

Felix Tacke

# ***Voilà* in the temporal discourse structure of narrative texts**

**Abstract:** Research on temporal discourse structure is traditionally centred around verb forms (tense) and temporal adverbs. I argue that, in addition to these, *voilà* constructions should also be considered. Due to their attention-directing semantic-pragmatic profile, *voilà* constructions exhibit inherent temporal and aspectual properties. Hence, they not only contribute to the constitution of temporal relations, but also serve to create prominent time points and foregrounding – including perspective-taking – effects on every level of the temporal discourse structure. Furthermore, a quantitative and qualitative analysis of Pierre Lemaitre’s award-winning novel *Au revoir-là haut* (2013) will show that *voilà* is often used as an integral part of mirative strategies, which add further profiling to the depiction of narrative events.

**Keywords:** *voilà*, deixis, attention-directing, prominence, tense, aspect, temporal discourse structure, narration, perspective, mirativity

## **1 Introduction**

Based on a previous study of the temporal and aspectual properties of deictic-presentative constructions in Italian (*ecco*) and French (*voici/voilà*) (Tacke 2022b), this paper provides an in-depth analysis of the various functions the deictic elements *voici/voilà*<sup>1</sup> perform within the temporal discourse structure of narrative texts. Following Becker/Egetenmeyer’s (2018, 41) theoretical account of temporal discourse structure, it is safe to assume, especially with regard to narrative texts, that “times, i.e., time points and time spans, and episodes are not only ordered according to ‘temporal linearity’, that is, their temporal relation properties, but also in a hierarchical manner”. In this context, the concept of “relative prominence” (ib.) is central since it captures the various ways in which foreground-background relations are expressed in discourse. Traditionally, research on temporal discourse structure has primarily focused on verb forms and temporal adverbs, regarded as the prototypical linguistic

---

<sup>1</sup> For the sake of simplicity, henceforth I will use the more frequent form *voilà* to refer to both *voici* and *voilà*.

---

**Felix Tacke**, University of Marburg

expressions of temporal relations. However, this paper highlights that deictic-presentative constructions also play a significant role, possessing distinct temporal and aspectual properties as part of their semantic-pragmatic profile. Most importantly, not only do they contribute to the constitution of temporal relations, they also serve to create prominence and foregrounding effects on every level of the temporal discourse structure. To obtain a complete picture of their functions and the prominence effects they help to create, an empirical analysis of *voilà* will be carried out based on its usage in the narrative discourse of the contemporary French novel *Au revoir là-haut* (2013) by Pierre Lemaitre.

To this end, Section 2 will provide a basic characterization of *voilà* and an overview of their general formal and functional properties. We will show that deictic-presentative constructions form a radial category with a prototype – the spatial deictic use – at its centre and a number of extended uses and constructional patterns around it. Section 3 will focus in on the various usage patterns of *voilà* within narrative texts. As the examples taken from Lemaitre's novel and other texts will demonstrate, *voilà* occurs both within the direct discourse of the characters and as an important attention-directing device within the narrative discourse. Furthermore, the narrative use of *voilà* is not limited to its basic attention-directing function; in certain contexts, it also serves to indicate shifts in perspective and to mark mirativity. Following this general outline, Section 4 is dedicated to an empirical analysis of its usage in Lemaitre's novel, which comprises four case studies. First, a quantitative study of the distribution of *voilà* within the novel's narrative discourse will show that it tends to occur in clusters around the most important plot moments (4.1). A qualitative analysis will shed light on the various usage patterns of *voilà* and their implications for the novel's temporal discourse structure. The second case study will show that *voilà* is often used by the narrator to contract the narrating time in order to give the impression of a rapid succession of events (4.2). The third case study will focus on the correlation between the narration of key plot moments and the use of *voilà* by showing that it frequently serves as a foregrounding device within narrative passages that are already foregrounded by other means (4.3). Finally, the fourth case study will concern the shifts in perspective created by the use of *voilà* and its correlation with the extensive use of free indirect discourse (FID) in Lemaitre's novel (4.4). The paper ends with a brief conclusion (Section 5).

## 2 *Voilà* in general: Spatial deixis, narrative deixis and temporal grounding

*Voilà* is one of the best-known French words, even among people who do not speak French likely due to its frequent usage. Moreover, in communication, it serves

the presentative function of directing the interlocutor's attention to something or someone new (or expected and finally present) within the situational context. It is also commonly used as a discourse marker in order to highlight the conclusion of an activity: "... et voilà!" French is not the only language that has deictic-presentative elements like *voilà*: many, if not all, languages have either an element with similar semantic, pragmatic and syntactic properties that can head a sentence, or some other kind of deictic-presentative construction – often characterised by an adverb-verb-subject order – with these same functions (cf., e.g., Engl. *There's Larry, Here comes Paul*,<sup>2</sup> Ger. *Da ist Werner, Hier stehe ich*). Since Latin has deictic elements (and constructions) of the first type, every Romance language has similar elements (Rom. *iată*, It. *ecco*, Cat. *vet/veus/heus aquí*, Sp. *he aquí*, Pt. *eis aqui*) and constructions (e.g., It. [*ecco* NP], Fr. [*voilà* NP]), although not all of these are direct formal descendants from Latin *ecce*.<sup>3</sup> As mentioned above, deictic-presentative constructions serve a universal communicative purpose, i.e., to point out a new (or an expected and newly present) referent in order to establish a joint focus of attention.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, irrespective of their formal characteristics, deictic-presentative constructions share a cross-linguistically common conceptual core.<sup>5</sup> According to Lakoff's convincing study of English *there*-constructions (1987, 462–585), this conceptual core can be described in terms of "an experiential gestalt" (ib., 489), an *idealised cognitive model*, which he calls "the pointing-out ICM" (ib., 490). It is described as encompassing a speech act background on the one hand and the speech act itself on the other. The background is defined by an entity that exists and is present within the speaker's visual field, and it is also assumed that the speaker's attention is directed at the entity while the hearer's is not. Importantly, through his speech act, the speaker "then directs the interlocutor's attention to the location of the entity (perhaps accompanied by a pointing gesture) and brings it to the interlocutor's attention that the entity is at the specified location" (ib.). The result is a joint focus of attention since both the speaker and the hearer are mutually aware of the other's attentional focus.

2 Cf. Lakoff's (1987, 462–585) seminal study of English *there*-constructions.

3 For a comprehensive historical account of the origins of deictic pointing elements and their development from Latin to Romance, cf. Tacke (2022a, chapter 4).

4 On the concept of joint attention, cf., most notably, Tomasello (2008) as well as Moore/Dunham (1995) and Eilan et al. (2005). On the use of demonstratives to establish joint attentional frames, cf. Campbell (2002) and Diessel (1999; 2006; 2013).

5 Cf., e.g., Bergen/Plauché's (2005) comparative study of *there* and *voilà* constructions, my studies of Italian *ecco* constructions (Tacke 2022b) and Spanish *he aquí* and *aquí está* constructions (Tacke 2023), as well as the comprehensive synchronic account of Romance deictic-presentative constructions in Tacke (2022a, chapter 2).

What is special about the Latin and Romance type of construction compared with the English one on which Lakoff's description is based, is the fact that the locational predicate ('there's X') or predicate of motion ('here comes X') is not expressed by a verb in the strict sense. Instead, French *voici/voilà* – like Italian *ecco* or Latin *ecce* – acts as a *sentential demonstrative* (cf. also Tesnière's 1959, 97 term "mot-phrasal incomplet").<sup>6</sup> In this sense, even though neither of these elements exhibits verbal inflection – there are no morphemes expressing person, number, tense, aspect or mode – their semantic characteristics resemble those of verbal imperatives.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, deictic-presentative constructions constitute directive speech acts:<sup>8</sup> pragmatically, the uttering of a sentence like *voilà ton frère* therefore entails the interpretation: 'become aware that there's your brother' (cf. Léard 1992, 124–127; Tacke 2022a, 164–188).

However, aside from this spatial deictic value, in most languages these constructions have developed several additional senses through pragmatic extension. Extension mechanisms regarding deictic-presentative constructions were first described for English by Lakoff (1987), for English and French by Bergen/Plauché (2001; 2005), for Italian and French by Tacke (2022b) and for Romance languages based on a historical-comparative perspective by Tacke (2022a). In line with Lakoff (1987) and especially Bergen/Plauché (2005), it has been shown that deictic-presentative constructions are best understood in terms of "a radial category". This means that the spatial deictic use of the construction functions as a prototype at the centre, while "the extended senses stem directly or indirectly from the central deictic sense" (Bergen/Plauché 2005, 11s.; cf. also Croft 2001, 104). Extended senses concern, for example, the fields of perception deixis (percepts instead of physical entities), discourse deixis (discourse entities), event deixis and narrative deixis. Furthermore, as I argue in Tacke (2022a, 509–536), the use of deictic-presentative elements as discourse markers can also be described in terms of extension mech-

6 Fillmore (1982, 47): "A Sentential Demonstrative, which we can represent as D/Se[\_ (NP)] is a demonstrative that can stand alone as a sentence, having what can be called a Presentative function. These are sentences whose meanings are something like 'Behold!' or maybe 'Look at this!'. Latin *ecce*, French *voilà*, Serbo-Croatian *evo*, are examples of Sentential Demonstratives".

