

The Present Tense in Narrative Discourse: Modes and Thematic Functions

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Abstract

The present study focuses on the use of the present tense in narrative discourse, its varieties, and functions. The study surveys the occurrence of the present tense along the different discourse types in order to compare and consequently draw distinctions. It is observed that there are at least four varieties of the present tense constructions used within narrative texts performing a number of functions. It is used as the standard narrative tense in case of historic present where the whole or a large portion of the narrative is conducted in the present, which is, here, timeless in reference. It also sets clearly descriptions of place, characters, props, and the surroundings. Setting, which is one manifestation of expository discourse, at times, deviates from the narrative tense, i.e., past and adopts the more neutral tense of the present. Evaluations and author's comments appear in narrative discourse, sometimes, in the form of gnomic present for which narrators have special preference. Finally, the present tense is one of the obvious distinctions of interior monologues where the inner thoughts, contemplation, and speculation of a character are portrayed. The present tense is trailed in about 14 lengthy narrative texts, i.e., novels in order to investigate all possibilities of occurrence and arrive at some general statements pertinent to its narrative functions.

Introduction

One dimension of Discourse Analysis is the study of such semantic-syntactic features of discourse represented by voice, mood/modality, aspect, and, of course, tense. These features are acute markers and essential signals that determine a great deal of the text construction, movement, and internal net of relationships. They have also a lot to do with the two-fold distinction of prominent/ancillary, salient/secondary, or foregrounding/backgrounding, which concerns itself with texture or the internal building of the text.

Tense monopolizes the temporal, sequential movement in the text. Temporality, in itself, is almost as crucial in the narrative text as causality whose cause-effect formula is an obligatory component in the construction of the plot (Forster, 1927: 93). Tense is manifested in the sequential arrangement of the narrative information since events are normally arranged chronologically. The temporal cues are at times clausal, sentential, or even cross-sentential, i.e., at levels higher than the sentence to encompass the paragraph and even the whole discourse. The guiding clues vary largely extending along a continuum from plain time references by the use of adverbs of time to oblique suggestions of temporality, which, in such a case, is hardly decided. Tense, as inspected in the present paper, is the domain of the verb. Candid cues of temporal relations in the text may come to lend a hand in the analysis, but tense as carried by the main verb is the subject of scrutiny. More precisely, the tense shifts as appear in narrative discourse are tracked and studied. It is worth stating that the shifts to the present tense are detected and analyzed in opposition to the standard narrative tense, viz., the past. Thus, the occurrence of the present tense in narratives is put under the microscope.

The present tense elaborated on in the current study is restrained to the narration proper, i.e., the use of the present tense in dialogues is excluded. In dialogue, which denotes characters' speech exchanges, the present tense occurs quite frequently since a character might stick to the present or choose to make a shift, as the situation requires. The speeches are not necessarily narrative, i.e., tell a story though they can be loaded with narrative information. What is investigated, here, is the deviation from the norm where the narrative convention is deliberately broken; the present tense in speech is by no means a violation of the established norm of narration.

It is observed at large that narrative discourse encompasses a variety of tense changes where the past is violated. If the narrative deviates from the established tense -past tense, there must be some significance, function, or end of some kind engendered by the shift. The present study investigates the

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thematic as well as the narrative ends associated with the use of the present tense in narrative texts.

Hypothesis

The present study pivots on the hypothesis that the present tense can be a token of embedded discourse types other than narrative. In addition, the present tense is inserted into past narratives as a strategy to achieve thematic as well as narrative functions.

Tense and Time

Prince (1987: 96) identifies tense with "*the set of temporal relations-SPEED, ORDER, DISTANCE, etc - between the situations, and events recounted and their recounting, STORY and DISCOURSE, NARRATED, and NARRATING.*" In grammar, tense is a form of indicative of a time distinction (ibid.). Lyons (1986:175) maintains that every language utterance is normally accompanied by deictic information, i.e., it manifests orientational features as well as spatio-temporal information as it occurs in a particular place and a particular time. The essential characteristic of the category of tense is that "*it relates the time of the action, event, or state of affairs referred to in the sentence to the time of the utterance (the time of the utterance being 'now')*" (ibid.: 305). This relation between tense and time, Longacre (1976: 204) poses, is best portrayed in illustrating the function of tense. Thus, tense encodes deep structure time in various systems of surface structure tenses which are highly language-specific. However, though time, as a deep structure feature, underlies surface structure tenses, yet tense systems are rarely purely temporal. Both Lyons (1968: 406); and Longacre (1976: 237-8) point to the interference of other semantic-syntactic categories of **aspect, modality, and inference**. However, Jackson (1985: 18-9) draws the attention to the fact that tense is independent of time though it relates to "*real-world*" time. Tense, sometimes, has nothing to do with time. Present tense, for instance, does not necessarily encode present time; it could be timeless in reference, habitual, or historic. Comrie (1976: 1-2) explains the distinction between tense and time by using the former "*to relate the time of the situation referred to to some other time, usually, to the moment of speaking,*" i.e., the **now** of the act of speech.

The major tense- distinction in English is, traditionally, described as an opposition of '*past*' v. '*present*', which is regarded, Lyons (1968: 306) proposes, as a contrast of '*past*' v. '*non-past*'. So while "*the past tense does typically refer to 'before now'*", the '*non-past*' is not restricted to what contemporaneous with the time of the utterance: it is used also for timelessness, or eternal and future statements (ibid.).

Tense and Discourse Types

Longacre (1983: 3) observes that tense is one of the elements resorted to so as to distinguish discourse genre. For each discourse type, there is almost always a specific tense, which works in the company of other features like **aspect**, **voice**, and **modality** to set it off other discourse types. Consequently, each discourse genre manipulates a particular tense or variety of tense as its unmarked standard. Although two or more of the four discourse types: **narrative, behavioral, procedural, and expository** are found to share the same tense or tenses, yet tense differences remain among the basic cues that help draw clear-cut lines among discourse types (Longacre, 1974: 361).

Generally, the four discourse types are specified according to two emic (deep) parameters which are "*the contingent temporal succession*", and "*agent orientation*" (Longacre, 1983: 3-7 ; 1996:7). The former is related to the chronological linkage defined as "*the framework of temporal succession*" which is realized in the surface (etic) structure feature of tense. The other parameter has to do with participant reference that indicates "*the orientation towards agent with at least a partial identity of agent reference running through the discourse type*" (ibid). The intersection of these two parameters in addition to two other secondary ones of **projection** and **tension** yields the four discourse genre already mentioned.

Thus, narrative discourse which comprises novels, short stories, folktales, and the like has both parameters active as it manifests the chronological linkage of the temporal ordering of the events and the participant orientation towards a first or third person agent. Expository discourse, which includes scientific essays, articles, and descriptive materials, lacks in both parameters. It neither temporally sequenced nor oriented towards a specific agent. Procedural discourse, which concerns itself with questions like "*how to do it, how it was done, how it takes place*" shows a chronological linkage only as the steps of the procedure, for instance a food recipe, are normally arranged temporally according to the time of occurrence. The participant orientation is missing since what matters most is what is done or made rather than who does or makes it. Behavioral (hortatory) discourse is rather a broad category that subsumes exhortations, eulogies, and "*political speeches of candidates*"; it demonstrates no temporal succession, but maintains a clear participant orientation. It is evidently addressed to a specific agent/agents since its main question is "*how people did or shall behave*" (ibid.).

