

- (i) As geographical units, they are treated as class (i), *ie* inanimate:

Here is a map of France. *It's* one of the largest countries of Europe.

- (ii) As political/economic units, the names of countries are often feminine, *ie* class (b) or (g):

France *has* been able to increase *her* exports by 10 per cent over the last six months.

England *is* proud of *her* poets.

- (iii) In sports, the teams representing their countries can be referred to by the name of the country used as a personal collective noun, *ie* class (e) <esp BrE>:

France $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{has} \\ \textit{have} \langle \text{BrE} \rangle \end{array} \right\}$ improved $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{its} \\ \textit{their} \langle \text{esp BrE} \rangle \end{array} \right\}$ chances of winning the cup.

In AmE there may be number variation in the pronoun (but not in the verb, which is singular) in this construction.

Note Inanimate entities, such as ships, towards which we have an intense and close personal relationship, may be referred to by personal pronouns, *eg*:

That's a lovely ship. What is *she/it* called?

In nonstandard and Australian English, there is extension of *she* references to include those of antipathy as well as affection, *eg*:

She's an absolute bastard, this truck.

Case

Common case and genitive case

- 5.112 We shall distinguish between two cases of nouns: the unmarked COMMON CASE (*eg*: *boy* in the singular, *boys* in the plural) and the marked GENITIVE CASE (*eg*: *boy's* in the singular, *boys'* in the plural). Case in pronouns will be discussed in 6.2ff; on the genitive in relation to the *of*-construction, *cf* 5.115.

Distinctions of case mark the structural and semantic function of noun phrases within sentences. It is arguable, as we shall see, that even the common/genitive distinction in present-day English is not really a case distinction, although it is a relic of a former case system comparable to that of Latin or of modern Russian (*cf* 5.123). We adhere to established terminology in this respect, but since the common case is simply the form used when the genitive is not used, our attention in the following sections will be devoted to the genitive.

The 'central', but far from the only use of the genitive, is to express possession: to this extent the term 'possessive' is fittingly applied to genitive pronouns like *his*. We may compare:

The children's toys are new. ['the toys belonging to the children']

Their toys are new. ['the toys belonging to them']

But it should be borne in mind that the label 'possessive' does not adequately apply to all uses (cf 5.116).

The forms of the genitive inflection

- 5.113 The genitive of regular nouns is realized in speech only in the singular, where it takes one of the forms /ɪz/, /z/, or /s/, following the rules for the -s inflection of nouns (cf 5.80) and verbs (cf 3.5). In writing, the inflection of regular nouns is realized in the singular by apostrophe + s (*boy's*), and in the regular plural by the apostrophe following the plural -s (*boys'*).

As a result, the spoken form /spatʒ/ may realize three forms of the noun *spy* as follows:

- The *spies* were arrested. [plural, common case]
 The *spy's* companion was a woman. [singular, genitive case]
 The *spies'* companions were women. [plural, genitive case]

Since the genitive adds nothing to a regular plural noun in speech, and nothing except the final apostrophe in writing, this plural genitive may be called the ZERO GENITIVE.

By contrast, some nouns with irregular plural like *child* preserve a number distinction independently of the genitive singular and genitive plural distinctions:

child ~ *child's*, *children* ~ *children's*

With such irregular plurals, as Fig 5.113 shows, the same genitive ending (spelled 's) occurs with both singular and plural nouns.

	REGULAR -S PLURAL		IRREGULAR PLURAL	
	singular	plural	singular	plural
SPOKEN				
common	/bɔɪ/		/tʃaɪld/	/'tʃɪldrən/
genitive		/bɔɪz/	/tʃaɪldz/	/'tʃɪldrənz/
WRITTEN				
common	<i>boy</i>	<i>boys</i>	<i>child</i>	<i>children</i>
genitive	<i>boy's</i>	<i>boys'</i>	<i>child's</i>	<i>children's</i>

Fig 5.113 The genitive inflection with regular and irregular plurals

- Note [a] In addition to representing different case forms of the noun *spy*, the pronunciation /spatʒ/ could of course also be the -s form of the verb, as in [1], or the noun with the contracted form of *is* [2], or *has* [3] (cf 3.32f):

- He *spies* on behalf of an industrial firm. [1]
 The *spy's* here. [2]
 The *spy's* been cycling along the coast. [3]

- [b] In postmodified noun phrases, there is a difference between the plural and the genitive endings, because the genitive ending is added to the end of the phrase, not to the end of the head noun (cf 'group genitives', 5.123):

- The palace was *the King of Denmark's*.
 They praised *the Kings of Denmark*.

