Engaging the audience

An intersubjectivity approach to the historic present tense in Latin

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Abstract: In accordance with the commonly acknowledged semantic value of the Latin present tense of 'simultaneity with the moment of speech', scholars have tended to formulate the main function of the historic present tense in terms of the addition of a certain vividness or dramatization to the narrative: by artificially transferring the deictic centre of the speech event (the 'discourse now') to the reference time of the characters in the narrated world (the 'story now'), the speaker/writer creates a form of narration with the features of an eyewitness account, in which the addressee/reader, on account of a pretended unmediated access to the recounted events, may feel maximally immersed.

This 'vividness' explanation of the historic present has, however, also been criticized for both its vagueness and its restricted applicability. In this article we will show that in a selected narrative corpus – book 22 of Livy's historiographical work *Ab Urbe Condita* – only very few instances of the historic present might actually be accounted for in terms of an effect of immersion or vividness. On the basis of a mixed discourse-linguistic, cognitive-linguistic and narratological instrument of analysis, we will argue that the vast majority of instances of the historic present tense in Livy book 22 are used quite differently, and that the present's inherent feature of 'epistemic immediacy' is used predominantly for strategic structuring of the text rather than for the effect of a vivid eyewitness account. By discussing a number of examples, we will illustrate the subtle ways in which Livy exploits the cognitive and functional potential of the present tense as established in our

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analysis – viz. indicating the common ground status of the information referred to – for smoothly and unobtrusively taking the audience along in the construction process of his complex narrative.

Keywords: Latin linguistics, cognitive linguistics, discourse linguistics, tense, historic present, intersubjectivity

1 Introduction

In the last decades a considerable number of linguistic studies have brought us new and interesting insights into the use of tenses in Latin narrative.[1] Due to variances in their approach, scope and corpus, these studies have led to complementary and sometimes also opposite views and conclusions. The historic present tense (i.e. the use of the present tense for referring to past events in narrative texts; henceforth: HP), the use of which often remains difficult to account for within a single explanatory frame, seems to be especially challenging. This does not only hold for Latin, but also for other languages and literatures.[2]

In accordance with the commonly acknowledged semantic value of the present tense of 'simultaneity with the moment of speech',[3] scholars have tended to formulate the main function of the HP in terms of the addition of a certain vividness or dramatization to the narrative: by artificially transferring the communicative situation of speaker and addressee (the 'discourse now') to the reference time of the characters in the narrated world (the 'story now'), the speaker creates a narration with the features of an eyewitness account, which, on account of a pretended unmediated access to the recounted events, gradually immerses the addressee in the narrated world.

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1 For a recent overview of the state of the art of the research, see Pinkster (2015, chapter 7). For a recent monograph on the use of tenses in Vergil's *Aeneid*, see Adema (2019).
2 There is a vast amount of literature on the use of the historic present, both for Latin and for other languages, and with a certain bias towards its occurrence in (pseudo)oral narrative discourse. Landmarks in the study of the (historic) present are Jespersen (1924); Casparis (1975); Wolfson (1982); Fleischman (1990); Fludernik (1991, 1992); Brisard (2002). More recent studies include Langacker (2011) on the English present; Thoma (2011) on Modern Greek; Chovanek (2014) on the use of the present in the headlines of news texts; Zeman (2016) on the historic present in Middle High German epic, and Stukker (2016) on the Dutch present tense in news texts.
3 See Pinkster (1998: 63) for a defense of this view as opposed to an 'unmarked' or 'neutral' value of the present tense.

This 'vividness'-explanation of the HP has, however, also been criticized for both its vagueness and its restricted applicability.[4] In this article we will show that in a selected narrative corpus – book 22 of Livy's historiographical work *Ab Urbe Condita* – only very few instances of the HP might actually be accounted for in terms of an effect of immersion or vividness. On the basis of a mixed discourse-linguistic, cognitive-linguistic and narratological instrument of analysis, we will argue that the vast majority of instances of the HP in Livy book 22 are used quite differently, and that the present tense's inherent cognitive feature of 'epistemic immediacy' is used predominantly for a strategic structuring of the text rather than for the effect of a vivid eyewitness account. By discussing a number of examples, we will illustrate the subtle ways in which Livy exploits the cognitive and functional potential of the present tense as established in our analysis – viz. indicating the common ground status of the information referred to – for smoothly and unobtrusively taking the audience along in the construction process of his complex narrative.

We will start the discussion, in Section 2, by formulating the claim that the various uses of the Latin present tense (including the HP) can be accounted for in a comprehensive way by treating the present tense as an intersubjectivity device which can operate on various cognitive levels, or in various cognitive systems. This is followed, in section 3, by a brief exposition of our methodology, in which we introduce and explain our research parameters. In section 4 we present the results of our analysis, both quantitatively and in the form of a discussion of illustrative instances, grouped along the three cognitive systems distinguished in section 2. In section 5 we draw some conclusions and formulate suggestions for further research.

