

# And now for something completely different

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## 0. Introduction

This article presents a critical analysis of Kamp and Rohrer's (1983) proposal to distinguish two different types of temporal perspective points within the temporal structure of a text.<sup>1</sup> They claim that such a distinction is needed to account for different types of deictic temporal adverbs, when used in narrative discourse. Their analysis seems to account for the difference between the deictic adverbs *maintenant* 'now' and *aujourd'hui* 'today'. I will show that the difference between these two adverbs can be explained more adequately in another way. My analysis points out the specific character of *maintenant*, already observed in Nef (1986). I will argue that the difference between *maintenant* and *aujourd'hui* is best accounted for by admitting, on the one hand, that *maintenant* has two distinct discourse functions and, on the other hand, by adopting the view that there are different time levels, each level corresponding to a particular entity in the narrative: a narrator or a protagonist.<sup>2</sup>

In the first part of this paper (sections 1 and 2), I will give a short sketch of how temporal expressions, i.e. tense forms and temporal adverbs, are dealt with in a Reichenbachian framework. I will also justify the introduction of the notion of perspective point as part of the temporal structure of a text. In the second part of the paper (sections 3 and 4), it will be shown that the different functions of *maintenant* in present tense contexts also apply to the use of this adverb in past tense contexts. The difference between *maintenant* and *aujourd'hui* will then turn out to be a question of the more or less deictic value of the adverb.

## 1. The temporal structure of narrative texts

The notions of S(peech point), E(vent point) and R(eference point), introduced by Reichenbach (1947), are regarded as useful instruments for a

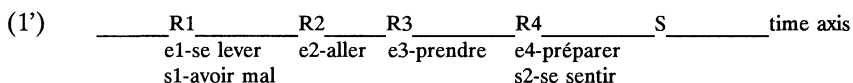
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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Helen de Hoop, Arie Molendijk, Co Vet and the reviewer for their useful remarks on earlier versions of this paper, and Ale de Boer for checking the English.

<sup>2</sup> In some cases, we could even speak of the time conception or perspective of the reader at the time of reading. For a discussion of this subject, see Landeweerd (1991).

formal account of the meaning of tense in texts. In general, it is assumed that a text consists of two types of eventualities: events and states. Each of them has a specific effect on the temporal structure of the discourse, which is formulated with the help of the three Reichenbachian notions. Events can be defined as eventualities having clear initial and final boundaries. Event sentences have a dynamic character in that they move time forward on the time axis, by introducing new reference points. State sentences have a static character. They do not introduce new reference points. The states they refer to overlap with some time point already identified on the time axis, which functions as the reference point. These two types of eventualities are referred to in French by sentences in the *passé simple* (PS) and sentences in the *imparfait* (IMP), respectively. The fragment given in (1) will, in this approach, receive the representation given in (1') (where *e1* stands for the event of the first event sentence and *s1* for the state of the first state sentence, etc.):

- (1) Claire se leva(PS) à 7 heures. Elle avait(IMP) très mal à la tête. Elle alla(PS) dans la salle de bains et prit(PS) un cachet. Puis elle se prépara(PS) un café. Elle se sentait(IMP) déjà un peu mieux.  
 'Claire got up at 7. She had an awful headache. She went to the bathroom and took an aspirin. Then she made herself a cup of coffee. She already felt a bit better.'



Time adverbs, too, play an important role in the temporal structure of a text. They serve to locate the moment of the reference point or the moment of the event. To illustrate these two possibilities, I cite two examples with the past perfect (PQP). This tense has the structure E-R-S (R is anterior to S and E is anterior to R). Since E and R do not coincide, it is easy to distinguish cases in which the temporal adverb specifies R and those in which the adverb specifies E.<sup>3</sup> We find examples of both cases in (2) and (3):

- (2) Jean entra(PS) au Musée d'Orsay à 8 heures. A midi il avait vu(PQP) la moitié de la collection.  
 'Jean entered the Musée d'Orsay at 8 o'clock. At noon, he had seen half of the collection.'

