

## A Study of Asyndeton in Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter

Iman Khudhair Al-Abodi

University of Al-Qadisiya/ College of Education

### Abstract

This study explores asyndeton as one of the figures of speech. Asyndeton is the statement of a several clauses, or phrases without the use of a conjunction between all or one of the parts. It can be used to convey concision and power and it serves to make the sentence more concise and unpredictable.

To explicate the linguistic phenomenon at hands, definitions and various effects of asyndeton are first introduced. Then, the study sets out to present forms of asyndeton and its types. The practical part includes illustrative texts extracted from Nathaniel Hawthorne' novel *The Scarlet Letter*. The findings of the study are summed up in the conclusion.

### الخلاصة

تبحث هذه الدراسة الفصل بوصفه احدى اشكال الكلام. الفصل هو الجملة التي تتكون من عدة عبارات بدون استعمال حروف العطف بين كل او احدى اجزائه. يستعمل الفصل لنقل الايجاز والقوة ولجعل الجملة اكثر ايجازا وعشوائية.

لغرض شرح هذه الظاهرة اللغوية قُدمت تعاريف وتأثيرات مختلفة للفصل اولا ثم حاولت الدراسة تقصي اشكال الفصل وانواعه. اما الجزء العملي فيضمن عينات توضيحية مأخوذة من رواية ناثانيل هاوثرن الحرف القرمزي. اما نتائج البحث فقد لخصت في الخاتمة.

### 1.1 Asyndeton: Definition and Origin

Asyndeton is not just another figure of speech, the power, force, intensity and vehemence. This device infuses into any writer's or speaker's work that can be commendable. The rapid effect while keeping the audience hooked on to the edge is what an asyndeton statement does. The conjunctions connecting a series of words, phrases or clauses in this technique, are omitted and instead only commas are used. This continuous flow of thought speeds up the rhythm of the passage and a single idea tends to be more memorable (**Figures of Speech: Asyndeton Examples**,2013:1).

In other words, asyndeton is a literary device and a type of figure of speech. It is often used for emphasis. In the creation of an asyndeton, the writer or speaker eliminates the conjunctions that would normally connect two or more phrases or parts of a phrase (**Example of Asyndeton**,2013:1).

It is a stylistic scheme in which conjunctions are deliberately omitted from a series of related clauses. More generally, in grammar and rhetoric, asyndeton is the use of brief sentences and phrases without intervening conjunctions. It eliminates all conjunctions in an attempt to create a choppy and out of breath feeling in the speech. In an asyndeton with two phrases, there can be a feeling of parallelism, synonymity or emphasis. There are many possible examples of asyndeton as in (Corbett,1971:1):

1. He received applause, prizes, money, fame.
2. Smile, talk, buy-buy.
3. He tried to betray you, to cheat you, to deceive you. (**Figures of Speech: Asyndeton Examples**,2013:1)

Asyndeton refers to a practice in literature whereby the author purposely leaves out conjunctions in the sentence maintaining the grammatical accuracy of the phrase. Asyndeton as a literary tool helps in shortening up the impact meaning of the entire

phrase and presenting it in a succinct form. This compact version helps in creating an immediate impact whereby the reader is instantly attuned to what the writer is trying to convey. And the use of this literary device helps in creating a strong impact and such sentences have greater recall worth since the idea is presented (**Literary Devices**, 2013:1). As in:

4. Read, Write, Learn.

5. Watch, Absorb, Understand.

This means that asyndeton is a figure of speech where conjunctions join clauses into complete sentences and include words such as: although, and, as, after, before, because, but, if, nor, since, that, until, unless, yet. They send signals about how the clauses work together. When they are omitted, they cause a certain amount of confusion, forcing the person to review what was just said. Asyndeton can thus be used as a form of light emphasis. Where the conjunction is omitted there may well be a pause, which appears in written text as a comma or semicolon. This may act as a signal to the listener or reader to think again about the meaning (**Asyndeton**, 2013:2).

Originally, the word asyndeton is derived from the Greek adjective *asyndetos*, defined by Liddell-Scott-Jones as "unconnected, loose" and "of language without conjunctions". The Greek adjective *asyndetos* is one of a large class of words with an "alpha privative" prefix a-; which negates the rest of the word following the prefix (Smyth, 1920:674).

### 1.2 Effect of Asyndeton

Asyndeton is a figure consists of omission of connections between words or clauses. The intended effect is, sometimes, to make the sentence impressive by requiring the hearer's imagination to supply the connectives, thereby fixing the attention more earnestly upon the subject. In delivering such a sentence, the speaker should make a marked pause at each point where a connective is omitted, or the effect will be lost. Again, the figure is used to suggest great rapidity of action (Johnson, 1903:45).

The use of asyndeton likely originated in ancient Greek, where it was used frequently by Aristotle and other writers. The Greek rhetorician Demetrius comments on the disjointed, dramatic effect of asyndeton: (Smyth, 1920:192-94)

First, it involves the use of normal words, secondly the use of connectives. Sentences which are unconnected and disjointed throughout are always unclear. For the beginning of each clause is obscured by the lack of connectives, as in the prose of Heraclitus, for it is mostly this lack which makes it darkly obscure. The disjointed style is perhaps better for immediacy, and that same style is also called the actor's style since the asyndeton stimulates dramatic delivery, while the written style is easy to read, and this is the style which is linked closely together and, as it were, safely secured by connectives. This is why Menander, who mostly omits connectives, is acted, while Philemon is read. To show that asyndeton suits an actor's delivery, let this be an example: "I conceived, I gave birth, I nurse, my dear." In this disjointed form the words will force anyone to be dramatic, however reluctantly-and the cause is the asyndeton. If you think it together to say, "I conceived and I gave birth and I nurse," you will by using the connectives substantially lower the emotional level, and anything emotional is always undramatic.

