

26. SHAKESPEARE'S GRAMMAR

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IN THE PREFACE TO HIS EDITION (1765) of Shakespeare's plays, Samuel Johnson complained that "[t]he stile of Shakespeare was in itself ungrammatical, perplexed and obscure" (Smallwood 41). A century later, Edwin Abbott opened his grammar of Shakespeare's language by pointing out that "Elizabethan English, on a superficial view, appears to present this great point of difference from the English of modern times, that in the former any irregularities whatever, whether in the formation of words or in the combination of words into sentences, are allowable" (Abbott 5).

Such observations are representative of a long tradition of grammatical correctness that approaches Shakespeare's language from the present to the past, judging it by the standards of a later age. Abbott's grammar, for example, consists simply of an alphabetical listing of "differences" between Elizabethan and Victorian English, beginning with "Adjectives used as adverbs" (Abbott §§1ff.) and "Adverbs with and without *-ly*" (§§23ff.), continuing with articles, conjunctions, prepositions, pronouns, and verbs, and concluding with two long sections dealing with "Ellipses" (§§382ff.) and "Irregularities" (§§406ff.).

Despite an evident lack of any kind of linguistic organization, Abbott's grammar, arguably the best-known and most frequently cited grammar of Shakespeare's language, though not superior to Franz's more comprehensive and systematic grammar, which is rarely referred to by Shakespearean editors because of its dense German, continued to be used well into the twentieth century as the reference that editors would consult to help them annotate Shakespeare's plays. As recently as 1998, one could find editors repeating Abbott's assertion that Shakespeare was a free spirit who could adjust the language to his own whims; witness, for instance, the following comments by Sylvan Barnet in the introduction to the Signet Classics edition of *Hamlet*:

A few matters of grammar may be surveyed, though it should be noted at the outset that Shakespeare sometimes made up his own grammar. As E. A. Abbott says in *A Shakespearian Grammar*, "Almost any part of speech can be used as any other part of speech": a noun as a verb ("he childed as I fathered"); a verb as a noun ("She hath made compare"); or an adverb as an adjective ("a seldom pleasure"). There are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of such instances in the plays.

(Barnet xxiii)

Had Barnet cared to consult the *Oxford English Dictionary*, he would have found that Shakespeare cannot be credited with any of the conversions just cited: *child* and *father* are

first documented as verbs in 1300 and 1483, respectively; the noun *compare*, from the corresponding verb, was used by Greene in 1589; and the use of *seldom* as a nominal pre-modifier was recorded as early as 1483. In these cases, at least, Shakespeare was not "making up his own grammar."

With the new millennium, two new grammars of Shakespeare finally came to replace Abbott's grammar in the English-speaking world, namely Norman Blake's *Grammar of Shakespeare's Language* (2002) and Jonathan Hope's *Shakespeare's Grammar* (2003). Hope's book was commissioned by the Arden Shakespeare series to revise and update Abbott's grammar. It is intended for editors and students of Shakespeare and thus assumes no prior linguistic knowledge or familiarity with work in historical linguistics, dealing mainly with verbs and noun phrases and with the description of their different structures in Shakespeare. Blake's grammar, in turn, represents a landmark not only in Shakespeare studies but also in descriptive and historical studies of the English of the period. Its 406 pages provide a comprehensive account of the morphology and syntax of different parts of speech, as well as highlighting features such as concord, negation, repetition, ellipsis, and clause and sentence structure. The final chapters, on "Discourse and register" and "Pragmatics," cover material beyond the sentence, thus taking a broader perspective on Shakespeare's English than any previous publication in the field.

Blake's grammar has informed the present chapter on almost every page, as have Barber (1997) and Rissanen (1999), rightly regarded as the standard accounts of Early Modern English syntax and morphology.

EARLY MODERN ENGLISH AND SHAKESPEARE'S ENGLISH

Early Modern English, variously dated as 1500–1700, 1500–1660, or even 1476–1776, is the period when many of the characteristics of the modern language developed. Leaving aside changes that fall outside the scope of this chapter, such as those in phonology and orthography, in morphology most of the remnants of the old inflectional system vanish: the third-person singular present indicative marker *-eth* ("he cometh") was gradually replaced by *-es*; the former singular versus plural distinction in the second-person pronoun (*thou* versus *ye/you*) began to be used to make social rather than number distinctions, and by the eighteenth century only the invariable *you* remained, except in regional dialects and special registers such as religious discourse. In syntax, the rise of the obligatory *do*-periphrasis in questions and negatives ("what do

you think?" instead of "what think you?"), the full development of the progressive *be + -ing* form ("he is reading"), and the fixation of subject-verb-object order constitute important developments.

