): 725–37; rpt in revised form as chapter 4 of his Celestial Pantomime. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979. pp. 73–103. As a demurrer to Hollander's view that enjambement is a device infinitely flexible, Lawler suggests in this richly allusive and elegant essay that its principal purpose is to stand as the emblem of the larger spiritual and sexual union in transcendence, in overflowing, in going over into the other.

F121 Lebedeva, N. V. "Certain Syntagmatic Features of Poetic Speech." Linguistics 141 (1974): 35–42. Originally in Voprosy jazykoznanija 4 (1972): 112–17. The work surveyed is Russian though the examples are English. Highly technical. The author recognizes that the verse-line is the irreplaceable requirement for all poetry but insists that it "can be defined only within the bounds of the semiotics of poetic speech."


Syntactic deviations in poetry are of two types: "those produced against the conventions of the poem." The first type, which Riffaterre has treated in terms of microcontext and macrocontext, is not a satisfactory concept, nor is the second if it approached purely statistically, since statistical norms for syntax in the language as a whole are simply impracticable. "But not all ungrammatical sequences are poetically deviant... poetic deviation is in some sense controlled." Hence the standard for deviation should be the determinate norm of a generative grammar of the language.

A computer programmed with a complete English grammar could indeed produce "poetic" (i.e. deviant) strings if it were given one additional directive to relax lexical co-occurrence restrictions. Such restrictions normally prohibit unrelated word-classes from appearing together, as in a hungry dance.

Confronts the general question of the adequacy of grammar for generating sequences in poetry such as "he danced his did" or "a grief ago." See Thorne (F210).


An effort to specifically correlate seven aspects of syntax with the traditional categories of "low," "middle," and "grand" style. Six conclusions: (1) pastoral/non-pastoral is Spenser's primary distinction for genre; (2) the social rank of characters in the poems virtually always correlates with syntactic complexity; (3) the most syntactically complex poems are the celebratory ones; (4) the satires are nearly all in the middle style; (5) in poems where lament suffuses joy, joy dominates at least in terms of syntactic complexity; and (6) Spenser shows a remarkable range of complexity in syntax.
Having previously sorted out critical objections to types of "obscurity" having nothing to do with poetic texture, Lint applies T-unit analysis in order to gauge the relative degree of syntactic complexity in "Sordello," which turns out to be "not uniform, nor even major in the poem." In quantitative density, specific features do not occur so very frequently compared to other stylists such as Gibbon, Johnson, or Swift, though in the relationships among specific features, some passages in the poem do score highly.

A review of the whole issue of grammatical deviance in poetry. "In the realm of highly deviant expression . . . given the idiosyncratic and non-formalizable nature of poetic deviance, it is likely that generative grammars will be at best irrelevant, and at worst misleading. . . . Additional models . . . are called for . . ." The crux of the problem, Lipski concludes, is that "when faced with an instance of severe grammatical deviance, the listener makes use of a set of pre-grammatical strategies for arriving at the basic semantic structure."

A full model of the seventeen variants of the refrain line in the twenty-three stanzas of the poem shows that over 28,00 variants were possible, but that Spencer chose his to indicate (syntactic) attachment and affirmation in the first sixteen stanzas (when guests are present at the wedding-feast) and detachment and negativity in the last seven (when the two lovers are alone and value their privacy).

"Recursive" structures in "anyone lived in a pretty how town" (e.g. "all in all and deep by deep") suggest steady incremental motion toward a "remote whole"; the "non-recursive" structures (e.g. "if by yes") imply a "complementary oscillation." There is a splendid observation on "pushing through" on p. 66.

Argues that the first line of the poem is grammatical.

Structural-linguistic analysis of grammatical patterning in forty-six blank-verse poems. The chief stylistic features in Frost are "contradictions and compounds." The use of blank verse enables Frost to present conversation while retaining the coherence usually absent in actual speech.


Some attention to syntax.

61.
Proposes as a stylistic criterion of authorship the use of a possessive adjective or pronoun as the antecedent of a relative clause. It is not a very effective indicator.

A review article, the first half of which surveys the work so far done on poetry and "grammaticality" in a spirit of healthy skepticism.

A synthesis of the work in her earlier studies.


See F110.


Shakespeare's usage is surprisingly uniform: hath and doth are forms generally confined to his early career, while has and does mainly appear late, with Shakespeare rarely mixing forms (e.g. has and doth) at any time. M asinger's usage is different, and some the non-Fletcherian scenes in H enry V III, when tested for this feature, show his patterns somewhat more than Shakespeare's.

