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Alice Munro's Naughty Coordinators in "Friend of My Youth"

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Alice Munro's Naughty Coordinators in "Friend of My Youth"¹

Lynn Blin

In the interpretation of sentences containing "and", in order to fully understand them, it is necessary to ask ourselves if the terms thus joined form a couple which intervenes as a unity in the action, or if the coordinated terms deal rather with participants who are individually concerned by the action.

Françoise Dubois-Charlier

- 1 What impresses me most in the work of Alice Munro is her talent for taking the reader by surprise, not once or twice but countless times during the same short story. Her narratives peel off layer after layer of the dull coat of paint which at first glance seems to be the surface background and present reality of her characters - for the most part small town women, living small town lives - only to reveal the deep dark intricacy of the existential tuggings and yearnings that make up the tragedy and grandeur of human existence.²
- 2 To the expectant reader discovering her stories in *The New Yorker* (which has first choice refusal on all of Munro's stories) to the literary critic delving into the explanations of why Munro has been compared to a modern day Chekhov, not to mention the probing academic for whom her works provide veritable interpretive field days, an Alice Munro short story is always a monumental literary delight. If the job of the literary critic and the narratologist is to explain the why of Munro's greatness, it is the job of the linguist to attempt to explain how she manages such a feat.³ This paper will deal with one of the main grammatical characteristics of many of Munro's works in general, and "Friend of My Youth" in particular - her extensive use of the coordinate conjunctions, "and", "or", "but", and the comma - the latter intervening in asyndetic coordination.

- 3 The “naughty” coordinators mentioned in my title are a tongue-in-cheek reference to the specific way Munro uses the seemingly innocent grammatical tool of coordination to weave into her narrative various narrative voices but also sexual innuendo there where we least expect it. In order to discover this aspect of “Friend of My Youth”, we will first briefly examine how this short story more specifically works. We will then examine some general grammatical rules concerning coordination. And finally, we will see how Munro while respecting the grammar makes “and”, “or”, “but” and the comma her allies enabling her to take us by surprise as deftly as she does.
- 4 “Friend of My Youth” is, on the surface, the rather sordid story of Flora and Ellie Grieves whom the narrator’s mother spent some time with during her first year as a young teacher. The Grieves belong to a fundamentalist Protestant sect called the Cameronians. The young teacher becomes friends with the more enigmatic of the two sisters, Flora. Ellie, though it is not clearly stated, is suggested as being mentally unbalanced. When the story opens, Ellie is married to a cousin-cum-hired man, Robert Deal, who had initially been Flora’s fiancé. But Robert gets Ellie pregnant and has to marry her. This pregnancy and all the subsequent ones end in miscarriages. Ellie gets cancer and dies and Robert marries the libidinous and grotesque Nurse Atkinson, who had come to take care of Ellie during her illness. This is the surface narrative – the one that can be summed up in a few sentences.
- 5 If this however was all there was to “Friend of My Youth”, we would be more likely to find it in a *True Love* magazine and not in *The New Yorker*. A linguistic analysis of some of the coordinate structures will enable us to better understand how more complicated events are constantly taking place beyond and beneath this surface narrative, which I have termed N1. The more complex narrative will be referred to as N2.

Opening Passage – Hints and Clues

- 6 Readers of short stories know that the opening passage will very often give them some keys and clues enabling access to another level of the narrative. Joly (2001) has pointed out that the first sentence of a literary work is the “container” to all that follows. He goes on to say that “the first sentence is a proposal of the formal shaping” and everything that follows “is a reworking of this” (151 my translation).
- 7 Here are the first two sentences.
- I used to dream about my mother, and though the details in the dream varied, the surprise in it was always the same. The dream stopped, I suppose because it was too transparent in its hopefulness, too easy in its forgiveness.
- 8 The passage goes on with this same homodiegetic narrator telling us about her dreams, where her mother always appeared “quite well - not entirely untouched by that paralyzing disease that held her in its grip for over a decade, but so much better than I remembered that I would be a little astonished.” If we apply Joly’s idea, looking at one of the aspects of the form of these two opening sentences, we notice that the first sentence contains a syndetic coordinate construction with two clauses joined by “and” and the second an asyndeton with two noun phrases joined by a comma.⁴
- 9 There are of course, other grammatical characteristics in these two sentences, but if we continue to investigate this grammatical specificity of “FOMY”, we discover that of the 15 sentences making up this opening passage 78 per cent of them contain coordinate

structures. And if we look at the entire short story we discover that out of 551 sentences, 294 contain coordinate structures.⁵ There are two interesting things about the whole introductory passage: it in no way deals with N1. And the first effect of the profuse use of coordination is to give this homodiegetic narrative voice an intensity which is for a great part due to the role played by coordination in the intonation of English, which I have termed the silent prosody of coordination.⁶

- 10 Though there are no sexual innuendos or violence in the introductory passage whatsoever, when they do crop up later on, a coordinate structure is systematically being used. My previous research attempted to show how the coordinate structures helped Munro to weave in other narrative voices. Not only do they enable the intimate intermingling of the homodiegetic voice of the introduction to the more detached one of the N1 story, they allow other narrative voices to surreptitiously slip their way into the narrative.

