6 Adverbs, Prepositions and Conjunctions

In the last chapter little was said of extensions because these are not so likely to cause difficulty to modern readers and because they are often formed of prepositions which could be alternatively interpreted as adverbs. This applies also in Modern English since the extension may be separated from the verb element of the verbal group. Hence we can say ‘Drink up your beer’ or ‘Drink your beer up’. The unfamiliarity of Shakespearian idiom may sometimes make it difficult to decide whether a word like *up* should be interpreted as part of the verbal group or as an independent adverb, although the difference in meaning is not likely to be great. When Shakespeare writes ‘To fill the mouth of deepe Defiance *vp*’ (*1H4* III ii 116), it is possible to take *vp* either way, and most readers would probably think of it as the extension in the verbal group *fill vp*. Shakespeare has separated the *vp* from the verb to throw it into emphasis and so it has more the function of an adverb with the sense ‘to the brim, completely’. It is perhaps better to think of it as an adverb in order to bring home this extra meaning which Shakespeare intended. A more tricky example is provided in *King Richard the Third* when Richard says:

> for it stands me much *vpon*
> To stop all hopes, whose growth may dammage me. (IV ii 60–1)

Here *vpon* is to be taken as the extension of the verb with the sense ‘is incumbent upon, is imperative for’, rather than as a preposition which has been placed after the noun or pronoun it governs. However, in *Hamlet* the order of *stand* and *vpon* is reversed in:

> the moist starre,
> Vpon whose influence *Neptunes Empier* stands . . . . (I i 118–19, Q2)
Here *stands upon* could be taken as a verbal group meaning 'is dependent on', though the word order may encourage readers to think that *upon* has here more the nature of a preposition. However, extensions in verbal groups are not met with so frequently in Shakespeare because it was more usual to use prefixes to the verb. One might expect to find Elizabethan English preferring to use a verb form like *to outtake* rather than one like *to take out*. It was the gradual fall in the use of living prefixes which has caused the explosion of verbal extensions in Modern English. This meant that the relation between adverbial forms and extension of the verbal phrase was still unclear as in the case of *stand upon*. Other examples are not hard to find. They all show that there was a close relationship between adverb and preposition. In addition, the relation between conjunction and either adverb or preposition is close, and this is why this chapter is concerned with all three.

The adverb has many different origins, and there are few parts of speech that have not been converted into adverbs. In Old English adverbs were most commonly formed from adjectives through the addition of the ending *-a*. With the weak stress position it occupied at the end of the word, this *-a* was reduced at first to *-e* and then finally disappeared so that there was no difference in form between an adjective and an adverb. This situation upset the eighteenth-century grammarians who recommended that adverbs should end in *-ly* with the result that this ending was accepted as a sign of the adverb. Many adverbs without it were lost and most new ones since then tend to have it. This situation, however, did not prevail in Shakespearian times so that it is often impossible to tell whether an adjective or an adverb is intended. It may well be that Shakespeare himself did not know, for often it makes little difference to the sense whichever grammatical interpretation is made. When Polixenes says:

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We were (faire Queene)
Two Lads, that thought there was no more behind,
But such a day to morrow, as to day,
And to be Boy eternall
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(\textit{WT} I ii 62–5)

the final word can be understood as an adjective following the noun or as an adverb dependent upon *be*. The latter seems more likely, though the form of *eternal* may encourage modern readers to favour the former. The situation of these forms is confused by the occurrence