Consequently and in relation to the first parameter of temporal succession, narrative discourse depends on the simple past as its standard tense. Procedural discourse normally has a non-past tense variety, i.e., either present or future

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though the probability of past tense is admitted. Behavioral discourse illustrates a present or future tense as commands and suggestions are strictly encoded by the use of imperatives. Finally, expository discourse marks no tense distinction, as time is not focused (Longacre, 1983: 7).

Tense and Narrative Discourse

Prince (1987:96) generally sums up tense in asserting the almost overall agreement among psychologists, linguists, and students of fiction and literature who often argue that tenses can be grouped in two main categories. The first includes tenses that are "related to the deictic system of "I-here-now," to the situation of ENUNCIATION (e.g., the present perfect-"he has eaten- which connects a past occurrence with the present time). The second category comprises tenses that are not related to the above mentioned system and they include the preterit- he ate- which refers to a past occurrence (ibid.). Narrative privileges the members of the second group, i.e., the preterit but also the imperfect and the pluperfect as opposed to the present, the present perfect, and the future.

Thus, among the absolute tenses: past/present/future, the simple past is the narrative tense; it is the unmarked standard tense of narrative discourse. Any departure from this standard must consequently imply a departure from the canonical conventions of narratives whether oral, written and folk or fictive though there exist many examples of narrative that are wholly or partially constructed in the present or perfective (Fleischman, 1991: 75). In English, the present tense is basically regarded as **imperfective**; it fits best descriptions rather than narration. The latter pivots on the use of successive clauses or sentences to communicate successive events that take place in the world described in the narrative. However, it is normal to have the narrative deviate from its standard conventionalized tense to perform thematic or narrative functions. Tense variations may be decided by the prominence of the narrative information. Glasbey (2001: 2) associates temporal varieties with the levels of information distributions, i.e., narrative information is encoded in different tenses to mark their levels of prominence. Longacre (1989: 418) points out that prominent narrative information is normally conveyed in the simple past constructions, which make up the story line of the narrative, i.e., the main line of events (see Al-Hajaj, 2001).

However, in his salience/prominence Scheme proposed in 1989, Longacre assures that tense varieties are intended to convey a batch of thematic functions. The pluperfect, past perfect, is specific as to flashback functions; evaluation and author's comments appear in the present; contemplated, but not yet realized

events and actions (**flashforward**), are set in the future tense; and descriptive setting elements are exposed in past and present. Tense variations are generally determined in accordance with "*exigencies of the subject matter*" (Fleischman, 1985: 851).

Time and Narration

What is meant by time of narration is mainly time relative to the story or as Prince (1982: 27) explains, the relation of "*the chronological link*" between "*the times of the occurrence of the narration and the narrated*". Prince (1987: 98) relates **Time** to "*the period or periods during which the situations and events presented (story time, time of the narrated) and their presentation (discourse time, time of narrating.*" The temporal dimension of narration is often deemed more essential than the spatial dimension represented by setting, hence narratologists necessitate the factors of locating narration in time, which must be either past, present, or future (Genette, 1982: 215). The time of the narration and that of the narrated are not necessarily coincident. The chronological differences observed between the times of narration and the narrated usually yield four major probabilities as delineated by both Genette (1982: 215); and Prince (1982: 27):

A. Posterior Narration

It involves a situation in which narration follows the narrated in time. It is, definitely, the most frequent situation observed in a very large body of narratives. The use of the past tense is the most distinct feature of posterior narration though the manipulation of tense variations for thematic ends is quite possible. However, such expressions as *many years/months/weeks ago, in the last war, in 1940*, and the like may help identify posterior narration. Genette (1982: 217) devises the term *subsequent* to indicate posterior narration.

B. Anterior Narration

It presents a narrative situation whose time of narrating precedes the time of the narrated. This is, undoubtedly, the case of what Todorov has first called *predictive* narrative (ibid.). Predictive narratives, Prince (1982: 166n) suggests, may encode narrative situations that are highly hypothetical utilizing the future tense or conditional constructions to mark meditated but non-realized events. Genette (1982: 216) explains that predictive narrative takes on different modes: prophetic, astrological, oracular, and many others. Prior narrative is a third term coined to indicate anterior narration (ibid.).

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C. Simultaneous Narration

Prince (1982:27) maintains that in this case the narration and the narrated occur at the same time. Genette (1982: 218) considers this type as the simplest since simultaneous narration eliminates any sort of interference or temporal game so that what happens first would be narrated first, and so on.

D. Intercalated Narration

It is the type of narration in which all the above-mentioned types are found together, a situation that is noticed in many diary and episoltary novels (Prince, 1982: 27).

The Pragmatic Functions of the Present Tense in Narratives

The present tense is often inserted into past narratives as a strategy intentionally proposed for some purposes related to thematic and narrative ends. Research work on this issue points out a host of narrative functions performed by the present tense. Fleischman (1985: 851), for instance, views the insertion of the present tense into past narratives as a thematic means that enables the author to mark less prominent materials, i.e., it could be a sign of subordination. On the other hand, Longacre (1996: 40) detects the manipulation of the present tense in setting off peaks or prepeaks in climatic narratives- as opposed to episodic narrative- where **historic** present is usually chosen to mark the former. The present tense is admitted as a sign of subordination when it occurs in its **gnomic**, proverbial thrust. Gnostic present that is universal and proverbial in nature is the most obvious feature of evaluative statements and author's instructions that fall out of the story world. Such evaluations and comments are neither obligatory nor part of the story, but statements voiced in relation to the events of the story (ibid.).

Although the present tense functions are not always easily identified since they may overlap and contrast, yet they, generally, fall into two types: textual and expressive. Textual functions include the use of the present tense to highlight or foreground important narrative information (actions and events), a situation generally known as **internal evaluation**, where the author emphasizes their significance in the story by means of the present tense. As for the second function, the present tense can express point of view, mark shifts in focalization, single out interior monologues, or encode **external evaluation** where the author exits the diegetic world and comments on the events outside the story world proper. Additionally, the present tense helps mark **narrative stance**, which represents the narrator's subjective distance from, or else, involvement in the events of the story. It is to create a visualizing as opposed to the recounting

plane where the past events are visualized as if the speaker were watching them take place (Chapter 7: Base Spaces, Narrative Levels, and the Present Tense: 381-427).

However, the present paper proposes that in addition to the manifold functions above delineated, there is a clear and direct relationship between the use of the present tense in past narrative discourse and other discourse types. The shift to the present tense can be regarded as a sign for the shift in discourse type, a feature that leads to the emergence of embedded discourse; discourse types might embed into each other. Thus, narrative discourse could invest expository, hortatory, or even procedural discourse types.