Implicitly or explicitly syntax has always been a part of English verse-theory, especially for Old English, but even "where a metrical principle is not perceptible, as in most modern verse, the description and definition of rhythms becomes impossible unless we take grammar into consideration." Earlier prosodists offer little help, though Scripture's "centroid" captures the idea of the phrase-coalescing stress. Probably enjambment is only a matter of degree, every line having at least some minimal pause at its end. M itchell gives a tentative sketch of a taxonomy for English verse (pp. 18–19), with illustrations.
   T-unit analysis of six Browning poems reveals that his syntax is "additive in nature, composed of relatively large numbers of tenuously related small clauses" which give the impression of "minds in motion, thinking."

   A comparison of the syntax in Hardy's poetry to that in his letters shows very little difference; his poetry preserves most of the features of conversational prose. Nor is there significant variation between the early verse and the late.

   Analyzes the distribution in Much Ado and Lear, with lengthy discussion and useful footnote-references.


   In their metrical pattern, Cowper's heroic couplets "imply the analytic mode [of conceiving experience] while his syntax implies the constructive." (In comparison with Pope, Cowper tends to modify the whole assertion rather than merely the subject.) It was this uncongeniality of the couplet to Cowper's modi cogitandi which impelled his toward blank verse. (In comparison with Wordsworth, Cowper's blank verse is much more argumentative and dialectic.


   The basis for structure in Astrophel and Stella is the clause rather than the line. Sidney's syntax (and prosody) differs markedly from that of his contemporaries in being "plainer," "more idiomatic," and "tending toward dramatic narration and elaborate argument, instead of elaborate description."


   Transformational-syntactic analysis of eleven poems generally confirms previous critical judgments on their complex or mixed tones.

   Rebutting Levin's arguments, Noël denies that the linguistic "nonrecoverable deletion" rule is in fact operating in the ellipses in Emily Dickinson, and that the rule "could serve to characterize a distinctive aspect of poetic language."

   On Shakespeare's use of grammar in the late Romances (1597–1601): to "ef-
fect regular structural rhythms of speeches" and hence differentiate characters.


F163 See also her essay of the same title in Studia Anglica Posnaniensia 9 (1977): 71–77. The main thrust of the study falls on the formal elaboration of the theory and a defense of the generative method; the analysis of Eliot is incidental.

F164 O’Neal, Michael J. "A Linguistic Examination of the Syntactic Style of Three English Decadent Poets: Arthur Symons, Ernest Dowson, and Lionel Johnson." DAI 39 (1978): 854A (Bowling Green State). Analyzes the proportion of phrases to clauses, varieties of verbals, and varieties of sentence-types (regular, elaborated, dislocated, or fragmented). Symons and Dowson wrote verse that is mainly clausal, while Johnson’s is mainly phrasal.

F165 Omen, Ursula. "On Some Elements of Poetic Communication." Georgetown University Working Papers on Languages and Linguistics 11 (1975): 60–68. A more fruitful approach to the grammar of poetry than the one which views poetic phrases as deviations is a broader view of the function of such phrases in the total (fictive) communication situation of the poem.

F166 Parker, David. "Verbal Moods in Shakespeare’s Sonnets." MLQ 30 (1969): 331–39. Suggests that it is profitable to view the sonnets as written in the imperative mood rather than as indicative assertions. The dynamics of fact, hypothesis, question, demand, wish, and threat in the sonnets is complex and subtle.


F169 Patterson, Annabel M. "‘How to load and . . . bend’: Syntax and Interpretation in Keats’s To Autumn." PMLA 94 (1979): 449–58. Recent analyses of the syntax of the poem by Donald Freeman (F68) and Geoffrey Hartmann find what they set out to find, as does the present analysis offered as a counter-view. The trouble with Freeman’s analysis is that it detaches parallel grammatical constructions from the stanza in order to point up their equivalence in the grammatical deep structure, thereby obliterating the fact that the parallel phrases present themselves in various positions upon a material [metrical] field, i.e. the stanza. "A viable concept of poetic syntax must, in other words, include metrical information." Patterson’s own reading of the Ode is a negative, ironic reading.


Part I is organized by author, historically, Part II by grammatical classification and author. Tables and lists at the end, including analysis of alliterating compounds (p. 276).

Though modern poets have not exploited the device of the lexical compound as extensively as Old English poets did, still they have recognized its effectiveness for creating new combinations of terms, for the simultaneous yoking of opposites (disordia concors), and for the conveyance of emotion in elevated language.