All these grammatical changes, and many others, unfold against the background of a complex society with many coexisting regional and social varieties, though, as Barber (10, 21) notes, their existence is to some extent concealed by the fact that by this time there was something approaching a standard literary language in England, and it was only in the spoken language that regional and social variation appeared. Occasionally, Shakespeare and his fellow dramatists attempt to reproduce regional and social variation in their dialogue, though the representation of regional dialects relied largely on stock theatrical ideas of how rustics talked and was mostly limited to certain conspicuous phonetic or lexical features. The discussion that follows therefore has little to say on these topics and pays attention primarily to a selection of the major features of the morphology and syntax of Early Modern English, as reflected in the language of the Shakespeare canon.

THE NOUN PHRASE

The basic principles of noun-phrase formation are the same in Early Modern English as in Present-Day English. The central element of a noun phrase is the head, which can be a noun ("a girl"), pronoun ("we"), adjective ("the rich"), or quantifier ("all"). The head can be preceded by various kinds of premodifiers, such as nouns ("the region kites"), adjectives ("an ordinary fool"), and adverbs ("my hence departure"), and followed by postmodifiers such as clauses and prepositional phrases. Noun phrases can be definite or indefinite, and the most common way of marking this is with determiners, such as articles or demonstratives.

PRE-HEAD ELEMENTS

As in the other Germanic languages, articles developed late in English. In Old English, no article was required, and though Middle English saw the emergence of both a definite and an indefinite article, in Early Modern English there is still considerable variation in article usage, with some uncertainty (just as in Present-Day English) as to when the article should occur. A zero article, for example, is often found with nouns occurring in the predicative position, as in this case prominence is given to the quality inherent in the noun in question rather than to familiarity with a specific individual; for example, "if ever I were *traitor*" (*R2* 1.3.201, italics are added here and in quotations that follow, unless indicated as original); "If you be *maid*, or no?" (*Temp.* 1.2.428). The zero article is also common, with both concrete and abstract nouns, when the noun follows a preposition or is further specified by a following *of*-phrase or a *that*-clause: "Mistress, look out *at window*"

(*MV* 2.5.41, prose), "And *to relief* of lazars, and weak age" (*H5* 1.1.15), "*at mercy* of my sword" (*Tro.* 4.4.114); compare in this regard the variation in Present-Day English with "in (the) light of."

With river names, the absence of *the*, as in "I would they were in Tiber!" (*Cor.* 3.1.261), was formerly quite common, and has survived in such village names as Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Stratford-upon-Avon. In Shakespeare's language, even the Thames, one of the first rivers to be recorded with the definite article in the history of English, can occur with and without *the*: "kill and knock down! throw them into Thames!" (*2H6* 4.8.3, prose), "and to be thrown in the Thames?" (*Wiv.* 3.5.6, prose). By contrast, the definite article appears in contexts where we do not include it, for example before titles ("the Lady Valeria is come to visit you," *Cor.* 1.3.26–27) or diseases ("a rich man that hath not the gout," *AYLI* 3.2.320, prose). With personal names, *the* is sometimes employed to indicate the distinction of the person in question, as in "My ancestors did from the streets of Rome / *The* Tarquin drive" (*JC* 2.1.54) and "Who craves a parley with *the* Burgundy?" (*1H6* 3.3.37); this use has survived with the surnames of certain Highland and Irish chiefs of clans (see Walter Scott, *Lady of the Lake* 2.24: "Then Roderick from *the* Douglas broke"), and seems to be related to the "typical" or emphatic *the*, as in "And how, Audrey? am I *the* man yet?" (*AYLI* 3.3.2–3, prose) and "I am alone *the* villain of the earth" (*Ant.* 4.6.29).

The indefinite article *a(n)* developed from the unstressed form of the numeral one, and in Shakespeare there are uses reminiscent of this, with the article meaning "one" or "the same" and carrying much more stress than is possible in Present-Day English: "Doth not rosemary and Romeo begin both with *a* letter?" (*Rom.* 2.4.206–07, prose) "and two men ride of *a* horse, one must ride behind" (*Ado* 3.5.36–37).

In Early Modern English, as in present Scots and many English regional dialects, there are three demonstrative pronouns that can function as determiners: *this*, *that*, and *yon* (also *yond*, *yonder*). *This* implies "near the speaker," *that* implies "remote from the speaker," with no implications about the position relative to the hearer, and *yon* implies "remote from both speaker and hearer." Moreover, *yon* usually carries the additional implication "visible, in sight," and therefore often "accompanies (or replaces) a pointing gesture" (Barber 162), as in "Yon Cassius has a lean and hungry look, / He thinks too much; such men are dangerous" (*JC* 1.2.194–95). However, in some cases, neither speaker nor hearer could have seen the object or person referred to:

MARIA [TO FABIAN AND SIR TOBY]: Yond gull
Malvolio is turn'd heathen, a very renegado.... He's
in yellow stockings....

SIR TOBY: Come bring us, bring us where he is.

(*TN* 3.2.69ff.)

Perhaps because of its frequent limitation to the visible, *yon* had a more restricted use than *this* and *that*, and for this reason occurred much less frequently: in the Shakespeare canon, there are only seventy-one instances of *yon(der)* in determiner use, compared with countless instances of *this* and *that*. By the late seventeenth century, *yon* had become a literary word, largely confined to poetry.

