The intrinsic importance of sentence-type and clause-type to narrative effect:

Or, how Alice Munro's "Circle of Prayer" gets started.

Michael Toolan

In his recent entertaining primer, *How to Read a Poem*, Terry Eagleton regrets the lack of close reading by students today, the reading of poems attentive to their form rather than just their content:

> What gets left out is the *literariness* of the work. Most students can say things like 'the moon imagery recurs in the third verse, adding to the sense of solitude', but not many of them can say things like 'the poem's strident tone is at odds with its shambling syntax'. (Eagleton 2007: 3)

This last point he liked so well that he recycled it, lightly altered, in his review in *The Guardian* of Tom Paulin's own primer on *The Secret Life of Poems*:

> Most students of literature can pick apart a metaphor or spot an ethnic stereotype, but not many of them can say things like: "The poem's sardonic tone is curiously at odds with its plodding syntax."

Eagleton is firmly of the view that it would be a good thing if students knew and could talk about syntax of the shambling or plodding varieties. But there is a problem here: it is far from clear what 'shambling syntax' is. We might suppose it is syntax that 'shuffles awkwardly along'; but what are the criteria by which we can classify this sentence as shambling or shuffling along and that one not? Is there a standard or norm of syntactic advance, against which degrees of shambling or plodding could be measured (as a physiotherapist might measure a patient's walking difficulties using normal gait characteristics as a standard?). Or is shambling (plodding, lively, strenuous, etc) syntax another of those things which we cannot quite define, but we know it when we see it? If it is, then it is a flimsy basis on which to build a theory of literariness, and of the importance of form to effect (particular forms, for particular effects) of the kind that Eagleton, like us stylisticians, seeks. In short, Eagleton's 'shambling syntax' does not get us much further than the 'moon imagery' description which, he implies, is inadequate in being all about content to the neglect of form. 'Shambling' is still too contentual, impressionistic and unverifiable a way of talking about syntax. The essay that follows aims to contribute to the effort to discuss sentential syntactic choices and effects in verifiable ways.

In the penultimate chapter of *Exploring the Language of Poems, Plays and Prose*, a chapter on prose style, Mick Short begins by distinguishing three types of authorial prose style: (i) that style that, regardless of the topic of the passage, prompts us to attribute it to one author rather than any other (e.g., Dickens, and not Hemingway or Lawrence or Austen); (ii) those style features, even less related to text meaning, which are 'tell-tales' or like a particular author's fingerprint, useful for forensic, author-identification purposes; and finally (iii) text style, style which is 'intrinsically related to meaning' (Short 1996: 330). Like him and most stylisticians, I am rather more interested in this kind of style than the other two: text style is the kind of style that seems most directly motivated by the particular topic or theme of the text in which it occurs, so that we feel there is a 'made to measure' fit between form and content; in the other two kinds of style, by contrast, there is the implication that local content has made little difference to form (see Hoover, this volume).

The discussion that follows is offered as an addition to the line of exploration of a text's broad choices in sentence grammar and what they might entail in the way of meaning and effect, which Short broaches in his chapter on prose style. There, his exemplary (both senses) commentary is on the famous description in *The Great Gatsby* of the commencement of one of Jay Gatsby's hedonistic parties, held at his fabulous mansion on Long Island Sound. As it happens, there is relatively little of special note to report about clause and sentence structures in the passage (Short 1996: 342): while sentences are comparatively long, these use mainly 'trailing' structures (a term I will explain below), and so are still relatively easy to process. By contrast there is plenty of richness (and absurdity and irony) in the passage's elaborations at the level of phrase structure and in the lexis, and in its sound and rhythmic effects, as Short demonstrates. In something of the same spirit in which Short looked at clause- and sentence-structuring in the Gatsby passage, and in which Leech and Short looked at the opening paragraphs of Henry James's "The Pupil" (Leech and Short 1981, Chapter Three; especially 100-104), I will discuss the sentence and clause trends in the opening paragraphs of Alice Munro's story "Open Secrets". I hope to throw a little new light on what is really an old topic (see for example, besides Leech and Short 1981 [2007], Sinclair 1966, Dillon 1978, Ceci 1983, and Austin 1984), sometimes termed 'iconic grammar'. At the least I hope to put new emphases into the interpretation of the relevance of some old, time-tested categorisations.