Polyphony and the silent prosody of coordination

- 11 When there is an implied narrative voice whose point of view is not the same as the narrator's we have polyphony. It was Bakhtine who first mentioned how polyphony intervenes in this way in a literary text. But even at a sentence level, as Ducrot (1992, 1984) pointed out, if I say "Mary was supposedly ill", the adverb supposedly suggests not only the utterer's voice, but someone else's.⁷
- 12 Polyphony is intrinsically linked with the sexual innuendo discovered in "Friend of My Youth", because when we do detect it, it is not entirely the detached extradiegetic voice that is telling the story her mother had told her. Analysing the coordinate structures we can hear more and more distinctly as the narrative evolves:
- the mother's voice, though even when she intervenes in direct speech there are never any quotation marks.
 - the voice of the community
 - the voice of an unreliable narrator
 - the homodiegetic voice heard at the beginning
- 13 The voice of the community according to Mainguenu (1993) is the voice expressing rumour and hearsay. For Rimmon-Kenan, the unreliable narrator, though often difficult to detect, becomes perceptible thanks to the following hints and clues. This narrator either does not have all the facts, or his/ her participation is too subjective, or he/she might be too young to fully understand what is going on (2001: 101-104). When any of these other voices can be heard, it is not N1 that is being told but the deeper, more mysterious narrative, which we have termed N2.

The Basic Rules of Coordination

- 14 The basic rules of coordination (and the way we generally perceive them in texts) stipulate that "and" signals addition, "but" opposition and "or" alternative. The comma, used in asyndeton – where the conjunctions *and* and *or* are replaced by a comma, is used to enumerate elements:
- 15 And:
Flora and Ellie Grieves were the two sisters left of the family (5).⁸

- I knew what she was like and Flora didn't (14).
 She had died firm in her faith, Flora said, and grateful for her release (17)
- 16 When there is simple addition it is possible to inverse the coordinated elements:
 Ellie and Flora Grieves were the two sisters left of the family.
 Flora didn't know what she was like, and I did.
 She had died grateful for her release, Flora said, and had died firm in her faith.
- 17 But we might very well wonder why in the example page 14 the second clause is in fact an opposition, and why "and" has been chosen instead of the more obvious "but".
- 18 Or:
- 19 When "or" introduces a simple alternative it is termed "exclusive "or" (Halliday & Hasan 1985: 46, Quirk et al. 1985: 940, Curme (in Lapaire & Rotgé 1991: 317); it is also possible for the two elements thus coordinated to be inverted:
 ...she (Ellie) sprung on them out of the bushes or sneaked up behind them so softly that she could blow on their necks. (10).
 ...she sneaked up behind them so softly that she could blow on their necks or sprung on them out of the bushes.
- 20 In the example from page 10, where there is no grammatical problem in the switching of places of the two clauses, we can't help but notice that the end focus is not the same in the altered example. End focus is the tendency in English to relegate the important information of an utterance to the end of an information unit. This is also the case in French, but information units tend to be more systematically at the end of each sentence, whereas the English sentence tends to be broken "up into several information units giving it a more roller coaster effect (Carr: 2005). Since sexual innuendo is the topic examined in this paper, an information unit where the focus is "so softly she could blow on their necks" is more sexually suggestive than "she sprung on them out of the bushes."
- 21 However even in the case of exclusive "or" we note that what is proposed in clause 1 does not exclude clause 2. In the example page 10, "or" could be replaced by "and". Very often exclusive "or" works inclusively. But there are cases when the alternative introduced by "or" is not a real alternative but it does not work inclusively either. Sweetser (1998) points out that in the American revolutionary Patrick Henry's "Give me liberty or give me death", or in the gangster's threat "Your money or your life", the choice between the two elements is not an equal; we do not interpret these utterances with the implied "either will do".
- 22 Neither does the "either will do" implication work in the following:
 The story of Flora and Ellie and Robert had been told--or all the people knew of it--in various versions (8).
 All the people knew of the story of Flora and Ellie and Robert-or it had been told - in various versions.
- 23 The switching of places of the clauses is not at all satisfactory. "Or" does not simply introduce an alternative here. It functions more like an elliptical comment in which the reader is required to fill in the blanks. What is implied in this sentence is:
 The story of Flora and Ellie and Robert had been told - [or even if it had never really been told] all the people knew of it - in various versions.
- 24 This use of what I term elliptical comment "or" enables Munro to slip in another narrative voice. The detached extradiegetic voice here gives way to the voice of the community - the one is expressed via rumour, gossip or idle chit-chat.

But: two types, four interpretations, seven types of ambiguity

- 25 "But" introduces an opposition. However, there are four different interpretations of *but* – "though", "yet", "nevertheless", and "however" – and, to borrow the expression from William Empson (1953), seven different types of ambiguity (cf. Lakoff 1971, Anscombe & Ducrot 1977, Horn 1985, Sweetser 1981, Rivara 1981, Lapaire & Rotgé 1991: 323-333, Hetherington-Blin 2006: 333-363).
- 26 *But* can be either corrective or argumentative.
- 27 Corrective *But* :
- 28 With corrective "but" the first clause is always negative or has a negative element in it.
 She would be looking quite well--not exactly youthful, not entirely untouched by the paralyzing disease that held her in its grip for a decade or more before her death, but so much better than I remembered that I would be astonished (3)
- 29 "So much better than I remembered" corrects, or at least sets straight, any interpretation that the reader might have of "not exactly youthful" and the powerful "not entirely untouched by the paralyzing disease that held her in its grip for a decade or more before her death".
- 30 Argumentative *But* :
- 31 "But" signals that the expectations set up by Clause 1 are going to be modified by what we find in Clause 2. The modification can be direct, in which case the clause introduced by "but" (C2) is a direct opposition to the expectations set up by the first clause (C1).
 Oh, I just have this little tremor in my arm, she would say, and a little stiffness up this side of my face. *It is a nuisance but I get around* (3).
- 32 C1 "It is a nuisance" = expectation = *it stops me from getting around*
- 33 *But*
- 34 C2 *I get around*, which is a direct opposition to *it stops me from getting around*.
- 35 C1 and C2 are symmetrical and syntactically on the same level which implies that we can change the order of the two clauses without modifying either the semantic acceptability or the functioning of the two arguments: *I get around but it's a nuisance*.
- 36 With asymmetrical "but" the two arguments are not on the same level, the order of the clauses cannot be inverted, and the opposition or contrast introduced by C2 is indirect in regards to C1:
 Ellie was married, to a man called Robert Deal, who lived there and worked the farm *but* had not changed its name to Deal's in anyone's mind (5). *The farm had not changed its name to Deal's in anyone's mind *but* Ellie was married to a man called Robert Deal, who lived there and worked on the farm.
- 37 Whether it be symmetrical or asymmetrical "but", in the most straightforward cases, the presupposed idea being contrasted or opposed by C2 is shared by the utterer and the receiver of the utterance. For example in:
 They (the Grieves) had the money but they didn't spend it (5.2).
- 38 It is relatively easy to imagine a C2 that conveys basically the same idea as the one found in the short story.