Asyndeton also creates the effect of speed, according to other Greek rhetoricians, e.g., Hermogenes: (Smyth, 1920:192-94)

Now we shall deal with those figures that are necessarily concise and rapid. The following are of this kind. First of all there is asyndeton, or lack of connectives, used

in conjunction with short phrases or words: "He came to the council, a degree was proposed".

Among Latin rhetoricians Quintilian discusses asyndeton: (**The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language**,2009:2)

But both the last example and the last but one involve a different figure as well, which, owing to the absence of connecting particles, is called dissolution (asyndeton), and is useful when we are speaking with special vigour: for it at once impresses the details on the mind and makes them seem more numerous than they really are. Consequently, we apply this figure not merely to single words, but to whole sentences, as, for instance, is done by Cicero in his reply to the speech which Metellus made to the public assembly: "I ordered those against whom information was laid, to be summoned, guarded, brought before the senate: they were led into the senate," while the rest of the passage is constructed on similar lines.

Aristotle once mentioned that this kind of rhetoric device was the most effective in spoken oratories than in written prose and quite aptly, some of the most remembered asyndeton statements are part of some well-known speeches: (**Figures of Speech: Asyndeton Examples**,2013:1). He wrote in his *Rhetoric* Book III,Chapter 12:

Thus strings of unconnected words, and constant repetitions of words and phrases, are very properly condemned in written speeches: but not in spoken speeches-speakers use them freely, for they have a dramatic effect. In this repetition there must be variety of tone, paving the way, as it were, to dramatic effect; e.g., 'This is the villain among you who deceived you, who cheated you, who meant to betray you completely.'

This figure of speech is used effectively in written prose as well. Aristotle mentioned in his book *Rhetoric* that, the maximum impact of asyndetons is when this rhetorical device is used at the end of passages and he himself ended his book with an asyndeton: (Corbett,1971:1)

6. For the conclusion, the disconnected style of language is appropriate, and will mark the difference between the oration and the peroration. 'I have done. You have heard me. The facts are before you. I ask for your judgment.' "Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, Book III, Chapter 19".

Several notable examples can be found in American political speeches: (**Wikipedia,the free encyclopedia**,2010:1)

7. ... and that government of the people, by the people shall not perish from the earth. Abraham Lincoln, *Gettysburg Address*

8. Let every nation knows, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty. John F.

Kennedy, *Inaugural Address*, January 20, 1961 Kennedy delivered a speech that fueled the hearts of Americans during times of hardship and uncertainty. Kennedy's usage of rhetorical devices gives his speech the empowering and resolute tone necessary to evoke the emotions of his audience and sway their motives to agree with his own. Kennedy's usage of asyndetons in his speech facilitate a more intense atmosphere, allowing his words to hammer even harder at the ears of his audience. Kennedy's usage of asyndeton here adds more energy to the speech by abruptly moving from one item to the next. This also places a great emphasis on the items mentioned, as they are separate from every other item due to the lack of conjunctions. To sum, asyndetons play an essential role in Kennedy's speech by allowing him to add greater emphasis on the elements in his lists, and by giving his speech a faster, more powerful tone. With the greater emphasis on elements and the faster, more powerful

tone, Kennedy was able to evoke the emotions of his audience and persuade them to follow his cause.

Also, the US Declaration of Independence includes an example of asyndeton, referring to the British:

9. We must... hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

Another frequently used, extended example, is Winston Churchill's address, "We shall fight on the beaches in 1940":

10. make a movie what it is. And a different technique and style can give an edge to We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills, we shall fight never surrender (ibid.).

Besides, asyndeton can be used in movies when dialogues them, making a movie memorable. It might be easy to overlook but many movies have had asyndeton dialogues and some are listed below: (**Figures of Speech:Asyndeton Examples,2013:1-2**)

11. Anyway, like I was saying, shrimp is the fruit of the sea. You can barbecue it, boil it, broil it, bake it, sauté it, Dey'suh, shrimp-kabobs, shrimp creoles, shrimp gumbo... (By the character 'Bubba' from *Forrest Gump*)

12. We use words like honor, code, loyalty. We use these words as the backbone of a life defending something. You use them as a punch line.(Delivered by 'Jack Nicholson' from the movie *A Few Good Men*)  
(Eidenmuller,2011:2)

Finally, asyndeton's work is used in poetry and literature to add terseness and songs as, the elimination of conjunctions enables the words and ideas to dissolve into each other without any formal bond, as in (**Figures of Speech: Asyndeton Examples,2013:2**):

13. I have found the warm caves in the woods,  
Filled them with skillets,  
Carvings, shelves,  
Closets, silks, innumerable goods. "By Anne Sexton, "Her Kind" "

14. Thou hast not lived, why should'st thou perish, so?  
Thou hadst one aim, one business, one desire;  
Else wert thou long since number'd with the dead! "By Mathew Arnold, "The Scholar Gypsy" "

### 1.3 Forms of Asyndeton

Asyndeton is a figure of omission in which normally occurring conjunctions (and, or, but, for, nor, so, yet) are intentionally omitted in successive phrases, or clauses; a string of words not separated by normally occurring conjunctions (Eidenmuller,2011:1).

This means that the unwillingness to waste words shows up in the address's telegraphic quality, the omission of coupling words and triple clauses sound as to a drumbeat, with no 'and' or 'but' to show their insistency as in: (**Wordsmith words:asyndeton,2010:2**)

15. We are engaged... We are met... We have come.

16. She is addicted to chocolates, cakes, cookies.

These examples are not connected by traditional conjunctions like the words 'and, or, nor, yet or but'. Without conjunctions, phrases maintain a faster, lighter rhythm.

Asyndeton refers to a form of verbal compression which consists of the omission of connecting words (usually conjunctions) between clauses. The most common form is the omission of 'and', leaving only sequence of phrases linked by commas, as in these sentences from Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*: (**Wordsmith words:asyndeton**,2010:2.)