2 The present tense as an intersubjectivity device

As said, the starting point of this article is the observation that discussions of the HP have focused too strongly on its immersive use, leaving crucial other

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4 See e.g. Brinton (1992: 224–225) for a discussion. More recently also Thoma (2011: 2375): "There is more to HP than just vividness". For Latin, e.g. Adam (1998), Adema (2009), Viti (2010), Stienaers (2015) and Adema (2019) draw attention to the restricted applicability of the vividness-explanation of the HP, and propose additional and/or alternative categories of use. For Ancient Greek historiography, see e.g. Allan: "the function of the (mostly isolated) historical presents in Thucydides has a pronounced text-structural character. The effect of creating a visually dramatic scene is less clearly visible" (2011: 60). See also Nijk (2013) for the HP in Demosthenes.

functions unaccounted for. Whereas in (1) an analysis in terms of immersion seems to work well, it is clearly not applicable in (2):

(1) *mox Hasdrubal ipse cum omni exercitu aderat, uarioque omnia tumultu **stre-punt** ruentibus in naues simul [in] remigibus militibusque fugientium magis e terra quam in pugnam euntium modo. vixdum omnes conscenderant, cum alii resolutis oris in ancoras **euehuntur**, alii, ne quid teneat, ancoralia **inci-dunt**, raptimque omnia <ac> praepropere agendo militum apparatu nautica ministeria **impediuntur**, trepidatione nautarum capere et aptare arma miles **prohibetur**.* (Liv. 22, 19, 9–10)
'Presently Hasdrubal himself appeared on the scene with his entire army, and **all was noise and confusion** as the rowers and soldiers rushed down together to their ships, as though their object were rather to flee the shore than to enter battle. Hardly were they all on board, when some cast off the hawsers and **swung out** on to their anchors, and others – that nothing might detain them – **cut** the anchor cables, and, in the hurry and excessive haste with which everything was done, the soldiers' gear **interfered with** the sailors in the performance of their tasks, and the confusion of the sailors **kept** the soldiers from taking and fitting on their armour.'[5]

(2) *ea classis ingens . . . portum Tarraconis ex alto tenuit. ibi milite exposito pro-fectus Scipio fratri se **coniungit**, ac deinde communi animo consilioque ger-ebant bellum.* (Liv. 22, 22, 2–3)
'This fleet . . . dropped anchor in the harbour of Tarraco. There Scipio dis-embarked his troops and **set out to join** his brother; and from that time forward they carried on the war with perfect harmony of temper and of purpose.'

The claim we want to make here is that in order to understand and explain the use of the present tense in cases like (2), and its relatedness to the immersive use exemplified in (1), we need to approach the category of tense from a *cognitive and communicative* rather than from a *semantic* point of view. Within such an approach, advocated by, for instance, Brisard (2002), the pres-ent tense is not described in temporal terms of *simultaneity*, but in cognitive

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5 All translations of Livy in this article are taken from the Loeb Classical Library edition, Cambridge, Mass. 1929 (transl. Foster).

terms of *epistemic immediacy* and *immediate givenness*: the present tense signals that the event referred to is part of the 'ground', and that speaker and addressee both have direct, unmediated access to the information involved.

In its capacity of indicating unmediated access to given information, the present tense in Latin is in direct opposition to the perfect tense, which signals a *mediated* accessibility to the information. Whereas information coded in the present tense is presented as part of the common ground and therefore not open for discussion or negotiation, information in the perfect tense depends on the authority of the speaker, and is therefore inherently challengeable.[6] This makes the perfect tense a typical *subjectivity* device (involving a presentation from the perspective and authority of the speaker), in contrast to the present tense, which, in our view, should be rated among the *intersubjectivity* devices.[7] By choosing the present tense, with its connotation of immediate givenness and anchoring into the common ground, the speaker makes the addressee co-responsible for the transmitted content, engaging him or her in the communication, and creating a joint focus of attention. Put briefly, we see the present tense as a linguistic device that involves *intersubjective alignment*, alignment with other perspectives.

This also holds true for the so-called historic use of the present tense. In order, however, to account for the whole variety of HP instances, we have to add one more theoretical parameter, which captures the well-established insight that, in narrative texts, the 'ground' involved in intersubjective alignment may pertain to different – potentially co-existing – realities, in cognitive linguistic literature alternatively labelled as, for instance, 'mental spaces' (Fauconnier 1985), 'possible worlds' (Ryan 2001), or 'ontological levels' (Martínez 2015). First,

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6 See Brisard (2002: 268, 278 and §3.3).

7 (Inter)subjectivity has since long been recognized as the basis of human interaction. In more recent years there has been a growing interest in the study of subjectivity and intersubjectivity, and of related notions such as interpersonal meaning, appraisal, joint focus of attention, stance, and metadiscourse. Definitions of (inter)subjectivity vary greatly depending on the domains or approaches involved, and also differ in their scope and the linguistic phenomena they cover. See the introductions in Davidse, Vandelanotte and Cuykens (2010) and Brems, Ghesquière and Van de Velde (2014) for a discussion. Influential studies are e.g. Verhagen (2005) on negation, complementation constructions, the *let alone* construction, and discourse connectives; Traugott (2010) on subtypes of intersubjective meaning; and Nuyts (2012) on mood and modality. To our knowledge, the category tense has not yet been studied systematically from an (inter)subjectivity perspective. For Latin, Adam (1998) contains some interesting first ideas.

there is of course the reality of the immediate speech situation, in which a real-world primary speaker or writer addresses an audience. In section 1 this reality was referred to as the 'discourse now'. In addition, however, also non-real (e.g. historical, fictive, hypothetical) spaces may be built around other perspectives than those of the primary speaker and addressee, involving other systems of (common) ground, and potentially entailing their own deictic systems. Readers continuously have to switch between these different realities, and they are helped in this by a variety of linguistic cues.