The 'zero genitive'

5.114 In addition to its normal use with regular plurals such as *boys'*, the 'zero genitive' is used to avoid repetitive or awkward combinations of sounds in the following cases (cf Fig 5.114):

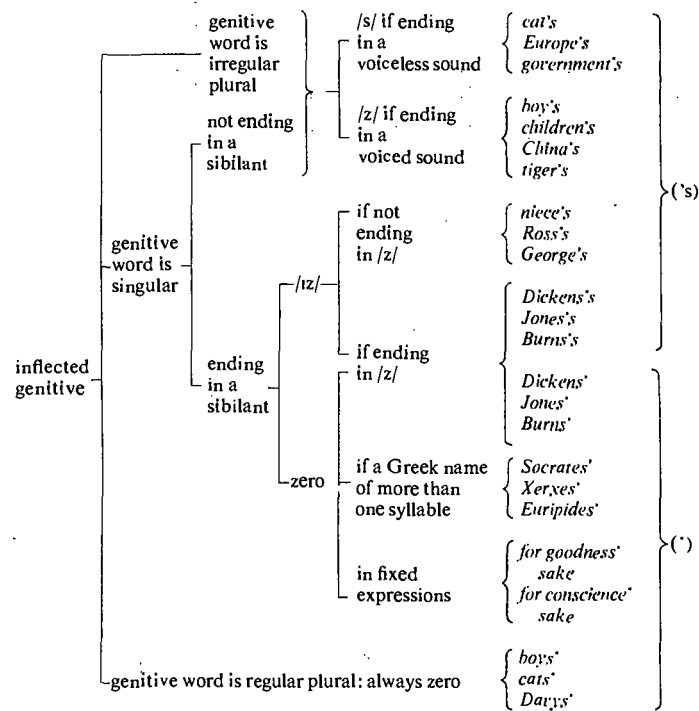


Fig 5.114 The forms of the inflected genitive

(i) with Greek names of more than one syllable which end in -s, as in:

Euripides' /di:z/ plays, *Xerxes'* army, *Socrates'* wife

(ii) with many other names ending in /z/ where, in speech, zero is a variant of the regular /tʒ/ genitive. There is vacillation both in the pronunciation and in the spelling of these names, but most commonly the pronunciation is /tʒ/, and the spelling is an apostrophe only. (In the following examples, the minority forms are given in parentheses.)

WRITTEN FORMS	SPOKEN FORMS
<i>Burns'</i> (<i>Burns's</i>) poem	/ˈbɜːnzɪz (bɜːˈnɪz)/
<i>Dickens'</i> (<i>Dickens's</i>) novels	/ˈdɪkɪnzɪz (ˈdɪkɪnɪz)/
<i>Jones'</i> (<i>Jones's</i>) car	/ˈdʒəʊnzɪz (dʒəʊnɪz)/

Names ending in other sibilants than /z/ have the regular /tʒ/ genitive: *Ross's*

/sɪz/ theories. However, *Jesus* and *Moses* normally have the zero form of the spoken genitive and are written *Jesus'* and *Moses'* (as well as *Jesus's* and *Moses's*).

(iii) with fixed expressions of the form *for . . . sake*, as in *for goodness' sake*, *for conscience' sake*, where the noun ends in /s/ (cf 5.120).

