Miracles and mirativity: Lexical versus grammatical uses of *wonder*, *marvel*, and *surprise*

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1. Introduction

- Topic: constructions with semiotic/shell nouns that denote something (un)expected or astonishing

  - *Wonder* (OE *Wundor*): 1. Sth that causes astonishment; 2. a miracle involving supernatural powers; Phrases: *it (or † that) BE wonder; no wonder*; *It is († great), little, small wonder*; *It is (a) wonder; No wonder that/if/though: (and) no wonder!; The wonder is* (OED)

  - *Surprise* (< Anglo-Norman, Old French *surprise* 1457): attacking unexpectedly or without warning (military); sth that takes by surprise, anything unexpected; Phrases: *surprise, surprise* (ironic) (OED)

  - *Marvel* (< Anglo-Norman *merveille* c1050): 1. miracle (obsolete); 2. A wonderful or astonishing thing, a cause of surprise, admiration or wonder; a wonder. Phrases: *It is (great) marvel*; *Is it any marvel?*; *It is no marvel*; *no marvel*; *what marvel* (obsolete) (OED)

- **Miravity**: qualifying a proposition in terms of mirativity, i.e. as "unexpected" (DeLancey 2001: 369) or "the opposite meaning, ... lack of surprise" (Simon-Vandenbergen & Aijmer 2007: 37)

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- Topic: constructions with semiotic/shell nouns that denote something (un)expected or astonishing
  - *Marvel*, *wonder* and *surprise*
  - Focus on constructions in which the **content of these nouns is specified**:
    - **Entities**, realized by a noun phrase
    - (1) *Simon Easterby is probably the biggest surprise.* (WB)

    - **Propositional content**, realized by clausal complement, action nominal, main clause
    - (2) *It's no wonder Norwegians hunt whale. There's nothing else left to catch.* (WB)
    - (3) *Goya's mark-making throughout the canvas is a marvel.* (WB)
    - (4) *Apparently, the insurance industry suddenly has woken up to the fact that the over-50s are – surprise, surprise - less likely to prang their cars, and more likely to look after their possessions and be at home to deter burglars.* (WB)

1. Introduction

- Distinguish between lexical, untypical lexical and grammatical uses of these nouns (Gentens et al. 2016), Van linden et al. 2016)
    - Lexical: (un)expectedness is discourse-primary; can be 'addressed' by 'how much of a surprise was it?') and thus shows lexical use (cf. Boye & Harder 2012; Davidse & Van linden Forthcoming)
        - (1) *The Grotta Azzurra is a **marvel**.* (WB)
    - Untypical lexical: "the new meaning, which may be grammaticalized in the further development, arises as a conversational implicature" (Diewald 2006: 4); rhetorical scheme somehow present, but (un)expectedness still discourse-primary
        - (2) *Tyson soon integrated into that environment and the authorities <u>misguidedly believed </u>he was being rehabilitated thanks to boxing. And it was no **surprise** when Tyson was released early to go to live with D'Amato permanently.* (WB)

    - Grammatical: a mirative qualifier, commenting on the complement proposition in terms of its (un)expectedness (cf. DeLancey 2001); paraphrase by an expectation adverb such as *of course* (Simon-Vandenbergen & Aijmer 2007: 172); discourse schema (proposition, mirative qualifier and justification → anti-concessive relationship; paraphrase with *of course*)
        - (3)   *After all the scaremongering since September 11 regarding good versus evil, with us or with the terrorists, it is no **wonder** Arab-phobia has hit new heights.* (WB)

- Get a fine-grained view of the **mirative paradigm** in present-day English: functional (lexical versus grammatical) and formal variation (different construction types) and their correlation

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- Fits in with earlier joint work on 'no' + semiotic noun [*doubt/question/way/wonder/need/fear/chance*] + complement clause/relative clause (Van linden, Davidse & Brems 2011; Davidse & De Wolf 2012; Davidse et al. 2014; Davidse, De Wolf & Van linden 2015; Saad et al. 2011; Brems 2015; Gentens et al. 2016; Van linden et al. 2016; Van linden & Brems 2017; Van linden & Brems 2018)