7 Concerning the verb-like characteristics of deictic-presentative elements, cf., e.g., Kröll (1968, 39), Leumann (1977, §223), Wehr (1984, 135) and Gaeta (2013, 46–50). A discussion of these accounts can be found in Tacke (2022a, 253–279).

8 Cf. Lakoff (1987, 474) and Bergen/Plauché (2005) for an account of their pragmatic properties. In this context, Bergen/Plauché explain convincingly that "*voilà* and *voici* explicitly encode a directive to focus attention (*voi-*) and the location of the entity (*-ci* or *-là*)" (5) and explain that the "central deictic speech act includes a call to notice an object in a location" (24).

anisms of both event deictic and discourse deictic uses.<sup>9</sup> For the purposes of this paper, however, I will describe and classify the usage of *voilà* according to Bühler's famous distinction between

- (a) spatial deixis (*demonstratio ad oculos* or *ocular demonstration*)<sup>10</sup>
- (b) narrative deixis (*Deixis am Phantasma* or *imagination-oriented deixis*)
- (c) discourse or anaphoric deixis (*anaphora*)

In this context, it is important to note that the use of deictic-presentative constructions does not only convey spatial anchoring, but that the act of pointing out a referent (be it a physical, imagined or discursive entity) also inherently includes a temporal anchoring (cf. Genaust 1975, 81s.; Léard 1992, 105–107; Tacke 2022b): the deictic pointing out of a (new) referent implies that the proposition 'there's X' also means 'now there's X'. In the absence of verbal inflection, this temporal anchoring is, of course, not formally rendered and thus remains implicit.<sup>11</sup> In this sense, deictic-presentative constructions can be understood as both spatial and temporal grounding devices.<sup>12</sup> This holds true for both the prototypical spatial deictic sense and any extended sense. The only thing that changes is the spatial field of application: in prototypical spatial deixis, the deictic referencing of an entity anchors its presence temporally in the *moment of utterance*; in narrative deixis, the anchoring is in the *moment of reference* or *reference point*; in contrast, discourse deixis refers to the point where the reader finds herself or himself within the discourse space, which, in turn, corresponds to the moment the recipient reads or hears the passage in question. As I will show in the analysis of *Au revoir là-haut*, all three types of deixis – including the three types of temporal grounding – occur in narrative texts.

<sup>9</sup> On *voilà* as a discourse marker, cf. also Auchlin (1981), Léard (1992), Bruxelles/Traverso (2006), Iliescu (2010), Maaß (2010, 128), De Cesare (2011). Cf. also the studies included in Col/Danino/Bikialo (2020).

<sup>10</sup> The first term given in parenthesis refers to Bühler's *Sprachtheorie* (1934), the second to its recent English translation (Bühler 2011).

<sup>11</sup> In contrast, in constructions of the second type, i.e., the verb-based English and German type, this temporal grounding is explicit. Here, the verb can only occur in the present tense. The same holds true for Spanish constructions headed by *aquí está* or *aquí viene* (cf. Tacke 2022b; 2023). Utterances exhibiting other tenses cannot be interpreted as deictic and therefore do not constitute instances of deictic-presentative constructions since it is not possible to point to something that is not there at the moment of speech.

<sup>12</sup> Cf., in this context, Langacker (2008, 260) who states that "grounding elements serve the specific function of relating a profiled thing or process to the ground, [but] they do not themselves refer to the ground explicitly". Taken in a broad sense, the term *ground* refers to "the speech event, its participants (speaker and hearer), their interaction, and the immediate circumstances (notably, the time and place of speaking)" (Langacker 2008, 259).

In this case, the use of narrative deixis reflects the voice of the narrator and her or his communication with the reader, which is most important in terms of the temporal discourse structure.

### 3 *Voilà* in narrative texts: Attention-directing, perspective-taking and mirativity

Before studying in detail the various roles and functions of *voilà* within the novel's temporal discourse structure, in this section I will give a more general account of its narrative functionalization in terms of attention-directing, perspective-taking and the marking of mirativity. In narrative texts, deictic-presentative constructions generally occur in both narration (narrative discourse) and within the speech of the characters (direct discourse). In the latter case, their use forms part of the so-called *fictitious orality*, i.e., the literary representation of authentic conversation (cf., e.g., Erzgräber/Goetsch 1987 and Blank 1991). As in authentic conversation, *voilà* is employed both in the prototypical sense – directing the interlocutor's attention to physical entities within the speaker's visual field – and as a device to highlight discourse entities (discourse deixis). Likewise, the characters' speech also typically includes instances in which *voilà* is used as a discourse marker. The following examples from *Au revoir là-haut* illustrate these three types of occurrences:

- (1) *Tenez, le coupa Péricourt, voici un chèque pour arrêter le projet et les premiers travaux. Prenez toutes les garanties concernant l'artiste, évidemment !* (p. 439)  
'Here, Péricourt interrupted, *here is a cheque* to cover the submission and the initial work. Make all necessary inquiries about the artist, obviously' (p. 326)<sup>13</sup>
- (2) *Oui, monsieur ! Justement, je sais ce que c'est, imaginez-vous ! Une injure à nos morts, voilà ce que c'est ! Et donc, je vais faire arrêter les travaux.* (p. 321)  
'Yes, monsieur, I know exactly how it is. It is an insult to the dead, *that's what it is!* So I am hereby suspending all work.' (p. 237)

<sup>13</sup> The translations are taken from the 2016 paperback edition of the English translation of Lemaitre's novel by Frank Wynne (Lemaitre 2016). Needless to say, these are literary not literal translations. In many cases, *voilà* is thus not rendered by its immediate functional equivalent (which would be *here is/are*, *here comes*, etc.) but by other non-deictic linguistic means or not at all.

- (3) *Ecoute, j'y peux rien, mon grand ! Tu ne veux pas rentrer chez toi, je ne comprends pas pourquoi mais, de toute manière, c'est pas de mon ressort. C'est vraiment désolant sauf que moi, je ne peux rien y faire, voilà !* (p. 97)

'Listen, there's nothing I can do, *mon vieux*! You don't want to go home, I don't really understand why, but in the end I don't get to decide. It's shitty, but there's nothing I can do!' (p. 71)

In (1) Péricourt directs his interlocutor's attention to the cheque he is handing over to him, in (2) the nominal object (*ce que c'est*) of *voilà* anaphorically refers to what the speaker has just said (*une injure*), and in (3) *voilà* serves as a discourse marker that both summarises the preceding discourse and marks the end of the speaker's turn.

When referring to a known or discourse-active referent (in most cases represented by a pronoun), *voilà* often acquires an aspectual reading. In (4) *voilà* construes the referent's arrival within the interlocutor's field of vision as immediately prior to the moment of its utterance and thus presents it as a resultative state (metonymy: 'X has just arrived' → 'X is now here'; cf. Tacke 2022b):

- (4) *Tenez, il arrive, le voilà.* (p. 565)

'Look, here he comes now.' (p. 417)<sup>14</sup>

Aside from these central uses of *voilà*, there are also instances of pragmatically motivated extensions, which Bergen/Plauché (2005, 16–18) have called "time-related" since they are based on temporal anchoring and the aforementioned resultative reading. In these extensions, the resultative reading becomes obligatory because the construction is complemented by a so-called secondary predication:

- (5) *Et nous voilà au labo.* (Bergen/Plauché 2005, 16)

'And now here we are in the lab.'

- (6) *Le voilà content.* (ib., 18)

'Now he's happy.'

In (5), the prepositional phrase *au labo* refers to the location where the speaker and his interlocutors have just arrived – the whole construction indicates the arrival at a new location at the moment of utterance. Bergen/Plauché (2005, 16) call this

<sup>14</sup> Literally, however, the utterance would have to be rendered as 'Look, he's coming, *there he is*'.

the *now deictic*. Example (6), however, is different because instead of a change in location, the adjective *content* indicates a change of state. Bergen/Plauché (2005, 17s.) describe this usage as ‘stative deictic’ and convincingly explain it as a case of metaphorical extension:

The stative deictic is mapped from the now deictic through the metaphor STATES ARE LOCATIONS. [...] Instead of a specified locational complement, however, the stative deictic requires a stative complement [...]. The interpretation that emerges is one of stating that an entity is now in a state in which it previously was not [...] rather than being in a new location, as in the now deictic.