<sup>3</sup> For sentences in the simple past (PS or IMP), the structure of which is defined as E,R-S, it is more complicated to distinguish these two cases, since E and R coincide.

- (3) Hier on a vu(PC) Jeanne à la fête. Elle avait reçu(PQP) l'invitation la veille.

'We saw Jeanne at the party last night. She had received the invitation the previous evening.'

*A midi* in (2) locates the reference point. The event of seeing half of the collection is anterior to this point (cf. Molendijk 1990). In (3), the temporal adverb *la veille* refers to the moment of receiving the invitation, thus specifying the moment of the event itself. Let us now consider the following examples:

- (4a) Jean tourna(PS) la tête et ne vit(PS) personne, sauf le lion, qui s'approchait(IMP) de lui. A ce moment-là il était(IMP) tout seul à faire face au danger qui le menaçait(IMP).

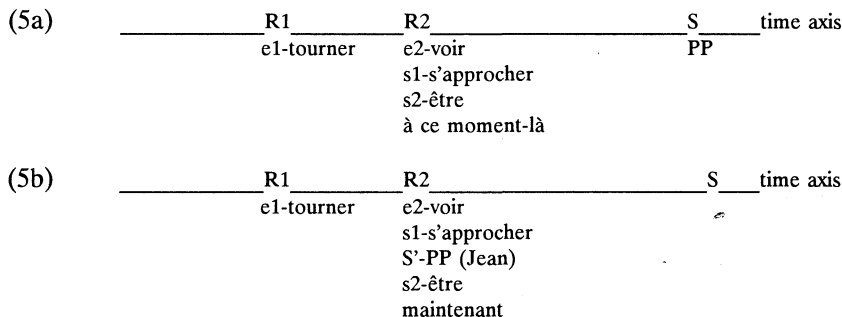
'John turned his head and saw nobody except the lion, which was approaching him. At that moment he was all alone to face the danger that threatened him.'

- (4b) Jean tourna(PS) la tête et ne vit(PS) personne, sauf le lion, qui s'approchait(IMP) de lui. Il était(IMP) maintenant tout seul à faire face au danger qui le menaçait(IMP).

'John turned his head and saw nobody except the lion, which was approaching him. He was now all alone to face the danger that threatened him.'

At first sight, the effect of the two temporal adverbs *à ce moment-là* and *maintenant* is very similar. Both specify the reference point. Yet, the sentences do not have exactly the same meaning. Kamp and Rohrer (1983) claim that the difference is due to a difference in perspective: the points in time from which the eventualities are presented are different. They therefore introduce, besides the points E, R and S, the notion of 'perspective point'. Usually, this perspective point (PP) will be located at S; the narrator presents the eventualities from his or her (distant) point of view, as in (4a). In (4b), we are dealing with a deictic adverb, *maintenant*. In general, deictic adverbs are interpreted with respect to S. It is clear, however, that in (4b) we are not dealing with the 'here and now' of the narrator. We rather interpret *maintenant* as referring to the 'here and now' of Jean at the moment he is looking behind him. The sentence is presented from the perspective of Jean. So PP is located at a point in the past. We could also speak of a secondary point of speech or thought, linked to Jean, representing his 'here and now', with respect to which *maintenant* is interpreted. I call this type of speech point an S'. Such an S' can be introduced by what I refer to as an attitude verb, defined as a verb that refers to some action of saying, thinking, seeing, feeling etc. of one of the protagonists. In (5b) S' is introduced by (*Jean*) *vit*.

The temporal interpretations of (4a) and (4b) are represented in (5a) and (5b):



A provisional rule can now be formulated as follows: in most narratives in the past, the point from which the eventualities are presented coincides with S, the narrator's point of view. In some cases, for example when deictic adverbs are used, the perspective point shifts to the past.

