The Historical Present in the *Grottaferrata* and *Escorial* Versions of *Digenis Akritis*: A Narratological Insight

Zuzana Dzurillová and Markéta Kulhánková

DIGENIS AKRITIS is well known as the only representative of genuinely Byzantine heroic poetry. The anonymous poem, which narrates the life and deeds of an ambivalent hero, a border guard of double descent, is composed in fifteen-syllable Byzantine verse and preserved in several rather different versions. Although its popularity is unlikely ever to reach the height it did in the late Byzantine period, it has grown significantly in recent decades. This is mainly due to modern editions and its translation into English,[1] together with numerous studies that look at the narrative from various viewpoints.[2] Our work contributes to this research by focusing on the two oldest versions of the poem and providing a comparative analysis

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[1] E. Trapp, *Digenes Akrites. Synoptische Ausgabe der ältesten Versionen* (Vienna 1971); S. Alexiou, *Βασίλειος Διγενὴς Ἀκρίτης* (Athens 1985); E. Jeffreys, *Digenis Akritis: The Grottaferrata and Escorial Versions* (Cambridge 1998).

[2] For the most recent research survey see C. Jouanno, "Shared Spaces: 1 Digenis Akritis, the Two-Blood Border Lord," in C. Cupane et al. (eds.), *Fictional Storytelling in the Medieval Eastern Mediterranean and Beyond* (Leiden 2016) 260–284. See also J. Trilling, "Re-Introducing *Digenes Akrites*: A Byzantine Poem of Strength, Weakness, and the Disturbing Absence of God," *Viator* 47.3 (2016) 149–170; A. J. Goldwyn, "Zoomorphic and Anthropomorphic Metaphors in the 'Proto-Romance' *Digenis Akritis*," in *Byzantine Ecocriticism* (Cham 2018) 39–84; E. Villa, "A Note on *Digenis Akritas* G 5.242 and Z 6.1813," *GRBS* 61 (2021) 183–192; M. Kulhánková, "Narrative Coherence in *Digenes Akrites* (G)," *BMGS* 45 (2021) 184–198.

of their use of the so-called historical present tense (HP)—a generally neglected topic in the study of Byzantine literature.[3]

1. *Using the present tense in narrative discourse for a past state of affairs*

The primary narrative tenses in Greek are the imperfect, the aorist, and the perfect. For the period of our interest, the recent *Cambridge Grammar of Medieval and Early Modern Greek* defines the use of the imperfect as follows: it serves "to describe actions that are viewed as ongoing/progressive in the past (non-stative verbs), states that are viewed as persisting over time, or actions that are viewed as habitual/characterizing in the past."[4] As the ancient monolectic perfect "had fallen together functionally with the aorist long before the medieval period," both the aorist and the perfect denote "eventualities in the past time that are viewed as single complete wholes."[5] In narrative discourse, the three primary narrative tenses occasionally alternate with the present tense. Holton et al. explain this tense-switching as follows: "present indicatives are used to comment on events taking place sequentially before the speaker's/hearer's eyes (e.g., *the emperor arrives, takes his seat and nods to his officials*). […] This type of 'historic' present is chiefly apparent in narrative texts, where it converts an account of past events into just such an eyewitness commentary."[6]

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[3] To the best of our knowledge, the only in-depth analysis so far of the HP in Byzantine literature is T. Shawcross, *The Chronicle of Morea. Historiography in Crusader Greece* (Oxford 2009) 167–180. For recent studies of the HP in post-Byzantine literature see Z. Dzurillová, "The Historical Present Tense in Vitsentzos Kornaros' *Erotokritos*: Narratological and Philological Insight," *Neograeca Bohemica* 21 (2012) 9–25; and C. A. Thoma, "The Function of the Historical Present Tense: Evidence from Modern Greek," *Journal of Pragmatics* 43 (2011) 2373–2391.

[4] D. Holton et al., *Cambridge Grammar of Medieval and Early Modern Greek* IV (Cambridge 2019) 1934.

[5] *Cambridge Grammar* IV 1934. For the function of the perfect in Byzantine literature see also M. Hinterberger, "The Synthetic Perfect in Byzantine Literature," in *The Language of Byzantine Learned Literature* (Brepols 2014) 176–204.

[6] *Cambridge Grammar* IV 1933.

Our objective here is to refine and extend this statement by analyzing the discourse-pragmatic functions and cognitive roles of the HP in two texts that render approximately the same story using different stylistic levels and applying different narrative strategies. In so doing we join recent trends in narratology and enrich its methodological approach with findings from cognitive linguistics.[7] Our aim is twofold: first, we illustrate the types of HP according to narrative mode (*diegesis* vs. *mimesis*) and narrative movement (*summary* vs. *scene*), pointing out the differences between the two versions in their treatment of story time and discourse time; second, we elucidate the cognitive effects that the different ways of representing past events in the two narratives have on their audiences.