The genitive and the *of*-construction

- 5.115 In many instances there is a similarity of function and meaning between a noun in the genitive case and the same noun as head of a prepositional phrase with *of* (sometimes called the '*of*-genitive'). The genitive inflection of [1], where *ship's* precedes and determines the head noun *name*, corresponds to the *OF-CONSTRUCTION* of the prepositional phrase in [1a], where *of the ship* postmodifies the head *name*:

What is	<i>the ship's name?</i>	[1]
	<i>the name of the ship?</i>	[1a]

In many cases, like [1] and [1a], the two forms are equivalent in meaning and are both perfectly acceptable. In other cases, either the genitive or the *of*-construction is the only appropriate choice:

<i>John's school</i>	BUT NOT: ? <i>the school of John</i>
<i>the front of the house</i>	BUT NOT: * <i>the house's front</i>

For further discussion of the *of*-construction, and its relation to the genitive, cf 5.116ff and, in particular, 17.38ff, where the *of*-construction is also compared with other types of postmodification. Our purpose in this chapter is to examine the genitive as a construction in its own right, and to indicate the semantic as well as the syntactic restrictions on its use.

The use of the genitive is determined by a combination of structural and semantic conditions. We will look in turn at

- (i) the meanings expressed by the relation between the genitive noun and its head noun (cf 5.116)
- (ii) the type of noun taking the genitive (cf 5.117–119)
- (iii) the type of noun acting as head (cf 5.120)

Genitive meanings

- 5.116 The meaning expressed by the genitive can best be shown by sentential or phrasal analogues such as we present below. For comparison, a corresponding use of the *of*-construction is given where this is acceptable.

- | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| (a) POSSESSIVE GENITIVE | |
| <i>my wife's father</i> | My wife has a father. |
| <i>Mrs Johnson's passport</i> | Mrs Johnson has a passport. |
| <i>the earth's gravity</i> | The earth has (a certain) gravity. |
| <i>of the gravity of the earth</i> | |
| (b) SUBJECTIVE GENITIVE | |
| <i>the boy's application</i> | The boy applied for . . . |
| <i>her parents' consent</i> | Her parents consented. |
| <i>of the decline of trade</i> | Trade declined. |

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- (c) OBJECTIVE GENITIVE
the family's support (. . .) supports the family.
the boy's release (. . .) released the boy.
cf a statement of the facts (. . .) stated the facts.
- (d) GENITIVE OF ORIGIN
the girl's story The girl told a story.
the general's letter The general wrote a letter.
?France's wines France produces wines,
cf the wines of France
- (e) DESCRIPTIVE GENITIVE (cf 5.122)
a women's college a college for women
a summer's day a summer day, a day in the summer
a doctor's degree a doctoral degree, a doctorate
cf the degree of doctor
- (f) GENITIVE OF MEASURE
ten days' absence The absence lasted ten days.
cf an absence of ten days
- (g) GENITIVE OF ATTRIBUTE
the victim's courage { The victim had courage.
The victim was courageous.
The party has a (certain) policy.
the party's policy
cf the policy of the party
- (h) PARTITIVE GENITIVE
the baby's eyes The baby has (blue) eyes.
the earth's surface The earth has a (rough) surface.
cf the surface of the earth

Note [a] There is a tendency for genitives to be taken as subjective, and for *of*-constructions to be taken as objective. Thus, with inadequate context, a phrase like [1] is likely to be interpreted as 'The family supports . . .', but [2] as ' . . . examined the fire department' (cf 17.41ff):

the family's support [1]
the examination of the fire department [2]

[b] A marginal additional category, the genitive of apposition, may be mentioned: *Dublin's fair city* (cf: *Dublin, a fair city*). In today's usage, however, this is normally replaced by an appositive *of*-construction (cf 17.47, 17.89): *the city of Dublin*.

[c] On the use of the genitive to denote close family relationships (*Peter's Jane*), cf 5.63 Note [c].

Gender of the genitive noun

5.117 The semantic classification in 5.116 is in part arbitrary. For example, one could claim that *cow's milk* is not a genitive of origin ['milk from a cow'] but a descriptive genitive ['the kind of milk obtained from a cow'], or even a subjective genitive ['The cow provided the milk']. For this reason, meanings and sentential analogues can give only inconclusive help in choosing between the genitive and the *of*-construction.

The choice can be more securely related to the gender class of the genitive noun. Generally speaking, the genitive is favoured for classes which are

highest on the gender scale (*cf* Fig 5.104), *ie* 'personal' nouns (particularly those referring to human beings and higher animals) and collective nouns with personal gender characteristics. Relating this to 5.104, we may infer that the possessive use is especially associated with the genitive because we think of 'possession' chiefly in terms of our own species. It is possible to see the partitive genitive at the opposite pole on comparable grounds: the marginal acceptability of *?the house's roof* matches the irrelevance of personal gender to a noun denoting something which is merely being measured or dissected.

