

## *Zero-Degree Narrativity and the Registering Present*

### 4.1 Introduction

The conceptual scenarios described in the previous chapters share an important feature: they both depend upon a strong measure of cohesion between a particular narrative assertion and the surrounding discourse context. The pretence of simulation (Chapter 2) is achieved through the experiential quality of a piece of narrative discourse and finds expression in features such as the relationship between discourse time and story time. In the case of the ‘diegetic’ use of the present for preterite (Chapter 3), I have argued that the underlying conceptual scenario involves a mental model of the discourse, so that discourse cohesion is crucial here as well.

However, the present for preterite can also be used in references to past events that are isolated in the wider discourse context. The following example illustrates a peculiar usage in Euripidean tragedy where the present for preterite is found in a relative clause within a non-narrative context. The speaker is the leader of a chorus of Theban men:

- (1) ὦ γῆς λοχεύμαθ', οὓς Ἄρης **σπείρει** ποτὲ  
 λάβρον δράκοντος ἐξερημώσας γένυν,  
 οὐ σκῆπτρα, χειρὸς δεξιᾶς ἐρείσματα,  
 ἀρεῖτε καὶ τοῦδ' ἀνδρὸς ἀνόσιον κάρα  
 καθαιματώσεθ', ὅστις οὐ Καδμεῖος ὦν  
 ἄρχει κάκιστος τῶν ἐμῶν ἔπηλυς ὦν;

Offspring of the earth that Ares once **sows**  
 after having emptied the fierce jaw of the dragon,  
 will you not lift your staffs supporting your right  
 hand and make bloody the unholy head  
 of this man, who, not being a Cadmean,  
 rules over my people, a very bad man, and a foreigner?

(Euripides, *Heracles* 252–7)

The relative clause beginning with οὗς ('that') contains a stand-alone reference to a past event (the sowing of the Spartoi). The use of the present for preterite here (252 σπείρει<sup>1</sup> ['sows']) cannot readily be explained in terms of a simulation scenario (the description of the event is largely devoid of experiential qualities) or in terms of an update to the mental discourse model representing the story (as the rest of the story is not mentioned in the surrounding discourse). I label this 'autonomous' use of the present for preterite the *registering present*.<sup>2</sup>

The registering present may also be found within a wider narrative context when the designated event is separated from the main narrative. Consider the following example:

- (2) καὶ ὁ ἐνιαυτὸς ἔληγεν, ἐν ᾧ Καρχηδόνιοι Ἄννίβα ἡγουμένου στρατεύσαντες ἐπὶ Σικελίαν δέκα μυριάσι στρατιάς αἰροῦσιν ἐν τρισὶ μῆσι δύο πόλεις Ἑλληνίδας Σελινοῦντα καὶ Ἥμεραν.

And the year ended, in which the Carthaginians led by Hannibal {made an expedition} against Sicily with an army of one hundred thousand and in three months **capture** two Greek cities, Selinus and Himera.

(Xenophon, *Hellenic affairs* 1.1.37)

This short paragraph marks the transition from the year 410 to 409. Xenophon's main narrative has been concerned with events in Greece and Persia, but here he briefly mentions noteworthy developments in Sicily during the year 410. The reference to these events is isolated from the main narrative by its placement at this transitional point in the discourse, in a relative clause; moreover, the description is strongly compressed, referring in a single main clause to two separate events (the capture of two cities) that occurred within a large stretch of time (three months). As a consequence, the description has a summarising rather than a narrative character.

These cases of the present for preterite are interesting because they belie the common assumption that tense-switching is confined to narrative discourse (e.g., Fleischman [1990: 65]; Rijksbaron [2006: 127], [2011c]; Thoma [2011: 2374] with references). It is, of course, possible to define the 'historical present' as 'narrative present' and argue that the uses we see in (1) and (2) are different in character. But then the claim that the historical present is confined to narrative discourse becomes circular and

<sup>1</sup> The primary manuscript L actually reads σπείρεις ('sow' [second person]); see Diggle's [1981] critical apparatus). The address to Ares would be rather sudden and, moreover, would require a vocative ('Ἄρες). The correction was made by Triclinius.

<sup>2</sup> On the issue of terminology, see Introduction, Section 1.2.2.3, note 9.

thus meaningless.<sup>3</sup> This problem does not arise when we talk of the ‘present for preterite’, as I have done throughout this study. The interesting question is not if the present forms in (1) and (2) should be considered ‘legitimate historical presents’ but rather whether these present forms can be replaced with past tense forms with the same impunity as narrative present for preterite forms can. The answer to that question is affirmative: in (1), for instance, the adverb *ποτέ* (‘once’) clearly locates the event designated with the present form *σπείρει* (‘sows’) in the past.

If we accept that the registering present actually refers to the past, then how should we interpret its use? Schwyzer and Debrunner (1950: 272) have labelled this type of present for preterite ‘inexpressive’, in contrast with the ‘expressive’ use in more typically narrative discourse.<sup>4</sup> The term ‘inexpressive’ is potentially misleading, however, as it may be taken to suggest that the present for preterite is used to no particular effect here.<sup>5</sup> The point rather seems to be that such present forms occur in contexts where we find an (almost) complete ‘cancellation of narrative experientiality’ (Fludernik [1996: 28], referring to Stanzel’s [1989: ch. 2] concept of ‘zero-degree narrativity’; see Huitink [2019: 188–95] for Classical Greek). In Chapter 3, we moved from the mimetic present in scenic narrative to the diegetic present in summary narrative – that is, we moved along the scale of narrative experientiality from high to low. With the registering present, we move to the very end of the spectrum: in the prototypical case, the registering present is used out of the blue in non-narrative assertions, without support from any conceptual scenario that is active in the surrounding discourse context.

What, then, is the conceptual scenario underlying this third use of the present for preterite, and what pragmatic connotations does it bring to the assertion? Allan (2011b: 246) has argued that the registering present is used to highlight ‘milestone events in the past which are viewed as still relevant to the narrator’s present’. I agree with this characterisation, but the question remains how exactly the function of highlighting milestone events is related to the semantics of the present tense; the notion of ‘present relevance’ is, to my mind, not specific enough as an explanation.

<sup>3</sup> Classicists have tried to explain away cases of the type exemplified by (1) as ‘present of continuing result’ or ‘perfective present’ (i.e., present for perfect); see Introduction, Section I.2.2.3, note 8.

<sup>4</sup> For this distinction, compare Rijksbaron (1991: 2); Allan (2011b: 246); George (2011: 252).

<sup>5</sup> Compare Introduction, Section I.2.2.3, note 10.

In this chapter, I argue that the registering present construes the designated event as presently accessible as part of a *record* that is external to the discourse itself.<sup>6</sup> I understand the concept of a ‘record’ in a broad sense here. It may be an actual physical entity, but events can also be conceived as being ‘on record’ in a more abstract, cognitive sense – for example, in terms of being generally recognised landmark events in history (such as, from our perspective, Caesar crossing the Rubicon) or as constituting officially authorised transactions (such as a marriages, which required a verbal contract).<sup>7</sup> As much as possible, however, I will refer to specific kinds of records when discussing the registering usages of the present for preterite in this chapter. In Section 4.2, I argue that the use of the registering present in drama to refer to mythological events (example [I]) evokes *iconographical* and *mythographical* representations. In the case of historical landmarks (Section 4.3), the underlying representation is a *chronographical record*. In Attic rhetoric (Section 4.4), the use of the present for preterite to refer to transactions evokes *documents* recording these transactions (contracts, indictments, decrees). Finally, in genealogical discourse (Section 4.5), the implied representation is a (mentally constructed) *family tree*.

By construing the designated past event as presently accessible on a record, the registering present signals that this event is well-established in shared cultural memory, which serves both to elevate the status of this event (giving it an ‘official’ or ‘canonical’ air) and to underline the legitimacy of the speaker’s assertion.

Before moving on, I will once again address the issue of category boundaries (compare Chapter 3, Section 3.1.1). I will not present statistical analyses in this chapter, as the registering present is a relatively marginal phenomenon and it would be difficult to isolate a meaningful set of contrastive data for such an analysis. Consequently, my discussions here will necessarily be more impressionistic in character than those in the previous chapters.

<sup>6</sup> Compare Willi (2017: 139–41); see Introduction, Section I.2.2.3, note 11.

<sup>7</sup> A similar point is made by Langacker (2011) in connection with the ‘scheduled future use’ of the present tense. According to Langacker, the use of the present tense in sentences such as *The plane leaves in ten minutes* evokes the present accessibility of the designated event in the form of an entry in a schedule. This schedule need not exist physically but may also be a purely mental construct. ‘[W]hat matters’, says Langacker (2011: 62), ‘is the existence of a schedule as a mentally and socially constructed entity – an accepted plan expected to govern the timing and occurrence of future events.’ Similarly, a ‘record’ may be conceptualised in concrete terms (e.g., iconographical representations, written documents) or as a more abstract construct.

4.1.1 *Where Diegesis Meets 'Registration'*

As with the mimetic and diegetic uses of the present for preterite, the registering use is not a clearly defined phenomenon. This is because there are different degrees to which a reference to a past event can be considered isolated within its wider discourse context. In example (1), the reference to the sowing of the Spartoi is completely isolated within a non-narrative context. In (2), on the other hand, the reference to events in Sicily does stand in some meaningful relationship to a surrounding narrative (the overall theme being events in the Greek world in 410 BC). As narrative cohesion – and with that, narrative experientiality – increases, the boundary between the registering use and the diegetic use of the present for preterite becomes fluid.

Let me discuss a passage that shows some ambiguity in this respect. In *Histories* 3.89.1, Thucydides tells how the Peloponnesians invaded Attica but had to turn back due to the occurrence of earthquakes. This prompts a discussion of some floods that occurred during that same time:

- (3) καὶ περὶ τούτους τοὺς χρόνους, τῶν σεισμῶν κατεχόντων, τῆς Εὐβοίας ἐν Ὀροβίαις ἢ θάλασσα ἐπανελθοῦσα ἀπὸ τῆς τότε οὖσης γῆς καὶ κυματωθεῖσα ἐπῆλθε τῆς πόλεως μέρος τι, καὶ τὸ μὲν κατέκλυσε, τὸ δ' ὑπενόστησε, καὶ θάλασσα νῦν ἐστὶ πρότερον οὖσα γῆ· καὶ ἀνθρώπους διέφθειρεν ὅσοι μὴ ἐδύναντο φθῆναι πρὸς τὰ μετέωρα ἀναδραμόντες. καὶ περὶ Ἀταλάντην τὴν ἐπὶ Λοκροῖς τοῖς Ὀπουντίοις νῆσον παραπλησίᾳ γίγνεται ἐπὶ κλυσις, καὶ τοῦ τε φρουρίου τῶν Ἀθηναίων παρέϊλε καὶ δύο νεῶν ἀνειλκυσμένων τὴν ἑτέραν κατέαξεν. ἐγένετο δὲ καὶ ἐν Πεπαρήθῳ κύματος ἐπαναχώρησις τις, οὐ μέντοι ἐπέκλυσέ γε· καὶ σεισμός τοῦ τείχους τι κατέβαλε καὶ τὸ πρυτανεῖον καὶ ἄλλας οἰκίας ὀλίγας.