F175  Redin, Mats. Word-Order in English Verse from Pope to Sassoon. Uppsala Universitets Arsskrift, 1925, no. 2. Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell's, 1925. 225 pp. Rev: in Anglia Beiblatt 38 (1927): 293–95. Analyzing some 50,000 lines from 1709–1919, mainly in Pope, Wordsworth, and the Georgians, Redin compares syntactic deviations in verse against a hypothetical norm in prose. Part 1 arrays the evidence in categories by nine parts of speech; Part 2 presents the statistical analyses. The general conclusion seems to be that deviations steadily decrease in this period, though more clearly so in rhymed verse than in blank.


A luminous piece which begins with a brief review of the questions of how verse is related to poetry, then examines "the kinds of effect, subtle and various, that Wordsworth achieves with line-endings," taking the white-space at line-end as some sort of pause or punctuation.

F179 Robinson, Fred C. "Verb Tense in Blake's 'The Tyger.'" PM LA 79 (1964): 666–69. The verb form dare in the poem is not an anomalous present tense but a rare, "poetical" preterite form, making it perfectly consistent with all the other verbs in the poem.

F180 There is a subsequent exchange between Robinson and John E. Grant on the issue, 81 (1966): 596–603, Grant conceding Robinson's point in a flurry of contentiousness, defensiveness, and aggression.

F181 Rodway, Allen. "By Algebra to Augustanism." Fowler (A14), pp. 53–67. It is the road to syntax which leads to the palace of Augustan poetry. The methods of New Criticism have proved much less efficacious for Augustan poetry than for Romantic and Modern, perhaps because the former is with states. With a sharper instrument the critic can effect, Rodway demonstrates, some very fine discriminations even on very small samples: what emerges to the eye is the (syntactic) neural lattice of the Augustan "aesthetic of the intellect."

F182 Rogers, J. P. W. "Pope and the Syntax of Satire." Literary English Since Shakespeare. Ed. George Watson. London: Oxford University Press, 1970. pp. 236–65. Elegantly, Robert contravenes most of our easy assumptions about the syntax of the couplet. Since structures of identity (stasis) such as repetition, parallelism, balance, and antithesis are inherent in the mode, Pope often works against the easier effects, creating for example "pseudo-parallelism" and "pseudo-antithesis," structures whose actual effect is exactly the opposite of what it seems. The essence of the couplet is a "serial form" with "constant progression." More generally, two modes of poetic organization may be defined, "open syntax" and "closed syntax," the open form emphasizing objects, things, quiddities, nouns, the closed form conversely attentive to connections, change, process (this the Augustan mode).


F184 Rose, Edward J. "Visual Forms Dramatic: Grammatical and Iconographical Movement in Blake's Verse and Designs." Criticism 8 (1966): 111–25. Does epistemology determine grammar in Blake? There is visual direction, and then there is grammatical direction. But directionality in both cases is anything but simple: an engraver might be expected to be sensitive to visual reversals, and images can be "read" in several configurations, but a word can be modified in several directions simultaneously, and in fact words often have "an internal order of meaning independent of the horizontal flow of the sentence." Language too is susceptible of reversal, and of multiple directionality. Finally, neither syntax nor image partakes of "single vision" in Blake: "The design of vision has no natural setting any more than it has anything to do with natural religion."

F185 Ross, Donald, Jr. "Stylistics and the Testing of Literary Hypotheses." Poetics n.s. (1978): 389–416. Further computerized stylistic analysis of syntax and lexis confirms the traditional alignment of Coleridge with Keats against Blake, relations which are also borne out in Wordsworth's "Preface." Comparison of Keats's sonnets with
those of the Elizabethans shows his technique radically unlike theirs, which is relatively homogeneous within the group.

F186 -----. "The Use of Word-Class Distribution Data for Stylistics: Keats's Sonnets and Chicken Soup." Poetics n.s. 6 (1977): 169–95. Describes a computer algorithm which parses verse by word-class, giving a more precise descriptive instruments for the weight or strength of verbal, adjectival or nominal style.


F188 Sarang, Vilas. "Articles in the Poetry of W. H. Auden." Language and Style 7 (1974): 77–90. Auden disliked them—the definite ones—and systematically removed them both in his early work and in the incessant late revisions. It is astonishing what significant shifts in articulations can be effected by changing the specificity of mere articles.

F189 -----. "Syntactic Nuances in the Poetry of W. H. Auden." Journal of the University of Bombay 39 (1970): 66–101. A maulding survey of the uses of syntax for mimesis (in "1929"); musicality, structuring, and crescendo; change of tempo; inversion and changes of mood and tense (subjective, imperative, and interrogative); typographic connection; the ejaculatory "O"; definite and indefinite articles; and four types of deviation (lexical shifts and collocations, syntactic compressions, anthimeria, and syntactic distortion).