Further factors influencing the choice of genitive are the principles of end-focus and end-weight (*cf* 17.45, 18.3*f*), which encourage the placing of more complex and communicatively more important units towards the end of the noun phrase. According to the principle of end-focus, the genitive tends to give information focus to the head noun, whereas the *of*-construction tends to give focus to the prepositional complement:

The explosion damaged *the ship's funnel*. [*funnel* in focus]
 Having looked at all the funnels, she considered that the most handsome was *the funnel of the Orion*. [*the Orion* in focus]

This principle is congruent again with the preference for the *of*-construction with partitive and appositive meaning, where the genitive would result in undesirable or absurd final prominence:

**the problem's part, *his resignation's shock*

The preference for placing complex constructions after the head accounts for the oddity of [1] (*cf* 5.123) in comparison with [1a]:

?She is *a man I met in the army's* daughter. [1]
 She is the daughter *of a man I met in the army*. [1a]

And conversely, it accounts for the oddity of the *of*-construction with simple form, *eg* [2a], as compared to [2], which shows the normal preference for a possessive pronoun:

She is *his* daughter. [2]
 ?She is the daughter *of him*. [2a]

(On the 'post-genitive' in *a daughter of his*, *cf* 5.126.)

- Note [a] The relevance of personal gender is shown also in the fact that indefinite pronouns with personal reference (*cf* 6.9), such as *someone* and *anybody*, admit the genitive inflection, while equivalent pronouns with nonpersonal reference do not: *someone's shadow*, but not **something's shadow*.
- [b] Some idioms, in spite of end-focus, require a construction in which the personal pronoun is complement in a postmodifying *of*-phrase:
- It will be the death *of me*.
 the impudence *of him*
 the cheek *of her* ['her rude behaviour'; BUT: 'I kissed her cheek.'
 I don't like the taste/look/feel, etc *of it*.
 For the life *of me*, I cannot remember her name, and yet my memory *of her* is still vivid.
 The last example also illustrates the tendency (mentioned in 5.116 Note [a]) to use such a construction where the *of*-phrase has an objective meaning (compare: *my memory of her* 'I remember her').

The genitive in relation to noun classes

5.118 The noun classes (a–c) frequently take the genitive (*cf* 17.38ff):

(a) PERSONAL NAMES (*cf* 5.66):

Segovia's pupil, *George Washington's* statue

(b) PERSONAL NOUNS (*cf* 5.105):

the boy's new bicycle, *my sister-in-law's* problems

(c) ANIMAL NOUNS, in particular those denoting 'higher animals' (*cf* 5.109):

the horse's tail, *the dog's* collar

(d) COLLECTIVE NOUNS. The genitive is also used with collective nouns (*cf* 5.108) which emphasize the aspect of 'organized individuals', in particular those denoting authoritative and other organizational bodies, *eg*:

the government's economic plans *the nation's* resources
the committee's decision *the Company's* directors

The genitive is further used with certain kinds of inanimate nouns (e–h):

(e) GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES (*cf* 5.68), *eg*:

continents: *Europe's* future, *Australasia's* natural resources
countries: *China's* development, *the United States'* attitude
states: *Maryland's* Democratic Senator, *Rhode Island's* colonial period
cities and towns: *Hollywood's* studios, *London's* water supply
universities: *Harvard's* Department of Linguistics

(f) 'LOCATIVE NOUNS' denoting regions, institutions, heavenly bodies, etc. They can be very similar to geographical names, and are often written with initial capital letter, *eg*:

<i>the earth's</i> interior	<i>the Church's</i> mission
<i>the world's</i> economy	<i>the hotel's</i> entrance
<i>the nation's</i> waterways	<i>a country's</i> population
<i>the Club's</i> pianist	<i>the city's</i> atmosphere
<i>the Gallery's</i> rotunda	<i>the school's</i> history

(g) TEMPORAL NOUNS, *eg*:

<i>the decade's</i> events	<i>this year's</i> sales
<i>a day's</i> work	<i>today's</i> paper
<i>a moment's</i> thought	<i>the hockey season's</i> first event