Historic Present

Although the simple past is the standard tense in narrative discourse, the use of historic present as the unmarked tense to compose narratives in whether wholly or partially is quite plausible. In German narratives, Fludernik (1992:132-3) observes, it is usual to construct stories and novels in the present tense or even the perfect. A similar observation is made in relation to French epics where the present tense dominates (Fleischman, 1985:87). As for English, the present tense is not a generally agreed upon norm in narrative discourse. The historic present is resorted to as a means of foregrounding when the author or more conveniently narrator intends to highlight certain narrative information. However, in English there exists hardly any narrative that is solely composed in historic present though the partial, sporadic use is quite noticed usually as a foregrounding device to effect prominence.

One of the most frequently cited examples of historic present is Faulkner's thematic use in his *As I Lay Dying*. The novella pivots on the interior monologues of its characters that take over the task of narration one by one and repeatedly for some of them. However, the present tense, here, is not merely a sign to make clear the private world of the interior monologue, it is, undoubtedly a narrative technique intended to perform certain functions. All the characters in the narrative are given the floor; even the dead *Addie*, in her coffin, is allowed to narrate poising her own point of view. But, only certain characters, mainly the sons, are granted the privilege to handle the narrative in the present. For instance, *Darl* whose narration makes the lion's share relates his part of the story wholly in historic present. Characters outside the family circle might dabble in the historic present occasionally in particular parts, but elsewhere they choose to stick to the past. Being untouched directly by the family's trouble, *Cora* and *Tull*, for instance, retain the standard tense of narration most of the time. On the other hand, under the impact of the mother's prolonged dying, her death in the

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long run, and the dilemma of her burial in rain and flood, the family members recount, reflect, and hallucinate all in the present. The general temporal framework is historic, which effects intentional timelessness, i.e., it is not merely present that disguises the past. It is designed to maintain a non-temporal sense of permanence and continuity. Thus, when *Darl*, the second son, tells:

- *Jewel stops at the spring and takes the gourd from the willow branch and drinks. I pass him and mount the path beginning to hear Cash's saw.* (p. 4)

He does not merely narrate a couple of actions of his brother Jewel's and a couple of his as clearly indicated by the verbs in bold, he, in fact, intends to seize the action in time, freeze its temporal contour, and erase temporality. There is not an inkling of time separating the actions narrated from the act of narration; both are achieved at the same time, which is an apparent example of simultaneous narration. The action is done and reported simultaneously, a phenomenon that can not happen unless a make-believe attitude is adopted to account for the duality of the occurrence of the events and their narration.

In historic present narrative situations, Longacre's narrative scheme of the generation of the narrative text proposed in 1989 and developed in 1995 and 1996 can be modified in relation to the tense feature. The present tense replaces the simple past altogether since the present is standardized as the narrative tense. Band 3, however, makes a curious issue since flashbacks are found to encompass a wide continuum of constructions whether in past narrative or historic present. In a historic narrative, memories appear in the forms of the present perfect, simple past, but they might also appear in the standard structure of the past perfect, pluperfect (the last construction is specific to past narration). The variant tenses are structural markers of the flashback remoteness from or else closeness to the immediate moment of narration, a continuum from the closest- the present perfect, to the remotest- the pluperfect; the simple past lies in between.

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Band 1 Story line	Present (S / Agent) Action , (S / Agent / patient) Motion Present (S / Experiencer) cognitive events (punctiliar adverbs) Present (S/ Patient) Contingencies
Band 2 Backgrou nd	Present progressive (S/Agent) background activities Present (S / Experiences) cognitive states (durative adverbs)
Band 3 Flashback	Present Perfect (events, activities , which are out of sequence) Present Perfect (cognitive events /states that are out of sequence) Simple Past (events, activities , which are out of sequence) Simple Past (cognitive events /states that are out of sequence Pluperfects (events, activities , which are out of sequence) Pluperfects (cognitive events /states that are out of sequence)
Band 4 Setting (expository)	Stative verbs / adjective predicates / verbs with inanimate subject (descriptive) “ Be “ vrbs / verbless clauses (equative) “ Be “ / “have “ (existential , relational)
Band 5 Irrealis	Negatives Modals / Futures
Band 6 Evaluation (author’s intrusion)	Gnomic present
Band 7 Cohesive (Verbs in preposed/postposed Adverbial Clauses)	Script determined Repetitive Back references

Narrative Scheme in Historic Present Narratives

Thus, the first example above represents Band 1 materials or the story line since the main verbs in bold are dynamic and encode actions. Band 2 covers the mental, emotional, contemplative zones of the narrative due to the static nature of verbs of cognition like *think, know, understand, feel, love, hate*, etc... (see Al-Hajaj, 2001). What is very remarkable, in fact, is the use of flashback in various constructions ranging from the present perfect as in:

- *When I reach the top he **has quit** sawing.* (P.4)
- *Vernon **has been** to town.* (P.11)

The simple past is similarly used to mark stepping into the past to dredge up memories whose temporal implications are further removed than in the case of the present perfect:

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- *She taught school too, once.* (P.11)
- *I told them that's why ma always whipped him and petted him more.* (p.17)

The utilization of the past perfect to fathom out temporally removed flashbacks is a quite possibility when the reminiscences are rooted in the remote past.

Simultaneous narration is the standard norm obeyed in diaries and to some extent in autobiographical novels. In the former, the diarist records the details of her/his daily life day by day or certain chosen days supposedly immediately as they occur. S/he can choose to encode certain incidents in the past, but the present seems to fit best the daily jotting down of happenings regardless of their importance, prominence, or significance. Though by no means a diary, Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* contains as a coda some pages supposedly torn from Stephen's diary. The narrator has never broken with the narrative past so far except, as usual, when reporting dialogues. But as a diarist, Stephen does not refrain from registering his observation in the present, as it is convenient. Along the narrative, the hero feels keenly the temporal rift between the time of narration and the narrated events though they are all his own. However, as he devotes the end of the novel to copying pieces of his diary jotted down at the time of the narrated— not narration, Stephen would occasionally dispense with the past tense:

- *March 25, morning. A troubled night of dreams. Want to get them off my chest. A long curving gallery. From the floor ascend pillars of dark vapours. It is peopled by the images of fabulous kings, set in stone. Their hands are folded upon their knees in token of weariness and there are darkened for the error of men go up before them for ever as dark vapours.* (P. 232)

The diary framework is obvious; the piece narrated, though at large descriptive, yet it is a case in point as to historic present for nowhere else the narrator takes recourse to the historic present. Furthermore, the diary in question embraces actions and events encoded in the present:

- *April 6. Certainly she remembers the past. Lynch says all women do.* (P.233)

In Murdoch's *The Sea the Sea*, the narrator-protagonist Charles Arrowby begins with the intention of writing a diary in mind, that is why the first third of the book subtitled *Prehistory* presents Arrowby, the diarist. Then he, all of a sudden and without preparation, indulges in reflecting on his theatrical life which he, lately, chose to relinquish in pursuit of simplicity and quiet picking a

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dilapidated, rickety coast cottage as his last peace harbour. Actually, Arrowby exploits lengthy stretches of narration in the past and present to inform on his daily activities of eating, drinking, swimming, wandering, and of course, writing amid his willingly chosen solitude. He also provides information on the setting, the act of writing, reflects, and speculates all in the present. However, when getting free from the diary restrictions, almost always for convenience, Arrowby is caught narrating wholly in the past heeding the narrative tense. Arrowby relates the stories of his first entrance to the theatre, his family life, the story of his interesting uncle Abel and his fascinating wife aunt Estelle, and his rival cousin, the very spoilt James, and many of his friends all in the past:

- *But I live entirely on the seaward side of the house.* (P. 14)
- *As I rise I am impelled to look towards it [mirror].* (P.18)

The present tense is an admitted necessity in simultaneous and intercalated narration of which *The Sea The Sea* is an apparent example. The temporal gap between the act of narration and the narrated is erased.

