'HOW MUCH I LOVE THIS WRITER'S MANLY STYLE!':

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TENNYSON AND OTHER POETS

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1. Introduction

Alfred Tennyson (1809–1892)

- 19th century (the Victorian) English poet
- Thousands of studies on his poems, life & style

- Various ALLUSIONS, ECHOES or BORROWINGS have been indicated
- Ricks (1969; 1987) indicated numerous associations with other poets

1. Introduction

- Shaw (1976: 27) counted the allusions cited by Ricks (1969)

  - The Bible: 272
  - Milton: 213
  - Shakespeare: 155
  - Shelley: 129

  - Keats: 86
  - Pope: 26
  - Wordsworth: 25

- *Poems by Two Brothers* (1827)

  '[M]ostly imitative in the fashionable style of the day'

  (Delphi Poet Series 20, Complete Works of Alfred, Lord Tennyson)

- Lionel Stevenson traced "[T]he influence of Shelley, especially on the *young* Tennyson." (Shaw, 1976:28)

1. Introduction: Thomas (2019: 85–86)

A **WHIRL**-BLAST from behind the hill

Rushed o'er the wood with startling sound:

Then — **all at once** the air was still,

And showers of Hilstones pattered round.

Where leafless Oaks towered high above,

I sat within an undergrove

Of tallest holies, tall and **green**;

A firer bower was never seen.

From year to year the spacious floor

With **withered leaves** is covered o'er,

And all the year the bower is **green**.

(William Wordsworth,

'A WHIRL-BLAST from behind the hill', 1807: ll. 1–11)

In **those fall'n leaves** which kept their **green**,

The noble letters of the dead:

[…]

So word by word, and line by line   +

   The dead man touched me from the past,

   And **all at once** it seemed at last   ○

The living soul was flashed on mine,

And mine in this was wound, and **whirled**

   About empyreal heights of thought,

   And came on that which is, and caught

The deep pulsations of the world.

(Alfred Tennyson,

In Memoriam A.H.H., 1850: XCV. ll. 23–24, 33–40)

1. Introduction

- "**To exist or not to exist:** example generation in Real Analysis"

$\hspace{8cm}$ (Bold added, Furinghetti et al., 2011)

  -- > "To be or not to be, that is the question"

$\hspace{6cm}$ (William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* SceneI ActIII)

- Contents (semantic elements/meanings) are important elements to interpret works (needless to say)

  WHAT are expressed/written in poems

- However, other factors (function words, syntax, etc) also influence our perception

  HOW they are expressed/written

1. Introduction

- Whose "HOW" (style) is most similar/different to/from Tennyson?

- What are the common/different elements with Tennyson?

2. Methodology

How can I observe similarities and differences?

- Cluster Analysis (CA)
  - A statistical method
  - calculates word frequencies and deduces the degree of similarities in frequency values
  - Authorship attribution

    e.g. Hoover (2012), Rybicki and Heydel(2013),
    Rybicki (2012), Eder (2017)

- R package: `stylo`

  (Rybicki and Kestemont, 2016)
- Relative frequencies (z-scored)
- Euclidean distance/Ward method

Frequency of (the, of)

(3, 10)

(3, 2)

(3, 3)

(3, 2)