1. Immediate background

This chapter emerged from one of the most traditional of lessons in an undergraduate degree module on English grammar for students relatively unversed in linguistic matters: a revision

class on the three main types of subordinate clauses (Nominal, Adverbial, and restrictive Relative) and some of their structural properties. In our language modules at Birmingham University for students whose interests are primarily literary, we teach a relatively simple and traditional constituency grammar, in which the finite clause will contain some of the five elements Subject, Predicate, Object, Complement, and Adjunct, and these in turn are typically realised by contrasting types of phrase. Thus, Subjects and Objects are filled in the simplest case by a simple noun phrase, which comprises a head with optional modifier and qualifier before and after; and Predicates are filled by a verb phrase containing a lexical verb, optionally preceded by up to four 'auxiliaries': modal, perfective, progressive, and passive; and so on.

The three main types of subordinate clause are distinguished structurally as follows. A Nominal clause fills the entirety of a noun phrase (which itself may constitute the S, O, or C of a clause. Here, underlined, are some Nominal clauses: *What he had done wrong was unclear to him. He decided that he would apologise to her anyway. To be on good terms with her was what he wanted more than anything*. A (restrictive) Relative clause fills the qualifier (or 'q') of a noun phrase, in place of something simpler such as a prepositional phrase (the qualifier or 'q' of noun phrase is everything after the head word; thus in *the apple on the desk* and *the apple he brought her*, *on the desk* and *he brought her* are the q elements). Examples of such Relative clauses are underlined in the following sentences: *The apology which he offered to her was not the kind of response that she was looking for*. An Adverbial clause is one that fills the A element of a clause and, when it is finite, it is usually introduced by a subordinating conjunction: *Hiding her disappointment, she turned away from him until she had regained her composure*.

The above sketch is fairly basic and certainly incomplete, but even this amount of technicality is too much for some literature students, who find talk of restrictive relative clauses 'filling the qualifier' of a noun phrase rebarbative and bamboozling. I can't really criticise them for feeling alienated and lost. They are not the only ones who have wondered what the *point* is, of being able to distinguish relative clauses from nominal or adverbial ones. For that matter, what is the relevance, to these students' interests and needs, of being able to distinguish compound sentences from complex ones? It is absorbing enough stuff, like being able to identify morphophonemic changes, or to explain the choice among the three allomorphs of the English plural morpheme; but isn't it 'purely' linguistic information, with no real bearing on the students' own reading, writing, and analytical understanding (or anyone else's)? To this I want to cry *No, no, no*, that knowing about sentence structure has a bearing on all kinds of understandings and judgements about language (or failings of understanding), near and far. The gaps in understanding are indirect cause, I believe, of other kinds of weakness in students' writing. Only with an at-least implicit grasp of such kinds of linguistic

understanding can any of us develop into more proficient writers, more aware of the different potential effects of alternative sentential forms. But I *do* see that we stylisticians need to do more than insist on students learning grammar "for their own good" (language doctor knows best). That is why I have written this chapter: to try to show how knowing about sentence and clause types truly helps us to understand and appreciate fine literary writing "from the inside". It also enriches our thinking about distinct kinds of writing, to suit distinct genres and contexts. For these reasons knowing sentence grammar and applying that knowledge is not fuddy-duddy technicality, but permanently relevant. That at least is what I hope to persuade the reader of.

2. The Evidence

As a first step in trying to persuade students that spotting the relative clauses or compound sentences in a text does have relevance to the bigger picture, of meaning and effect, I ask them to do their practice grammar analysis (identifying sentence types, and subordinate clause types) not on my own invented sentences, but on sentences invented by a great writer. That is how I came to give my second year grammar students the opening paragraphs of Alice Munro's story "Circle of Prayer", asking them first to identify the simple, compound and complex sentences therein, and then all instances of the three main types of subordinate clause. For the Relative clauses, I also asked them to indicate whether they were restrictive or non-restrictive. After working through some of their solutions in class, I completed a 'model' answer, for the three types of clausal subordination, using a different colour font for the three types. I told them:

> In the text that follows, Relative clauses are double underlined, Nominal Clauses are single underlined and the Adverbial ones are wavy underlined.

