

# **A LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF POETIC INVERSION**

## **(An Approach to Applied Stylistic Methodology)**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper, a humble contribution to stylistic studies, aims at classifying and illustrating the different types of syntactic inversion in poetry, employing a generative transformational approach.

It consists of two sections followed by an appendix. Section One, entitled "Inversion as a Linguistic Process," comprises five sub-sections, the first of which serves as an introduction to the subject, the second illustrates the objectives of the research, the third states the conditions related to the choice and presentation of material, the fourth introduces the linguistic approach and the system of classification, and the fifth reviews the inventory of notation and symbolization and the phrase-structure rules.

Section two, entitled "Inversion Patterns," comprises ten sub-sections, corresponding to the ten types of inversion investigated here.

In the Appendix are listed the complete poetical texts that served as material for our analysis.

## **ONE: INVERSION AS A LINGUISTIC PROCESS**

### **1. 1. Introductory**

As opposed to creative inventions and innovations, inversion has always been part and parcel of poetic craftsmanship. Equally, it has

always been part and parcel of the reader's appreciation and enjoyment of poetry. To the poet, inversion is a handy tool that allows him greater freedom of movement: for rhyme, for rhythm, for metrical purposes, for stylistic effect, for irony, etc. To the reader, inversion is a means of obtaining some added intellectual pleasure.

Technically, inversion is the commonest form of the **Routine Licences** of poetry, i.e., the professional devices utilized by the poet for his task. Professor Leech (1969 : 17-18), who first introduced the term 'routine licences,' makes the following enlightening remark:

Looking back over the span of English literature since Chaucer, we note that certain freedoms of language have been traditionally sanctioned in verse, but not in prose. These enter the study of poetic language at a rather low level: in fact, they belong to the mechanics of verse composition. Their obvious function is to compensate the poet for his loss of freedom in submitting himself to the disciplines of verse composition; to furnish him with a wider set of choices than are normally available in English and thus to give him a better chance of squeezing his language into a predetermined mould of versification. If he rejects these 'routine licences', as we may call them, the task of versification is that much more difficult.

In some cases, it is only inversion that marks a certain linguistic context as poetic (1). In many cases, what is termed 'paraphrase' is merely a process of restoring the different elements to their normal positions. The following statement, made by Professor Turner (1973 : 79) sheds some more light on this point:

It would not do to look for reasons every time we find a departure in poetry from the most common order of elements in a clause. It seems evident that once poets are permitted inversions for effect, they will sometimes extend the licence and invert for rhyme.

## **1. 2. Objectives of the Research**

An analytic research in linguistics such as the present one, aims at serving a doublefold purpose. First, it inspects and dissects a certain specific area of linguistic structure, rendering its latent properties much more accessible to scientific investigation.

Second, it displays a certain methodology at work, introducing new

approaches and/or techniques that could be employed - as field-work tools - for further analyses of similar linguistic phenomena.

More specifically, the present research belongs to a relatively new branch of linguistic study, vis. **Stylistics**. As such, it aims at narrowing the gap between two very old disciplines; the study of language, and the study of literature. Our proposition is: since language is the medium of literature, and, since the linguistic formulation of a literary work is in most cases delicately calculated and predetermined, nothing less than the rigorous scientific analysis and anatomy of this medium could serve the purposes of literary criticism and literary appreciation (2).

By the word scientific is meant trying to be systematic, consistent, and exhaustive; to be systematic in as much as one should follow a specific set of rules and move in one specific direction; to be consistent in as much as one should apply the same criteria - within the same limitations - to all items of the data; to be exhaustive in as much as one should account for every little detail and exhaust all available occurrences and possibilities.

The contribution of this paper is that it tries to present the reader with an illustration of one of the linguistic features underlying a specific form of literary expression.

The means employed here is three-dimensional. First, the paper tries to expose the material in such a way that the so-called 'irregularities' (in this case, the feature of 'inversion') can be easily spotted and categorized. Second, it tries to classify the material in the most logical and systematic way, in accordance with the grammatical system of English. Third, it tries to display a certain methodology in applied stylistics, a methodology that could be further tried in the detection and interpretation of other similar linguistic features of literary creative usage.

It is only hoped that this paper may serve as an introduction to an area of scientific inquiry that has so far been fairly neglected.

### **1. 3. The Choice and Presentation of Material**

As regards the choice of material, a very little sample had to be chosen arbitrarily - as the bulk of English poetry is too immense to encompass. Moreover, since our analysis is conducted in terms of the rules of modern syntax, the selected texts had to belong to the modern period.

The other limitation we had to face here is a limitation of space. In order for the research to be as brief, as concentrated, and as consistent as possible, one poet only had to be chosen - again arbitrarily. The poems of a certain modern poet, **Walter De La Mare** (1873-1956), were found to supply the diversity of inversion-types, and yet the consistency of syntactic structure, that would best serve the goals of this study. Out of the great amount of poetry he wrote, we picked only a minimum few of the short poems, fourteen in number. In the choice of this corpus, we had to strike a balance between the need to include most of the common types of inversion, and the need to be as brief and conclusive as the space here might allow (3). That is why some of the types are not represented by large enough data.

The examples cited below preserve the serial numbers first attached to them, throughout the paper. When an example is cited a second time, its reference is then omitted.

It might be quite advantageous to the reader, however, to try to refer to the full text when faced with one of the examples for the first time. By doing so, he will be able to relate the quoted lines to the complete poem, in order to grasp the full implications of the mechanism of inversion in each case. Such implications, be they semantic, contextual, artistic, or otherwise, constitute the poet's motives for resorting to such a mechanism. However, the investigation of these implications, though crucial to the study of inversion as one of the components of poetic composition, lies outside the scope and interest of the present research.

#### 1. 4. The Linguistic Approach

Syntactically speaking, **inversion is a linguistic phenomenon related to surface structure. It deals with the freedoms of structure-ordering and structure-layering not normally used or expected in prose writing.** Using 'T. G.' terminology, it is a process of **Rearrangement** (or 'Permutation').

From our corpus of material, we could distinguish as many as ten types of Rearrangement Transformations. Such rearrangements are best handled, here, in terms of a **Fronting Transformation**. Taking the normal order of a very common pattern of sentence-structure (S) to be: an initial noun phrase (NP<sub>1</sub>), a verbal element (V), an optional adjective phrase (AP) or second noun phrase (NP<sub>2</sub>), and optional adverbs of manner (manner), place (place), and time (time); we could arrive at **the ten different ways** of changing this order (as well as the order of other common patterns) that are listed below. (4)

These ten types of rearrangement, termed **Inversion Patterns**, are arranged in order of commonness, starting with the most common. They are, further, illustrated by examples, with underlines provided for the fronted elements, as follows:

**Pattern I: manner/place/time - S (5)**

- (1) So, when **with fickle heart**  
I joyed in the passing day,  
(Estranged)
- (2) **Nimble than air-borne music**, heart may call  
A speechless message to the inward ear,  
(Solitude)
- (3) **From their sand** the conies creep; (Nod)
- (4) **Ere unto Z**  
My pen drew nigh; (The Scribe) (6)

**Pattern II: V - NP<sup>1</sup>**

- (5) When **howls** man's soul, it howls inaudibly.  
(In the Dock)
- (6) Where once **lay** sterile snow;  
(The Scarecrow)
- (7) **Roves** back the rose.  
(All that's Past)
- (8) Soon **will** the wheat swish body high  
(The Scarecrow)

**Pattern III: NP<sup>1</sup> - manner/place - V**

- (9) His settling eyes  
**From staring face to face** rove on - and quail.  
(In the Dock)
- (10) The robin **with its burning breast**  
**Alone** sings now.  
(Winter)

- (11) And she **with gaze of vacancy,**  
**And large hands folded on the tray,**  
Musing the afternoon away;  
(Miss Loo)

**Pattern IV: AP/NP<sup>2</sup> - be - NP<sup>1</sup>**

- (12) **Bright are** the plenteous berries  
(The Children of Stare)

- (13) **Still is** the fountain's music,  
(The Children of Stare)

- (14) **Thick draws** the dark, (7)  
(Winter)

**Pattern V: AP/NP<sup>2</sup> - NP<sup>1</sup> - be**

- (15) **Ghosts** there must be with me in this old house,  
(Solitude)

- (16) And **dark** the night grew!  
(The Silver Penny)

**Pattern VI: NP<sup>2</sup> - NP<sup>1</sup> - V**

- (17) **A presence** my mood estranged  
(Estranged)

**Pattern VII: NP<sup>1</sup> - V - manner - NP<sup>2</sup>**

- (18) I see **most clearly** poor Miss Loo; (Miss Loo)

**Pattern VIII: NP<sup>1</sup> - NP<sup>2</sup> - V**

- (19) While the slim bird **its lean wires** shakes,  
(Miss Loo)

**Pattern IX: NP<sup>1</sup> - V - AP/NP<sup>3</sup> - NP<sup>2</sup>**

- (20) And leaves **forlorn and dim**  
The narrow solitudes  
(Estranged)

**Pattern X: NP<sup>2</sup> - NP<sup>1</sup> - V - AP/NP<sup>3</sup>**

(21) Yet **nought** that listening could make more clear.  
(Solitude)

**1. 5. Notation and Grammatical Rules**

The grammatical system employed here is basically that of B. L. Liles (8). However, some very slight amendments and additions, which serve the purposes of our research, have been introduced here. These alterations, six in number, are listed below. They are, then, followed by the 'Table of Symbols,' and the 'Phrase Structure Rules.'

i) **The objective complement:** An 'NP<sup>3</sup>/AP' node, standing for the objective complement, has been added to the Phrase Structure Rules (as an optional element). This addition allows for the generation of such sentences as **I thought him your neighbour** and **I thought him mad.** (9)

ii) **Linking verbs:** The be-node is expanded here to include, besides members of the verb **Be**, all other linking verbs -- whose syntactic function is very similar to **Be**, e.g., **seem, look, become, remain,** etc.

iii) **The Aux-node:** The Aux-node is further expanded into the optional element (be + en) to account for the occurrence of such constructions as **is gone** and **is drowned.** (10)

iv) **Plurality:** A plural node was found to be irrelevant here, since more emphasis is laid on the syntactic level than on the morphological one.

v) **Phrasal verbs:** The V-node is expanded, optionally, into a verb (v) plus a particle (part).