17. An empty stream, a great silence, an impenetrable forest.

The air was thick, warm, heavy, sluggish.

And the most famous example is Julius Caesar's boast:

18. I came, I saw, I conquered.

If asyndeton was not utilized in this sentence, it would include conjunctions, and would read, "I came, and I saw, and I conquered. The use of asyndeton is often intentional, as it gives text a unique emphasis or emotion. It can also be used to draw the reader's attention to a particular idea, or indicate that a list of items is infinite or incomplete (**Asyndeton**,2013:1).

It leaves an impression that the list is not complete. For example, the sentence, "I play hokey, baseball and football" conveys the notion that I play those three sports. The sentence, "I play, hokey, baseball, football." Conveys that I am an avid sportsman and leaves open the possibility that I play other sports as well. And gives the impression that the voice should not drop with the last phrase; rather, it should remain level or even rise slightly (**Rhetorical Devices: Asyndeton**,2013:1).

Further, Walt Whitman in his *Song of Myself* writes about one form of asyndeton in:

19. I too am not a bit tamed, I too am untranslatable,

I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world.

This is an example of asyndeton as Walt Whitman omits the conjunction 'and' after the clause 'I too am untranslatable'. In this particular excerpt of *Song of Myself*, the asyndeton serves to make the sentence more concise and unpredictable. Also, it is especially noticeable in this poem because it is the first asyndeton at the end of the sixth page (Hermon,2010:1).

Asyndeton, lack of ands, a special form of this great figure, falls to be treated along with it . It is one of the most common forms of asyndeton which is the omission of the word 'and' in a list. This creates surprise as the word 'and' is usually a signal that the list is about to end (**Asyndeton**,2013:2).

In a list of items, asyndeton gives the effect of unpremeditated multiplicity, of an extemporaneous rather than a labored account:

20. On his return he received medals, honors, treasures, titles, fame.

21. She likes pickles, olives, raisins, dates, pretzels.

Sometimes an asyndetic list is useful for the strong and direct climatic effect it has, much more emphatic than if a final conjunction was used. In certain cases, the omission of a conjunction between short phrases gives the impression of synonymity to the phrases, or makes the latter phrase appears to be an after thought or even a substitute for the former. Also, the degree of spontaneity granted in some cases by asyndetic usage "The moist , rich, fertile soil," appears more natural and spontaneous than "the moist, rich, and fertile soil."

(**Asyndeton**,2013:3)

The same is true with other conjunctions such as: but, or, nor, so and yet, when they are absent in the following examples respectively which create asyndetic coordination: (Hoey,1986:2)

22.The committee felt obligated, the chairperson did not. [contrast]

23. The children should leave, I will. [alternative]  
24. Emily does not want to see the doctor, does Liz. [negative alternative]  
25. Liz drove very carefully, the traffic was unusually heavy. [reason]  
26. Neither side made a convincing argument, the committee decided to postpone its decision. [result]  
27. The college anticipated the budget cuts, it still needed to cut several student programs. [concession]

Another form of asyndeton is the omission of 'when' as in:

28. I'll see you when you get home.

Omitting of 'when' leaves nonsense. The clauses are must stand alone and the listener must be able to make sense of how they are connected.

Finally, less common is the omission of pronouns, as in Auden's early poem 'The Watershed': (ibid.)

29. two there were/cleaned out a damaged safety by hand.

Here, the relative pronoun 'who' is omitted.

Generally, asyndeton offers the feeling of speed and concision to lists and phrases and clauses, but occasionally the effect cannot be so easily categorized.

#### 1.4 Types of Asyndeton

In linguistic text , but also in psychology and the study of artificial intelligence, much attention has been devoted to the question of what exactly turns a collection of sentences into a coherent text. A necessary but not a sufficient condition is that the sentences are semantically related. They must deal with the same topic. Another condition is that the contents of the sentences must be related in a temporal, causal/consecutive or similar manner, or at least that they can be interpreted as such by the hearer/reader, e.g., (Pinkster, 1990:320):

30. a. It was raining. We stayed at home.

b. It was raining. So we stayed at home.

The two sentences above can be interpreted as having a consecutive relation even in the absence of the connector so as in (30.a). It is much more difficult to see a relation between the sentences in :

31. It was raining. Unemployment figures were still high.

Such a relation can be constructed by a third sentence, as in:

32. It was raining. Unemployment figures were still high. Gloomily the union leader was staring out of the window.

If in a text the relation between successive sentences is not made clear in one of the ways described above, we are dealing with asyndeton as in the example (30.a). The grammars distinguish various types of asyndeton, e.g., adversative asyndeton as in (33) and causal asyndeton as in (34). These labels do not, of course, explain anything, but make explicit a semantic relation that the text itself leaves implicit. The imply, moreover, that adversative, causal, etc. relations are essentially different from 'normal' temporal relation between successive sentences.

33. Caesar rapidly put an end to the meeting. He kept Liscus behind.

34. They have devised a special punishment for parricides. They want them to be sewn alive into a leather bag.

So adversative asyndeton refers to a staccato effect produced by omitting adversative connectives from between two or more items forming a group and also implying opposition or contrast in introducing adversative clauses as in: (**Unabridged Based on the Random House Dictionary, 2013:26**)

35. I liked all there was to buy in the store. I did n't get anything.

Often sentences that follow one another *asyndetically* are merely temporally related, e.g., succession and contemporaneousness in: (Pinkster,1990:322)

36. Because of the closeness and rapidness of the enemy they no longer waited for orders from Caesar but took the necessary decisions as they themselves saw fit. Caesar... hurried down...

Texts differ as to the frequency of *asyndeton*. In texts written in a periodic style *asyndeton* is relatively rare. In archaic texts, it is relatively frequent. The grammars often describe the high frequency in archaic texts as a mark of colloquial usage and a relatively underdeveloped stylistic level.