not similar

similar
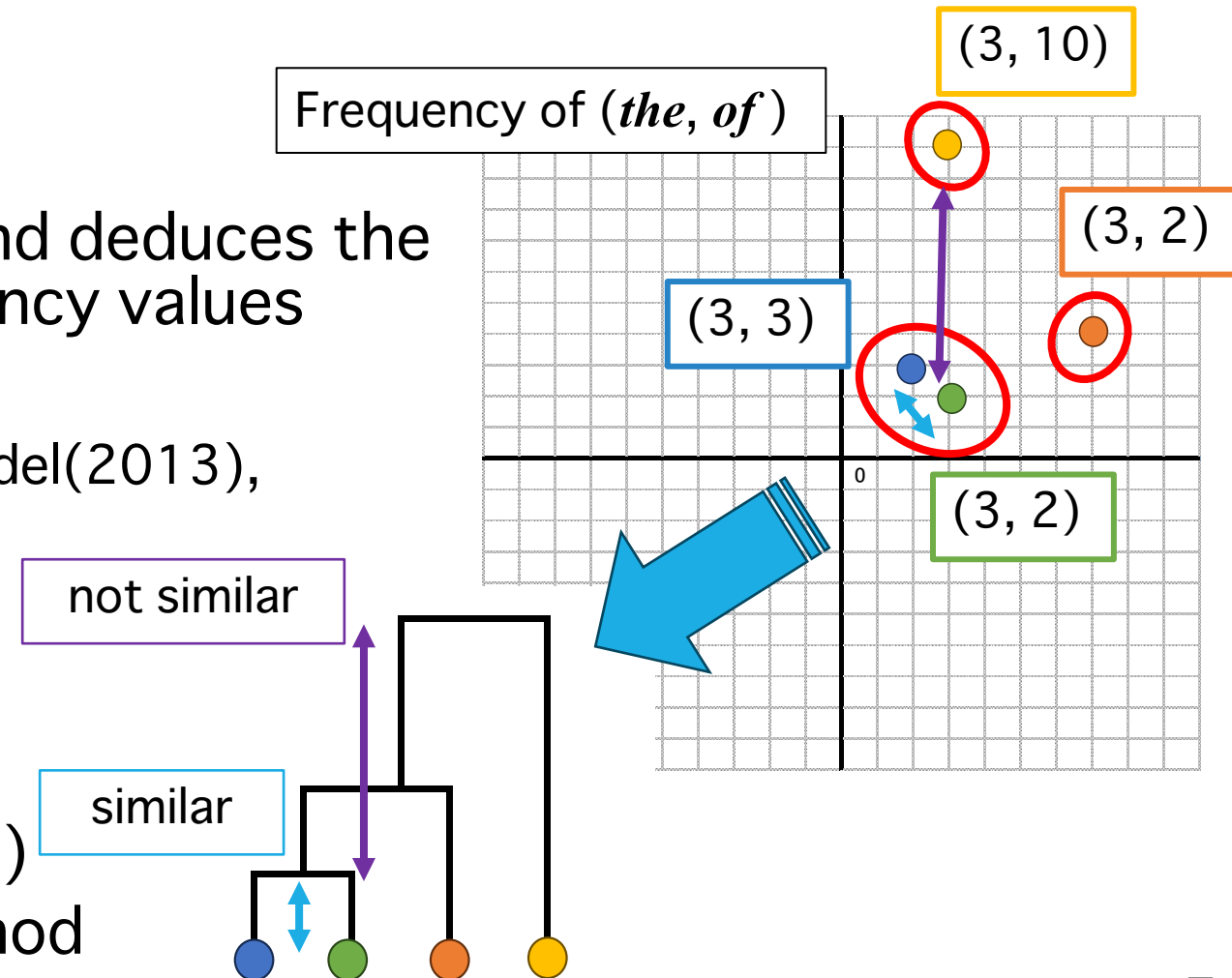
3. Data

Authors	No. of works
Alexander Pope	216
William Wordsworth	307
Samuel Taylor Coleridge	495
George Gordon Byron	288
John Keats	147
Percy Bysshe Shelley	313
Robert Southey	301
Alfred Tennyson	**593**
Robert Browning	204
Dante Gabriel Rossetti	296
Christina Georgina Rossetti	210
Algernon Charles Swinburne	547
Matthew Arnold	117
TOTAL	**4,034**

- 100 most frequent words

- Words more than 101 MFW: only appear less than 30% of all poems
(less than 1,210 works)

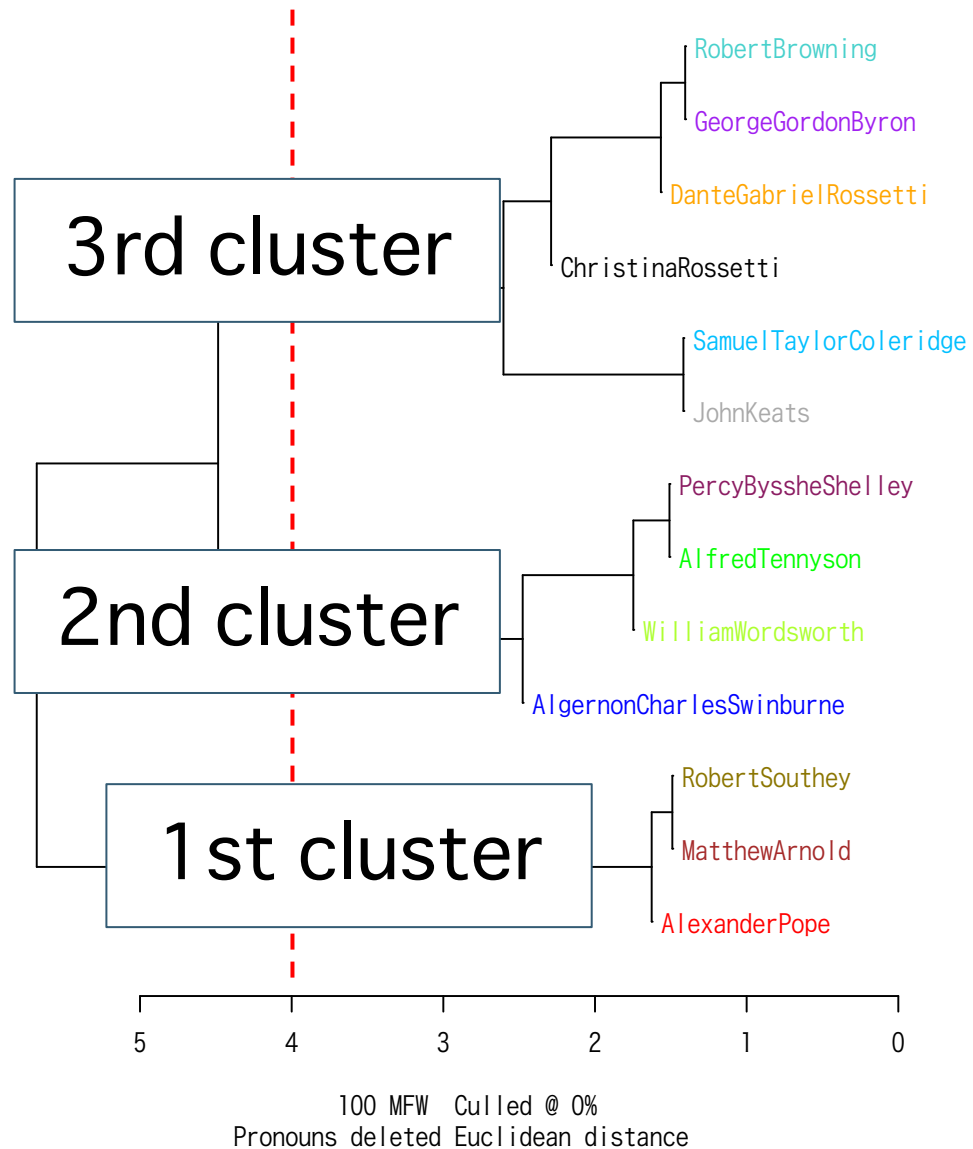- Practices: 50 MFW, 100 MFW, 200 MFW, 500 MFW; no crucial difference observed

