

The Art of Ordinary Words and Sentences

Sentence Complexity and Madness in Works by the Dutch Authors Maarten Biesheuvel and Jan Arends

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Abstract

In stylistics, research is often focused on what traditionally are called 'foregrounded elements': conspicuous elements in a text which draw attention to themselves - cf. Roman Jakobson's 'poetic function of language'. This starting point has led to selective attention for poetry and prose that is characterized by linguistic elements that are obviously deviant from 'normal' language use, like metaphor, blending, parallelisms or specific language use resulting from extraordinary points of view.

Instead, I want to look at two texts consisting of what seems to be 'ordinary prose', by giving a stylistic analysis of two short stories by two modern Dutch authors: Maarten Biesheuvel and Jan Arends. I will focus on the stylistic effect of relatively unmarked linguistic elements like sentence length, sentence construction (main and subordinate clauses) and use of adverbial clauses. Both Biesheuvel and Arends were admitted to mental hospitals several times during their life, and their stories are often situated in this environment of 'madmen' and caretakers. It is therefore interesting to see in what (different) ways – with what linguistic means – the idea of 'madness' is expressed in their work. The goal of this analysis will be to show that ordinary prose too plays an important role in creating the overall stylistic effect of a text.

1 Introduction

The central theme of the two stories I have compared – 'Het ontbijt' by Jan Arends and 'De heer Mellenberg' by Maarten Biesheuvel, is the border between insanity and normality. Both stories tell of crazy events that are described in apparently normal language. 'Het ontbijt' (The breakfast) by Jan Arends is situated on a Sunday morning in a home for elderly people. It is the birthday of the main character, mr. Koopman. This elderly gentleman changes into a chimpanzee and climbs into a tree. The narrator describes the reaction of the nurse, the doctor and a clerk who are all called to the scene. We do not get access to the thoughts of mr. Koopman himself; we see only the reactions and thoughts of the people around him. Some of them see him as an ape; others still see mr. Koopman and deny that he has changed into an ape. In this story, Arends ironically criticizes the way elderly people are treated in hospitals and homes.

In 'De heer Mellenberg' ('Mr. Mellenberg') by Maarten Biesheuvel, we have a first person narrator with the same name as the author, who tells us about his first admission to a mental health hospital, eight years ago. He was admitted there because he believed that he was Jesus. He meets a fellow patient, mr. Mellenberg, who devotes all his time to the writing of a scientific paper. The reader immediately knows that Mellenberg's paper is nonsense and that Mellenberg is just as mad as Biesheuvel, but just in a different way. But our first person hero does not see this. Mellenberg's scientific nature appeals to him, and to him Mellenberg is the wisest person in the whole world. The main character Maarten decides to part with his Jesus fantasies, and wants to become the follower of Mellenberg, to become 'just as smart as he is'.

The play with insanity and normality, which is already visible in this short summary, is present on all levels of the text. Biesheuvel and Mellenberg think they are smart and 'normal', and they play jokes on their caretakers and psychiatrists. It is a very humoristic story, with word jokes like 'We were working like crazy'.

Both stories have a similar theme: the play with madness and reality. It is therefore interesting to see in what different ways this theme is stylistically worked out. There are obvious stylistic differences between the two texts. Biesheuvel uses a first person narrator and writes in long sentences that are described as 'wandering', 'meandering' and 'complex' by literary critics and students that I used as test subjects. Arends' style on the other hand, is described as very plain: he mostly uses in short sentences and his language use is described as 'clear' and 'easy to read' by critics and students.