(h) OTHER NOUNS 'OF SPECIAL RELEVANCE TO HUMAN ACTIVITY', *eg*:

<i>the brain's</i> total weight	<i>the game's</i> history
<i>the mind's</i> development	<i>science's</i> influence
<i>the body's</i> needs	<i>love's</i> spirit
<i>my life's</i> aim	<i>the play's</i> philosophy
<i>in freedom's</i> name	<i>the book's</i> true importance
<i>the treaty's</i> ratification	<i>the novel's</i> structure
<i>duty's</i> call	<i>a word's</i> function
<i>the poll's</i> results	<i>television's</i> future

Note [a] It seems that semantic relations other than possession (cf 5.117) place stronger restrictions on the 'personal' quality of the genitive noun than does possession itself. For example:

Table 5.118 Possessive and objective genitive with personal and nonpersonal nouns

	POSSESSIVE GENITIVE	OBJECTIVE GENITIVE
PERSONAL	<i>the man's</i> collar	<i>the man's</i> release from prison
NONPERSONAL	<i>the dog's</i> collar	? <i>the dog's</i> release from quarantine

In combination with the objective genitive, a nonpersonal noun results in a less acceptable noun phrase than does a personal noun.

[b] With temporal nouns in the plural, the apostrophe is sometimes omitted (cf 17.108):

several $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{weeks} \\ \text{weeks} \end{array} \right\}$ vacation

The genitive with superlatives and ordinals

5.119 The genitive is particularly common with locative nouns of Class (f) above when it is followed by a superlative adjective or a 'general ordinal' (cf 5.22) such as *only*, *first*, and *last*. The corresponding prepositional phrase in these cases is introduced by *in* rather than by *of*:

the world's best universities ~ the best universities *in the world*
this country's only university ~ the only university *in this country*
Africa's first arts festival ~ the first arts festival *in Africa*

More generally, the genitive combines with superlatives, ordinals, and 'general ordinals' to express a meaning which is independent of all the meanings listed in 5.116 above, and which can best be paraphrased by a relative clause:

Paganini's last performance
 ~ the last performance *that Paganini gave*
the Cabinet's greatest mistake
 ~ the greatest mistake *that the Cabinet made*

Noun heads with the genitive

5.120 So far, genitive constructions have been identified by reference to certain classes of the genitive noun (personal, collective, temporal, etc). There are, however, some constructions with the genitive which can best be described in terms of specific lexical noun heads.

Expressions with *edge*, *end*, *surface*, *for . . . sake* permit the alternative *of*-construction (cf 9.12 Note [c]):

She stood at $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{the water's edge.} \\ \text{the edge of the water.} \end{array} \right.$ He did it $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{for charity's sake.} \\ \text{for the sake of charity.} \end{array} \right.$

Similarly: *at the river's edge*, *at his journey's end*, *for art's sake*, *the water's surface*, *for heaven's sake*.

The following expression does not permit the *of*-construction:

People don't get $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{their money's worth.} \\ \textit{*the worth of their money.} \end{array} \right.$

Similarly: *at one's wits' end, at arm's length, within arm's reach.*

Note the stress typical of compounds (cf 17.104), which indicates that the following are compounds: *our 'money's ,worth, a 'stone's ,throw.* Compare the relatively free syntactic constructions of, eg: *within|beyond|out of (her) reach.*

The grammatical status of the genitive

Genitive as determinative

- 5.121 Most commonly the genitive functions as a determinative (cf 5.10ff): it fills a slot in the noun phrase equivalent to a central determiner such as *the* [1]. This is so whether the genitive is a possessive pronoun (such as *her* [1a]), a single noun (such as *Jenny's* [1b]), or a noun accompanied by its own determiners and/or modifiers (such as *my daughter's* [1c]), as shown in Fig 5.121a:

DETERMINATIVE	HEAD	
<i>the</i>	(new) desk	[1]
<i>her</i>	(new) desk	[1a]
<i>Jenny's</i>	(new) desk	[1b]
<i>my daughter's</i>	(new) desk	[1c]

Fig 5.121a The genitive as determinative

It is obvious that in [1c], the genitive noun *daughter's* has its own determinative, viz the possessive pronoun *my*, which does not apply to *desk*, but to *daughter*. In other words, the genitive in this instance is not a single word, but a noun phrase in its own right. Such an analysis is even more compelling for phrases such as *many people's ambition*; *many*, requiring plural concord, must determine the plural noun *people*, rather than the singular noun *ambition*:

Many people's ambition is to own a house.