1700s from Shaw (1973)
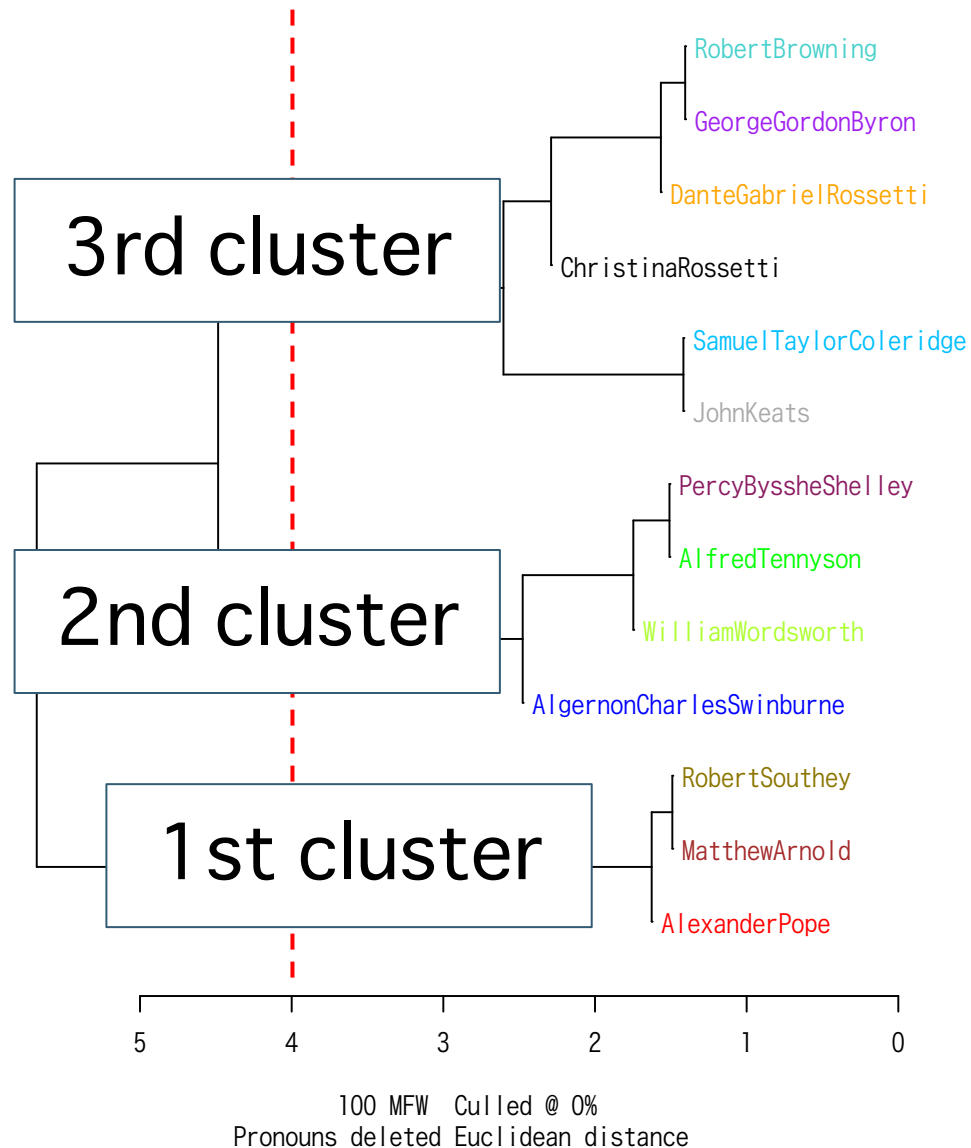1800s refer to Harvy (1937)