And around that time, as the earthquakes were prevailing, the sea at Orobiae in Euboea {retreated} from the land that was there at the time, {swelled}, and flooded a part of the city. Then part of the flood engulfed [the shore], while another part subsided, and what used to be land is now sea. And the flood killed the people who were not able to flee to the higher parts in time.

A similar flood **occurs** around Atalante, the island at Opuntian Locris, and it carried away part of the Athenian fort and destroyed one of two ships that had been drawn up to the shore.

There occurred a certain recession of the water in Peperethus as well, but it did not flood the land; and an earthquake threw down part of the wall as well as the prytaneum and some houses.

(Thucydides, *Histories* 3.89.2–4)

Under a diegetic interpretation of the present tense form γίγνεται ('occurs') in the second paragraph, we would have to argue that the designated event impacts the structure of the main story line – and that this is more the case here than with the events designated with the preterite in the surrounding discourse. It is true that the other two incidents occurred in places (Orobiae and Peparethus) that are not mentioned elsewhere in the discourse, while Thucydides tells us of the building of the Athenian fort at Atalante (2.32) and the return of the island to the Peloponnesians as part of an agreement (5.18.7). Given the brevity of these references, however, the importance of the island seems practically negligible; moreover, the flood does not impact Athenian control of the island in any way.<sup>8</sup>

In my view, the character of the discourse in (3) tips the scales in favour of a registering interpretation. The overall discourse progression is not driven by chronology or causality but by thematic continuity: Thucydides lists three separate incidents that are related by their similarity in character. The narrative main line is paused for a moment, as Thucydides registers some events that deserve mention simply because they are noteworthy in themselves. The present γίγνεται ('occurs') suggests that this is the kind of event that would be included in a chronographical record (I will explain this in more detail in Section 4.3).

A registering interpretation allows for a relatively simple explanation of the tense variation in this passage. In the case of Orobiae, Thucydides gives a detailed description of the flood, which has something of a narrative character (the sea retreats, swells, engulfs the land, etc.). In the case of Atalante, Thucydides merely registers the fact: παραπλησία γίγνεται ἐπὶ κλυσίδι ('a similar flood occurs').<sup>9</sup> I propose that in this particular type of context, a *high degree of schematicity* (or low experientiality) favours the use of the present over the preterite. As for the incident at Peparethus, this was a relatively insignificant event as there was no actual flood.

A final point is that the diegetic and registering interpretation may sometimes compete even in typical narrative discourse. In some cases, it is difficult to determine whether the motivation for the use of the present for preterite is mainly to highlight the impact of the designated event on the structure of the story or rather to signal that the event constitutes a historical landmark in its own right. Consider the following example from

<sup>8</sup> On the general significance of 'natural upheavals' in Thucydides' narrative, see Munson (2015).

<sup>9</sup> In both cases, the use of the preterite to refer to the resulting damages is typical as marking the result of the central event in the discourse segment.

the pseudo-Demosthenic speech *Against Neaera*.<sup>10</sup> Neaera, the speaker alleges, had prostituted herself at Athens. Fleeing her current ‘partner’, Phrynio, who treated her badly, she went to Megara. The speaker specifies that this was during the archonship of Asteius at Athens (372 BC), when Athens was at war with Sparta. Then the following happened:

- (4) διατρίψασα δ' ἐν τοῖς Μεγάροις δύο ἔτη, τὸν τ' ἐπ' Ἀστείου ἄρχοντος καὶ Ἀλκισθένου ἐνιαυτόν, ὡς αὐτῇ ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος ἐργασία οὐχ ἱκανὴν εὐπορίαν παρεῖχεν ὥστε διοικεῖν τὴν οἰκίαν (πολυτελῆς δ' ἦν, οἱ Μεγαρεῖς δ' ἀνελεύθεροι καὶ μικρολόγοι, ξένων δὲ οὐ πάνυ ἐπιδημία ἦν αὐτόθι διὰ τὸ πόλεμον εἶναι καὶ τοὺς μὲν Μεγαρέας λακωνίζειν, τῆς δὲ θαλάττης ὑμᾶς ἄρχειν· εἰς δὲ τὴν Κόρινθον οὐκ ἔξῃν αὐτῇ ἐπανελθεῖν διὰ τὸ ἐπὶ τούτῳ ἀπηλλάχθαι ἀπὸ τοῦ Εὐκράτους καὶ τοῦ Τιμανορίδου, ὥστ' ἐν Κορίνθῳ μὴ ἐργάζεσθαι) – ὡς οὖν **γίγνεται** ἡ εἰρήνη ἢ ἐπὶ Φρασικλείδου ἄρχοντος καὶ ἡ μάχη ἢ ἐν Λεύκτροις Θηβαίων καὶ Λακεδαιμονίων, τότε ἐπιδημήσαντα Στέφανον τουτοῦ εἰς τὰ Μέγαρα ... **πρόιστται** ... αὐτῆς.

She {remained} at Megara for two years, that of the archonship of Asteius and that of Alcisthenes; but when the trade of prostitution did not bring in enough money to maintain her establishment (she was lavish in her tastes, and the Megarians were niggardly and illiberal, and there were but few foreigners there on account of the war and because the Megarians favored the Lacedaemonian side, while you were in control of the sea; it was, however, not open to her to return to Corinth, because she had got her freedom from Eucrates and Timanoridas on the condition that she would not ply her trade in Corinth) – so, when peace **is made** [γίγνεται] in the archonship of Phrasicleides, and the battle **is fought** [same verb γίγνεται] at Leuctra between the Thebans and the Lacedaemonians, at that time she **takes** Stephanus over there, who had come to Megara, as her patron.

(Demosthenes, *Against Neaera* [59] 36–7; trans. after Murray [1939])

I am concerned here with the use of the present for preterite to refer to the peace between Athens and Sparta and the battle between Sparta and Thebes at Leuctra. Under a diegetic interpretation, the present tense highlights the impact of the designated event on the story structure. It is true that these events are significant because the new situation allows Stephanus to visit Megara (an ally of Sparta). However, the narrator's concern with these events is only incidental, as the narrative focuses on Neaera and the individuals who came into contact with her. The historical developments described in the subordinate clause form the canvas on

<sup>10</sup> On the authorship of the speech, see Carey (1992: 1, 17–20).

which the story is painted. In my view, a registering interpretation presents a more viable alternative. The peace between Athens and Sparta and the battle at Leuctra are landmark events in Greek political history. The present tense can be explained as evoking the present accessibility of the designated events on a chronographical record (again, see Section 4.3). Note how the same verb is used here as in example (3): γίγνεται, which essentially means ‘occurs’, but in translation has to be adapted to the subject noun (‘a peace is made’, ‘a battle is fought’). This is a typical ‘registering’ verb due to its schematic meaning.

In conclusion, the registering present is prototypically associated with zero-degree narrativity, but the conceptual scenario supporting its use (whereby the past event is conceived as presently accessible through the medium of a record) may be activated in proper narrative as well, so that the registering interpretation competes with (or supplements) the diegetic interpretation.

#### 4.2 Iconography and Mythography

The events of the mythological past were part of the present reality in Classical Greece in the sense that they formed established, traditional stories. Consider how, in the following passage, reference is made to the myth of Actaeon:

- (5) ὄρᾳς τὸν Ἄκταίωνος ἄθλιον μόνον,  
 ὃν ὠμόσπιτοι σκύλακες ἄς ἐθρέψατο  
 διεσπάσαντο, κρείσσον' ἐν κυναγίαις  
 Ἄρτέμιδος εἶναι κομπάσαντ', ἐν ὄργασιν.

You see the wretched fate of Actaeon,  
 who was torn apart in the meadows by the blood-thirsty hounds  
 he had raised, because he had boasted he was superior  
 in the hunt to Artemis.

(Euripides, *Bacchants* 337–40)

Cadmus tries to persuade Pentheus to accept the cult of Dionysus and reminds him of Actaeon’s fate. Cadmus suggests Pentheus can ‘see’ the horrific event (ὄρᾳς, 337) even though it belongs to the past. The idea of ‘seeing’ is here used metaphorically to express the immediate accessibility of the myth. This can be understood in terms of its status as an established, traditional story. More concretely, this will have found expression in its being commonly represented in different forms – in particular, through

*iconography* and *mythography*. In this section, I argue that the registering present can be used to construe events from mythological history as presently accessible in this way.

A strong clue to this interpretation is given in the following passage. This is part of a dialogue from Euripides' *Ion*, where Ion asks Creusa about her divine ancestry:

- (6) Ἴων πρὸς θεῶν, ἀληθῶς, ὡς μεμύθηται βροτοῖς . . .  
 Κρέουσα τί χρῆμ' ἐρωτᾷς, ὦ ξέν', ἐκμαθεῖν θέλων;  
 Ἴων ἐκ γῆς πατρός σου πρόγονος ἐβλασταν πατήρ;  
 Κρ. Ἐριχθόνιος γε· τὸ δὲ γένος μ' οὐκ ὠφελεῖ.  
 Ἴων ἦ καὶ σφ' Ἀθάνα γῆθεν ἐξανείλετο;  
 Κρ. ἐς παρθένους γε χεῖρας, οὐ τεκοῦσα νιν.  
 Ἴων **δίδωσι** δ', ὥσπερ ἐν γραφῇ νομίζεται . . .  
 Κρ. . . Κέκροπος γε σώζειν παισὶν οὐχ ὀρώμενον.  
 Ἴων ἦκουσα λῦσαι παρθένους τεῦχος θεᾶς.  
 Κρ. τοιγὰρ θανοῦσαι σκόπελον ἦμαξαν πέτρας.
- ION: By the gods, is it true, as has been told by mortals . . .  
 CREUSA: What do you ask me, stranger, that you wish to learn?  
 ION: Did your father's father spring from the earth?  
 CREUSA: Yes, Erichthonius. But my ancestry does not help me.  
 ION: And did Athena really take him up from the earth?  
 CREUSA: Yes, into her maidenly arms, though she had not given birth to him.  
 ION: And she **gives** him, as it is commonly depicted . . .  
 CREUSA: . . . to Cecrops' daughters to keep, not to be seen.  
 ION: I have heard that the maidens took apart the vessel of the goddess.  
 CREUSA: And for that they died and made the promontory of the rock bloody.