> Trudy threw a jug across the room. It didn't reach the opposite wall; it didn't hurt anybody, it didn't even break. (1)

> This was the jug without a handle—cement-colored with brown streaks on it, rough as sandpaper to the touch--that Dan made the winter he took pottery classes. He made six little handleless cups to go with it. The jug and the cups were supposed to be for sake, but the local liquor store doesn't carry sake. Once, they brought some home from a trip, but they didn't really like it. So the jug Dan made sits on the highest open shelf in the kitchen, and a few odd items of value are kept in it. Trudy's wedding ring and her engagement ring, the medal Robin won for all-round excellence in Grade 8, a long, two-strand necklace of jet beads that belonged to Dan's mother and was willed to Robin. Trudy won't let her wear it yet. (2)

Trudy came home from work a little after midnight; she entered the house in the dark. Just the little stove light was on--she and Robin always left that on for each other. Trudy didn't need any other light. She climbed up on a chair without even letting go of her bag, got down the jug, and fished around inside it. (3)

It was gone. Of course. She had known it would be gone. (4)

She went through the dark house to Robin's room, still with her bag over her arm, the jug in her hand. She turned on the overhead light. Robin groaned and turned over, pulled the pillow over her head. Shamming. (5)

"Your grandmother's necklace," Trudy said. "Why did you do that? Are you insane?" (6)

Robin shammed a sleepy groan. All the clothes she owned, it seemed, old and new and clean and dirty, were scattered on the floor, on the chair, the desk, the dresser, even on the bed itself. On the wall was a huge poster showing a hippopotamus, with the words underneath "Why Was I Born So Beautiful?" And another poster showing Terry Fox running along a rainy highway, with a whole cavalcade of cars behind him. Dirty glasses, empty yogurt containers, school notes, a Tampax still in its wrapper, the stuffed snake and tiger Robin had had since before she went to school, a collage of pictures of her cat Sausage, who had been run over two years ago. Red and blue ribbons that she had won for jumping, or running, or throwing basketballs. (7)

"You answer me!" said Trudy. "You tell me why you did it!" (8)

She threw the jug. But it was heavier than she'd thought, or else at the very moment of throwing it she lost conviction, because it didn't hit the wall; it fell on the rug beside the resser and rolled on the floor, undamaged. (9)

Alice Munro, "Circle of Prayer"

So what do the passage's trends, in frequent sentence types and scarce ones, and in more frequent subordinate clause types and less frequent ones, show or tell? Before attempting to answer those questions (in section 5 below), I include two sections. In the first of these I would like to say more about the effect that seems to be achieved by the first few sentences, in the order in which they occur. I do this partly on the grounds that these are what the reader encounters first (the reader does not take even this short span of paragraphs as a simultaneous whole, but rather by increments out of which perceptions of trends and patterns must progressively emerge). But I also want to take this opportunity to fill in some of the story's background and preoccupations (as I see them), relative to which—it may be argued—the teller decided to tell things in the sentence-structuring way she chose, rather than in any of the other ways she could have chosen. In section 4, a little more commentary is made on sentence-types and their impact on reading.

3. The story starts straight away…and conversationally.

The story starts straight away, with *Trudy threw a jug.* In one sense, concerning the text, it is ridiculous tautology to say that a story 'starts straight away': in that sense, a story starts where it starts and all stories start straight away. But in another sense we are quite used to finding, in the first lines or paragraphs of a story, a preliminary, situation-establishing introduction of the time, the place, the main participants, and some of their habitual activities: these, we understand, are the background set of conditions out of which a destabilizing action or development erupts. There is none of that background here, at the outset; instead, an almost absurdly 'bare' narrative-event clause: *Trudy threw a jug*. Bare because it lacks any accompanying time or place orientation, no setting of the scene: instead, we get action first, with background perhaps later. So straight away we have been given the answer to the crucial narrative question, 'What happened?'.

Well—it emerges—that Trudy threw a jug is *one* of the 'what happeneds?', but later we learn of other, not unrelated happenings:

* Trudy's daughter Robin put the jade necklace in her schoolmate's coffin;
* the necklace was bequeathed to Robin by Trudy's mother-in-law some years ago;
* Trudy and Dan divorced (after he took up with a younger woman) a few years ago.

