A PECULIAR FEATURE IN THE WORD-ORDER
OF GOWER’S Confessio Amantis

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Although John Gower has been highly estimated for the clarity, smoothness and simple beauty of his English, very few systematic studies of his language have ever appeared. Nor have, it seems, many noteworthy articles on specific themes been put forth since the beginning of this century when the admirable edition of the Confessio Amantis was published by G. C. Macaulay. Perhaps accumulation of an increased number of detailed investigation on various themes is needed, as in the case of Chaucer, before we can hope to have any form of systematic study of Gower’s English; and here we shall be content to confine ourselves to drawing attention to a peculiar feature in the word-order of his Confessio Amantis. Macaulay’s edition will be used throughout our investigation.

I

The first thing to note is that part of a subordinate clause may precede the connective. Adverbial phrases are most liable to this change of position. The direct object of a verb, an adjectival phrase and an adverb may sometimes take this position, and in a few examples a to-infinitive and even a past participle are shifted.


2 Benjamin Förg’s Die konjunktionen in Gowers Confessio Amantis, Heidelberg diss. 1911, which I have had no chance to see, may have treated the problem with which we are concerned here.


4 The term ‘connective’ here includes conjunctions and relatives.
The most frequent connectives concerned here are *if, if that, as, that* (conj.), *which, hou and hou that*. Other connectives are rather rare and can be met with only once or twice (three times at most) respectively: *whan, whan that, whanne, for, what, wher that, that* (rel.), *than, til that, er, er that, so, thanne, though, as thogh, who that, wher as, bot if*.

**IF**

*Of Falsseblempt if* I schal telle,
Above all othre it is the welle
Out of the which deceipte floweth. (II, 1879–1881)

And overthis, mi Sone, also
After the vertu moral eke
To speke of love *if* I schal seke,
Among the holi bokes wise
I finde write in such a wise,
`Who loveth noght is hier as ded’; (IV, 2320–2325)

Sche preith that for a litel stounde
Sche myhte knele upon the grounde,
Toward the hevene forto crave,
Hire wofull Soul if sche mai save: (VIII, 1385–1388)

Other examples: Prol., 835; I, 1078; II, 3128; IV,
1223, 1679, 2634; V, 2857, 4876, 7033; VII, 3807;
VIII, 199.

**IF THAT**

*Envie if that* I schal descrie,
He is noght schaply forto wyve
In Erthe among the wommen hierc; (II, 3111–3113)

*At hom if that* man wol won,
This Fievere is thanne of comun won
Most grevous in a mannes yhe: (V, 467–469)

Other examples: I, 753, 1253; III, 1523, 2310; V,
7151; VIII, 2224.

**AS**

So him befell upon a tide
*On his hunting as* he cam ride,
In a Forest alone he was: (I, 349–351)

This king, of which thou hast herd sein,
*Fro Troie as* he goth hom ayein
Be Schipe, he fond the See divers, (VI, 1415-1417)
Other examples:  III, 981, 2092; V, 4940, 4943, 6160;
VI, 1519; VII, 3146, 3627; VIII, 443.

**THAT** (conj.)
Sche bad Yris hir Messagere
*To Slepes hons that* sche schal wende, (IV, 2972-2973)

And som men sein, *of worthi blod*
**That** sche is come, and is also
So fair, that nawher is non so; (VI, 840-842)
Other examples:  I, 1608, 1930; II, 1854, 2611; IV, 3177; V, 4296; VII, 2871.

**WHICH**
To speke of an unkinde man,
I finde hou whilom Adrian,
*Of Rome which* a gret lord was, (V, 4937-4939)

And overmore
Of wommen in the same cas,
With hem I sih wher Dido was,
*Forsake which* was with Enee; (VIII, 2550-2553)
Other examples:  III, 1004; IV, 2978; VII, 2767, 3300, 3309.

**HOU**
For thogh I be noght al cunynge
Upon the forme of this wrytynge,
Som part therof yit have I herd,
*In this matiere hou* it hath ferd.  (IV, 2437-2440)
Other examples:  II, 1187; III, 594, 821; VI, 533.

**HOU THAT**
Ensample I finde therupon,
*At Troie how that* Agamenon
Supplantede the worthi knyht
Achilles of that swete wiht,
Which named was Brexedia; (II, 2451-2455)
Other examples:  II, 294, 1180; III, 1251; V, 5548.