## 2. Temporal vs. personal perspective

Kamp and Rohrer give a specification of the provisional rule given in the previous section. They make a further distinction within the group of deictic adverbs: adverbs like *maintenant* 'now' and *dans deux jours* 'within two days' are less deictic than *aujourd'hui* 'today' and *demain* 'tomorrow'. This difference affects in some cases the perspective of the sentence: if used in past tense sentences, the first two adverbs can presuppose a 'neutral' perspective in the past, not necessarily linked to any particular individual in the story. Kamp and Rohrer speak of a 'temporal perspective point' in this case. *Aujourd'hui* and *demain*, on the other hand, can only be found in free indirect speech, and will therefore always refer to the point of view of one of the protagonists. They require a 'personal perspective point' in the past.

For *aujourd'hui* and *maintenant* such a distinction seems quite plausible, as is shown in the following examples:

- (6) Jeanne sortit(PS) pour aller au travail. Il faisait(IMP) beau maintenant.  
'Jeanne left to go to work. The weather was nice now.'
- (7) Jeanne sortit pour aller au travail. Il faisait beau aujourd'hui!  
'Jeanne left to go to work. The weather was nice today!'

For (6), it seems reasonable to assume that we are dealing here with two remarks of the narrator, since there is no evidence in the form of some attitude verb, indicating we are dealing with the perspective of the protagonist. So we conclude that there is no shift of perspective from the narrator to one of the protagonists. The use of *maintenant* is not enough to support the interpretation that the sentence is presented from the perspective of Jeanne (but see (14), section 4). Still, in order to account for the use of *maintenant*, Kamp and Rohrer say that the second sentence is presented from a neutral temporal perspective in the past, which does not represent the point of view of a protagonist, but rather underlines the close link between the fictional world and that of the narrator and reader. Another analysis is needed for (7). The most plausible interpretation is to regard the second sentence as an observation of Jeanne. The moment she steps outside, she notices the weather is nice. The fact that the sentence is presented as an exclamation as well as the use of the strong deictic adverb *aujourd'hui* favor this interpretation. In this case, Kamp and Rohrer speak of a personal perspective in the past.

So it seems justified to distinguish the 'perspectival' characteristics of *aujourd'hui* and *maintenant*. The question is whether this difference is adequately accounted for by assigning a different type of perspective to each of them. My claim is that the difference has more to do with the specific functions of *maintenant*. Let us have a closer look at the meaning of this adverb by examining its different uses.

### 3. *Maintenant* in present tense contexts

It is plausible to assume that *maintenant* is less deictic than *aujourd'hui*, witness the analyses given for (6) and (7). How can this difference be explained, since both adverbs have the basic meaning of referring to the moment or day of utterance? The difference in deictic character is mainly due to the semantic nuances of *maintenant*. I claim that *maintenant* is often used in past tense contexts to express a contrast between two time intervals. Nef's (1986) analysis of *maintenant* is along similar lines. Nef describes the meaning of *maintenant* in its temporal and non-temporal use in present tense contexts. He states that the difference between a present tense sentence of the form *P* and one of the form *maintenant P* often lies in the fact that the latter has the presupposition that *P* was not the case before the moment of utterance. So the difference between

- (8a) Paul dort.  
'Paul is sleeping'

- (8b) *Maintenant* Paul dort.  
 'Paul is sleeping now'

is that the latter presupposes that Paul was not sleeping at some moment anterior to the moment to which *maintenant* refers.<sup>4</sup> By assuming a certain contrastive element in the meaning of *maintenant*, its non-temporal use in argumentative sentences can be easily accounted for.<sup>5</sup> I cite some of the examples Nef gives in this context:

- (9) Cet écrivain a du succès. *Maintenant*, a-t-il du talent?   
 (Literally) That writer is successful. Now, does he have talent?  
 (10) Tout le monde dit qu'il est idiot. *Maintenant*, je n'en sais rien.  
 (Literally) Everybody says he is an idiot. Now, I don't know anything about it.