Taking the reader by surprise

- 39 In "easier" literary works, the expectation set up by "but" carries little surprise. But Munro's use of "but", while not 'naughty' in that it necessarily introduces sexual innuendo, is one of her tools for taking us by surprise.
- 40 In order to test this intuition, I handed out to ten people a list of 43 sentences from "Friend of My Youth" containing clauses or phrases linked by "but". They were given the first clause or phrase and asked to imagine what follows. For example, for the two sentences previously mentioned, the participants were given:
- It's a nuisance but...
They had the money but
- 41 As expected for sentences like this, for 100% of the participants, their answer conveyed the same idea as Munro. If for 6 of the examples, it was hard to conclude because the inventions partially corresponded and partially didn't, out of the 43 examples used, only 12 (27%) completed by the participants corresponded almost exactly to what was actually in Munro's text. Twenty-five others (60%) were totally different from Munro's.
- 42 For example if we look once again at 5.1
- Ellie was married, to a man called Robert Deal, who lived there and worked the farm but
- 43 We cannot guess if the opposition introduced is to pertain to Ellie, to Robert Deal, or to the farm ! And finally it pertains to none of the above, because Munro leaves the clause without a subject:
- But \emptyset had not changed its name to Deal's in anyone's mind (5.1).
- 44 The fact that the subject is left out is grammatically correct. Known as ellipsis, this phenomenon is one of the specificities of coordination as opposed to subordination. But we usually find this type of ellipsis in sentences like: I washed but \emptyset didn't dry the dishes. Ellipsis is allowed because there is no doubt to who the grammatical subject could be. We can see that this is not the case with our example above. It is discoveries such as this one that led us further on the track of Munro's deliciously devious use of coordination and helped us to discover more the ambiguity of "FOMY".
- 45 Further types of opposition possible with "but" are the following:

C1 expresses intention/expectation C2 fact

- 46 This is the most direct type of opposition and C2 is easily guessed at.
- They delayed awhile, but finally the dance was held, and my mother got her report (18).
- 47 The verb "delay" implies an intention to not go through with the action, and C2 what actually took place.

Comment *But*

- 48 In some cases when what is announced in C2 is totally unexpected in regards to C1, "but" has the effect of commenting on it. I include in brackets the comment implied with "but".

She trusted fully in Robert's patience and in her own purity. So she might. *But* [wouldn't you know] in the winter a commotion started (10).

- 49 Of the 13 sentences containing comment *but*, the conjunction not only introduces a clause but begins a new sentence. As Hoareau (1997: 110) points out, when *but* begins a sentence it is most often because there is shared knowledge between the utterer and the co-utterer and it is for this reason that they are very often found in dialogues or in the personalized narrative parts. In "Friend of My Youth" comment "*but*" does indeed intervene in the personalized narrative parts, but one of the reasons the participants in my questionnaire had difficulty finding the same idea as Munro in C2, is because there is not as much shared knowledge as is usually expected for comment "*but*" to intervene.

New Possibilities *But*

- 50 In sentences containing "not only", "*but*" is compulsory. In this case, it does not so much introduce a contrast as introduce new possibilities. Lapaire & Rotgé explain that this anti-restrictive use of "*but*" attenuates the adversative nature of "*but*" and introduces a clause which either completes or reinforces what is said in C1:

God dealt out punishment for hurry-up marriages—*not just* Presbyterians *but* almost everybody believed that (11).

- 51 The interesting aspect of coordination in my view is that there is something so unassuming about it that it becomes the perfect tool for a writer like Munro, the Queen of the litote, to weave her narrative and catch us in its web. The intricacy of these structures cannot be dealt with within the confines of this short paper but hopefully we'll be able to detect how Munro's text illustrates the rules and then turns them upside down.⁹

Hierarchy in Coordinate Clauses

- 52 When we speak of hierarchy, we are referring to the fact that, unlike subordinate clauses which, as their name indicates are subordinate to a main clause, coordinate clauses are of equal rank. In symmetrical coordination, as illustrated below, it is possible to change the order of the two clauses and retain the grammaticality of the sentence as well as the original meaning.

John and Marilyn are in love and live together downtown.

John and Marilyn live together downtown and are in love.

- 53 Symmetrical coordination however competes with asymmetrical coordination where diverse relationships between the two clauses are implied. If we look at the first sentence of the text we see that it would be impossible to inverse the two clauses:

I used to dream about my mother, and though the details in the dream varied, the surprise in it was always the same (3).