### 1.5 *Asyndetic Coordination*

Since *asyndeton* refers to the practice of leaving out the usual conjunctions between coordinate sentence elements. This means that coordinate constructions may lack an overt coordinator (*asyndetic coordination*) or have some overt linking device (*syndetic coordination*). And if restricts for the moment to binary coordinations, *syndetic coordinations* may either have a single coordinator (*monosyndetic*) or two coordinators (*bisyndetic*). *Monosyndetic coordination* is illustrated by: Franz and Sisi will travel to Trieste, and *bisyndetic coordination* is illustrated by: Both Franz and Sisi will travel to Trieste. Coordinators may be prepositive (preceding the coordinand) or postpositive (following the coordinand). In English, all coordinators are prepositive, but there is an example of postpositive coordinator in Kannada (a Dravidian language of southern India) (Haspelmath, 2000:6).

*Coordination* without an overt linker occurs widely in the world's languages, and although in European languages *monosyndetic* is the norm, *asyndesis* (also called *juxtaposition*) also occurs commonly, especially with the meaning of conjunction:

37.a. (English) Slowly, stealthily, she crept towards her victim.

b. (German) ein elegantes, geraumiges foyer  
'an elegant, spacious entrance hall'

c. (French) Dans quell philter, dans quell vin, dans quelle tisane  
noierons-nous ce vieil ennemi?

'In which love potion, in which wine, in which herbal tea shall we  
drown this old enemy?'

In European languages, *asyndesis* occurs mostly with modifying phrases such as adverbials and adjectives, or with clauses. *Asyndetic coordination* of noun phrases is more restricted and quite impossible in many cases (cf. I met Niko, Sandra. 'I met Niko and Sandra'). Many non-European languages have no such restrictions, and *asyndetic coordination* is very widespread in the world's languages (ibid:7).

In *asyndesis*, intonation is the only means by which the coordinated structure can be indicated, and it is probably not an accident that languages with long written tradition tend to have a strong preference for *syndesis*: intonation is not visible in written-languages that lack writing (or lacked it until recently) often lack indigenous coordinators and now use coordinators borrowed from prestige languages such as: Spanish, English, Arabic and Russian. *Asyndesis* is often preferred in natural conjunction, i.e., when the two conjuncts habitually go together and form some kind of conceptual unit (Haspelmath, 2000:7.).

*Asyndetic coordination*, as in (38) must be identical in meaning to the use of the two separate sentences, as in (39), since no coordinator is present to add a new bit of meaning:

38. I have a story; this story has ruined my life.

39. I have a story. This story has ruined my life.

However, the implied connections between clauses that are juxtaposed can be just as significant. As in Caesar's famous use of asyndetic coordination when he juxtaposed these three short clauses and in the process gave us an insight into the egomaniacal soul: *veni, vidi, vici* ("I came, I saw, I conquered").

By the use of asyndetic coordination, Caesar can suggest that the effort he expended on conquering of his territories and enemies was no greater than the effort he expended on simply arriving and observing (Hoey,1986:2).

### **1.6 Asyndeton as an Unmarked Connective**

Asyndeton basically means that no connective is used to link consecutive propositions in a discourse. Runge (2011:22-23) says that the use of asyndeton indicates that the writer chooses not to make a relation explicit. The relation must be gleaned from the context. And he suggests that "asyndeton can be used at points of discontinuity" or "in contexts of close connection, such as moving from generic to specific". But that is the extent of what Runge says about asyndeton used to express continuity. On the other hand, the weight of his discussion promotes the idea that asyndeton does not mean what other connectives mean:

Levinsohn summarizes the use of asyndeton in non-narrative by stating that since explicit connectives are used to indicate clause relationships such as strengthening, developmental, associative, or inferential, "the use of asyndeton tends to imply 'not' strengthening, not developmental, not associative, not inferential, etc." (2011:119).

But that is only one side of a much more carefully nuanced description by Levinsohn:

Strictly speaking, the absence of any conjunction between sentences of a Greek text should imply only that the author offered no processing constraint on how the following material was to be related to its context... In practice, however, New Testament authors tend to use a conjunction whenever the relationship with the context concerned is strengthening, developmental, associative or additive, or inferential-cum-resumptive, etc. Consequently, asyndeton tends to imply "not strengthening, not developmental, not associative, not inferential, etc." This is why asyndeton is often the norm when the relation of the following material to the context is not logical or chronological (ibid.).

Asyndeton is found in two very different contexts in non-narrative text: (ibid.:118)

1-When there is a close connection between the information concerned (i.e., the information belongs together in the same unit).

2-When there is no direct connection between the information concerned (i.e., the information belongs to different units).

At this point, Levinsohn suggests that one may recognize when no direct connection between juxtaposed information is intended by the presence of vocatives and orienteers. The default assumption in any communication is that consecutive units do relate. This is not just because an author may typically use particular connectives to explicitly convey specific relationships that the use of asyndeton in other places means that those relationships are not implied. It may simply be the difference of whether those relationships are explicitly indicated with a conjunction or implicitly included with asyndeton. Sometimes making the relationship explicit says too much, or skews the argument, or betrays the persuasive power of the author too soon and ruins the chances for successful and convincing communication (Runge,2011:11).

Thus, asyndeton is best understood as the unmarked form that may implicitly include a board range of semantic relationships. But Runge presents asyndeton, with the weight of its supposed significance falling on discontinuity, contradicts what he has already summarized about markedness: (ibid.)



The default option is considered 'unmarked' for the qualities found in the other members of the set. The quality may or may not be present. The choice to use a marked form represents the choice to explicitly signal the presence of a quality that would only have been implicit if the default were used.

Whether the relation is explicit or implicit is very different from saying that the unmarked use of asyndeton implies that those logical relations are not present at all. 'Unmarked' means that a feature is not explicitly included. It does not follow, however, that a feature is explicitly excluded.