In our study of the use of the HP in Livy we have worked with a tripartite model of analysis which distinguishes *three cognitive systems*, corresponding to the three types of 'realities' in which the reader, by means of the use of the present tense, may be invited to align with a certain perspective.[8] The appropriate interpretation of the present tense in actual instances crucially depends on the particular cognitive system that is activated in the direct context. Table 1 provides a summary of the model we propose, in which pride of place is given to the reader.

Table 1: Common ground in three systems.

	Cogn. system 1: reader in role of addressee	**Cogn. system 2: reader in role of narratee**	**Cogn. system 3: reader in role of character / onlooker**
Common Ground	What S & A (are supposed to) commonly know and perceive	What the narratee has understood from the narrator on account of the prior narrative	What a character knows and perceives at a particular moment in the story
Present tense	Invites reader to align with speaker/writer = *actual present*	Invites reader to align with narrator = *narratorial present*	Invites reader to align with character = *immersive present*

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8 In distinguishing three relevant realities in the analysis of the HP rather than two we differ from other approaches, which merely distinguish a 'discourse now' and a 'story now'. Martínez (2015), in a study on double deixis and the English pronouns *you* and *one*, seems to make a tripartite distinction that is comparable to ours, adding the narrating situation of narrator and narratee as a third ontological level. She does, however, not elaborate on this level, and does not explicitly make use of it in her analysis.

In Table 1 we see that the reader of a narrative text may potentially be involved in three different cognitive systems, in which he may assume three different cognitive roles: the role of addressee, the role of narratee, and the role of character or onlooker in the narrated world. In the first cognitive system (CS1), corresponding to the 'discourse now', the present tense invites the reader (in his role as addressee) to align with the writer (in his role as speaker), on the basis of personal or cultural common ground. This may give rise to an 'actual' interpretation of the present tense, as in the following example:

(3) *multas et locis altis positas turris Hispania habet, quibus et speculis et propugnaculis aduersus latrones utuntur.* (Liv. 22, 19, 6)
    'The Spaniards have numerous towers built on heights, which they use both as watch towers and also for protection against pirates.'

In the third cognitive system (CS3), corresponding to the 'story now', the present tense invites the reader to take on the role of an anonymous witness or identifiable character in the narrated world, and to align with the perspective of one or more of the narrated world's characters. The common ground involved is not the common ground of the 'discourse now', but is defined by what a character may know, perceive or infer at the narrated moment in the story-world. This situation gives rise to what we propose to call the 'immersive' interpretation of the present tense, an example of which is (1) above.[9] As already stated, this eyewitness-like use of the present tense is rare in Livy, who clearly reserves this tense for a quite different function which, in our view, can best be described in terms of a separate, and intermediate, cognitive system 2.

    This second cognitive system (CS2) reflects the fact that the speaker may at any time adopt the role of narrator, turning the addressee into a narratee. The present tense invites the reader, in his role as narratee, to align with the narrator in the construction of the narrative. The common ground involved is not the same as in CS1 or CS3, but concerns the knowledge and expectations that have been built up in the course of the prior narrative. This particular situation gives rise to what we have labelled the 'narratorial' interpretation of the present. An example of the use of the present tense in cognitive system 2 is (2) above.

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9 See Allan, De Jong and De Jonge (2017) for the concept and linguistic features of immersion in classical literature.

In section 4 we will come back to examples like (2) in much more detail. First, however, we will address the issue of the linguistic operationalization of the three cognitive systems, in a section where we go into the methodology of our research.

3 Corpus and methodology

3.1 Corpus

In our analysis we have used as our corpus the entire text of Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita* book 22 (Teubner edition by Dorey 1971), with the exclusion of all passages containing character text, which makes up almost 30 percent of the text of book 22, see Table 2.

Table 2: Corpus (Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita* book 22).

	number of words	
narrator text	12.245	**71%**
character text[a]	5.002	29%
TOTAL	17.247	100%

[a]By 'character text' we mean characters' direct and indirect speech, quoted letters and decisions of at least one clause. Shorter quotations of characters and passages in which Livy quotes other sources in indirect speech (cf. *alia fama* in 22.61) we do not consider as character text.

In this corpus we have collected and investigated the tenses of all main clause predicates in the indicative mood, with special attention to the present tense. For obvious reasons we have disregarded the ambiguous verb forms (pr./pf.) in the rest of our research. The indicative of the present tense occurs in about 20 percent of the main clauses in narrator text (147 instances), see Table 3.

