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Perception of Syntactic Deviations in Poetry - A Study of William Blake's *Songs of Innocence*

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General Aim of the Study

The present study is concerned with the aspects of syntax which help us to comprehend poetic lines. Poetry employs language which drifts apart from the normal language.

Example: Piping down the valley wild.

Here, the PP 'down the valley wild' contains a DP 'the valley wild'. Within the DP we have an NP 'valley wild'. The words 'valley' and 'wild' belong respectively to N and A categories.

This combination is not permitted in normal language, hence considered deviant. The normal acceptable sequence reads:

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Down the wild valley.
 Preposition Determiner Adjective Noun

Specific Aims of the Study

The present work tries to explain how we perceive the deviant examples, that is, above mentioned structures. This also helps us to learn why we don't misinterpret the above examples with similar structures of our language.

Research Questions

1. What is the position of Adjective in Blake's stylistic deviations?
2. How is it syntactically different from Complex Transitive Verbal Constructions?
3. Is there any test to distinguish the difference between them?

Data for Study

The data for this study is taken from the collection of poems by William Blake (Ramji Lal 2006: 69-104). The data include the following:

1. Piping down the valleys wild. (Introduction)
2. Stain'd the water clear. (Introduction)
3. He was an infant small. (A Cradle Song)
4. Becomes an infant small. (A Cradle Song)
5. Seek your cradle narrow. (The Blossom)
6. Our father dear. (The Divine Image)

These NPs clearly show that the N° is followed by A°. They should be written as:

7. Down	the <u>wild</u>	<u>valleys</u>
8. The	<u>clear</u>	<u>water</u>
9. A	<u>small</u>	<u>infant</u>
10. Your	<u>narrow</u>	<u>cradle</u>
11. Our	<u>dear</u>	<u>father</u>
	A	N

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Let's see how we can account for the movement.

Adjectives, in English, can also occur as complement of objects that is, as sisters of V' node as in the followings:

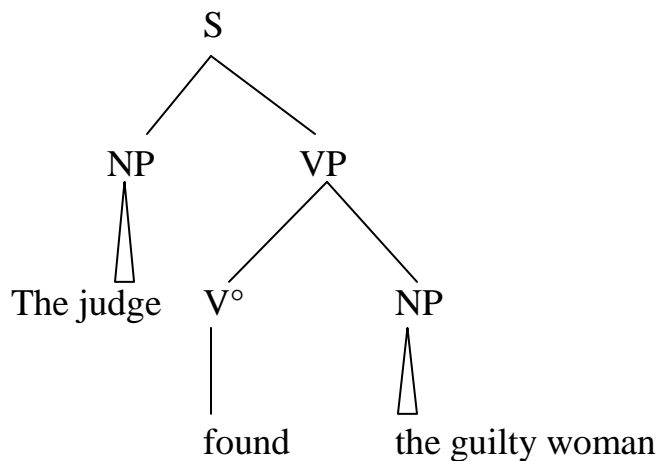
12. The judge found the woman guilty.
 13. Hari Painted the house green.
 14. The girl called the boy useless.

Comp Tr V Object Complement

Compare sentence 12 with the following:

15. The judge found the guilty woman.
 16. The judge found that the woman was guilty.
 17. The judge found the woman to be guilty.