### 1.7 Synonyms for Asyndeton

Since asyndeton is a rhetorical term for a writing style that omits conjunctions between words, phrases, or clauses (Nordquist, 2013:). There are two synonymous terms with asyndeton: brachylogia and parataxis.

Brachylogia means the absence of conjunctions between single words and the effect of brachylogia is a broken, and hurried delivery. Examples: (Burton, 2013:1)

40. Philip! Rise! Eat! Leave!

41. Love, hate, jealousy, frenzy, fury drew him from pity.

Brachylogia is the brevity of diction; abbreviated construction; word or words omitted. A modern theorist differentiated this use from ellipsis in that the elements missing are more subtly, less artificially, omitted in ellipsis. It is not always a vice. Sometimes its obscurity is the price paid for convenient brevity, or signals euphemism or irony, as: (Lanham, 1991:1)

42. Coffee-break (a break in which to have coffee)

43. A social disease (one contracted through close social contact)

Brachylogia is of great help to the novelist in avoiding repetition of the declarative verbs like: to say, etc. It is a concision of speech or writing; thus also any condensed form of expression, as for example when Antony in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* tells a messenger: 'Grates me; the sum,' meaning 'This is annoying me; get to the point of what you have to say.' (Dupriez, 1991:2)

A second term which is synonymous with asyndeton is parataxis which refers to the grammatical arrangement of "equal" constituents, clauses in this case. The word parataxis literally means 'equal arrangement'. Parataxis is the hall mark of coordination. In most cases, the equality of the clauses is evident both grammatically and semantically. Coordination can link constituents at any rank. It creates parallel grammatical structures-structures that are identical in function and usually form as well. And coordination holds each of the parallel structures at the same grammatical rank (Martin, 1983:72).

In other words, parataxis is derived from Greek for 'act of placing side by side'; from *para*, beside+ *tassein*, to arrange; contrasted to syntaxis. It is a literary technique, in writing or speaking, that favors short, simple sentences, with the use of coordinating rather than subordinating conjunctions. It is also to describe a technique in poetry in which two images or fragments, usually starkly dissimilar images or fragments, are juxtaposed without a clear connection. Readers are then left to make their own connections implied by the paratactic syntax. Ezra Pound, in his adaptation of Chinese and Japanese poetry, made the stark juxtaposition of images an important part of English language poetry (Stanley, 2013:62).

The underlying idea, important for understanding of the parataxis, is that in a connected discourse the complete independence of the consecutive sentences rarely exists. This observation is captured in the expression "train of thought". For example: (Morris, 1990:3)

44. The sun was shining brightly. We went for a walk.

45. The sun was shining brightly; we went for a walk.  
 46. The sun was shining brightly, and we went for a walk.  
 47. The sun was shining brightly, so we went for a walk.

In the first example, the two sentences are independent expressions, while the last example they dependent. However, the connection of thought in the first examples is just as real as in the last one, where it is explicitly expressed via the syntax of subordination.

In spoken language, this continuance from sentence to sentence is supported by intonation and timing (rhythm and pause). While details may differ among different languages and cultures, generally similar musicality and shortness of pauses indicate the continuation, while the change of tone and longer pause generally indicate the transition to another connected group of ideas (ibid.).

The term parataxis has also been appropriated by some theorists to describe certain works of art or "cultural texts" in which a series of scenes or elements are presented side by side in no particular order or hierarchy. Examples might range from the collages of the Dadaists and Robert Rauschenberg to many contemporary music videos (Bulter,2003:260).

### 1.8 Asyndeton Vs. Syndeton and Polysyndeton

There are two contrasting figures to asyndeton which can be explained further in this section like: syndeton and polysyndeton.

Nardquist (2013:1) defines syndeton as a rhetorical term for a sentence style in which words, phrases, or clauses are joined by conjunctions (usually and) and it comes from the Greek that means "bound together", as in:

48. He had never been left with hobbled feet to shift for himself in a prolonged storm of rain, sleet and snow. (Zane Grey, *Tales of Lonely Trails*, 1922)

49. I crawled back under the cover of the boat and huddled there, wet, cold and sobbing. (Sam Mckinney, *Sailing Uphill*. Touchwood, 2010)

50. You are talking to a man who has laughed in the face of death, sneered at doom, and chuckled at catastrophe. (The wizard in *The*

Coordination is usually but not invariably marked by one or more coordinators. Three patterns to be distinguished are shown in:

i- Simple Syndetic: You need (celery, apples, walnuts, and grapes).

ii- Polysyndetic: You need (celery and apples and walnuts and grapes).

iii- Asyndetic: You need (celery, apples, walnuts, grapes).

The major contrast is between syndetic coordination, which contains at least one coordinator, and asyndetic coordination, which does not. In constructions with more than two coordinates there is a further contrast within syndetic coordination between the default simple syndetic, which has a single coordinator marking the final coordinate, and polysyndetic, where all non-initial coordinates are marked by a coordinator (which must be the same for all of them). The coordinator forms a constituent with the coordinator which follows (Huddleston and Pullum, 2006:1).

Syndeton or syndetic coordination in grammar is a form of syndetic coordination of the elements of a sentence (conjuncts) with the help of a coordinating conjunction. In a single syndeton, two conjuncts are joined by a coordination like: I will have eggs and ham. In syndetic coordination with more than two conjuncts, the conjunction is placed between the two last conjuncts: I will need bread, cheese and ham. The serial comma is not usually used in front of the conjunction between the last two items in British English, while American English generally suggests a comma: I will need bread, cheese, and ham (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, 2010:1).

Asyndeton and polysyndeton are two contrasting figures which they might refer to in English as, No Ands and Many Ands. Mankind has always used lists and/or referred to multiple things in a single sentence and so grammatical rules have arisen in each language to communicate how the list should be written. The standard grammatical practice in Hebrew, Greek, and English is to write the list and place the word before the last item. Thus, we would write, "When you go to the grocery store, get milk, eggs, butter, and bread". We do not write, "get milk and eggs and butter and bread", nor do we write, "get milk, eggs, butter, bread". The proper rules of grammar for making lists or stating things in sequence opens a door of opportunity for the figures of speech asyndeton and polysyndeton (**Examples of Asyndeton, Polysyndeton**,2013:1).