But the results of my stylistic analysis will show that the relation between sentence structure and complexity is not as straightforward as it looks. I will argue that the impression that Biesheuvel's text is 'difficult' to read has not so much to do with the length of his sentences, but more with coherence relations between the sentences. First of all, I will show that in Biesheuvel's text, coherence relations are mainly of a temporal kind and not causal, leading to a text which jumps from one subject to another without clear logical connections between the sentences. Secondly, it will turn out that the easy-looking short sentences Jan Arends uses are in some ways more difficult to understand than Biesheuvel's complex sentence structures. This has to do with Arends' use of complement clauses and modality. I will argue that the complexity of Arends' text is mainly caused by the subjectivity in his descriptions, which will lead me to some remarks about the distinction between 'objective' and 'subjective' storytelling.

2 Ordinary words and sentences

Of the four categories in the Leech & Short checklist (2007 [1981], Chapter 3), the category of grammatical elements ('Category B') is used the least in stylistic analysis. Research in cognitive stylistics is mostly focused on the level of lexical items, or on blending mechanisms, mental spaces or metaphors, on cases where there is something special with viewpoint, e.g. unreliable storytellers, or on the special language use of poetry (Semino and Culpeper 2002, Bex, Burke and Stockwell 2000, Gavins and Steen 2003). In other words: cases of special or deviant language use - what in the tradition of Roman Jakobson are called 'foregrounded elements': elements in a text which draw attention to themselves (Jakobson 1958, Fagel 2008). The semantic effect of choices on the *grammatical* or *syntactical* level is often less visible than choices in the lexicon.

My research project focuses on ordinary words and sentences. I am interested in finding ways of discovering the stylistic effect of prose texts that on first sight do *not* seem to have anything out of the ordinary. The grammar is correct, no tropes of parallelisms are used, everything looks perfectly normal. Yet the reader knows and feels that even this normal looking prose steers you in the direction of a certain interpretation, not only in the content of the novel, but also stylistically. This almost invisible steering of the reader, which in cognitive linguistics is called 'construal' (Verhagen 2005), takes place on a grammatical and syntactical level. A good example of the stylistic effect of a relatively unmarked phenomenon - the use of past and present tense - can be found in Daalder and Verhagen (1993). In this article, I will investigate another grammatical element that on first sight does not seem to have any special stylistic effect: the use of main and subordinate clauses.

3 Hypothesis

The opening sentences of the two stories already give a good impression of the stylistic differences of the two texts. Arends' 'The breakfast' starts as follows:

- (1) *It is not just an ordinary day. It is the first of September. Furthermore, it is a Sunday. And it is mister Koopmans birthday. The other gentlemen have been up for hours. The nightnurse started washing this morning at five o' clock. Now all of them, at least those who are able to walk, are wearing their Sunday suits and they have already eaten breakfast. Most of them are in the conservatory. They are smoking or chewing tobacco. They are arguing or looking outside. There is not much to see. A dusty little lawn. A big chestnut tree that takes away a lot of light and that will be cut down this winter. A black tar fence. It is September 1st, 1968. But mister Koopman is still asleep. He is 79 years old now.*¹

Arends writes in short sentences, mostly main clauses, and a lot of elliptic sentences. Literary critics, and students that I have used as test subjects give the following judgements: Arends' style is plain and simple, it reads like a children's book. Furthermore, they judge that the third person narrative style of this story 'Het ontbijt' is 'objective': he just registers what happens.

Biesheuvel's style is very different: he uses longer sentences, and complex sentence structuring: the fourth sentence counts 109 words and in the Dutch original it consists of 5 main and 6 subordinate clauses:

- (2) *Eight years ago they deemed it necessary for the first time to bring me to a madhouse. I was housed in 'Men E'. Nowadays 'Gentlemen E'. When I had recovered a little and was allowed to talk to other people than the most heavy lunatics on the pavilion (this reality defies all description, and I will refrain from an attempt to do so, which would be useless altogether or which would, because of the effort of writing about such beautiful, primitive people, immediately put me in a situation in which I would have to live with and among them again, for all these reasons. Of course I would like to return one day to recover from the madness at our universities and large libraries. 'But between dream and deed there are laws obstructing the way and practical concerns'.) I was sent to the pavilion for occupational therapy.*

Students judge Biesheuvel's story difficult to read, because of the long sentences and the fact that he rambles from one subject to another. They also judge this text to be highly subjective, because of the first person narrator.