In the set of possessive determiners, if we leave aside the second-person forms *thy/thine*, which were replaced by *your* over the course of the seventeenth century (see Chapter 27, "Shakespeare's Forms of Address"), the major difference with respect to Present-Day English usage was the form *his*, used both for the masculine and neuter, as in "I see the jewel best enamelled / Will lose *his* beauty" (*Err.* 2.1.110). However, already in the Middle English period, the neuter use of *his* was often avoided, with substitutes being found in *thereof*, *of it*, and *it*. As a possessive, *it* had become reasonably common by 1600, with fourteen occurrences in Shakespeare's First Folio (e.g., "The innocent milk in *it* most innocent mouth," *WT* 3.2.100). Alongside *it*, the new form *its*, formed by adding the possessive ending to *it*, appeared in about 1600 and rapidly spread as with other possessives; in Shakespeare, though, it is still rare (only ten instances in the First Folio): "Heaven grant us *its* peace" (*MM* 1.2.4, prose).

The possessive form of the noun was usually formed with the *-(e)s* morpheme, as in Present-Day English. Since the use of the apostrophe to mark the possessive did not become common in writing until the end of the seventeenth century, the usual forms in the quartos and First Folio are sequences such as *Loves spring* ("love's spring") (*Ant.* 3.2.43), with ambiguities sometimes arising regarding a singular or plural interpretation, as in "keep a corner in the thing I love / *For others uses*" ("for others' uses," or perhaps, "for other's uses") (*Oth.* 3.2.73).

In addition to the *-(e)s* suffix, two other possessive variants merit attention here: the so-called *his*-form and the zero form. The *his*-form, though sometimes incorrectly characterized as a mistake (Abbott §217), can be found as early as Old and Middle English; it occurs chiefly after nouns ending in *-s* ("Mars *his* gauntlet," *Tro.* 4.5.177; "the Bastard's braves, and Charles *his* glikes," *1H6* 3.2.123), and less commonly after other sounds ("the Count *his* gallies," *TN* 3.3.26). The construction probably arises from several sources, but the reason for its relative popularity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries can be found in the phonetic similarity between the possessive suffix and the possessive pronoun *his*, which often lost its initial /h/ when unstressed (Altenberg 44). The two forms were confused, and as a result *his* came to be used as a hypercorrect possessive suffix separated from the noun base. Its use was sometimes extended to other possessive pronouns to express gender and number concord with the preceding noun, as in "Then *churls their thoughts* (i.e., "the thoughts of churls") ... / To thy fair flower add the rank smell of weeds" (*Son.* 69.11–12), a

passage often emended, following Capell (1768), to "Then, *churls, their thoughts* ..."

The zero form, or zero genitive, is quite common in Shakespeare and his contemporaries. The final *-(e)s* suffix is dropped on phonetic grounds either before or after an *s* sound, especially when the nouns involved have more than one syllable: "Doctor Caius wife" (*Wiv.* 5.5.175, p), "Bassianus love" (*Tit.* 2.1.109), "Lucrece sov'reignty" (*Luc.* 3.6), "at every sentence end" (*AYLI* 3.2.136), "for sport sake" (*1H4* 2.1.70, prose), "for their own credit sake" (*1H4* 2.1.72, prose), "his mistress circle" (*Rom.* 2.1.24), "to Friar Lawrence cell" (*Rom.* 2.5.68, First Folio). Outside these phonetic environments, zero forms can sometimes be explained as late examples of Old English uninflected genitives: "my father house" (*Ant.* 2.7.128; but compare, in the same play, "my father's house," *Ant.* 2.6.27).

In other cases, apparent zero genitives represent examples of the use of nouns (or fuller nominal structures) in the premodifier position, in circumstances where Present-Day English would prefer an *of*-phrase or a possessive construction: "all the region kites" (*Ham.* 2.2.579), "By all our country rights" (*Luc.* 1838), "Within rich Pisa walls" (*Shr.* 2.1.367), "Through faire Verona streets" (*Rom.* 1.2.35, first quarto). With proper place nouns in particular, such uses were formerly more extensive than at present. The use of other kinds of premodifying nouns, such as those referring to processes, states, and the like (e.g., research fund, maternity hospital, etc.), has increased considerably since Shakespeare's time (Banks 132–37). Premodifiers are sometimes exploited by Shakespeare to satisfy the demands of meter or to avoid the occurrence of two *of*-phrases in succession. Compare "He'll ... sowl ... the porter of *Rome gates* by th' ears" (*Cor.* 4.5.201, prose) with "Whether to knock against *the gates of Rome*" (*Cor.* 4.5.141).