But you've got to begin somewhere, and this story begins with *Trudy threw a jug*. What else to note about that maximally simple transitive action clause? That in structure it is the kind of sentence someone could easily say, in a slightly shocked tone, in a hushed conversation; so that the sense of voice is projected from the very beginning. Of course someone talking to a friend (it is hard to imagine a natural context—i.e., outside fiction-- for the opening sentences that is not talk between friends) might not use the name *Trudy*: as likely would be *She threw a jug* or *You threw a jug*; which is why I say the sentence is conversational in structure, rather than wording. Further markers of this 'conversational' tenor is the extensive use of contractions and negation in the narration: *didn't, doesn't, won't* (Biber et al. 1999 suggest negation is characteristic of conversation). Yet another indicator is the use of *even,* three times, in the narration of this opening, where it is used for that semantically-redundant evaluative emphasis that in Appraisal theory (Martin and White 2005) is called Graduation (amplification) by Focus: *it didn't even break….. without even letting go of her bag…even on the bed itself*). A fourth linguistic marker one might note—and this does bring us some way back to the question of clause and phrase-combination—is to be found in the oral rather than writerly way in which some clauses or phrases are combined without the ordinarily required coordinating conjunction. The first example of a departure from the norms of formal written English comes in the second sentence, after the semi-colon: linking

the two coordinated clauses *it didn't hurt anybody* and *it didn't even break* only with a comma does not conform to the standard conventions of written grammar. And when we come to the longer 'item-listing' sentences, such as the penultimate sentence of paragraph 2, beginning *Trudy's wedding ring*, or the final two sentences of paragraph 7, either a Subject and main verb or an expectable conjunction (e.g., *and*) is missing, or both are. Does the story continue to be 'conversational' in structure, and how can one evidentially support that claim? This is a subsidiary topic of my chapter.

Despite the series of story happenings listed in the previous paragraph, the heart of the story (I believe) is not so much 'one event' as a tellable situation. That situation is that while Dan left her several years ago, Trudy is still grieving over the loss, and still struggling to understand what she once wished for or indeed now wishes for. Thus mid-way through the story she learns that a close friend has joined a 'circle of prayer' in which a group of women linked by a phone tree get notified of one member's need for prayer, and all of them privately pray for that person. A skeptical Trudy wonders: if she believed in prayer, what would she pray for, for herself? Time has been a healer, the routines of life and friendship have absorbed her up to a point, but then out of the blue has come this teenage death in a car accident (not to Robin, thankfully), and Robin responding by casually 'donating', for burial or cremation, the precious jade necklace, this material acknowledgement of womanly beauty and connection of the 'matriarchal line' from Dan's mother, through Trudy, to Robin. The necklace has been consigned by Robin, used up, rather than kept forever, for better or for worse, in the way Trudy had thought it should be.

Before moving on to the core of this chapter, let us note something else about the opening lines:

> *Trudy threw a jug across the room. It didn't reach the opposite wall; it didn't hurt anybody, it didn't even break.*

A story must give us an answer to the simple, sometimes disingenuous, question, 'What happened?' And as already noted, this opening appears to get down to the task, but then doesn't. It tells us one thing that did happen but then three things that did not. As has been variously discussed, use of negation to tell what *didn't* happen is always significant and evaluative, evoking an alternative chains of events (here, one in which the jug *did* break, and/or did *hurt* someone) (Labov 1972, Nørgaard 2007), and sometimes implying some abnormality in the negated events or states that applies here and makes them tellable: if you throw a jug across a room it is more usual for it to at least break, if not to reach the far wall or hit someone, but in this episode none of these reasonably expectable outcomes occurred (Toolan 2009: 148). But what about the sequencing of these negative reports, telling first of the jug's not reaching, then of its not hurting, then of its not breaking? How might this chime with what one might call a painterly or representational preference for iconicity in narration,

so stimulatingly discussed in Leech and Short nearly 30 years ago (Leech and Short 1981: 233-243; [2nd edition, 2007: 187-196]. Is this sequencing iconic? The first clause comments on the force and spatial context of the throw, and is purely 'physical' observation, focused on process rather than endpoint (we are not told where the jug *did* reach or come to rest); the second clause is much more interpretive and complex, addressing immediate effect on other people; the third reports the effect or consequence for the jug itself. There is something implicitly iconic (i.e., mimetic) here, as reflected in the fact that the three statements 'build' to a final one involving *even*. Usually such negative sequences imply a series in which the last is the least, just as positive sequences imply the last is the most (most valuable, surprising, tellable):

> *They didn't give me dinner, they didn't give me lunch, they didn't even give me coffee and biscuits.*
>
> *They bought me coffee, they bought me lunch, they even bought me dinner.*

I don't wish to say anything more here about *It didn't reach the opposite wall; it didn't hurt anybody, it didn't even break,* but simply cite it as indicative of the kind of careful thought, and regard for iconic effect, that a great artist like Munro puts into the structuring and sequencing of information (here, negated information) of seemingly slight importance.