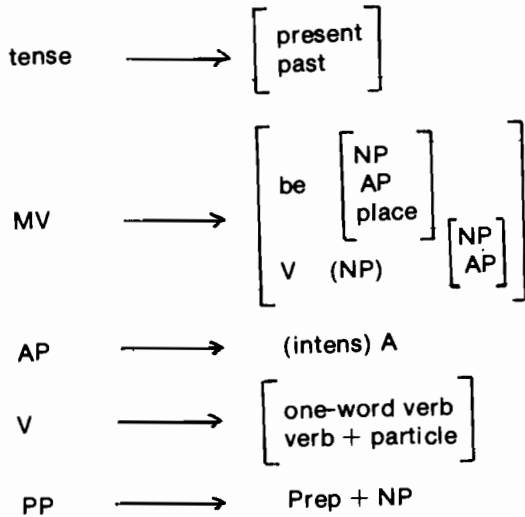
vi) **Triangles:** The device of triangles is made use of to indicate structures that need not be further expanded in our tree-diagram analysis. This serves purposes of simplicity and economy of description, e.g., in the cases of compounded constructions, embedded sentences, nominalizations, etc.

## Table of Symbols

S	:	sentence
SM	:	sentence-modifier
Nuc	:	nucleus
NP <sup>1</sup>	:	subject (NP under Nuc)
NP <sup>2</sup>	:	object (NP under MV)
NP <sup>3</sup>	:	objective complement (second NP under MV that cannot be made subject in a passive sentence)
PP	:	prepositional phrase
Det	:	determiner
VP	:	verb phrase
Aux	:	auxiliary elements
MV	:	main verb
V	:	verbal element
part	:	particle
v	:	verb
manner	:	adverb of manner
place	:	adverb of place
time	:	adverb of place
reason	:	adverb of reason
M	:	modal
haven + en	:	perfect tenses
be + ing	:	progressive tenses
Ap	:	adjective phrase
Intens	:	intensifier
A	:	adjective
Conj	:	conjunction (in our analysis, relating the sentence under consideration to a previous one)

## Phrase Structure Rules

S	→	(SM) Nuc
Nuc	→	NP + VP
NP	→	(Det) N
VP	→	Aux + MV (manner) (place) (time) (reason)
Aux	→	tense (M) (have + en) (be + ing) (be + en)



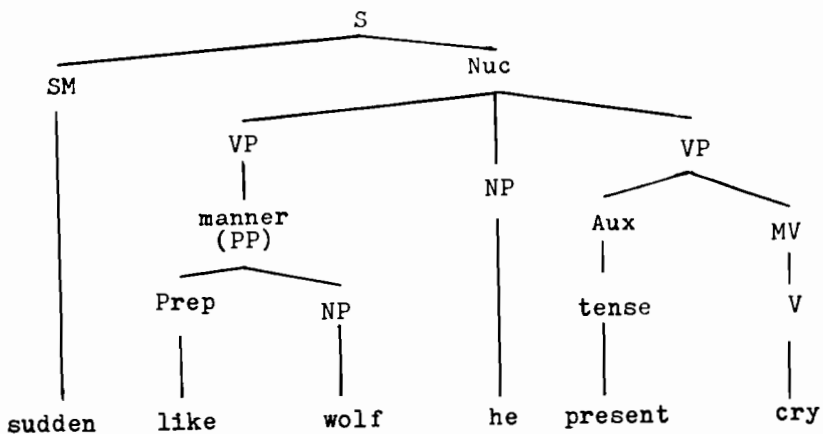
## TWO : INVERSION PATTERNS

### 2. 1. Pattern I: manner/place/time - S

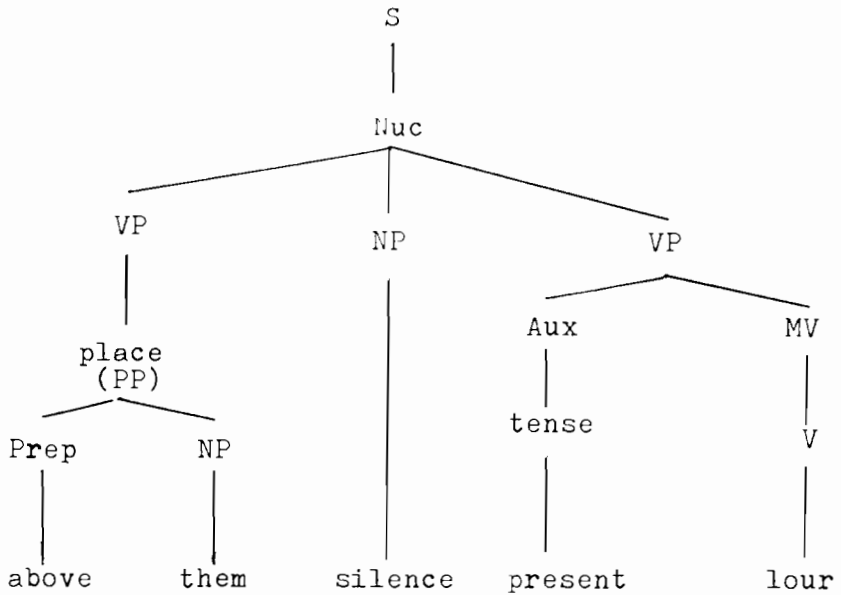
In this pattern, adverbs of manner, place, or time, normally dominated by the VP-node, are fronted in the relation to the nucleus.

2. 1. 1. As a consequence of this type of inversion, the VP-node is split into two parts, as is shown by the following three surface-structure tree diagrams:

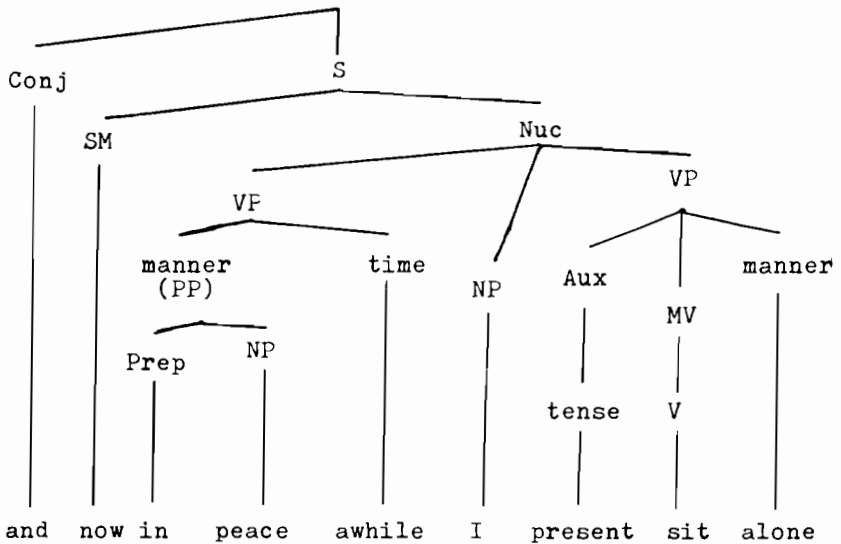
(22), Sudden like wolf he cries; ... (In the Dock)



(23) Above them silence lours, (The Children of Stare)