To conclude this overview of genitive constructions in Shakespeare, we may consider a few instances of the so-called split genitive. In groups consisting of a noun phrase and a postmodifying *of*-phrase, this can be uninflected and placed after the head noun: "And stol't away the ladies' hearts *of France*" (*2H6* 1.3.52, where the quarto reads "... our Ladies hearts *in France*") or "The Archbishop's grace *of York*" (*1H4* 3.2.119). By the second half of the seventeenth century, this type of genitive pattern had been replaced by the modern pattern, first attested in the late fourteenth century, in which the genitive inflection is attached to the last element in the group of noun phrases: "the Duke of Suffolk's insolence" (*2H6* 2.2.70).

Apart from nouns, as discussed earlier, other elements that can occur in the premodifier position in the noun phrase are adjectives and adverbs. Regarding adjectives, the rich system of adjective inflection found in Old and Middle English had disappeared from the language by Shakespeare's time, except for the comparative and superlative.

The traditional inflections for these are respectively *-er* and *-est*, but from later Middle English an analytic system

of comparison with *more* and *most* had started to appear, the new forms gaining ground steadily. Today, modern standard comparison restricts the suffixes to monosyllabic bases and to some dissyllables (e.g., "bigger," "prettier," as opposed to "more grievous," "more beautiful"), but until the late eighteenth century, usage was nowhere near this uniform. Textual evidence and grammarians' comments in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries suggest that analytic and synthetic comparisons were simply alternatives, though there may have been subtle stylistic and meaning differences between the two types, still to be systematically investigated. Thus, Shakespeare uses both "a nuntio's of more grave aspect" (*TN* 1.4.28) and "your graver steps" (*WT* 1.2.173), "not more smooth and rubious" (*TN* 1.4.32) and "Smoother than Pelops' shoulder" (*TNK* 4.2.21), "violent'st contrariety" (*Cor.* 4.6.73) and "most violent author" (*Ham.* 4.5.80), "That we the horrider may seem" (*Cym.* 4.2.331), and "forms more horrid" (*H8* 3.2.196), "a perfecter giber" (*Cor.* 2.1.82, prose), and "more perfect in the use of arms" (*2H4* 4.1.153), for example.

Also worthy of mention here is the frequent use of double comparatives and superlatives, later rigorously proscribed in the written language but perfectly acceptable in Shakespeare's time, to the extent that the majority of the double comparatives in his plays occur in the speech of characters who are distinguished members of their respective societies: King Henry in *Henry IV* ("more fairer," *2H4* 4.5.200), the Duke of Norfolk in *Henry VIII* ("more stronger," *H8* 1.1.147), Octavius in *Antony and Cleopatra* ("more larger," *Ant.* 3.6.76), and Mark Antony in *Julius Caesar* ("most unkindest," *JC* 3.2.183), to name just a few. The rare double forms uttered by speakers of lower social rank, such as Touchstone or Bottom, also suggest that double comparison may have been intended by Shakespeare as a mark of distinction (González-Díaz 176–85): Bottom's "more better assurance" (*MND* 3.1.19, prose) occurs during the rehearsal of the play in which he has the role of Pyramus, a nobleman; and Touchstone, a "witty fool," uses his double comparatives ("a more sounder instance," *AYLI* 3.2.61, prose; "more worthier," *AYLI* 3.3.59, prose) in two speeches where he is making clear his social pretensions.

Finally, moving on to other features of adjectives and their syntactic patterning, when two adjectives modify a noun head, the ambilateral placement (*adj + noun + and + adj*) was common in Old and Middle English, and can still be found occasionally in Early Modern English texts. Examples from Shakespeare include: "A very valiant Britain, and a good" (*Cym.* 4.2.369), "Free speech and fearless I to thee allow" (*R2* 1.1.123), "goodly dwelling and rich" (*2H4* 5.3.6, prose), "a shrewd knave and an unhappy" (*AWW* 4.5.63, prose), "a good lady, and a wise and virtuous" (*Rom.* 1.5.114), and "Are you good men and true?" (*Ado* 3.3.1, prose), from which derives the Present-Day English set phrase "twelve good men and true," meaning "a jury."

The use of adverbs as premodifiers in noun-phrase structure, though sometimes presented in the literature

as a feature peculiar to Shakespeare's language (e.g., *Hope* 60), was relatively frequent in the Early Modern English period, since at this time the adjectival and adverbial classes were less well defined than in Present-Day English. Examples occur mostly with temporal and spatial adverbs: "[my] often rumination" (*AYLI* 4.1.19, prose), "my hence departure" (*WT* 1.2.450), "the fine point of seldom pleasure" (*Son.* 52.4), "the after-inquiry" (*Cym.* 5.4.182, prose), "mad with evermore unrest" (*Son.* 147.10), "hereafter ages" (*1H6* 2.2.10), "the quondam king" (*3H6* 3.1.23), and others. For most of the adverbs in question, this use was transient, and examples are found only adverbially in Present-Day English.