The key opposition between *diegesis* and *mimesis* as modes of narrative discourse already interested ancient scholars. Pseudo-Longinus in his treatise *On the Sublime* (9.13) argues that the *Odyssey*'s mode is mainly "diegetic" (διηγηματικόν) while the *Iliad*'s is "dramatic" (δραματικόν) and "actively engaging" (ἐναγώνιον). In modern cognitive terms, narrative *mimesis* implies an active engagement: with its use of proximal deictic expressions, first-person narration, concreteness, etc., the narrative induces the audience to process it like immediate experience. *Diegesis*, on the other hand, implies distance from the story.[8]

In narrative discourse, the difference is largely established by the narrative rhythm, in particular by the narrative speeds *summary* (in which the story time is longer than the time of the discourse) and the *scene* (in which the story and discourse time

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[7] For so-called cognitive narratology see, e.g., D. Herman, "Cognitive Narratology (revised version)," in P. Hühn et al. (eds.), *The Living Handbook of Narratology* (Hamburg 2013), at http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/cognitive-narratology-revised-version-uploaded-22-september-2013.

[8] We adopt this key distinction for the present analysis as applied in A. A. Nijk, *Tense-Switching in Classical Greek: A Cognitive Approach* (Cambridge 2022) 67.

are equal).[9] We see the *diegetic HP* in a summary narrative, which accelerates the pace of narration, and the *mimetic HP* in a scenic narrative, which decelerates the pace of narration.[10] In what follows we will elucidate both the mimetic HP, which functions as an important immersive device by bringing the narration close to an eyewitness commentary, and the diegetic HP, which provides changes in the narrative dynamics and serves as a cohesive device.

Narration in the present tense with referential meaning to the past originates in the oral tradition and like other speech devices has undergone in various languages a long process of refining.[11] From the perspective of diachronic development, the oral pattern of the HP, which is based on dynamic tense-switching in discourse with the episodic narrative structure typical of early medieval vernacular, has been transformed gradually into the written pattern of modern literary narratives.[12] Thus, there is, on the one hand, dynamic and irregular alternation of past and present tenses and, on the other, more refined long sequences and strands of scenes carried in the HP and replacing the episodic narrative with a teleological one. With this change, the functions of the HP also changed. Initially, it served pre-dominantly to mark narrative turns and it provided a means of

[9] Cf. G. Genette, *Narrative Discourse. An Essay in Method* (Ithaca 1980) 86–112.

[10] Nijk, *Tense-Switching* 66–146 and 147–232.

[11] Whereas some scholars support the idea of the HP's diachronic development (S. Fleischman, "Temps verbal et point de vue narratif," *Études littéraires* 25 [1992] 117–135; M. Fludernik, "The Historical Present Tense in English Literature: An Oral Pattern and its Literary Adaptation," *Language and Literature* 17 [1992] 77–107), others oppose it. Among them is S. Zeman, who argues instead for different kinds of orality hidden behind this term: "Orality, Visualization, and the Historical Mind. The 'Visual Present' in (Semi-)oral Epic Poems and its Implications for a Theory of Cognitive Oral Poetics," in M. Antovic et al. (eds.), *Oral Poetics and Cognitive Science* (Berlin 2016) 168–195, at 180–189.

[12] Fludernik, *Language and Literature* 17 (1992) 77–78.

internal evaluation.[13] With the gradual adoption of new semantics, the HP has become a means of internal focalization, a device that allows for a highly mimetic presentation of the narrated events.[14] But if we look at the relationship between orality and literacy in medieval Greek literature, where various kinds and degrees of orality can be detected, things appear to be more intricate. We can roughly distinguish three types of texts: those that preserve elements of the oral tradition (primary orality); those originally written, but intended for oral performance (secondary orality); and an in-between type that does not originate directly in the oral tradition but adopts some of its features as a conscious textual strategy (textualized orality).[15] At least in the two versions of the *Digenis Akritis* analyzed, it is hard to tell if we are faced with transformations in the diachronic development of the HP or with different synchronic varieties of its use.

What is certain is that versions *E* and *G* derive from different traditions of unclear relationship to the lost original, which was probably written down in the first half of the twelfth century. Therefore, they differ considerably. Surviving in a manuscript dated to the end of the thirteenth century and preserved in a monastery in Grottaferrata, version *G* is the longer one (3850 verses) and belongs to the middle linguistic register. Written down in the fifteenth century, version *E* survives in a manuscript found in the Escorial. It is considerably shorter (1867 verses) and belongs to the lower linguistic register, displaying several ver-

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[13] See W. Labov and J. Waletzky, "Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience," in J. Helms (ed.), *Essays on the Verbal and Visual Arts* (Philadelphia 1967) 12–44; S. Fleischman, "Evaluation in Narrative: The Present tense in Medieval 'Performed Stories'," *Yale French Studies* 70 (1986) 199–251.

[14] Fleischman, *Études littéraires* 25 (1992) 117–135; T. Damsteegt, "The Present Tense and Internal Focalization of Awareness," *Poetics Today* 26 (2005) 39–78.

[15] C. Messis and S. Papaioannou, "Orality and Textuality (with an Appendix on the Byzantine Conceptions)," in S. Papaioannou (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Literature* (Oxford 2021) 241–272, at 243.

nacular linguistic elements.[16] Among their differences are the narrative strategies they apply, including the use of the HP, which we explore below.