F191 Schap, Keith. "A Syntactic Figure in Two Poems by Theodore Roethke." Language and Style 11 (1978): 238–46. Readings of Roethke's poems will be enhanced by realizing that the grammatical relation subject-object may be underpinning by a more fundamental relation, predicate-role or predicate-patient-instrument-agent.


Four poets examined: Wyatt's use of syntactic repetition is simple and direct; Sidney learned to vary syntax with speaker and context; Spenser deploys his repetitions strategically for transition and modulation; and Donne anatomizes and intellectualizes the repetition itself.

Keats's syntax contains predominantly phrases and noun modifiers as opposed to clauses and verbs. This feature of his style remains constant over time even though the types of nominal modifiers and their placements vary.

"The characteristic sound in Stevens' poetry depends to a surprising extent upon a single thing: the capacity for complex syntax... The phenomenon is a matter of the most exquisite balances, for the parts are at once immediate yet surprising, while the whole is simultaneously complex and satisfying. This dramatic balance gives Stevens a superb aesthetic instrument, for he can vary its effect almost endlessly by shifting complexity from design to detail and simplicity from detail to design... Since the balances in a poem are sequential rather than causal, and so can only be momentarily achieved, the poem's prosody must not offer the slightest resistance to reaching them... the prosodic resonance is all outward and discontinuous since what there is of it in itself is wholly implicit in the momentary balances between detail and design."

Close syntactic analysis of "Tintern Abbey": the poem is generally "loose" in its grammatical structure, a result of frequent use of co-ordination. Meter (the line) is also balanced against grammar (the sentence), which makes for constant frustration of reader expectation.

Though Smith never mentions syntax but often mentions meter, his subject is clearly the former: "In prose, a word or group of words is repeated for emphasis; whereas in verse, repetition is chiefly employed not for emphasis... but for melody or rhythm... for banding lines or stanzas..." Many examples
but virtually no analysis.

   The analysis leads to the novel conclusion that Thomas uses the relative clause idiosyncratically.


   Contrary to what we might expect, syntactic repetition in Hopkins functions not as complication but as a device of simplification; it "smooths out" the surface structure and pulls up, frequently, the most essential threads of the complexly elaborated pattern. Repetition reinforces continuity and offsets complexity.

F204  Sugden, Herbert W. The Grammar of Spenser's "Faerie Queene." Language Dissertations Published by the Linguistic Society of America, no. 22; Philadelphia: L.S.A., 1936; 228 pp., incl. long Bibliography.
   Organized by parts of speech. Though Spenser's diction is of course unusual, his grammar is in fact very similar to that of his contemporaries, and not particularly distinguishable from Shakespeare's.

   Levin's theory of coupling (B129) and A. A. Hill's theory of analogy are applied to yield a line-by-line interpretation.

   On pronominal constructions in four English prose writers; not on poetry.

   Argues for the superiority of a transformational analysis and proposes some deletion rules for Cummings.

   The word appears very frequently at the beginnings of lines and speeches and stands as Marlowe's most obvious stylistic idiosyncrasy.


   Following Levin (F128), Thorne argues that the stylistic analyst should treat a literary text as a sample of an unknown language in constructing its grammar. Criticized by Hendricks (F88). Cf. Fowler (F63).


Five poems are compared to their germinal texts (classical antecedents) or contemporaneous verse for syntactic devices and variations: "Eloisa to Abelard," "The Wife of Bath's Tale," "The First Satire, Second Book of Horace Imitated," The D undad, and The Rape of the Lock.

Bemoans the general lack of critical awareness of the importance of poetic syntax: examples from Roethke.

Otto Jespersen's tunnel vision for morphology has hindered the understanding of poetic syntax: analyses of Whitman poems and Hamlet may help correct this situation.


The typical long simile in Milton (S) is both preceded and succeeded by a grammatical linkage (A--giving the formula ASA); it is rare when the successive nexus is dropped.

Considerable discussion of syntax passim.


Mainly interpretation and explication.

Instances in English, French, and German poetry, mostly minor, though the original query was about Ben Jonson.

A study of the functions, overtones, and history of the simple present (in contrast to the progressive present) tense in English poetry. The history is one of erratic increase, suggestive of the shift in Western sensibility from authority to experience. The overtones range from eternity to provisionality. An Appendix provides data on use of the progressive tense in fifty-nine poets.
See the later exchange by Donald Ross and Wright.

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Ross's analysis of the statistical data implies that the variances Wright notices are normal effects of changes in the language, not any indication of particular poet's styles; Wright disagrees.