(Euripides, *Ion* 265–74)

From the first line of this excerpt, it is clear that the events Ion enquires into are considered part of a traditional story (ὡς μεμύθηται βροτοῖς ['as has been told by mortals']; compare 273 ἦκουσα ['I have heard']). After two preterite forms (ἐβλασταν ['sprung'] in 267 and ἐξανείλετο ['took up'] in 269), Ion uses the present tense to refer to an event in the myth of Erichthonius (δίδωσι ['gives'] in 271). In the first two instances, Ion seems to be primarily concerned with *what actually happened*: note ἀληθῶς ('truly'; here translated 'is it true' for syntactical convenience) in 265 and ἦ ('really') in 269. In 271, by contrast, there is no such emphasis. More importantly, Ion here explicitly evokes the existence of iconographical representations of the designated event (ὥσπερ ἐν γραφῇ νομίζεται ['as it

is commonly depicted’)].<sup>11</sup> The existence of such representations facilitate the construal of this past event as presently accessible.<sup>12</sup>

I argue that this idea of ‘as it is commonly depicted (or otherwise represented)’ is implicit in similar instances of the present for preterite referring to mythological events.<sup>13</sup> Consider the following example, where the messenger in Euripides’ *Suppliant Women* identifies himself as a former servant of Capaneus:

(7) λόγου δέ σε  
μακροῦ ἀπολύσω· Καπανέως γὰρ ἦ λάτρις,  
ὃν Ζεὺς κεραινώ· πυρπόλω **καταιθαλοῖ**.

I will spare you  
a long story: I was a servant of Capaneus,  
whom Zeus **burns to ash** with his fiery thunderbolt.  
(Euripides, *Suppliant Women* 638–40)

Capaneus was one of the seven captains who marched against Thebes to overthrow Eteocles. Zeus struck him down with a thunderbolt. This was a celebrated event, as is evident from the fact that a number of artefacts showing Capaneus’ demise have survived into our time (*LIMC* 5.1 ad ‘Kapaneus’, 25–34). For the use of the present tense here, it is instructive to compare another passage, where chorus members in Euripides’ *Ion* admire representations of mythological scenes in the sanctuary of Delphi (190–218).<sup>14</sup> One representation shows Zeus killing one of the Giants:

<sup>11</sup> See Martin (2018) ad loc. for some useful observations concerning pictorial representations of myth; see also note 13. According to Martin, ‘[t]he accuracy of Ion’s statement [in 271] is doubtful; what matters for my argument, however, is how Ion conceptualises reality, not how accurate that conceptualisation is.

<sup>12</sup> The past tense form ἔδωκε (‘gave’) would have been metrically equivalent, so there can be no doubt that the present tense is purposefully used here. Compare δίδωσι (‘gives’) in line 23, referring to the same event.

<sup>13</sup> There is another passage in Euripidean tragedy where a representation is mentioned which depicts a story that is referred to with present for preterite forms elsewhere. In the recognition scene in *Iphigenia amongst the Taurians*, Orestes tries to convince Iphigenia that he is in fact her brother. The first piece of evidence he gives is that he knows that Iphigenia once weaved a tapestry, depicting the story of the quarrel between Atreus and Thyestes, which culminated in Zeus changing the course of the sun (811–17). Present for preterite forms refer to this story in choral narratives in two other Euripidean plays about the children of Agamemnon. First, *Electra* 722–3 ἐκκομίζει (‘brings out’): Thyestes steals the golden lamb; 731 ἐλαύνει (‘drives’): the sun ‘drives’ westward; 735 φθίνουσι (‘perish’): the land of Egypt dries up. (Formally ambiguous are 707 ἰαχεῖ [‘shouts’], 716 κελᾶδει [‘sounded’] and 724 ἄντεῖ [‘proclaim’]. I think Diggle’s [1981] accentuation, which makes the first and third form present for preterite, may well be correct.) Second, *Orestes* 1006 μεταβάλλει (‘changes’): Zeus changes the course of the sun.

<sup>14</sup> Owen (1939) ad loc. notes that it is unclear whether they are looking at paintings, sculptures or tapestries; according to Martin (2018) ad loc., the chorus members are probably referring to statues visible on stage. See also Stieber (2010: ch. 4) on references to works of art in the play in general.

- (8) {-} τί γάρ; κεραυνὸν ἀμφίπυρον | ὄβριμον ἐν Διὸς  
 ἐκηβόλοισι χερσίν;  
 {<->} ὄρῶ· τὸν δάιον  
 Μίμαντα πυρὶ **καταθαλοῖ**.

– And do [you see] the thunderbolt with flame on either end? Zeus holds the mighty weapon in his far-hurling hands.

– I see it. With his flame he **burns to ash**  
 Mimas his foeman.

(Euripides, *Ion* 212–15; trans. after Kovacs [1999])

Here the visual access afforded by iconographical representations is highlighted (214 ὄρῶ [‘I see’]). It seems obvious that the present *καταθαλοῖ* (‘burns to ash’, 215) refers to the event as seen in the representation. I argue that this idea is implicit in (7): the present tense suggests that the designated event is part of an established story that one would find represented in iconography.<sup>15</sup>

It might be argued that this interpretation is problematic because the killing of Capaneus, while ‘mythological’ from the perspective of the Athenian audience, belongs to the recent past of the speaker. However, such an ‘anachronistic’ understanding of the later significance of certain events by tragic characters is not alien to the genre. For example, in Euripides’ *Iphigeneia amongst the Taurians*, Orestes expresses awareness of an Athenian festival held in his memory (958–60). This shows that tragic characters can talk about their past experiences as if they are already established mythology.<sup>16</sup>

Another way in which the world of myth is ‘transported into the present’ is through mythography (compare von Fritz [1949: 198–9]; Willi [2017: 234–7]; Huitink [2019: 190–2]). I reproduce example (1) from the introduction to this chapter:

- (9) ᾧ γῆς λοχεύμαθ’, οὗς Ἄρης **σπείρει** ποτὲ  
 λάβρον δράκοντος ἐξερημώσας γένυν . . .

Offspring of the earth that Ares once **sows**  
 after having emptied the fierce jaw of the dragon . . .

(Euripides, *Heracles* 252–3)

<sup>15</sup> Collard (1975) ad loc. suggests this may be an actual present, which to me seems impossible (despite *καπνοῦται* [‘is smoking’] in 496). The death of Capaneus is marked with the present for preterite also in *S. Ant.* 131 *ρίπτει* [*sic*] (‘throws’) and *E. Ph.* 1181 *βέλλει* (‘throws’).

<sup>16</sup> In this connection, it is noteworthy that in Euripidean prologue (where a number of registering present forms are found), the boundary between the world of the play and the world of the spectators often seems fluid; see de Jong (2007b: 19–27).

In order to explain the use of the present for preterite, we may supply the idea ‘as can be seen on iconographical representations’ (although it so happens that none depicting this event have come down to us) but also ‘as can be read in the texts of the mythographers’. In the present case, we can point to a specific fragment of Pherecydes:

- (10) ἐπεὶ δὲ Κάδμος κατωκίσθη ἐν Θήβησιν, Ἄρης **διδοῖ** αὐτῷ καὶ Ἀθηναίῃ τοῦ ὄφιοις τοὺς ἡμίσεις δδόντας, τοὺς δὲ ἡμίσεις Αἰήτη. καὶ ὁ Κάδμος αὐτίκα **σπείρει** αὐτοὺς εἰς τὴν ἄρουραν Ἄρεως κελεύσαντος, καὶ αὐτῷ **ἀναφύονται** πολλοὶ ἄνδρες ὡπλισμένοι.

After Cadmus settled in Thebes, Ares and Athena **give** half of the teeth of the snake to him, and half to Aiete. And Cadmus immediately **sows** them to the ground at Ares’ instruction, and **up grow** a large number of men, fully armored.

(Pherecydes, *fragment 22a* Fowler [2000]).

Note how Pherecydes himself also uses the present tense to describe these events, while the preterite *κατωκίσθη* (‘settled’) in the subordinate clause makes it clear that their actual temporal location is in the past. In this way, Pherecydes construes the myths as established stories. Pherecydes’ text, in turn, contributes to the further ‘canonisation’ of the myth. (I use the term somewhat loosely here – there was no one authorised version of any myth). This helps facilitate the registering use of the present tense to refer to the myth in example (9).<sup>17</sup>

To conclude, the registering present referring to mythological events evokes the existence of a ‘mythological record’ in which these events are presently accessible. This can be understood concretely in terms of iconographical representations and mythographical texts but also more abstractly in terms of the status of myths as established, traditional stories.<sup>18</sup>

#### 4.2.1 *Rhetorical Functions*

Now that I have described the conceptual scenario facilitating the registering use of the present for preterite to refer to mythological events, the

<sup>17</sup> Compare *τεκνοῦσι* (‘populate’) in line 7 of the same play, referring to another part of the myth.

<sup>18</sup> Another important type of representation of mythological events are tragic plays. This is less relevant in the context of the present for preterite in tragedy, because the notion that a character in a play would implicitly refer to the genre of tragedy is absurd. However, in D. 23.74, we find a registering present for preterite referring to the acquittal of Orestes at his trial on the Areopagus (*ἀποφυγγάνει* [‘is acquitted’]). Here the idea of ‘as can be seen in plays representing the life of Orestes’ may well be active. Compare Adema (2008: 29; 2019: 84 n. 72) on present tense forms in Vergil, *Aeneid* 4.465–73, referring to past events as commonly represented ‘on the stage’ (471 *scenae*).

question is what rhetorical motives we can plausibly attribute to a character for activating this scenario. As I argued above, the implication of the registering present is that the designated event is well-established in mythological history. Consequently, the present, broadly speaking, seems to add a note of elevation to the reference to the event. For example, in Euripides, *Medea* 952–5, Medea says to Jason that she will send a gown and a crown to his new wife:

- (11) εὐδαιμονήσει δ' οὐχ ἓν, ἀλλὰ μυρία,  
 ἀνδρός τ' ἀρίστου σοῦ τυχοῦσ' ὄμευνέτου  
 κεκτημένη τε κόσμον ὃν ποθ' Ἥλιος  
 πατρός πατήρ **δίδωσιν** ἐκγόνοισιν οἷς.

She will be happy not in one respect but in a thousand,  
 as she has acquired you as her husband, the best  
 of men, and as she possesses raiment which Helius,  
 the father of my father, once **gives** to his descendants.

(Euripides, *Medea* 952–5)

Medea adds lustre to her treacherous gift (which will kill the bearer) by remarking that it was once given by the god Helius to his descendants. Using the present δίδωσιν ('gives') to highlight the mythical status of this event fits her rhetorical strategy for 'selling' the gift.<sup>19</sup>

More specifically, the present for preterite is used a number of times when someone's legitimacy is at issue. In (9) ([1] in the introduction), for example, the chorus leader refers to the sowing of the Spartoi in order to highlight the autochthonous status of the Theban men, inciting them to rise against the foreign usurper. The present for preterite σπείρει ('sows') substantiates this point by evoking the mythological record.