The use of conjunctions to link clauses, or its lack, has a parallel in classical rhetoric with the concepts of polysyndeton and asyndeton. In polysyndeton, relatively many conjunctions are used to link clauses, but in asyndeton, conjunctions are avoided. Thus, a link can be made between Halliday's approach to conjunctive cohesion and classical rhetoric, in the sense that polysyndeton depends quite a lot on conjunctive cohesion, but asyndeton avoids it (Talib,2013:1).

Polysyndeton is a list or series of words, phrases, or clauses that is connected with the repeated use of the same conjunction. The most common conjunctions used with polysyndeton are 'and' and 'or'. As in:

51. Saying "here and there and everywhere," instead of simply saying "here, there and everywhere".

52. We have ships and men and money and stores.

53. We lived and laughed and loved and left.

54. Me toward the Mexican Sea, or in the Mannahatta, or the Tennessee, or far north, or in land. (*Me Temperturbe* by Walt Whitman)

55. What leaf-fringa legend haunts about the shape of deities or morals, or of both, In Tempe or the dales of Arcady? What men or gods are these? (*Ode to a Grecian Urn* by John Keats)

The purpose of the word *and* is to link two or more words, phrases, or clauses, but importantly, *and* signifies that the items that are linked are equal in some way. In business or academic, or creative writing, each word or group of words connected by the *and* is more emphasized than it would be without the *and* (Kolln,1999:183).

The primary effect of polysyndeton is to show readers down so they can take in all the information. Like the following example which could be found in a recommendation letter:

56. John West has excellent organization skills and superb interpersonal skills and outstanding written communication skills.

Kolln discusses that the repetition slows the reader down because each word in the series or list is read "with a fairly equal beat". In this example, those organizational and interpersonal and written communication skills have the same weight or importance (grammatically speaking, because they're parallel ideas) (ibid.:184)

In other words, polysyndeton is a stylistic scheme which is used to achieve a variety of effects in poetry and literature. The overuse of conjunctions in close succession helps achieve rhythm, mainly by introducing continuation and slowing it. This rhetoric figure of speech can convey solemnity or even exhibit a child like spirit. Having a Greek etymology, which means 'bound together', a sentence employing a 'polysyndetic device' uses coordinating conjunctions like 'and', 'or', 'but' or 'nor' to link the words, phrases or clauses. It adds cadence to the sentence or a series of sentences. Usually, in a grammatically correct sentence, the word or phrase after the 'and' is

given most importance. However, polysyndeton gives equal importance to every element in the list. Usually used in short stories, novels and speeches, literatures, both classic and modern, greatly employ this rhetoric technique to captivate a reader's interest. It helps in holding the passage together as one, hence keeping the reader threaded to the idea. Polysyndetons are used extensively in religious scripts too. Such torrential sentences are sure to make a person want to read more, not only for the morals they hold, but for the rhythm and tempo they create within a person. (**Figures of Speech: Polysyndeton Examples**,2013:1)

### 2.1 Analysis

This section deals with the application of what has been presented in the previous section. It is going to trace asyndeton in Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. *The Scarlet Letter* is considered Nathaniel Hawthorne's most famous novel and the first quintessentially American novel in style, theme, and language. Set in seventeenth-century Puritan Massachusetts, the novel centers around the travails of Hester Prynne who gives birth to a daughter Pearl after an adulterous affair. Hawthorne's novel is concerned with the effects of the affair rather than the affair itself, using Hester's public shaming as a spring board to explore the lingering taboos of Puritan New England in contemporary society (**Study Guides and Literature Essays**,2013:1).

*The Scarlet Letter* is famous for presenting some of the greatest interpretive difficulties in all of American literature. While not recognized by Hawthorne himself as his most important work, the novel is regarded not only as his greatest accomplishment, but frequently as the greatest novel in American literary history. After it was published in 1850, critics hailed it as initiating a distinctive American literary tradition. Ironically, it is a novel in which, in terms of action, almost nothing happens. Hawthorne's emotional, psychological drama revolves around Hester Prynne who is convicted of adultery in colonial Boston by the civil and Puritan authorities. She is condemned to wear the scarlet letter "A" on her chest as a permanent sign of her sin. The narrative describes the effect to resolve the torment suffered by Hester and her co-adulterer, the minister Aruther Dimmesdale, in the years after their affair (**The Scarlet Letter**,1988:12).

In fact, the story excludes even the representation of the passionate moment which enables the entire novel. It begins at the close of Hester's imprisonment many months after her affair and proceeds through many years to her final acceptance of her place in the community as the wearer of the scarlet letter. Hawthorne was masterful in the use of symbolism, and the scarlet letter "A" stands as his most potent symbol, around which interpretations of the novel revolve. At one interpretive pole, the "A" stands for adultery and sin and the novel is the story of individual punishment and reconciliation. At another pole, it stands for America and allegory and the story suggest national sin and its human cost (ibid.:18).

#### Text 1

**Calm, gentle, passionless, as he appeared, there was yet, we fear, a quiet depth of malice, hither to latent, but active now, in this unfortunate old man.** (Chapter 3:88)

Chillingworth's desire for revenge and his obsession to examine the depths of Dimmesdale's heart changes him. Most important of all, Chillingworth sacrificed his human sympathies in his desire for revenge. However, far worse than that offense is the sin which begins to take possession of Chillingworth when he first appears at the scaffold scene; he lies to Dimmesdale, saying he will help him, but he is really trying to help himself discover a secret. On the other hand, Chillingworth is guilty the first time by marrying Hester, even when knew that she did not love him and he was not

the kind of a man to make her a proper husband (**The Sin of Chillingworth: Out of Good Comes Bad**,2013:2).