4. Sentence patterns and inter-clausal processing dependence.

Short (1996: 340) lists six "basic sentence patterns" found in English. Types 1-3 are: the simple sentence, and the compound sentence, either with coordinator or with paratactic punctuation only. Types 4-6 are all complex, with the selected source of complexity, the adverbial clause, variously sited:

> [4] John loves Mary because Mary loves John. (**trailing structure**)
>
> [5] Because Mary loves John, John loves Mary. (**anticipatory structure**)
>
> [6] John, because Mary loves him, loves Mary. (**parenthetic structure**)
>
> (Short 1996: 340)

There are numerous alternative terms in the literature for the terms trailing, anticipatory, and parenthetic, such as loose or released structure, fronting or thematizing; and central embedding respectively, but Short's terms are perfectly adequate. More important are the implications or effects of these different choices (in the case of sentences [4] to [6] above, alternative structures which carry virtually synonymous sentences). Short touches lightly on those effects (1996: 341), but invokes the crucial question of whether 'one clause at a time' is processed by reader or listener. In the simple and compound types ([1] to [3]) it seems fairly uncontroversial to postulate that processing is and can be conducted one clause at a time (even in those compounds where a pronoun in the second clause co-refers with an antecedent

in the first: *John loves Mary and she loves him*). But in all the complex types, there is such a degree of dependence of one clause on another, that we cannot say that one and only clause at a time can or need be processed. On the contrary a cross- or multi-clausal perspective is required to make sense of the two (or more) clauses involved. This is mildly true in [4], more palpable in [5], and most apparent in [6], where the dependent clause interrupts the sequence of 'inner' higher clause elements, by occurring between the S and the P. It would be only one more step to move the parenthetic clause to the right, to fall between the P and O; but this creates a structure that is both unacceptable and surprisingly hard to process:

[6'] John loves, because Mary loves him, Mary.

As Short notes, anticipatory and parenthetic clause structures are sometimes described as a 'tight' style (341). And by 'tightness' must be meant this inescapable 'bound-up' inter-connection of the clauses involved, so different from the minimal bonding between clauses in structure type 1: *John loves Mary. Mary loves John.*   For Saussure, linearity was (with arbitrariness) one of the two fundamental features of language; in the concatenation of simple or compound clauses linearity *at the clausal level* operates in a relatively pure or absolute way, but where complex clauses abound there is clearly substantial compromise of pure linearity. This claim is, I recognize, contentious, and depends on how linearity in reading is understood. Might one dismiss my claims by arguing that, whatever the sentence structure, one reads word by word and thus inescapably linearly? Only if that were the whole story. But is reading/processing truly and only word by word? The most compelling counter-argument relates to sentence-hood: the sentence boundary, very clearly marked in modern writing, is a milestone of text-processing of inestimable importance, and it is clear that notwithstanding the linear presentation of writing, we do not process the first word of a new sentence along with the last word of the previous sentence, as word-by-word processing would require. There will be *some* links between these two words, flanking the sentence boundary, but each is made sense of first and extensively within its own sentential envelope. In short, reading is not only and not always word by word, but also and sometimes alternatively sentence by sentence. Space limitations prevent me setting out the subsidiary argument that, between word-by-word and graphological-sentence-by-graphological sentence processing, clause-by-clause reading is an important intermediate segmentation and processing of text. But again it is crucial to my thesis, and crucial to trying to persuade students that clause-structuring is important to literary understanding. The final step in the reasoning, outlined above, is to argue that by contrast with simple and compound sentences, in complex sentences with a preposed or parenthetically-embedded subordinate clause, linear clause-by-clause, proposition-by-proposition processing is disrupted or 'knotted', causing eddies in the dynamic flow of reading .

In the title of this section I have used the term *processing* and it is, I hope, clear that I want to develop an argument about how different patterns of deployment of sentence- and clause-types can create different effects in readers, since those different types require different kinds of local and contextualized processing. It might be objected that I should not refer to processing and reading without copious reference to the extensive (but often inconclusive) psycholinguistic research on these topics; some would go so far as to say that 'processing' is a matter for psycholinguistics, and mere stylisticians or grammarians should keep away. I disagree with all that, and contend that no elaborate psycholinguistic testing is required for language users to recognize that (all other things being equal) a structurally simple sentence is easier (smoother, without need to scan backwards or forwards) to process than a complex one, and that parenthetic complexity is slightly more demanding (more disruptive of steady onward incremental reading) than trailing complexity.   Indeed it is in part because the 'grammatical' distinctions (simple, compound, complex, fronted, centrally-embedded, trailing, nominal, relative, adverbial) have always had some psychological and psycholinguistic validity, some bearing on our processes of text-composition and -processing, that they have become so deeply entrenched in our textual descriptions.