Outline

1. Introduction
2. Methodology
3. *Wonder*
4. *Surprise*
5. *Marvel*
6. Comparison: functional and formal variation/competition in the mirative paradigm

2. Methodology

- Corpus query: lemma search in the British subcorpora of the WordbanksOnline corpus (written and spoken): manually sorted

- *Marvel(s)*: exhaustive sample of 430 hits; 110 relevant hits
- *Surprise(s)*: random sample of 250 relevant hits
- *Wonder(s)*: random sample of 250 relevant hits

3. *Wonder*

Lexical:

(1) She kept looking at him in a way. He sipped his cup of tea. She was looking at him in that way again ... he finished his cup of tea ... Dear reader, **it's a wonder** <u>how</u> one bed can take so much punishment . The springs groaned under the combined assault of two activated bodies . (WB)

Untypical:

(2) The first of those [goals] yesterday came after just two minutes and such was their explosive beginning **the wonder was** <u>that</u> it took that long for New Zealand to open their account. (WB)

Grammatical:

(3) His wife was an alcoholic, **and no wonder**, if she knew what kind of man he was. (WB)

3. Wonder

Uses	Complementation	Paratactic	Adverbial	Total
Lexical	7 POS	0	0	7
Untypical	15 POS	0	0	15
Grammatical	99 NEG: 85; POS: 14	4 NEG	125 NEG	**228**
Total	121	4	**125**	250

3. *Wonder:* complementation patterns

Clausal complementation	Lexical	Untypical	Grammatical	Total
It BE (det) *wonder*	5	11	**74**	**90**
There BE (det) *wonder*	0	0	**2**	2
(det) *wonder* BE	1	4	0	5
No/little/small wonder that	0	0	**23**	23
What a wonder that	1	0	0	1
TOTAL	7	14	100	121

3. *Wonder:* complement type per use

Use	*That*-clause	*If*-clause	*How*-clause	TOTAL
Lexical	6		1	7
Untypical	14		1	15
Gr: clausal	98	1		99
TOTAL	**118**	1	2	121

4. *Surprise*

(1)   Currently, only four carriers, BA, American, United and Virgin Atlantic, are allowed to fly transatlantic flights from the airport. The high price demanded by the DoT **came as a surprise** to BA and will have dashed any hopes that the financial squeeze on airlines since September 11 would speed the conclusion of a profitable deal. (WB)

(2)   She glanced up sharply and Chavasse smiled. "**surprise, surprise**" Jean Frazer removed her spectacles. "You look like hell. How was Albania?" (WB)

Untypical:

(3)   Given that costs of production are more obvious than hours of labor expended in the determination of prices, **it should be no surprise** that such an emphasis would be found at this level of intellectual development. (WB)

4. *Surprise*

Grammatical:

(4) THE odd couple of Kate Moss and Pete Doherty looks like a good publicity stunt to me. Doherty is promoting his new band and, **what a surprise**, Kate Moss is launching her own perfume. (WB)

(5) Such as the recent discovery that the death of a parent can scar a child for life, or that alcoholics have an unusually high depression rate. **Surprise, surprise**. (WB)

(6) Rovers never lost their composure. With Friedel standing firm and imperious, **it came as no real surprise** <u>to see Rovers catch Tottenham on the break</u> (WB)

  → *to*-inf (knowledge or acquisition of knowledge CTP, i.e. KAK), in turn complemented by *that*-clause/bare infinitival/ present participial

  → content of surprise: coded by secondary complement

  (cf. Van linden 2010, 2012: *it is good to hear that …*)

4. *Surprise*

Uses	Total
Complex predicate	2 NEG
Lexical	170 98 POS; 72 NEG
Untypical	30 6 POS; 24 NEG
Grammatical: clausal	34 NEG
Grammatical: adverbial	14 14 POS: irony!
Total	250

Before long, though, I was prepared for anything, and **it caused me no particular surprise** to see an aged and infirm man squatting on the ground and offering for sale a single, shrivelled lemon. (WB)