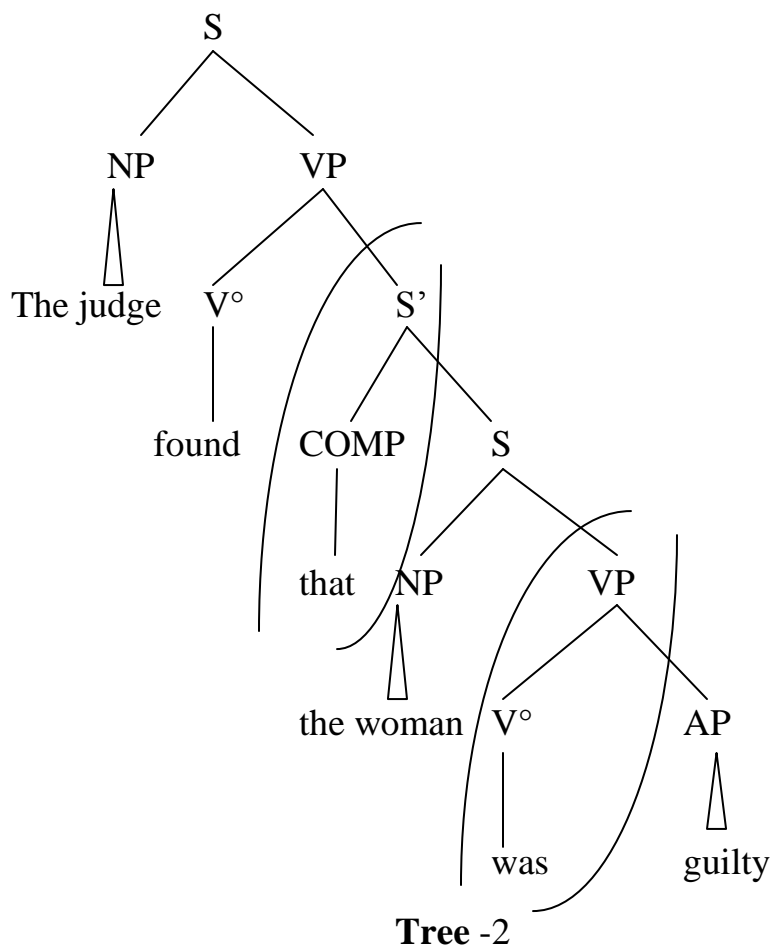
Sentences 15 and 16 have certain semantic differences. These are signaled by the position they hold in the phrase structure. She might have absconded out of fear for punishment and the judge identified the place of her hiding. This is because the NP 'the guilty woman' occupies the position of sister node with V°. The sub-categorization frame of the V° takes NP as its complement and thus is assigned the role of Object NP as follows:



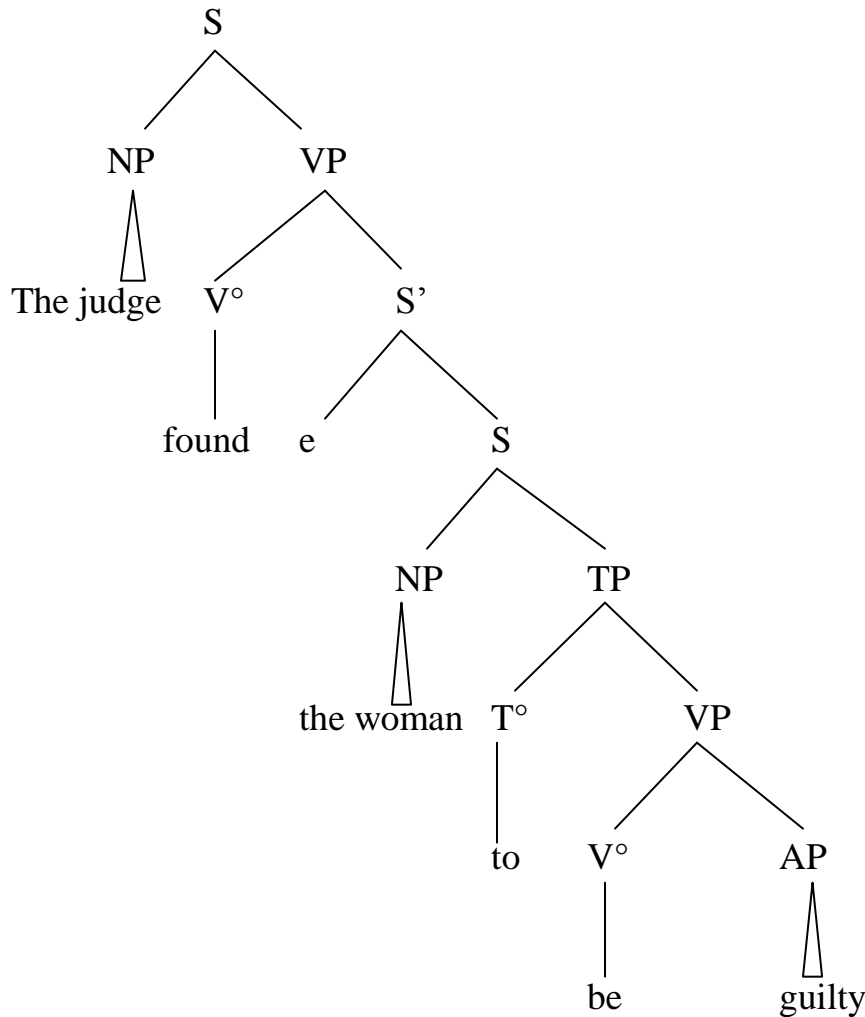
Tree -1

But, sentence 16 can be taken as the paraphrases of the sentence ‘The judge found that the woman was guilty’. This should be taken to mean that the woman was suspected of the murder or any other crime reported. Through the investigation, the judge has found out the truth and had come to the conclusion of her involvement. The sentence contains two clauses: MATRIX SENTENCE with ‘found’ and the EMBEDDED SENTENCE with ‘was’. The second sentence is under the maximal projection of its own CP. The embedded sentence ‘The woman was guilty’ conforms the statement and the matrix sentence says that the judge found out the truth. The truth is given as the complement of found.

The judge found that the woman was guilty.



In sentence 17, Small Clause contains the ellipsis (*to be*) explicitly. The sentences 16 and 17 are syntactically different but semantically closely related to each other. In 17, the ‘to-infinitive’ cannot assign Nominative Case to the NP preceding it. Hence, the V° of the preceding clause. Here the clause with the verb ‘Found’ assigns Objective Case to the NP ‘The woman’. This can be shown on the tree as follows:



Tree -3

Robert D. Borsley (1999; p176) calls this type of construction as “Control Sentences”. Small Clauses, as Radford (2004; p307) says “whose predicate is not a verb”.

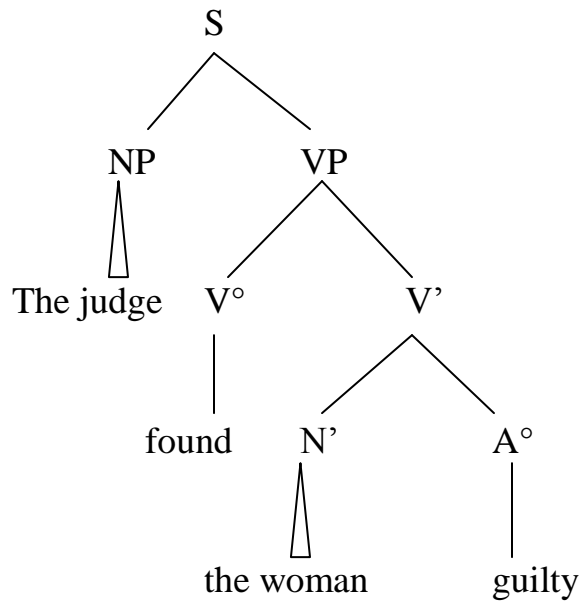
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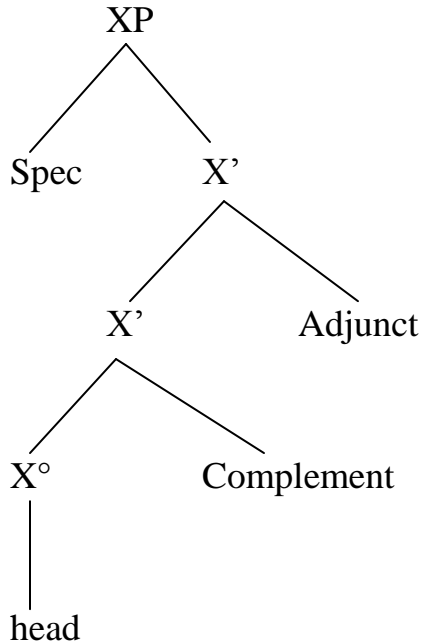
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“SCs lack a C-System and an I-System.” (Bas Aarts 1992; p179) The removal of V° (ie) I- System subsequently removes CP (here Spec- S’) because the case assignment to the NP is essential and thus leads to the merging of NP and AP to the V’.