4. Results I: Each author (100MFW)

Cluster Analysis

RobertBrowning

GeorgeGordonByron

DanteGabrielRossetti

3rd cluster

ChristinaRossetti

SamuelTaylorColeridge

JohnKeats

PercyByssheShelley

AlfredTennyson

2nd cluster

WilliamWordsworth

AlgernonCharlesSwinburne

RobertSouthey

1st cluster

MatthewArnold

AlexanderPope

5   4   3   2   1   0

100 MFW Culled @ 0%
Pronouns deleted Euclidean distance

Cluster Analysis

3rd cluster

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5   4   3   2   1   0

100 MFW Culled @ 0%
Pronouns deleted Euclidean distance

Compared to other clusters,

- **3rd cluster**: fewer frequency of *the*, slightly more usage of *as* (but Swinburne is the most), high frequencies of auxiliaries (*shall, will, may, would, should, could, can, might, **must***)

- **2nd cluster**: higher frequency of *and, of, that, with*
- 2nd cluster: barely use *for*

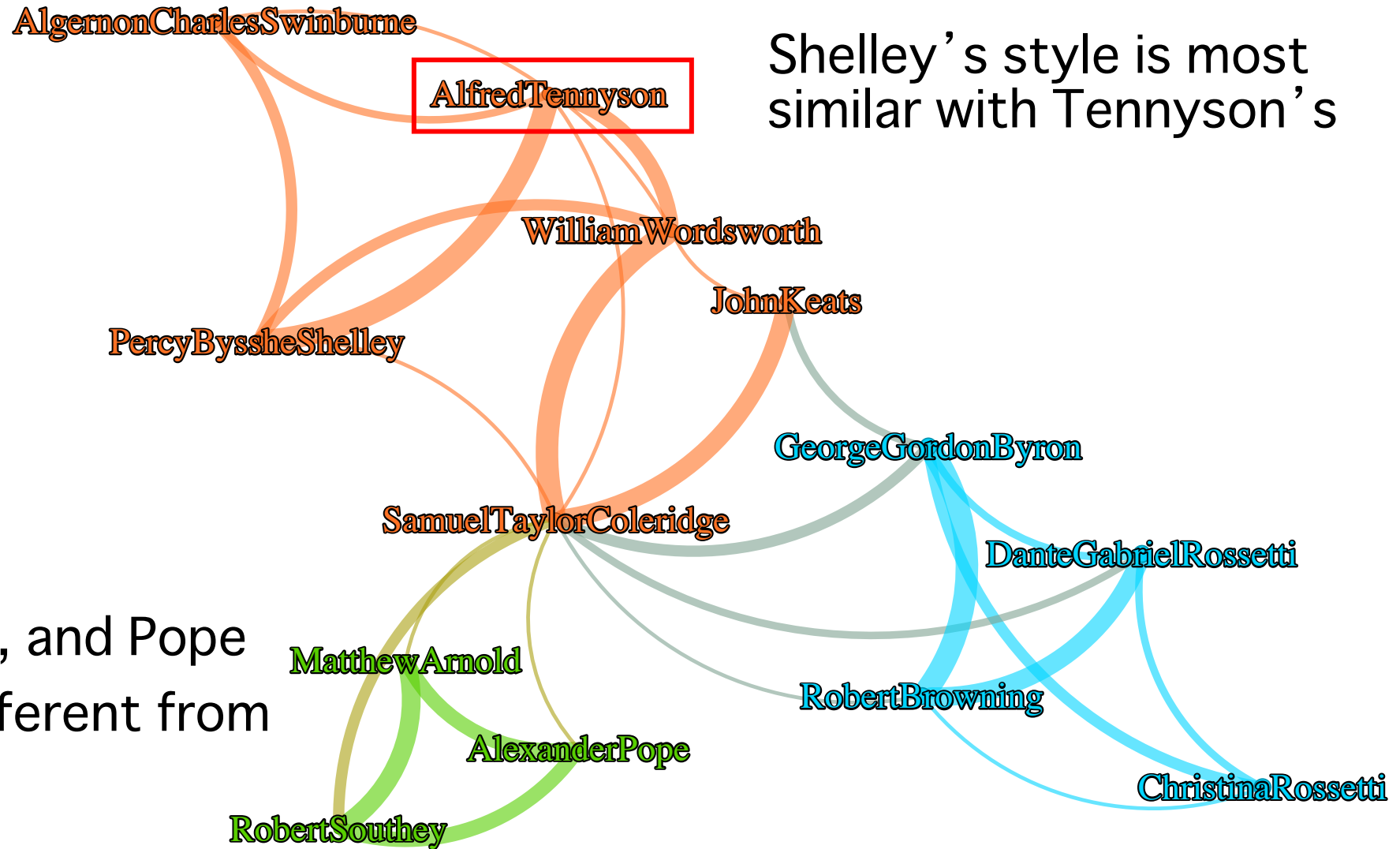- **1st cluster**: less use of *all, is, was* (besides Southey), *it*