4. *Surprise:* uses per formal type

Formal type	Lexical	Untypical	GR: clausal	GR: adv	TOTAL
It BE (det) *surprise*	41	17	27		85
There BE (det) *surprise*	16	3			19
(det) *surprise* BE	15	1			16
It COME as (det) *surprise*	8	7	3		18
No/little surprise	1	2	4		7
What a surprise	2			1	3
surprise				1	1
Surprise, surprise	2			12	14
TOTAL	85	30	34	14	162

4. *Surprise:* complement type per use

Use	*That*-clause	*When*-clause	*If*-clause	*To*-inf (KAK) + secondary compl	TOTAL
Complex predicate				1	1
Lexical	22	13	2	9	46
Untypical	12	8	2	8	30
Gr: clausal	29			4	33
TOTAL	63	21	4	22	110

5. *Marvel*

(1)   The Grotta Azzurra is **a marvel**. (WB)

(2)   The director, cameraman and crew (if there were any) are completely absent. You can chew over the implications of this for weeks -even 40 years. <u>That Kiarostami stitched this intimate film together from 23 hours of tape without once setting foot inside Akbari's cab is **a marvel**</u>. (WB)

Untypical:

(3)   "Thank goodness I did not realize the horrible danger!" said Frodo faintly. "I was mortally afraid, of course; but if I had known more, I should not have dared even to move. **It is a marvel** that I escaped!." "Yes, fortune or fate have helped you," said Gandalf (WB)

Grammatical:

(4)   A state created out of some 17,000 islands, a mix of races and religions, based on an artificially created philosophy - the five principles of "Pancasila" - **it is a marvel** that Indonesia has been kept together at all. (WB) (concessive)

5. *Marvel*

Uses	Total
Lexical	104 POS
Untypical	2 POS
Grammatical: clausal	4 3 POS; 1 NEG
Total	110

5. *Marvel:* uses per formal type

Formal type	Lexical	Untypical	GR: clausal	TOTAL
It BE (det) *marvel*	7	2	4	**13**
There/here BE (det) *marvel*	3			3
(det) *marvel* BE	8			8
NP BE (det) *marvel*	84			**84**
That … BE (det) *marvel*	2			2
TOTAL	104	2	4	110

5. *Marvel:* complement type per use

Use	*That*-clause	*If*-clause	TOTAL
Lexical	5		5
Untypical	2		2
Gr: clausal	3	1	4
TOTAL	10	1	11

6. Comparison: Semiotic nouns, types of use & types of formal complements

	That-clause	*if*-clause	*when*-clause	*how*-clause	*To*-infinitive + secondary compl
WONDER: LEX	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗
WONDER: GR	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
SURPRISE: LEX	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
SURPRISE: GR	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
MARVEL: LEX	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
MARVEL: GR	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗

6. Comparison:
Semiotic nouns, types of use & formal types

	wonder		surprise		marvel	
	LEX	GR	LEX	GR	LEX	GR
It BE (det) *N*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
There BE (det) *N*	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗
(det) *N* BE	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗
No/little/small N	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
What a N that	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗
It COME as (det) *N*	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗
N	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗
N N	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗
X BE *N*	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗

6. Comparison

- Mirative paradigm in PDE:
  - *marvel, wonder* and *surprise* show different relative frequencies of lexical versus grammatical uses:
    - *Wonder*: predominantly grammatical (91%), already attested in Old English (Van linden et al. 2016)
    - *Marvel* (96%) & *surprise* (81%): predominantly lexical
  - Formal variation:
    - Complement types: surprise (*that, if, when, to*-inf + compl)
      - > wonder (*that, if, how*)
        - > marvel (*that, if*)
    - Structural type containing N: surprise
      - > wonder
        - > marvel

Specialization of *wonder* string as mirative qualifier

6. Comparison

- Further research into the diachrony of this paradigm
    - Track changes in formal and functional preferences of the three nouns
    - Other nouns that need to be added?
    - Role of polarity?
    - Persistence of lexical meaning? (*marvel/wonder* vs. *surprise*)

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