**WHAN**
Bot *of here entre whan* thei soghte,
The gates weren al to smale; (I, 1144-1145)
Other examples:  I, 2191; VIII, 2267.
WHAN THAT

and fell withinne a while,
*Between hem two whan that* thei were,
Sche feigneth wordes in his Ere,
And in this wise gan to seie: (II, 652–655)

Other examples; II, 682, 281o.

WHANNE

For I have herd it telle also,
Achilles lefte his armes so
Bothe of himself and of his men
At Troie for Polixenen,
*Upon hire love whanne* he fell,
That for no chance that befell
Among the Grecs or up or doun,
He wolde noght ayein the toun
Ben Armed, for the love of hire. (IV, 1693–1701)

For it betidde upon a day,
*Into the pas whanne* he was falle,
Thembuisschementz to brieken alle
And him beclipte on every side,
That fle ne myhte he noght aside: (VII, 3474–3478)

FOR

Unkindely* for* thou hast wroght,
Unkindeliche it schal be boght,(III, 2065–2066)

Other examples: V, 2937; VI, 1257.

THAT (rel.)

Thou farst as he *between two stoles*
*That* wolde sitte and goth to grounde (IV, 626–627)

This Anthenor ayein goth hom
Unto his king, and whan he com,
He tolde *in Grece of that* he herde,
And hou that Thelamon ansuerde, (V, 7289–7292)

WHAT

and Couste upon his tale
With herte clos and colour pale
Aswoune fell, and he mervileth
So *sodeinly what* thing hire eyleth, (II, 1345–1348)

And to this knyht of Romanie,
Word-order of Gower’s *Confessio Amantis*  

As unto him whom he most triste,  
His Dowhter Ring, that non it wiste,  
He tok, and tolde him al the cas,  
*Upon hire oth what* tokne it was  
Of that sche scholde ben his wif. (II, 2638–2643)

**WER THAT**  
The hevene lich unto a bowe  
Sche bende, and so she cam doun lowe,  
*The god of Slepe wher that* sche fond. (IV, 2983–2985)

A Parlemt and thus he sette,  
*His wisdom wher that* he besette  
In audience of grete and smale, (VII, 2949–2951)

**THAN**  
To kepe hire maidenhede whit  
Under the wede of fethers blake,  
*In Perles whyte than* forsake  
That no lif mai restore ayein. (V, 6208–6211)

**TIL THAT**  
And soghte aboute with his hond,  
*That other bed til that* he fond, (V, 6911–6912)

**ER**  
Bot al only hise lustes secheth,  
*Abedde er* he was fully warm  
And wolde have take hire in his Arm, (VII, 5332–5334)

**ER THAT**  
The thonderstrok smit er it leyte,  
And yit men sen the fyr and leyte,  
*The thonderstrok er that* men hiere: (VII, 307–309)

**SO**  
For as the man hath passioun  
Of seknesse, *in comparison*  
*So* soffren othre creatures. (Prol., 915–917)

**THANNE**  
And whanne he syh that be no mede  
Toward hire love he myhte spede,  
*Be slayhte feigned thanne* he wroghte; (I, 795–797)
THOUGH
No wonder is, in lusty place
*Of love though* he lese grace. (VII, 407-408)

AS THOGH
And forth thei wenten into Schipe
And crossen seil and made hem yare,
*Anon as thogh* thei wolden fare: (I, 1164-1166)

WHO THAT
*For love who that* list to wake
Be nyhte, he mai ensample take
Of Cephalus, whan that he lay
With Aurora that swete may
In armes all the longe nyht. (IV, 3187-3191)

WHER AS
And this men sen, *thurgh lacke of love*
*Wher as* the lond divided is,
It mot algate fare amis: (Prol., 892-894)

BOT IF
It nedeth noght to seche more,
He myhte noght have suche manere,
*Of gentil blod bot if* he were. (VIII, 792-794)

II

A more striking feature of Gower’s use of connectives is that even part of a sentence beginning with *and* or *bot* may often be shifted to the position before the connective. Examples with *bot* are rather rare, but those with *and* are fairly frequent. Here again adverbial phrases are the ones that most frequently suffer this displacement. The following sentence components, though much less frequently, may also be displaced from their natural position: an adverb, a direct object of a verb, an adjectival phrase, a present participle and a complement.