In *Au revoir là-haut*, there is only one instance of the *now deictic* used in direct discourse. In example (7), which is extracted from a letter, the location is in fact not spatial but temporal (*en février*) and does not change the overall meaning of the construction:

- (7) *Ici, le temps n'en finit pas. Te rends-tu compte que l'armistice a été signé en novembre dernier; que nous voilà en février et toujours pas démobilisés ?* (p. 121)

‘Time drags here. Do you realise, the armistice was signed last November, it’s February already and there’s still no sign of us being demobbed?’ (p. 89)

In contrast, there are several instances of the *stative deictic*. These include prepositional phrases (8), participles (9) and nominal phrases (10):

- (8) *En danger ! s’écria Madeleine en éclatant de rire, grands dieux, me voici en danger, maintenant !* (p. 412)

‘In danger! Madeleine shrieked with laughter. Good heavens, so I’m in danger now, am I?’ (p. 306)

- (9) a. *Eh ben, te voilà réveillé, mon grand, dit Albert en tentant de mettre dans ces mots le plus d’enthousiasme possible.* (p. 75)

‘Finally decided to wake up, then, mate, Albert said, attempting to put the greatest possible enthusiasm into his words.’ (p. 55)

- b. *Car enfin, se disait-il, je ne vais pas aller maintenant déterrer des cadavres pour couvrir un mensonge commis par bonté d’âme ! Ou par faiblesse, c’est la même chose. Mais si je ne vais pas le déterrer, si je dévoile toute l’affaire, me voilà accusé.* (p. 147)

‘After all, he thought, I am not going to dig up bodies to cover up a lie I told out of the goodness of my heart! Or out of weakness, it amounts to the same thing. But if I don’t dig him up, if I reveal everything, I’ll be court-martialled.’ (p. 109)

- (10) *Pire, son nom se retrouverait au centre de ce procès ! Et si, par malheur, il avait été le seul à commander une œuvre sur mesure, serait-il le seul dont on dirait : voyez celui-là, il a mis cent mille francs dans le commerce, le voilà Gros-Jean comme devant !* (p. 453)

‘Worse still, his name would be dragged through the trial. And if, by some misfortune, he was the only person to have commissioned a bespoke memorial, then he above all would be ridiculed: See him? Poured a hundred thousand into their scheme for all he ever saw for his money.’ (p. 400)

The attention-directing function conveyed by *voilà*, the inherent temporal anchoring and the aspectual readings that are especially foregrounded in these cases of *now deictics* and *stative deictics* are essentially the same within the narrative discourse. What changes though, is the communicative setting: rather than the story’s characters interacting with each other or speaking to themselves, it is generally the narrator’s voice that engages the readers. A striking example is the following case of *now deictic* usage:

- (11) *Il tendit le document. Tous deux s’aperçurent qu’il était mouillé de transpiration, Albert voulut le sécher contre sa manche, le dossier tomba à terre, toutes les pages en désordre, les voici aussitôt à quatre pattes, vous imaginez la scène. . .* (p. 457)

‘He held out the file. They both noticed it was damp with sweat, Albert tried to dry it on his sleeve, dropped the file, pages fluttering everywhere and suddenly they were both on all fours, you can picture the scene . . .’ (pp. 338–339).

In (11), by using *voici*, the narrator emphasises the culmination point of Albert’s clumsy attempt to hand over a document that ends with him and the maid on the floor trying to pick up the loose sheets. What is special in this case is that the narrator complements the use of *voici* by the statement *vous imaginez la scène* directed at his readers.

Importantly, the inherent (and implicit) temporal anchoring conveyed by each instance of *voilà* within the narration also contributes to the structuring of what Becker/Egetenmeyer (2018) call the *temporal discourse structure*. The concept is defined in terms of a hierarchy and distinguishes three levels (ib., 42s.):

- (i) ‘On the level of temporal structure, time points and time spans are related to each other. Some of them may serve as anchors for others and are in this sense more important for temporal structuring. We call these prominent time points. [. . .]’

- (ii) “The perspective and the phenomenon of perspective taking are also relevant for temporal structuring. They have a strong text structuring potential that interacts with the times and has an effect on the prominence of time points and time spans.”
- (iii) “Most obvious for prominence structuring, however, is the discourse level. We consider foreground and background, and also phenomena that contribute to the profiling of a primary and a secondary story line.”

Regarding level (i), deictic-presentative constructions form part of the temporal structure since they are related to time points defined by the use of both tense and temporal adverbs. What is more, they serve as “anchors for others” and always constitute the most “prominent time points”. As we will show in section 4, *voilà* can also indicate changes in perspective (level ii), especially from the narrator’s voice to the voice of the protagonists in what amounts to the constitution of free indirect discourse (FID; Fr. *discours indirect libre*). In this context, *voilà* may serve, depending on the context, to create effects of rapprochement and visualization because it imposes a “parallel perspective”<sup>15</sup> on the event being pointed out. On level (iii), the discourse level, deictic-presentative constructions contribute to the constitution of foreground and background by profiling not only specific aspects within scenes but also by marking leaps in time, by foregrounding specific events and by highlighting “the surprising, and focal, points of the narrative” (Aikhenvald 2012, 442).

Key to the analysis of *voilà* on the discourse level is the concept of mirativity. This notion, first established in linguistic typology at the end of the 1990s, refers to “to the linguistic marking of an utterance as conveying information which is new or unexpected to the speaker” (DeLancey 2001, 369s.; cf. previously Wehr 1984 with her own terminology). Defined as a “crosslinguistic category” (DeLancey 2012, 529), research first focused on languages that have dedicated grammatical means (particles, morphemes, verbal inflections) to express surprise. The concept was later extended to include mirativity as a functional category. As such, from an onomasiological point of view, mirativity can be expressed in any language on the discourse level (*mirative strategies*). As Aikhenvald (2012, 437, 473) has shown, mirative values expressed by grammatical means (the same would be true for dis-

---

<sup>15</sup> The term “parallel perspective” alludes to Coseriu’s (1976, 93s.) theory of the verbal system of Romance languages which distinguishes between *retrospective*, *parallel* and *prospective perspectives*. Coseriu shows that the speaker’s adoption of a parallel perspective (e.g., by using the present or imperfect tense) inevitably entails that the state of affairs expressed by the verb is construed as temporally unbounded (*kursiv* ‘in its course’).

cursive strategies) range from the marking of “sudden discovery” and “surprise”, through “unprepared mind” and “counterexpectation” to the simple marking of “new information” (always in contrast to the marking of already known information). Due to its basic attention-directing pragmatics, the use of deictic-presentative constructions crucially displays a strong affinity to the marking of mirativity. Even before the term *mirativity* was coined, this was observed with regard to Latin (*ecce*) and Romance constructions (e.g., It. *ecco*, Fr. *voilà*) as well as those in other languages such as biblical Hebrew.<sup>16</sup> Hence, even though *voilà* is not mirative in and by itself, it regularly forms part of mirative discourse patterns. In this context, it is important to note that these patterns do not only correspond to the speaker’s intent to mark his or her surprise, as the famous definition by DeLancey suggests. In fact, linguistic markings of surprise and related notions also encompass usages in which rather than reflecting an emotion of the speaker the intent is to provoke surprise in the interlocutor or denote the surprise of a story’s protagonist. In the latter cases, the expression of the emotion shifts to the staging or *mise-en-scène* of the emotion with the ultimate communicative goal of drawing attention to the information conveyed by the statement in question and highlighting its relevance. In this sense, Aikhenvald (2012, 473) differentiates between mirativity in relation to “(a) the speaker, (b) the audience (or addressee), or (c) the main character.” The expression of mirativity with regards to (b) and (c) is – of course – most relevant to the analysis of narrative texts. What is more, the mirative use of *voilà* is especially effective in both the constitution of salient time points and perspective-taking within the temporal discourse structure. The following example illustrates this, while a more comprehensive analysis will be presented in the following section:

- (12) *En le tenant contre lui, Albert se dit que pendant toute la guerre, comme tout le monde, Édouard n’a pensé qu’à survivre, et à présent que la guerre est terminée et qu’il est vivant, voilà qu’il ne pense plus qu’à disparaître. Si même les survivants n’ont plus d’autre ambition que de mourir, quel gâchi. . .* (p. 98)  
 ‘As he hugs the young man Albert realises that, like everyone else, Édouard spent the war thinking only of coming out alive, but now it is over, and he is still alive, all he wants is to die. If even the survivors have no greater ambition than to die, what a waste . . .’ (p. 71)

<sup>16</sup> Cf., most notably, Wehr (1984, 98, 134ss.) who uses the term *surprisatif* for the same phenomenon. For a first analysis of deictic-presentative constructions in Hebrew that refers to the notion of mirativity, see van der Merwe (2011). Tacke (2022a, 188–223) provides a comprehensive account.

This passage beautifully demonstrates that the use of *voilà* is essential to the linguistic marking of mirativity, which in this case, expresses counter-expectation. While the preceding phrase sets up the assumed expectation (*Édouard n'a pensé qu'à survivre*), the construction [*voilà que* P] – conventionally employed in such contexts (cf. Tacke 2022a, 139–141 and 417–440) – marks the opposite result (*il ne pense plus qu'à disparaître*). In this context, the emotion of counter-expectation represents Albert's perspective, i.e., his assumptions about his friend's feelings and his astonishment about his friend's wish to die. At the same time, the whole utterance signals the end of a narrative passage and constitutes both a highly salient time point and an instance of what Dessi Schmid (2019, 114) calls “(final) adjacency-related aspectuality”, which refers to the relevance of the depicted state of affairs for the preceding situation by focusing on its end point.