Cluster Analysis

RobertBrowning
GeorgeGordonByron
DanteGabrielRossetti
ChristinaRossetti
SamuelTaylorColeridge
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5   4   3   2   1   0

100 MFW Culled @ 0%
Pronouns deleted Euclidean distance

Focusing on Tennyson,

- Shortage of frequencies of (')s & (') d

   's : *Ken's, it's* (*has, is*)

   'd : *we'd* (*would, had*), *follow'd* (*followed*)

- s: clearly deviated frequency
- d: Swinburne, Shelley, Crossetti, Browning also have very low frequency

- lowest frequency of *now* (0.1776) but 2nd highest frequency (0.3338) of *then*

11

AlgernonCharlesSwinburne

AlfredTennyson

Shelley's style is most
similar with Tennyson's

WilliamWordsworth

JohnKeats

PercyByssheShelley

GeorgeGordonByron

SamuelTaylorColeridge

DanteGabrielRossetti

Southey, Arnold, and Pope
are the most different from
Tennyson

MatthewArnold

RobertBrowning

AlexanderPope

RobertSouthey

ChristinaRossetti

Gephi (Bastian et al.,2009)

12

4. Results I: Each author (100MFW)

- Are all works of Shelley and Tennyson close?
- Is there any tendency?

  cf. Lionel Stevenson traced '[T]he influence of Shelley, especially on the young Tennyson.' (Shaw, 1976:28) (to notify again)

- Analyse each work of Tennyson (593 poems) and Shelley (313 poems)