2. *The diegetic HP in a summary narrative and the mimetic HP in a scenic narrative*

While both versions have a similar proportion of narrative sections and conversational and metanarrative sections, the absolute number and frequency of HPs is considerably different. As TABLE 1 shows, version *E* has on average one HP per every three and a half lines of narrative, while version *G* has one in every sixteenth:[17]

	Grottaferrata 3749 lines	Escorial 1867 lines
Narrative sections	1852 (49.4%)	865 (46.3%)
Conversational and metanarrative sections	1897 (50.6%)	1002 (53.6%)
Number of HPs	113	245
HP frequency	1 in 16.4 lines	1 in 3.5 lines

TABLE 1. Historical presents in the *G* and *E* versions

The two narratives differ significantly in the way HPs are used and function. In version *G* the use of the isolated HP surrounded by past tenses prevails, whereas in version *E* HPs often constitute short sequences, which consequently affect the duration of the events narrated. An example from the first part of the poem, the so-called *Lay of the Emir*, illustrates this well. The following extract, preserved in version *G* 1.226–233, recounts the moments

[16] Cf. Jeffreys, *Digenis Akritis* xix–xxx.

[17] The table is inspired by Y. Nakamichi, "On the Use of the Historical Present in the Gawain-Poems," *Geibun-Kenkyu* 43 (1982) 173–184, at 183.

when the brothers are looking for their kidnapped sister in a ditch full of bodies of murdered girls:[18]

Ἐλάλησαν τοὺς ἵππους των, ἀπῆλθον ’ς τὸ ῥυάκιν·
πολλὰς σφαμμένας εὕρηκαν εἰς τὸ αἷμα βαπτισμένας,
ὧν μὲν αἱ χεῖρες ἔλειπον, κρανία τε καὶ πόδες,
ὧν δὲ τὰ μέλη ἅπαντα, καὶ τὰ ἔγκατα ἔξω,
γνωρισθῆναι ὑπό τινος μὴ δυνάμενα ὅλως.   230
Καὶ ταῦτα θεασάμενοι, ἔκπληξις τούτους εἶχεν
καὶ χοῦν λαβόντες ἀπὸ γῆς ταῖς κεφαλαῖς **προσραίνουν**,
ὀδυρμούς τε ἐκίνησαν καὶ θρήνους ἐκ καρδίας.

They urged their horses on, and went off to the ditch;
they found many girls slaughtered, soaked in blood;
some lacked hands, heads and feet,
others all their limbs and their entrails were on the ground;
no one at all could recognize them.
As the brothers gazed at them, they were overcome with shock;
they took dust from the ground and they **sprinkle** it on their heads
and uttered wails and lamentations from their hearts.[19]

The event is narrated in the past tense except for the sole present indicative προσραίνουν (232), which closes a passage that provides such details as the missing parts of the girls' bodies. The HP, used immediately after this short description, accelerates the rhythm and moves the plot forward through a summary, thus changing the narrative dynamics. It does not aim to slow the narrative rhythm into a scene and to give the impression of eyewitness report (*contra* Holton et al.), quite the opposite. Therefore, it may be identified as the diegetic HP in a summary narrative for plot progression.

Nevertheless, we should also consider possible metrical reasons for the use of the present: the political verse is composed in lines of fifteen syllables, divided into two hemistichs of eight

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[18] We follow the critical edition by Jeffreys, *Digenis Akritis.* HP is in boldface and past tenses are underlined.

[19] Because the translation by Jeffreys does not preserve the HPs, we have modified it to make the HP visible in English. To help the reader tell apart the two modes of the HP, we will use simple present for the diegetic HP and the present continuous for the mimetic HP.

and seven syllables. The tendency towards iambic accentuation is clear, but the stress is obligatory only on syllables 6 or 8 and 14.[20] Thus, when the verb is placed at the end of either hemistich, as in this example, we cannot rule out metrical reasons for the choice of the present over the aorist or the imperfect.[21] There are, however, a number of HPs in metrically unexposed positions at the beginning or in the middle of a hemistich, where metrical considerations do not apply, for example 7.102–108:

Ἐντὸς τοῦ οἴκου τῆς αὐλῆς <u>ὑπῆρχε</u> τὸ πεδίον
πολὺ ἔχον διάστημα εἴς τε μῆκος καὶ πλάτος·
τούτου ἐν μέσῳ <u>ἵδρυσε</u> ναόν, ἔνδοξον ἔργον,
ἁγίου ἐν ὀνόματι μάρτυρος Θεοδώρου   105
καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ τὸν ἴδιον πανέντιμον πατέρα
θάπτει κομίσας τὸν νεκρὸν ἀπὸ Καππαδοκίας
λίθοις τὸ μνῆμα φαεινοῖς, ὡς ἔπρεπε, κοσμήσας.

Within the courtyard of the house <u>was</u> a flat area
of great size of both length and breadth.
In the middle of this Digenis <u>set up</u> a church, a glorious structure,
in the name of the martyr Saint Theodore;
and in it **he buries** his revered father,
bringing the body from Cappadocia
and adorning the tomb, as was fitting, with brilliant stones.

Given the metrically unexposed position of the HP here, discourse pragmatics remains as the sole motivation for the HP, and one can observe an acceleration of the rhythm that moves the plot forward.[22]

We now move to the representation of the scene with murdered girls in version *E*, which depicts the event in more detail (74–90):

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[20] For the basic metrical characteristic of the political verse see W. Hörandner and A. Rhoby, "Metrics and Prose Rhythm," in *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Literature* 407–429, at 413–416; and with a special attention to orality, M. Jeffreys, "From Hexameters to Fifteen-Syllable Verse," in W. Hörandner et al. (eds.), *A Companion to Byzantine Poetry* (Leiden 2019) 66–91.