Perhaps the most interesting case in this connection is that of Euripides' *Bacchantes*. Here we find three registering present forms referring to the same past event as seen from two different, antagonistic perspectives. The play revolves around the god Dionysus, who has come to Thebes to punish

<sup>19</sup> Compare, with the same verb, E. *Rh.* 185, where Hector notes how Achilles' horses were once given to his father by the god Poseidon; the present for preterite is used again in 241 (in a choral passage) to refer to the same event. It must be said, however, that such a clear rhetorical motive is not always identifiable, and sometimes the present seems just to add a touch of awe or solemnity. For example, in E. *IT* 1318, the messenger speaking to the barbarian king Thoas mentions the name of Orestes. Thoas asks (1319): τὸν ποῖον; ἄρ' ὃν Τυνδαρίς **τίκτει** κόρη; ('Which Orestes? The one to whom the daughter of Tyndareus **gives birth**?') In my view, the effect is something like 'The famed son of Clytaemnestra?' Compare E. *Supp.* 986 φυτεύει ('begets'): the chorus solemnly introduce Euadne, wife of the recently deceased Capaneus and main actor in the following scene; *IA* 245 τρέφει ('rears'): the chorus mention the illustrious ancestry of Mecisteus.

the ruler Pentheus for rejecting his cult. When Dionysus delivers the prologue, he announces himself in the following manner:

- (12) Ἦκω Διὸς παῖς τήνδε Θηβαίαν χθόνα  
 Διόνυσος, ὃν **τίκτει** ποθ' ἡ Κάδμου κόρη  
 Σεμέλη λοχευθεῖσ' ἀστραπηφόρῳ πυρί.

I have come to this land of Thebes,  
 Dionysus, to whom Cadmus' daughter Semele once **gives birth**,  
 midwived by a lightning-borne fire.

(Euripides, *Bacchants* 1–3)

The use of the registering present *τίκτει* ('gives birth') reflects Dionysus' main concern in this play. As he explains in lines 26–31 of the prologue, the sisters of Semele denied that she had given birth to Dionysus as the son of Zeus. Instead, they believe that Semele had an illicit affair, became pregnant and then falsely claimed that she had conceived a child of Zeus. Consequently, she was struck by Zeus' thunderbolt as punishment, and the child died with her. Dionysus has come to set the record straight: the crucial fact for him is that the event actually happened, that is, that Semele really did bear a child to Zeus. Dionysus makes his goals explicit further on in the prologue, where he again uses the present *τίκτει* ('gives birth' or 'bears') to refer to his birth:

- (13) δεῖ γὰρ πόλιν τήνδ' ἐκμαθεῖν, κεῖ μὴ θέλει,  
 ἀτέλεστον οὔσαν τῶν ἐμῶν βακχευμάτων,  
 Σεμέλης τε μητρὸς ἀπολογήσασθαί μ' ὕπερ  
 φανέντα θνητοῖς δαίμον' ὃν **τίκτει** Διί.

For this city needs to learn, even if it does not want to,  
 that it is not initiated into my Bacchic rites,  
 and I need to defend my mother Semele,  
 appearing to the mortals as the divinity whom she **bears** to Zeus.

(Euripides, *Bacchants* 39–42)

In my view these two instances of the present for preterite are part of the same strategy.<sup>20</sup> By using the present tense to refer to his birth, Dionysus suggests that the event is part of established mythological history – the kind of event that one will find represented in, for example, iconography.

<sup>20</sup> Verdenius (1980: 1) complains that commentators fail to distinguish this supposed present of continuing result (meaning 'is the mother of') from the 'historical' present in 2 (which according to him is used 'without expressive force'). Compare Dodds (1960) ad 213 *δίδωμι* ('give'), who says the present tense is used here 'because the effect of the action persists'. I think it is an advantage of my account that it enables us to attribute the same expressive force to the present both here and at 2 (as well as at 244: see below).

(This particular event is found in *LIMC* 3.1 ad ‘Dionysus’, 664.) Thus, the present tense serves to emphasise Dionysus’ legitimacy as a god.<sup>21</sup>

Strikingly, this use of the present tense is mirrored by Pentheus, Dionysus’ antagonist, when he tells his version of the story:

- (14) ἐκεῖνος εἶναι φησι Διόνυσον θεόν,  
ἐκεῖνος ἐν μηρῷ ποτ’ ἐρράφθαι Διός  
ὃς **ἐκπυροῦται** λαμπάσιν κεραυνίαις  
σὺν μητρί, Δίους ὅτι γάμους ἐψεύσατο.

This is the man who claims Dionysus is a god,  
the man who says he was sewed up in the thigh of Zeus!  
In truth he **is burnt up** together with his mother in a gleam of  
lightning fire  
because she pretended she had lain with Zeus.

(Euripides, *Bacchants* 242–5; trans. after Kovacs [2002])

In my view, Pentheus’ use of the present ἐκπυροῦται (‘is burnt up’) is a rhetorical move to give his heretical version of the story the semblance of legitimacy.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, there is a strongly rhetorical example of the registering present in *comedy*. In the following passage from Aristophanes’ play *Peace*, the poet praises his own deeds through the mouth of the chorus:

- (15) καὶ πρῶτον μὲν **μάχομαι** πάντων αὐτῷ τῷ καρχαρόδοντι,  
οὔ δεινόταται μὲν ἀπ’ ὀφθαλμῶν Κύννης ἀκτίνες ἐλαμπον,  
ἐκατὸν δὲ κύκλω κεφαλαὶ κολάκων οἰμωξομένων ἐλιχμῶντο

<sup>21</sup> Dionysus reaffirms his status at the end the play in 1340–1: ταῦτ’ οὐχὶ θνητοῦ πατρός ἐκγεγώς λέγω | Διόνυσος ἀλλὰ Ζηνός (‘this I say, Dionysus, not a descendant of a mortal father but of Zeus’).

<sup>22</sup> In the *Andromache* we also find two instances where status seems to be the main issue. The conflict driving this play is the rivalry between Andromache, who was given to Neoptolemus as a prize after Troy had been conquered, and Hermione, Neoptolemus’ new wife. In 147–54, Hermione flaunts her finery to Andromache to assert her superior status over her. She uses the present tense to mark the occasion of this gift (151–3): ἐκ Λακαίνης Σπαρτιάτιδος χθονός | Μενέλαος ἡμῖν ταῦτα **δωρῶται** πατῆρ | πολλοῖς σὺν ἔδνοις, ὥστ’ ἐλευθεροστομεῖν (‘from the Laconian earth of Sparta my father Menelaus **gives** me these along with many wedding gifts, so that I may speak freely’). Further on in the play (898), when Hermione identifies herself to Orestes as the daughter of Helen, she uses the present for preterite **τίκτει** (‘gives birth’). The two present forms mark the facts of Hermione’s life which underscore her high standing and thus her superiority over Andromache: she was born in a noble Greek house (Andromache is a foreigner), and her father gave her away in marriage with a rich dowry (Andromache is a prisoner of war). Compare E. *Supp.* 891 παιδεύεται (‘is raised’): Adrastus praises Parthenopaeus, one of the seven who marched against Thebes. The present tense is used to highlight his standing as an Argive, even if he was not one by birth (see 890: he was an Arcadian). Finally, in S. *Aj.* 1301, Teucer uses the present for preterite ἴσχει (‘acquires’, i.e., ‘marries’) to refer to the marriage of his father and his mother, who was ‘royal by nature’ (φύσει . . . βασιλεία). Teucer’s status is at issue: Agamemnon treats him as a mere ‘slave’ (line 1235).

περὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν, φωνὴν δ' εἶχεν χαράδρας ὄλεθρον τετοκυίας,  
φώκης δ' ὁσμὴν, Λαμίας δ' ὄρχεις ἀπλύτους, πρωκτὸν δὲ καμήλου.

First of all I **battle** old Jagged Teeth himself,  
whose eyes like the bitch Cynna's flashed terrible beams,  
and all around his pate licked a hundred heads of damned flatterers,  
and he had the voice of a death-dealing torrent,  
the smell of a seal, the unwashed balls of a Lamia and the arsehole of  
a camel.

(Aristophanes, *Peace* 754–8; trans. after Henderson [1998])

The reference here is to the politician Cleon, whom Aristophanes had fiercely attacked in his comedy *Knights*; he is here likened to Cerberus, who was dragged up from the underworld by Heracles (Olson [2002] ad loc.). The present μάχομαι ('battle') has been thought objectionable, to the point that Richter – reported in Wilson's (2007) critical apparatus – suggested an emendation to the text.<sup>23</sup> This shows how uncomfortable scholars can get with instances of the present for preterite that do not fit the traditional narrative use (note the summarising πρῶτον μὲν . . . πάντων ['first of all']).<sup>24</sup> Olson (2002) ad loc. rightly says 'no emendation need be considered' for the present here, but he does not seek to explain its function.

In my view, the use of the present tense is part of Aristophanes' broader strategy of framing his act of comic valour (using free speech to criticise a politician) as an event of mythological proportions. In line 752, the chorus announce the poet's exploits by comparing him to Heracles: 'Ἡρακλέους ὀργὴν τιν' ἔχων τοῖσι μεγίστοις ἐπεχείρει ('with a temperament like Heracles, he attacked the greatest [foes]'). The registering present μάχομαι ('battle') conveys the pretence that the battle between Aristophanes and Cleon is a famous event, part of the well-known 'works of Aristophanes', as if these were as commonly represented as the labours of Heracles were.<sup>25</sup>

#### 4.2.2 Conclusion

In this section, I have argued that the registering present referring to mythological events in drama evokes the immediate accessibility of these

<sup>23</sup> Reading δὴ (particle) 'μσχόμην' ('I battled') instead.

<sup>24</sup> Note also that the verb is atelic, which is uncommon with the present for preterite. The implicit aspectual construal, however, may still be perfective. See Introduction, Section I.4.

<sup>25</sup> The present for preterite refers to a Herculean labour at E. *HF* 404 ἐλαύνει (Hercules 'drives' his hands under the firmament).

events in the ‘mythological record’. In an abstract sense, these events are ‘on record’ in the sense that they form established, traditional stories. In a more concrete sense, the events of mythological history were made presently accessible by iconographical and mythographical representations. From a rhetorical perspective, the construal of the designated event as part of the mythological record by means of the registering present serves to emphasise the prestige or legitimacy of an entity that is involved in the event.

### 4.3 Chronography

In this section, I argue that the use of the registering present to refer to historical events highlights their present accessibility as part of the ‘historical record’. The particular representation underlying this scenario – the counterpart to the iconographical and mythographical representations discussed in Section 4.2 – is a chronographical record.<sup>26</sup> As my argument here is so similar to that in the previous section, I will be brief.