These impressionistic judgments about Arends and Biesheuvel can be summarized in the following hypotheses about the two texts:

- 1a. Biesheuvel is difficult to read, because of the sentence complexity
- 1b. Biesheuvel's text is highly subjective, because of the first person narrator.
- 2a. Arends' text is plain, easy to read.
- 2b. Arends' text has an objective narrator, who registers what happens.

On first sight, these hypotheses seem plausible. But as it will turn out, the notions of 'complexity' and 'subjectivity' are not as straightforward as they seem. In the next paragraphs,

I will answer the following two questions: In what way do Biesheuvel's long and complex sentences of his story convey the madness of their protagonist (paragraph 4)? And how does the plain and simple language of Arends create a story that still leaves the question unanswered whether mister Koopman really changed into an ape or not (paragraph 5)?

4 Sentence complexity in 'Mister Mellenberg'

I used category B2 from the Leech & Short checklist as a starting point for my analysis of Biesheuvel's long and wandering sentences:

- (3) *B2: Do sentences on the whole have a simple or a complex structure? What is the average sentence length (in number of words)? What is the ratio of dependent to independent clauses? Is complexity mainly due to (i) coordination, (ii) subordination, of (iii) parataxis (juxtaposition of clauses or other equivalent structures)? In what parts of a sentence does complexity tend to occur? For instance, is there any notable occurrence of anticipatory structure (e.g. of complex subjects preceding the verbs, of dependent clauses preceding the subject of a main clause)?* (Leech & Short 2007,62)

I will analyze main clauses separately (paragraph 4.1) from subordinate clauses (paragraph 4.2) and will now first turn my attention to the sentences consisting of solely main clauses.

4.1 Main clauses

The average sentence length in Biesheuvel's story is 16,02 words per sentence. In Arends' text, the average is 9,55. This is because Arends uses a lot of elliptic sentences (see figure 1 below: Arends uses 77 elliptic sentences, while in Biesheuvel's text we only find 4). Also in Arends' text, over 50% (315 out of 600 sentences) are sentences which only have one main clause. This percentage becomes even larger if you add the 77 elliptic sentences (65%, 392 out of 600 sentences).

Figure 1: Use of main clauses

| Number of sentences that consist of... | Biesheuvel | Arends |
|--|------------|------------|
| 1 main clause | 88 | 315 |
| 2 main clauses | 55 | 43 |
| 3 or more main clauses | 20 | 1 |
| elliptic main clauses | 4 | 77 |
| Total main clauses | 167 | 436 |
| Overall number of sentences | 267 | 600 |

Biesheuvel's sentences are longer and grammatically more complex: more sentences consist of two or more main clauses (see table 1), or a combination of main and subordinate clauses (subordinate clauses are not included in figure 1, because I will deal with them separately in paragraph 4.2). It is therefore plausible to think that Arends' short sentences contribute to the plainness and children's book quality of his style, and that Biesheuvel's long sentences bear traces of the narrator's mad mind. But where in Biesheuvel's long sentences does the 'madness' of the narrator's mind express itself? That his sentences are longer (grammatically complex) does not necessarily entail an increase in the difficulty to understand them (complexity with regard to content). These two types of complexity should be carefully

distinguished: if a sentence contains more than one finite verb and subject, then it is called *grammatically* complex. Very often, sentence length (along with word length) is used to measure reading difficulty. But a sentence that is *grammatically* complex is not necessarily more difficult to read or understand (*content* complexity). When I investigated Biesheuvel's story, it turned out that a lot of his long sentences are fairly easy to read, even though they are grammatically complex. Take the following two sentences:

- (4) Karel dropped by a couple of times, but he did not want to give me his blessings anymore, and Zoltan Szirmai came as well with Eva.
- (5) It is not just an ordinary day. It is the first of September. Furthermore, it is a Sunday. And it is mister Koopmans birthday. The other gentlemen have been up for hours.