Table 3: Distribution of tenses in main clauses of narrator text in Livy *AUC* book 22.

	predicates in main clause	
ambiguous (pres./ perf.)	42[a]	6%
perfect tense (ind.)	336	47%
present tense (ind.)	**147**	**20%**
imperfect tense (ind.)	127	18%
other tenses or moods	62[b]	9%
TOTAL	714	100%

[a] The following predicates in main clauses in Livy 22 are morphologically ambiguous between perfect and present tense: *avertit* (2), *concurrit, confugit, contendit, corruit, evenit, fugit, intendit, invenit, occurrit, ostendit* (2), *perfugit, pervenit* (5), *refugit, restituit, statuit* (2), *venit* (4). This category also includes 15 instances of *ait* and *inquit* in main clauses.
[b] Other tenses are: indicative pluperfect (34), historic infinitive (18), subjunctive imperfect or pluperfect (6), future (2), elliptic (2).

3.2 Methodology

All 147 occurrences of the present tense in our corpus were studied in their immediately preceding and following contexts, and categorized as Cognitive System 1, 2 or 3 on the basis of a particular set of distributional features. The research parameters we worked with are shown in the left-hand column of Table 4, and involve linguistic and narratological features of the context which we consider – on their own or in combination – as potentially indicative of one of the three cognitive systems CS1, CS2, CS3.[10]

CS1, for instance, is typically characterized by speaker-perspective, presentation of historical events in a list-like manner, not necessarily in chronological

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[10] Table 4 makes use of the results of various earlier research projects conducted by ourselves and by other members of the Dutch research group on Latin and Greek linguistics. See most recently Allan (2018) and Van Gils and Kroon (2018), and the literature referred to there.

order, and the occurrence of coherence markers that are argumentative in nature. As for nouns, it is assumed that abstract and non-specific entities occur relatively more often in CS1 than in CS2 and CS3, where concrete nouns will abound (which in CS3 are, in turn, expected to be more specific and individualized than in CS2). Nouns and verbs in CS1 are, furthermore, characterized by a relatively low specificity (e.g. *facere* 'to do'), especially as compared to CS3 (e.g. *praecipitare* '(to cause) to fall headlong'). A high degree of lexical specificity is considered an important prerequisite for a high level of reader engagement (immersion) in the narrative. A comparable observation can be made for the parameter voice/passivization. Whereas in CS1 – which does not pertain to narrative in a proper sense – we expect relatively few actions (i.e. agentive events), and a relatively frequent use of the passive voice, in CS3 actions and the active voice are taken as the default. CS2 occupies an intermediate position in this, as is also the case with other parameters in Table 4.

Table 4: Research parameters.

Parameter	CS1	CS2	CS3
Perspective	Speaker	Narrator (often implicit)	Character
Presentation of historical events	Listed	Summarized	Registered
Rhythm	Not applicable	Summary / Scenic	Scenic / Slow
Coherence marking	Argumentative text-structuring: *ceterum, itaque, ergo, enim*	(Distal) narrative text-structuring (*tum, eo die, nam, igitur, quia, ubi primum, ibi, cum+impf.coni., quo, (ut eo), tamen*)	(Proximal) spatial & temporal text-structuring (*hic, repente*); word order (V first)
Character speech	–	Indirect discourse	Direct discourse
Lexical specificity & degree of individualization (nouns & verbs)	Low	Medium	High
Passive voice	Common	Possible	Exceptional

Using Table 4 as our main research instrument we were able to categorize all 147 occurrences of the present tense in our database in terms of CS1, CS2 or CS3. It has to be emphasized here, however, that the situation in actual texts

is not always as clear-cut as Table 4 might suggest. Not all prototypical features of the individual systems need to be present, and often we came across passages with a clearly mixed profile, in which the boundaries between the three cognitive systems were quite fuzzy. The features summed up in Table 4 are tendencies, not rules, and with regard to the various cognitive systems we are clearly dealing with a cline rather than with discrete categories.

4 Analysis and discussion

4.1 Analysis

The analysis of the 147 instances of the present tense in our database along the lines sketched above shows that they are distributed quite unevenly over the three types of contexts/cognitive systems we have distinguished. The data are given in Table 5.

Table 5: Distribution of present tense in terms of cognitive systems (Livy *AUC* book 22).

	instances of present tense (main clauses, narrator text)	percentage
CS1	28	18%
CS2	**111**	**77%**
CS3	8	5%
TOTAL	147	100%

Most importantly, we counted only 8 instances of the *immersive use* of the present tense (CS3), spread over only two passages. By far the most frequent appeared to be the *narratorial* use (CS2, 111 instances). In the following subsections we will elaborate on these findings, focussing especially on the narratorial use in CS2.

4.2 The present tense in cognitive system 1: reader and writer aligned

The first cognitive system is triggered by references to the discourse situation of the writer and his addressee or by references to other elements in their common

ground (see Table 1). The contemporaneous 'ideal' addressee of Livy's book 22 shared common ground with the author in various ways: they shared their spatiotemporal deictic centre in the sense that both are anchored in the Roman society of the first century CE. It is also clear that knowledge of Roman customs, history and institutions is taken for granted, which means they shared 'cultural common ground', as well.[11] With an indicative of the present tense in the context of the first cognitive system, the writer underlines the intersubjective nature of the communicated content, by marking the information as part of the common ground.[12] The perfect tense, by contrast, would have marked the subjective nature of the information, inviting the reader to be more critical or at least more careful.[13]

The 28 instances of present tense main clause predicates which occur in the context of the first cognitive system refer to either geographical features of the landscape (example 3 above and example 4 below), or to the existence of a source, often anonymous, for a given version of the historical events in the years 221–216 BCE (*traditur* in example 5). What is exceptional in our corpus is the use of the actual present tense in a meta-narrative remark (*est* in example 5).