Many comments could be made on the analysis of subordinate clauses in the Munro passage, in Section 2 above. I will mention just three. The first concerns verbless subordinate clauses. I emphasized to the students that both finite and non-finite subordinate clauses had been underlined, and that in one or two of the non-finite clauses, no predicate is present so that the clause is quite incomplete ("reduced"). Nevertheless, if there was more than one clause element present, e.g. if what was present was more than just a Prepositional Phrase functioning as a single A, then I suggested there were grounds for calling the chunk a reduced clause. Thus, for example, in the case of *a Tampax* *still in its wrapper*, I would analyse this as a reduced version of a relative clause:

                              NP
    m   h   q
              [S   P   A   A   ]
    a Tampax   [that/which | was | still | in its wrapper]

A second point to note is that in focusing on the three main types of subordinate clause, I have neglected other less frequent types; thus the comparative clause in the final sentence in the passage, demarcated by a broken rectangle, is not commented upon. A third point is that some analytical decisions are contestable. In the following sentence, for example, I have underlined the brief relative clause attached to *clothes—*

> All the clothes <u>she owned</u>, it seemed, old and new and clean and dirty, were scattered on the floor, on the chair…

—but there is a case for saying that *All the clothes she owned, old and new…were scattered on the floor* is a Nominal clause associated with the *it* of *it seemed*. For reasons too lengthy to rehearse here, I have rejected that analysis.

5. What does the sentence- and clause-structural analysis show?

The grammar analysis highlights quite a lot about this wonderful story opening. One thing we can immediately note is *how little* subordination, i.e. use of complex sentence structure, there is here, until we get to the section describing Robin's chaotic bedroom. There are very few Adverbial clauses, finite or non-finite, and those that occur are without exception sited clause-finally (i.e., in the 'trailing' or releasing position, which we have noted makes low demands on processing effort). Nominal clauses are even scarcer (there are just two), and these too are in that easiest-to-manage clause- and sentence-final position. They are undemanding, also, in that they only encapsulate and repeat ideas that have already been expressed earlier in the text (without subordination) earlier. For example, Trudy asks Robin *"Why did you do that?"* and a few lines later says (using an embedded Nominal clause): *"You tell me <u>why you did it!</u>"*. Only Relative clauses occur here in any significant number (almost always of the restrictive or defining kind: *who had been run over two years ago* is one exception). And restrictive Relative clauses we can describe as normally 'trailing' in a particular sense: as here, they almost invariably directly follow the modifier and head of the noun phrase which they specify without even the possibility of separation by a comma. Thus positionally restrictive Relative clauses present the reader with no surprises.

At this point it may be useful to distinguish two types of complex sentences (a different distinction from that made in Short's trailing/anticipatory/parenthetic classification, but one that can be combined with the latter). The two types of complex sentence I now want to distinguish are:

i) those involving an Adverbial or a Nominal subordinate clause, which latter can be said to function on two levels, as clauses in themselves and as full elements in a 'higher' clause; Adverbial and Nominal clauses are relatively freely moveable (e.g. to an anticipatory position):

> *The house has a ramp now for wheelchairs, because some of the mentally handicapped may be physically handicapped as well.*
> *Because some of the mentally handicapped may be physically handicapped as well, the house has a ramp now for wheelchairs.*

She never really found out what had happened at Genevieve's house.

What had happened at Genevieve's house, she never really found out.

ii) those containing a restrictive Relative clause: such a subordinate clause really functions only on one level, by virtue of being embedded as qualifier within a nominal element (S, O, or C) of a higher clause. In Short's terms restrictive Relatives always 'trail' the head noun, and can never be anticipatory or parenthetic; but because they can attach to any head noun in a sentence and not just the final head noun, they can create parenthetic effects—albeit only local parenthetic effects.

The jug that Dan made one winter was cement-colored with brown streaks on it, rough as sandpaper to the touch.

*That Dan made one winter the jug was cement-colored with brown streaks on it, rough as sandpaper to the touch.

Trudy hated the jug that Dan made in pottery class.

*Trudy hated the Dan made in pottery class jug.

I will argue that the former type involve greater structural complexity and—all other things being equal—tend to be more difficult to process. A sentence labelled Complex simply by virtue of containing a restrictive Relative clause is more difficult to process than a Simple clause—

So the jug Dan made sits on the highest open shelf in the kitchen.