The Example below, presents three clauses that belong to Bands 1, 2, and 3 respectively. The first is an action and a motion represented by the act and motion of writing; the second is a progressive activity as manifested in the -ing aspectual form; and the third is a flashback in the form of the present perfect:

- *As I write this I am sitting on my plot of grass behind the house where I have put a chair, cushions, rugs.* (P. 26)

Generally, first person narratives abound with narrative stretches in the present inserted as a foregrounding technique to illuminate certain events in both episodic and climatic narratives. In *The Confidence-Man*, an episodic novel by Herman Melville, the narrator chooses to relate some chapters wholly or partially in the present tense. He commences to recount in the present without failing to provide descriptions and comments as he reports actions. He does not, even, attempt to be consistent in his reliance on one tense as he inclines to alternate between the present and the past. In Chapter (8) that centers on two characters: a lady and a stranger, for instance, the present tense prevails over a considerable portion of the dialogue, which has been in other chapters spared. Consequently, the extradiegetic narrator who does not appear as a character in the narrative neither major nor minor starts the dialogue with reporting the act of speech using such reportive clauses in the present. So, "*the stranger breathes....*" then "*he hastens to....*" followed by the character's exchange before the lady breaks the so far consistent rhythm of the present and her silence in consequence, and "*rejoined*" positing the shift to the past. However, the present tense is soon resumed when the same lady, this time, "*rejoins*"(pp.45-6).

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The present tense is resumed again in Chapter 10, where a merchant and a stranger meet, but this time only to introduce the episode. It prevails over the introductory paragraphs and appears sporadically elsewhere where the present and past are almost intermittently used. Thus, the characters' exchanges are reported like this in the present: "*he* [the first character] *makes fraternally up*"(p. 55). Then, "*he with the book at length seems fatigued, looks round for a seat... drops down...*", finally "*he whispers*" to start the conversation, in the middle of which however "*the owner now places it* [the book]"(pp.56-7). Reminded of something, "*the stranger starts up, moves away*" leaving his book, which "*the merchant takes*", then "*civilly returns*" and so on. The historic present functions as a marker that separates this episode from what follows with which it has much in common. Chapter (10) introduces the first interview between the stranger and the merchant aboard the ship. In contrast, the other episodes tell about some unfortunate man whose story is not narrated by the same extradiegetic narrator of the novel, but by a secondary intradiegetic narrator, i.e., a character in the novel, which happens to be no one other than the merchant. The merchant uses the secondary story to support his point of view. The story is narrated in the past though introduced in the present, which marks the change of focalization. However, the historic present is used again only to present the episodes at the very onset, but no further as in chapters 15, 16, and 17. The historic present is manipulated to highlight and foreground the episodes and their events. The lively tone of narration in which actions and actors are visualized rather than merely recounted or described consecutively is maintained to set off prominent episodes in episodic narratives where action lacks in.

Similarly in climatic narrative, Longacre (1996:40) reflects, the historic present is inserted occasionally in past narratives to mark peaks and prepeaks in which action intensifies taking a high climatic direction. The present tense paves the way before or even encodes the climax. In *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte, the narrator Jane herself tends to relate certain events in a present framework in spite of the huge temporal distant separating the time of occurrence from the moment of narration. The historic present pushes forward the actions/events recounted, pictures/visualizes, and tinges them with a clear shade of immediacy and timelessness. Two instances are particularly interesting. One presents Jane watching Rochester's friends including her rival, Miss Ingram, feast, talk, laugh, and jest along pages 176, 177, 178, and 250-1. Jane entwines both narration and commentary to achieve the intended effect, a sign that designates a state identical with interior monologues though not exactly the same. Being the heroine-narrator or homodiegetic narrator, Jane manages the task of narration and thought-revealing as she summons the present tense to accomplish the effect sought.

Jane tries to isolate the party, place them in the spotlight, dim off the surrounding and make prominent the assembled company whose actions she

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watches with envy, glowering, and ironically disgust. She feels satisfaction as she finds the party stoops to folly and deterioration. What is very remarkable is the dynamism of the main verbs used and the vitality of action. Verbs like: **sit, come, put, smile, see, behold, recall, glance, lean, show, select, share, stand, confront, laugh** abound all in the present redounding to the dynamicity and vitality of the narration:

- *Mr. Frederic Lynn has taken a seat beside Mary Ingram, and is showing her the engravings of a splendid volume: she looks, smiles now and then, but apparently says little. The tall and phlegmatic Lord Ingram leans with folded arms on the chair back of the lively Amy Eshton; she glances up at him, and chatters like a wren....* (P. 178)

Jane Eyre narrates as if she frames a picture frozen in time, i.e., a timeless view of the activities she reports. Jane conveys masterfully the sense that time does not budge for it has stopped, a matter that helps her pinpoint even the slightest detail of the picture. The historic present, on the other hand, tinges the picture with rigour and freshness of expression. The shift to the present endows the narrative instance in addition to the narrated itself with a more vigorous animation and makes clear Jane's isolation in the dim corner of the room while she watches gloating, sometimes, and with wounded vanity the scene proceed before her eyes. The second stance witnesses the second strong use of the present by Jane to portray her feelings of excitement, ecstasy, yearning, thrill, suspense, and expectation as she approaches Thornfield after a one-month absence:

- *pass a tall briar, ..., I see the narrow stile with stone steps; and I see Mr. Rochester sitting there, a book and a pencil in his hand: he is writing.*
- *'Hillo!' he cries; and he puts up his book and his pencil.* (P. 246).

The present tense pushes the actions/events narrated up the prominence scale so that they rank high. Jane utilizes the present to foreground the happenings that are vigorously related and to plumb up her psychological tumult, tension of expectation, and emotional anxiety. The tense shift, here, works as a marker of salience similar to the signaling of narrative peaks and prepeaks already commented on only different in the facts that in *Jane Eyre* no peaks or prepeaks occur in these parts of the narrative.