THE HEAD

Nouns, which in both Early Modern English and Present-Day English constitute the majority of head-words, formed their plural with the zero morpheme rather more often than is the case today. In addition to *sheep*, *deer*, *swine*, and similar familiar plurals, we encounter in Shakespeare uninflected plurals with nouns indicating measures of various kinds (number, time, length, weight): "Full fathom five" (*Temp.* 1.2.397), "twenty mile" (*Wiv.* 3.2.33, prose), "three year old" (*AYLI* 5.2.60, prose), "forty mark" (*1H4* 3.3.82, prose), and so on. Remnants of this use in Present-Day English include "two million" and "five foot six," for example.

On the other hand, abstract nouns that in Present-Day English are normally singular are found in the plural in Shakespeare's usage, with little or no difference in meaning between the singular and plural forms: "His *funerals* shall not be in our camp" (*JC* 5.3.105), "holy men at their death have good *inspirations*" (*MV* 1.2.28, prose), "I will try *confusions* with him" (*MV* 2.2.37, prose, spoken by Launcelot Gobbo; second quarto reads *conclusions*), "inferior eyes, / That borrow their *behaviours* from the great" (*John* 5.1.51), "a kind of confession in your looks, which your *modesties* have not craft enough to colour" (*Ham.* 2.2.280, prose). Critics often interpret such uses as distinctly literary.

In Present-Day English, adjectives used as noun-phrase heads have to be preceded by the determiner *the* and can refer either to abstract concepts ("the mystical") or to generic groups of people ("the poor," "the French"), with a few exceptions having singular reference, such as "the accused," "the deceased," "my beloved." In Old English and early Middle English, the substantival use of the adjective, by comparison, was remarkably free, and adjective heads could refer to a single person or to a specific group of persons or things. However, after the loss of adjectival inflections in Middle English, the adjective head could no longer express the distinction between singular and plural, and this resulted, among other things, in the development of *one* and other propwords, as in "when rich villains have need of *poor ones*" (*Ado* 3.3.113–14, prose).

In Shakespeare's usage, the older, less restrictive use of adjectives as noun-phrase heads can be seen in examples where, for instance, the adjective refers to a single person ("The younger rises, when the old doth fall," *Lear* 3.3.25; "I rather choose / To wrong the dead" *JC* 3.2.126), takes a range of premodifiers other than *the* ("these French," *John* 2.1.214; "Our lusty English," *John* 2.1.322; "Five hundred poor I have in yearly pay," *H5* 4.1.298), or has no premodifiers at all ("The blood of English shall manure the ground," *R2* 4.1.137; "sweet, pardon what is past," *Tit.* 1.1.431; "meaner than myself have had like fortune," *3H6* 4.1.71).

Personal pronouns can naturally act as the head of a noun phrase, but in earlier stages of English they could adopt features now restricted to ordinary nouns by taking noun inflections or through modification by determiners and other pre- and post-modifiers, including relative clauses: "The shes of Italy" (*Cym.* 1.3.29), "the cruell'st she alive" (*TN* 1.5.241), "Are not you he / That frights the maidens?" (*MND* 2.1.34-35), "they of Rome" (*Cor.* 1.2.2), "And to poor we / Thine enmity's most capital" (*Cor.* 5.3.104-05).

POST-HEAD ELEMENTS

Among post-head dependents, relative clauses deserve special mention. In Middle English, the most common relative link was *that*, but in late Middle English, probably because *that* had assumed too many functions, as complementizer, demonstrative, and relative, the interrogative pronouns *which*, *whose*, *whom*, and later also *who* started to be used as relative pronouns, and by about 1700 the relative pronoun system looked very similar to that of Present-Day English. However, it was not until the eighteenth century that the modern constraints on the patterns of distribution of the relative links became fully operative. The following is an account of how some of these changes in relative pronoun usage manifest themselves in Shakespeare's language.

That is the most common relative link in Shakespeare, representing around fifty percent of all relative links (Yanagida 3). As is true today, it can refer to both animate and nonanimate antecedents, but, unlike today, it could be used to introduce nonrestrictive relative clauses (i.e., those not essential for the identification of the head): "The better for the King of Heaven, that hath him" (*R3* 1.2.105), "Fleance his son, that keeps him company" (*Mac.* 3.1.134), "Such Brooks are welcome to me, that o'erflows such liquor" (*Wiv.* 2.2.151, prose).

- When *which* emerged in Middle English as a relativizer, it could be used with reference to both animate and inanimate antecedents. This usage continued in Early Modern English, though by the fifteenth century *which* was already far less common with inanimate antecedents than with animate ones (Bergs 153), and the same applies to Shakespeare's usage. Examples with

animate and personal antecedents include "O God! which this blood mad'st, revenge his death!" (*R3* 1.2.62), and "bind the boy which you shall find with me" (*John* 4.1.4), among many others.