- *'s, had* appear in a few works, tend to occur frequently in particular works
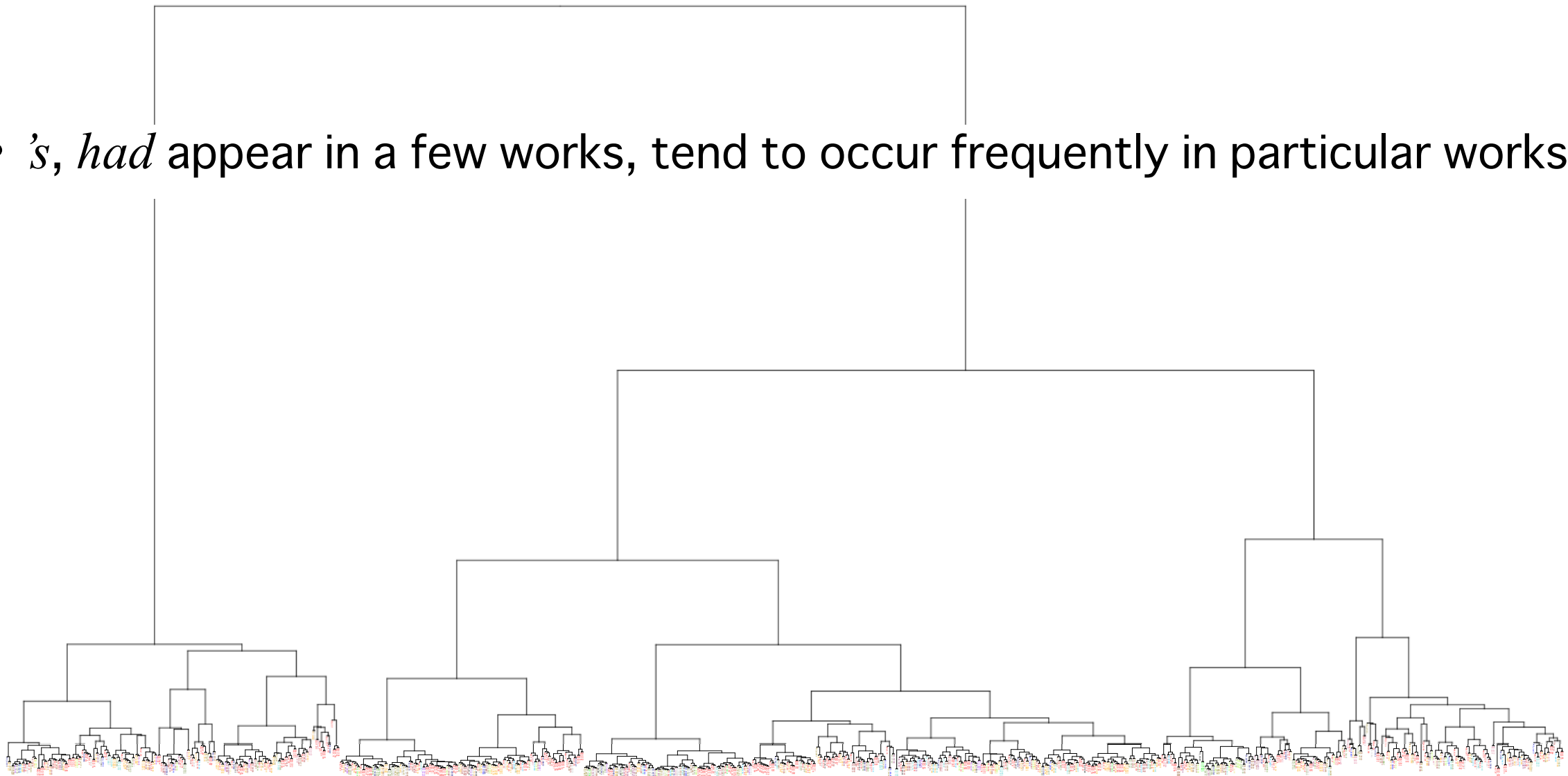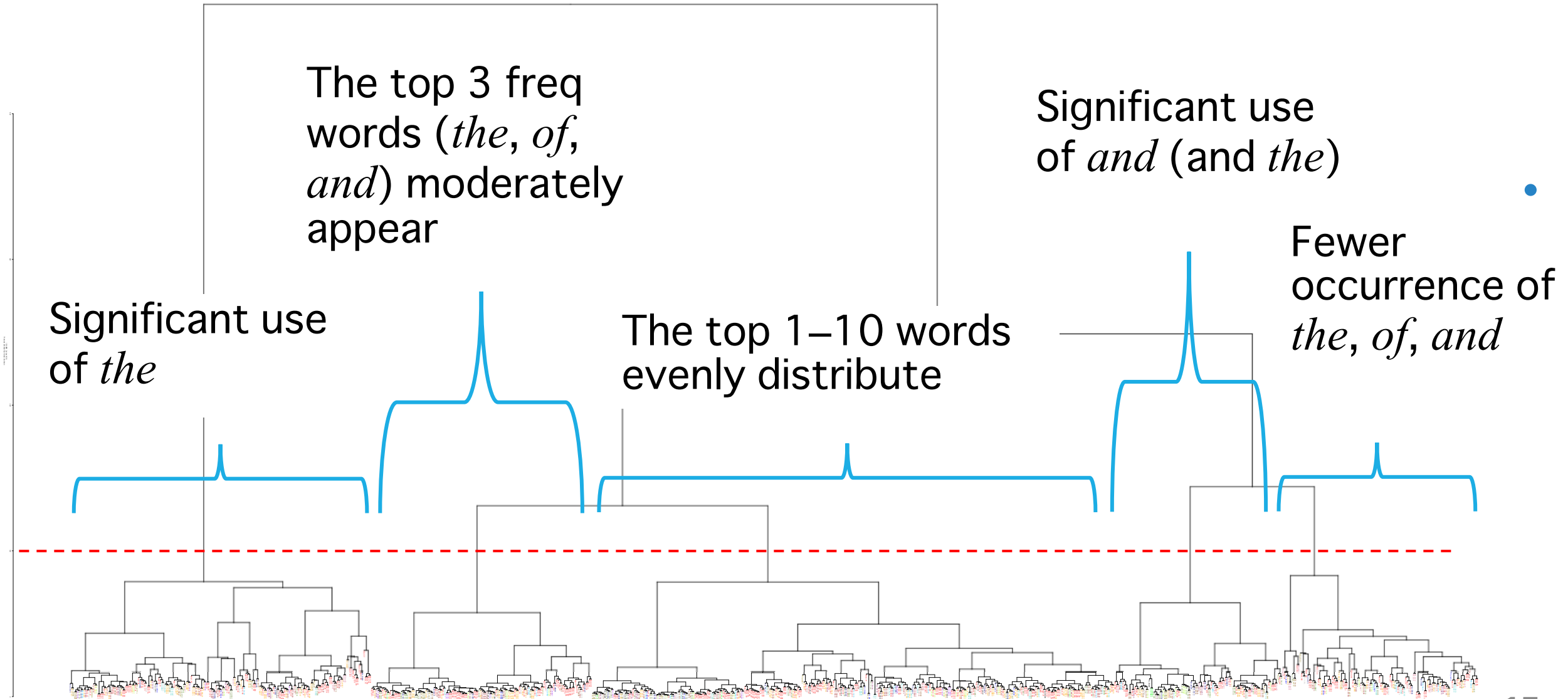
The top 3 freq words (*the*, *of*, *and*) moderately appear

Significant use of *and* (and *the*)