Tree -4

This analysis is clearly wrong because linguists have already devised the trees for Complement and Adjunct Positions as follows:

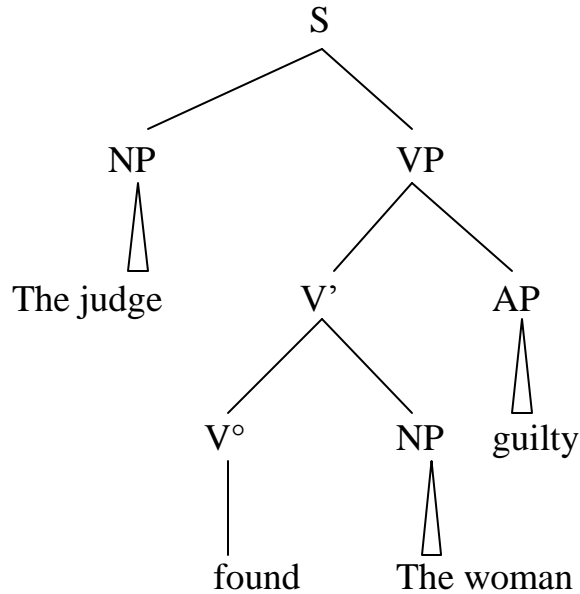


Tree -5

(Taken from H.D. Sharma 2007:169)

The lexical head X° takes ‘Complement’ as its sister because it subcategorizes but not the Adjunct. Based on this, the V° “found” demands an NP such as ‘The woman’ as its Complement. This close affinity is subject to the individual lexical item. But, Adjuncts are not so bound with the heads. So, Adjuncts are the sisters of X' (here V').

The V° is Complex – Transitive in nature. Thus, demanding an NP as its complement and an Adjective as its Adjunct. The tree should read as follows:



Tree -6

Let's get back to our discussion of the occurrence of Adjectives next to N°.

Syntactic Test

Read the following pairs of sentences:

18. I stain'd the water clear.

18a. *I stained the water (to be) clear.

18b. I stained the water (which was clear).

19. The judge found the woman guilty.

19a. The judge found the woman (to be) guilty.

19b. The judge found the woman (who was guilty).

20. Piping down the valley wild.

20a. *He piped down the valley (to be) wild.

20b. He piped down the valley (which was wild).

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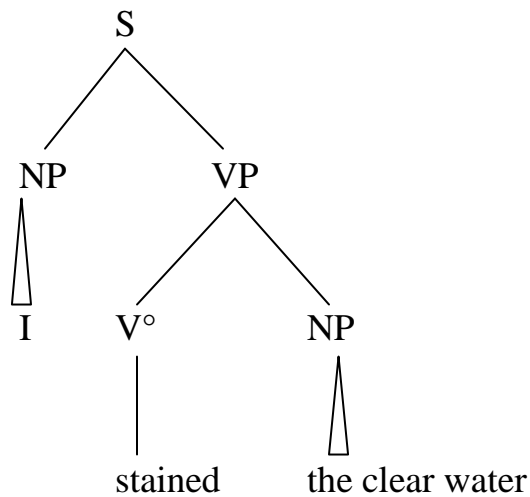
21. We called the girl intelligent.

21a. We called the girl (to be) intelligent.

21b. We called the girl (who was intelligent).