*The surprise in it was always the same and [...] I used to dream about my mother.

- 54 Not only is it not possible to change the order of the two clauses, it is also difficult to establish the exact relationship between the two clauses or even the need for the second clause. If someone starts out to tell you about their dream, there is obviously something surprising about it. In the short story genre, where the keyword is economy, one cannot help but pay attention to what is to some extent redundant. It is of course,

the "to some extent" which is important here, for it is in the end focus of this first sentence that the attentive reader will begin to pay close attention to the end element of the coordinate structures of the entire short story.

- 55 When the two clauses of a coordinate sentence cannot be reversed, there are various relations that can be implied.¹⁰ Asymmetrical "and" implies an "and then" relationship or an "and so" relationship (Lakoff, 1971: 141). However, it is not possible to paraphrase our sentence by "and then" or "and so" and except for a very loose relationship between the two, the exact link is very difficult to establish.

Hierarchy, Uneasy Couples and Narrative voices

- 56 A study of coordination in "Friend of My Youth" leads us deeper and deeper into this question of hierarchy between two clauses. When two clauses are coordinated they can be of two types according to Quirk *et al.*: Noun phrases can be joined by combinatory coordination – in which case what is predicated for one is predicated for the other: or segretory coordination where it is possible to paraphrase Clause1 and Clause2 (Dik 1968; Girard 1998).

- 57 In *John and Mary are married*, the obvious interpretation is *John and Mary are married to each other*. But, there is nothing preventing an interpretation in which *John is married to Karen and Mary is married to Donald*, wherein the coordination can be interpreted as segretory. In order to disambiguate one from the other there are various devices we can use. For example a preposition like *between* demands a joint coordination:

Instead of putting the wedding ahead, she put it back—from next spring to early fall, so that there should be a full year between it and her father's death (10).

**there should be a year between it*

**there should be a year between her father's death.*

- 58 Also:

By the way everyone spoke my mother expected the Grieves sisters and Robert to be middle-aged at least, but Ellie the younger sister was only in her thirties and Flora seven or eight years older. *Robert Deal might be in between* (6).

- 59 The innocent reader of course is going to interpret this last sentence as.

Robert Deal's age might be somewhere between thirty and thirty-seven.

- 60 The very unassuming way in which coordination functions fully enables Munro to set up the detached extradiegetic voice of the narrator telling the story her mother told her. However, a closer look at these structures indicates other narrative voices participating in the telling.

The case of reciprocal verbs

- 61 Joint coordination is required of all reciprocal verbs (i.e. verbs such as *marry*, *correspond*, *link* etc.) and when these verbs are employed, an implicit understanding of *with one another* or *together* is usually par for the course:

Soon he and Flora were engaged [to one another] (9)

"You have in all probability heard," wrote Flora, "that *Robert and Nurse Atkinson* have been married" [to one another] (16).

- 62 Once the couple is established by the context, in any further mention the reader can easily identify the coordination as being joint with an implicit understanding of "together" to be read between the lines.

The division had been made, of course, in the expectation that *Robert and Ellie* would have a family [together], and they would need the room (6).

The father made *Flora and Robert* [together] set the wedding date a year ahead, and after he died they did not move it any closer (10).

- 63 Since the couple *Flora and Robert* has already been established by the context, there is no difficulty identifying it as a joint coordination. And in the following, the characteristic 'joint' of the coordination has also been firmly established by N1.

Ellie's share, left to *him and Nurse Atkinson* to enjoy themselves with, the shameless pair (17).

- 64 There is to all evidence no ambiguity in these sentences. *Robert and Ellie*, and *Robert and Nurse Atkinson* are fully established couples. Quirk *et al.* tell us that one thing that can help us decide whether we're dealing with one type of coordination or another is to find a cover term which includes the two coordinated elements. In the example page 17 Munro has conveniently provided us with cover terms which help us identify the *jointness* of the coordination - "Ellie's *share*" and "the shameless *pair*" in this last example. In 3, 4, 5, and 6 the cover term that comes to mind is in fact "couple".

Segratory coordination or how Munro invites us to fill in blanks

- 65 In segratory coordination, the coordinated elements are not to be considered as a couple and it is possible to paraphrase the sentence by breaking it up into two clauses. In the case of this type of coordination, *both* is either present or implied in the sentence. *Both*, *the pair*, and *the two* are all terms that can be used to disambiguate couples: *Pair* identifying the coordination as joint, *both* and *the two* as segratory:

Flora and Ellie were *both* dark-haired, dark-eyed women, tall and narrow-shouldered and long-legged (7). = Flora is dark-haired.... Ellie is dark-haired...

Flora and Ellie Grieves were *the two* sisters left of the family (5) = Flora was one sister. Ellie was the other sister

- 66 It is generally the context which comes to the reader's rescue and enables the linguist to decide which kind of coordination is being used when there is no term to disambiguate. But while the linguist is trying to determine how the grammatical couples are being formed, the Munro reader is being let in on some rather unsuspected dimensions of the couples the characters form in "Friend of My Youth". A re-examination of the examples just mentioned will help us to clarify this view.

- 67 Through the context, the reader who has been following the story easily identifies the following coordination as being joint:

And of course she has made over the farm to Ellie and Robert, of course he has inherited it, and now everything belongs to Audrey Atkinson (20).