- Although *who* is restricted today to human antecedents, in Early Modern English it is possible to find examples of its use with nonpersonal antecedents, though they are not common (Barber 211-13). In Shakespeare, such examples tend to occur when the antecedent refers to an animal or when there is an element of personification ("the winds, / Who take the ruffian billows by the top," *2H4* 3.1.22-23), but in some cases neither of these explanations is available: "my arm'd knees, / Who bow'd but in my stirrup" (*Cor.* 3.2.118-19), "This first [casket], of gold, who this inscription bears" (*MV* 2.7.4).
- Unlike in Present-Day English, the relative link can be deleted even when it is the subject of the clause, and such deletion is not necessarily a feature of colloquial language: "I have a brother is condemn'd to die" (*MM* 2.2.34), "the hate of those love not the King" (*R2* 2.2.128), "should you fall, he is the next will mount" (*2H6* 3.1.22), "I have a bag of money here troubles me" (*Wiv.* 2.2.171-72, prose).

THE VERB PHRASE

In terms of verb morphology, the most noticeable differences between Early Modern English and Present-Day English pertain to the endings *-(e)st* for the second-person singular ("thou givest," "thou gavest"), *-(e)th* for the third-person singular of the present indicative ("he beareth"), and *-(e)s* for the third-person plural ("my old bones aches"). Second person *-(e)st* naturally became rarer as the pronoun *thou* fell into disuse during the seventeenth century. With respect to the third-person singular *-(e)th*, this was the regular ending in most written language at the beginning of the period, especially in "higher" writing, but by the decade 1590-1600 it had been widely replaced by the originally Northern *-(e)s*, though the verbs *have* and *do* and verbs ending in a sibilant (*hiss*, *merge*, *please*, etc.) retained *-(e)th* much longer. In the case of Shakespeare, for instance, early plays such as *Richard III* and *Henry VI, Parts 1, 2, and 3* show a preference for *-(e)th* with sibilant verbs, but in the later plays *-(e)s* is the norm in this environment. The forms *hath* and *doth*, however, remained common throughout Shakespeare's career.

The change from *-(e)th* to *-(e)s* enabled the "semiotization" of *-(e)th* and its use to signal levels of discourse. Stein (1987) notes its comic use, which occurs with certain persons or in certain situations. Typical cases are Holofernes and Don Adriano de Armado in *Love's Labour's Lost*; witness Holofernes's "A soul feminine saluteth us" (*LLL* 4.2.81, prose) or Armado's "It rejoiceth my intellect" (*LLL* 5.1.60,

prose). Another typical use is the *-(e)th* of villains and rogues. Thus Richard III produces seven of the eighteen occurrences of *-(e)th* in the play, in situations where he is feigning or attempting to deceive somebody; and in *King Lear*, one of the two occurrences of *-(e)th* is by Edmund, who is at that moment lying to Edgar: "Bethink yourself wherein you may have offended him; and at my entreaty forbear his presence until some little time hath qualified the heat of his displeasure, which at this instant so *rageth* in him, that with the mischief of your person it would scarcely allay" (*Lear* 1.2.162–63, prose).

For the present plural, the standard Early Modern English form was the base, uninflected form, but a few other endings can also be found, namely the Midland *-(e)n* type, which is used as a deliberate archaism in *Pericles* ("All *perishen* of man, of pelf," *Per.* 2.35; see also *waxen* [i.e., "grow"] in *MND* 2.1.56); the old southern *-(e)th* plural, a minority form persisting into the seventeenth century and occasionally employed by Shakespeare: "All his successors (gone before him) *hath done't*" (*Wiv.* 1.1.14, prose), "Look how thy wounds *doth* bleed at many vents" (*Tro.* 5.3.82, First Folio text; quarto reads *do*); and the *-(e)s* plural, which may be Northern in origin or simply result from analogy with the third-person singular *-(e)s*, as seems to be suggested by the fact that it is seldom found in the early sixteenth century and is commonest around 1600, when *-(e)s* had displaced *-(e)th* as the singular ending.

Examples of the *-(e)s* ending in Shakespeare, which occur in both verse and prose and are not confined to vulgar or dialectal speakers, include "Such Brooks are welcome to me, that *o'erflows* such liquor" (*Wiv.* 2.2.151, prose), "My old bones *aches*" (*Temp.* 3.3.2), "Untimely storms *makes* men expect a dearth" (*R3* 2.3.35; quarto reads *make*), and "The great man down, you mark his favourites *flies*" (*Ham.* 3.2.204; second quarto reads *favourite*), among quite a few others. In the standard language, the *-(e)s* plural fell out of use quite quickly, and this is reflected in the Shakespeare folios of 1632, 1663, and 1685, which often correct these forms: "aches" earlier in this paragraph was normalized to "ache," and "his favourites" was made singular: "his favourite flies."

Other noticeable developments in the Early Modern English verbal system relate to the establishment of the tense and aspect auxiliaries and the decline in the use of the subjunctive. When the period opened, the modern functional differentiation between the perfect form (*have* + *-ed/-en*) and the simple past was not yet fully established, and thus the simple form can sometimes be found in contexts in which the perfect would be preferred today: "I saw not better sport these seven years' day" (*2H6* 2.1.2), "You spoke not with her since?" (*Lear* 4.3.35). According to some scholars (Rissanen 225), the use of the simple past in these contexts might be a marker of a lively tone by focusing on the quality of the action instead of its duration.