BOT
Ther is no cok to crowe day,
Ne beste non which noise may;
*The bell bot* al aboute round
Ther is growende upon the ground
Popi, which berth the sed of slep,
With othre herbes suche an hep. (IV, 3003–3008)

With mochel wo bot ate laste
His slombrende yhen he upcaste
And seide hir that it schal be do. (IV, 3031–3033)

AND

ADVERBIAL PHRASE

Horestes dede his moder calle
Anon tofore the lordes alle
And ek tofor the poeple also,
To hire and tolde his tale tho, (III, 2051–2054)

Jason, which sih his fader old,
Upon Medea made him bold,
Of art magique, which sche couthe,
And preith hire that his fader youthe
Sche wolde make ayeinward newe: (V, 3945–3949)

With open hed and fot al bare,
Hir her tosprad sche gan to fare,
Upon hir clothes gert sche was,
Al specheles and on the gras
Sche glod forth as an Addre doth: (V, 3963–3967)

In sondri wise and tho sche caste
Hou sche this king mai overcaste; (VII, 3459–3460)

And who that can mi tale save,
Al quyt he schal my doghter have;
Of his ansuere and if he faile,
He schal be ded withoute faile. (VIII, 411–414)

Other examples: Prol., 155, 759.

I, 409, 854, 1002, 1118, 2320, 2454, 2533, 3146.
II, 1104, 1274, 3005.
III, 1394, 1396, 1902, 1903, 1415, 2412.
IV, 127, 420, 2148, 2952, 2975, 3078, 3518, 3541.
V, 231, 444, 905, 2080, 2318, 2815, 3034, 3641, 4263,
4553, 5057, 5060, 5071, 5096, 5118, 5178, 5613, 6312,
6817, 7290, 7429, 7536.
VI, 496, 1523, 1876, 2209.
VII, 1106, 1937, 2074, 3674, 3701, 4034, 4402, 4636,
4970, 4972.

1 On the punctuation see below.
VIII, 109, 404, 2252.

ADVERB

Fulofte and thus the sweete soureth,
Whan it is knowe to the tast: (I, 1190–1191)

I charge you and bidde this,
That ye the same Schip vitale,
In which that sche tok arivaile,
Therinne and putteth bothe tuo,
Hireself forthwith hire child also, (II, 1030–1034)

Sche hath hire oghne lif beguiled
Anon and hyng hireselve tho. (III, 2180–2181)

Thus was he schent on every side,
Ayein and into prison lad,
For so the king himselfe bad. (VII, 2670–2672)

Other examples: I, 1010, 1102; II, 1033; IV, 2971; V, 2321.

DIRECT OBJECT

And thus wepende sche compleigneth,
Hire faire face and al desteigneth
With wofulle teres of hire ye, (I, 965–967)

And therupon mercy thei soghte
Toward the god in sondri wise
With preiere and with sacrifise,
The Maide and hom ayein thei sende, (V, 6468–6471)

Min yhe and as I caste aboutes,
To knowe among hem who was who, (VIII, 2460–2461)

Other examples: Prol., 521; I, 433; II, 1301; VI, 1698; VII, 2949, 5099.

ADJECTIVAL PHRASE

Of Rome and thus was abandoned
Thempire, which cam nevere ayein
Into the hond of no Romein; (Prol., 766–768)

Forthi unto thi myhtes hyhe,
As thou which art the daies yhe,
Of love and myht no conseil hyde, (IV, 3213–3215)

And that was Circes and Calipse,
That cowthen do the Mone eclipse,
WORD-ORDER OF GOWER'S *CONFESSIO AMANTIS* 213

*Of men and* change the liknesses,
Of Artmagique Sorceresses; (VIII, 2599–2602)

Other examples: Prol., 756, 1014; IV, 2502; V, 410; VI, 1407.

PRESENT PARTICIPLE

When he beheld his Cote of heres,
He wepte and with fulwoful teres
Up to the hevene he caste his chiere,

*Wepende and* thoghte in this manere: (I, 2999–3002)¹

And thus in al the haste he may
He tok his leve, and forth he seileth,

*Wepende and* sche hirself beweileth,
And torneth hom, ther sche cam fro. (IV, 2956–2959)¹

And sche, which red for schame was,
With bothe hire handes hath him preid

*Knelende and* in this wise seid, (V, 2736–2738)

Tho was this povere Bardus glad,

*Thenkende god and* to the Ston

He goth and takth it up anon, (V, 5070–5072)¹

COMPLEMENT

The Prestes tho gon hom ayein,
And sche goth to hire sovereign,

*Of goddes willes and* as it was
Sche tolde him al the pleine cas,
Whereof he was deceived eke, (I, 861–865)

Macaulay often calls our attention to this inverted word-order² by showing in his Notes that the word(s) before the connective should be construed with what follows (Prol. 155, 521, 756, 759, 766; I, 2320, 2533; II, 2642; III, 1394, 1396, 1415; V, 2815, 3948). He also often mentions that he followed the punctuation of the manuscript (II, 762, 1001, 1950; III, 1430; V, 1980, 6281, 6899; VIII, 1101, 2713), which fact indicates that he had some doubt as to the punctuation being correct.