Here, we can see 18a and 20a asterisk marked that means they are ungrammatical. The sentences 18b and 20b convey the same meaning as in 18 and 20. In the case of 19 and 21, all are acceptable but they make certain differences. 19b and 21b are equivalent to 'The judge found the guilty woman' and 'We called the intelligent girl'. But 19a and 21a are the same as 19 and 21.

The sentence 'I stained the clear water' contains an NP+V+NP. This can be shown as follows on a tree diagram:



Tree -7

Sentence (18b) is the near paraphrases of 18. 18b contains a MATRIX SENTENCE followed by an EMBEDDED SENTENCE and so can be represented as follows:

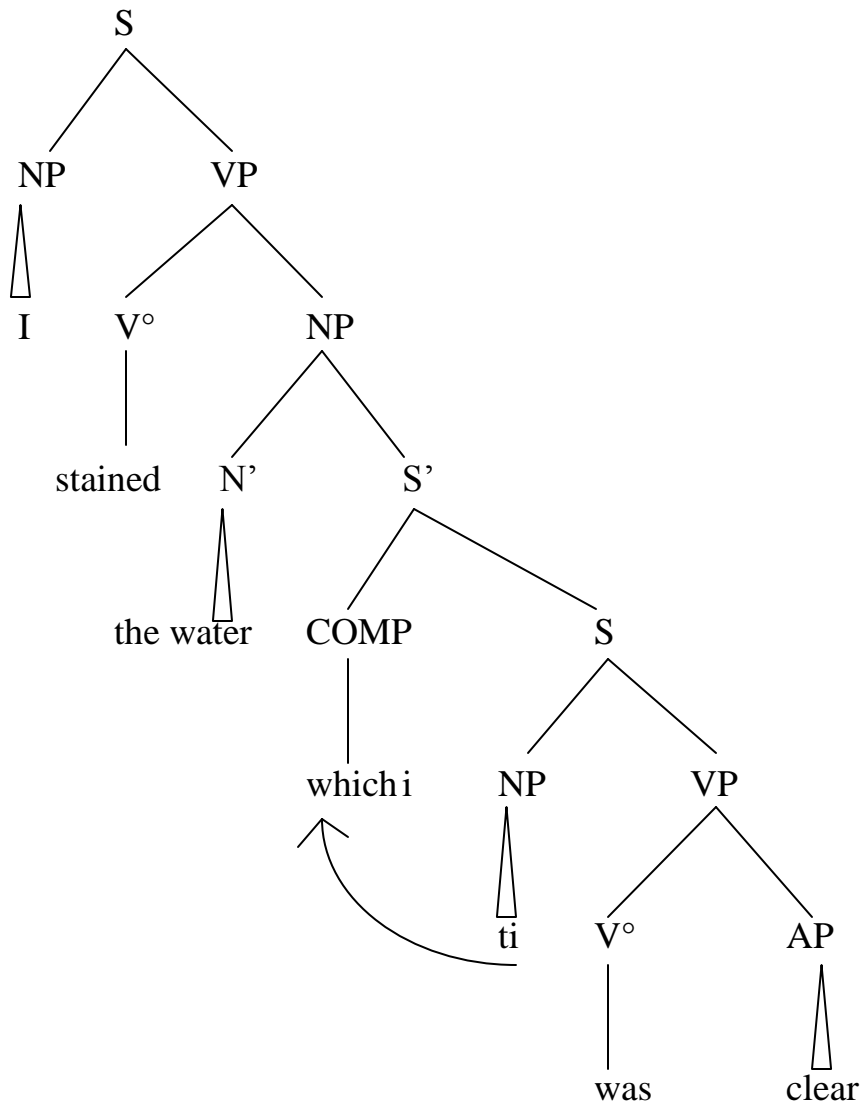
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I stained the water which was clear.



Tree -8

Why is 18a 'I stained the water (to be) clear' unacceptable?