[21] Similar instances in 1.56, 57; 2.155; 3.267; 4.48, 789; 5.34; 6.233. Cf. also Shawcross, *The Chronicle of Morea* 169.

[22] Cf. 1.66, 193; 4.122; 5.782; 6.546.

Καὶ ὡσὰν τὸ ἐκοῦσαν οἱ ἄρχοντες, ἐθλίβησαν μεγάλως
καὶ ὥραν πολλὴν ἐποίσασιν καὶ εἰς λογισμοὺς ἐμπῆκαν   75
καὶ μετὰ ὥρας περισσὰς ἐφέρασιν τὸν νοῦν τους·
τὰ δάκρυα τους **σφουγγίζουσιν**, τὰ ρέτενα **γυρίζουν**,
καὶ ἤλθασιν καὶ ηὔρασιν τὸ ἑρμηνευθὲν τὸ ρυάκιν.
Ἐκεῖ ηὖραν τὰ κοράσια εἰς τὸ αἷμαν κυλισμένα·
τῶν μὲν αἱ χεῖρες ἔλειπον, ἄλλων οἱ κεφαλές των,   80
μαχαιροκοπημένες ἦν καὶ εἰς τὸ αἷμαν κυλισμένες.
Τὰς χεῖρας των ἐξήπλωσαν, τὰς κεφαλὰς **κρατοῦσιν**
καὶ **βλέπουν** καὶ τὰ πρόσωπα, νὰ εὑροῦν τὴν ἀδελφήν τους
καὶ ὅλας ἐγυρεύσασιν, **στέκουν** καὶ **θεωροῦν** τας
καὶ οὐδὲν ἐγνωρίσασιν ποσῶς τὴν ἀδελφήν τους,   85
ὅτι συζουλισμένες ἦν καὶ εἰς τὸ αἷμαν κυλισμένες.
Καὶ ὡς εἴδασιν παράνομα, τὰ ποῖα οὐδὲν ἐλπίζαν,
εἰς θλίψιν ἐσεβήκασιν καὶ **κάθουνται** καὶ **κλαίουν**·
χοῦμαν ἐπῆραν ἐκ τῆς γῆς, <’ς> τὰς κεφαλὰς τὸ βάνουν,
τὸν ἥλιον ἐντρυχώνοντες μετὰ πολλῶν δακρύων.   90

When the lords <u>heard</u> this, they <u>were</u> greatly <u>distressed</u>;
they <u>delayed</u> for a long time, <u>lost</u> in thought,
and after very many hours they <u>came</u> to their senses.
They **are wiping** their tears, they **are shaking** their reins
and <u>went</u> and <u>found</u> the ditch that had been spoken of.
There they <u>found</u> the girls dripping with blood,
some <u>lacked</u> hands, others their heads,
they <u>had been stabbed</u> with daggers and were dripping with blood.
The brothers <u>stretched out</u> their hands, they **are picking up** the
     heads,
and they **are looking** at the faces too, to find their sister;
they <u>examined</u> all of them, they **are standing** and **looking** at
     them
but in no way <u>could</u> they <u>recognize</u> their sister
because the girls had been crushed together and covered in blood.
When they <u>saw</u> these lawless deeds of a kind they <u>had</u> never
     expected,
they <u>began</u> to grieve, they **are sitting** and **weeping**;
they <u>took</u> dust from the ground and are sprinkling it on their heads,
beseeching the sun with many tears.

Here the HP occurs nine times (compared to once in version *G*), mostly in pairs alternating with past tenses. Despite the tense-switching, the reader can perceive a decelerating narrative pace that results in the scene's equality in story time and discourse time. In other words, the degree of *mimesis* is high and processing

the narrative feels like processing an immediate experience. The consequent mental involvement of the reader in the story is strong.[23] The narrative provides terrifying images and details, such as the brothers' holding the severed heads of the dead girls drowned in blood and examining their lifeless faces. This experience of direct touch is absent in *G*. This suggestive scene is underscored by verbs in the HP expressing duration (κρατοῦσιν, στέκουν) and perception (βλέπουν, θεωροῦν). After examining many faces, the brothers mourn their allegedly dead sister. This intimate moment is expressed through the HPs κάθουνται, κλαίουν, and βάνουν. Again, the rhythm of the narration is decelerated in order to suggest the characters' emotional experience.

Accordingly, these instances of the HP can be identified as mimetic in a scenic narrative, functioning as a means of internal evaluation—a narrative technique which tends to convey the viewpoint of a character, mirroring his or her "experience of events as they impinge on her situation or activities."[24]

Again, metrical reasons should be considered as one of the reasons for the choice of some of the HPs in this passage (σφουγγίζουσιν, γυρίζουν, κρατοῦσιν, κλαίουν, βάνουν),[25] but again there are several other verbs in unexposed positions, both in this passage (βλέπουν, στέκουν, θεωροῦν, κάθουνται) and elsewhere.[26] Based on this and the analysis above, we argue that in the choice of tense to use, metrical reasons are of secondary importance.

Let us now move to another example that demonstrates the difference in the treatment of discourse time between *G* and *E*, the passage recounting the moment when young Digenis first proves his extraordinary strength by killing a bear. The version *G* 4.124–138:

[23] Nijk, *Tense-Switching* 67, 114.