There is not much evidence for the chronographical tradition in Classical Greece. The most interesting record we have is the so-called Parian Chronicle, which dates from 264–263 BC; however, it is clearly based on many earlier sources.<sup>27</sup> The Parian Chronicle is a marble slab that was written by an individual (the author is unknown but he is presumed to have been a native of Paros or at least to have lived there) but meant for public display; it lists historical events in chronological order, specifying how many years have elapsed since each event. The chronicle begins in mythological times, from Cecrops’ kingship in Athens, and lists such events as the death and succession of kings, victories in poetic contests,

<sup>26</sup> Schwyzer and Debrunner (1950: 272) point to the link between chronography and the registering use of the present for preterite. Von Fritz (1949: 191) argues that the present is used in these contexts to ‘mark the beginning of a new era’. See also Willi (2017: 139–41).

<sup>27</sup> On the Parian Chronicle and its context, see Rotstein (2016). The chronicler seems to list his sources in the first lines of the text, but unfortunately this part is mutilated. In Jakoby’s (1904, 1929: 992–1005) restoration, the text reads as follows: [ἐξ ἀναγραφῶν] πᾶν[τοίω]ν [καὶ ἱστοριῶν κοινῶν ἀνέγραψα τοὺς ἀνωθεν χρό | νοὺς] (‘from all kinds of records and common histories I have recorded earlier times’). This would imply a plethora of sources. Young and Steinmann (2012: 230–2) argue on the basis that the events in the text are dated by the Athenian archons that ‘the ultimate source of information in the Parian Marble was the state archive of Athens’. They propose reading [Ἀθη]νῶν (‘of Athens’) where Jakoby has [κοι]νῶν ‘general’. This is rather uncertain; in my view, the reading does not sit well with πᾶν[τοίω]ν (‘all kinds’), and I am also uncertain as to whether ἐξ . . . ἱστοριῶν Ἀθηνῶν (‘from the histories of Athens’) would actually be solid Greek.

significant military events, prodigious natural phenomena and so on. An example is the following passage:

- (16) ἀφ' οὗ ἢ ἐν | Πλαταιαῖς μάχη ἐγένετο Ἀθηναίοις πρὸς Μαρδόνιον τὸν  
Ξέρξου στρατηγόν, ἣν ἐνίκων Ἀθηναῖοι, καὶ Μαρδόνιος ἐτελεύτησεν  
ἐν τῇ μάχῃ, καὶ τὸ πῦρ ἐρύθη ἐ[ν] | Σικελίαι περὶ τὴν Αἴτνην, ἔτη  
ΗΗΔΠΙ, ἄρχοντας Ἀθήνησι Ξανθίππου.

From when the battle in Plataea was fought by the Athenians against Mardonius, Xerxes' general, which the Athenians won, and Mardonius died in the battle, and fire streamed around the Etna in Sicily, Xanthippus being archon at Athens, 216 years [have passed up to the present time].

(Parian Chronicle, A2.52 Rotstein [2016])

As a whole, the chronicle presents an overview of history that is comparable to a timeline or chronological table, as in the following excerpt from a Wikipedia entry on Classical Greek history:

- (17) 733 Naxos (Sicily) **is founded** by Euboeans  
733 Troliton **is founded** by Megarans  
732 Euboea **splits** between Chalcis and Eretria due to disputes  
731 Sigeion **is founded** by Mytilene  
731 Catania **is founded** by Chalcidians  
(Wikipedia, 'Timeline of Ancient Greece': [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline\\_of\\_ancient\\_Greece](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_ancient_Greece), accessed 15 January 2019)

Such chronicles afford the reader an immediate visual overview of large portions of history. As we look at the timeline, we can point to specific events and say *Here is the founding of Troliton* or *Here is the battle at Plataea*. This construal of historical events as presently accessible in a chronographical record is what seems to underlie the registering uses of the present for preterite in Classical Greek to refer to historical events.<sup>28</sup>

First, however, let us consider tense usage in the chronicles themselves. In modern chronological tables, the present is normally used, as in example (17). The present is used in the Parian Chronicle here and there,<sup>29</sup> but the preterite is essentially the standard tense. I suggest that there is a conceptual motivation behind this difference. In example (16), the writer highlights the temporal distance of the designated events to his *hic et nunc* by specifying the number of years that have elapsed since their occurrence

<sup>28</sup> Compare Adema (2008: 46–8) on the present tense as referring to past events as represented on a 'conceptual timeline' (I disagree, however, that this implies a displaced base space).

<sup>29</sup> E.g., τελευτᾶ ('dies'), A2.49, 69, etc.; βασιλεύει ('rules'), e.g., A2.49, 58.

(‘from when . . . X years [have passed up to the present time]’). In (17), by contrast, the dating is absolute instead of relative. Moreover, the dates are presented as *headings*. This mode of presentation more strongly conveys the pretence of direct access to the designated past events: the actual past event space is mapped onto the textual space following the date. (This mapping of temporal space onto physical space is even stronger when an actual line representing the direction of time is drawn.)

Now let me discuss some uses of the registering present for preterite. In Section 4.1.1, I mentioned a reference to the battle of Leuctra (example [4], abbreviated):

- (18) ὡς οὖν **γίγνεται** ἡ εἰρήνη ἢ ἐπὶ Φρασικλείδου ἄρχοντος καὶ ἡ μάχη ἢ ἐν Λεύκτροις Θηβαίων καὶ Λακεδαιμονίων . . .

So, when peace **is made** [γίγνεται] in the archonship of Phrasicleides, and the battle **is fought** [same verb γίγνεται] at Leuctra between the Thebans and the Lacedaemonians . . .

(Demosthenes, *Against Neaera* [59] 37)

As I argued earlier, a registering interpretation of the present for preterite γίγνεται (lit. ‘occurs’) seems preferable here, even though this example is found in narrative discourse. As a registering present, its function would be to highlight the designated event as being of landmark importance in its own right (rather than crucial to the evolution of the story the speaker is telling). The canonical status of the battle at Leuctra is evidenced by its inclusion in the Parian Chronicle:

- (19) [ἄφ’ οὗ ἢ ἐν Λεύκτροις μάχη | ἐ]γένετο Θηβαίων καὶ Λακεδαιμονίων, ἦν ἐνίκων Θηβαῖοι, ἔτη ΗΠΙΙ, ἄρχοντος Ἀθήνησιν Φρασικλείδου.

From when the battle at Leuctra was fought between the Thebans and the Lacedaemonians, which the Thebans won, 107 years, Phrasicleides being archon at Athens.

(Parian Chronicle, A2.72 Rotstein [2016])

As the Parian Chronicle covers such a large portion of history in a relatively small expanse, we should not expect each event designated with a registering present in historiographical or rhetorical prose to appear in it. Chronicles with a more local focus or covering a smaller expanse of history will have been more inclusive. But the Parian Chronicle gives us an idea of the kind of events that were included in chronological records.

For example, in 4.1.1, I discussed a passage where the registering present refers to a flood against the background of seismic activity in Greece (example [3]: Thucydides, *Histories* 3.89.3 γίγνεται ἐπὶ κλυσις [‘a flood

occurs’]). In the Parian Chronicle, we find reference to seismic activity in Ionia (B.24), and I might also mention the reference to the mythical flood (κατακλυσμός) in the time of Deucalion (A1.4). Similarly, for the registering present designating the capture of Selinus and Himera (example [2]: Xenophon, *Hellenic affairs* 1.1.37 αἰροῦσιν [‘capture’]), we can adduce the entry in the Chronicle mentioning the capture of Babylon (B.5).

In this light, I would like to revise a particular case of the present tense that has given rise to controversy (see Allan [2011b]; Rijksbaron [2011c]). The following passage is taken from the portion of Thucydides’ *Histories* commonly called the ‘archaeology’:

- (20) φαίνεται δὲ καὶ Σαμίους Ἀμεινοκλῆς Κορινθίος ναυπηγὸς ναῦς ποιήσας τέσσαρας· ἔτη δ’ ἔστι μάλιστα τριακόσια ἐς τὴν τελευταίαν τοῦδε τοῦ πολέμου ὅτε Ἀμεινοκλῆς Σαμίους ἦλθεν. ναυμαχία τε παλαιτάτη ὧν ἴσμεν **γίγνεται** Κορινθίων πρὸς Κερκυραίων· ἔτη δὲ μάλιστα καὶ ταύτη ἐξήκοντα καὶ διακόσια ἔστι μέχρι τοῦ αὐτοῦ χρόνου.

Ameinocles, a Corinthian shipbuilder, appears to have built four ships for the Samians. It is about three hundred years before the end of this [i.e., the Peloponnesian] war that Ameinocles went to the Samians. The oldest naval battle we know of **is fought** [γίγνεται, lit. ‘occurs’] between the Corinthians and the Corcyreans; and that is about two hundred and sixty years before the same time.

(Thucydides, *Histories* 1.13.3–4)

As Allan (2011b: 243) points out, the archaeology, while chronologically organised, is low in narrativity: Thucydides is arguing rather than narrating (in Allan’s terminology, the discourse mode is ‘discursive’ rather than ‘diegetic’). Rijksbaron (2011c: 260) argues that therefore the present ‘cannot possibly be historical’. The material presented in this chapter hopefully will have convinced the reader that the assumption that the historical present is confined to narrative discourse is either circular or incorrect. Moreover, I think Rijksbaron’s solution is not convincing. He argues that γίγνεται here means ‘is’, with the dynamic element in the verb implying that the assertion is the result of some calculation (we might paraphrase ‘turns out to be’). However, with the ‘additive’ use of the verb, the element of calculation is made explicit by the use of a numeral, as in Herodotus, *Histories* 1.142 οὗτοι χαρακτηρισ γλώσσης τέσσερες **γίνονται** (‘those **are** four types of dialect’). There is no good parallel that I know of for Rijksbaron’s interpretation in (20).<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Rijksbaron (2011c: 260) also argues that γίγνεται (‘occurs’) here may be paraphrased φαίνεται γιγνόμενον (‘appears to have occurred’), but the imperfective aspect in the participle seems off.

Allan (2011b: 246) allows for a registering ('annalistic') interpretation of the present tense here. He argues that the present tense 'indicates that the events referred to are somehow considered immediately relevant to the narrator as they constitute major landmarks in the narrator's conception of the past'. In my view, the construal imposed by the present tense leads to the inference that the designated past event is presently accessible through the medium of some kind of representation. The nature of this representation is suggested by the character of the discourse: non-narrative historiographical discourse naturally evokes the style of a chronographical record. The present thus construes the designated event as a 'canonical' event that may be 'pointed out' on a representation comparable to the Parian Chronicle.<sup>31</sup>

#### 4.4 Records of Transactions

In Attic rhetoric, the present for preterite is often used to designate transactions that would have been recorded in a document, such as political decisions, legal actions and business deals. While these present forms are typically found in narrative discourse and thus amenable to a diegetic interpretation, I argue that they may also have a registering character (compare Section 4.1.1). This means that the assertions in which these present forms are found evoke the existence of records of the designated transactions. In such cases, the present for preterite highlights the present accessibility of the designated event through the medium of the document, suggesting that it is 'officially on record'.