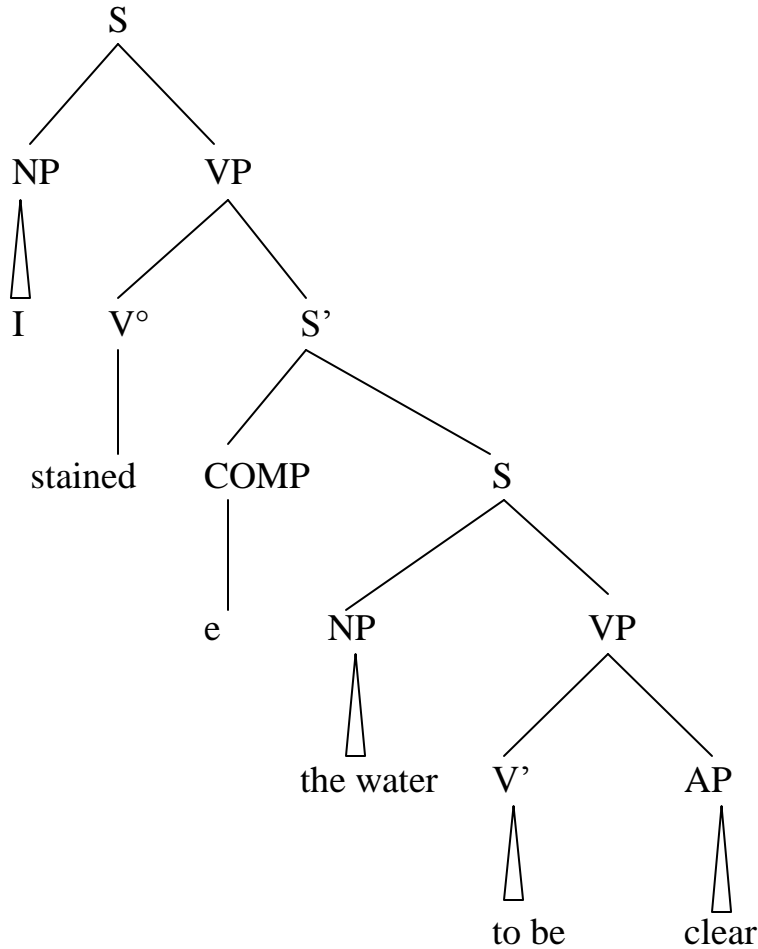
18a is a control clause with 'to be clear'. The matrix sentence 'I stained the water' has the subject of the control clause as its Objective NP. This can be represented on a tree as follows:

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Tree -9

The structure of the above sentence is similar to **Tree -3** and makes no difference. Hence, the difference is somewhere in the semantic level.

The idiosyncratic properties of the verb ‘stain’ should be considered. The word ‘stain’ is the antonym of ‘clear’.

The test for antonym as explained by Andrew Radford, et.al. (2009: 199) is:

‘X is tall’ entails ‘X is not short’.

‘X is short’ entails ‘X is not tall’.

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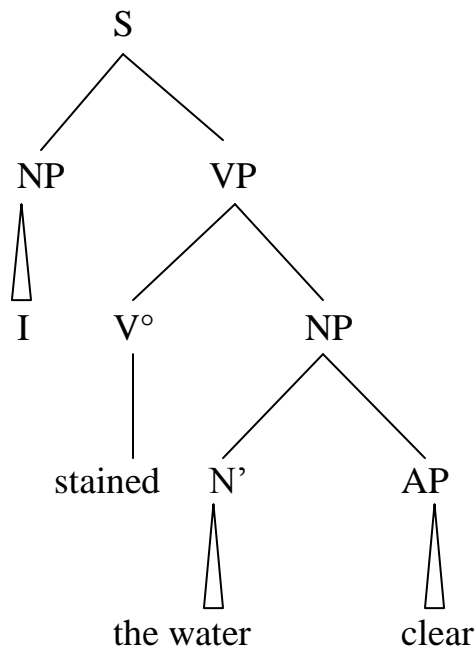
The test can be implemented on these lexical items:

‘The water is stained’ entails ‘The water is not clear’.