[24] M. Fludernik, *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology* (London 1996) 22. For more on internal evaluation, particularly in medieval literature, see Fleischman, *Yale French Studies* 70 (1986) 199–251.

[25] Cf. also 27, 53, 194, 207, 455, 645, 976, 1454.

[26] Cf. also 124, 208, 316, 466, 520, 584, 947, 1121.

Ἐκεῖνος ὢν ἀπείραστος εἰς θηριομαχίαν
<u>οὐκ ἐγυρίσθη</u> ὄπισθεν νὰ τοῦ δώση ῥαβδέαν   125
ἀλλ᾿ <u>ἐπεσέβη</u> σύντομα, ἐκ τὴν μέσην τὸ **πιάνει**
καὶ σφίγξας τοὺς βραχίονας εὐθὺς <u>ἀπέπνιξέ</u> τον
καὶ τὰ ἐντὸς <u>ἐξήρχετο</u> ἐκ τοῦ στόματος τούτου·
<u>ἔφυγε</u> δὲ τὸ ἀρσενικὸν εἰς τὴν ἔλην ἀπέσω.
Ὁ θεῖος του τὸν <u>ἐφώνησε</u>· "Βλέπε, τέκνον, μὴ φύγῃ."   130
Κἀκεῖνος ἀπὸ τῆς σπουδῆς <u>ἀφῆκε</u> τὸ ῥαβδίν του
καὶ πετάσας ὡς ἀετὸς <u>ἔφθασε</u> τὸ θηρίον·
ἡ ἄρκτος <u>ἐστράφη</u> πρὸς αὐτὸν στόμα χανοῦσα μέγα
καὶ <u>ὥρμησε</u> τὴν κεφαλὴν τοῦ παιδὸς ἐκλαφῦξαι.
Τὸ δὲ παιδίον σύντομα τὸ μάγουλόν του **πιάνει**   135
καὶ τινάξας <u>ἀπέκτεινε</u> χαμαὶ βαλὼν τὸ θηρίον,
στρέψας τὸν τράχηλον αὐτοῦ <u>ἐξεσφονδύλισέ</u> το
καὶ παρευθὺς <u>ἀπέψυξεν</u> εἰς τὰς χεῖρας τοῦ νέου.

He, lacking experience in fighting wild beasts,
<u>did not turn around</u> to strike it with his stick
but <u>rushed up</u> quickly and **seizes** it round the waist
and, tightening his grasp, immediately <u>throttled</u> it,
and its innards <u>came out</u> through its mouth.
The male <u>fled back</u> to the thicket.
His uncle <u>shouted</u> to him, "Child, see it doesn't get away."
And in his haste he <u>abandoned</u> his stick
and flew like an eagle and <u>overtook</u> the wild beast.
The bear <u>turned towards</u> him with its huge mouth agape
and <u>charged up</u> to swallow the boy's head.
The boy suddenly **seizes** its jaw
and shook and <u>killed</u> the beast, throwing it to the ground;
he twisted its neck and <u>snapped</u> its spine
and immediately it <u>expired</u> in the young man's hands.

The mode of representing this event is purely diegetic. There are only two instances of the HP: the indicative present πιάνει (126, 135) that twice signals the narrative turn towards the climax of the passage, the killing of the beast. Because of their position in the verse, both cases can (also) be justified by metrical constraints.

In contrast, version *E* uses the HP to provide a strikingly mimetic representation of the action. The fight and the reaction

of Digenis' companions are recounted as follows (773–780):[27]

Καὶ ὁ <θαυμαστὸς> νεώτερος <u>εἶχεν</u> γοργὸν τὸ στρέμμαν,
<u>ἦτον</u> καὶ <γὰρ> ὑπόστεγνος καὶ ἐγνώθουντα οἱ νεφροί του,
καὶ εἰς τέσσαρα πηδήματα τὸν ἄρκον **καταφθάνει**   775
καὶ ἀπὸ τὸ κατωμάγουλον γοργὸν **πιάνει, κρατεῖ** τον
καὶ εἰς δύο μέρη τὸν <u>ἔσχισεν</u>, **στέκει** καὶ **θεωρεῖ** τον.
Ὁ θεῖος του καὶ ὁ πατὴρ οἱ δύο ὁμάδι **ὑπᾶσιν,**
στέκονται καὶ **θαυμάζονται** τὰς τάξεις τοῦ νεωτέρου·
ὦμον πρὸς ὦμον <u>ἔθηκαν</u> καὶ πρὸς ἀλλήλους λέγουν: […]   780

But the marvelous young man <u>could spin round</u> swiftly,
for he <u>had</u> little fat on him and his ribs stood out,
and with four bounds he **is catching up** with the bear.
He **is seizing** it quickly by the lower jaw, (he) **is holding** it
and <u>tore</u> it in two; he **is standing** and **gazing** at it.
His uncle and his father both **are coming up** together,
they **are standing** and **are being amazed** at the young man's
        performance.
They <u>put</u> shoulder to shoulder and **are saying** to each other: […]