Sentence (4) is by Biesheuvel, sentence (5) was taken from Arends' story. You might argue that (4) has an air of restlessness because of the 'but' and the 'and', but they are not harder to process or to understand than the short sentences in (5).

Another complicating element in determining sentence complexity is the use of direct speech with speaker reference formula (he/she said: '...'). Biesheuvel uses more sentences of the type '..., said he.', 'I asked:...', 'Mellenberg said: ...' If you count sentence complexity, these types of sentences fall under the category 'sentences consisting of two (or more) main clauses (namely: 'He said: X' and 'X', where X stands for a quoted sentence). But these sentences are not difficult to understand. On the other hand, Arends does not include speaker reference formula as often as Biesheuvel, and it is therefore sometimes hard work to discover if what you are reading is the opinion of a character or the narrator. This makes his text more complex in this regard than Biesheuvel. In sum, we should be careful what conclusions we draw from numbers regarding the ratio of simple versus complex clauses.

4.2 Subordinate clauses

Not only the main clauses, but also the subordinate clauses raise questions about how the stylistic effect of sentence complexity should be analyzed. The fourth sentence quoted in (2), which in Dutch consists of 117 words, 5 main and 6 subordinate clauses, is one of the most complex sentences in Biesheuvel's story. Still, it is an exception. Most of his sentences are relatively easy to read and understand, regardless of their number of main and subordinate clauses:

- (6) *Mellenberg calmly let the man blow off steam, gave me a wink from which I gathered that he would now pull a fast one on this psychiatrist and he said, without paying attention to the outbursts of the foolishly excited psychiatrist: 'Now you listen to me...' he lit his pipe, his deep little eyes were glowing with fun, 'if I feel like it I will move the entire complex with all of the grounds and all of the buildings one millimeter.'*²

The reason that these and other long sentences are so comprehensible, is that the events portrayed in them take place in chronological order, so the reader does not have to work hard to understand the order of events. But it does face us with a problem: we were searching for the reasons that Biesheuvel's text comes across as 'complex', but so far we have not found an explanation. I have therefore looked at the type of (finite) subordinate clauses both writers use, to see if this will bring us closer to an explanation.³

Figure 2: Finite subordinate clauses

| | Biesheuvel | Arends |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Complement clauses | 34 | 41 |
| Restrictive relative clauses | 36 | 40 |
| Adverbial clauses | 38 | 48 |
| Non-restrictive relative clauses | 18 | 22 |
| Total finite subclauses | 126 | 151 |

On first sight, none of these figures stand out. This shows again that simply counting types of sentences is not enough. But when you look at the *content* of the clauses, two elements have shown to be exceptional in my two texts, namely the use of adverbial clauses in Biesheuvel (see figure 3), and the use of complementation clauses in Arends text (see paragraph 5).

Figure 3: Types of adverbial clauses

| | Biesheuvel | Arends |
|-------------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Temporal | 15 | 8 |
| Causal | 10 (M9) | 14 |
| Conditional | 9 | 22 |
| Contrastive | 1 | 3 |
| Explicative/Elaborative | 3 | 1 |
| Total | 38 | 48 |

When I was looking at the adverbial clauses, I noticed that 18 of the 38 adverbial clauses have a temporal content, like:

- (7) *When I had recovered a little bit... ;*
- (8) *Three days later...*
- (9) *He was 84 years old when he made it*
- (10) *When the company was near Mellenberg and me, his follower...*

What also stands out, is that 9 out of the 10 causal adverbial clauses, occur in quotations by the character Mellenberg. The narrator does not seem to use causal expressions very often. I took this as a lead to look at the coherence relations between sentences. The easiest way to find those, is to look at explicit markings of coherence. These are best found in the first sentence position (topic position), when something other than the subject or finite verb is in first place. I found that 50 out of 105 topicalisations are of a temporal kind. There are very few causal topicalisations, and most of those are pronounced by the character Mellenberg, explaining one of his quasi-scientific theories.