‘The water is clear’ entails ‘The water is not stained’.

So, what is stained cannot be or become clear. The reason for the unacceptability lies in the Semantic Level and not in the Syntactic Level.

Tree – 8 shows that the Relative Clause ‘which was clear’ lies within the NP ‘the water’ and so should be a part of it. Hence, their arrangement on the tree should be as follows:



Tree -10

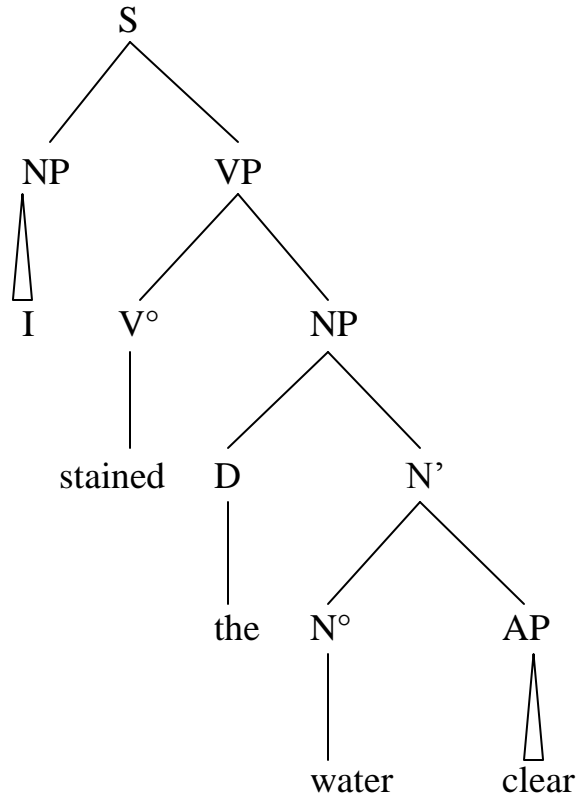
(OR)

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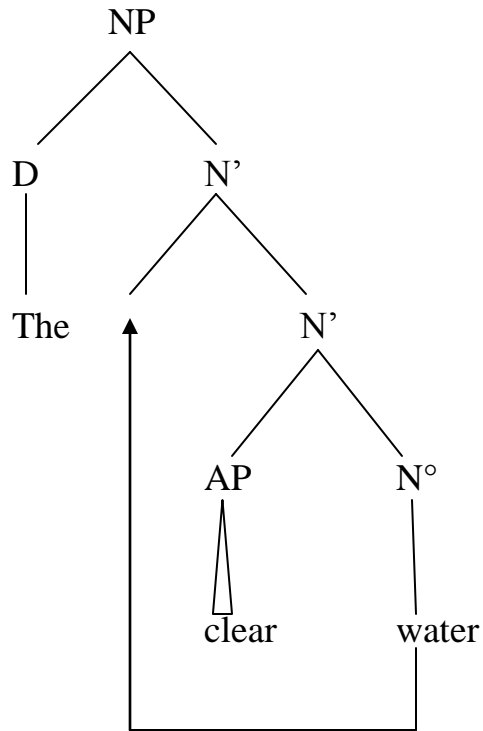
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Tree -11

The question of its movement should be answered now. English is a language which follows Bottom-Up process of Arrangement of lexical items. The syntactic movement is also unidirectional, that is, move towards the CP/S.

Interrogative Movement is an example for this. So in this case too the movement proves to be of N° to the level AP as shown below.



Tree -12

Conclusion

1. Adjectives are the sisters of N' under the maximal projection NP. They occur within NP. (**Tree -12**)
2. In Small Clause, the adjectives occur as sister of V' under the maximal projection of VP. (**Tree -6**)
3. Small Clauses are elliptical sentences (19a; 21a & **Tree -3**). The (to be) is deleted (19; 21). The stylistically moved N° can be paraphrased as Relative Clauses (18b; 20b) only.

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Colophon:

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I am responsible for any error found in this paper.

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