An expressive use, however, is detected in *The Great Gatsby* where the present tense singles out the narrative stance making clear the narrator's subjective distance. Nick Carraway, an almost witness narrator for being only a minor character in the narrative, expresses at times his personal and emotional

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detachment from the scenes he watches from afar and eventually reports often at the onset of chapters. The scene itself has ultimately caught his observing eye and engaged his attention; and Nick adds to it rigour and animation by relating it in the present. Ultimately, the past tense is resumed as the spell is broken and the narrator is back to action. The present is relinquished upon the personal participation in the events:

- *By seven o'clock the orchestra **has arrived**.... The swimmers **have come** in from the beach now and **are dressing** upstairs.... (P.46).*

One can notice the use of two flashbacks, Band 3, in the form of the present perfect and one background activity, Band 2, in the form of the progressive -ing structure. Band 1 materials also appear as Nick draws a vivid picture of what he describes in Gatsby's notorious parties:

- *The groups **change** more swiftly, **swells** with new arrivals, **dissolve** and **form** in the same breath.... (P.46)*

Or else he picks a certain interesting incident to encode in the historic present as happened in the story of the gypsy dancer:

- ***Suddenly** one of these gypsies, in trembling opal, **seizes** a cocktail out of the air, **dumps** it down for courage and, moving her hands like Frisco, **dances** out alone on the canvas platform. A momentary hush; the orchestra leader **varies** his rhythm obligingly for her,.... (P. 46-7)*

The example cited above is a case in point for the foregrounding function of the historic present. The incident remarkably starts with **suddenly**, a punctiliar adverb that effects prominence; the adverb itself highlights what follows and guarantees its inclusion in the story line with Band 1 materials. Carraway conveys a two-fold function: he insures his personal remoteness whether physical or emotional, and achieves the required prominence of the events he relates foregrounding them, visualizing their occurrence, and colouring them with vitality. Carraway is also caught supposedly unaware divulging his feelings of wonder and ecstasy mingled with the reference to his wealthy bewildering neighbour, Jay Gatsby.

Setting and Expositions

The present tense in narrative is not always a means of foregrounding, but it can be resorted to as an indicator of embedded discourse, for instance, the use of expository discourse to furnish the descriptive side of the narrative with Band 4 cordon. Expository or descriptive discourse is marked by its neutral tense where its elements may be, theoretically, encoded in almost any tense form. It is non-

biased as far as tense is concerned though the present is normally preferred to record factual materials. This discourse type relies heavily on descriptive clauses that have inanimate agents/subjects and almost always-static verbs (Longacre, 1988: 418). Thus, expository discourse is mainly made up of equational, existential/locational, and relational clauses marked by the use of verbs **be**, **have**, and such relational verbs as **own**, **belong** as long as the agent is inanimate (ibid.).

Functionally speaking, expository discourse is basically exploited for explanatory, elaborative, and descriptive purposes. That is why, it is the medium selected to register scientific essays, articles, and information of any sort (Longacre, 1996: 7). The absence of a specific agent reference, i.e., participant orientation redounds to the objective, neutral, matter-of-fact nature of this discourse type and its treatment of factual data exclusively. However, in narratives, the alleged factuality is relative since the fictional world is not necessarily factual.

In narrative discourse, setting elements with their descriptive and/or elaborative purport are best conveyed by expository discourse. Generally, expository statements might occur at the onset or end of any discourse type as introduction and termination respectively. However, its most obvious use is to communicate setting materials in narratives or any other discourse type as a manifestation of embedded discourse stance.

The choice of the present tense to encode setting elements is quite a norm particularly in the field of expository discourse proper, for instance, in papers. The choice of the same tense to mark setting and descriptive materials when embedded in narrative discourse is also quite admitted (Longacre, 1988: 418). According to the salience/rank scheme proposed by Longacre in 1988, the present tense singles out the materials of both setting (Band 4), and evaluation (Band 6). However, the present tense of setting materials differs from that of evaluation only in the proverbial, universal nature of the latter's gnomic present.

Hemingway's treatise on bullfighting entitled *Death in the Afternoon* is a perfect instance on expository discourse. The book by no means tells a story, but provides descriptions, bits of information, facts, and elaborative details on the activity of bullfighting in Spain. Generally, its chapters can be viewed as articles and journalistic accounts written to inform and explain. That is why the features that set off the expository discourse are apparent:

- *In the modern formal bullfight or corrida de toros there are usually six bulls that are killed by three different men. Each man kills two bulls. The bulls by law are required to be from four to five years old, free from*

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physical defects, and well armed with sharp-pointed horns. They are inspected by a municipal veterinary surgeon before the fight. (P.31)

Or:

- *The bullfight usually takes place at five o'clock or five-thirty in the afternoon. At a half-hour past noon the fight of the apartado takes place. This is the sorting of bulls in the corrals.... (P.33)*

Here is very clearly detected the constant resort to the present tense and the inclination towards defining, explaining, and supplementing information. The *apartado*, for instance, in the last example is readily defined in the next sentence:

- *Aranjuez is only forty-seven kilometers from Madrid on a billiard-smoothroad. It is an oasis of tall trees, rich gardens and swift river set in the brown plain and hills. There are avenues of trees like the background of Velasquez canvases.... (P. 43)*

The example above is a case in point when it comes to locational and geographical descriptive details. Again, the present tense is retained to present these bits of information. The use of existential (be + adj.), and equational (be+n) clauses, which are specific to explanatory, elaborative functions prevails over the descriptive statements.

Another example of descriptive discourse that prevails over the narrative is Melville's *Moby Dick*, which is his treatise on whaling as *Death in the Afternoon* is Hemingway's treatise on bullfighting. The narrator, Ishmael, provides descriptions, explanations, and elaborations along with narration to visualize the setting. In addition, he supplies scientific information on types of whales, its physiology, anatomy, reproduction, food, and hunting. The novel subsumes a variety of discourse types other than narrative with or without tense change. However, the use of the present tense to encode explanations and descriptions is prevalent. Moreover, Ishmael affirms now and then the scientific nature of his observations by listing references by authorities by the way of an informal bibliography with which he is, being a teacher by profession, familiar:

- *Physiognomically regarded, the Sperm Whale is an anomalous creature. He has no proper nose. And since the nose is the central and most conspicuous of the features; and since it perhaps modifies and finally controls their combined expressions; hence it would seem that its entire absence, as a combined external appendage, must very largely affect the countenance of the whale. (P. 344)*

The present tense marks the general framework of the book with embedded pieces of narrative, behavioral/hortatory, and procedural discourse types. Embedded narrative and hortatory instances are quite frequently met along the text. Both authors, Hemingway and Melville, tend to vary their media of expression supplying stories, dialogues, comments, and instructions to meet demands germane to the thrilling elements of suspense, anticipation, excitement accompanying the violent pursuits. However, the use of the present tense as a medium of expository information is neither consistent nor frequent in past narratives. In Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, for instance, a rare and only occurrence of the present tense setting materials is picked:

- *It [the Venetian plain] is a low level country and under the rain I it is even flatter. Towards the sea there are salt marshes and very few roads. The roads all go along the river mouths to the sea....* (P. 200)

This stance is sharply contrasted to the great amount of setting elements in the novel which constitute more than 22% (see Al-Hajaj, 2001) and which are all encoded in the simple past. The above example reports clearly the composer's attempt to visualize setting elements in this particular point in the narrative to refurbish a pungent, life-like picture of the place watched and geography drawn. Moreover, it has an apparent authorial involvement, i.e., the descriptive details are tinged with the personal ring of the narrator-protagonist, Lt. Henry, who tries to transmit his thoughts at the moment of narration and to display as if on screen what his sight has seized and memory vigorously restored. All his perceptions are sharpened under the impact of the danger he was liable to after his miraculous escape.