According to Nef, we are dealing here with an interpretation similar to the interpretation of *maintenant* in (8b). In the above sentences, *maintenant* is used to question or deny the implicature or the presupposition of the preceding sentence. In (9), the first sentence has the implicature that if a writer is successful, he will be talented too. The use of *maintenant* renders this conclusion dubious. In (10), *maintenant* reinforces the negation of the implicature of the first sentence, i.e. that if everybody thinks a certain person is a fool, the speaker will think so too.

Besides this contrastive function, *maintenant* can also take its strict deictic function of a rigid designator, referring explicitly to the moment of utterance, as for example in (11):

- (11) Je serai content dans 10 ans d'être en train de travailler maintenant.  
 'I will be happy 10 years from now to be working now.'

*Maintenant* does not refer to the moment at which the speaker will be happy, but to the moment the speaker is uttering the sentence. A similar analysis can be given for (12):

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<sup>4</sup> Vet (1980) makes a similar remark regarding the difference between *Pierre mange* and *Pierre mange maintenant*. He claims that the second sentence is the only one capable of expressing a contrast with respect to another time period, like the one in the following question: *Est-ce que Pierre mange à huit heures?* To this question one could answer with a sentence containing *maintenant*: *Non, Pierre mange maintenant*. A sentence without *maintenant* is out in this context.

<sup>5</sup> The (temporal) contrastive reading is favored at the moment *maintenant* is stressed, either by its syntactic position, e.g. at the beginning of the sentence, or by intonation.

- (12) Marie m'a dit hier que Paul arriverait maintenant.  
'Marie told me yesterday that Paul would arrive now.'

The moment of Paul's arrival is the moment of utterance, *maintenant* does not refer to the moment Marie was speaking. In its function of rigid designator, *maintenant* has a non-temporal counterpart: the adverb can be used in hypothetical contexts, where it serves to cancel the implicature of a conditional clause. Consider the following example, taken from Nef:

- (13) Si les poulets rôtis tombaient du ciel, ce ne serait pas mal.  
Maintenant, hélas, ce n'est pas le cas.  
'If roasted chickens would fall from the sky, how nice that would be.  
Now, alas, it is not the case.'

The use of *maintenant* reinforces the annulment of the implicature of the conditional clause. It brings us back from the hypothetical world to the actual world.

To sum up, one could say that *maintenant* has two meanings: a temporal and a non-temporal one. Within each of these meanings two functions can be distinguished, each function showing certain correspondences with its (non-)temporal counterpart. As a rigid designator, *maintenant* refers, in its temporal use, to the moment of speech, in its non-temporal use, to the actual world. *Maintenant* can also function as a contrastive element. In its temporal use, the adverb implies a contrast with a preceding interval. In its non-temporal meaning, it cancels the implicature of the preceding sentence.

#### 4. *Maintenant in past tense contexts*

In this section, I will argue that Nef's analysis does not only apply to *maintenant* in present tense contexts, but also to *maintenant* used in narrative texts written in the past tense. The adverb can be a rigid designator in the sense that it refers to the speech point of one of the protagonists, cited in free indirect speech or in indirect speech, like in (14):

- (14) Puis elle parlait de sa santé, et lui apprenait que M. Roque venait maintenant chez elle. (Flaubert:155)  
'Then she talked about her health and told him that M. Roque came to her house now.'

Here, *maintenant* is interpreted with respect to S', a speech point situated in the past, representing the 'here and now' of the female protagonist, who is

presented as a second speaker.<sup>6</sup> This S' coincides with some R in the past, here the time at which the conversation takes place. In (15) we are dealing with a similar use of *maintenant* in free indirect speech. The fact that the sentences are presented as questions and direct (interior) discourse makes us conclude that the thoughts of the protagonist are represented. An S' is introduced, coinciding with the R referring to the moment the protagonist, Frédéric, just has left the house of the woman he is in love with. This S' refers to 'the moment of thought' of Frédéric.