We therefore see the genitive construction as a noun phrase embedded as a definite determinative within another noun phrase (cf 2.8, 17.38 and Fig 5.121b):

SUPERORDINATE NOUN PHRASE		
GENITIVE NOUN PHRASE		
<i>a horse's</i>	hind leg	[2]
<i>some people's</i>	opinions	[3]
<i>the older boys'</i>	books	[4]
<i>every teacher's</i>	guide to child psychology	[5]
<i>the Italian government's</i>	recent decision	[6]

Fig 5.121b The structure of the superordinate noun phrase with a genitive noun phrase as determinative

That the genitive can be expanded into a phrase in this way is not surprising when we recall its equivalence to a prepositional phrase, in which *of* is followed by a noun phrase complement:

the hind leg <i>of</i> [<i>a horse</i>]	[2a]
the opinions <i>of</i> [<i>some people</i>]	[3a]
the recent decision <i>of</i> [<i>the Italian government</i>]	[6a]

One implication of the determinative function of the genitive is that the genitive phrase is normally in initial position in the superordinate noun phrase, so that any words occurring in front of the genitive noun in the phrase belong to that noun rather than to the noun which is head of the superordinate noun phrase, as in [2–6].

One exception to this, however, arises when the genitive construction follows a predeterminer such as *all*, *both*, or *half* (cf 5.16): Since the genitive fills a position equivalent to that of a central determiner, these words preceding the genitive noun may apply either to that noun or to the superordinate head noun. In [7], the predeterminer *both* applies to *parents*, but in [8] *both* can only apply to *girls*:

both [the girl's] parents	[= both parents of the girl]	[7]
[both the girls'] mother	[= the mother of both the girls]	[8]

Note The construction with genitive or possessive pronoun with determinative function will have definite reference, eg:

- (i) *Susan's* son (ii) *her* son

If we want the indefinite interpretation, we have to resort to the *of*-construction (cf 5.115):

- (i) $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{a son of } Susan \\ \text{a son of } Susan's \text{ (cf the 'post-genitive', 5.126)} \end{array} \right.$ (ii) a son of *hers*

Genitive as modifier

5.122 There are occasional examples where the genitive acts as a modifier rather than as a determinative. These are of the kind listed as 'descriptive genitive' in Class (e) of 5.116. They have a classifying role similar to that of noun modifiers and some adjective modifiers (cf 17.110):

There are several *women's universities* in Tokyo.

['several universities for women']

He wants to become a *ship's doctor* when he grows up.

['a doctor working on a ship']

There were ten $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{farmer's} \\ \textit{farmers'} \end{array} \right.$ wives at the meeting.

Notice, in connection with the last example, that the expression *farmer's wives* does not imply polygamy: if this is a descriptive genitive, it is simply the plural of *farmer's wife*. The change to the plural genitive *farmers' wives* may, however, be preferred.

Another distinguishing mark of the descriptive genitive is the fact that any modifiers and/or determiners preceding it generally belong to the head noun, rather than to the genitive noun. The speaker who refers to a *quaint old shepherd's cottage* is passing a comment on the age and quaintness of the

cottage, not of the shepherd. Nevertheless, there are cases where the modifying genitive itself contains a modifier:

How much do *those* [*farm workers*'] *cottages* cost?

It was meant to be a PhD thesis, but to me it read like a [*first-year undergraduate*'s] *essay*.