Let me illustrate this with examples from the political, legal and financial spheres. First, consider the following present for preterite form highlighting a decree passed in the Athenian assembly:

(21) καὶ **ψηφίζεται** ὁ δῆμος Κριτίου εἰπόντος, τὸν μὲν νεκρὸν κρίνειν προδοσίας . . .

And the people **vote**, Critias having made the proposal, that the corpse should be tried for treason . . .

(Lycurgus, *Against Leocrates* 113)

Under a diegetic interpretation, the present form **ψηφίζεται** ('vote') may be argued to mark the culmination of the story told in sections 112–14 (see

<sup>31</sup> Compare Classen and Steup (1919) ad loc., who argue that the present reflects the 'Vergegenwärtigung des historischen Überblicks, dem sich die Ereignisse unmittelbar vor Augen stellen'.

Chapter 3, Sections 3.3 and 3.4). But it is also noteworthy how Lycurgus' wording here evokes the text of an actual decree. Consider the following example:

- (22) Ἔδοξε τῷ δήμῳ, Τεισαμενὸς εἶπε, πολιτεύεσθαι Ἀθηναίους κατὰ τὰ πάτρια . . .

It has pleased the people, Teisamenus proposed it, that the Athenians should be governed in accordance with the customs of the forefathers . . .

(Andocides, *On the Mysteries* [I] 83)

The phrase ἔδοξε τῷ δήμῳ ('it has pleased the people') in the decree text in (22) is mirrored by ψηφίζεται ὁ δῆμος ('the people vote') in (21); Τεισαμενὸς εἶπε ('Teisamenus proposed it') in (22) by Κριτίου εἰπόντος ('Critias having made the proposal') in (21); and in both cases, an infinitival phrase follows specifying the actual resolution.<sup>32</sup> This parallel suggests that, in (21), the text of the actual decree may function as the conceptual substrate for the construal of the decision of the people as something that is presently accessible.<sup>33</sup>

In the juridical sphere, there are many types of documents that are relevant, such as the γραφή ('indictment') with corresponding present for preterite verb γράφομαι ('indict'), the λῆξις ('complaint'; λαγχάνω [δίκη] 'bring a suit') and the πρόκλησις ('challenge'; προκαλοῦμαι 'challenge'). The following passage gives a comic impression of what a γραφή ('indictment') would have looked like:

- (23) ἀκούετ' ἤδη τῆς γραφῆς. ἔγράψατο  
Κύων Κυδαθηναίεὺς Λάβητ' Αἰξωνέα  
τὸν τυρὸν ἀδικεῖν ὅτι μόνος κατήσθειεν  
τὸν Σικελικόν. τίμημα κλωδὸς σύκινος.'

Now all hear the charge: 'Demagogue of Cydathenaeum  
indicted Grabes of Aexone  
of malefaction, in that he devoured a Sicilian cheese  
all by himself. Proposed penalty: a collar of impeach wood.'

(Aristophanes, *Wasps* 894–7; trans. after Henderson [1998])

<sup>32</sup> Often the formula is more extended, including, in particular, identifications of the presiding officer and the clerk (X ἐπρυτάνευε, Y ἐγραμμάτευε). Compare *Ar. Th.* 373–9.

<sup>33</sup> The fact that the text of the decree refers to the event with a past tense form is not a problem for this analysis. The point is that the mere reference to the event creates a representation of this event. For example, we can say *In the Iliad*, *Hector does so and so*, even though the narrative in the *Iliad* is exclusively in the past tense. Likewise, the people 'decide' *in the text of the decree*, even though the decree records the decision in the past tense.

The formula begins with a verb (894 ἐγράψατο ['indicted']), is followed by a subject (895 Κύων Κυδαθηναίεϋς ['Demagogue of Cydathenaeum']), then an object (895 Λάβητ' Αἰξωνέα ['Graves of Aexone']) and then an infinitival phrase specifying the charge (896 ἀδικεῖν ὅτι . . . ['of malefaction, in that . . .']). Compare the following instance of the present for preterite:

- (24) λαχόντος δὲ τοῦ Στεφάνου αὐτῷ δίκην σίτου εἰς Ἰδιεῖον κατὰ τὸν νόμον ὃς κελεύει, ἐὰν ἀποπέμπτῃ τὴν γυναῖκα, ἀποδιδόναι τὴν προῖκα, ἐὰν δὲ μὴ, ἐπ' ἑννέ' ὀβολοῖς τοκοφορεῖν, καὶ σίτου εἰς Ἰδιεῖον εἶναι δικάσασθαι ὑπὲρ τῆς γυναικὸς τῷ κυρίῳ, **γράφεται** ὁ Φράστωρ Στέφανον τουτονὶ γραφῆν πρὸς τοὺς θεσμοθέτας, Ἀθηναίῳ ὄντι ξένης θυγατέρα αὐτῷ ἐγγυῆσαι ὡς αὐτῷ προσήκουσαν, κατὰ τὸν νόμον τουτονί.

Stephanus {brought suit} for alimony against him in the Odeum in accordance with the law which dictates that, if a man puts away his wife, he must pay back the marriage portion or else pay interest on it at the rate of nine obols a month for each mina; and that on the woman's behalf her guardian may sue him for alimony in the Odeum.

Phrastor, on his part, **indicts** Stephanus over there before the Thesmothetae, charging that he had betrothed him, being an Athenian, the daughter of an alien woman as though she were his own, in accordance with this law here.

(Demosthenes, *Against Neaera* [59] 52; trans. after Murray [1939])

The narrative main clause (in the translation, this begins in the second paragraph) is very similar to what will have been recorded in the actual document. As in example (23), there is a form of the verb γράφομαι ('indict'), followed by the name of the prosecutor, the name of the defendant and an infinitival clause specifying the charge.

The third category of verbs involves financial transactions, such as loans (δανείζω ['lend'], δανείζομαι ['borrow']), sales (ἀποδίδομαι ['sell'], ὠνέομαι ['buy']) and mortgages (ὑποτίθημι ['take a mortgage on']). Such transactions could be recorded in a συγγραφή or συνθήκη ('contract'). The text of one such document has survived in a Demosthenic speech:

- (25) Ἐδάνεισαν Ἄνδροκλῆς Σφήττιος καὶ Ναυσικράτης Καρύστιος Ἀρτέμωνι καὶ Ἀπολλοδώρῳ Φασηλίταις ἀργυρίου δραχμὰς τρισχιλίας Ἀθήνηθεν εἰς Μένδην ἢ Σκιώνην, κτλ.

Androcles of Sphettus and Nausicrates of Carystus lent to Artemon and Apollodorus, both of Phaselis, three thousand drachmas [for a voyage] from Athens to Mende or Scione, etc.

(Demosthenes, *Against Lacritus* [35] 10)

The document also mentions the security (ὑποθήκη) provided by Artemon and Apollodorus (ἸΙ ὑποτιθέασι δὲ ταῦτα [‘they give that as security’]). Now compare the following instance of the present for preterite:

- (26) καὶ ἐπὶ ταύταις ταῖς ὁμολογίαις **δανείζονται** παρ’ ἡμῶν ἐπὶ τῇ νηὶ τρισχίλις δραχμᾶς ἀμφοτερόπλουν, καὶ συγγραφὴν ἐγράψαντο ὑπὲρ τούτων.

And on those conditions they **borrow** from us three thousand drachmas for a voyage there and back, with their ship as surety; and they drew up a contract specifying these matters.

(Demosthenes, *Against Dionysiodorus* [56] 6)

The structure of the sentence is a little different from that in (25), as here the debtors are the subject rather than the creditors. Nevertheless, the orator here records in a businesslike manner a transaction between two parties, specifying a sum of money and certain conditions. The present for preterite, in my view, highlights the official nature of this transaction by evoking the existence of a record on which the event may be accessed.<sup>34</sup>

As I argued in the introduction to this chapter, the ‘record’ that serves as the conceptual substrate for the registering present may be a physical object, but we may also think of the record more abstractly, as a ‘mentally and socially constructed entity’ (Langacker [2011: 62–3] on the concept of a ‘schedule’). The memory of an oral agreement can also be considered a record in this sense. Such agreements were normally made in the presence of witnesses, and through them the terms of the contract could be presently accessed. The terms of the agreement ‘stand’ even if they are not in writing.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> That this results in some redundancy in light of the following assertion that a contract was actually drawn up seems to me inconsequential to my argument.

<sup>35</sup> Financial transactions, for example, were not necessarily recorded in a written document. Oral and written agreements were equally valid: the existence of a written contract was not a requirement for a suit regarding such a transaction to be actionable, except in the case of the δικὴ ἐμπορικὴ ‘maritime trade suit’. (Thomas [1989: 38–45] argues that witnesses continued to play an important role even as the Athenians gradually became more ‘document-minded’ – Thomas refers to Clanchy [1979] for the expression – in the course of the fourth century. See also Lanni [2006: 157–8].) As the public and private archives of Athens and other Greek city states, except those in Egypt, have been lost (Bresson [2016: 281]), we must rely on our literary texts as evidence for the existence of written contracts. In any case, we can assume, with MacDowell (1978: 141), that ‘[i]f the conditions [of a contract] were at all complicated, it would be convenient to have them in writing’. Moreover, we may consider a wider range of documents recording such transactions than just the contracts themselves. For example, we are told in Demosthenes’ speech *Against Timotheus* (49) 5 that bankers kept records of loans they made in ‘memoranda’ (ὑπομνήματα). We also have a scene in the beginning of Aristophanes’ *Clouds* (18–31) where the main character reads from a document (γραμματοεῖον) in which his debts are recorded. Furthermore, Theophrastus reports that sales (of land, presumably) had to be preregistered with the appropriate official sixty

Let me discuss an example of an oral agreement to make the point more clear:

- (27) τὴν γὰρ θυγατέρα τὴν ταυτησί Νεαίρας, ἣν ἦλθεν ἔχουσα ὡς τουτονὶ παιδάριον μικρόν, ἦν τότε μὲν Στρυβήλην ἐκάλουν, νυνὶ δὲ Φανῶ, **ἐκδίδωσι** Στέφανος οὐτοσί ὡς οὖσαν αὐτοῦ θυγατέρα ἀνδρὶ Ἀθηναίῳ Φράστορι Αἰγίλιεῖ, καὶ προῖκα ἐπ’ αὐτῇ **δίδωσι** τριάκοντα μνᾶς.