## 4 *Voilà* in Pierre Lemaitre's *Au revoir là-haut*

*Au revoir là-haut* is a 2013 novel by French author Pierre Lemaitre, which won the prestigious Prix Goncourt. It is set in the aftermath of the First World War and follows the intertwined stories of a handful of characters, in particular Albert Maillard and Édouard Péricourt, two soldiers who struggle to adjust to civilian life in post-war France, and their antagonist, lieutenant d'Aulnay-Pradelle, who concocts a fraudulent scheme to get rich. The novel is a perfect example of contemporary French storytelling. At the same time, it stands out because of the author's extensive use of perspective-taking effects through the narrative technique of free indirect discourse (FID) where the distinction between the narrator's voice and his protagonists' voices is often blurred. As mentioned above, the author relies heavily on the use of deictic-presentative constructions headed by *voilà* in his representation of the direct discourse between his characters as well as within his narrative discourse to mark both salient time points and mirativity. Four case studies will shed light on the narrative usage of *voilà*: the first consists in a quantitative analysis that shows that the occurrences of *voilà* tend to cluster around the novel's key plot moments (4.1). The following case studies then focus on selected tokens within the novel's narrative discourse. Three aspects of its usage will be at the core of these studies, all of which are related to its contribution to the temporal discourse structure: section 4.2 is dedicated to the narrative effects of *voilà* with regard to the relation between narrating time and narrated time, section 4.3 concentrates on its marking of salient reference points and section 4.3 on its use in and around FID events.

## 4.1 *Voilà* in numbers

The novel contains 14 occurrences of *voici* and 62 occurrences of *voilà*, reflecting the general tendency in French for the latter form to take over most of the functions of the former.<sup>17</sup> While 15 out of 76 instances occur in direct discourse, the remaining 61 form part of the narrative discourse where they represent either the narrator's voice or can be attributed to a protagonist's voice in cases of FID. With respect to the 607 pages of the original edition of Pierre Lemaitre's novel (counting only the text of the narration itself), these 61 occurrences equate to an average of roughly one occurrence of *voici* or *voilà* every ten pages, making it a frequent yet circumscribed linguistic device. However, a closer look reveals that these instances are not evenly distributed over the novel's narrative discourse. Interestingly, they seem to form clusters around certain plot moments: 28 occurrences, i.e., roughly 50 percent of all tokens appear in only three passages of the novel: 10 instances (or one instance every 4.3 pages) appear in chapters 1–3 (pp. 13–56), which depict the battle scene at the end of World War I and establish the novel's plot; 7 instances (or one instance every 3.7 pages) in chapter 6 (pp. 86–112), which narrates Albert's successful attempt to change Édouard's identity in order to shield him from the novel's villain and establish a new civilian life for them both; 11 instances (or one instance every 3.4 pages) in chapters 18–20 (pp. 277–314) in which several storylines come together and Édouard mounts his brilliant fraudulent scheme (which obviously inspires the title of the English translation: *The Great Swindle*); and 3 instances (or one instance every 3 pages) in chapter 38 (pp. 536–544) in which Édouard's father, M. Péricourt, finally discovers that he has been deceived and is awaiting public shame. In contrast, in all of the intervening and following chapters, i.e., chapters 7–17, 21–37 and 39–42, there is not a single instance of *voilà* within the narrative discourse. This cluster formation alone underlines the fact that its attention-directing pragmatics and its affinity with the expression of mirativity make *voilà* an appropriate linguistic device for marking salient story points and, *inter alia*, salient time points.

---

17 On the tendency to use the distal form *voilà* instead of the proximal form *voici* in Modern French, cf. previously Müller-Hauser (1943, 221) who affirms: “Dans la langue courante, *voilà* a presque complètement supplanté *voici*.” Cf. also FEW (XIV, s.v. *vidēre*, 429), TLF (s.v. *voilà*), Grevisse/Goosse (14<sup>th</sup>2008, §1008) and, based on corpus studies of different ranges, De Cesare (2011, 55) and Karssenber/Lahousse/Marzo (2018, 138s.). Nowadays, *voilà* is seen as the unmarked member of the opposing pair *voici* vs. *voilà* (cf. Genaust 1975, 106; Grenoble/Riley 1996, 837) parallel with the same tendency observed in the opposing pair *(i)ci* vs. *là*. Diachronically, I have shown that *voici* and its formal predecessors (e.g., *veci*) were used predominantly until the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, while the tendency of *voilà* to supplant it started in the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Tacke 2022a, 331–374).

## 4.2 *Voilà* in relation to “narrating time” and “narrated time”

Due to their semantic-pragmatic profile, deictic-presentative constructions are sometimes used as linguistic time lapse devices in the depiction of certain events or event sequences. Central to the description of time lapse effects is Müller's ([1948] 1968, 270) well-known distinction between narrating time (*Erzählzeit*) and narrated time (*erzählte Zeit*): while narrated time refers to the time span of the events depicted in the story, narrating time refers to the time supposedly needed to read the narrative representation of these events.<sup>18</sup> Narrative texts usually transform the presupposed linear and homogeneous time they represent to either foreground or background certain events depending on their aesthetic storytelling goals. Of the various possibilities of narrative transformation, only the contraction of time is relevant when it comes to the use of *voilà*. In fact, it is quite common to find deictic-presentative constructions narratively functionalised in order to contract time and skip certain intermediary events. Formulated in an abstract manner with regard to a series of three related events (A-B-C), they often serve to draw attention to a resultative event (C) following a first event (A) without ever mentioning the logically necessary intermediate step (B). Consider the following examples:

- (13) *Très courtois*, <sub>A1</sub>[*M. Péricourt tendit la main vers un fauteuil*], <sub>C</sub>[*les voilà installés*]. (p. 293)  
 ‘Very graciously, M. Péricourt waved towards an armchair *and they sat*.’ (p. 216)
- (14) [*. . .*] <sub>A1</sub>[*il monta les six marches du perron*], <sub>A2</sub>[*sonna*], <sub>A3</sub>[*essuya furtivement chaque chaussure derrière le mollet opposé*], <sub>A4</sub>[*la porte s'ouvrit*]. *Le cœur affolé dans la poitrine*, <sub>C</sub>[*le voici dans le hall haut comme une cathédrale*], *des miroirs partout, tout est beau même la bonne, une brune aux cheveux courts, rayonnante, mon Dieu, ces lèvres, ces yeux, tout est beau chez les riches, se dit Albert, même les pauvres*. (pp. 285s.)

<sup>18</sup> There are a number of terminological derivatives: narrating time or *Erzählzeit* as opposed to narrated time or *erzählte Zeit* are also described as the dichotomies *Erzählzeit* and *Handlungszeit* (‘plot time’) (Hirt 1923, 27–31), *temps du récit* and *temps de l'histoire* (Genette 1972, 77), *represented time* and *representational time* (Sternberg 1978, 14) and *text time* and *act time* (de Toro 2011, 113–115).

'he climbed the six steps to the front door, rang the bell, furtively buffed his shoes, rubbing each against the back of the other calf, the door opened. Heart hammering wildly in his chest, *he finds himself in a lobby that soars like a cathedral*, there are mirrors everywhere, everything is beautiful, even the housemaid, a young woman with short dark hair, she is radiant, my God, those lips, those eyes; in the houses of the rich, Albert thinks, even the poor are beautiful' (p. 210).

- (15) [*. . . J<sub>A1</sub>[elle lui indiqua la pièce], il pouvait s'installer où il voulait, A<sub>2</sub>[elle arriva juste à dire "Désolée", à cause de ce rire qu'elle ne parvenait pas à endiguer,] il leva les mains, non, non, riez, au contraire.*

*c*[Maintenant le **voilà** seul dans cette pièce, la porte est refermée,] *on va prévenir que M. Maillard est ici, son fou rire est calmé, ce silence, cette majesté, ce luxe vous en imposent quand même.* (p. 287)

'she gestured him to sit wherever he liked, and could only manage to stammer "Sorry", since she still could not contain her giggles. Albert held up his hands, giggle away, it's alright.

*Now he is alone in the room, the door has closed, the announcement is being made that M. Maillard has arrived, his laughing fit has subsided, overawed by this silence, this majesty, this opulence.'* (p. 211)

In all three cases, the narrator skips one intermediary event: the act of sitting down in (13), Albert's arrival in (14) and the maid's departure in (15). Instead, *voici* and *voilà* focus on the resultative states. To this effect, they occur either as a *now deictic*, as in (14), where *dans le hall* indicates the new location and implies that Albert has arrived there just prior to the utterance containing *voici*; or as a *stative deictic* as in (13) and (15), where *installés* and *seul dans cette pièce* indicate the metaphorical 'arrival' at the new state, i.e., 'being seated' and 'being alone'. Either way, *voilà* contracts the narrating time that would otherwise be taken up in depicting the skipped events and has, therefore, an effect on the scene as a whole. Combined with the preceding use of the *passé simple* – typical for the temporal sequencing of events (cf. Kamp/Rohrer 1983; Labeau 2007; Becker/Egetenmeyer 2018, 31s.) – the transition from the preceding sequence of events (A<sub>1</sub>-A<sub>2</sub>-A<sub>n</sub>) to the resultative state (C) gives the impression of a rapid succession in which the intermediate event (B) is barely noticeable and therefore not expressed overtly.<sup>19</sup> Consequently, if the scene itself is conceived as a rapid succession of events, the use of *voilà* and the

<sup>19</sup> This narrative technique is, of course, not exclusive to contemporary French literature, and neither is the functionalization of deictic-presentative constructions, as I have shown in my analysis of their use in the Old Spanish *Cantar de mio Cid* (Tacke 2021).

subsequent skipping of a barely noticeable event allows the narrator to represent the narrated time in a temporally iconic fashion.