Figure 4: Coherence markers in topic position - Biesheuvel

| | |
|-----------------|----|
| Temporal | 50 |
| Local | 12 |
| Causal | 2 |
| Conditional | 10 |
| Modal | 2 |
| Direct object | 15 |
| Indirect object | 3 |
| Other | 11 |

So the number of temporal adverbial clauses stands out and is very specific voor Biesheuvel's storytelling. (Arends uses a wider variety of adverbs.) Research by Land (2009) for example has shown that children understand complex sentences better than segregated simple sentences, because complex sentences contain explicit structural markers which give the reader clues about coherence relations in the text. In addition to that, linguistic research has shown that *temporally* connected sentences are more difficult to process than *causal* relations. Experimental research has shown that test subjects need longer reading time to read sentences that are temporally connected; causally connected sentences are quicker to read and understand. (Sanders en Noordman 2000). This is called the 'causality by default'-hypothesis:

- (11) *The most important finding in this study is that a text segment is processed faster when it is connected by a problem-solution structure than when it is connected by a list relation. At the same time this segment is verified faster and more accurately in the problem-solution context. In addition, it is recalled more often and participants more often use the same coherence relation to relate the information in the target sentence to the rest of the recall.* (Sanders&Noordman 2000, 51)

So Biesheuvel's way of talking about 'what happened then and what happened next' might help explain why his text appears more complex to readers than Arends texts. He rambles from one subject to another and this is reflected in his use of temporal instead of causal coherence relations between sentences. In effect, it also resembles his own wandering mind which still bears traces of his lunatic past.

In sum, what we see here is that the difficulty of Biesheuvel's text lies not so much in its grammatical complexity. The sentences are long, but in general they are not very intricate or difficult to read. There are two types of complexity: grammatical and content complexity. The complexity of Biesheuvel's text seems to be caused by the absence of causal coherence relations between the sentences.

5. Subjectivity in Jan Arends

If we want to find out how Arends' plain and clear sentences create this strange story of a man changing into an ape (and back again), the figures on sentence length and clause types do not give us an immediate answer. When we look at figure 2 again (reprinted here for convenience), not of the figures stand out. We have to look at the specific use of these types of sentences.

Figure 2: Finite subordinate clauses

| | Biesheuvel | Arends |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Complement clauses | 34 | 41 |
| Restrictive relative clauses | 36 | 40 |
| Abverbial clauses | 38 | 48 |
| Non-restrictive relative clauses | 18 | 22 |
| Total finite subclauses | 126 | 151 |

It turns out that there is something peculiar about Arends' use of complementation clauses. Although the *number* of complement clauses does not differ significantly from Biesheuvel, the

type of complementation *does*. With Arends, most complementation clauses are impersonal, in the third person:

(12) **Complementation (Arends)**⁴

- *It is true that mr. Koopman is the most troublesome gentleman of the house.*
- *He is slightly demented. But that does not take away that he generally behaves against the grain.*
- *It is surprising to see how old gentlemen are able to climb trees when they change into apes.*
- *It is just as if his brown pyjamas aren't hairy anymore.*
- *And it is very sensible that he finally comes out of the tree.*
- *He seems to have lost his agility too.*
- *Maybe it was the case that the problem [...] was starting to bore mr. Koopman.*

This is striking compared to Biesheuvel: first- and third-person (I and he) complementation of the personal type is much more prominent in Biesheuvel's text:

(13) **Complementation (Biesheuvel)**⁵

- *I understood that I was very ill in comparison to Mellenberg.*
- *He pretended to use some force for a little while.*
- *They all pretended that it was very normal what happened.*
- *Society is glad to be rid of them.*
- *I did not know anymore what a little man looked like.*
- *I knew that all was lost for Mellenberg now.*