Generally, present tense descriptions are apt to be met far more often in first person narratives though this is by no means the established norm. This can be justly attributed to the fact that the narrator and hero are one and the same in first person narratives. Considering the diegetic situation, the narrator-protagonist stores in his memory some very lively, rigorous pictures of certain places that have impinged on his consciousness, and which he can reproduce with their original rigour, preserved. Additionally, in a diary or autobiography, present tense descriptions are the norm rather than exception. That is why, more instances of present tense setting materials are detected along Iris Murdoch's *The Sea The Sea* in which the narrator intends to jot down his diary. The assumption that the book is only a diary is imposed by the narrator-protagonist inside the diegetic/fictional world and not by the novelist. However, that does not prevent the make-believe assumption from being carried out with success, hence the prolific occurrence of present tense descriptions:

- *I am Charles Arrowby and, as I write this, I am, shall we say, over sixty*

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years of age. I am wifeless. Childless, brotherless, sisterless, (P. 3)

After introducing himself, Arrowby does not neglect the setting of his sea shore surrounding. The descriptive statements in the present tense abound as the supposed diarist jots down the landscape aspects caught by his keen eye. The autobiographical form makes the present tense at home with descriptions as Arrowby describes the immediate environment:

- *They [rocks] are sandy yellow in colour, covered with crystalline flecks, and are folded into large ungainly incoherent heaps. Below the tide line they are festooned with growth of glisten blistery dark brown seaweed which has rather unpleasant smell.... There are many V-shaped ravines containing pools or screes of extremely varied and pretty stone. There are also flowers which contrive somehow to root themselves in the crannies; (P.5)*

The use of the present tense appears almost on every page in the first part of the novel entitled **Prehistory** where the hero-narrator intends to write his contemplation as he lives by the sea, but he found himself entrapped into recording his journal, memoirs or even autobiography. The present tense copies the immediacy of the descriptive or even diegetic/narrative situation. The immediate moment is seized and hence recorded by the use of the present tense, i.e., the descriptive detail is visualized and its immediacy-its now- is retained. In short, pieces of expository discourse are inserted into the narrative, visualized and singled out by the use of the present tense. The forms of the memoirs, diary, or autobiography facilitate the shift to the present tense when the pen registers supposedly what the eye describes directly at the moment of narration.

In Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, a similar use is noticed though with a crucial difference in relation to the fact that the novel relies heavily on the framework of the successive monologues which are largely communicated in the present as already illustrated. However, even in the sections whose narrators do not flout the standard tense, the present tense marks descriptions:

- *The quilt is drawn up to her chin, hot as it is, with only her two hands and her face outside. She is propped on the pillow.... (P. 8)*

This is how *Cora* describes the dying *Addie* on her deathbed. *Cora* who normally narrates in the past adopts the present when picturing the departing lady partly because of the influence of the presence of death itself:

- *The sleeves of Jewel's coat are too short for him. Upon his face the ruin streams.... (P. 74)*

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The examples above and below are descriptive statements of personal nature since characters are described both times by Tull, Cora's husband who is, like Cora, narrates mainly in the past:

- *His face is calm, down-sloped, calculant, concerned.* (P.140)

However, the narrators noticeably at the onset of the narrative or at least its major divisions intend the communication of geographical, locational information in the present tense. Such use of the present tense redounds to the life-like visualization of the spatial dimensions of the narrative. Thus, Steinbeck chose to start his *East of Eden* with:

- *The Salinas Valley is in Northern California. It is a long narrow swale between two ranges of mountains, and the Salinas River winds and twists up the center until it falls at last into Monterey Bay.* (P. 1)

The witness narrator, John in name, utilizes the present tense to make the opening more powerful and to contribute to the eternal throbbing existence of the details portrayed. However, he exploits it in three more occasions along the novel (PP. 380, 456, and 523) again for descriptive purposes almost always in relation to natural landscapes. When the description involves a natural feature of national pride or even sorrow like the notorious Salinas River and Valley, John does not hesitate in applying the present to set the features off:

- *February in Salinas is likely to be damp and cold and full of miseries. The heaviest rains fall then, and if the river is going to rise, it rises then.*
(P. 380)

The weather references are almost the common feature of these vivid descriptions offered by the infatuated narrator whose admiring eye finds it indomitable to render descriptions in the present. Similarly, in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, the introductory parts of the chapters, being expository, are sometimes made vivid and lively by the use of the present tense:

- *About half-way between West Egg and New York the motor road hastily joins the railroad and runs beside it for a quarter of a mile* (P. 29)

The above example is used to introduce a chapter as the opening statement. It is more convenient to the narrator to commence in the present then turn to the past rather than open the chapter with the past and then change to the present, only soon to return to the past.

A rare and only instance is detected in Forster's *A Passage to India* where the narrator devotes chapter one solely to describing the geographical features of the Indian city *Chandrapore*, the river *Ganges*, and the *Maraber Caves* mingling

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descriptive, elaborative details with evaluative comments all in the present tense:

- *Inland the prospect alters. There is an oval Maiden, and a long shallow hospital. (P. 9)*
- *Except for the Maraber Caves—and they are twenty miles off—the city of Chandrapore presents nothing extraordinary.... (P.9)*

As in the previous instances, the setting elements are placed in the very beginning of the narrative to open up and introduce the story. And again, the setting elements constitute the introductory paragraph or chapter, which is made life-like, tangible, and visually alive by the present tense. The narrator watches, shoots as if with a camera, and registers the details of the scene on the page.

Evaluation and Hortatory

Longacre (1989:445) considers evaluations as author's instructions among the most peripheral and optional elements of the narrative text. They present the author's or actually the narrator's subjective attitudes and, consequently, permit value judgement. The author may intrude upon the story by proposing materials of evaluative nature assessing and commenting on participants, props, and situations. Trabasso and Ozyurek (1997a: 270) confirm that the authors, in effect, may offer assessments and evaluations, in short, opinions that are clearly personal about experiences of characters in the narrative and their emotional status. However, Longacre (1989: 418) holds the view that evaluations are highly optional and even unnecessary since "*the story can get on perfectly well without such comments.*" They are, thus, to be regarded as a means providing insights into the theme or the **moral** of the story (ibid.:445). The story is not told, solely, for entertainment but also for some sort of instruction and for some "*thematic, didactic thrust*"(ibid.). Similarly, though Trabasso and Ozyurek (1997b: 306) stress the importance of evaluations as there is rarely a narrative that does without them. However, they describe them as being evidently a sort of "*disruption of the temporal order of events*" made by the narrator to reflect upon and express the significance of narration (ibid.).

Longacre (1989: 418) lists two types of narrator's evaluations: **gnomic present** – the concern of the present study, and past tense comments. Gnostic present constructions that may have some proverbial, general universality are thus considered the most evident category. Gnostic present differs from historical present found in narrative writings of many languages when the present is "*used to foreground rather than background the action*" (Fleischman, 1986: 203). Other signs of commentaries may appear in the form of similes or other figures of speech. The pronoun **you**, when used by the

narrator in address to none of the narrative participants, is considered either an empathetic address to himself or else to narratees inviting them to join the narrator in her/his opinions and personal attitudes.