A second type of temporal contraction concerns cases in which, even though no event sequence is skipped, the use of *voilà* (the proximal form *voici* is used in the following examples) has a similar acceleration effect:

- (16) *Il ouvre la barrière, traverse la cour ; le voici en bas des marches, il regarde vers le haut de l'escalier; personne alentour ; il se risque, monte, méfiant, prêt à tout, ah ! comme il aimerait avoir une grenade à cet instant, mais ce n'est pas la peine ; il pousse la porte, l'appartement est inoccupé.* (p. 583)

'He opens the gate, crosses the courtyard and he stands at the foot of the steps; he peers up, there is no-one around, he takes the risk, climbs the stairs warily, ready for anything, oh, how he wishes he had a grenade at this very moment, but it doesn't matter; he pushes open the door, the apartment is empty.' (pp. 430–431)

- (17) – *Cent trente mille francs, dit M. Péricourt.*

*C'était plus fort que lui.*

*Mais sa fille ne l'entend pas, la voici penchée sur un détail d'une autre œuvre.* (p. 435)

"A hundred and thirty thousand francs," M. Péricourt says.

He cannot stop himself.

But his daughter does not hear, *she is studying a detail in a different portfolio.*' (p. 323)

The *now deictic* in (16) – cf. also example (11) above – directs the reader's attention to the end point of the two previously depicted actions (*il ouvre*, [*il*] *traverse*). By doing so, the narration implicitly indicates the rapidity with which Albert crosses the courtyard. In contrast, the use of the *stative deictic* in (17) indicates a shift in perspective: the narrator first focuses on Péricourt's speech and behaviour (*c'était plus fort que lui*), then shifts attention (seemingly by assuming the perspective of the character) to his daughter, who is already concerned with other things.

### 4.3 *Voilà* in key moments: Marking key plot moments

As we have seen in the preceding subsection, the narrative representation of events does not equate to the homogeneous progression of physical (or event) time.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> On the concept of event time as well as other relevant time concepts, cf. Becker/Egetenmeyer (2018).

Instead, deictic-presentative constructions serve to contract time and to add certain acceleration effects. Another pattern of use of *voilà* can be observed on the discourse level and concerns the profiling of a primary story line. We have already seen that the distribution of its occurrences in *Au revoir là haut* (4.1) indicates a correlation between its use and the narration of key plot moments. A closer look at one of them, namely the battle scene that establishes the friendship between the two protagonists (Albert, Édouard) and the antagonistic relationship between them and the villain (Pradelle), will be examined in order to shed light on the role of *voilà*.

What stands out in the narrative depiction of these key plot moments is the persistent narrative use of the present tense.<sup>21</sup> Importantly, the present tense serves to construe the scenes as if the reader were a direct witness to the events, giving them a sense of immediacy. The depiction of these scenes is, therefore, foregrounded against other parts of the story. Here again, *voilà* serves as a foregrounding device within those present-tense passages since it stands out against the regular use of verbs. In this respect, *voilà* provides additional profiling within the foregrounded discourse passages. The following example illustrates how *voici*, at the end of a sequence of actions, draws the reader's attention to Albert's coming upon a second comrade's corpse on the battlefield.<sup>22</sup> This is vital because Albert has doubts about his lieutenant's version of their death and is going to reveal that they were, in fact, killed by him (the lieutenant) and not the Germans:

- (18) *Il enjambe le cadavre et fait quelques pas, toujours baissé, on ne sait pas pourquoi, les balles vous attrapent aussi bien debout que courbé, mais c'est un réflexe d'offrir le moins de prise possible, comme si on faisait tout le temps la guerre dans la crainte du ciel. Le voici devant le corps du petit Louis.* (p. 24)  
 'Albert steps over the body and takes a few paces, he is still half crouching though he does not know why, since a bullet can strike whether a man is standing or stooping, but instinctively he offers as small a target as possible, as though war were constantly waged for fear the sky should fall. *Now he stands before the body of young Louis.*' (p. 19)

Another narrative peak is reached a little later: having discovered the truth, Albert is pushed into an impact crater by lieutenant d'Aulnay-Pradelle and is then buried there after a round of artillery explodes near him. Miraculously, another round of

<sup>21</sup> On narrative present-tense usage, see, e.g., Fludernik (2003), Huber (2016) and Meisnitzer (2016).

<sup>22</sup> On the eve of the war's end, their lieutenant shoots two of his own troops while on a reconnaissance mission. He blames the Germans in order to instigate a final attack on them. Albert goes out to look at the corpses. Example (25), discussed below, depicts the same moment from the villain's point of view.

artillery allows him to free himself. At this very moment, he finds himself face to face with the head of a dead horse:

- (19) *L'obus, en trouant le sol, a déterré un de ces innombrables canassons morts qui pourrissent sur le champ de bataille et vient d'en livrer une tête à Albert. Les **voici** face à face, le jeune homme et le cheval mort, presque à s'embrasser. L'effondrement a permis à Albert de dégager ses mains, mais le poids de la terre est lourd, très lourd, ça comprime sa cage thoracique.* (p. 36)

'As it buried itself in the ground, the shell had unearthed one of the countless old nags rotting on the battlefield and served the head up to Albert. *Face to face, the young man and the dead horse are so close they could almost kiss.* The collapsing soil has freed Albert's hands, but the soil weighs heavily on him, crushing his ribcage.' (p. 27)

In this context, *voici* is used to direct attention to one of the most emblematic moments (or pictures) of the novel (and also of the graphic novel and the live-action film that drew on it). A third example, which likewise draws on the use of the *now* and *stative deictics* and imposes a perfective aspectual reading, is the following scene where Albert has finally managed to save his comrade Édouard, the novel's second protagonist:

- (20) *Albert continue de vomir; Édouard lui tape gaiement dans le dos, il pleure et il rit en même temps. Le **voilà** assis là, sur ce champ de bataille dévasté, à côté de la tête d'un cheval crevé, une jambe repliée à l'envers, sanguinolente, tout près de défaillir d'épuisement, avec ce type qui revient de chez les morts en dégueulant. . .* (p. 56)

'Albert carries on vomiting and Édouard cheerfully pats him on the back, laughing and crying at the same time. *There he sits on the ravaged battlefield beside a horse's severed head, one leg bent backwards and bleeding, feeling he might pass out from exhaustion, while next to him this man who has returned from the dead is throwing up . . .*' (p. 42)

This brief analysis shows how deictic-presentative constructions are used within the narrative discourse to mark salient reference points and simultaneously draw attention to the key plot moments by highlighting them against the events they are embedded in.

#### 4.4 *Voilà* in between: Perspective-taking and free indirect discourse

The third case study of *voilà* concerns its use as a perspective-taking device contributing, in many cases, to the marking (and occurring in contexts) of FID.<sup>23</sup> In this context, the concept of perspective time, as defined by Becker/Egetenmeyer (2018, 50–53), can be usefully applied. Perspective time “marks a time point from which a certain eventuality or a sequence of eventualities are seen. It acts as a typical vantage point to which a series of time points introduced via eventualities may be related” (ib., 51). Whereas the primary perspective source or “perspectival centre is, by default, the speaker” (ib.), i.e., in our case, the narrator, the narration’s perspective may shift to a “secondary or text-internal source” (ib., 52). Concerning the temporal discourse structure, these shifts in perspective are achieved primarily through the choice of tense. For example, Becker/Egetenmeyer (2018, 52) point to the use of the *imparfait*, which conveys a “parallel” perspective (cf. note 15) on the represented events, as opposed to the *passé simple*, the use of which implies the setting of new reference times. Importantly, Becker/Egetenmeyer (2018, 53) point to the fact that not only tense forms, but also “temporal adverbials, such as *now*, are paramount for the updating and highlighting of a perspective time”. As I will demonstrate, deictic-presentative elements like *voici* and *voilà* are as equally capable as more salient linguistic expressions when it comes to highlighting shifts in perspective.

A special kind of perspective taking is the phenomenon of free indirect discourse (FID), which refers to the representation of the speech and thoughts of characters without the explicit indication typical of both direct and indirect discourse (see, e.g., Banfield 1982; Doron 1991; Landeweerd/Vet 1996; Schlenker 2004; Eckardt 2014; Maier 2015; 2017; Reboul/Delfitto/Fiorin 2016; Egetenmeyer 2021; on FID in French, see, e.g., Vettters 1994; Vuillaume 2000; on forms of FID in medieval literature, see Lebsanft 1981). Most of these theoretical approaches (except for Maier 2015, 2017; cf. Becker/Egetenmeyer/Hinterwimmer 2021; Egetenmeyer 2021 for an overview) conceive FID as a competition between different voices or contexts, a view we will adopt here as well.