- 68 It's by filling in the blanks - where Robert appears each time - that this merry-go-round of couples, begins to come into focus and enhance the question that Dubois-Charlier and Vautherin, quoted at the beginning of this article, invite us to answer: what indeed authorizes us to talk of couples.

69 Let us look again at the example at page 6.

By the way everyone spoke, my mother expected the Grieves sisters and Robert to be middle-aged at least, but Ellie the younger sister was only in her thirties and Flora seven or eight years older. Robert Deal might be in between.

70 The interpretation of this sentence is clear enough as I suggested above. But another interpretation is also possible:

Robert Deal might be in between Ellie and Flora.

71 It is perhaps pushing things a little to conclude that we are to interpret this as a tongue-in-cheek insinuation that these three were into unorthodox practices, but it is in these gaps that Munro not only enables us to play our role of active readers by inviting us to fill them in, it is in these gaps she constructs the space in her text to enable various narrative voices to be heard.

72 Even in the most unassuming of sentences, Munro is in fact taking advantage of the leeway coordinate structures give her to send her readers on what might look like a wild goose chase. Something similar happens in example page 9.

Soon he [Robert] and Flora were engaged (9).

73 The interesting thing about this sentence is that it intervenes as an analepsis after the story has begun and Robert was introduced at the beginning as being married to Ellie! So when we come to this sentence we go back for a second read. Of course we do not interpret it as *he was engaged to Ellie and Flora was engaged to someone else*. But N1 has been telling us a completely different story up until now. This coordinate structure invites us to take a closer look. The narrator is not telling the story in chronological order; she's telling the story her way, and though this voice is not the intense homodiegetic voice we heard at the beginning of the narrative, it's not simply the detached extradiegetic narrator telling the tale her mother told her.

74 And let us look again at example page 17

Ellie's share left to him and Nurse Atkinson to enjoy themselves with, the shameless pair (17).

75 It is perhaps not superfluous to add here that this sentence intervenes near the end of the story. It is a repetition of the story we have just read. We already know all the facts related here. In a form that demands concision, we cannot help but ask ourselves what the author is driving at. Why repeat what the reader already knows? The only new detail, is that the couple Robert Deal-Nurse Atkinson is now designated under the cover term "pair", modified by the adjective "shameless which on top of everything is placed at the end of the sentence and hereby gaining end-focus.

76 If Robert and Nurse Atkinson have attained the status of couple here, they have attained a whole new status in this sentence as being "a pair". How does *the two* differ from *the pair*? The *Oxford Dictionary of English* confirms the use of the term as a possible synonym for *couple*; but in the examples given in the dictionary "pair" is always preceded by an attributive derogatory adjective ie *silly pair*, or an adverb *they make quite a pair* or it is used to designate objects: *a pair of scissors, gloves, pyjamas etc*. So when "pair" is used to designate a couple, there is always a modal quality to it.

77 The "shameless pair" is of course a blatant sexual innuendo. But what is of interest here, is how this disambiguator of couples enables Munro to introduce a trio of narrative voices. This sentence is part of a whole retelling of the story. The narrator

tells us how she as an impatient teenager imagined her then ailing mother would have told the story if she could have:

- 78 What at first glance appears to be only the mother's voice is in fact accompanied by that of the narrator as she was when she was a teenager. The use of *the pair* – this disambiguator of joint /segregatory coordination - in introducing a modal commentary is in fact a subtle way for the narrator to comment on the rather close-minded way *she* perceived her mother to be. The narrator here becomes here the unreliable narrator, the one who didn't have all the facts, because she was too young. So, in this passage we have:
- the voice of the mother who at the same time is the mouthpiece for the community
 - the narrator and the narrator's rendition of her mother when she was 15
 - the unreliable narrator.
- 79 What is of interest here is the fact that through the analysis of this disambiguator we catch a glimpse of the other narrative-N2, and it is through the uneasy relationships between Flora, Ellie, Robert, and Nurse Atkinson that the narrator lets slip in the uneasy relationship between her and her mother. If these uneasy couples peep their heads up above the surface when two clauses are coordinated, the unorthodoxy becomes clearer when we study what Munro does with multiple coordination in "Friend of My Youth".

Multiple Coordination and the Merry-Go-Round of Couples

- 80 The basic rule for canonical multiple coordination stipulates that the coordinated elements are separated (or joined!) by commas and the last element is to be separated from the second to last one by "and", such as in the example below.

A, B, and C

But she was engaged by that time, she wanted to work on her trousseau instead of running around the country having a good time, and she figured she could get home one Sunday out of three (5).

- 81 It is perhaps not surprising to discover that out of the 45 sentences built with multiple coordination, only five respect this rule. The remaining forty use either polysyndeton, when there is repetition of the conjunctions "and" or "or" which Pillière (2005: 139) terms "special effects coordination", or asyndeton—coordination via the comma—which Cressot (1947: 237) designates under the term fragmentary view coordination where each of the elements joined only by a comma maintain a greater autonomy.
- 82 It is perhaps not surprising to discover that out of the 45 sentences built with multiple coordination, only five respect this rule. The remaining forty use either polysyndeton, when there is repetition of the conjunctions "and" or "or" which Pillière (2005: 139) terms "special effects coordination", or asyndeton--coordination via the comma--which Cressot (1947: 237) designates under the term fragmentary view coordination where each of the elements joined only by a comma maintain a greater autonomy.

A and B and C: Special effects coordination

- 83 The repetition of the coordinate conjunction (polysyndeton) creates an effect of accumulation such as can be witnessed in the example below. Flora, who in the eyes of the narrator's mother has not lost out on her chance to marry, must also take on all the household chores, because the ailing Ellie cannot help her:

She washed the clothes and tidied up the rooms and cooked the meals served in both sides of the house, as well as helping Robert with the milking and separating (6).