(4) *et iam peruenerant ad loca nata insidiis, ubi maxime montes Cortonenses Trasumennus subit. Via tantum **interest** perangusta, uelut ad <id> ipsum de industria relicto spatio; deinde paulo latior **patescit** campus; inde colles **adsurgunt**.* (LIV. 22, 4, 2)
 'And now he had reached a spot designed by nature for an ambuscade, where Trasumennus approaches closest to the mountains of Cortona. Between them **is** nothing but a very narrow track, as though room had been left expressly for this purpose; the ground then **widens** into a little plain; beyond this the hills **rise** steeply.'

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11 See Clark (1996) for a distinction in types of common ground. Cultural common ground is opposed to personal common ground in the sense that the latter consists of the shared time and place and the recollection of previous communicative exchanges between a speaker and addressee. The relevance of one or both types of common ground depends on the genre.

12 Common ground does not necessarily mean that the reader already knows the content, but either he knows, or he should update his common ground with this information; either way, the information is not challengeable.

13 This article will only discuss the present tense, even though a comparative approach is certainly useful.

(5) *Haec **est** nobilis ad Trasumennum pugna atque inter paucas memorata pop-*
uli Romani clades. quindecim milia Romanorum in acie caesa sunt; decem
milia sparsa fuga per omnem Etruriam auersis itineribus urbem petiere; duo
milia quingenti hostium in acie, multi postea [utrimque] ex uulneribus peri-
*ere. multiplex caedes utrimque facta **traditur** ab aliis.* (Liv. 22, 7, 1–3)
'Such was the famous battle of Trasumennus, a disaster memorable as few
others have been in Roman history. Fifteen thousand Romans were killed
on the field; ten thousand, scattered in flight over all Etruria, made their
way by different roads to the City. Two thousand five hundred of the
enemy fell in the battle and many perished subsequently of their wounds.
Some writers multiply the losses on both sides'.

At the start of example (4), it is clear to the reader that the battle of Lake
Trasimene is imminent. The sentence starting with *et iam peruenerant* is part of
a longer stretch of narrative (CS2) which has typically narrative features like
a narrator's distant perspective on the characters' actions (*iam* and the pluper-
fect tense signal a narrative arc of tension), a summarizing presentation of
events, a scenic rhythm, and, finally, lexical specificity at an intermediate level
between giving abstract descriptions and providing detailed features of objects
or events (*loca nata insidiis*).

The beginning of the next sentence, *uia tantum interest*, together with the pre-
ceding *ubi*-clause, signals a topic shift from characters to location and, aided by
the lexical semantics of the predicate *interest*, also a shift from narrative to descrip-
tion. The present tense (instead of, e.g. the imperfect) enhances the impression of
a rupture in the narrative, and marks a shift to the first cognitive system in which
the reader is invited to activate or update his common ground with regard to the
geographical situation. The description continues with two more present tenses
(*patescit, adsurgunt*) before returning to the narrative of the disastrous battle.

Directly after this narrative in CS2 (22, 4, 3–22, 6, 12), we change to the first
cognitive system again with the passage in (5), starting with *haec est nobilis ad
Trasumennum pugna*. The common ground of the writer and addressee obvi-
ously contains the story which has just been told and to which the writer can
refer with the 'proximal' demonstrative *haec* and the (equally proximal) present
tense (*est*). The change from the second to the first cognitive system is expected
after the end of the story and the first two words (*haec est*) clearly refer to the
common ground of speaker and addressee.

The following predicates in perfect tense provide the expected list of those
who died, those who fled and those who were wounded without any linguistic
indication that we have changed back to the second cognitive system. As indi-
cated in Table 4, the listing of events is a typical feature of the first cognitive

system. The perfect tense indicates that the writer authoritatively takes responsibility for these numbers without implying any common ground on these matters. What is presented intersubjectively, however, is the existence of other sources (*traditur ab aliis*) which claim higher numbers of casualties on both sides.[14] In book 22, the existence of alternative versions of historical events is frequently referred to with the present tense in the first cognitive system, almost as if the writer wants to acknowledge their existence together with his addressee, in order to move on without the need to defend his own position.