¹ On the punctuation see below.

In some examples he suggests better punctuation. To take a few examples from Book V:

Sch preide, and ek hield up hir hond

_To Echates, and gan to crie, (V, 3980-3981)_

The Perles weren tho forsake

_To hire, and blake clothes take; (V, 5723-5724)_

In the first example Macaulay suggests that we should remove the comma after ‘Echates’ and put one after ‘hond’. Ford follows the manuscript punctuation (The Age of Chaucer, Pelican Book, 1954. p. 433), but Bennette shares the same view as Macaulay (Selections from John Gower, Clarendon Medieval and Tudor Series, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1968. p. 75). Likewise in the second example Macaulay suggests that it will suit the sense better to put the comma after ‘forsake’, and to take ‘To hire’ with what follows. The punctuation he proposed is adopted in Bennett’s edition (op. cit., p. 84).

In still other examples Macaulay goes a step further and declares that the manuscript is wrongly punctuated (I, 1102; V, 231, 410, 444, 2318, 2738, 2937, 3966, 5096).

Macaulay seems to be generally right in his punctuation, but an objection is raised by Sisam as regards the following lines.

And thus in al the haste he may
He tok his leve, and forth he seileth

_Wepende, and sche birsself beweileth,
And torneth hom, ther sche cam fro. (ed. M. IV, 2956-2959)_

Ther is no cok to crowe day,
Ne beste non which noise may

_The helle, bot al aboute round_
With othre herbes such an hep. (ed. M. IV, 3003-3006)

Tho was this povere Bardus glad,

_Thonkende god, and to the Ston_
He goth and takth it up anon, (ed. M. V, 5070-5072)

As for the first example I should like to agree with Sisam who puts a comma after ‘seileth’ instead of after ‘Wepende’, asserting that it is not the husband but Alceoun, his wife, who weeps. Ovid’s description of this scene seems also to support this view. In the second exam-
ple Sisam puts a semicolon after 'may' and removes the comma after 'hell', insisting that 'noise' is intransitive. If he is right, this is a unique example in which the words governed by a preposition are displaced. In both cases Bennett follows Sisam’s punctuation. In the third example the comma after ‘god’ is quietly, and no doubt rightly, removed in Sisam’s edition.

In my own opinion the following lines in Macaulay’s edition should also be emended.

When he beheld his Cote of heres,
He wepte and with fulwoful teres
Up to the hevene he caste his chiere
Wepende, and thoughte in this manere: (I, 2999–3002)

This Anthenon ayein goth hom
Unto bis king, and whan be com,
He tolde in Grece of that he herde,
And how that Thelamon ansuerde, (V, 7289–7292)

In the first example it might be better to put a comma after ‘chiere’ instead of after ‘wepende’ so that the lines may more naturally be interpreted. Likewise in the second example it might be better to put a comma after ‘hom’ instead of after ‘king’.

When doubtful lines are left unpunctuated (probably because they are not punctuated in the manuscript), we are not quite certain how the editors interpreted the lines, and the problem is left for us to solve.

The following example is probably a case of the inverted order of the connective. The lines should perhaps be read: ‘Then was this woeful wife comforted and disported by all ways till . . .’.

Tho was this wofull wif conforted
Be alle weies and desported,
Til that sche was somdiel amended; (ed. M. I, 1001–1003)

The next two examples show Macaulay’s rather inconsistent punctuation. In the second example ‘With humble herte’ evidently is better taken with ‘to him calle’ rather than with the preceding line as in the first example.

And forto don him felaschipe
His wif unto the See him broghte,
With al hire berte and him besoghte,  
That he the time hire wolde sein,  
Whan that he thoghte come ayein: (IV, 2950–2954)

Upon hire knes sche gan doun falle  
With humble berte and to him calle,  
And seide... (I, 3145–3147)

Exactly the same thing may be said of the following two examples.