- 84 The special effects are produced of course by the accumulation brought on by the repetition of the conjunction.

A, B, C: Fragmentary Vision coordination

- 85 When a comma replaces a coordinate conjunction (asyndeton), the result is an impression of fragmentary vision or that there is "something more to be said" (Pillière 2005) such as in the example below.

Houses turn black, maple syrup has a taste no maple syrup produced elsewhere can equal, bears amble within sight of farmhouses (4).

- 86 The fragmented vision comes from the absence of a closing conjunction thus producing the impression that something has been left out. It is when there is no hierarchy in the multiple coordination, and the coordinate conjunction separates each item, the coordination can usually be paraphrased by a general term (Quirk *et al* 1985):

They were very backward. They didn't have a car or electricity or a telephone or a tractor. (car, electricity, telephone, tractor = modern conveniences) (5).

- 87 Or the cover term can be provided by the text itself, as it is in the example below.

Flora did all the work. She washed the clothes, and tidied up the rooms and cooked the meals served in both sides of the house as well as helping Robert with the milking and separating (6) (all the work = wash the clothes, tidy up the rooms, cook the meals).

- 88 But, when a cover term cannot be found to round them all up, or the cover term can be further subdivided into two or more cover terms, one of the elements finds itself detached from the rest and the different configurations outlined below are to be considered. In the example above, "helping Robert with the milking and separating", though it is also part of "all the work", is clearly detached by "as well as". The end focus here draws our attention to the fact that Flora and Robert are paired via the farm chores. It should be pointed out, that since end focus is the normal place for focus in the English sentence, there is no intonational enhancement. This pairing off of Flora with her former fiancé and present brother-in-law thus goes relatively unnoticed and would remain unnoticed if there were not other pairings off of the couple.

- 89 Let us now have a look at further examples of hierarchy in the coordinate sentences. In these cases, either the first element or the last element of the coordinate structure is alone:

A + [B+C+D]

But no – it was Flora who pressed Robert's suit – it must have been – *and got Ellie out of bed and washed her and made her presentable* (10)

- 90 In the example from page 10 *it was Flora who pressed Robert's suit* is separated from the activities which can be summed up by '*got Ellie ready*'

A + B [+C]

Her kerchief and apron and Robert's baggy overalls, that she donned for the climbing jobs gave her the air of a comedian – sportive, unpredictable (7).

Robert had to catch her and tie her up, and together he and Flora had to put her to bed (10).

- 91 In the example at page 7, *her kerchief and apron* can be resumed by the cover term *women's apparel* and is separated from *Robert's baggy overalls*, which of course stands out from the other two terms as "men's apparel". In both these examples we find Flora once again paired off with her brother-in-law. This example especially gives us food for thought. When we recall that the Grieves are members of a fundamentalist Protestant sect, we cannot help but be somewhat surprised that Flora would be daring something as intimate as getting into Robert's overalls. A sentence like this one, of course goes unnoticed until we start looking at the hierarchy in this coordinate structure.¹¹ Likewise in the page 10 example, when the mentally unbalanced Ellie, already pregnant (though the reader doesn't know this yet) becomes hysterical and runs away and hides from her sister.

- 92 Here the last segment, where Flora and Robert who are still engaged are once again paired off, is clearly separated from the first two. The pairing off here of course is legitimate, as they are engaged.¹² But not only is their pairing off end-focused as in the previous example, they are paired off putting a tied-up Ellie to bed! And what are we to think of the following:

The story of Flora and Ellie and Robert had been told -or all the people knew it - in various versions (8).

- 93 Is the hierarchy of this coordination Flora and [Ellie and Robert], or [Flora and Ellie] and Robert or with no hierarchy at all [Flora] and [Ellie] and [Robert] in which case the cover term that spontaneously comes to mind is "threesome"? There is no clear cut answer to this question, but these examples give strong linguistic clues to how Munro works sexual innuendo and muted violence into her text and how this "special effects" coordination clearly merits its name. When sex is openly mentioned, we again hear the homodiegetic voice heard at the beginning of the narrative. In the following example, the narrator speaks of her own budding, teenage sexuality:

I admired their wrists and their necks and any bit of their chests a loose button let show, and even their ears and their feet in shoes (22).

- 94 The hierarchy here is [A+B+C] +D +E. If there had only been the first three elements – their wrists and their necks, and any bit of their chests a loose button let show – the desire evoked would be quite clear-cut. The two elements tacked on at the end however – their ears and their feet in shoes – add another, almost comical note and enables us to further grasp how we are to understand what might be unreliable in the 15-year-old narrative voice when we hear it at various points in the text.¹³

Asyndeton and Fragmentary View

A, B, C, D

95 We have seen above that though coordination does indeed join elements, some elements are more joined than others. With asyndeton there are two main effects. The standard one, which implies the notion of fragmentary view, implies that the description is being built as the utterer goes along. In canonical coordination, when there is enumeration, the "and" which announces the final element, announces to the reader that the end is nigh. If the list were to be read aloud, the final element would be read with a falling tone. Asyndeton is open-ended, and there is very often an impression that more can be said, or an implied etc. In both cases it is an open invitation to the reader to imagine a follow up.¹⁴ This is the case in the following examples:

She demanded new medicine, reviled the doctor, nagged Flora (11).
 Would she get a permanent, paint her nails, put on lipstick (25)?
 She might rent a cottage on a lake for a week, learn to swim, visit a city (25).