The narrator opens this section, which depicts the very peak of
the hunt, with the HP καταφθάνει (775), accompanied by details
like the exact number of steps taken by the hunter. The HPs
πιάνει (776) and κρατεῖ (776) follow in an asyndetic juxtaposition
that emphasizes the speed of the action and anticipates the aorist
ἔσχισεν (777). These HPs underline the first heroic deeds of the
young warrior and bring this important episode close to the
audience's perception. The HPs στέκει and θεωρεῖ (777) describe
Digenis' pleasurable evaluation of his accomplishment. The
audience's own reaction is similarly reported. The HPs ὑπᾶσιν
(778), στέκονται, θαυμάζονται (779), and λέγουν (780) not only ex-

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[27] Shawcross, *Chronicle of Morea* 172–176, analyzes a longer section of
version *E* that includes this passage as a *comparandum* for the *Chronicle of Morea*.
She rightly notes the oral background of this device and, in regard to the
tense-switching, draws an apt parallel with a sample of a modern sports com-
mentator's report. In agreement with modern narratological approaches like
Fludernik's, she recognizes tense-switching as a means of back- and fore-
grounding. She also suggests (178–179) that the higher incidence of the
present tense in *Digenis E* in comparison with chronicles and historiography
is the result of a conscious narrative strategy distinctive of orality.

press wonder at Digenis' feat but invite the audience to pause and join his companions in admiring the youth's heroic deed. Given these features, the HP in this passage should be categorized as a mimetic in a scenic narrative.

The observations so far lead us to the following partial conclusion: version *G* recounts events with a large degree of distancing and abstraction, whereas version *E* tends to provide more detailed visual descriptions of the events narrated. Both do so with the help of the HP: in *G*, the diegetic mode predominates, whereas in *E*, the mimetic is preferred.[28] More specifically, the HP in version *E* assists in creating scenes. Characters and events can be introduced in the present because the 'here' and 'now' are features of the discourse. This simulates a complex relationship of simultaneity between the narrator, the audience, and the story world by establishing a 'shared experience', a 'common experiential ground' that interconnects these three dimensions.[29]

3. *The mimetic HP as a means of immersion*

It has been convincingly argued that the modern notion of 'immersion' introduced into literary studies by Marie-Laure Ryan[30] has its ancient counterpart in the term *enargeia*, "the power of bringing the things that are said before the senses of the audience."[31] It was this word that Greek literary critics used

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[28] For similar scenic representations in *E*, cf. 202–211, 304–317, 804–809, 1011–1017, 1052–1054, 1108–1111, 1686–1694.

[29] S. Zeman lists three aspects of this common ground: the communicative situation ('singer' vis-à-vis 'recipient'), the socio-pragmatic condition ('individual' vis-à-vis 'tradition'), and the epistemological presupposition ('speaker' vis-à-vis 'reality': in *Oral Poetics and Cognitive Science* 188–189.

[30] M.-L. Ryan, *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory* (Indiana 1991).

[31] R. J. Allan, I. J. F. de Jong, and C. C. de Jonge., "From *Enargeia* to Immersion: The Ancient Roots of a Modern Concept," *Style* 51 (2017) 34–51, at 34. For the Byzantine theory of *enargeia*, although chiefly in non-narrative

when praising Homer for his ability to immerse his audience into the story world. *Enargeia* includes a wide range of immersive devices that "help the narratees mentally picture what they are being told."[32] In Homeric poetry, modern scholars have identified the following devices as means of immersion: epithets, ekphrases, visual details, acoustic jingles, apostrophes, embedded focalization, and scenic rhythm.[33]

Both versions *G* and *E* contain various immersive devices like direct speech, ekphrasis, and visual details, but they use them in different ways and to different degrees. In particular, the two versions differ in their use of HP in scenic narratives, which are numerous in *E* but almost entirely absent from *G*. If we look again at the two parallel passages above (*G* 1.226–233 and *E* 74–90; *G* 4.124–138 and *E* 773–780), we see that the extracts from *G* have the form of summaries and that the characters' emotional reactions are less intense. In contrast, in *E* the vivid representation of the actions of the terrified brothers in a ditch full of dead bodies and a high degree of suspense are achieved primarily through scenic rhythm. This all creates a feeling of immediate experience, which is underscored by the frequent use of HPs, including verbs of perception (βλέπουν, θεωροῦν, θεωρεῖ, θαυμάζεται). To use the term coined by Monika Fludernik, the passages in *E* have a higher degree of experientiality and are, consequently, more immersive.[34]

We now turn to the immersive potential of the mimetic HP.

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genres and without considering the question of immersion, see S. Papaioannou, "Byzantine *Enargeia* and Theories of Representation," *Byzantinoslavica* 69 (2011) 48–60.

[32] Allan et al., *Style* 51 (2017) 39.

[33] Allan et al., *Style* 51 (2017) 41.

[34] Fludernik, *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology* 20, considers experientiality one of the crucial parameters that qualify a text as narrative: "Experiencing, just like telling, viewing or thinking, are holistic schemata known from real life and therefore can be used as building stones for the mimetic evocation of a fictional world."

Its use in *E* can be explained effectively through the so-called representation scenario, as shown by Arjan A. Nijk who investigated from a cognitive point of view the use of the present tense for a past state of affairs in a variety of narratives.[35] The representation scenario designates one of two possible ways of connecting distal event space (story world) and ground space (the actual mental stance of the recipient) from the perspective of mental spaces. This connection may be effected in discourse with grammatical and linguistic means like the HP and proximal deictic expressions. In that case, usually (but not exclusively) a narrator recounts a story as if he were watching it unfold before his eyes thereby bringing the distal space into the present in a representation. As Nijk writes, "we remain grounded in our actual surroundings; and the present tense refers to the time in which we are looking at the representation."[36] Alternatively, recipients are made to feel that they have been transferred to the story world. This is called 'displacement'.[37] In both cases, the immersive potential of the mimetic HP is deployed to represent past events as if they were happening before the eyes of the recipient.