Hortatory discourse concerns itself with the questions "*how to behave*" and "*how to do*" and seeks to teach or guide. It is manifested in exhortation, eulogies, political speeches and the like. The use of the present tense is one marker of such discourse type where evaluations, comments, and instructions are conveyed. However in narrative discourse, the narrator can pause to voice her/his comments on the events, characters, and situations (West, 1964:46). These comments and evaluative remarks may be set off by the use of a specific variety of the present tense that is undoubtedly timeless. Gnomic present has a clear proverbial, universal thrust of generality. That makes it a suitable medium to denote narrator's intrusions, which fall outside the story world proper as they are by no means obligatory (Longacre, 1989: 418). Upon inspection, instructions and comments are manifestations of hortatory discourse embedded within narrative or any other discourse type. They are singled out by the use of the imperative constructions, second person pronouns, conditional clauses, the use of dummy *it/that/this*, which have no definite references in addition of course to the present tense (Longacre, 1996: 13).

The practical analysis of samples shows the importance of gnomic present comments and evaluations even in the narrative that are strictly composed in the past. Moreover, these comments, some times, make up a large body of the narrative and are assigned to perform very crucial tasks. The narrators avail themselves of the commentary area to impose their authorial personage and make clear their individual voices. Even in such a work as Hemingway's *Death in the Afternoon*, where the narrative stance is expositionally disguised, the composer does not dispense with evaluations, as he tends to append evaluations to his descriptive, explanatory text. Hemingway pauses to speculate on the process of writing, life/death compact, man's instinctive blood shedding appetite and bullfighting in general all in the present:

- *If a man writes clearly enough any one can see if he fakes.* (P. 56)
- *Death is a sovereign remedy for all misfortunes.* (P. 102)
- *At first bullfight if you are alone, with no one to instruct you, sit in a delantra de grada or a sobrepuerta.* (P.37)

As for narrative texts proper, the use of the gnomic present is a norm whether the narrative is episodic or climatic. Even the narratives, whose story world-actions, events, flashbacks, and descriptions— is wholly encoded in the past, must violate the adhered to tense at times to convey evaluations. To begin with an instance of episodic narrative, Melville's *The Confidence Man* is again

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cited. In his introduction to the novel, Cohen (1964: xxi) draws the attention to the abundance of evaluation in the novel where in chapters 14, 33, and 44, the authorial instructions permeate the narrative constructions. The author's comments, Cohen insists, interrupt the story as digressions (ibid.). However upon analysis, the use of the gnomic present with its proverbial thrust is very remarkable as long stretches of evaluative, commentary materials are detected along the novel:

- *The grand points of human nature are the same to-day they were a thousand years ago.* (P. 74)
- *Every great town is a kind of man-show....* (P. 260)

The shift from the narrative tense to mark evaluations pulls the reader out of the past and establishes her/him in the immediate present of narration or even—to stretch the metaphor further—of reading. The comments would take on a personal appeal to the narratees themselves. The other evaluative tokens represented by the use of the imperatives, figures of speech, and the pronoun *you* come to aid in deciding, beyond dispute, the commentary statements. Steinbeck's *East of Eden* displays an interesting array of such tokens:

- *Think back, recall our little nation fringing the oceans, torn with complexity, too big for its britches.* (P. 112)

The common feature of such evaluations is the fact that they are all voiced by the narrators who happen to be characters in the narrative. The shift to the present is necessary to indicate the current view with which the past events are regarded. Consequently, the past events are commented on from a recent point of view, i.e., distant in time from the time in which the same events took place. Furthermore, they are the best vehicles for supplying the narrative with the comments that apply not only to the specific situation in the narrative, but may espouse a far more universal thrust in that they may apply to more than the fictional world. Even the narratives that are strictly constructed in the past, the gnomic present is never neglected. Thomas Hardy, for instance, is found to obey the narrative tense, as he tends to present the narrative information solely in the simple past. But when it comes to comments, Hardy has a special preference to the gnomic proverbial present. However, gnomic present evaluations appear most in the onset of chapters as introductory or the end as concluding remarks. In Steinbeck's *East of Eden*, the narrator, only a minor character, devotes, at times whole chapters (e.g. 12 and 34) and sections to passing his personal points of view:

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- *In human affairs of danger and delicacy successful conclusion is sharply limited by hurry. So often men trip by being in a rush.* (P. 212)
- *Vice has always a new fresh young face, while virtue is venerable as nothing else in the world.* (P. 368)

Evaluation, some times, adopts the form of hortatory paragraphs that embed within narration proper preceding or following the event that wants commentary. Here, the narrator attempts to link closely the event and its evaluative remark. In *A Farewell to Arms*, Hemingway reflects:

- *If people bring so much courage to this world the world has to kill them to break them, so of course it kills them. The world breaks every one and afterward many are strong at the broken places. But those that will not break it kills. It kills the very good and the very gentle and the very brave impartially. If you are none of these you can be sure it will break you too but there will be no special hurry.* (P. 216)

One can notice the use of a variety of evaluative or instructive constructions represented by the imperative, conditional structures, the pronoun **you**, and of course the gnomic present. The protagonist–narrator who breaks down under the impact of his imminent loss of his beloved pours forth his ghastly speculations, which are made thrillingly alive by the use of the present tense.

Interior Monologues

In a fashion similar to evaluations, the present tense may occur within interior monologues where this time any character's contemplation could unfold regardless of its relation to the act of narration, i.e., whether the character is a narrator or not and heedless to any temporal or spatial restrictions. Cohn (1978: 198) explains that the present tense in *autonomous*–first person–monologues is always a “*true tense; it referred to a temporal moment that coincided with (or at least included) the moment of the utterance.*” The speaker forgets all about time and recalls or recounts “*as vividly as if it were before his eyes,*” that is why Cohn prefers to term it as *evocative present* (ibid.). The most direct example is, in fact, Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*. From a constructive view, the novella is compiled of a series of interior monologues meditated by almost every character mentioned in the narrative. The extradiegetic narrator, being totally an outsider, encloses and displays pieces of what goes on in the mind of the care-worn characters and sheds the light on the tension, which they are preys to, and the serious nature of the experiences which they undergo. Their minds are pried open and the thoughts stored in are recorded minutely and unmodified even in their ragged confused forms that correspond with their mental and psychological status. But from a notional/etic angle, each separate interior monologue is an

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episode or even a full-fledged narrative and thus it should be treated as one. The monologues are not inoculated within a wider narrative matrix, as the extradiegetic narrator does not intervene to link the monologues together by any narration.

Generally, Prince (1987: 44–5) defines the interior monologue as “*the nonmediated presentation of a character’s thoughts and impressions or perceptions.*” The interior monologue is now frequently taken to subsume the stream of consciousness though the term originally designates a character’s thoughts rather than impressions or perceptions. Furthermore, the interior monologue respects morphology and syntax contrary to the stream of consciousness, which might subsume any anomaly and would capture thought in its nascent stage, prior to any logical organization. However, both terms are often used interchangeably (*ibid.*).

