

On Grammar and Punctuation

Recently I had occasion
to reread little ee's poem
at least in part about
why grammarians make poor lovers,
and while I found it beautiful
and that it revealed
a truth,
like most truths it is
not the whole truth.

For instance, it assumes
the primacy of feeling when
(physiologically speaking)
actually perception first travels
to the frontal lobes
before going to the amigdala.
Obviously, when he speaks of syntax,
he is speaking about control,
but control can be a good thing
even in the context of love.
This is why the disintegration
of formal language skills is so important:
it denotes the acquiescence
of self control to control by another
endemic to our society.

In the beginning was language,
the creative and destructive power
of universes,
and to relinquish such power
without decision or even thinking
is something like a sin.
Without the rules of language
there is no language –
there are phonemes and morphemes
that can express information
but not in a systematic way.
When my dog barks,
information is conveyed,
but it is not through language
(even if I asked her to “speak”).

And so these people so cavalier
with their expression of thought

puzzle me.

Why bother to know the difference
between subject and object?
(Me and her understand each other.)

Why use modifiers properly?
(I'm just going to explain real quick.)

Why not use multiple question marks?
(How else can I convey the importance of my question???)

When something really excites me,
why not exclaim repeatedly?
(Since I exclaim constantly,
it is the only tool I have
to express intense emotion!!!)

(Should extra commas be next?)

I cannot abide
such illogic as that
which assumes extravagant
punctuation is an adequate
substitute for diction, syntax, and context.

It is the height of irony
that those who seem the least
interested in good language
skills are the ones
who feel most compelled
to communicate most frequently.
The volume of their jabber is
in inverse proportion
to its effectiveness.
They thirst to be understood by others
but lack the discipline to do it,
and so they must make allowances.
They tell us "lol" instead of actually
being funny.

So I am an advocate
for grammar and punctuation,
an apostle for home rule;
I am every inch the zealot.
I can be a sport about it, though;

I don't worry much
about things like split infinitives.
However, I refuse to be kind
about those eager
to give their power and glory
to someone else
and then demand I listen.

The Ardens,
Shakespeare's mother's family,
were zealots of another kind
and tortured for it
in the Tower
in the chamber known as "Little Ease"
before they were executed.
Death is no parenthesis,
and those who treat it as such
won't ever even realize they are sorry.

– Jeffery Greb