This is an example of asyndeton because Hawthorne uses no conjunctions to describe Chillingworth in order to make his description more memorable and to create the effect of speeding up the rhythm. Leaving words with no 'and' linked by commas to give the text a unique emotion and to show that these words come one after another in succession and frequent which reflects causal asyndeton: **Calm, gentle, passionless.**

#### Text 2

**No matter whether of love or hate; no matter whether of right or wrong! Thou and thine, Hester Prynne, belong to me. My home is where thou art, and where he is.** (Chapter 9:146)

The character of Mr. Roger Cillingworth, in Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, goes through several dark changes. This English physician who finds his young wife bearing the child of another man after two long years of separation is thrown into a world of moral dilemmas. His ill-fated decision to plague the man who wronged him takes an ironically and equally devastating toll on the doctor's health. Mr. Chillingworth is affected physically, mentally, and emotionally because of the evil he chooses to embrace and the revenge he attempts to impose. Chillingworth's life has no meaning beyond the torment of the man who stole his wife and happiness. Only at the end of the story he does redeem himself by bestowing his estates to young Pearl and showing his continued love for Hester (Reid,2013:257).

In this text, asyndeton is used when Hawthorne's parallel phrases beginning with 'no' and his omission of conjunctions, replaced with a further heighten the shame Hester must endure. Anyone Hester will ever encounter will know about her dark past. Chillingworth is clearly explaining that her sin cannot and will not hide. Such parallelism gives the steady beat of the sentence represents the steady life that a husband and wife should lead together. Chillingworth is upset that his wife betrayed him and his word choice shows that and the short exclamatory sentence at the end set his angry tone.

Further, Hawthorne uses polysyndeton in such parallel phrases, connected with conjunctions i.e., 'alternatives' and 'and' combine all of Dimmesdale's unwanted earthly belongings: **It does not matter if you love me or if you hate me; and it does not matter whether it is wrong or right. Hester Prynne, you are mine and you belong to me.** This overuse of conjunctions helps achieve rhythm by introducing continuation and slowing it.

#### Text 3

**At first, his expression had been calm, meditative, scholar like.** (Chapter 9:149)

Roger Chillingworth, unlike Hester and Dimmesdale, is a flat character. While he develops from a kind scholar into an obsessed fiend, he is less of a character and more of a symbol doing the devil's bidding. As a scholar, he studied Indian knowledge of herbs and medicines to learn. He had, indeed, spent his life as a lonely scholar, cutting himself off when necessary in the quest for knowledge from the world of other men. In Cillingworth, Hawthorne has created "the man of science", "a man of pure intellect and reason with no concern for feelings". This man of science has lost the spiritual view of human beings because he is so wrapped up in the scientific intricacies of the human body. He lives in a world of scholarly pursuits and learning. Even when he was married to Hester, a beautiful, young woman, he shut himself off from her and single-mindedly pursued his scholarly studies (**Cliffs Notes**,2013:2).

This is an example of asyndeton because Hawthorne does not use conjunctions between his series of adjectives describing Chillingworth: **calm, meditative, scholar like**. When "and" is omitted, it causes a certain amount of confusion and forcing the reader to review what was just read. The reader may think of Chillingworth to be a man expecting to start a family since he was calm and meditative but he becomes evil and lives entirely for the suffering of Dimmesdale after he learns of his wife's betrayal. Asyndeton can thus be used as a form of dramatic emphasis and occurs mostly with modifying adjective phrases.

**Text 4**

**...high aspirations for the welfare of his race, warm love of souls, pure sentiments, natural piety...** (Chapter,10:150-51)

Dimmesdale, the personification of human "frailty and sorrow", is an ordained Puritan minister, he is well educated, and he has a philosophical turn of mind. There is no doubt that he is devoted to God, passionate in his religion, and effective in the pulpit. He also has the principal conflict in the novel, and his agonized suffering is the direct result of his inability to disclose his sin. As a minister, he has a voice that consoles and an ability to sway audience. His congregation adores him and his parishioners seek his advice. He must be above reproach, and there is no question that he excels at his profession and enjoys a reputation among his congregation and other ministers. His ministry aids people in leading good lives. If he publicly confesses, he will lose his ability to be effective in this regard (**Cliffs Notes**,2013:1-2).

This quote uses the scheme of asyndeton to set apart the list of these parts of Dimmesdale's character, thus emphasizing them. It is used to show a great emphasis on the items mentioned since they are separated from each other due to the lack of conjunctions. Asyndetons play such role to add greater emphasis on the items in the list. With the greater emphasis, Hawthorne tends to evoke the emotions of his readers by mentioning them without conjunction. It can also be used to draw the reader's attention to a particular idea to indicate that the list of phrases is incomplete. It leaves open the possibility of other description of Dimmesdale's character and gives the impression that the tone does not drop with the last phrase but it remains rise.

**Text 5**

**The heart, making itself guilt of such secrets, must perforce hold them until the day when all hidden things shall be revealed.** (Chapter 10:152)

It is evident to the audience that Dimmesdale does not in any way want to be associated with Hester. He is afraid of saying something that would give his sin away that it takes a desperate plea from Hester to open his mouth up. He knows the mouth is more deceitful than the heart. By this time in her life, Hester needs to love a man who needs to speak his mind in all things. Dimmesdale's actions communicate to the audience the fact that his ability not to forgive himself, but he never makes up in his mind to let go his anxiety and confess in order to stop feeling tortured and show Hester what he is worth. Moreover, it seems that Dimmesdale is more concerned with what his positional appearance or what people might think of him than being committed to Hester. This announcement is completely astounding especially since he is a pastor who hears confessions of the deepest sins. He is obsessed with the idea of hiding the secret from everyone on Earth until he has heard God's thoughts on his sin. This is the man who knows that it is better to repent on Earth in order to benefit mankind rather than waiting until the judgment day (Adossi,2008:2).