Thought and speech representation, whether indicated directly or as FID, is a frequent narrative device in Lemaitre’s novel. However, there is not always a clear-cut, explicitly indicated difference between thought representation and FID

---

<sup>23</sup> The use of deictic-presentative constructions as markers of free direct discourse has not been studied comprehensively. See, however, Renzi/Salvi/Cardinaletti (2001, IX.4.3) who mention the Italian cognate *ecco* among the “indicatori sintattici e pragmatici del discorso indiretto libero”.

events. The following examples show how *voilà* contributes not only to the creation of perspective effects, but also interacts with contexts of FID. In (21), there is a shift of perspective from the narrator to Albert, whose inner thoughts are overtly indicated by an introducing comment:

- (21) *En fait, Albert le comprend maintenant : Edouard n'aura plus la force de se tuer. C'est fini. S'il avait pu se jeter par la fenêtre le premier jour, tout aurait été réglé, le chagrin et les larmes, le temps, l'interminable temps à venir, tout se serait achevé là, dans la cour de l'hôpital militaire, mais cette chance est passée, il n'aura plus jamais le courage ; le voici condamné à vivre.* (p. 98)

'Finally Albert understands: Édouard no longer has the strength to kill himself. It is over. If he had managed to throw himself through the window that first day, it would all be over, the misery and the tears, the time, the interminable time to come, it would all have ended there in the courtyard of a field hospital, but the opportunity has passed, he will not have the courage to try again; he is condemned to live.' (p. 71)

In this context, which, despite the introductory comment, could be interpreted as an instance of FID, the use of *voici* underlines Albert's perspective as he is thinking about his comrade's fate and could be paraphrased as '*maintenant je [= Albert] comprends qu'il est condamné à vivre*'. At the same time, *voici* adds a mirative value to the situation depicted: its use in (21) emphasises the fact that the result (Édouard has to live on, suffering) is the opposite of what would have been the best for him (according to Albert). *Voici* is thus used to convey a sense of counter-expectation (or countered hope in this case) and marks Albert's act of awareness.

The following example from the novel's second half is a more clear-cut case of FID. Here, *voilà* is used to represent the collective voice of the public – [*voilà que P*] – and is, as already mentioned, conventionally tied to the expression of counter-expectation. The police arrive after Albert is attacked by a man from whom he had previously stolen a box of morphine for his friend. Yet, both of them manage to get away, to the disappointment of the bystanders the fight had attracted:

- (22) *Tout le monde fut déçu. On avait une relance de l'action et voilà que les protagonistes disparaissaient. On était frustré d'une arrestation, d'un interrogatoire, car enfin, on avait participé, on avait le droit de connaître le fin mot de l'histoire, non ?* (p. 367)  
'The assembled crowd was disappointed.

Just as the action was about to start, the protagonists were disappearing. They had been cheated out of an arrest, an interrogation, after all they had played their part, the least they deserved was to know how the story ended' (p. 271).

In this passage, the narrator sums up the situation in the first phrase (*Tout le monde fut déçu*), uttered in the simple past tense, then goes on to elaborate the situation from the public's perspective. The shift of perspective is expressed not only by the pronoun *on*, the use of the imperfect tense and the question at the end of the passage, but especially by the use of *voilà que*, marking the bystanders' counter-expectation and representing both their perspective and (collective) thoughts.

Interestingly, there are several instances of FID in which this narrative technique is combined with present tense narrations (on the rather rare cases of FID in present tense narratives, cf. Eckardt 2014, 225–227; cf. also Schlenker 2004). In these cases, *voilà* is used to mark the shift from past to present tense and from the narrator's voice to the protagonist's. This can be observed in (23) – already analysed under (14) from another angle – where the shift from the narrator's to Albert's voice immediately follows the *voici* construction:

- (23) *Vers dix-neuf heures trente, il repassa devant l'hôtel, trottoir d'en face, décida de rentrer chez lui, mais on allait venir le chercher, envoyer le chauffeur qui serait moins délicat que sa patronne, les mille et une raisons qu'il retournait sans cesse se carambolèrent de nouveau dans sa tête, il ne sut jamais comment cela se fit, il monta les six marches du perron, sonna, essuya furtivement chaque chaussure derrière le mollet opposé, la porte s'ouvrit. Le cœur affolé dans la poitrine, le **voici** dans le hall haut comme une cathédrale, des miroirs partout, tout est beau même la bonne, une brune aux cheveux courts, rayonnante, mon Dieu, ces lèvres, ces yeux, tout est beau chez les riches, se dit Albert, même les pauvres. (pp. 285s.)*

'At about 7.30 p.m. he passed the house again, crossed to the opposite side of the street, decided to go home, but they would come and fetch him, they would send a chauffeur who would not be as tactful as his mistress, the whys and wherefores rattled and ricocheted inside his head and, though he never understood how it came about, he climbed the six steps to the front door, rang the bell, furtively buffed his shoes, rubbing each against the back of the other calf, the door opened. Heart hammering wildly in his chest, he finds himself in a lobby that soars like a cathedral, there are mirrors everywhere, everything is beautiful, even the housemaid, a young woman with short dark hair, she is radiant, my God, those lips, those eyes; in the houses of the rich, Albert thinks, even the poor are beautiful' (p. 210).

A closer look at the passage reveals, that at the beginning of this passage, the narrator already refers to Albert's thoughts through FID, which is indicated by the shift from the simple past ([il] *décida de rentrer chez lui*) to the imperfect tense (*mais on allait venir le chercher*) and back. But it is *voici* that seems to mark a definitive shift to the protagonist's inner thoughts with the description and admiration (!) of the mansion's entrance hall. The utterance *tout est beau même la bonne* as well as the interjection *mon Dieu* clearly represent Albert's viewpoint and constitute FID events even though the narrator marks these statements *a posteriori* as coming from his protagonist (*se dit Albert*). At the same time, *voici* marks the second shift from a past tense to a present tense narration combining thus two narrative techniques in one instance. Another look at (15), which is expanded in (24) to provide more context, shows that it can be interpreted as yet another example of the overlapping of present tense narration and FID:

- (24) *Albert se mit à rire, simplement. On voyait qu'il riait pour lui-même, de lui-même, la main devant la bouche, c'était si spontané, si vrai, que la jolie bonne se mit à rire elle aussi, ces dents, mon Dieu, ce rire, même sa langue rose et pointue était une merveille. Avait-il vu ses yeux en entrant ou était-ce maintenant seulement qu'il les découvrait ? Noirs, brillants. Tous deux ne savaient pas de quoi ils riaient. Elle se détourna en rougissant, toujours riant, mais elle avait son service à assurer, elle ouvrit la porte de gauche, le grand salon d'attente, avec le piano à queue, les hauts vases de Chine, la bibliothèque en merisier remplie de livres anciens, les fauteuils en cuir, elle lui indiqua la pièce, il pouvait s'installer où il voulait, elle arriva juste à dire "Désolée", à cause de ce rire qu'elle ne parvenait pas à endiguer, il leva les mains, non, non, riez, au contraire.*

Maintenant le **voilà** seul dans cette pièce, la porte est refermée, on va prévenir que M. Maillard est ici, son fou rire est calmé, ce silence, cette majesté, ce luxe vous en imposent quand même. Il tâte les feuilles des plantes vertes, il pense à la petite bonne, s'il osait . . . Il tente de lire les titres des livres, glisse l'index sur une marqueterie, hésite à appuyer sur une touche du grand piano. Il pourrait l'attendre à la fin de son service, sait-on jamais, a-t-elle un ami déjà ? (pp. 286s.) 'Albert suddenly started to giggle, naturally, spontaneously, his hand covering his mouth, and it was so obvious that he was laughing to himself, at himself, that the pretty housemaid began to laugh too – her teeth, my God, and that laugh, even her pink, pointed tongue was a vision. Had he seen her eyes as he arrived, or was he only now seeing them for the first time? Dark, shimmering. Neither of them knew what they were laughing at. Blushing furiously, and still laughing, she turned away; she had her duties to attend to. She opened the door on the left leading to a formal

waiting room with a grand piano, tall Chinese vases, cherrywood bookcases filled with old books, and leather armchairs; she gestured him to sit wherever he liked, and could only manage to stammer “Sorry”, since she still could not contain her giggles. Albert held up his hands, giggle away, it’s alright.

*Now he is alone in the room*, the door has closed, the announcement is being made that M. Maillard has arrived, his laughing fit has subsided, overawed by this silence, this majesty, this opulence’ (p. 211).