So the jug sits on the highest open shelf in the kitchen.

—but not much. In terms of the two types of complex sentence just described, those sentences in the Munro passage that are Complex are overwhelmingly of the cognitively less demanding type, in which a trailing relative clause follows and supplies further information about the head of a noun phrase.

Where sentences qualify as Complex, then, by virtue of the appearance of a subordinate clause somewhere in their structure, still there are varying degrees of delay, complexity, or 'thickening', over and above the trailing/parenthetical/anticipatory alternation. Looking more closely at complex Sentences involving an Adverbial or Nominal clause (my type i), those with a Nominal clause normally seem more 'delaying' than those with an Adverbial one. Thus an SPOA clause with a clause filling the final Adjunct element after a simple noun phrase Object, is arguably less complex than one where the O is filled by a Nominal clause while the A is phrasal: *She had known it even before she checked; She had known it would be gone before checking*. And whatever the subordination, movement of that subordinate clause

to sentence-initial position ('fronting'), I will assume invariably introduces a little more complexity (or 'slowed' processing) than the unfronted alternative:

Even before she checked, she had known it.

She had known it even before she checked.

A general point can be made, also, about the Simple/Compound/Complex typology of sentence-patterns. This implies a three-way contrast, but I would suggest that often the most significant distinction is a binary one, between Simple or Compound sentences on the one hand, and Complex ones on the other. This is because what distinguish compound sentences from simple ones (provided one can tolerate simple sentences introduced by coordinators such as *And* and *Or*) are relatively superficial 'diacritical' markers, namely punctuation. Indicative of the smallness of the contrast, it is hard for a listener to distinguish an enunciation of the following actual version of the second graphological sentence of the passage:

It didn't reach the opposite wall; it didn't hurt anybody, it didn't even break.

from this alternative, sense-preserving presentation, as three simple sentences:

It didn't reach the opposite wall. It didn't hurt anybody. It didn't even break.

That is to say, a listener cannot easily tell that the first version is a compound sentence, the second version three simple sentences. There is no way of similarly conflating complex sentences, in the hearing of a spoken delivery, with either of the other two types:

He made six little handleless cups. To go with it.

She had known. It would be gone.

Thus there is much that unites simple and compound sentences as a single syntagmatic style of steady advance, to be contrasted with the 'thicker' advance, made more complicated by the clausal elaboration at one point or another of the structure, involved in complex sentences.

Even with the Relative clauses that feature in paragraphs 2 and 7, the passage remains predominantly one of Compound Sentences, which means in turn that the passage is a chain of clauses of equal grammatical level, linked by punctuation such as the semi-colon, and *ands*, *buts*, and *ors*. It is thus a series of pulses or packets of information that can be taken in order, like beads on a necklace, with very little need to hold one packet in mind while a preceding, following, or interrupting packet is processed. This short paragraph, for instance, is typical:

Trudy came home from work a little after midnight; she entered the house in the dark. Just the little stove light was on—she and Robin always left that on for each other. Trudy didn't need any other light. She climbed up on a chair without even letting go of her bag, got down the jug, and fished around inside it.

What we find here is a series of simple clauses, one after the other, with relatively little cross-clausal linkage, so that each is relatively free-standing. Much of it can be written out *as* free-standing separate sentences, with little change in effect:

Trudy came home from work a little after midnight.

She entered the house in the dark.

Just the little stove light was on.

She and Robin always left that on for each other.

Trudy didn't need any other light.

This means that each can be taken in turn, without need for extensive 'holding in mind' of the content of a previous clause *as a clause*; and that structural format is very well suited to a simple, maximally straightforward telling of events. This is not to deny the numerous cohesive links between these clauses (*Trudy → She; came home → entered the house; little stove light → that → any other light*; and so on), but to suggest that clausally each is completed (and read) before the next begins (Sinclair's challenging idea of encapsulation may be relevant here: see Sinclair 2004: 14ff and discussion in Toolan 2007). And by 'straightforward telling' I do not necessarily mean a chronological telling in which events are reported strictly in their order of assumed occurrence: in fact we have already seen that the story departs from that simplest ordering in its first sentence; and besides, even among the five sentences re-formatted immediately above, we can see that the third reports what was already the case even before Trudy got home, while the fourth reports a habitual or recurrent practice, not tied to any particular evening. By 'straightforward' I mean that in adopting a texture that is predominantly simple sentences, with limited *grammatical* cross-clause linkage, the telling advances by easy steps (easy to compose, easy to process), rather than by this larger kind of 'stride' (difficult to compose, difficult to process):