This china used to be regarded as [*poor man*'s] *Worcester porcelain*, ['the sort of porcelain which resembled Worcester, but which a poor man could afford']

Note [a] As the examples above suggest, the descriptive genitive tends to have an idiomatic connection with the head noun. The fullest stage of lexical assimilation to the head is observed in expressions where the genitive and the head form a compound (cf App I.57ff), as in *bull's-eye* and *cat's paw* (where the meaning is metaphorical). Between these and more freely constructed expressions such as *women's college* should be placed combinations where the two words are written separately, but where the stress is placed in the first (genitive) element, as in compounds:

¹*girl's school* ¹*bird's nest* ¹*cow's milk* ¹*calves' liver*

Thus *bird's nest* resembles compounds both in meaning and in stress pattern (cf: *foxhole*, *rabbit warren*). In many cases the first noun ends with an *s*, which can be written in three ways:

a girl's school [genitive singular]
a girls' school [genitive plural]
a girls school [common case plural]

The second variant is favoured in *an all girls' school* ['a school entirely for girls'].

[b] Modifying genitives may occasionally contain their own determiners:

my this year's examination questions ['my examination questions for this year']

By this means, the strange cooccurrence of two central determiners *my this* may take place, as in the above example.

The group genitive

5.123 The modifying genitive, however, is rare in comparison with the genitive in determinative function; and since we observed in 5.121 that the genitive construction in this latter function can be a noun phrase, not merely a single noun, it is necessary to revise the idea (with which we introduced the genitive in 5.112) that the genitive is a noun inflection. The *-s* ending is not a case ending in the sense which applies to languages such as Latin, Russian, and German. It can be more appropriately described as a 'postposed enclitic': *ie*, its function is parallel to that of a preposition, except that it is placed after the noun phrase. This view is inescapable if we take into account the so-called GROUP GENITIVE (or 'embedded genitive'), in which the genitive ending is affixed to a postmodifier:

the teacher of music's room ['the room of the teacher of music']

Obviously the 'possessor' in this example is the teacher, not the music; but the *'s* cannot be added to the head, as one would expect if *'s* could only be a noun inflection. Instead, it is regularly added to a prepositional postmodification which is part of a name or a compound noun phrase:

[[*the University of Minnesota*]'s] President
 [[*the Museum of Modern Art*]'s] Director
 [[*my son-in-law*]'s] prospects

Since the group genitive fits most naturally into patterns of postmodification of the noun phrase, we defer further treatment of it until 17.119.

The independent genitive

- 5.124 The head of the superordinate noun phrase in a genitive construction may be omitted if the context makes its identity clear. The result is the so-called INDEPENDENT GENITIVE:

My car is faster than <i>John's</i> . [= John's car]	[1]
Her memory is like <i>an elephant's</i> . [= an elephant's memory]	[2]
This year's mixed doubles final was much better than <i>last year's</i> . [= last year's mixed doubles final]	[3]
If you can't afford a sleeping bag, why not borrow <i>somebody else's</i> ? [= somebody else's sleeping bag]	[4]
<i>Mary's</i> was the prettiest dress. [= Mary's dress]	[5]
Don't touch those cards – they're <i>my partner's</i> . [= my partner's cards]	[6]

As the examples show, this genitive is frequently an elliptical variant of a noun phrase in which the genitive has its usual determinative function. But note that a possessive pronoun used in this genitive construction requires the independent form (cf 6.29):

Hers was the prettiest dress. [5a]

Strictly, the pronoun illustrates quasi-ellipsis rather than ellipsis (for this distinction cf 12.40).

Note With the *of*-construction in comparable environments, a demonstrative pronoun *that/those* is normally required (cf 12.19):

The population of New York is greater than $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{that of Chicago.} \\ \text{Chicago's.} \end{array} \right.$

The 'local genitive'

- 5.125 The genitive is less clearly ellipted in expressions relating to premises or establishments (sometimes called the 'LOCAL GENITIVE'):

We'll meet *at Bill's*.