The daughter of that woman Neaera, whom she brought with her as a small child to the house of Stephanus, and whom they then called Strybele, but now call Phano, Stephanus **gives in marriage** as being his own daughter to an Athenian, Phrastor, of Aegilia; and he **gives** a marriage portion of thirty minae with her.

(Demosthenes, *Against Neaera* [59] 50; trans. after Murray [1939])

The way the transaction is described is similar to the examples discussed above in its formal, ‘official’ character. I suggest that the existence of a marriage contract is evoked here. We know of written marriage contracts already at the end of the fourth century BC in Ptolemaic Egypt (see Hunt and Edgar [1932], no. 1, from 311 BC). In Classical Athens, however, such arrangements were oral (MacDowell [1978: 86–7]; Oakley and Sinos [1993: 9–10]). A marriage was valid if preceded by a formal betrothal (ἐγγύη), which consisted in the legal guardian pronouncing the words *I betrothe X to you* to the prospective husband. If a dowry was given, this was usually stated as well. By this formal pronouncement in the presence of witnesses, the terms of the contract were ‘on record’ and could be presently accessed in the courtroom by calling the witnesses to the stand.<sup>36</sup>

#### 4.4.1 Rhetorical Functions

What is the rhetorical effect of this use of the present for preterite referring to transactions? I argue that there are two aspects. First, the implication that the speaker bases his narrative on some kind of record may work to enhance his credibility: the speaker pretends to be not so much telling a story as registering certain events from the record. Second, the implication that the designated event is ‘officially on record’ makes the transaction

days in advance (fragment xcvi Wimmer [1862]). Also, an early record of a sale is found on a lead tablet from southern France, dated between 480 and 460 BC (*IGF* 135; Decourt [2004]; compare Bresson [2016: 233]).

<sup>36</sup> We see this in D. 41.6 πρώτων μὲν οὖν ὑμῖν μάρτυρας παρέξομαι τοὺς παραγενομένους ὄτ’ ἠγγύα μοι Πολύευκτος τὴν θυγατέρ’ ἐπὶ τετταράκοντα μναῖς (‘first I will produce to you as witnesses those who were present when Polyuctus betrothed his daughter to me with a portion of forty minae’).

sound more serious. Admittedly, this argument is difficult to corroborate, as it is hard to find criteria by which to measure such implications. Nevertheless, I will try to support my argument with a case study.

Meneclēs had been married twice during his lifetime. When his first wife died before giving birth to any children, he married the daughter of his friend Eponymus. After some time, he divorced her before she had had any children. Having no wife or children, Meneclēs adopted as his son one of the brothers of his second wife. When he died, the right to inheritance fell to his adopted son. However, Meneclēs' brother contested the adopted son's right to inherit, arguing that the adoption was invalid because it had been done 'under the influence of a woman' (i.e., his second wife). The speaker in Isaeus' *On the estate of Meneclēs* (2) is Meneclēs' adopted son. Formally, he is defending his father-in-law Philonides against a charge of perjury: Philonides had testified that the speaker really was the adopted son of Meneclēs, whereupon Meneclēs' brother instituted a suit against Philonides. But in reality, the speaker is vindicating his own claim to the estate.

The narrative in sections 3–9 deals with the marriage between Meneclēs and the speaker's sister. It appears from section 5 that Meneclēs' brother had argued that the girl had not been given a dowry when she married Meneclēs, which suggests that there was no legal marriage; and 'it may be conjectured that he attacked the honour of her brothers, representing her as a concubine or worse' (Wyse [1904: 235]). The speaker seeks to undo this impression from the start. After describing his family (there were two sons and two daughters), he tells how he and his brother gave the elder sister away in marriage:

(28) Τελευτήσαντος δὲ τοῦ πατρός, ἐκδίδομεν ἡμεῖς τὴν πρεσβυτέραν ἀδελφήν, ἐπειδὴ εἶχεν ὄραν, Λευκολόφῳ, προῖκα ἐπιδόντες εἴκοσι μνᾶς.

After our father died, we **give away** our oldest sister, when she was of marriable age, to Leucolophus, giving her a dowry of twenty minae.

(Isaeus, *On the estate of Meneclēs* [2] 3)

The inclusion of this – technically irrelevant – event in the narrative serves to 'convey indirectly the impression that [the speaker] and his brother were not the sort of men to neglect their duty and leave their sisters to grow old unmarried' (Wyse [1904: 241]). When the speaker tells how they subsequently gave their younger sister to Meneclēs, he emphasises that a dowry was given and refers back to the marriage of the elder sister:

- (29) καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰδότες ὅτι καὶ ὁ πατήρ οὐδενὶ ἂν ἔδωκεν ἥδιον ἢ ἐκείνῳ, **δίδομεν** αὐτῷ, οὐκ ἀπρῶικον, ὡς οὗτος λέγει ἐκάστοτε, ἀλλὰ τὴν ἴσῃν προῖκα ἐπιδόντες ἦνπερ καὶ τῇ πρεσβυτέρῃ ἀδελφῇ ἐπέδομεν.

Knowing that our father would not have given her away to anyone with more pleasure than to him, we **give** her to him – not without a dowry, as that man keeps saying, but with the same dowry we gave to the elder sister.

(Isaeus, *On the estate of Meneclēs* [2] 5)

The speaker puts even more emphasis on this point later in the narrative, when Meneclēs divorces the speaker's sister and she is remarried to a certain Elius:

- (30) καὶ οὕτως **ἐκδίδομεν** αὐτὴν Ἡλείῳ Σφηττίῳ, καὶ ὁ Μενεκλῆς τὴν τε προῖκα **ἐπιδίδωσιν** αὐτῷ, μετασχὼν τοῦ οἴκου τῆς μισθώσεως τῶν παιδῶν τῶν Νικίου, καὶ τὰ ἱμάτια, ἃ ἦλθεν ἔχουσα παρ' ἐκείνων, καὶ τὰ χρυσίδια, ἃ ἦν, **δίδωσιν** αὐτῇ.

And so we **give** her **away** to Elius of Sphettus, and Meneclēs **hands over** the dowry to him (for he had had part in the lease of the estate of the children of Nicias) and he **gives** to her the mantles which she had when she moved in with him, and the jewelry which there was.

(Isaeus, *On the estate of Meneclēs* [2] 9)

All in all, the speaker takes pains to establish that both his sisters had been given a dowry with the aim of underscoring the legitimacy of the marriage between his younger sister and Meneclēs. The present for preterite is used to highlight the three occasions where a dowry is transferred: (28) ἐκδίδομεν ('give away'), (29) δίδομεν ('give') and (30) ἐκδίδομεν ('give away'), ἐπιδίδωσιν ('hands over'), δίδωσιν ('gives'). In my view, the use of the present tense makes these transactions sound more 'official', which in this context supports the speaker's rhetorical aim.

Sections 10–17 deal with the adoption. In 10–12, the speaker describes how Meneclēs made overtures to himself and his brother, saying he wished to adopt a son from the family of his second wife. As the other brother had to go abroad, it was decided that Meneclēs should adopt the speaker. This event is highlighted with the present for preterite in 12:

- (31) Καὶ ὁ Μενεκλῆς καλῶς ἔφη αὐτὸν λέγειν καὶ ἐκ τοῦ τρόπου τούτου **ποιεῖται** με.

Meneclēs approved of what [my brother] said, and in this way he **adopts** me.

(Isaeus, *On the estate of Meneclēs* [2] 12)

The speaker goes on to argue that the law allows a man without legitimate male children to adopt whomever he wishes (13). Having made this point, he expounds in more detail the steps Meneclēs took in the adoption process:

- (32) Διδόντων οὖν τῶν νόμων αὐτῷ ποιεῖσθαι διὰ τὸ εἶναι ἄπαιδα, ἐμὲ **ποιεῖται**, οὐκ ἐν διαθήκαις, ὡς ἄνδρες, γράψας, μέλλων ἀποθνήσκειν, ὡσπερ ἄλλοι τινὲς τῶν πολιτῶν, οὐδ' ἀσθενῶν· ἀλλ' ὑγιαίνων, εὖ φρονῶν, εὖ νοῶν ποιησάμενος **εἰσάγει** με εἰς τοὺς φράτερας παρόντων τούτων, καὶ εἰς τοὺς δημότας με **ἐγγράφει** καὶ εἰς τοὺς ὄργεῶνας.

The laws thus allowing him to adopt on account of his childlessness, he **adopts** me – not by a will written right before his death, as some other citizens [have done], nor during illness; but he {adopted} me while of good health and sound mind, well aware of what he was doing, and **introduces** me to the clansmen in the presence of my opponents, and he **registers** me with the demesmen and the members of his religious association.

(Isaeus, *On the estate of Meneclēs* [2] 14–15)

The emphasis on Meneclēs' thoroughness in completing the adoption process here mirrors the (exaggeratedly) precise description of the transfer of the dowry and possessions of the youngest sister when she divorced Meneclēs and married Elius (passage [30]). Again, I argue that the present for preterite, by evoking the present accessibility of the designated events as being 'on record' (concretely, the registers of the clansmen, demesmen and the private religious association), supports the speaker's strategy of underscoring the legitimacy of the narrated transactions.

#### 4.4.2 Conclusion

In this section, I have argued that the use of the present for preterite referring to transactions can evoke the present accessibility of the designated event on a document recording it. Concretely, this document may be a decree, an indictment, a contract, or something similar; however, the construal of a certain transaction as 'officially on record' does not necessarily depend on the existence of an actual, physical document, as I illustrated with the case of verbal marriage contracts. The rhetorical effect of this use of the present tense is to enhance the legitimacy of the speaker's presentation of the designated events, as well as to hint at the official character of the transaction.

## 4.5 Family Tree

Finally, a specific usage of the registering present that deserves mention is that found in genealogical discourse. The use of the present for preterite to refer to births and marriages can be accounted for in terms of the scenarios described above, depending on the kind of people that are described (mythical characters: mythography etc.; famous historical persons: chronography; private citizens: public registers). In addition, however, I argue that this use can be facilitated by a more specific conceptual scenario in which the designated events are traced on a tablet (or other visual medium) representing family relationships.

That something akin to the notion of a ‘family tree’ was accessible to the Greeks is shown by the following passage from a Demosthenic speech:

- (33) Τὸ μὲν οὖν πρῶτον διενεόθη, ὃ ἄνδρες δικασταί, γράψας ἐν πίνακι ἅπαντας τοὺς συγγενεῖς τοῦ Ἀγνίου, οὕτως ἐπιδεικνύειν ὑμῖν καθ’ ἕκαστον· ἐπειδὴ δὲ ἐδόκει οὐκ <ἄν> εἶναι ἐξ ἴσου ἢ θεωρία ἅπασιν τοῖς δικασταῖς, ἀλλ’ οἱ πόρρω καθήμενοι ἀπολείπεσθαι, ἀναγκαῖον ἴσως ἐστὶν τῷ λόγῳ διδάσκειν ὑμᾶς.