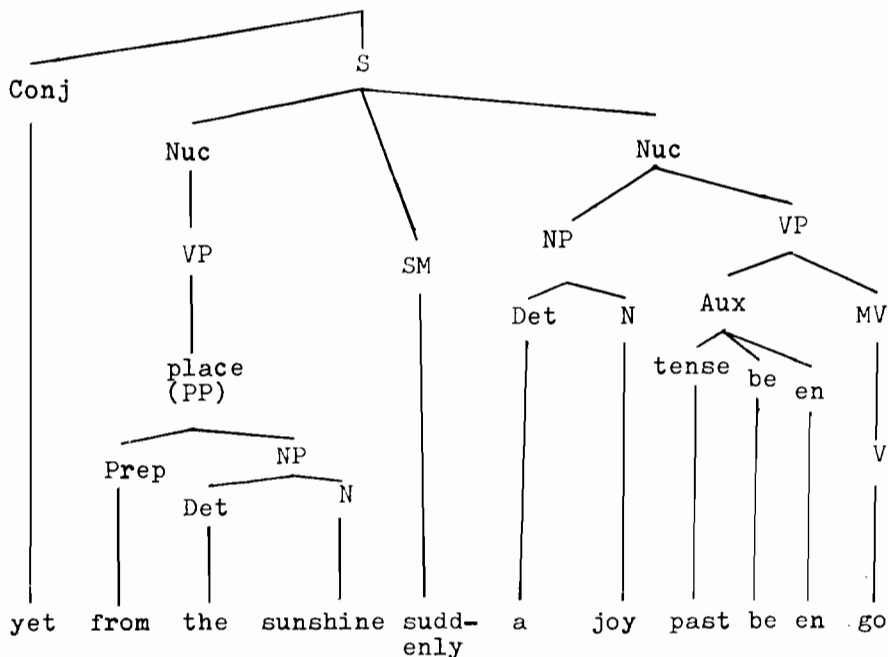
(24) And now, In peace awhile, I sit alone; (The Railway Junction)



2. 1. 2. In some cases, the fronting is effected in relation to the whole sentence. (This happens when the SM is not in initial position). The

result is that such fronting brings about a split of the Nuc-node into two parts, e.g.,

(25) Yet from the sunshine suddenly  
A joy was gone. (Estranged)



2. 1. 3. It might be interesting, from a syntactic point of view, to note that when the two spatial dimensions of place and time overlap, it becomes difficult to try to assign them to specific adverbial nodes, e.g.,

(26) Softly **along the road of evening,**  
**In a twilight dim with rose,**  
.....

Old Nod, the shepherd, goes, (Nod) (11)

The overlapping may also take place between the dimension of place and the notion of manner, e.g.,

(27) That here **through tunnelled gloom** the track  
Forks into two; (The Railway Junction) (11)

Such overlappings bear more on the semantic level than on the syntactic one. Thus, we cannot pursue the issue any farther at this place. (12)

2. 1. 4. The following two lines, though seemingly of identical structure, belong to two different patterns:

(28) O fierce the winds blew! (The Silver Penny)

(16) And dark the night grew!

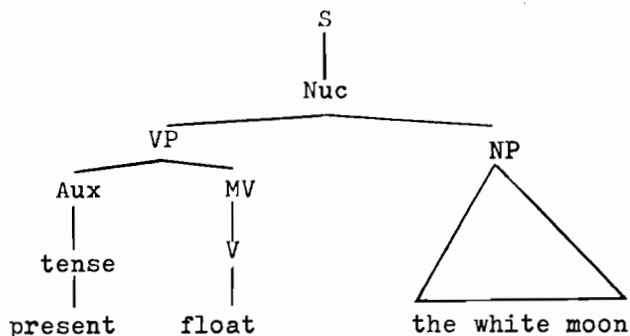
The first line belongs to the present pattern, as its constituent structure is 'manner - S'; the second line, however, has a different constituent structure, viz. adjective (subjective complement), noun phrase (subject), and a linking verb. This is the type of inversion referred to here as 'Pattern V' (AP/NP<sup>2</sup> - NP<sup>1</sup> - be).

## 2. 2. Pattern II: V - NP<sup>1</sup>

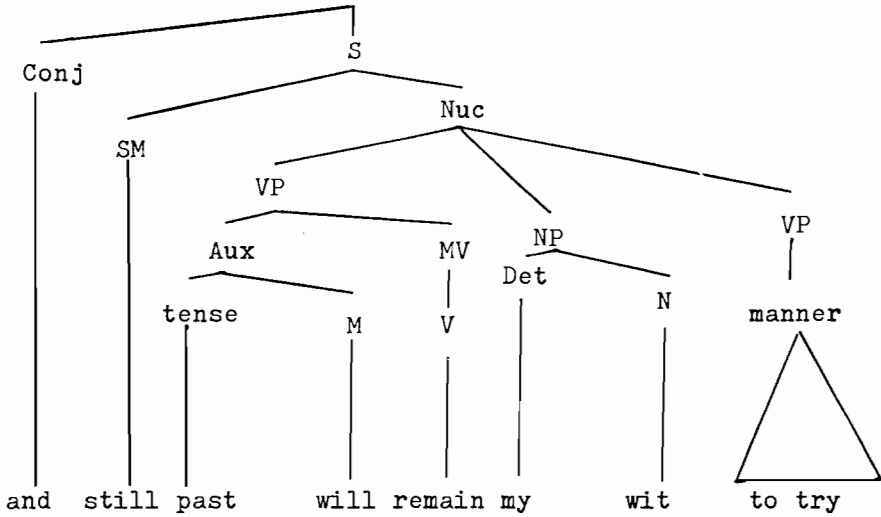
In this pattern, the verbal element is fronted. An obvious consequence of this is that the Aux-node is fronted as well. This means that the reference to the V-node here is exploited in a rather loose sense (13). (This helps in rendering our description more consistent and more systematic.)

2. 2. 1. In poetic usage, the auxiliary elements are usually reduced to a bare minimum, consisting simply of 'tense' in most cases. (Other elements do occur, but much less frequently than in normal usage). As can be seen from the three examples illustrated below, either the whole VP-node is fronted ('Example 29'), or it is split into two parts ('Examples 30, 31'); depending on whether or not it includes other constituents besides the Aux and the MV.

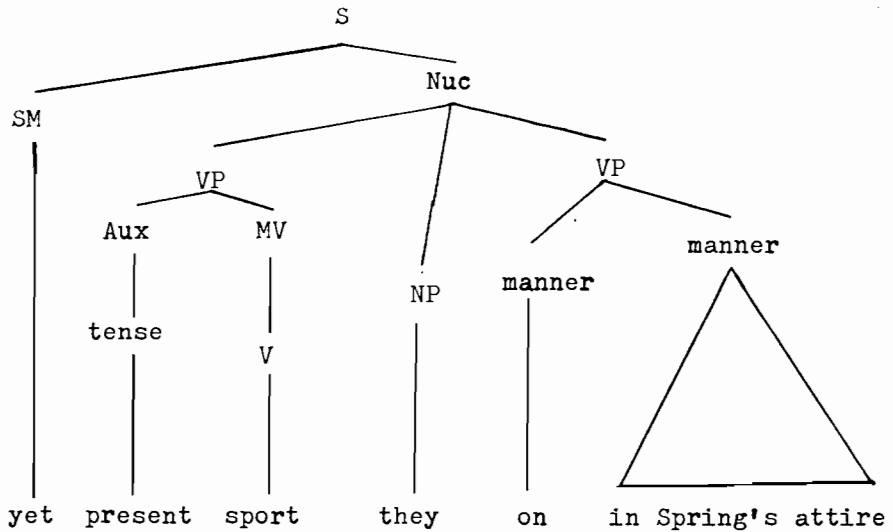
(29) Floats the white moon. (Winter)



(30) And still would remain  
My wit to try -- (The Scribe)



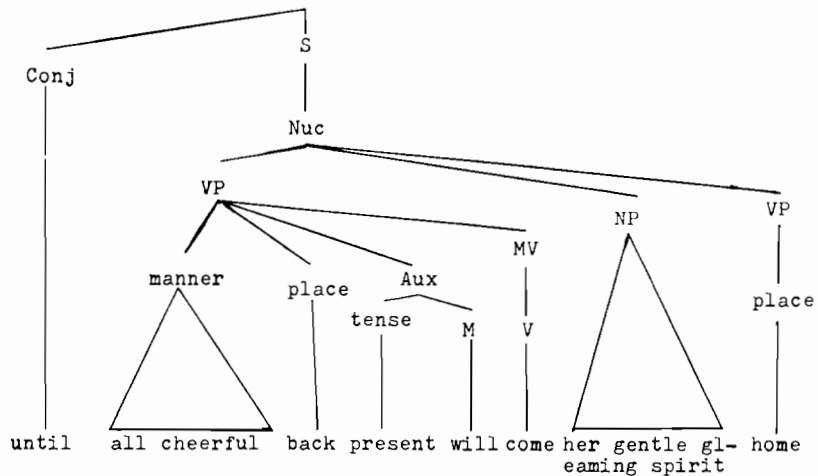
(31) Yet sport they on in Spring's attire,  
(The Children of Stare)



2. 2. 2. It is also a prevalent syntactic feature in subject-verb inversion to be accompanied by adverb-inversion. In the following example, the

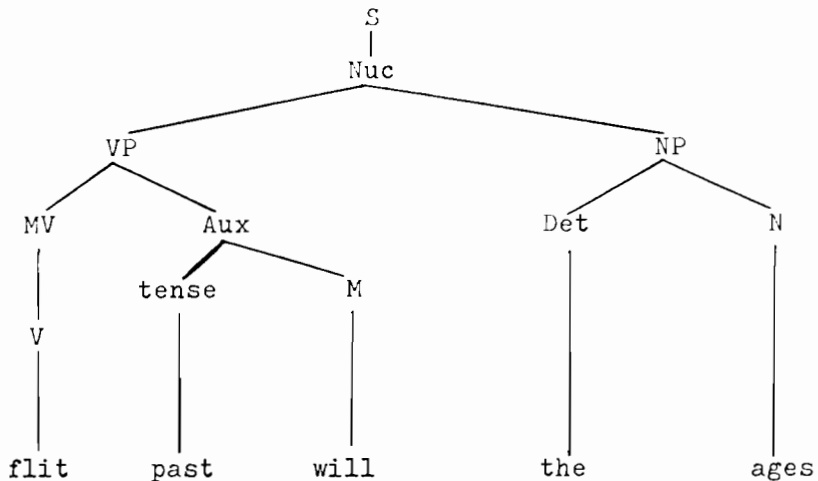
VP-node is split into two parts, the adverb of place is split into two parts, and the adverb of manner is fronted in relation to the whole sentence:

(32) Until all cheerful back will come  
Her gentle gleaming spirit home: (Miss Loo)



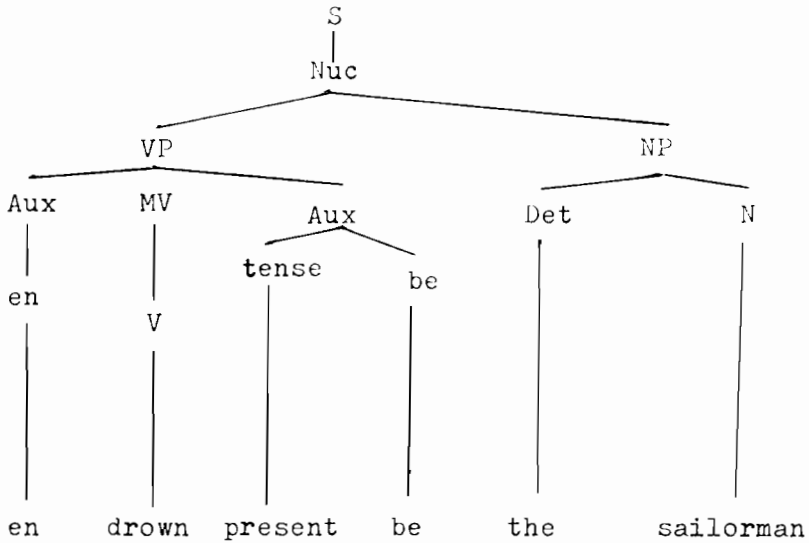
2. 2. 3. The subject-verb inversion may, in other cases, result in 'Aux-MV' inversion as well, e.g.,

(33) Flit would the ages (The Scribe)



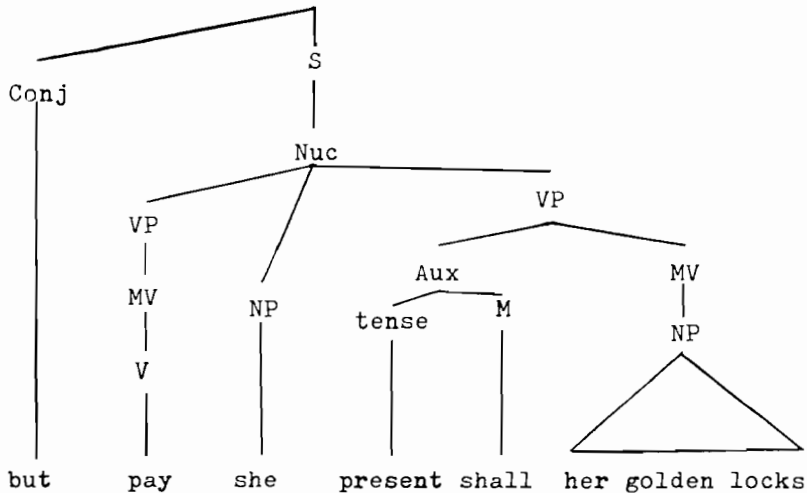
2. 2. 4. The Aux-node, on the other hand, may itself be split into two parts, separated by the MV, e.g.,

(34) Drowned is the sailorman, (The Silver Penny)



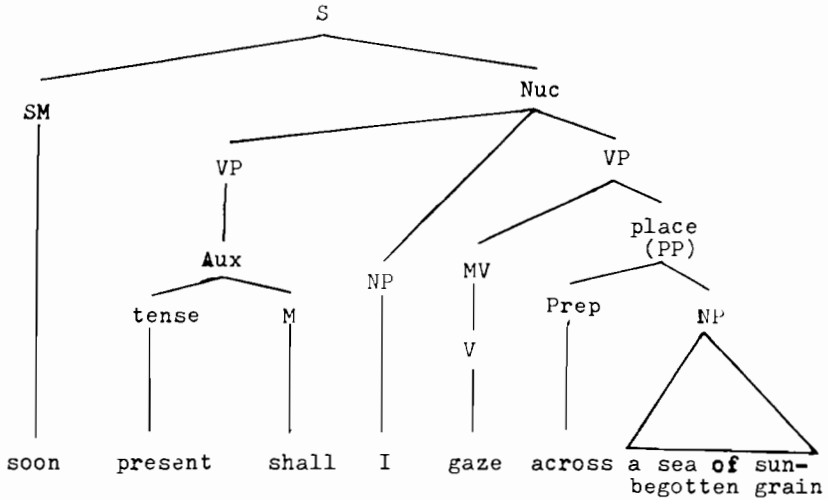
2. 2. 5. Contrary to our first statement (in the opening lines of '2. 2.', the V-node only may be fronted, while the auxiliary elements keep their normal sequential order, e.g.,

(35) But pay she shall her golden locks  
(The Silver Penny)



2. 2. 6. The other alternative to '2. 2. 5.', is that the verb keeps its normal sequential order, while the Aux-node gets fronted, e.g.,

(36) Soon shall I gaze across a sea  
Of sun-begotten grain, (The Scarecrow)

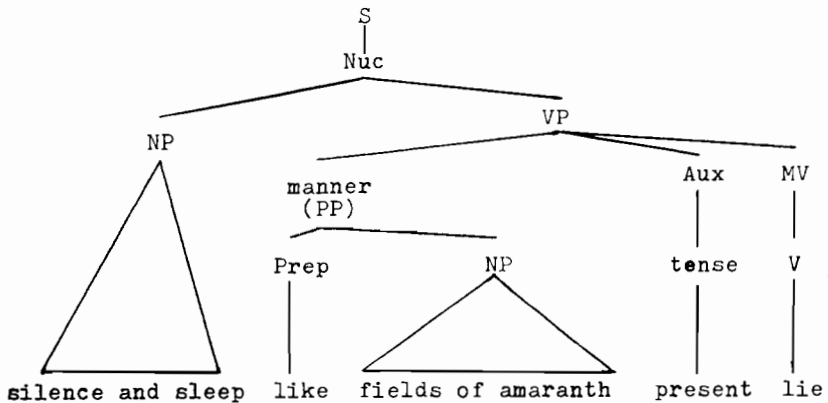


**2. 3. Pattern III: NP<sup>1</sup> - manner/place - V**

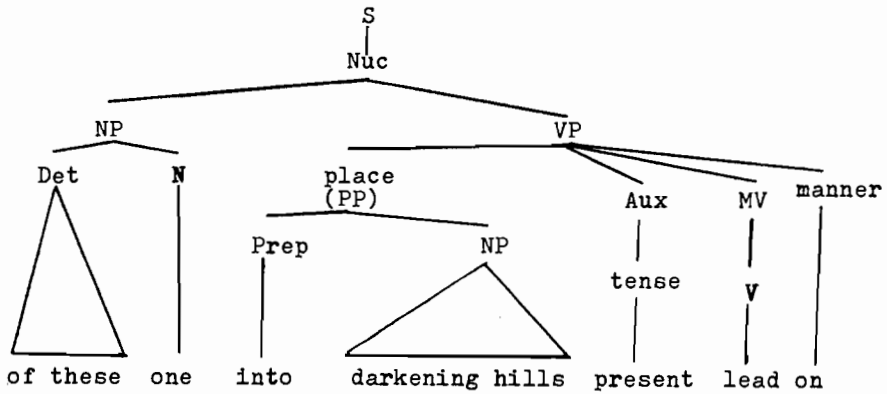
In this pattern, adverbs of manner or place, normally occurring after the MN, are fronted in relation to the VP.

2. 3. 1. This type of inversion results in changing the order of elements under the VP-node, so that adverbs of manner or place occur before the Aux-node. The following two examples illustrate the two cases of 'manner' and 'place', respectively:

(37) Silence and sleep like fields  
Of amaranth lie. (All That's Past)

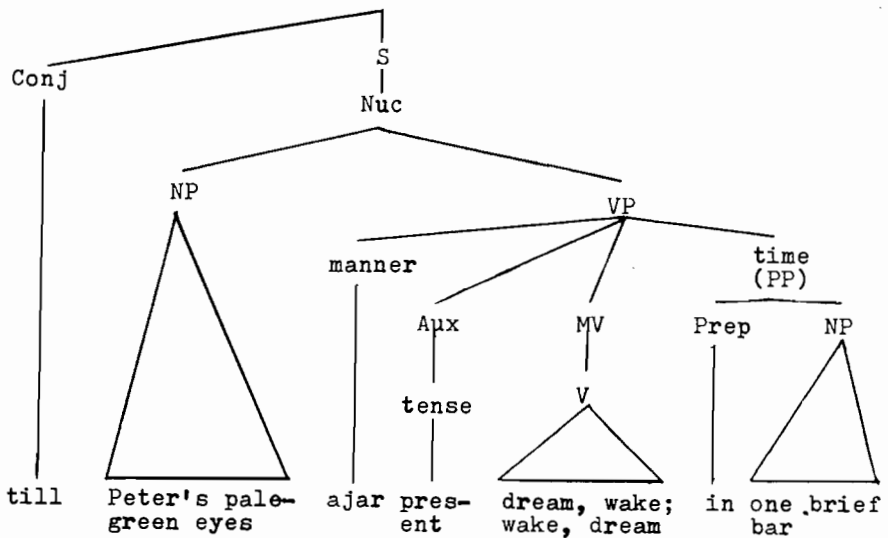


- (38) ; of these  
One into darkening hills leads on, (The Railway Junction)



2.3.2. When the Verbal element forms a rather lengthy sequence (i.e., in the case of compounding or embeddedness), the adverb fronting might then be regarded as justifiable: (14)

- (39) Till Peter's pale-green eyes ajar  
Dream, wake; wake, dream, in one brief bar.