And alle unto the king thei preiden,  
With comun vois and thus thei seiden: (VII, 4033–4044)

And natheles mercy sche preide  
With wepende yhe and thus sche seide: (VIII, 325–326)

Neither Macaulay nor Bennett puts a comma after 'ende' in line 2974, Book IV.

Sche bad Yris hir Messagere  
To Slepes hous that sche schal wende,  
And bidde him that he make an ende  
Be swevene and schewn al the cas  
Unto this ladi, hou it was. (IV, 2972–2976)

In Sisam's edition, however, we find a comma after 'ende', which fact clearly indicates that he takes 'Be swevene' with what follows. After all there must always remain some uncertainty and difference of opinion on such a problem as this where the context plays the most important role and some insight into the author's turn of mind is required on the part of the reader.

III

As has been stated in the foregoing chapters adverbial phrases most frequently precede the displaced connective. In case of subordinate clauses about ninety percent and in case of and or but about seventy percent of the whole examples contain adverbial phrases. These are most of them composed of 'preposition' + '(pro)noun'. (Of course modifiers such as adjectives, articles, possessives, etc. often intervene between the two.) Typical examples are: at Troie, be alle weies, be name, for evere, in sondri wise, in this materie, to hire, to Rome, unto hirself, upon a time, with gret worschipe, with al his berte, withinne his berte, etc.
A glance at the above-mentioned phrases may reveal the fact that first comes an unstressed syllable and next a stressed syllable, thus forming iambic rhythm. It is true that rhyme also plays an important role in arranging the order of words, but Gower seems to have been so sensitive to rhythm as to go further and distort natural word-order. In order to prove this we shall compare some cases of natural order with those of inverted order. For convenience sake the simplest construction will be chosen.

'And+prep.+(pro) noun...' (From Prologue and Book IV only.)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{And óf desése his párt recéyveth (Prol., 178)} \\
\text{And óf misélf I télle thís (IV, 165)} \\
\text{And thúrgh fortúne it féll him só (IV, 376)} \\
\text{And tó Cupídé máke a yíste (IV, 1684)} \\
\text{And ín ensámple thérupón (IV, 2339)} \\
\text{And óf Musiqué alsó the nőte (IV, 2416)} \\
\text{And tó Junó hire sácrifise (IV, 2966)}
\end{align*}
\]

'prep.+(pro) noun+and...' 

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{In háste and sché tho flédde awéie (III, 1394)} \\
\text{Be nyhte and whán that hé worst férde (IV, 420)} \\
\text{Be náme and Thóphís ít was hóte (V, 6817)} \\
\text{To híre and ýáf that Appel thó (V, 7429)} \\
\text{With slép and bóthe his ýhen fédd (VI, 1523)} \\
\text{In bóke and ás ít máí be séie (VII, 1186)} \\
\text{To hím and ín íis wise spák (VIII, 108)}
\end{align*}
\]

It may be observed that in the former group the (pro)nouns have more than one syllable and, the stress usually falling on their second syllable, iambic rhythm is smoothly maintained. The first stress may fall on the 'And', but a trochaic foot at the beginning of lines is usually tolerated. In the latter group, on the other hand, the (pro)nouns are monosyllabic (or disyllabic with the final -e being subject to elision before the following and) and, with the preceding unstressed preposition and the following unstressed and again form the regular iamb, which would not be the case if and were placed at the beginning of the line.

To confirm how far this explanation can be relied upon let us examine some other examples.

'And+prep.+article+(pro) noun...' (From Book IV only.)
And tó the gól for hélpe críden (IV, 1023)
And óf the cónseil nón accómpte (IV, 1062)
And för the whilí his ése eschúie (IV, 1814)

‘prep. + article + (pro)noun + and. . .’

Upon the wéie and ás he róð (II, 3005)
Upon the mórwe and úp sche stérte (IV, 3078)
Upon the bórd and déde hem sétte (V, 2317)
Upon a tíme and ás he dróuh (V, 5060)
Withinne a time and thérupon (V, 6312)
Toward the tempéle and forth thei gó (V, 7536)
Intó the chámbre and whán sche cám (VII, 1937)

It will be clearly recognized that here again rhythm plays an important role. When disyllabic prepositions are employed, Gower seems to have preferred inverted order so that iambic rhythm might more smoothly be produced. This view will further be confirmed by comparing the following two groups of examples.