This is not to say that a discourse carried out primarily in past tenses lacks imagery, or that the degree of immersion is generally higher in version *E* and lower in *G*. But they differ substantially in their strategies for achieving this effect and even put the same

[35] Another way to relate distal space and ground space is through displacement. In addition to proximal deixis and the HP, often first-person narration also is used. The HP reports actual past events as seen from a displaced perspective. Cf. A. A. Nijk, "Bridging the Gap between the Near and the Far: Displacement and Representation," *Cognitive Linguistics* 30 (2019) 327–350, and *Tense-Switching* 37–43. For more on cognitive approaches to the representation of past events in narrative see L. Gosselin, "Présentation et représentation: Les rôles du 'présent historique'," *Travaux de Linguistique* 40 (2000) 55–72; M. Vuillaume, *Grammaire temporelle des récits* (Paris 1990).

[36] Nijk, *Cognitive Linguistics* 30 (2019) 329.

[37] Nijk, *Cognitive Linguistics* 30 (2019) 328.

narrative device, the HP, to different purposes.[38] We hold that *E* depends heavily on the immersive function of the mimetic HP, which brings distal events before the mind's eyes of its readers, while *G* almost entirely neglects this use of the HP.

4. *The diegetic HP and narrative organization*

We now analyze how the summary narratives of the two versions use the HP. For narratologists the diegetic HP signals a narrative turn, i.e., an event or action that the narrator considers particularly important.[39] In cognitive terms, we can say that it involves "a significant update to our mental model."[40] The two HPs at 1.56–57 in *G* provide an excellent example of this:

> <u>διαδραμὼν</u> Χαρζιανὴν Καππαδοκίαν **φθάνει**
> καὶ εἰς οἶκον τοῦ στρατηγοῦ ἀθρόως **ἐπιπίπτει**
>
> he <u>overran</u> Charziane, he **comes** to Cappadocia
> and **falls** overwhelmingly upon the house of the general.

The entire passage from its beginning (1.44) exclusively features past tenses. The narrator does not switch the tense of the discourse until he recounts the emir's invasion of Cappadocia (φθάνει) and the attack on the general's house (ἐπιπίπτει). This is the starting point of the story, which provides a crucial narrative turn and triggers the events that make up its backbone. The change in the narrative dynamic is obvious.[41] The HP draws attention to the new developments and underscores their importance. The same can be said of the first instance of the

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[38] In the case of *G* one can think of immersive devices like ekphrasis (of Digenis' palace in 7.40–108, of *loca amoena* in 6.12–41 and 7.15–41) and long, embedded speeches by various characters (e.g. by the mother in 2.14–25, or the embedded narration of the Arabian girl in 5.66–149). Some of the devices used by *G* for achieving vividness and narrative coherence are discussed in Kulhánková, *BMGS* 45 (2021) 190–197.

[39] Cf., e.g., Fludernik, *Language and Literature* 17 (1992) 77–107.

[40] Nijk, *Tense-Switching* 161.

[41] A metrical reason for the use of the HP is also possible since the present forms are placed at the close of the verse; but the two explanations are not mutually exclusive.

diegetic HP in *E* (9). Since the beginning of this version is missing, we consider instead a particular episode, which (as in *G*) is connected with a shift in space. The verb ὑπαγαίνω signals the start of a fight between the youngest brother and the emir:

Καὶ ὁ ἀμιρὰς ᾿καβαλίκευσεν, εἰς αὖτον **ὑπαγαίνει**.

The emir <u>mounted</u> and goes towards him.

In both examples the diegetic HPs perform the same discourse-pragmatic function and have the same cognitive force: they mark a change in the narrative dynamic and cause audiences to update their mental model. There is, however, one substantial difference between *G* and *E* that relates to the distinctively formulaic language of *E*. We maintain that the diegetic HP in *E* is marked by a tendency towards repetition. This helps to connect the individual scenes and enhances the narrative coherence of the episodic poem. Bernard Fenik's meticulous analysis demonstrates the importance in *E* of repeating various structures in both direct speeches and narrative passages.[42] This is one of its fundamental stylistic features. What follows adds further detail to Fenik's presentation.

From the semantic point of view, the largest group of present-tense verbs in *E* are reporting verbs (71). But instead of serving as narrative diegetic or mimetic HPs, they function as discourse markers, introducing direct speech.[43] The second largest group of HPs are verbs of motion (60). The most frequent among them is ὑπαγαίνω (with 22 instances), followed by καβαλικεύω (17) and πηδώ (12).[44]

By marking the beginning and end points of episodes, repe-

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[42] B. Fenik, *Digenis. Epic and Popular Style in the Escorial Version* (Herakleion 1991).

[43] The most frequent are: λέγω (30), λαλώ (15), συντυχαίνω (12), ἀπιλογοῦμαι (6). In *G* the present forms of λέγω are used only 14 times to introduce direct speech.