When we look at the theory on complementation, we learn that complementation clauses consist of a matrix clause, which has a perspectivizing function on the information in the subordinated clause: in prototypical forms of complementation, the information is presented as a subjective viewpoint, like in a sentence as 'I think that he will be on time' (Verhagen 2005). Arends use of complementation is different. The impersonal complements create a distance between the narrator and the events he talks about. Furthermore, the impersonal complements are combined with another stylistic feature, a high number of modal verbs and modal adverbs, words like 'maybe' and 'it seems like', or 'he seems to be...'. These expressions give the impression of 'scientific observation', of just registering what happens. The impersonal complement constructions and modal verbs create a distance between the narrator and the events he narrates about. He observes it from a distance, almost like someone who is observing animals in a scientific experiment 'He seems to be feeling a bit unwell today'. This would explain why students describe this story as 'objective', told by a 'registering' narrator.

On the other hand, this 'objectivity' is in conflict with the use of modal verbs and adverbs. Words like 'it seems if...' 'like....' and 'maybe' are not at all 'objective'. They are used to guess and suggest. The narrator is everything but an objective storyteller. He is not sure, but he guesses and observes and in doing so, he implicitly presents his own viewpoint on the situation. The narrative viewpoint of this story is remarkable. The narrator does not present himself 'on stage' explicitly'. He never presents himself as storyteller by saying 'I', not even 'I think that...' Instead, he uses these impersonal complement clauses to avoid saying 'I'. This creates the effect of 'objective distance' while it hides the subjectivity of the expressions. Consider the following sentences:

(13) *And all of nature is festive. To celebrate the parting of the summer. There is sweet sun and there is gold in the leaves of the chestnut tree which will be cut down this winter.*⁶

Should we call this 'objective'? That does not sound right. Instead of talking about the distinction between objective and subjective narration, one could better speak of implicit versus explicit subjectivity. This distinction is based on the cognitive grammar theory of Ronald Langacker, who turns the everyday distinction between objective and subjective radically around (Langacker 1991). Langacker calls the sentence 'John is sitting across the table' subjective, because the viewpoint (across from who?) is not explicitly mentioned in the sentence. On the other hand, the sentence 'John is sitting across the table from me' in his definition is objective, because the point of orientation (me) is explicitly mentioned in the sentence. Alternatively, Langacker speaks of 'on stage' and 'off stage' participants. Similarly, according to Langacker's theory of subjectivity, one should call Biesheuvel's story maximally objective, because the story is told by a first person narrator who puts himself and his own viewpoint explicitly on stage. In Arends' text, the viewpoint of the narrator is hidden, off stage. And because it is hidden, it creates the effect of objectivity in the reader.

The use of free indirect speech adds to the confusion. Sometimes it is hard to say where the free indirect speech ends and the narrator takes over. The narrator also plays with his ability to access the thoughts of all characters. He only gives us access to the nurse, the doctor and the official who are at the scene, but not to Mister Koopman's mind. He leaves open the question if Mister Koopman really changed into an ape. This uncertainty on a thematic level, is stylistically reflected in Arends' use of viewpoint, impersonal complement clauses and modal verb and adverb use.

So, even though Arends uses short sentences, his story could be seen as much more complex regarding the content than Biesheuvel's story, because the narrator hides himself behind all kinds of modal constructions, impersonal complementation clauses and modal adverbs. This makes it very hard for the reader to figure out how he should view the events in the story; the question if Mr. Koopman really changed into an ape is left unanswered. On the contrary, because of the explicit first person narrator in Biesheuvel's story 'De heer Mellenberg', this story is much easier to understand. Biesheuvel explicitly states that he wants to become 'just as smart as Mellenberg', but the reader already knows how he should judge this wish, because the reader knows that the first person narrator and Mellenberg are both crazy.