4.3 The present tense in cognitive system 3: reader and character aligned

Labov (1972) and Fleischmann (1990) have shown how a natural story typically consists of the phases of abstract, orientation, complication, peak, resolution and coda. Experienced narrators and listeners unconsciously follow this pattern which enables them also to anticipate the next phase or the end of a story. In an abstract the speaker makes clear why the story is 'tellable'. Once the addressee's attention is caught, he may be seduced into becoming a narratee and to activate the second cognitive system in which a story world is unfolded. And once the threshold of the narrative is firmly passed, the narrator may gradually seduce the narratee into feeling emotionally involved or even immersed into the story world.[15] If he succeeds, the third cognitive system is activated in which the deictic centre may switch to the *hic et nunc* of the story world, the perspective changes from narrator to character (identifiable or anonymous), the rhythm slows down, and the degree of lexical specificity and individualization matches that of personal observation or experience of the events. In Livy's book 22 immersive scenes are not uncommon, but it is only in two of them that the historic present is used, in a series of three and five predicates, respectively. The first scene describes Hannibal's struggle through the marshes (LIV. 22, 6, 5–6: *euadunt, praecipitantur, immergunt*). The second scene has already been cited under (1), here repeated as example (6). It describes how Hasdrubal, with his ships lying in the mouth of the river Ebro in Spain, is surprised by the Roman fleet under the command of Scipio.

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14 References to other oral or written sources in Livy *AUC* book 22 occur with the following predicates in present tense: *auctores sunt* (3), *comparandae sunt, creditur, dicitur, dicuntur* (3), *discrepat, est et alia fama, fertur* (2), *ferunt* (4), *indicio est, scribit, traditur, tradunt* (2), *variant*.
15 Experimental psychological research on the effect of watching a movie seems to confirm the relevance of assuming three cognitive systems. See Bjørner, Magnusson and Nielsen (2016).

(6)　*haec equites dimissi passim imperabant; mox Hasdrubal ipse cum omni exercitu aderat, uarioque omnia tumultu **strepunt** ruentibus in naues simul [in] remigibus militibusque, fugientium magis e terra quam in pugnam euntium modo. uixdum omnes conscenderant, cum alii resolutis oris in ancoras **euehuntur**, alii, ne quid teneat, ancoralia **incidunt**, raptimque omnia <ac> praepropere agendo militum apparatu nautica ministeria **impediuntur**, trepidatione nautarum capere et aptare arma miles **prohibetur**.* (LIV. 22, 19, 9–10)

The perspective taken here seems to be close to the described events (character perspective) as the audible and visible details imply (*uario tumultu strepunt*), and the rhythm of this episode is very slow (including even non-events like *impediuntur* and *prohibetur*).[16] There is a lack of coherence markers denoting distance, argumentation or order, but instead we find many lexical references conveying the idea of complete chaos and lack of strategy. Through these linguistic indications, the reader is implicitly invited to pass the threshold and enter the third cognitive system, in which he may feel immersed in the story world rather than just following the plot. In this third cognitive system, the historic present induces the reader to align with a character, experiencing, as it were, the events as they unfold before his eyes. It is to be noted that the predicates in the present tense often refer to physical experiences, apparently out of the characters' control. In the following section we will see that this contrasts strongly with the second cognitive system, in which the historic present tense typically invites the narratee to understand the rationale behind the actions of the characters.

4.4 The present tense in cognitive system 2: reader and narrator aligned

The second cognitive system is, in a sense, the most artificial: whether it will be activated depends on the speaker's art of telling a story and the interest and narrative experience of the reader. The reader needs to accept the guidance of the narrator and to adopt the role of narratee. The common ground of narrator and narratee is less obviously connected to the actual world or normally shared emotions, as is the case in the first and third cognitive system, but instead is

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16 Genres differ in what counts as a 'scenic' or 'slow' rhythm. In historiography, we may find passages in which decades or even centuries are summarized. A slow scene in historiography may narrate the events of one day in a few sentences. In the epic genre, however, a story may slow down to a rhythm slower than real life, e.g. when various sentences are devoted to a flying spear.

negotiated and constructed during the narrative itself. One way of constructing common ground in the course of a narrative, we contend, is the use of the present tense. In contrast to perfect tense forms which are typically used to tell noteworthy events from the authoritative narrator perspective, the narrator may use the present tense to signal intersubjective alignment with his narratee. There may be various reasons why such intersubjective alignment in a story is opportune at a particular moment. In Livy 22, we have found a number of different, characteristic motivations.

For instance, right after the description of the surroundings of Lake Trasimene (see example 4), the narrator continues the narrative by means of the anaphoric adverb *ibi*. The subject is Hannibal, who strategically positions his army (example 7).

(7) *ibi castra in aperto **locat**, ubi ipse cum Afris modo Hispanisque consideret;*
     *Baliares ceteramque leuem armaturam post montis **circumducit**; equites ad*
     *ipsas fauces saltus tumulis apte tegentibus **locat**, ut, ubi intrassent Romani,*
     obiecto equitatu clausa omnia lacu ac montibus essent. (Liv. 22, 4, 3)
     'At this point he **laid out** a camp in the open, for himself and his African and
     Spanish troops only; the Baliares and the rest of his light-armed forces he **led
     round** behind the mountains; the cavalry he **stationed** near the entrance to
     the defile, where some hillocks formed a convenient screen for them, so that
     when the Romans should have entered the pass, they might block the road,
     and trap the entire army between the lake and the mountains.'