Dimmesdale's cowardliness towards those who might judge him unfairly affects his show of any affection for Hester. Hawthorne gets his point across in the answer

Dimmesdale gives by using two forms of asyndeton. The omission of connections between his speech to make it more impressive by requiring the reader's imagination to supply the connectives which are 'and' and the relative pronoun 'which' in: " **The heart which making itself guilt of such secrets, and must performe hold them**".

### Conclusion

Asyndeton is the omission of different forms of conjunctions from a series of related phrases or clauses. It adds speed and rhythm to the words and leaves an impression that the list is not complete. Sometimes an asyndetic list is useful for the story and direct climactic effect it has, much more emphatic than if a final conjunction was used.

Consequently, there is more drama to the sentence without the conjunction between the final two phrases or clauses. Like all figures of speech, it can be employed with a variety of effects. It is more effective in oratory than in writing.

In Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, it is an essential part of the dramatic effect. Its use as a rhetorical device in the novel to enrich the meaning of the dramatic situation.

### References

- Adossi, N. (2008). **Literary Analysis: Characters in Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter**. New York: Helium, Inc.
- Asyndeton**. (2013). New York: Conjecture Corporation.
- Bulter, Ch. (2003). **Structure and Function: A Guide to Three Major Structural-Functional Theories**. Cambridge: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Burton, G. (2013). **Brachylogia**. Brigham: Brigham Young University Press.
- Cliffs Notes**. (2013). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Corbett, E. (1971). **Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student**. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Dupriez, B. (1991). **A Dictionary of Literary Devices**. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Eidenmuller, M. (2011). **Rhetorical Figures in Sound**. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Example of Asyndeton**. (2013). URL([www.http.file://Users/netmax/Desktop/Asyndeton/example of asyndeton.htm](http://www.http.file://Users/netmax/Desktop/Asyndeton/example%20of%20asyndeton.htm))
- Examples of Asyndeton, Polysyndeton**. (2013). URL([www.http.file://C:/Users/netmax/Desktop/Asyndeton/modules.php.htm](http://www.http.file://C:/Users/netmax/Desktop/Asyndeton/modules.php.htm))
- Figures of Speech: Asyndeton Examples**. (2013). URL([www.http.file://C:/Users/netmax/Desktop/Asyndeton/asyndeton-examples prag.htm](http://www.http.file://C:/Users/netmax/Desktop/Asyndeton/asyndeton-examples%20prag.htm))
- Figures of Speech: Polysyndeton Examples**. (2013). Boston: Allen&Bacon.
- Haspelmath, M.(2000).**Coordination**. Cambridge:Cambridge University Press.
- Hawthorne,N.(1988).**The Scarlet Letter**. Virginia: Viking Penguin Inc.
- Hermon,N.(2010).**Asyndeton**. London: Lonhman.
- Hoey,W.(1986).URL([www.http.file://C:/Users/netmax/Desktop/Asyndeton/complex.htm](http://www.http.file://C:/Users/netmax/Desktop/Asyndeton/complex.htm)).
- Huddleston,R. and Pullum,G.(2006).**Coordination and Subordination: The Handbook of English Linguistics**,ed.by Bas Aarta and Aprill M.S. Mc.Mahan. London: Blackwell.

- Johnson,A.(1903).**Asyndeton**. London: Longman.
- Kolln,M.(1999).**Rhetorical Grammar: Grammatical Choices, Rhetorical Effects**.(3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Boston: Allen&Bacon.
- Lanham,R.(1991).**A Handist of Rhetorical Terms**. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). California:

- University of California Press.
- Levinsohn,G.(2011).**Discourse Features of New Testament Greek**.(2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). London: Butter&Tanner Ltd.
- Literary Devices**.(2013).URL([www.http:file://C://Users/netmax/Desktop/Asyndeton/frontpage.htm](http://www.http:file://C://Users/netmax/Desktop/Asyndeton/frontpage.htm)).
- Martin,J.(1983).**Conjunction: The Logic of English Text**. Hamburg: Helmut Buske.
- Morris,E.(1990).**Parataxis**. New York: Scribner's Sons.
- Nordquist,R.(2013).**Asyndeton**. New York: Holt&Rinehart.
- Syndeton**. New York: Holt&Rinehart.
- Pinkster,H.(1990).**Latin Syntax and Semantics**. London: Routledge.
- Reid,B.(2013).**Chillingworth's Revenge**. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rhetorical Devices:Asyndeton**.(2013).URL([www.http:file://C:/Users/netmax/Desktop/Asyndeton/Rhetorical Devices Asyndeton-Manner...](http://www.http:file://C:/Users/netmax/Desktop/Asyndeton/Rhetorical Devices Asyndeton-Manner...)).
- Runge,B.(2011).**Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament**. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Smyth,H.(1920).**Greek Grammar**. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
- Stanley,F.(2013).**How to Write a Sentence**. London: George Allen&Unwin.
- Study Guides and Literature Essays**.(2013). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Talib,I.(2013).**Literary Stylistics: Lecture Notes No.18(C)**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language**.(4<sup>th</sup> ed.). (2009). New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- The Sin of Chillingworth: Out of Good Comes Bad**.(2013).URL([www.http:file://C:/Analysis of The Scarlet Letter/ The Sin of Chillingworth Out of Good Comes Bad essays.htm](http://www.http:file://C:/Analysis of The Scarlet Letter/ The Sin of Chillingworth Out of Good Comes Bad essays.htm)).
- Unabridged Based on the Random House Dictionary**.(2013). Cambridge: Random House, Inc.
- Wikipedia,the free encyclopedia**.(2010).URL([www.http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asyndeton](http://www.http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asyndeton)).
- Wordsmith Words: Asyndeton**.(2010). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press