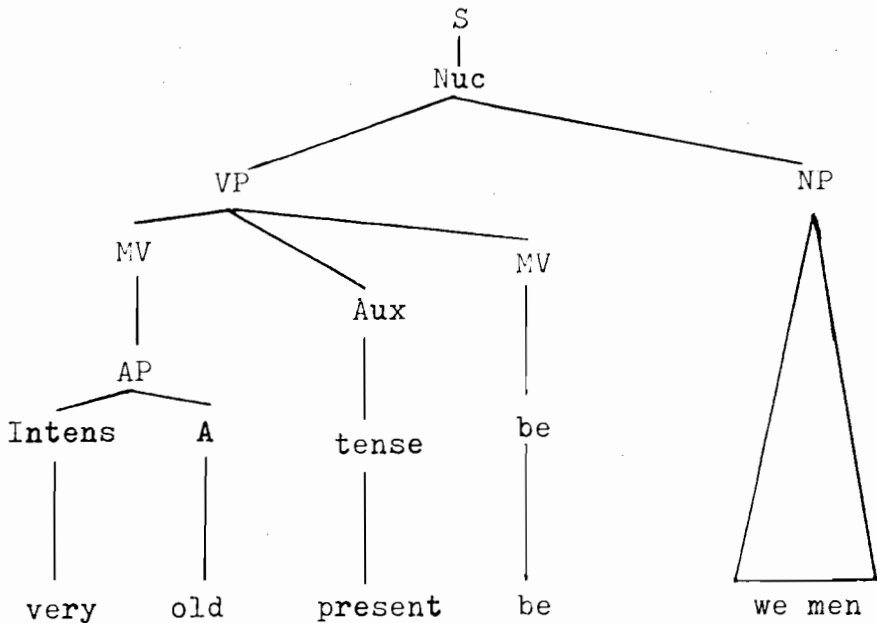


**2. 4. Pattern IV: AP/NP<sup>2</sup> - be - NP<sup>1</sup>**

In this pattern, the subjective complement, be it an adjective phrase or a noun phrase, and the be-node following it, are fronted in relation to the whole nucleus. This pattern, in other words, represents the reversed order of the corresponding pattern of normal usage.

2. 4. 1. By virtue of this type of inversion, the MV-node is split into two parts, separated by the Aux-node, e.g.,

(40) Very old are we men; (All That's Past)



2. 4. 2. Noun phrases, as subjective complements, are much less common in this pattern than adjective phrases. The following example was found to be the only one of its kind in our corpus:



Nor sunbeam pierces through,  
 Is a tomb-stone, (The Stranger)

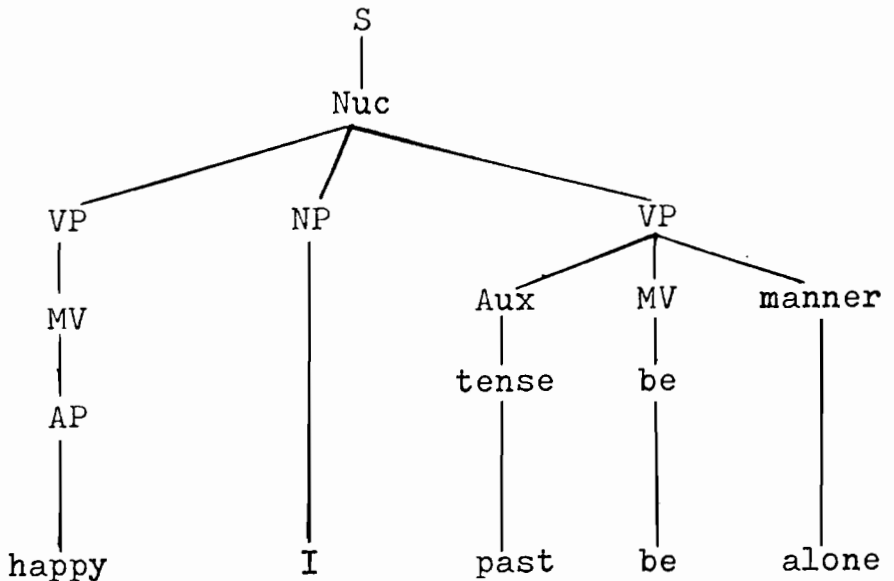
Thus, in all cases, it must be the semantic load, or the desired stylistic effect, that determines the importance or weight of the element to be fronted.

**2. 5. Pattern V: AP/NP<sup>2</sup> - NP<sup>1</sup> - be**

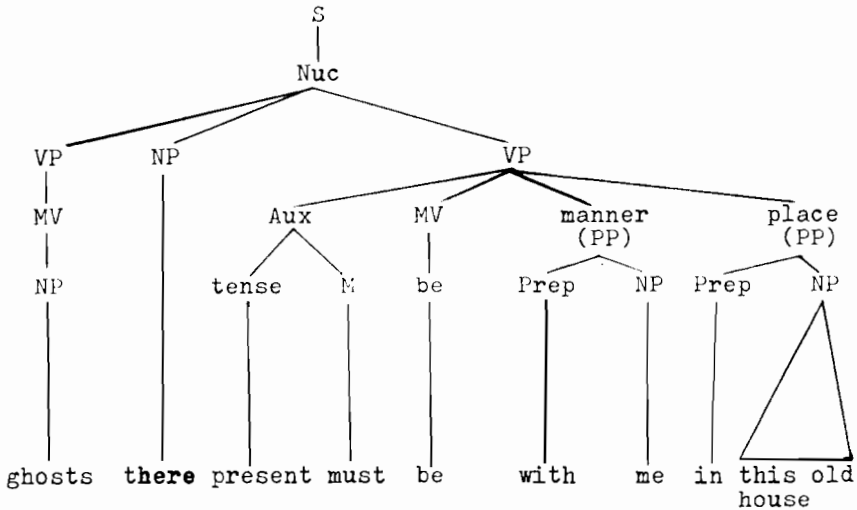
As compared with 'Pattern IV', the fronting here affects the subjective complement only; the other elements retain their fixed sequential order.

2. 5. 1. As a result of this type of inversion, the VP-node is split into two parts by the NP-node. The subjective complement is either an adjective phrase or a noun phrase, as is shown by the following two examples in their respective order:

(45) Happy I was - alone (Estranged)

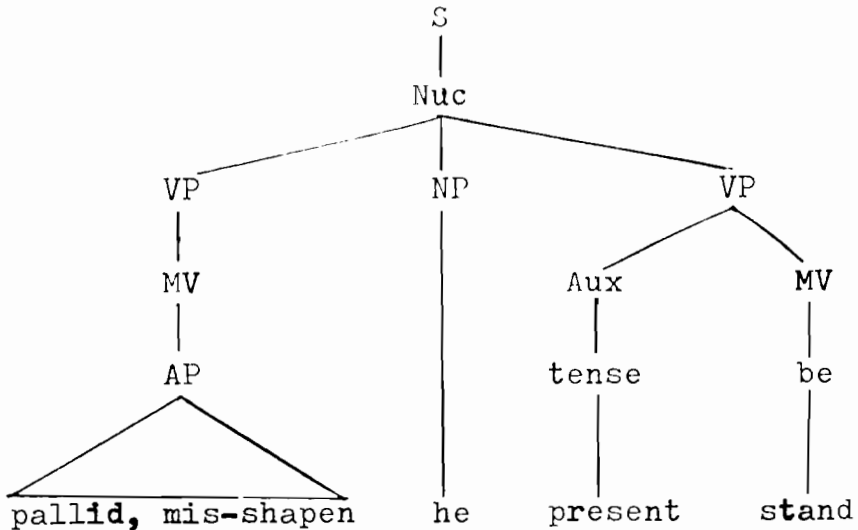


(15) Ghosts there must be with me in this old house,



2. 5. 2. The **be**-node, it must be remembered, does not refer only to occurrences of the verb **Be**, but to other linking verbs as well. (15) 'Example 16', cited above, exhibits the linking verb **grow** filling the **be**-node. (16) The verb **stand** is also sometimes used as a linking verb as is shown by the following example:

(46) Pallid, mis-shapen he stands. (In the Dock)



## 2. 6. Pattern VI NP<sup>2</sup> - NP<sup>1</sup> - V

In this pattern, the NP dominated by the MV-node (i.e., the object of the verb), is fronted in relation to the whole nucleus.