96 In the asyndeton, instead of an imagined etc. we could also imagine suspension points, which are much less neutral than etc. in that etc., implies "more of the same" or "things of that sort", while suspension points indicate that something has been omitted. This use of asyndeton, in most of our analysis (Hetherington-Blin: 2006) signals a shifting of narrative voice. Instead of the detached extra-diegetic voice, telling the story her mother told her of her time spent with the Grieves, the asyndeton enables the narrator to slip in her own less detached intradiegetic voice and to comment on it. And strangely enough, if for many sentences using asyndeton there is indeed an impression that etc. could be added to the final element, this cannot be taken as a hardfast rule. Just as in a sentence like "He came, he saw, he conquered" we have the impression that there is nothing more to be said, Munro does the same with several of her asyndeton sentences. When describing Ellie's preparation for her "shotgun wedding" we have this:

She let Flora fix her up, she let herself be married, she was never wild from that day on (10).

97 Here, even without the final "and", we have a very clear "that's-it-in-a-nutshell" point of view.

Couples and the Merry-Go-Round of Coordination

98 To conclude, we shall examine how Munro manages to combine within one and the same sequence several different possibilities of coordination. The intricacy of Munro's narrative becomes all the more evident when her coordinate sentences combine different possibilities that this structure allows. In the following example, the narrative voice is once again the intradiegetic voice heard at the beginning. The narrator, comparing her generation's view of sex with that of her mother's gives us this:

My mother had grown up in a time and in a place where sex was a dark undertaking in a woman. So she honored *the decency, the prudery, the frigidity*, that might protect you. And I grew up in the horror of that protection, the dainty tyranny that seemed

to me to extend to all areas of life, to enforce *tea parties and white gloves, and all other sorts of tinkling inanities* (22).

- 99 Here again with *the decency, the prudery, the frigidity* one wonders what could possibly be added. It seems clear however, that what is implied here is not *etc.* but rather suspension points which enables the asyndeton to have a commentary effect. Commentary that is fully developed in *dainty tyranny* which itself is explained and commented on by the use of polysyndeton in *tea parties, and white gloves, and all other sorts of tinkling inanities*. The interesting linguistic phenomenon here is that with the asyndeton, Munro manages to give us the impression that there is little more to be said concerning the awesome protection from sex afforded to women at the time, thus countering the open-endedness effect that this type of coordination is supposed to give. Also, with the polysyndeton in 27 the expression "all sorts" which, as Pillière (2005) has pointed out, indicates that "there is more to be said", we have once again an example of how Munro subtly works within and without the rules which govern these structures enabling her to orchestrate different narrative voices, the polyphony of which enables to reader to have access to a multi-layered text.
- 100 As "Friend of My Youth" draws to a close the merry-go-round of couples leaves way for the mother-daughter couple encountered in the opening passage. At the very end of the short story, the narrator comments on the dream of the opening passage and the experience of forgiveness. I shall quote the whole passage and underline the coordinate structures:

I would have to say that I felt slightly cheated. Yes. *Offended, tricked, cheated, by this welcome turnaround, this reprieve*. My mother moving rather carelessly out of her old prison, showing *options and powers* I never dreamed she had, changes more than herself. She changes the bitter lump of love I have carried all this time into a phantom – something *useless and uncalled for*, like a phantom pregnancy (26).

- 101 To conclude we will look at this final paragraph, which is the penultimate in the text.¹⁵ The asyndeton, "offended, tricked, cheated" is of interest, because unlike the other asyndetons in the text which either imply "more to be said", or on the other hand, "nothing more to be said", takes on another twist here as it implies that the narrator is at a loss for words (the repetition of "cheated"; where there are good number of synonyms from which to choose introduces a note of frustration in the narrative voice.
- 102 The following asyndeton, *this welcome turnaround, this reprieve*, where the second term is introduced as an explanation of the first,¹⁶ is not only a contradiction to the impression of feeling cheated, it introduces the idea of "reprieve", which not only has an official connotation to it, but also implies something more temporary than forgiveness. The poignant "*bitter lump of love*, compared to a phantom pregnancy suggests yet another couple onto this above-mentioned merry-go-round and perhaps the most unsuspected of all. As far as coherence is concerned, the phantom pregnancy rings a coherent echo to Ellie's perpetual miscarriages and the narrator here finds herself indirectly associated with Ellie.

Conclusion

- 103 We have seen how Munro uses the possibilities that coordination gives the writer to have at her disposal the necessary tools to give power and depth to the story of the Grieves sisters. The study of her naughty coordinators has shown how the N1 is really a

sort of "textual foreplay" to the far more complex N2 in which "Friend of My Youth" can be read - and is read by countless scholars - as a daughter-mother story. Munro's coordinators turn out to be not simply deliciously "naughty", but a little bit subversive, and thoroughly authoritative.