Again, at the beginning of this passage, i.e., the first paragraph, FID is used to represent Albert’s perception, as is indicated by the use of deictic expressions, interjections and reference to the protagonist’s evaluations on the one hand (*ces dents, mon Dieu, ce rire, même sa langue rose et pointue était une merveille*) and the question (*Avait-il vu ses yeux en entrant ou était-ce maintenant seulement qu’il les découvrirait ?*) on the other hand. The subsequent paragraph beginning *Maintenant le voilà seul dans cette pièce* then goes on to mark another shift to a present tense narrative and FID. Interestingly, in this passage, the narrative seems to keep shifting between the narrator’s voice and the protagonist’s: *ce silence, cette majesté, ce luxe vous en imposent quand même* seems to represent Albert’s perception, before the narrator continues the plot (*Il tâte les feuilles des plantes vertes, il pense à la petite bonne*) only to return to Albert’s voice *s’il osait . . .*; the narrator then takes over again (*Il tente de lire les titres des livres, glisse l’index sur une marqueterie, hésite à appuyer sur une touche du grand piano*), but lets the passage end with Albert’s thoughts: *Il pourrait l’attendre à la fin de son service, sait-on jamais, a-t-elle un ami déjà ?* In sum, as this analysis shows, *voilà* seems to be used primarily to mark a change from past to present tense and consequently to foreground the plot depicted in the second paragraph against the preceding one. The present tense narrative, in turn, constitutes the perfect context for a continuous shifting of perspectives and the embedding of FID.

Finally, the initial battle scene of the novel offers another interesting example: in (25), the reader follows the villain’s thoughts and actions while he is eagerly trying to cover up his tracks after murdering two of his own soldiers in cold blood (cf. above):

- (25) *Or ce corps-là, Pradelle l’avait à l’œil depuis le début de l’attaque parce qu’il devait absolument s’en occuper et, le plus vite possible, le faire disparaître, c’était même pour cette raison qu’il était resté en serre-file sur la gauche. Pour être tranquille.*

*Et voilà ce con de soldat qui s’arrête en pleine course et regarde les deux cadavres, le vieux et le jeune.* (p. 43)

'The lieutenant had been keeping an eye on that particular corpse from the moment he launched the attack because he needed to deal with it, needed to make it disappear as soon as possible, in fact this was why he had brought up the rear. To make sure . . .

*And now this stupid fucking soldier stops and starts examining the bodies of the old man and the kid' (p. 32).*

While the first paragraph represents the narrator's voice, the second paragraph marks a change in both perspective and voice. In this case, the whole utterance headed by *voilà* is a clear instance of FID since the evaluative expression *ce con de soldat* can only be attributed to Pradelle.<sup>24</sup> In this particular instance, *voilà* fulfils a whole range of functions: (a) it occurs as part of a cleft-sentence construction which adds a new perspective time by marking the transition from past to present tense, as is the case with examples (23) and (24); (b) it adds a mirative reading pointing to the abruptness of Albert's physical and metaphorical appearance on the scene; and (c) it marks the event's importance within the primary plot line by pointing to the very moment where Albert enters the villain's path and therefore becomes his target – triggering the novel's plot.

## 5 Conclusion

Analysis of the use of *voilà* within the narrative discourse of Pierre Lemaitre's *Au revoir là-haut* has demonstrated how the deictic-presentative element contributes to the constitution of the temporal discourse structure of narrative texts. Whereas tense and temporal adverbs are traditionally at the forefront of tense-related studies, it has been shown that deictic-presentative constructions headed by *voilà* should also be considered, especially when it comes to determining how relative prominence and foreground-background relations are expressed in discourse. In this sense, their semantic and pragmatic properties are systematically functionalised by the narrator. *Voilà* constructions add further profiling and always constitute the most prominent time points in a narration, at both the sentence and the discourse levels. As the quantitative analysis of the use of *voilà* in Lemaitre's narrative discourse has shown, it tends to cluster around the most important plot moments. The subsequent qualitative analysis of its use within specific scenes then sheds

---

<sup>24</sup> It might be objected that the utterance could simply represent an instance of direct discourse. In the novel, however, direct discourse is consistently marked not only by a line break but also by a dash, which is not the case in this example.

light on how *voilà* constructions impact on the temporal discourse structure and add to the marking of mirativity. First, the study showed how *voilà* is regularly used by the narrator in order to contract the narrating time: in these cases, the predicate within the *voilà* construction highlights a resultative state, e.g., the new location of a character, without representing the intermediary step of arriving or moving there (e.g., *M. Péricourt tendit la main vers un fauteuil, les voilà installés*). By doing so, *voilà* serves to create narrative acceleration effects that give the impression of a rapid succession of events in narrated time. By contrast, the third and fourth case studies investigated the impact of *voilà* constructions on higher discourse levels. We were able to show that the novel's key plot moments are characterised by persistent narrative use of the present tense. Interestingly, *voilà* is frequently used either to mark the shift from past tense to present tense narration or to add further profiling within already foregrounded discourse passages. Finally, we demonstrated that *voilà* is also used to mark shifts in perspective and to represent the thoughts and perceptions of the protagonists within FID events. In sum, the quantitative and qualitative analyses of the use of *voilà* in the novel highlight the fact that it functions not only as an attention-directing and temporal grounding device, but also as an indicator of perspective-taking and, in some cases, FID.

## References

- Aikhenvald, Alexandra Y., *The essence of mirativity*, Linguistic typology 16 (2012), 435–485.
- Auchlin, Antoine, “*Mais heu*”, “*pis bon*”, “*ben alors voilà*”, “*quoi !*”, *marqueurs de structuration de la conversation et complétude*, Cahiers de linguistique française 2 (1981), 141–160.
- Banfield, Ann, *Unspeakable sentences. Narration and representation in the language of fiction*, Oxford/New York, Routledge & Paul, 1982.
- Becker, Martin/Egetenmeyer, Jakob, *A prominence-based account of temporal discourse structure*, Lingua 214 (2018), 28–58.
- Becker, Martin/Egetenmeyer, Jakob/Hinterwimmer, Stefan, *Perspective in German and French. Divergences in formal marking and temporal anchoring*, Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik 51 (2021), 321–356.
- Bergen, Benjamin K./Plauché, Madelaine C., *The convergent evolution of radial constructions. French and English deictics and existentials*, Cognitive linguistics 16 (2005), 1–42.
- Bergen, Benjamin K./Plauché, Madelaine C., “*Voilà voilà*”. *Extensions of deictic constructions in French*, in: Cienki, Alan/Luka, Barbara/Smith, Michael (edd.), *Conceptual and discourse factors in linguistic structure*, Stanford, CSLI Publications, 2001, 45–62.
- Blank, Andreas, *Literarisierung von Mündlichkeit. Louis-Ferdinand Céline und Raymond Queneau*, Tübingen, Narr, 1991.
- Bruxelles, Sylvie/Traverso, Véronique, *Usages de la particule “voilà” dans une réunion de travail. Analyse multimodale*, in: Drescher, Martina/Frank-Job, Barbara (edd.), *Les marqueurs discursifs dans les langues romanes. Approches théoriques et méthodologiques*, Frankfurt am Main, Lang, 2006, 71–92.

- Bühler, Karl, 2011, *Theory of language. The representational function of language*, ed. Goodwin, Donald F., Amsterdam/Philadelphia, Benjamins.
- Bühler, Karl, *Sprachtheorie. Die Darstellungsfunktion der Sprache*, Jena, Fischer, 1934.
- Campbell, John, *Reference and consciousness*, Oxford, Clarendon, 2002.
- Col, Gilles/Danino, Charlotte/Bikialo, Stéphane (edd.), *Polysémie, usages et fonctions de "voilà"*, Berlin/Boston, De Gruyter, 2020.
- Coseriu, Eugenio, *Das romanische Verbalsystem. Herausgegeben und bearbeitet von Hansbert Bertsch*, Tübingen, Narr, 1976.
- Croft, William, *Radical construction grammar. Syntactic theory in typological perspective*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001.
- De Cesare, Anna-Maria, *L'italien "ecco" et les français "voici", "voilà". Regards croisés sur leurs emplois dans les textes écrits*, *Langages* 184 (2011), 51–67.
- de Toro, Alfonso, *Time structure in the contemporary novel*, in: Meister, Jan Christoph/Schernus, Wilhelm (edd.), *Time. From concept to narrative construct. A reader*, Berlin/New York, De Gruyter, 2011, 109–142.
- DeLancey, Scott, *Still mirative after all these years*, *Linguistic typology* 16 (2012), 529–564.
- DeLancey, Scott, *The mirative and evidentiality*, *Journal of pragmatics* 33 (2001), 369–382.
- Dessi Schmid, Sarah, *Aspectuality. An onomasiological model applied to the Romance languages*, Berlin/Boston, De Gruyter, 2019.
- Diessel, Holger, *Demonstratives, joint attention, and the emergence of grammar*, *Cognitive linguistics* 17 (2006), 463–489.
- Diessel, Holger, *Demonstratives. Form, function and grammaticalization*, Amsterdam, Benjamins, 1999.
- Diessel, Holger, *Where does language come from? Some reflections on the role of deictic gesture and demonstratives in the evolution of language*, *Language and cognition* 5 (2013), 239–249.
- Doron, Edit, *Point of view as a factor of content*, *Proceedings of the 1<sup>st</sup> Semantics and Linguistic Theory Conference (SALT 1)* (1991), 51–64.
- Eckardt, Regine, *The semantics of free indirect discourse. How texts allow us to mind-read and eavesdrop*, Leiden/Boston, Brill, 2014.
- Egetenmeyer, Jakob, *Temporal relations of free indirect discourse events*, *Linguistics* 59 (2021), 1057–1102.
- Eilan, Naomi, et al. (edd.), *Joint attention. Communication and other minds*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Erzgräber, Willi/Goetsch, Paul (edd.), *Mündliches Erzählen im Alltag, fingiertes mündliches Erzählen in der Literatur*, Tübingen, Narr, 1987.
- FEW = Wartburg, Walther von (ed.), *Französisches etymologisches Wörterbuch. Eine Darstellung des galloromanischen Sprachschatzes*, Bonn et al., 1922–2002, online: <http://www.atilf.fr/few>.
- Fillmore, Charles J., *Towards a descriptive framework for spatial deixis*, in: Jarvella, Robert J./Klein, Wolfgang (edd.), *Speech, place, and action. Studies in deixis and related topics*, New York, Wiley & Sons, 1982, 31–59.
- Fludernik, Monika, *Chronology, time, tense and experientiality in narrative*, *Language and literature* 12 (2003), 117–134.
- Gaeta, Livio, *Ecco, ecco, l'ho trovata. La tenace persistenza di un'impalcatura cognitiva primaria*, in: Knop, Sabine de/Mollica, Fabio/Kuhn, Julia (edd.), *Konstruktionsgrammatik in den romanischen Sprachen*, Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 2013, 45–74.
- Genaut, Helmut, *"Voici" und "voilà". Eine textsyntaktische Analyse*, in: Schecker, Michael/Wunderli, Peter (edd.), *Textgrammatik. Beiträge zum Problem der Textualität*, Tübingen, Niemeyer, 1975, 76–106.
- Genette, Gérard, *Figures III*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1972.