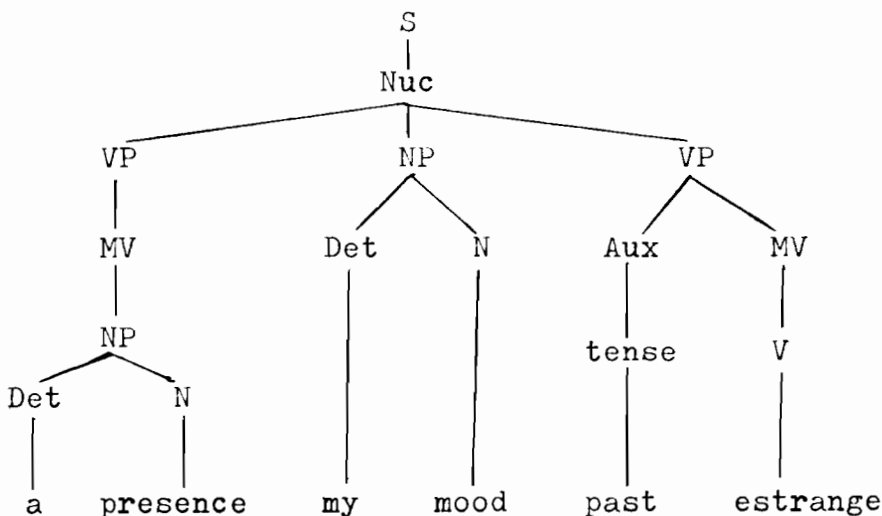
Obviously, there must be certain limits to the freedom of syntactic rearrangement exploited by the poet -- beyond which he cannot go. The last-quoted example, for instance, is unlikely to be structured as follows:

(46) \* Stands pallid, mis-shapen he.

Moreover, this freedom of syntactic rearrangement forms a graded scale; some types of inversion are much more common than others. In our analysis, the types of inversion represented by the first five patterns are much more common than the types represented by the last four. As was indicated earlier (cf. '1. 2.' above), our system of classification relies heavily on this hierarchical order of commonness; the more common types occur first, they are also being represented by larger data.

2. 6. 1. As a result of this type of inversion, the VP-node is split into two parts by the NP-node, e.g.,

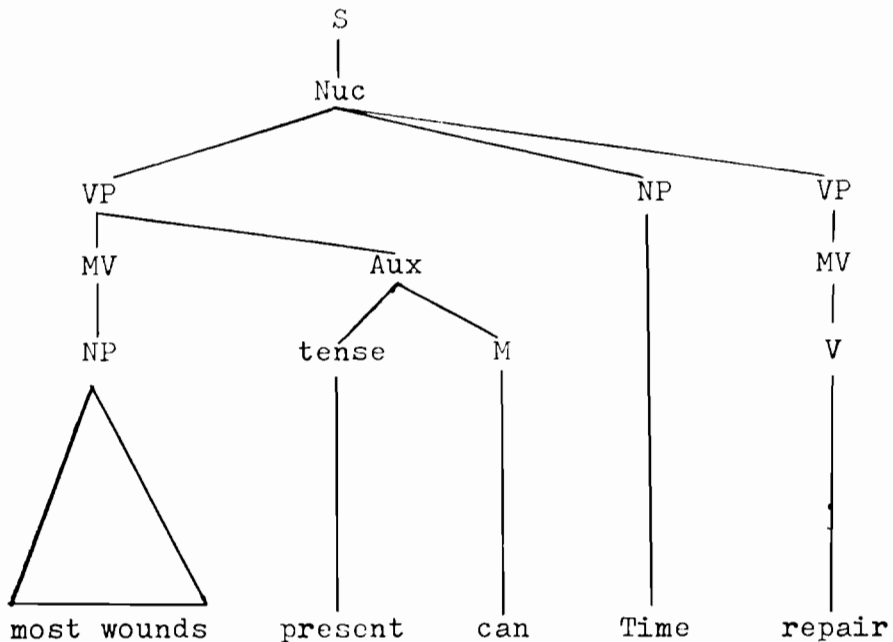
(17) A presence my mood estranged



2. 6. 2. The reason why this type of inversion is less common, is that two NP's cluster together in initial position, effacing, to some extent, the 'typological' character of English as an **analytic** language -- a language that relies rather heavily on 'word-order' distinctions.

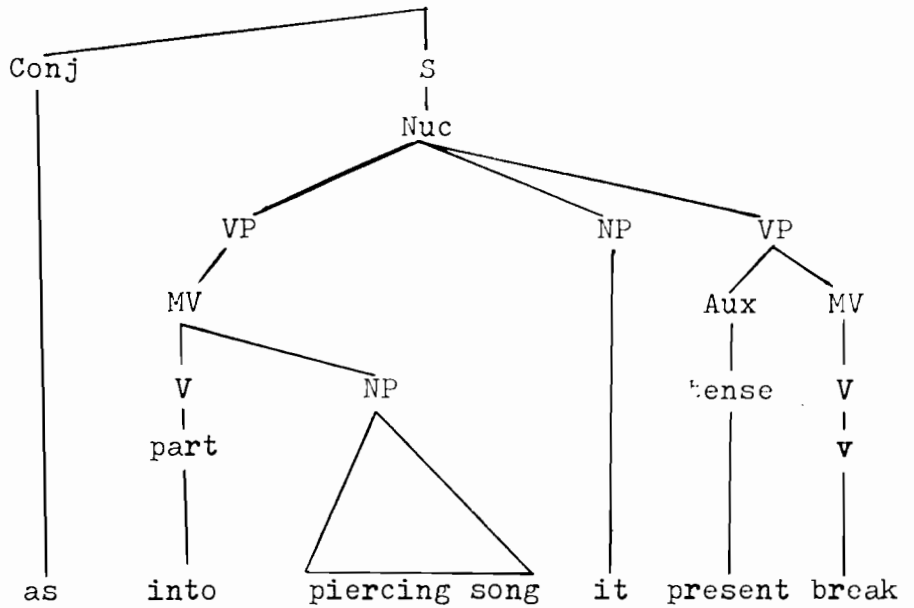
The style becomes less laborious, however, when the Aux-node interrupts the 'NP-NP' sequence, e.g.,

(47) Most wounds can Time repair; (At Ease)

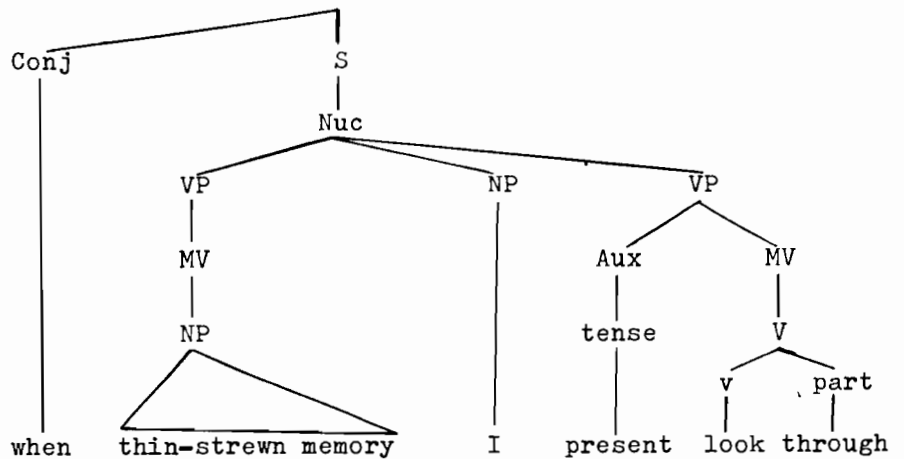


2. 6. 3. Another way of easing the tension caused by the **NP-NP** clustering, is that the particle (of a phrasal verb, that is) is fronted -- making the sense more accessible to the reader -- as is shown by 'Example 48' below. When the particle is not thus fronted, as is shown by 'Example 49' below, the sense becomes rather elusive or difficult to grasp.

(48) As into piercing song it breaks; (Miss Loo)



(49) When thin-strewn memory I look through,

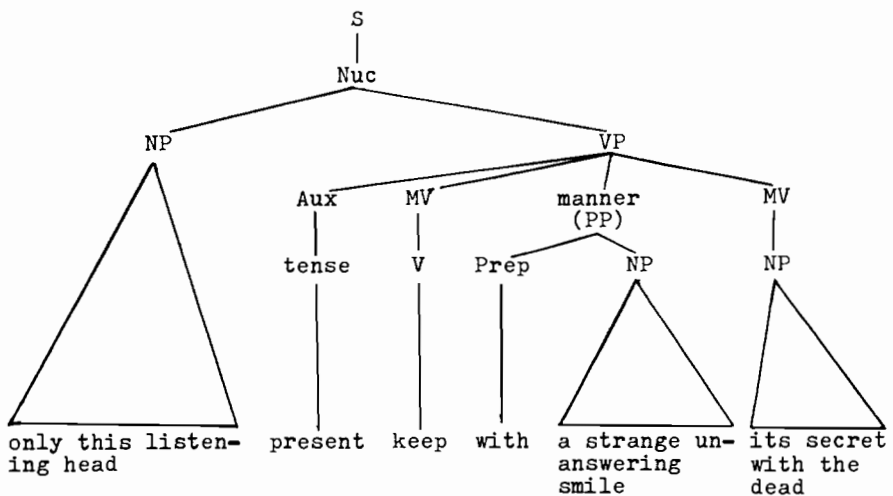


**2. 7. Pattern VII: NP<sup>1</sup> - V - manner - NP<sup>2</sup>**

In this pattern, the adverb of manner is fronted in relation to the VP-node.