A second difference with respect to Present-Day English usage is that we find variation between *have* and *be*, the two auxiliaries that could formerly be used to mark the perfect. In Shakespeare's time, *have* is selected with transitive verbs, but *be* is predominant with intransitive verbs and occurs in about sixty-seven percent of cases (Kytö 33), as in "The tidings comes that they are all arriv'd" (*John* 4.2.115). The factors influencing the choice between one or the other auxiliary are too complex to be detailed here, but, in general, with auxiliary *have*, the concern of the sentence is with the action of the verb as a continuing process; with *be*, the emphasis is on the state that has arisen as a result of the action. This contrast is nicely illustrated in an example such as "'Tis gone, and will not answer. /... Thus twice before, and jump at this dead hour, / With martial stalk *hath he gone* by our watch" (*Ham.* 1.1.52–65).

The combination of *be* and the present participle ("the progressive form") goes back to Old English, but its meaning then was not necessarily aspectual. The progressive proper developed in Middle English, and though its frequency and functions expanded considerably in Early Modern English, it remained much less frequent than in Present-Day English: Nehls (1974) counted 40 tokens per 100,000 words in Shakespeare compared with 837 tokens in twentieth-century drama. Examples of simple forms in contexts that in Present-Day English would require the progressive are therefore common; witness "What is it, my good Lord, the King *languishes* of?" (*AWW* 1.1.35, prose), "I *come*, I *come*" (*TGV* 2.2.19), or Polonius's question to Hamlet, "What *do you read*, my Lord?" (*Ham.* 2.2.191, prose). In general, progressive forms tend to occur less frequently in formal contexts than in informal ones; examples of their use in the latter include "As we *were sharing*, some six or seven fresh men set upon us" (*1H4* 2.4.180–81, prose) and "Your husband's *coming* hither, woman, with all the officers in Windsor" (*Wiv.* 3.3.106, prose).

In Old English, the set of verb inflections traditionally known as "subjunctive" was chosen typically to mark doubt, unreality, wishes, commands, requests, and so on, and was also the mood selected by certain conjunctions (conditional, concessive, etc.). From Old English on, the subjunctive inflections were gradually reduced, and their functions encroached on either by the indicative or by periphrases with modal verbs. By Early Modern English times, the only subjunctive forms remaining were essentially the third-person singular present "he take" (versus "he takes/taketh") and the second-person singular "thou take" (versus "thou takest"), although with the verb *be* a few more distinctions were available: "I/thou/he be" (versus "I am," "thou art/be'st," "he is"), "I/he were" (versus "I/he was"). In Early Modern English main clauses, the subjunctive occurs frequently to express a wish ("Never *come* such division 'tween our souls!" *JC* 4.3.235, "heaven *send* Ann Page no worse fortune!" *Wiv.* 1.4.32, prose) or

an exhortation ("Some light-foot friend *post* to the Duke of Norfolk," *R3* 4.4.440), but periphrases with *may* and *let* can also be found with the same function; for example, "Long may they kiss each other for this cure!" (*Ven.* 505), "Let each man render me his bloody hand" (*JC* 3.1.184).

Outside main clauses, the subjunctive occurs in various kinds of adverbial clauses, its use being most common with subordinators implying reference to the future or nonfactuality, such as *before*, *ere*, *till*, *until*, *if*, *unless*, *though*; for example, "I must away today, before night come" (*Shr.* 3.2.190), "till the wicked fire of lust *have* melted him in his own grease" (*Wiv.* 2.1.68, prose), "If he *take* her, let him take her simply" (*Wiv.* 3.2.76, prose). With all these conjunctions, however, the indicative can also be found in Shakespeare and his contemporaries: "Florence is denied before he *comes*" (*AWW* 1.2.12), "till he *hath* pawn'd his horses" (*Wiv.* 2.1.96, prose), "If she *dares* trust me with her little babe" (*WT* 2.2.35), and others.

As is still the case in many varieties of Present-Day English, the subjunctive is also common in nominal clauses dependent on verbs, nouns, and adjectives expressing commands, requests, intentions, desires, and the like, where it occurs in covariation with the indicative or with auxiliaries such as *may*, *might*, *shall*, and *should*: "I conjure thee ... / That in thy likeness thou *appear* to us!" (*Rom.* 2.1.21), "I wish my brother *make* good time with him" (*Cym.* 4.2.108), "I do entreat you, not a man *depart*, / Save I alone" (*JC* 3.2.60–61).