At first, men of the jury, I had in mind to write all the relatives of Hagnias on a tablet and in this manner point them out to you one by one. But as it seemed to me that not all the members of the jury would have an equal view, but those sitting far back would be at a disadvantage, perhaps it is necessary to instruct you by using speech.

(Demosthenes, *Against Macartatus* [43] 18)

This is one of the speeches in the rhetorical corpus that deal with inheritance disputes. In such cases, the degree of kinship (ἀγχιστεία) is often a central question. Making family relations visually accessible through a representation on a tablet is certainly helpful. While it is hard to deduce from this passage if and to what extent this option was actually exercised in the courtroom (the tone perhaps rather suggests that this was a novel idea of the speaker than that it was common practice), it is nevertheless clear that the idea of representing family relations on a physical object was well within the grasp of the Greek audience.

Now consider the use of the present for preterite in the following passage:

- (34) ἐμοὶ γὰρ ἦν πάππος, ὃ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, τῆς μητρὸς πατήρ, Δαμόστρατος Μελιτεῦς. τοῦτῳ **γίγνεται** τέτταρες παῖδες, ἐκ μὲν ἧς τὸ πρῶτον ἔσχεν γυναικὸς θυγάτηρ καὶ υἱὸς ᾧ ὄνομ’ Ἀμυθέων, ἐκ δὲ τῆς ὕστερον, Χαιρεστράτης, ἡ μήτηρ ἡ ἐμὴ καὶ Τιμοκράτης.

τούτοις δὲ **γίγνονται** παῖδες, τῷ μὲν Ἀμυθέωνι Δαμόστρατος, τοῦ πάππου τούνομ' ἔχων, καὶ Καλλίστρατος καὶ Δεξιθεός. . . .

τῇ δ' ἀδελφῇ αὐτοῦ συνοικησάσῃ Διοδώρῳ Ἄλαιεϊ υἱὸς **γίγνεται** Κτησίβιος. καὶ οὗτος μὲν ἔτελεύτησεν ἐν Ἀβύδῳ μετὰ Θρασυβούλου στρατευόμενος, ζῆ δὲ τούτων ὁ Δαμόστρατος ὁ τοῦ Ἀμυθέωνος, τῆς μητρὸς ἀδελφιδοῦς τῆς ἐμῆς.

My grandfather, fellow Athenians, the father of my mother, was Damostratus of Melite. To him **are born** four children: from the woman he had first, a daughter and a son named Amytheon; and from Chaerestrates, whom he married later, my mother and Timocrates. To them children **are born** – to Amytheon, Damostratus (who carried the name of his grandfather) and Callistratus and Dexitheus . . . .

And to his sister, who went to live together with Diodorus of Halae, a son **is born**, Ctesibius. He died in Abydos on an expedition with Thrasybulus, but Damostratus the son of Amytheon and nephew of my mother is still alive.

(Demosthenes, *Against Eubulides* [57] 37–8)

The three present forms of the verb γίγνομαι ('be born') can partly be explained in terms of the accessibility of these events on a record, as sons had to be officially recognised and registered at a certain age (compare Section 4.4.1). However, I argue that the discourse progression in this passage is iconic of the act of tracing relatives on a family tree. In that scenario, the speaker would first point out the oldest relevant family member (*Here is Damostratus, my grandfather*) and move down the generations, specifying the relationship of each new member to the previous one (e.g., *And here is Amytheon, his son*). The branching structure of the discourse in (34) evokes this scenario. Thus, I argue that the events designated by the present forms are construed as being immediately accessible on a virtual family tree.<sup>37</sup>

As with other registering uses of the present for preterite described in this chapter, the rhetorical effect of the present tense seems to be to invest the speaker's claims with a certain legitimacy. The two biggest clusters in Attic rhetoric are found in the Demosthenic corpus, and in both cases pedigree is the paramount issue.<sup>38</sup> In the speech *Against Eubulides* (57) (example [34]), the speaker is fighting for his rights of citizenship. His enemy, Eubulides,

<sup>37</sup> Interestingly, the past tense is used to refer to the death of Ctesibius (ἔτελεύτησεν ['died']); compare the aorist of the same verb in a similar passage in D. 44.9. Note that this event does not result in a change in the family tree (in contrast to births and marriages, which introduce new entities).

<sup>38</sup> The speaker in D. 43 (example [33]) consistently uses the preterite in his genealogy (19–26). Where the genealogies in the other Demosthenic speeches are brief and matter-of-fact, the complexity of the family tree in this case causes the speaker to present the facts in a highly argumentative fashion.

had caused him to be scrapped from the citizen register of his deme, claiming that neither the speaker's mother nor his father were of pure Athenian blood. In the part of the speech where the speaker deals with the attacks on his mother, he uses seven registering present forms to paint a picture of her family (37–40).<sup>39</sup> In the conclusion (40) he says he has shown that his mother was an Athenian on both her mother's and her father's side. Second, there is the speech *Against Leochares* (44). Here the speaker aims to show that his son has a better claim to the estate of the deceased Archiades than the counter-claimant Leochares. He first establishes his own relation to Archiades in 9–10, using six present forms, and concludes by saying that he and his son are nearest of kin to Archiades in the male line (11). Then, in 17, he shows how his opponents are much further removed from Archiades, using two present forms.<sup>40</sup> In both cases, the persistent use of the present tense makes the assertions sound as if the speaker is 'reading from the record' rather than merely making claims on his own authority.

The most conspicuous parallel in drama is the following passage, where similar considerations seem to play a role:

(35) Κῆρυξ		τίς ἀγορεύειν βούλεται;
Ἄμφιθεός	ἐγώ.	
Κη.		τίς ὤν;
Αμ.		Ἄμφιθεός.
Κη.		οὐκ ἄνθρωπος;
Αμ.		οὔ,

ἀλλ' ἀθάνατος. ὁ γὰρ Ἄμφιθεός Δημητρος ἦν  
καὶ Τριπτολέμου· τούτου δὲ Κελεός **γίγνεται**·  
**γαμεῖ** δὲ Κελεός Φαιναρέτην τήτην ἐμήν,  
ἐξ ἧς Λυκῖνος ἐγένετ'· ἐκ τούτου δ' ἐγὼ  
ἀθάνατός εἰμ'.

HERALD:	Who wishes to speak?
AMPHITHEUS:	I do.
HERALD:	And who are you?
AMPHITHEUS:	Amphitheus.
HERALD:	Not a man? <sup>41</sup>

This would be in contradiction with the idea of an easily accessible representation of the designated events.

<sup>39</sup> 37 γίγνονται ('are born') *bis*; 38 γίγνεται ('is born'), λαμβάνει ('takes as wife'), γίγνεται ('is born'); 39 γίγνεται ('is born'); 40 γίγνεται ('is born').

<sup>40</sup> 9 γίγνονται ('are born'), ἐκδιδόασιν ('give away in marriage'), γαμεῖ ('marries'); 10 γίγνεται ('is born'), ἐκδίδωσι ('gives away in marriage'), γίγνονται ('are born'); 17 ἐκδιδόασιν ('give away in marriage'), γίγνεται ('is born').

<sup>41</sup> The name 'Amphitheus' literally means 'god on both sides'.

AMPHITHEUS

No,

but an immortal. For Amphitheus was the child  
of Demeter  
and Triptolemus; of him **is born** Celeus;  
Celeus **marries** Phaenarete, my grandmother,  
of whom Lycinus was born; and by descent from  
him  
I am immortal.

(Aristophanes, *Acharnians* 45–51)

The character Amphitheus presumably represents a contemporary Athenian whose pedigree was a matter of debate. Olson (2002) *ad loc.* suggests that there actually was a person named Amphitheus, whose ‘family’s repeated nominal claim to semi-divine status is presumably gently mocked here’. In my view, the use of the registering present (48 γίγνεται [‘is born’], 49 γαμέει [‘marries’]) serves to give Amphitheus’ claims a more dignified air by suggesting these are well-established facts that may be accessed from the mythological record or, more directly, from a mental family tree (note again how the discourse progression is iconic of the act of tracing relatives on a family tree).<sup>42</sup> In light of the apparent satire of Euripidean genealogy here (as suggested by the ancient scholion; I do not share Olson’s skepticism on this point), such a tone of mock dignity is fitting.

#### 4.6 Conclusion

The registering use of the present for preterite has proved to be the most difficult one to account for. While many scholars have offered interpretations of the present for preterite in terms of narrative mimesis (Chapter 2) or discourse organisation (Chapter 3), the registering use, due to its rarity and its being in contradiction with the generally shared axiom that tense-switching is confined to narrative discourse, has been overlooked, explained away as not really referring to the past or else uninformatively labelled ‘inexpressive’. In this chapter, I have argued that the registering present is just as expressive as the mimetic and diegetic uses in the sense that it too evokes a conceptual scenario in which past events are presently

<sup>42</sup> As for explaining the use of the past tense: ἦν (‘was’) is chosen for its aspectual value, referring to a state (see Appendix, Section A.2.1); ἐγένετ(ο) (‘was born’) is more difficult. The form is found in a relative subordinate clause, which may disfavour the present in this particular type of context; compare E. *IT* 3 ἐξ ἧς Ἀτρεΰς ἐβλάσπεν (‘from whom sprang Atreus’). From a rhetorical point of view, I have argued (Nijk [2013a]) that when Celeus mentions ‘my grandmother’ (τήθην ἐμήν) he has already established his connection with the gods; Lycinus is then only a filler.

accessible in the form of a representation. Moreover, I have argued that its use has marked rhetorical effects. I hope that this discussion will inspire future scholars and commentators to take these present forms just as seriously as the more familiar mimetic and diegetic instances.

To conclude, let me briefly summarise the main arguments made in this chapter:

- (a) *Record as representation.* The registering present construes the designated past event as presently accessible on a record. In an abstract sense, the 'record' consists of events that are well-established in shared cultural memory. Concretely, the kind of record that is evoked depends on the character of the designated event: the 'mythological canon' in the case of mythological events; the chronographical record in the case of historical events; documents such as decrees, indictments and contracts in the case of common transactions; and additionally, in genealogical discourse, a 'family tree'.
- (b) *Narrativity.* The prototypical context for the registering present is non-narrative discourse. When the present tense is used in references to the past that are isolated in the broader context, it is most easily inferred that the representation supporting the construal of the designated past event as presently accessible does not depend on the surrounding discourse. However, the record-as-representation scenario can also be activated in narrative discourse when the character of the designated event and/or the wording of the assertion evokes the concept of a record.
- (c) *Rhetorical function.* The exact rhetorical nuances of the registering present differ from genre to genre, but in general an implicit appeal to 'the record' both makes the assertion seem more legitimate (as being 'backed by the record') and elevates the status of the designated event (as being 'official' or 'canonical').