An adverb of manner thus fronted, interrupts the sequence V-NP 'under MV'. It is very unusual in normal usage to separate a verb from its object by an adverb (e.g. \*'They addressed politely their teacher.'). The following example illustrates such usage:

- (50) Only this listening head  
 Keeps with a strange unanswering smile  
 Its secret with the dead. (The Stranger)

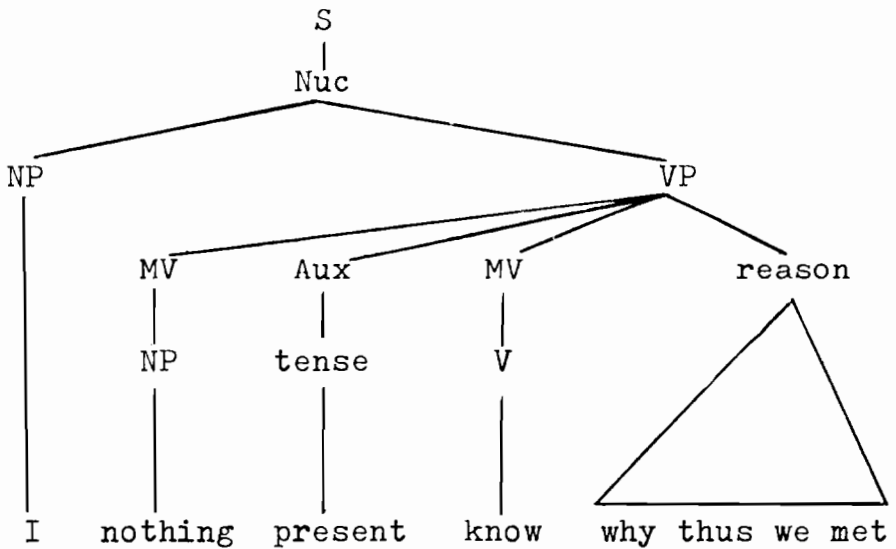


## 2. 8. Patterns VIII: NP<sup>1</sup> - NP<sup>2</sup> - V

In this pattern, the NP dominated by the MV (i.e., the object of the verb), is fronted in relation to the VP-node.

As a result of this type of inversion -- where the verb and its object exchange positions - the MV-node is split into two parts, allowing the auxiliary elements to occur immediately before the verb they modify, e.g.,

(51) I nothing know why thus we met - (The Railway Junction)

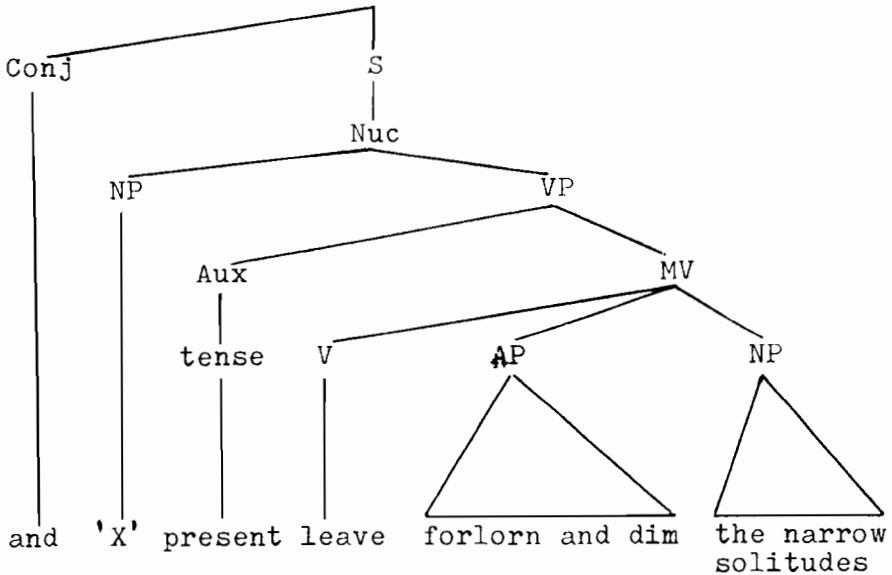


**2. 9. Pattern IX: NP<sup>1</sup> - V - AP/NP<sup>3</sup> - NP<sup>2</sup>**

In this pattern, the third node under MV is fronted, exchanging position with the NP preceding it (i.e., the second node under MV).

This reversal of sequential order between the object and the objective complement represents a clear-cut violation of the rules of normal usage (e.g. \*'We found sad the girl'.) 'Example 20', cited above (cf. '1. 2. '), exhibits this rather rare structure:

(20) And leaves forlorn and dim  
The narrow solitudes



**2. 10. Pattern X: NP<sup>2</sup> - NP<sup>1</sup> - V - AP/NP<sup>3</sup>**

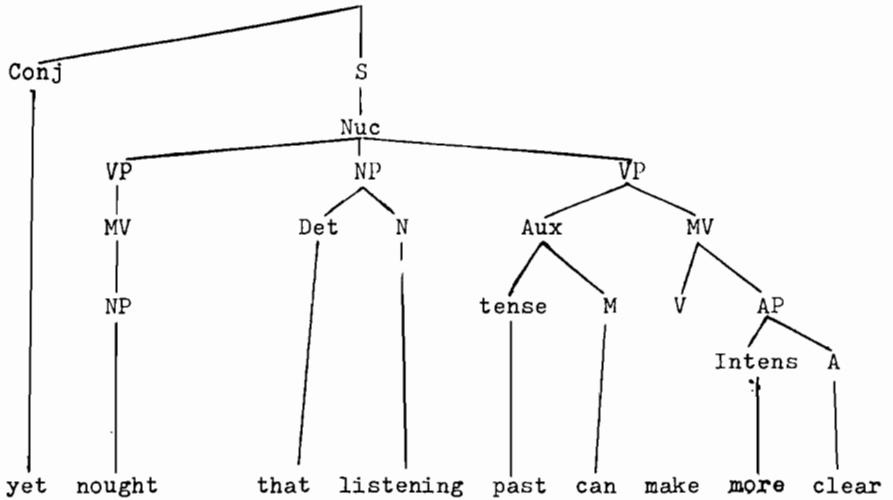
In this pattern, NP<sup>2</sup> (i.e., the object of the verb) is fronted in relation to the whole nucleus.

This last type of inversion is as rare as the previous one (only one example occurred in our corpus). It corresponds, in normal usage, to such sentences as: **\*The boy we found happy.**

It might be the case, however, that the reversed order of the elements of this pattern, viz. **AP/NP<sup>3</sup>-NP<sup>1</sup>-V-NP<sup>2</sup>**, is a potential type of inversion (e.g., **\*'Happy we found the boy'**), but no examples corresponding to this word-order occurred in our corpus.

As a result of the inversion in 'Pattern X', the VP-node is split into two parts by the NP-node, e.g.,

(21) Yet nought that listening could make more clear.



## APPENDIX

(The Texts are Listed in Alphabetical Order of Their Titles)

### All That's Past

Very old are the woods;  
 And the buds that break  
 Out of the brier's boughs,  
 When March winds wake,  
 So old with their beauty are--  
 Oh, no man knows  
 Through what wild centuries  
 Roves back the rose.

Very old are the brooks;  
 And the rills that rise  
 Where snow sleeps cold beneath  
 The azure skies  
 Sing such a history  
 Of come and gone,  
 Their every drop is as wise  
 As Solomon.

Very old are we men;  
Our dreams are tales  
Told in dim Eden  
By Eve's nightingales;  
We wake and whisper awhile,  
But, the day gone by,  
Silence and sleep like fields  
Of amaranth lie.

### **At Ease**

Most wounds can Time repair;  
But some are mortal -- these:  
For a broken heart there is no balm,  
No cure for a heart at ease --

At ease, but cold as stone,  
Though the intellect spin on,  
And the feet and practised face may show  
Nought of the life that is gone;

But smiles, as by habit taught;  
And sighs, as by custom led;  
And the soul within is safe from damnation,  
Since it is dead.

### **The Children of Stare**

Winter is fallen early  
On the house of Stare,  
Birds in reverbrating flocks  
Haunt its ancestral box;  
Bright are the plenteous berries  
In clusters in the air.

Still is the fountain's music,  
The dark pool icy still,  
Whereupon a small and sanguine sun  
Floats in a mirror on,  
Into a West of crimson,  
From a South of daffodil.

'Tis strange to see young children  
In such a wintry house;  
Like rabbits' on the frozen snow

Their laughter rings like timbrels  
'Neath evening ominous:

Their small and heightened faces  
Like wine-red winter buds;  
Their frolic bodies gentle as  
Flakes in the air that pass,  
Frail as the twirling petal  
From the briar of the woods.