Here *at Bill's* normally means 'where Bill lives', but the hearer might not know whether the appropriate head would be *house*, *apartment*, *place*, etc. It is for this reason that the term 'ellipsis' is strictly not applicable (cf 12.32ff). The reference of a genitive proper noun could also be to a restaurant, a bar, etc, as in [1]:

Let's have dinner *at Tiffany's*. [1]

By contrast, where the genitive noun is a common noun, it would only refer to the dentist's professional establishment [2], and the same applies to proper nouns referring to commercial firms [3]:

I'm going to *the dentist's*. [2]

Wendy has just been shopping in *Harrod's/Foyle's/Macy's*. [3]

This usage is normal also in relation to 'one-person' businesses, as in [4]:

I buy my meat *at (Mr) Johnson's*. [4]

The 'local genitive' is used in the following three cases:

(i) For normal residences:

She is staying at $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{my aunt's.} \\ \text{the Johnsons'. [BUT: with the Johnsons]} \end{array} \right.$

(ii) For institutions such as public buildings (where the genitive is usually a saint's name):

St Paul's (Cathedral), *St James's* (Palace), *Queen's* (College)

(iii) For places where business is conducted:

the barber's, the hairdresser's, the butcher's, the grocer's, W. H. Smith's, the chemist's <BrE>, *the druggist's* <AmE>; usually *the drugstore*

(On the 'sporadic' use of *the* here, cf 5.33.) The 's is often dropped:

at/to *the chemist* <BrE>, *the druggist* <AmE>, *the hairdresser, the greengrocer*

With large businesses, their complexity and in some sense plurality causes reinterpretation of the -s ending as a plural rather than genitive inflection (*Barclays, Harrods, Selfridges, Woolworths*). The genitive meaning – if it survives – is expressed by moving the apostrophe: *at Macys'*. This uncertainty over the status of the -s ending is matched by a vacillation in concord, reflecting the conflict between plurality and the idea of a business as a collective unity:

Harrods is|are very good for clothes.

In some cases, where the -s form cooccurs with the indefinite article, a genitive interpretation is unavoidable:

They have taken the rug to $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{a cleaner's.} \\ \text{a cleaners'.} \\ \text{*a cleaners.} \end{array} \right.$

Note In relation to commercial firms, all three forms (*Harrod's, Harrods, Harrod*) may be found and constructed as either singular or plural (plural is esp BrE, cf 10.36). Thus the following variants are used in the same document:

Liberty's are the wholesalers for this country.

Liberty's is probably best known for its beautiful printed silk.

This silk, for which *Liberty are* the wholesalers in this country, . . .

It can be noted, however, that the *Harrod's* form is more likely than the *Harrods* form to be followed by a singular verb. The *Harrod* form, which has become fashionable relatively recently and still strikes many people as odd or pretentious, tends to be used only for very large enterprises. With titles of firms involving multiple names, however, the forms without -s are more current, especially in AmE, eg: *Sears Roebuck*.

The 'post-genitive'

5.126 An *of*-construction can be combined with a genitive to produce a construction known as the POST-GENITIVE (or 'double genitive'). In this construction, the independent genitive acts as prepositional complement following *of*:

some friends *of Jim's* ['some of Jim's friends']

that irritating habit of *her father's*
 an invention of *Gutenberg's*
 several pupils of *his*

But the independent genitive is not in this case elliptical. Rather, the post-genitive contrasts in terms of indefiniteness or unfamiliarity with the normal determinative genitive. Whereas [1] and [2] presuppose definiteness, the presupposition in [1a] and [2a] is one of indefiniteness:

<i>Jim's friend</i>	[1]	<i>a friend of Jim's</i>	[1a]
<i>Joseph Haydn's pupil</i>	[2]	<i>a pupil of Joseph Haydn's</i>	[2a]

Like the group genitive, the post-genitive belongs more closely to the subject matter of Chapter 17 than to that of this chapter. We accordingly postpone further discussion until 17.46.

Bibliographical note

On noun classes, see Algeo (1973); Bolinger (1969); Quirk (1978); Seppänen (1974); Sloat (1969).

On reference and determiners, see Van der Auwera (1980); Behre (1967); Bolinger (1980b); Burton-Roberts (1976, 1977); Christophersen (1939); Hawkins (1978); Hewson (1972); Kaluža (1981); Kramsky (1972); Perlmutter (1970); Powell (1967); Robbins (1968); Rydén (1975); Sloat (1969); H. S. Sørensen (1959); K. Sørensen (1981).

On number, see Ball (1927/28); Hirtle (1982); Juul (1975); Seppänen (forthcoming a); Sussex (1979).

On gender, see Jacobsson (1968b); Kanekiyo (1965).

On case, see Altenberg (1982); Dahl (1971); Jahr Sørheim (1980); Svartengren (1949).