- (15) Son coeur débordait. Pourquoi cette main offerte? Était-ce un geste irréflecti, ou un encouragement? "Allons donc, je suis fou!" Qu'importait d'ailleurs, puisqu'il pouvait maintenant la fréquenter tout à son aise, vivre dans son atmosphère. (Flaubert:143)  
'His heart overflowed. Why had she offered him her hand? Was it an unconscious gesture or an encouragement? "Come on, I am crazy!" What did it matter, since he could see her now at ease and live in her atmosphere.'

In (16), we see that *maintenant* can, in its function of rigid designator, also refer to the narrator's speech point:<sup>7</sup>

- (16) Il y avait(IMP) autrefois une ville en ce lieu, la cité de Lorre, avec des temples païens, des amphithéâtres et un capitole. Maintenant, c'est(PR) un val désert où la charrue paresseuse..... (Féval:7)  
'In earlier days there was a city at this place, the city of Lorre, with heathen temples, amphitheatres and a capitol. Now it is a deserted valley where the lazy plough....'

Besides these two so-called deictic uses, there is another use, illustrated by (17) and (18):

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<sup>6</sup> One might conclude from the explicit use of *maintenant*, that at some moment before the uttering of the sentence, it was not the case that M. Roque came to her place, and argue that the sentence has a certain contrastive reading as well. Still, because the context is in indirect speech, I conclude that *maintenant* has in the first place a deictic function here and refers to the S' of the protagonist. This same argument applies to the possible, though less evident, contrastive reading of example (15).

<sup>7</sup> Note, however, that in those cases when the narrator refers explicitly to his or her 'here and now' he or she uses the present tense, whereas the rest of the story is in the past tense. Whenever *maintenant* is used to refer to the 'here and now' of a protagonist, the past tense is maintained, as we have seen in (14) and (15).



- (17) En 1699, M. le marquis de Caylus était un homme de 60 ans. Il avait suivi la cour au commencement du règne de Louis XIV, mais sans beaucoup de succès, et s'était retiré mécontent. Il vivait maintenant dans ses terres avec la belle Aurore de Caylus, sa fille unique. (Féval, *Le Bossu*:9)  
 'In 1699, the marquis de Caylus was 60 years old. He had followed the Court at the beginning of the reign of Louis XIV, but without success, and he had withdrawn, discontented. He now lived on his property with the beautiful Aurore de Caylus, his only daughter.'
- (18) ...d'Artagnan s'aperçut que ce n'était pas devant son hôtel, mais devant la maison voisine, que le rassemblement avait lieu. [...] Il demanda ce qui se passait. On lui répondit que c'était un bourgeois....[...] Il entra dans son hôtel sans faire d'autres questions. Autrefois, d'Artagnan voulait toujours tout savoir; maintenant il en savait toujours assez. (Dumas, *Vingt ans après*:766)  
 '... d'Artagnan saw that the crowd had not collected in front of his house but in front of his neighbour's.[...] He asked what was going on. They told him there was this man....[...] He entered his house without asking further questions. In earlier days, d'Artagnan always wanted to know everything; now he always knew enough.'

In these fragments, we are dealing with a kind of flashback with respect to the main reference point in the story. Two time periods are compared, i.e. the moment the story has come to so far, the main R, and some period anterior to this moment. Once the narrator wants to return from the flashback period to the current time line of the story, he is forced to use *maintenant*, which is capable of bringing the attention back to the main reference point. The use of an anaphoric adverb would lead to wrong interpretations, because it would be interpreted with respect to the moment, anterior to the main reference point, to which the attention had been drawn in the previous sentence. In the first sentence of (17), the year 1699 is introduced and serves as an R. In the second sentence we go back in time, i.e. to the beginning of the reign of Louis XIV till the withdrawal of de Caylus. The last sentence is again about 1699, i.e. the first R. Anaphoric adverbs like *alors* or *à cette époque* would be interpreted with respect to the moment of the withdrawal (*e2-se retirer*), which is not the interpretation that is aimed at here. The structure of the fragment (17) is represented in (17'):

(17')	R'1	R'2	R	S	time axis
	e1-suivre		1699		
		e2-se retirer	s1-être		
		(*alors)	<b>maintenant</b>		
			s2-vivre		

The same type of reasoning applies to the use of *maintenant* in (18). In this example too, we are dealing with a period anterior to the main R, as indicated by the anaphoric *autrefois*. To get back to the main reference point, it is necessary to use *maintenant*.