- Grenoble, Lenore/Riley, Matthew, *The role of deictics in discourse coherence. French “voici”/“voilà” and Russian “vot”/“von”*, *Journal of pragmatics* 25 (1996), 819–838.
- Grevisse, Maurice/Goosse, André, *Le bon usage*, Louvain-la-Neuve, De Boeck Université, 142008.
- Hirt, Ernst, *Das Formgesetz der epischen, dramatischen und lyrischen Dichtung*, Leipzig, Teubner, 1923.
- Huber, Irmtraud, *Present-tense narration in contemporary fiction. A narratological overview*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.
- Iliescu, Maria, *Observations sur les présentatifs français “voici” et “voilà” et leurs correspondants roumains*, in: Maaß, Christiane/Schrott, Angela (edd.), *Wenn Deiktika nicht zeigen. Zeigende und nichtzeigende Funktionen deiktischer Formen in den romanischen Sprachen*, Berlin, Lit, 2010, 205–222.
- Kamp, Hans/Rohrer, Christian, *Tense in texts*, in: Bäuerle, Rainer/Schwarze, Christoph/Stechow, Arnim von (edd.), *Meaning, use, and interpretation of language*, Berlin/New York, De Gruyter, 1983, 250–269.
- Karssenberg, Lena/Lahousse, Karen/Marzo, Stefania, *Les clivées en “voici”/“voilà”. Une analyse de corpus*, *Linguisticae investigationes* 41 (2018), 129–151.
- Kröll, Heinz, *Die Ortsadverbien im Portugiesischen. Unter besonderer Berücksichtigung ihrer Verwendung in der modernen Umgangssprache*, Wiesbaden, Steiner, 1968.
- Labeau, Emmanuelle, *Reçu à l'épreuve orale? Le cas du passé simple dans la narration*, in: Abecassis, Michaël/Ayosso, Laure/Vialleton, Elodie (edd.), *Le français parlé au 21<sup>ème</sup> siècle. Normes et variations dans les discours et en interaction*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2007, 75–86.
- Lakoff, George, *Women, fire, and dangerous things. What categories reveal about the mind*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1987.
- Landeweerd, Rita/Vet, Co, *Tense in (free) indirect discourse*, in: Janssen, Theo/van der Wurff, Wim (edd.), *Reported speech. Forms and functions of the verb*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, Benjamins, 1996, 141–164.
- Langacker, Ronald W., *Cognitive grammar. A basic introduction*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Léard, Jean-Marcel, *Les gallicismes. Étude syntaxique et sémantique*, Paris, Duculot, 1992.
- Lebsanft, Franz, *Perspektivische Rededarstellung (Erlebte Rede) in Texten des französischen und spanischen Mittelalters*, *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie* 97 (1981), 65–85.
- Lemaitre, Pierre, *Au revoir là-haut*, Paris, Albin Michel, 2013.
- Lemaitre, Pierre, *The great swindle*. Translated by Frank Wynne, London, MacLehose, 2016.
- Leumann, Manu, *Lateinische Laut- und Formenlehre*, München, C.H. Beck, 1977.
- Maaß, Christiane, *Diskursdeixis im Französischen. Eine korpusbasierte Studie zu Semantik und Pragmatik diskursdeiktischer Verweise*, Berlin/New York, De Gruyter, 2010.
- Maier, Emar, *Quotation and unquotation in free indirect discourse*, *Mind and language* 30 (2015), 345–373.
- Maier, Emar, *The pragmatics of attraction. Explaining unquotation in direct and free indirect discourse*, in: Paul, Saka/Johnson, Michael (edd.), *The semantics and pragmatics of quotation*, Berlin, Springer, 2017, 259–280.
- Meisnitzer, Benjamin, *Das Präsens als Erzähltempus im Roman. Eine gedruckte Antwort auf den Film*, Tübingen, Narr, 2016.
- Moore, Chris/Dunham, Philip J. (edd.), *Joint attention. Its origins and role in development*, Hillsdale/Hove, Erlbaum, 1995.
- Müller, Günther, *Erzählzeit und erzählte Zeit*, in: Müller, Günther (ed.), *Morphologische Poetik. Gesammelte Aufsätze*, Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, [1948] 1968, 269–286.
- Müller-Hauser, Marie-Louise, *La mise en relief d'une idée en français moderne*, Genève/Erlenbach-Zürich, Droz/Eugen Rentsch, 1943.

- Reboul, Anne/Delfitto, Denis/Fiorin, Gaetano, *The semantic properties of free indirect discourse*, *The annual review of linguistics* 2 (2016), 255–271.
- Renzi, Lorenzo/Salvi, Giampaolo/Cardinaletti, Anna (edd.), *Grande grammatica italiana di consultazione*, vol. 1: *La frase. I sintagmi nominale e preposizionale*, Roma, il Mulino, <sup>2</sup>2001.
- Schlenker, Philippe, *Context of thought and context of utterance. A note on free indirect discourse and the historical present*, *Mind and language* 19 (2004), 279–304.
- Sternberg, Meir, *Expositional modes and temporal ordering in fiction*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.
- Tacke, Felix, *Ahé en castellano medieval y su funcionalización narrativa en el “Cantar de Mio Cid”*, *Nueva revista de filología hispánica* 69 (2021), 541–570.
- Tacke, Felix, *Aufmerksamkeitslenkung in den romanischen Sprachen. Historische Syntax und Pragmatik von Zeigeaktkonstruktionen*, Frankfurt am Main, Klostermann, 2022 (= 2022a).
- Tacke, Felix, *Reference, deixis and perspective. Aspectual readings of Italian “ecco”- and French “voilà”-constructions*, *CogniTextes* 23 (2022) (special issue: Bounding in Romance, edd. Pfadenhauer, Katrin/Jansen, Silke).
- Tacke, Felix, *From “he aquí” to “aquí está”. A case of constructional substitution and syntactic regularization*, in: Hennecke, Inga/Wiesinger, Evelyn (edd.), *Constructions in Spanish*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, Benjamins, 2023, 280–308.
- Tesnière, Lucien, *Éléments de syntaxe structurale*, Paris, Klincksieck, 1959.
- TLF = Imbs, Paul/Quemada, Bernard (edd.), *Trésor de la langue française. Dictionnaire de la langue du XIX<sup>e</sup> et du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle (1789–1960)*, Paris, Éditions du CNRS/Gallimard, 1971–1994.
- Tomasello, Michael, *Origins of human communication*, Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 2008.
- van der Merwe, Christo H. J., *The difference between הָיָה וְהָיָה and הָיָה וְהָיָה*, in: Gaß, Erasmus/Stipp, Hermann-Josef (edd.), *“Ich werde meinen Bund mit euch niemals brechen!” (Ri 2,1), Festschrift für Walter Groß zum 70. Geburtstag*, Freiburg i. Br., Herder, 2011, 237–256.
- Vetters, Carl, *Free indirect speech in French*, in: Vet, Co/Vetters, Carl (edd.), *Tense and aspect in discourse*, Berlin/New York, De Gruyter, 1994, 179–226.
- Vuillaume, Marcel, *La signalisation du style indirect libre*, in: Mellet, Sylvie/Vuillaume, Marcel (edd.), *Le style indirect libre et ses contextes*, Amsterdam/Atlanta, Rodopi, 2000, 107–130.
- Wehr, Barbara, *Diskurs-Strategien im Romanischen. Ein Beitrag zur romanischen Syntax*, Tübingen, Narr, 1984.