Significant use of *the*

The top 1–10 words evenly distribute

Fewer occurrence of *the*, *of*, *and*
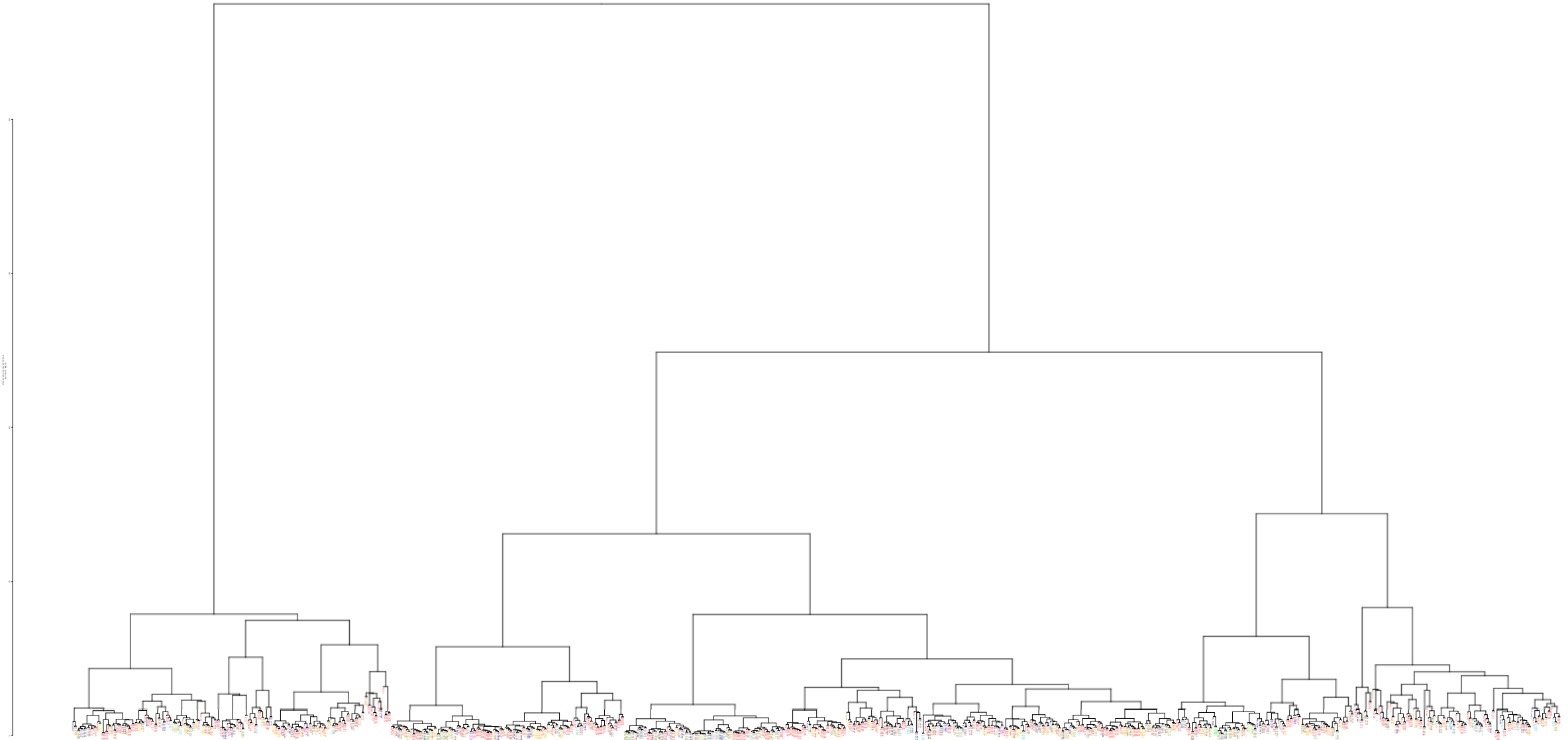
Tennyson & Shelley very close work pairs/groups

- 93 pairs/groups
- 34 written/published in 1820s
- 20 written/published in 1830s

-- > Tennyson's early works tend to be similar with Shelley (more than 50% of the pairs)