A number of linguistic features point at this transition to the second cognitive system: the anadeictic *ibi* which is clearly from the narrator's distal perspective; the summarized sequence of actions of an inferred protagonist (referred to with zero anaphors and *ipse*) brings typically narrative referential coherence; the concreteness of the nouns and verbs without being detailed or individualized (*locare, circumducere, Afri, Hispani, Baliares, equites, Romani, lacus, montes*) point to a distal narrator. We remember that the geographical description cited in (4) explicitly contained the message that the landscape seemed to be made for an ambush. As narratees we know Hannibal's character well enough at this stage of the history to anticipate that he will recognize the strategic advantages of the landscape.[17] The present tense in (7) marks exactly this expected understanding of Hannibal's

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17 See van Gils (2018) for spatial strategies in the following Roman defeat at Cannae (Liv. 22, 34–61).

actions on the part of the narratee. Or, stated otherwise, the present tense in (7) grammatically anchors the information into the common ground.

Our data seem to confirm the interpretation of the present tense in the second cognitive system as intersubjective, that is, as indicating that the reader is assumed to have understood or to have already inferred the narrative action referred to. The 111 instances of the present tense in a CS2-context never appear to be used for surprising events, neither for actions by completely new characters or events without a controlling agent: as narrator you can expect alignment only insofar as the narratee can reasonably be expected to follow and more or less anticipate the presented course of events. In contrast, we do find unexpected actions by unidentified characters in the historic present in the *third* cognitive system. This is understandable, because the requested alignment in the third cognitive system is with (the experience of) a character, not with the all-knowing narrator.

The following example may at first sight seem to have features of this third cognitive system:

(8) *Primis tenebris silentio mota castra; boues aliquanto ante signa acti. Ubi ad radices montium uiasque angustas uentum est, signum extemplo **datur**, ut accensis cornibus armenta [aut id] in aduersos concitentur montis.* (Liv. 2, 17, 1–2)
'In the dusk of evening the Carthaginians broke camp in silence, driving on the cattle a little way before the standards. When they reached the foothills and the narrow roads, the signal **was** immediately **given** to set fire to the horns and drive the herd up the mountain'

The Carthaginians have prepared a trap for the Romans by tying dry branches to the horns of cattle, driving them at night up the mountain and setting fire to the branches in order to confuse the enemy. The words *signum extemplo datur* describe a rushed action. There is, however, nothing unexpected or sudden for the narratee, who has been prepared for this trick in quite some detail. Setting the branches on fire is an understandable step in the plotline of this embedded story and by the use of the present tense the narratee is invited to see its logic in alignment with the narrator.

In (8) above, as often in CS2-contexts, the actions in the present tense are not only comprehensible and more or less expected, but they are also *consequential*. The reader is invited to align his perspective to that of the narrator in understanding why a particular event is taking place *and* why this is relevant for the way the story will be continued. This can be illustrated further with example (9) about the election of the future 'bad general' Terentius Varro.

(9) *Cum his orationibus accensa plebs esset, tribus patriciis petentibus, . . .*
 C. Terentius consul unus **creatur***, ut in manu eius essent comitia rogando*
 collegae. (LIV. 22, 35, 1–2)
 'When the plebs had been inflamed by these harangues, though there
 were three patrician candidates, . . . Gaius Terentius was the only consul
 elected, and the assembly called to choose a colleague for him was there-
 fore under his control.'

The sentence starts in a typically narrative way, with a causal *cum*-clause which
describes the popularity of C. Terentius Varro among the *plebs*. His election
therefore seems inevitable, in spite of the presence of more eligible candidates.
The present tense of *creatur* marks exactly the reader's expected anticipation of
this outcome.[18] The election is not only anticipated, but also consequential, in
the sense that it looks forward to future narrative developments, the first of
which is immediately mentioned in the *ut*-clause.[19] The historic present in
the second cognitive system thus seems to function as a backward and forward
linking cohesion device at the same time.[20]

   Elections, as in example (9), and for instance deaths of important people
may be referred to by both the perfect and the historic present tense. We argue
that the HP is chosen when the writer wants to present the elections or deaths
as part of the common ground, that is, as somehow given or inferable informa-
tion.[21] When, however, the narrator uses the perfect tense, he presents the elec-
tions or deaths as part of a list, or as a summary of events which the reader is
not expected to have already anticipated.[22]

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18 The actions in examples (7) and (8) are also in line with the circumstances just described.
Sentences like (9) may, for example, also start with an *ubi*-clause, as in LIV 22,9,5 or with
a participle as subject complement, as in LIV. 22, 9, 6 (*metuens*).
19 The sentences containing an HP in our database quite often already contain the foreseeable
consequence of the action referred to by the HP, in the form of *ut*-clauses (see also e.g. LIV. 22, 41,
8), or with comparable prospective expressions (e.g. *quo + coni., quo magis*, future participle).
20 See Torrego (1994: 143) who describes the historic present in Livy as a bridge, "como
tiempo de conexion entre dos partes de una unidad narrativa". This metaphor comes close to
what we call forward and backward linking. See also Pinkster (1998: 79): "The present tense
[in Latin historiography, LvG/CK] seems to be preferred, for example, when an important ad-
vance is made in the progress of events (cf. Klug 1992)."
21 Often such instances of HP have been labelled 'annalistic' present (see recently Pinkster
2015: 409) or 'praesens tabulare' (see the discussion in Viti 2010), but in our approach there is
no need to assume a separate 'annalistic' use of the present tense.
22 See e.g. *creati sunt* in the same paragraph (LIV. 22, 35) about the election of otherwise
unknown men and for unknown reasons, vs. *creatur* in (9) said about the general who will