[44] In *G* there are only two instances of the HP of ὑπάγω and three instances of καβαλλικεύω.

titions of these verbs help to orient readers in the narrative. This signaling function of verbs of motion stands halfway between the use of HP for narrative turns and the lexicalized use of verbs of utterance as discourse markers to introduce direct speech.

The verb ὑπαγαίνω occurs only in isolation, whereas πηδῶ and καβαλικεύω also occur in a formula, for example at 560–570 in version *E* (note also λέγει as a discourse marker at 560):[45]

Καὶ τότε ἡ μητέρα του, ἄκο καὶ τί τοῦ **λέγει**·	560
"Τέκνον μου ποθεινότατον, ἔρχομαι ὅπου θέλεις·	
⟨ἔρχομαι⟩ διὰ τὸ σπλάγχνον σου καὶ τὴν πολλήν σου ἀγάπην·	
ἀρνοῦμαι καὶ τὸ γένος μου,	
ἀρνοῦμαι καὶ τὸν Μαχουμέτ, τὸν μέγαν μας προφήτην.	
Ἀλὶ καὶ τί μὲ ἐποίησες, ἀλὶ καὶ τί μὲ ἐποῖκες;"	565
Καὶ πάραυτα ὁ ἀμιρὰς **πηδᾶ**, **καβαλικεύγει**.	
Μὲ τὸν λαὸν καὶ ἀγούρους του **πηδᾶ**, **καβαλικεύγει**	
καὶ <u>ἀπεσύναξεν</u> αὐτὸς πᾶσαν αἰχμαλωσίαν	
καὶ ⟨ἐξαπ⟩<u>έστειλεν</u> αὐτὰ τὴν πολυπόθητήν του	
καὶ μετὰ τὰ ἀμάλωτα ἄριφνους ἀνδρειωμένους.	570

And then his mother, listen to what she **says** to him:
"My much-loved child, I will go wherever you wish,
I go out of compassion for you and out of my great love for you.
I renounce my family,
I renounce Mohammed, our great Prophet.
Alas, what have you done to me, alas what did you do to me?"
And straight away the emir **springs into the saddle**.
With his company and his youngsters he **springs into the saddle**.
He <u>collected</u> together all his prisoners and <u>sent</u> them <u>off</u> to his dearly
    loved girl,
And with the captives he <u>sent</u> innumerable brave men.

In such cases, the HP enhances the formulaic language and underscores the role of formulas and of repetition generally. It provides a means of orientation in the text and strengthens its coherence. Again, as we observed in connection with the mimetic HPs, this is not to say that *G* is less coherent for not using this device; it merely takes a different approach to coherence.[46]

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[45] This formula appears six times: at 566, 567, 927, 1009, 1274, and 1281.
[46] Cf. Kulhánková, *BMGS* 45 (2021) 197–198.

5. *Conclusions*

Let us now recapitulate the types of HPs used in the two versions of the *Digenis Akritis*. Both feature the diegetic HP in summary narrative and use it to change the narrative dynamic and signal narrative turns. In addition to its organizing function, in version *E* the HP, used primarily with verbs of motion, enhances the repetitive style characteristic of this text. *E* also displays the mimetic HP in scenic narrative, promoting immersion, and it can be interpreted in cognitive terms through the so-called representation scenario.

Both versions regularly alternate the HP with past tenses. This accords with the assumption that the device arose in the oral tradition. While version *E* features sequences of present forms, these are short and do not approach the lengths of cultivated sequences of HPs found in modern literature.

Our study of the HP confirms the view that the two versions belong to different linguistic registers: *G* belongs to the middle, *E* to the lower register. This division is supported by the presence of the mimetic HP in *E* and its absence from *G*, and by the distinctive use each version makes of the diegetic HP. Both *E* and *G* use the diegetic HP in summary narratives to change the narrative dynamic and draw attention to the recounting of salient events. But in *E* the HP is essentially a means of repetition, a characteristic trait of oral and (semi)-oral narrative that *G* does not exhibit. The repetition of particular diegetic HPs gives *E* a stylistic quality that not only points to its oral background but also enhances its narrative coherence.

Version *G* recounts events with a larger degree of distance and abstraction. Its sparse use of the HP is consistent with the observation that "tendencies toward distancing, abstraction, or detachment […] come to be associated with authoritative written discourse."[47] In version *E*, on the other hand, the abundant

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[47] T. A. DuBois, "Oral Poetics: The Linguistics and Stylistics of Orality," in K. Reichl (ed.), *Medieval Oral Literature* (Berlin 2012) 203–224, at 209. Cf. Shawcross's conclusions in n.27 above.

use in scenic narratives of HPs with an immersive function provides more detailed, visualizing, and engaging descriptions of events. Its formulas, moreover, exhibit the 'connective' function of the diegetic HP. All this agrees with the observation that "oral communications tend to hold a significance for the present."[48]

Finally, our analysis reaches beyond the diachronic development of the HP and sheds new light on the synchronic variants of its use. It demonstrates how the HP can serve two stylistically different versions of the same story to preserve (or consciously incorporate) varying degrees of orality. Careful attention to the use of the HP not only aids the study of linguistic register, syntax, and stylistics, but it can also place a text within the orality-literacy continuum.[49]

November, 2022   Masaryk University
                                                  Brno, Czech Republic
                                                  462048@mail.muni.cz
                                                  mkulhanko@phil.muni.cz

[48] DuBois, in *Medieval Oral Literature* 209.