In these latter cases, the function of *maintenant* is very similar to the contrastive function of this adverb in present tense contexts (cf. (8), (9), (10)). My claim is that *maintenant*, when used to emphasize a contrast, loses, to a certain extent, its deictic function as a rigid designator. This means that it will not need a perspective point in the past for its interpretation. In other words, it is not interpreted with respect to an S', as was the case in (14) and (15).<sup>8</sup> It will only be interpreted with respect to the main reference point. This view allows us to drop the notion of 'temporal perspective point', which was only introduced to account for contexts in which *maintenant* in past tense sentences does not refer to the 'here and now' of one of the protagonists. In its function of rigid designator *maintenant* will be interpreted with respect to the S of the narrator or with respect to an S' of one of the protagonists. In the latter case we are dealing with a perspective in the past, which will always be a personal perspective point.<sup>9</sup>

In the temporal structure, we end up with one perspective point, always linked to some person, either the narrator (PP at S) or a protagonist (PP in the past). The great advantage is that we no longer have obscure neutral perspective points which are hard to distinguish from the reference point. In this view, the notion of perspective point always implies the existence of someone whose perception, words, thoughts or feelings are represented. It will therefore always be related to some person in the world of the narrative.

<sup>8</sup> If we apply my analysis to example (6), we can only interpret it if in the preceding context something has been said about the weather before Jeanne went out, for example that it was raining. The remark *Il faisait beau maintenant* would point out the contrast with the earlier meteorological situation.

<sup>9</sup> As far as the difference between *maintenant* and *aujourd'hui* is concerned, I claim that the latter only has a deictic function, i.e. it always refers to the moment or day of speech, and it does not have a contrastive aspect of meaning. This means that a past tense sentence with *aujourd'hui* will always be interpreted with respect to a personal perspective point in the past.

### 5. Conclusion

The temporal structure of a text can be described by means of the three Reichenbachian notions E, R, and S, plus a perspective point (PP), which indicates from which point in time the eventualities are presented. A further distinction between different types of perspective points in order to account for different types of deictic temporal adverbs has turned out to be unnecessary. A distinction between the perspectival characteristics of *maintenant* and *aujourd'hui*, however, is justified. I have shown that this difference has to do with the specific, ambiguous character of *maintenant*. This adverb has two values: a deictic value and a contrastive one. In its role of contrastive element, *maintenant* loses to a certain extent its deictic value. In past tense contexts, this means that in those cases *maintenant* is interpreted with respect to a perspective point, located at S, just as is the case with anaphoric adverbs. In its deictic function, *maintenant* will explicitly be interpreted with respect to S or S', suggesting a PP linked to the narrator or to a protagonist, respectively. Which one of the two functions we are dealing with should become clear from the context. When there is some sort of attitude expression, we may conclude we have to do with *maintenant* in its deictic function. When two time periods are compared, the contrastive function will be at hand. *Aujourd'hui* has a deictic value only.<sup>10</sup> Used in past tense sentences, this adverb will always be interpreted with respect to a PP in the past.

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<sup>10</sup> *Demain* and *dans deux jours* also pertain to this category. Contrary to Kamp and Rohrer's judgements, the two adverbs can only be interpreted with respect to a perspective of one of the protagonists in the past. This means that both adverbs always presuppose a personal perspective in the past and never a neutral temporal perspective.

*Works of fiction*

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