The examples of historic presents in CS2 cited in (7) to (9) contained the predicates *locat, circumducit, datur* and *creatur*. We think it is not a coincidence that these verbs, like all other instances of the historic present in the second cognitive system in our corpus, are actions, controlled by some known agent.[23] In terms of Pinkster's semantic classification of verbs in states, processes, situations and actions (looking at the semantic features +/- human and +/- dynamic), three of the four classes (states, processes and situations) are not represented at all in the historic present tense when the second cognitive system is activated.[24] This is compatible with the function suggested here of the historic present in the second cognitive system, namely invoking intersubjective alignment on the course of particular narrative events.[25]

We end our analysis by returning to example (2), repeated here as example (10). The narratee is informed here that Publius Scipio arrives in Spain with an impressive fleet and joins his brother (*fratri se coniungit*) who was already waging war in Spain. In Livy's third decade the *Scipiones* serve as an example of successful dual leadership, in contrast to all other Roman generals who are described as opposing each other rather than fighting their common enemy Hannibal.

(10) *ea classis ingens . . . portum Tarraconis ex alto tenuit. ibi milite exposito profectus Scipio fratri se* **coniungit**, *ac deinde communi animo consilioque gerebant bellum.* (LIV. 22, 22, 2–3)
   'This fleet . . . dropped anchor in the harbour of Tarraco. There Scipio disembarked his troops and **set out to join his brother**; and from that time forward they carried on the war with perfect harmony of temper and of purpose.'

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decide the fatal outcome of the battle and whose election is the logical outcome of his popularity.

23 Often these actions are part of more specific semantic sub-groups of 'controlled actions'. Of the 111 predicates most are about communication (*adloquitur, iubent, nuntiat*, 34 instances) or about moving someone or something (*adiungit, duct, mittunt*, 30 instances), or moving intransitively (*adgreditur, ineunt, vertunt*, 22 instances). The remaining instances often contain aggressive acts (*capit, expugnant, peruastat*) or some other action (*desiliunt, praeligantur, datur*).
24 Pinkster (2015: 22–24).
25 Many studies on the HP have seen a connection between verb semantics and the use of the HP. See e.g. Viti (2010). Pinkster (2015: 408, note 52) observes: "Koller (1951) sees a connection between the use of the historic present and the meaning of the verbs: in his view, 'inceptive' verbs in particular are found in the historic present." We see the same patterns, but do not consider verb semantics an explanatory factor in itself.

The intersubjective presentation of Scipio's reunion with his brother invites the reader to note Scipio's sensible behaviour and relate it to the subsequent harmonious collaboration during the rest of the war.

5 Conclusion

The aim of the present study was to gain further insight into the specific uses of the present tense in Latin narrative texts and to propose a comprehensive explanation for the variety of its uses in Livy *AUC* book 22. In a theoretical introduction we claimed that the present tense in Latin is an intersubjectivity device which can operate in three cognitive systems. Reading a narrative allows subsequent cognitive shifts from 1) listening to a speaker to 2) following a narrative to 3) immersing oneself into a story world. The writer may linguistically create cognitive contexts which facilitate such shifts. The 'common ground' involved in the intersubjective alignment marked by the present tense differs according to the specific cognitive system involved. This explains the substantial differences between the 'actual' use of the present, the 'immersive' use and the 'narratorial' use. It has been argued before that many instances of the historic present in, for instance, Caesar, Vergil and Livy are neither 'actual present' nor 'immersive', but the solutions offered usually focus on verb semantics, whereas we argue that recognition of the specific 'cognitive' context (CS1, CS2 or CS3) might be the key to explaining them.

The cognitive systems have been operationalized by connecting them to prototypical linguistic and narratological features. In Livy 22, all predicates of the main clauses in narrator text (71% of the total) have been analysed. One fifth of the predicates (147 instances) unambiguously had a present tense form. An analysis of the context of these instances revealed that 18% was found in a CS1 context, 77% in a CS2 context, and 5% in a CS3 context. The present tenses in the second cognitive system (111 instances) are neither 'actual' present tenses (CS1) nor 'immersive' present tenses (CS3), but form an in-between category of 'narratorial presents', often with a text-organizing effect. With in-depth analyses of a few examples, the intersubjective alignment between reader and narrator in this second cognitive system has been illustrated.[26]

As to future research, we intend to extend our study of the present tense to other historiographical works and to other genres, taking also other tenses into

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26 See van Gils and Kroon (2018) for a more elaborate analysis of the structure of Livy book 22, and of the ways in which Livy exploits intersubjectivity devices like the HP for smoothly guiding the reader through the text and focusing his attention.

account.[27] Moreover, we intend to explore the potential of an intersubjectivity approach to other deictic categories in Latin.

Abbreviations

HP   Historic Present
CS   Cognitive System

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27 A first investigation of the present tense in Tacitus' *Annals* 15 has confirmed the applicability of our theoretical and analytical framework, and, moreover, revealed some interesting stylistic differences between Livy and Tacitus in how they exploit the intersubjective potential of the HP.

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