‘And + prep. + poss. + (pro)noun . . .’ (From Prol. and Book IV only.)

And upón his hóst the wéie táké (Prol., 754)
And with his Móder hé conspíreth (IV, 984)
And tó his lándi Ére brínge (IV, 1636)
And óf his Slóuthe he drémeth ófte (IV, 2722)
And óf my wáchche máke an énde (IV, 2868)
And för his lórd sche háth so bédé (IV, 2968)
And ín his pipinge éveré amóng (IV, 3345)

‘prep. + poss. + (pro)noun + and . . .’

Withinne his hértle and tók a prídé (I, 2533)
Withinne his hértle and gán despéire (IV, 3341)
Withinne his hértle and thúc he préiseth (V, 231)
Untó his kíng and whán hé cóm (V, 7290)
Upon his fót and ás he férde (VII, 3701)
Upon his wómbé and líth to drínke (VII, 3674)
Of his ansuéré and íf he fáile (VIII, 413)

In the first group are employed, except for one instance, monosyllabic prepositions which form the first feet with the preceding ‘And’, while in the second group the prepositions themselves (with one exception)
form the first feet. It is evident that if and is displaced in the former group, or shifted to its natural position in the latter, iambic rhythm will be marred.

In case of natural order disyllabic prepositions are practically restricted to the following construction in which they, in turn preceded by the unstressed ' and ' and followed by the stressed demonstrative, help to bring about iambic rhythm.

'And+prep.+dem. . .' (From Prologue and Book IV only.)

And upon this alsó men séin (Prol., 407)
And óver thát thurgh Sénne it cóm (Prol., 1017)
And óver thís to löke álso (IV, 442)
And áfter thát out óf Hebréu (IV, 2653)
And óver thát he hâdde affáited (IV, 3337)
And únder thát thei máden lówe (IV, 3664)

As a matter of fact not all the examples can be explained by this simple rule, but many examples will serve to illustrate the tendency described above, which we shall not fail to observe when once our attention has been called to it.

IV

In the preceding chapters we have given examples that illustrate Gower's peculiar use of connectives, and briefly discussed in what condition inverted order occurs. The examples are meant to be exhaustive, but there may be some, or I am afraid many, that have been overlooked. These may be revealed in a future article with a wider survey, covering, if possible, all the chief Middle English works. We may for the present content ourselves only with mentioning that, according to some authorities, this inverted order is to be found in King Alisaunder,¹ in the ME Palladius,² and in Passion of Christ.³ It is interesting to note that the Confessio Amantis and King Alisaunder belong to

¹ Smithers points out (Early Middle English Verse and Prose, O.U.P., 1968, p. 278) that the construction, though rare in ME, is well attested in King Alisaunder.
² Macaulay mentions (op. cit., Vol. I, p. 460) Liddell's pointing out to him that the usage occurs in the ME Palladius.
³ Bennett says in his Selections from Gower (Medieval and Tudor Series, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1968, p. 154) that the construction is also occasionally found in later verse, e.g. Kennedy's Passion of Christ.
the same dialect—South-Eastern. We might possibly consider this a matter of dialectal syntax. At least in Gower's *Confessio Amantis* this peculiar order occurs frequently enough to make us suppose that his audience or readers were fairly accustomed to the expression. So were the scribes presumably; but, as a matter of fact, the punctuation of the manuscript is not always correct. Macaulay bases his text on MS. Fairfax 3, the punctuation of which, he says, generally must be treated with respect (*op. cit.*, Vol. i, p. clix). He also gives us to understand that the frequent stops at the ends of lines are for the most part meaningless, but those elsewhere are of importance and usually may be taken as a guide to the sense (*op. cit.*, Vol. i, p. clix). This statement is important because it is directly connected with what we have been discussing. The existence or non-existence of the comma before 'and' has indeed an immediate bearing on the sense. And scholars sometimes disagree, as we have seen above, on this apparently trivial but actually important problem of punctuation. Even the scribe is, as has been pointed out before, not always trustworthy. It might well be suspected that, even at that time, this inverted order, though it was no doubt readily understood in most of the cases, was sometimes ambiguous enough to lead the scribe to punctuate incorrectly or inappropriately. We should endeavour, therefore, to form and strengthen the critical faculty with which we reconstruct the structure of the language in the past. The degree of our success depends to a large extent upon our own power to interpret the manuscript correctly, our power to interpret it just as the author rather than the scribe intended it to be interpreted. We should not be dependent on edited texts.