Subjunctive forms are also found occasionally in nominal clauses following verbs such as *think*, *hope*, and *doubt* (i.e., "fear"), and predicates encoding an emotional reaction or evaluation: "her father counts it *dangerous* / That she *do* give her sorrow so much sway" (*Rom.* 4.1.10), "I doubt he *be* not well, that he comes not home" (*Wiv.* 1.4.41, prose), "I think my wife *be* honest, and think she is not" (*Oth.* 3.3.384). The variation between *be* and *is* in this last example has often been considered to signify Othello's distrust of Desdemona, but there is evidence (Fanego, "Clauses" 131–32) to suggest that the use of *be* in such clauses has little to do with the hypothetical nature of the statement and simply represents a more conventional form than the following, more modern, *is*; it is also possible that the alternation between *be* and *is* in this case may have been chiefly determined by metrical factors, as suggested by the scansion of the line "/ I think / my wife / be honest, / and think / she (i)s nót!."

CLAUSE ORGANIZATION

One of the major changes in the history of English syntax was the emergence and development of the auxiliary *do*, which took place in Middle and Early Modern English. By the end of the eighteenth century, the use of *do* had become regulated: *do* was an obligatory element in negative sentences ("I do not understand") and interrogative

sentences ("Do you understand me?"), and could also be used in affirmative statements to add contrastive emphasis ("I *did* check if the lights were off").

In Shakespeare's time, however, usage is still typically unregulated and *do*-periphrases in questions and negatives alternate with *do*-less formations; witness "See you these, husband? *Do not* these fair yokes / *Become* the forest better than the town?" (*Wiv.* 5.5.107–08). In addition, *do* often occurs in Shakespeare in affirmative statements in which it is highly improbable that its use is intended to give emphasis. In this use, especially common in the sixteenth century but declining rapidly in the seventeenth, *do* was used as a convenient means of avoiding undesirable consonant clusters, in particular with borrowed verbs ("thou criest, 'Indeed!' / And *didst* contract and *purse* thy brow together," *Oth.* 3.3.113–14), of satisfying the demands of rhythm and meter ("Here *do* I choose, and thrive I as I may!" *MV* 2.7.60; "He *doth* object I am too great of birth," *Wiv.* 3.4.4), and of serving discourse functions such as highlighting the main verb in a narrative or signaling the end of a topic and the beginning of a new one ("I found them close together / At blow and thrust, even as again they were / When you yourself *did* part them. / More of this matter cannot I report," *Oth.* 2.3.237–40).

Another important topic in connection with the structure of the English clause is the shift in word order that it underwent at some time between Middle and Early Modern English, whereby the order subject-verb-object (SVO) became generalized in declarative sentences. By Shakespeare's time, SVO order was already well established, but sentence patterns can occasionally differ from those of Present-Day English, and "inverted" word order (i.e., VS or, in clauses containing an auxiliary, AuxSV), common in earlier stages of English, is still frequently found, particularly after initial adverbs and adverbial phrases. Jacobsson (1951) gives statistics for sentences beginning with adverbs such as *also*, *then*, *now*, *there*, *here*, *so*, *yet*, and *therefore*, and finds that from 1370 to 1500, inversion of verb and subject occurs in almost half of the cases; for the sixteenth century, the figure is still thirty-four percent, but for the period 1600–1712 it drops to seven percent.

The relative "weight" and length of the finite verb and the subject had an influence, and thus inversion is favored with pronominal (as opposed to nominal) subjects and with certain verbs (*have*, *say*, *come*, and *stand*). Examples of inversion in Shakespeare include, among many others: "Now shall the devil be sham'd" (*Wiv.* 4.2.119, prose; but compare, earlier in the same scene, "Now he shall see his own foolery" *Wiv.* 4.2.37, prose), "then will I follow it" (*Ham.* 1.4.63, First Folio; quarto: "then I will follow it"), "So think I too" (*Wiv.* 4.4.25, prose), "Then did the sun on dunghill shine" (*Wiv.* 1.3.63, prose), "if I be not Jack Falstaff, then am I a Jack" (*1H4* 5.4.139, prose).

By contrast, there are some cases where inversion is normal in Present-Day English but where Early Modern

English can have straight word order, most notably after sentence-initial adverbs with a negative force (*never, nor, only, rarely, scarcely, seldom*, etc.). The inverted order that is the rule today in this environment became established only during the course of the seventeenth century, so that in Shakespeare we find structures with and without inversion; witness "These boys know little they are sons to th' King, / *Nor Cymbeline dreams that they are alive*" (*Cym.* 3.3.81–82) and "*Nor do I think the man of safe discretion / That doth affect it*" (*MM* 1.1.71–72). Other departures from SVO order include occasional cases of the retention of the earlier SOV order, as in "*I combat challenge of this latten bilbo*" (*Wiv.* 1.1.162), "*Convey, the wise it call*" (*Wiv.* 1.3.29, prose), "*Let huswifery appear. Keep close, I thee command*" (*H5* 2.3.62), all of them uttered by Pistol and no doubt intended as humorous representations of his idiosyncratic speech.

This chapter bridges the gap between two temporal varieties of English, Early Modern English and Present-Day English, by explaining some of the major differences between them and the manner in which Shakespeare makes artistic use of those forms. The full range of structures existing in Early Modern English on both sentence and text levels – and the complex stylistic conventions available to Elizabethan literary authors – are addressed in the other chapters in this section.

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