Above them silence lours,  
Still as an arctic sea;  
Light fails; night falls; the wintry moon  
Glitters; the crocus soon  
Will open grey and distracted  
On earth's austerity:

Thick mystery, wild peril,  
Law like an iron rod:-  
Yet sport they on in Spring's attire,  
Each with his tiny fire  
Blown to a core of ardour  
By the awful breath of God.

### **Estranged**

No one was with me there -  
Happy I was -- alone;  
Yet from the sunshine suddenly  
A joy was gone.

A bird in an empty house  
Sad echoes makes to ring,  
Flitting from room to room  
On restless wing:

Till from its shades he flies,  
And leaves forlorn and dim  
The narrow solitudes  
So strange to him.

So, when with fickle heart  
I joyed in the passing day,  
A presence my mood estranged  
Went grieved away.

### **In the Dock**

Pallid, mis-shapen he stands. The World's grimed thumb,  
Now hooked securely in his matted hair,  
Has haled him struggling from his poisonous slum  
And flung him, mute as fish, close-netted there.  
His bloodless hands entalon that iron rail.  
He gloats in beastlike trance. His settling eyes  
From starting face to face rove on -- and quail.  
Justice for carrion pants; and these the flies.  
Voice after voice in smooth impartial drone  
Erects horrific in his darkening brain  
A timber framework, where agape, alone  
Bright life will kiss good-bye the cheek of Cain.  
Sudden like wolf he cries; and sweats to see  
When howls man's soul, it howls inaudibly.

### **Miss Loo**

When thin-strewn memory I look through,  
I see most clearly poor Miss Loo;  
Her tabby cat, her cage of birds,  
Her nose, her hair, her muffled words,  
And how she'd open here green eyes,  
As if in some immense surprise,  
Whenever as we sat at tea  
She made some small remark to me.  
It's always drowsy summer when  
From out the past she comes again;  
The westering sunshine in a pool  
Floats in her parlour still and cool;  
While the slim bird its lean wires shakes,  
As into piercing song it breaks;

Till Peter's pale-green eyes ajar  
Dream, wake; wake, dream, in one brief bar.  
And I am sitting, dull and shy,  
And she with gaze of vacancy,  
And large hands folded on the tray,  
Musing the afternoon away;  
Her satin bosom heaving slow  
With sighs that softly ebb and flow,  
And her plain face in such dismay,  
It seems unkind to look her way:  
Until all cheerful back will come

Her gentle gleaming spirit home:  
And one would think that poor Miss Loo  
Asked nothing else, if she had you.

### **Nod**

Softly along the road of evening,  
In a twilight dim with rose,  
Wrinkled with age, and drenched with dew,  
Old Nod, the shepherd, goes.

His drowsy flock streams on before him,  
Their fleeces charged with gold,  
To where the sun's last beam leans low  
On Nod the shepherd's fold.

The hedge is quick and green with brier,  
From their sand the conies creep;  
And all the birds that fly in heaven  
Flock singing home to sleep.

His lambs outnumber a noon's roses,  
Yet, when night's shadows fall,  
His blind old sheep-dog, Slumber-soon,  
Misses not one of all.

His are the quiet steeps of dreamland,  
The waters of no-more-pain,  
His ram's bell rings 'neath an arch of stars,  
'Rest, rest, and rest again.'

### **The Railway Junction**

From here through tunnelled gloom the track  
Forks into two; and one of these  
Wheels onward into darkening hills,  
And one toward distant seas.

How still it is; the signal light  
At set of sun shines palely green;  
A thrush sings; other sound there is none,  
Nor traveller to be seen

Where late there was a throng. And now,  
In peace awhile, I sit alone;  
Though soon, at the appointed hour,  
I shall myself be gone.

But not their way; the low-legged groom,  
The parson in black, the widow and son,  
The sailor with his cage, and gaunt  
Gamekeeper with his gun,

That fair one, too, discreetly veiled  
All, who so mutely came, and went,  
Will reach those far nocturnal hills,  
Or shores, ere night is spent.

I nothing know why thus we met  
Their thoughts, their longings, hopes, their fate;  
And what shall I remember, except  
The evening growing late

That here through tunnelled gloom the track  
Forks into two; of these  
One into darkening hills leads on,  
And one toward distant seas?

### **The Scarecrow**

All winter through I bow my head  
    Beneath the driving rain;  
The North Wind powders me with snow  
    And blows me black again;  
At midnight in a maze of stars  
    I flame with glittering rime,  
And stand, above the stubble, stiff  
    As mail at morning-prime.  
But when that child, called Spring, and all  
    His host of children, come,  
Scattering their buds and dew upon  
    These acres of my home,  
Some rapture in rags awakes;  
    I lift void eyes and scan  
The skies for crows, those ravening toes,  
    Of my strange master, Man.  
I watch him striding lank behind  
    His clashing team, and know  
Soon will the wheat swish body high  
    Where once lay sterile snow;  
Soon shall I gaze across a sea  
    Of sun-begotten grain,

Which my unflinching watch hath sealed  
For harvest once again.

### **The Scribe**

What lovely things  
Thy hand hath made:  
The smooth-plumed bird  
In its emerald shade,  
  
The seed of the grass,  
The speck of stone  
Which the wayfaring ant  
Stirs -- and hastes on!  
  
Though I should sit  
By some tarn in they hills,  
Using its ink  
As the spirit wills  
To write of Earth's wonders,  
Its live, willed things,  
Flit would the ages  
On soundless wings  
Ere unto Z  
My pen drew nigh;  
Leviathan told,  
And the honey-fly:  
  
And still would remain  
My wit to try --  
My worn reeds broken,  
The dark tarn dry,  
All words forgotten --  
Thou, Lord, and I.

### **The Silver Penny**

'Sailorman, I'll give to you  
My bright silver penny,  
If out to sea you'll sail me  
And my dear sister Jenny.'  
  
'Get in, young sir, I'll sail ye  
And your dear sister Jenny,  
But pay she shall her golden locks  
Instead of your penny.'

They sail away, they sail away,  
O bierce the winds blew!  
The foam flew in clouds,  
And dark the night grew!

And all the wild sea-water  
Climbed steep into the boat;  
Back to the shore again  
Sail they will not.

Drowned is the sailorman,  
Drowned is sweet Jenny,  
And drowned in the deep sea  
A bright silver penny.

### **Solltude**

Ghosts there must be with me in this old house,  
Deepening its midnight as the clock beats on.  
Whence else upwelled -- strange, sweet, yet ominous --  
The moment of happiness, and then was gone ?

Nimble than air-borne music, heart may call  
A speechless message to the inward ear,  
As secret even as that which then befell,  
Yet nought that listening could make more clear.

Delicate, subtle senses, instant, fleet!--  
But oh, how near the verge at which they fail!  
In vain, self hearkens for the fall of feet  
Soft as its own may be, beyond the pale.

### **The Stranger**

Half-hidden in a graveyard,  
In the blackness of a yew,  
Where never living creature stirs,  
Nor sunbeam pierces through,

Is a tomb-stone, green and crooked --  
Its faded legend gone --  
With one rain-worn cherub's head  
To sing of the unknown.

There, when the dusk is falling,  
Silence broods so deep

It seems that every air that breathes  
Sighs from the fields of sleep.

Day breaks in heedless beauty,  
Kindling each drop of dew,  
But unforsaking shadow dwells  
Beneath this lonely yew.

And, all else lost and faded,  
Only this listening head  
Keeps with a strange unanswering smile  
Its secret with the dead.

### Winter

Clouded with snow  
The cold winds blow,  
And shrill on leafless bough  
The robin with its burning breast  
Alone sings now.

The rayless sun,  
Day's journey done,  
Sheds its last ebbing light  
On fields in leagues of beauty spread  
Unearthly white.

Thick draws the dark,  
And spark by spark,  
The frost-fires kindle, and soon  
Over that sea of frozen foam  
Floats the white moon.

### FOOTNOTES

1. Cf. "I nothing know why thus we met" (to be discussed in '2.8.' below).
2. Cf. our paper, **Linguistic Criticism**. (Cairo: Al-Azhar University, Bookshop, 1977).
3. so much so that a number of poems as small as fourteen provided us with as many as fifty-one examples of inversion, as is shown below
4. Note that "Be" is treated as a special case. However, for a full

- account of the notational system and the grammatical rules employed here, refer to '1.3.' below.
5. The 'slanted lines' device indicates the following: one of the two alternatives, if there are two; one or more if there are three.
  6. The first two examples illustrate manner adverbs, the third one a place adverb, and the fourth a time adverb.
  7. The verbs **draw** ('Example 14') and **grow** ('Example 16') are linking verbs in these contexts, thus they are regarded as potential fillers of the **be** - node; cf. '1.3.' and '2.5.2.' below.
  8. Cf. 'Bibliography'.
  9. Cf. '2.9.' and '2.10.' below.
  10. Cf. '2.1.2.' and '2.2.4.' below.
  11. our underlines
  12. For a Satisfactory discussion of topics dealing with semantic vs. syntactic deviation, refer to G. Leech (1969), 'Chapter 3'.
  13. unless otherwise specified (cf. '2.2.5.' Below)
  14. This is not always the case, though, cf. '2.4.3.' below.
  15. Cf. '1.3.' above.
  16. Cf. '1.2.' and '2.1.4.' above.

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