- Mostly (more than 90% of the pairs) are lyrical poems
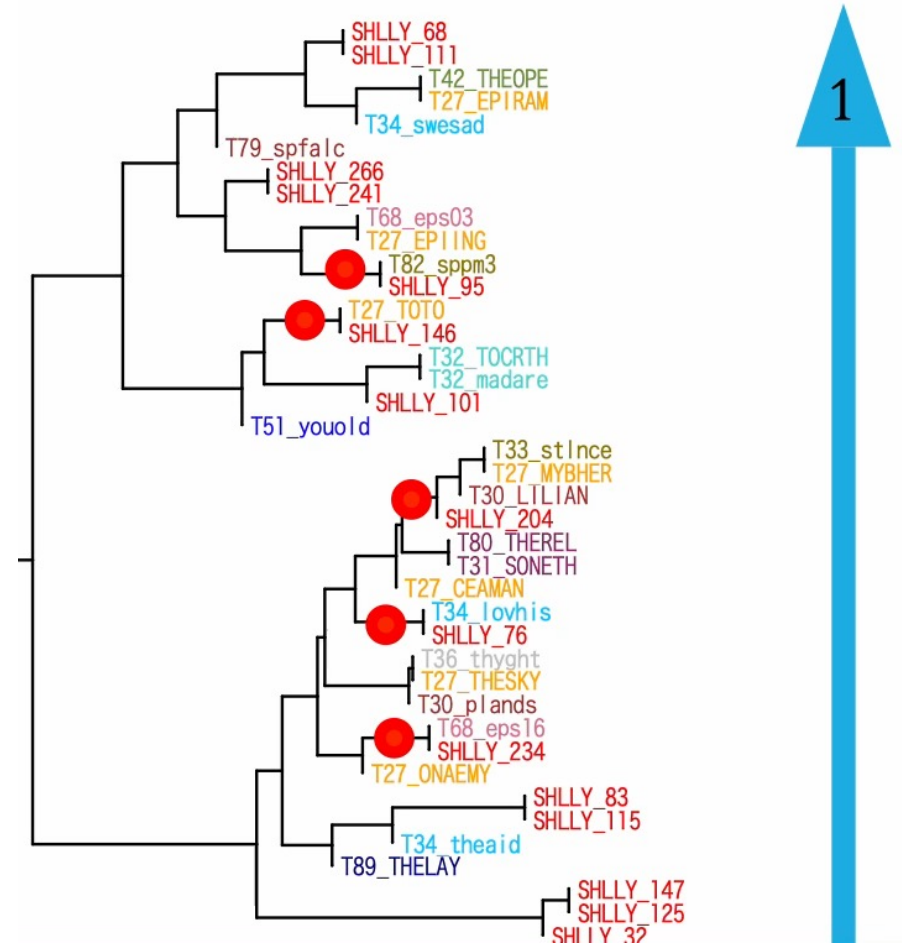
Great Spirit whom the sea of boundless thought

Nurtures within its unimagined caves,

In which thou sittest sole, as in my mind,

Giving a voice to its mysterious waves —

(Shelley, "Great Spirit (Fragment)"*)

*published in 1870 by Rossetti

LADY! you threw a glance at me,

I knew its meaning well;

He who has loved, and only he,

Its mysteries can tell:

That hieroglyphic of the brain,

Which none but Cupid's priests explain.

(Tennyson, "A Glance", 1827)

The cold earth slept below,
Above the cold sky shone;
And all around, with a chilling sound,
From caves of ice and fields of snow,
The breath of night like death did flow
Beneath the sinking moon.
The wintry hedge was black,
The green grass was not seen,
The birds did rest on the bare thorn's breast,
Whose roots, beside the pathway track,
Had bound their folds o'er many a crack
Which the frost had made between.
Thine eyes glowed in the glare

Of the moon's dying light;
As a fen-fire's beam on a sluggish stream
Gleams dimly, so the moon shone there,
And it yellowed the strings of thy raven hair,
That shook in the wind of night.
The moon made thy lips pale, beloved —
The wind made thy bosom chill —
The night did shed on thy dear head
Its frozen dew, and thou didst lie
Where the bitter breath of the naked sky
Might visit thee at will.

(Shelley, "The cold earth slept below", 1823)

Come hither canst thou tell me if this skull
Which I thus handle was the bold Turenne?
Or is thine intellect so dense and dull
Thou dost not know it by its marks? What then?
Death levels all The crown, the crimsoned flags,
The scutcheons of the mighty robed in black,
Are no more in Death's eye than those poor rags
Which the wind sports with on the beggar's back.
When the great Henri from his tomb was raised,
The jest of all the rabble that stood by,
He whose bright fame so brilliantly had blazed,
The star, the meteor of his century,
That glorious monarch, at whose nod the throne
Of Empire tottered to its base, was brought

And reared before the people on a stone
To work them sport (Oh! souls without a thought
Save the blind impulse of the brutal zeal
Which urges the mad populace to vent
Upon the breathless dead that cannot feel,
The fury of their senseless chastisement).
There came a woman from the crowd and smote
The corpse upon the cheek: to earth it fell,
That eye was dim, that glorious tongue was mute,
The soul had fled its cold receptacle.

(Tennyson, "Come Hither, Canst Thou Tell Me If This Skull", 1827)

5. Conclusion

- Arnold's, Southey's, and Pope's verse texts are most different from Tennyson
  - Arnold & Southey: less use of *all*, *is*, *was* (besides Southey), *it*
  - Tennyson, Shelley, Wordsworth, Swinburne: higher frequency of *and*, *of*, *that*, *with*
  - Tennyson: Shortage of frequencies of *'s* & *'d*

- Shelley and Tennyson are closest among the 13 poets
  - Tennyson's poems written in 1820s and 1830s tend to have similarities with Shelley

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