> She waited, Kate Croy, for her father to come in, but he kept her unconscionably, and there were moments at which she showed herself, in the glass over the mantel, a face positively pale with the irritation that had brought her to the point of going away without sight of him. It was at this point, however, that she remained; changing her place, moving from the shabby sofa to the armchair upholstered in a glazed cloth that gave at once--she had tried it—the sense of the slippery and of the sticky. (Henry James, *The Wings of a Dove*)

To be sure, the James passage still advances by compound sentences, but there is a depth of embedding in the long extraposed Subject noun phrase *moments at which she showed herself, in the glass over the mantel, a face positively pale with the irritation that had brought her to the point of going away without sight of him* unlike anything in the Munro opening. The embedding is chiefly a matter of recursive relativization, finite or nonfinite (*at which she showed herself…; a face [that was] positively pale…; the irritation that had brought her…; the point of going away…*). And one of the things we can say about restrictive relative clause constructions is that they invariably supply more information about entities that have *already* been named, so in that sense they are non-dynamic: they add more

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informative depth to an already reported event or situation rather than reporting a new situation or event. This is very much borne out by paragraph 7 of the Munro passage: in this relative-clause-heavy paragraph, there is a strong sense of scenic pause, relative to surrounding paragraphs. We are not told this explicitly, but we infer that Trudy is scanning Robin's entire messy room, like a camera pan, and what is described is what she sees. At first items are reported with some locational specificity (the clothes are on the floor, or on the chair, etc.; the posters are on the wall); but by the fifth sentence we are given a random listing (without a main verb for the sentence), and left to guess quite where the dirty glasses, the school notes, and so on are precisely situated. In short there is a rhythm and a contrast here, between the steady onward drive of the first six paragraphs (somewhat resumed in eight and nine) and the hiatus, where Trudy takes in the 'primal scene' of Robin's bedroom, in paragraph 7. The grammar and content—and how we are to take the content—all fit.

In the foregoing I have not intended to imply that a sentence that is grammatically simple or compound in structure is inevitably simple to process; I have only wished to suggest that the contrast between simple and complex *in clause structure* is a relevant part of the picture of what makes for ease, smoothness, rapidity, dynamism—and all their opposites—in the reading of literary narrative. A simple sentence could present much complexity of processing, if, for example, it contained elaborate (but non-clausal) phrase-structure within its Subject and Object noun phrases. But that would be a matter of phrasal, not clausal structure; and only the latter has been my focus here.

To give an admittedly extreme example of the emphasis on coordination and compounding and simplicity of narration and processing entailed in the bulk of the extract, I would cite the following:

> *The jug and the cups were supposed to be for sake, but the local liquor store doesn't carry sake.*

It takes a certain kind of literary confidence, about the tone that you wish a passage to project, to write sentences of such seemingly artless inconsequentiality and repetitiveness. What is the tone and effect that is achieved by this and other recyclings (*She entered the house in the dark. Just the little stove light was on; It was gone… She had known it would be gone*)? I have proposed two answers: conversationality of tone, and an emphasis on steady, incremental narration, of one event or fact at a time (even if the facts or events narrated are being reported a second or third time). These in turn may give rise to other broader implicatures, such as that the narration is direct and immediate rather than detached and rehearsed, that it comes *as if* from Trudy's perspective and is expressive of her direct involvement in what is narrated. Little touches of Free Indirect Thought (see Leech and Short, Chapter 10, and Bray, this volume), such as the *Of course* of paragraph 4, reflect that immediacy and character-aligned involvement. And with the dominant steady onward flow

of subordination-free clauses, a sense of urgency and movement is created, entirely congruent with events: you hear about girls putting valuables in another girl's coffin, you bet your daughter has done the same, you get off work, you come home, get up on a chair to grab the jug, the necklace is gone of course, you storm into Robin's room, she shams, you flip and you throw the jug at her. This is Trudy's and Robin's 'danger of death' narrative, of the time Trudy 'could have killed' Robin with that jug, in her anger about the necklace. That's what happened and what needs to be told (or admitted, in conversation), and Munro's clause- and sentence-structure choices do that as effectively as one could imagine. Literature students who shut their minds to pondering at least some of this, by deciding that clause- and sentence-analysis is too technical or irrelevant, are missing an opportunity to examine and explore.

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