6 Conclusion

The goal of this analysis was to show that ordinary words and sentences can play an important role in creating the overall stylistic effect of a text. In this paper, I took the categories on sentence complexity and clause type from the Leech & Short checklist as a starting point. But soon it showed that grammatical complexity (sentence length and clause type) did not tell us enough about what makes a sentence complex with regard to content. Those are two different types of complexity. I have shown that the use of temporal coherence relations and the absence of causality markers probably play an important role in creating the overall impression that Biesheuvel rambles from one subject to another.

And I have also shown that the complement clauses in Jan Arends are of a very specific type, namely impersonal complementation, and that his grammatical and syntactical choice of words that seems so objective hides a very subjective viewpoint. The opposite could be said of Biesheuvel. His explicit use of 'I' makes his subjective perspective very visible. I have therefore

argued that it is best to speak of implicit versus explicit subjectivity (or on stage vs. off stage participants) instead of objective vs. subjective storytelling. And as I hope to have shown you today, the clues to establishing implicit and explicit subjective viewpoints are hidden in the grammar of a text. So a grammatical linguistic analysis of ordinary words and sentences is in my view certainly worthwhile.

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¹ The Dutch original reads as follows: 'Het is niet zomaar een dag. Het is 1 september. Bovendien is het zondag. En mijnheer Koopman is jarig. De andere heren zijn al vele uren op. De nachthulp is vanmorgen om vijf uur met wassen begonnen. Nu hebben ze, voorzover ze ter been zijn, allemaal hun zondagse pak aan en ze hebben al ontbeten. De meesten zitten in de serre. Ze roken of ze pruimen. Ze maken ruzie, of kijken naar buiten. Veel is daar niet te zien. Een stoffig gazonnetje. Een grote kastanjeboom die veel licht wegneemt en van de winter zal worden omgehakt. Een zwartgeteerde schutting. Het is 1 september 1968. Maar mijnheer Koopman slaapt nog. Hij is nu 79 jaar.'

² In Dutch: Mellenberg liet de man rustig een uurtje uitzazen, gaf mij een knipoog waaruit ik begreep dat hij nu deze psychiater in het bijzonder ertussen zou nemen en zei, zonder op de woedende uitvallen van de dwaas opgewonden psychiater in te gaan: 'Moet jij eens goed luisteren...' hij stak onderdehand zijn zoveelste pijpje op, zijn diepliggende oogjes glommen op van pret, 'als ik daar zin in heb verschuif ik heel Endegeest met alle grond en alle opstallen die daarop zijn één millimeter.'

³ I have left out the infinite subordinate clauses (21 clauses in Biesheuvel), because they are more highly integrated in the main clause, and do not play a clear role on discourse level.

⁴ In Dutch:

- Het is waar dat mijnheer Koopman de lastigste heer van het huis is.
- Hij is licht dement. Maar dat neemt niet weg dat hij zich over het algemeen dwars gedraagt
- Het is verbazend om te zien hoe oude heren kunnen boomklimmen als zij in apen veranderen.
- Het is net of zijn bruine pyjama niet meer behaard is.
- En het is maar verstandig dat hij eindelijk uit de boom komt.
- Hij lijkt ook zo lenig niet meer.
- Misschien is het zo dat het probleem dat aan de kastanje verbonden was mijnheer Koopman ging vervelen.

⁵ In Dutch:

- Ik begreep dat ik in vergelijking met Mellenberg behoorlijk ziek was.
- Hij deed net of hij eventjes kracht zette
- Ze deden allemaal of het heel gewoon was wat er gebeurde.
- De maatschappij is blij dat ze van hen af is.
- Ik wist niet meer hoe een mannetje eruitzag.
- Ik wist dat Mellenberg nu verloren was.

⁶ In Dutch: En de hele natuur is *feestelijk*. Om het afscheid van de zomer te vieren. Er is *lieve* zon en er is *goud* in het gebladerte van de kastanjeboom *die van de winter zal worden omgehakt*.