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NOTES

1. I wish to thank Beth Kaplan and Jean-Marie Merle for their careful reading and challenging questions concerning this article.
2. For treatment of the ordinary in Munro see Ventura 2002.
3. For Halliday and Hasan, it is not for the linguist to interpret a text. In their book *Cohesion* (1983) they explain how a literary text coheres but stipulate that thought textual cohesion does not give us direct access to the meaning of the text "what it will do is to show why the text is interpreted in a certain way" (328). "Cohesion is the set of meaning relations that is general to all sets of text that distinguishes text from non-text and interrelates the substantive meanings of the text with each other. Cohesion does not concern what a text means: it concerns how the text is constructed as a semantic edifice" (26).
4. Syndeton refers to coordination of clauses or phrases by "and", "or", and "but". Grammarians and linguists of the French-speaking world do not always include asyndeton in comma as a coordination. This however is not the case for the English speaking world. The Polysyndeton is the multiple use of "and" and "or" to link clauses or phrases.
5. For comparison's sake, a short story of similar length but which also makes use of coordination, "The Orlov Sokolovs" by L. Ulitskya, we find only 175 coordinate structures for 405 sentences.
6. It is impossible within the confines of this paper to go into this concept of silent prosody, which I have dealt with more thoroughly elsewhere (Hetherington-Blin 2006, Blin 2008). Suffice it to say there that along with other linguists and phonologists (see notably Arabyan 2001), I believe

that we take our intimate knowledge of the spoken language with us when we read. Good readers, even when they read silently, read with expression. The very long sentences which coordination enables, as well as the effects it has upon intonation and pitch gives large portions of this introductory passage the intonation pattern of a lament.

7. For a more thorough linguistics approach to polyphony see Gévaudan 2009.

8. The numbers at the end of each sentence indicate the page number where they are to be found.

9. See Hoareau (1997) for a detailed comparative study of how coordination works in French and in English. Pilière (2005) illustrates the different effects of canonical multiple coordination compared to that where the last element in an enumeration is not separated by "and".

10. Halliday and Hasan in their work on how a text forms a cohesive unit have this to say about "and": "We shall refer to the conjunctive 'and' by the more general term "additive" to suggest something rather looser and less structured than what is meant by coordinate" (1976: 234). For Halliday and Hasan, it's the progression of a text that is most important; therefore cohesion is concerned only with links established between sentences, and not within the sentence itself. Coordinate conjunctions are not considered to be strictly cohesive unless they are at the beginning of sentences. However, this is to neglect the specific prosody of sentences where coordination plays an important role. When what I have termed the silent prosody of coordination is analysed in the opening passage, we gain several clues to why this passage has some of the characteristics of a lament. The long sentences that coordination enables is one factor contributing to this phenomenon, but the breaths and pauses that coordination demands is another (Hetherington-Blin 2006: 23-35, Blin 2008).

11. We might also note the asyndeton of the two adjectives in postposition as the end focus of this utterance: *...gave her the air of a comedian, sportive, unpredictable*. In contemporary English, *sportive*, means frolicsome, playful, but it also has an archaic meaning of *wanton*. The use of adjectives in postposition (predicative adjuncts) instead of the more canonical attributive position, plus the use of the polysemous *sportive* also suggests the slipping in of the intradiegetic voice of the narrator. For more on adjective phrases see Desurmont: 2003: 101-118, 2007, 2008: 74-94, Hetherington-Blin: 2006: 238-262).

12. As previously explained, we discover that Flora had been engaged to Robert prior to the latter's marriage to her sister on page 6. We also discover that it was Flora herself who put off the wedding after her father's death, instead of putting it ahead: "A year from wedding to funeral-that seemed proper to her.", p10 and, though propriety is the reason given here, the reader is left to wonder if it is Flora's fear of sex or simply her desire to remain independent which pushes her to delay it.

13. A more psychoanalytical reading of this sentence of course would imply that "feet in their shoes" might refer to a more hidden part of the male anatomy.

14. When we consider the open endedness of "Friend of My Youth", open endedness which is the case of most great short stories, it is perhaps not surprising that Munro makes such good use of a grammatical form that is itself open-ended.

15. The last paragraph of *Friend of My Youth* reads thus: "The Cameronians, I have discovered, are or were an uncompromising remnant of the Covenanters – those Scots who in the seventeenth century bound themselves with God, to resist prayer books, bishops, any taint of popery or interference by the king. Their name comes from Richard Cameron, an outlawed, or "field" preachers, soon cut down. The Cameronians – for a long time they have preferred to be called the Reformed Presbyterians – went into battle singing the seventy-fourth and the eighty-eighth Psalms. They hacked the haughty Bishop of Saint Andrews to death on the highway and rode their horses over his body. One of their ministers, in a mood of firm rejoicing at his own hanging, excommunicated all the other preachers in the world." The reader is obviously puzzled by this ending, but we consider that it is not only a coherent echo (in the sense that Halliday and Hasan

refer to coherence) to each and every mention of the Cameronians in the text, but that it also functions as a metonymy and rings coherently for all the violence in the text: a) the violent relation between Robert and Ellie, b) the violence of the mother's tragic destiny, c) the violence of the suffocating stifled life in small-town Ontario, and last but not least d) the violence of the narrator's sense of guilt of having condemned her mother's last painful years to solitude when she decided to leave home.

16. Multiple modification is another feature of Munro's writing. Quirk *et al.* Point out that out of 17,000 noun phrases examined in Survey of English Usage files, less than one-eighth had multiple modification. In "Friend of my Youth" 98 of the noun phrases have multiple modification. We have shown (Hetherington-Blin 2006: 302) that even when Munro respects the rules concerning adjective phrase coordination, it's the unsuspected association of two (or more) adjectives which constantly takes the reader by surprise.

ABSTRACTS

Un des phénomènes grammaticaux les plus saillants dans l'œuvre d'Alice Munro est son emploi répété de structures faisant appel à la coordination. Munro utilise ces structures pour introduire des allusions sexuelles qui ne sont pas là où nous les attendons. Cet article utilise des exemples précis tirés de « Friend of My Youth » pour démontrer comment une analyse linguistique de ces structures peut être une clef utile pour comprendre la complexité de son œuvre.

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