For the purpose of analysis, two instances of interior monologue are inspected in relation to the question of tense change. The narrative tense is the simple past, but in the interior monologue, the narrator can break from the past tense to come out with thematic and/or narrative implications. First in Greene’s *The Heart of the Matter*, interior monologues are the monopoly of Major Henry Scobie. They particularly intensify towards the end of the novel. They become an exigency as Scobie gets more isolated and find no refuge other than in inner thoughts. Out of self-denial, he keeps his speculation pent-up within the reach of none of his acquaintance dreading the possibility of hurting anyone other than himself. In the course of time, isolation accumulates and Major Scobie loses or cuts any links of communication with the surrounding since he believes that he can open his heart to none at all not even to his wife, Louise. In stead, he develops a self-centred stand according to which contact appears not only impossible but, more dangerously, futile. He can effect candor neither with his wife whose interests lie in a completely different direction, nor with his mistress, Helen, out of sheer pity and compassion for her flimsy shock-vitiated nerves. And indeed, Scobie’s final downfall is accelerated by his altruist passions. Consequently, he feels besieged spiritually as well as socially by his conscience, which is lenient with all except Scobie himself. His senses get entirely dumbfounded and even paralyzed. His bosses, wife, friend, agents, Wilson—the government spy, and Yusif—the island tycoon of smuggling, illegal trade and wild competition all hasten his escape to repugnance meditation. His religious fear of God, a remnant of his catholic upbringing and his piercing sense of guilt join forces to push him in the direction of break-down. Major Scobie, thus, gives vent to his bottled contemplation simmering inside turning them loose in the form of interior monologues. Major Scobie dictates a large body of his monologues in the present tense as the narrator follows the track of the released thoughts simultaneously. The use of a tag clause is noticed though not very

strictly imposed, but at least one tag clause signals the stretch of contemplation now and then:

- *But one still has one's eyes, he thought, one's ears. Point me out the happy man and I will point you out either extreme egotism, evil- or else an absolute ignorance.* (P. 123)

Although the use of the tag clause is by no means obligatory, yet it is one of the most obvious markers of interior monologues. The tag clause appears most the times medially interrupting the flow of thought. It might be placed finally and rarely initially. *Scobie/he thought* is almost always the one clause chosen:

- *One must be reasonable, he told himself, and recognize that despair does not last (is that true), that love does not last....* (P. 220)

A rare case of an initially placed tag clause equates the reported act of thinking with its content in that the narrator draws attention to both equally:

- *He thought: I know that Ali is honest: I have known that for fifteen years; I am just trying to find a companion in this religion of lies.* (P. 230)

Here, the monologue differs from author's evaluations and comments in the fact that the narrator in the former is homodiegetic, i.e., a character in the narrative. The extradiegetic narrator in third person narration makes his identity candid by the insertion of the tag clause—*he thought*. However the medial or final position of the tag clause renders the contemplative content prior to the act of narration itself as performed by the narrator outside the story. The present tense helps achieve the intended foregrounding effect of prominence. Sometimes, the monologues tend to stretch in pages length towards the end of the narrative as the character's awareness develops evolving long contemplative inward speeches or monologues. Then, one tag clause is used to link one interior monologue of many paragraphs or even pages long. For instance, Scobie's monologues in the past as well as present intensify as he loses hope and adopts a one-track method of thinking excluding any thought other than suicide.

In Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, Santiago monologues almost entirely in the present with occasional insertion of other tenses. Again the use of the tag clause *he thought* is sometimes retained to discriminate the primary extradiegetic narrator from the I of Santiago while he entertains speculation. The old, lonely fisherman takes refuge in inner speech as his boat gets far away from the shore and any other boat. Isolation impels Santiago to meditate as well as, of course, talk to himself and to the fish loudly. However, while the former is, indubitably, an interior monologue, the latter is hardly regarded so. Santiago's

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struggle with the huge fish impinges on his consciousness turning loose the contents of his mind:

- *That school[flyfish] has gotten away, he thought. They are moving out too fast and too far. (P. 28)*
- *If they don't travel too fast I will get into them, the old man thought. (P. 31)*
- *Now is no time to think of baseball, he thought. Now is the time to think of only one thing. (P. 31)*
- *Eat them fish, eat them, please eat them. (P. 35)*
- *Chew it well, he thought, and get all the juices. (P. 50)*
- *I wish I could feed the fish, he thought. He is my brother. But I must kill him and keep strong to do it. (P. 51)*
- *But he seems calm, he thought, and following his plan. But what is his plan, he thought. (P. 52)*
- *I wonder how much he sees at that depth, the old man thought. (P.58-9)*

However, not all the interior monologues are clearly designated by a tag clause. The extradiegetic narrator may omit or neglect the insertion of a clue as to the act of thinking. So, while Hemingway tends to place the tag clause in the rear to dim off its role, Hardy, in *The Return of the Native*, does without it altogether. The narrator, being an outsider, portrays the thoughts of his characters, for instance Eustacia, without recourse to *she thought/told herself*, a matter that makes the present tense of a particular significance:

- *Another part of the room soon riveted her gaze. At the other side of the chimney stood the settle, which is the necessary supplement to a fire so open that nothing less than a strong breeze will carry up the smoke. It is, to the hearths of old-fashioned cavernous fire place, what the east belt of trees is to the exposed country estate, or the north wall to the garden. Outside the settle candles gutter, locks of hair wave, young women shiver, and old men sneeze. Inside it is paradise. (P.140)*

Though the extradiegetic narrator makes no reference to Eustacia's ruminative act, it is clear that the narrator is prying the heroine's mind open. The shift in tense to the present is responsible for the distinction between the narrator's act of narration marshaled in the first sentence and the head of the second. The rest of the paragraph is obviously Eustacia-oriented. Here, the primary narrator hands over the job to her in an endeavour to capture her thoughts that interest the naratee and illuminate the narrative by raking and dredging up her own speculation.

Conclusion

Though the standard narrative tense is the simple past, yet narrators have no scruples in resorting to other tenses to achieve certain thematic and narrative effects. Among the non-canonical tenses manipulated in narrative discourse, the present tense appears most whether for textual or expressive functions. The textual function of the present tense manifests itself in foregrounding and pushing the narrative information up the prominence scale. As a result, certain incidents are recounted in the historic present, a choice made by the narrator to set them off the rest. The narrator overcomes the temporal gap, assumes camera-like perspective, watches and tells simultaneously. Consequently, immediacy is effected as the *now* of the narration merges with the *now* of the occurring events. However, the above-explained effect might be reversed when the narrator defines himself as an outsider or a mere on-looker. S/he is after achieving a detached stand relating events with which the narrator develops no involvement whether mental, physical, or emotional. In such a case, the foregrounding function could be retained, but the narrator makes clear her/his inevitable personal remoteness.

The present tense, however, is more used for backgrounding functions to encode descriptive materials as an instance of expository discourse. Descriptive present tense appears in narrative discourse almost always in the introductory chapters, which normally make up the exposition in the classical plot delineation of the exposition as opposed to complication and denouement. The occurrence of descriptive present is equally plausible in the onset of sections, chapters, books, and volumes anywhere else along the narrative. Descriptions are time-neutral and the present tense endows them with a ring of liveliness, pictorial rigour, and permanence.

Gnomic present singles out evaluative statements, a manifestation of hortatory discourse. There is hardly any narrative without the narrator's intrusion with comments and instructions. Though these comments can, and often, appear in the past tense in concord with the conventional narrative tense, yet they could be more effectively encoded in the gnomic present, which is devoid of any temporal indication. It is timeless in orientation, universal and proverbial in nature. Narrators prefer to comment in the present interrupting the flow of narration, but at the same time, providing insights into events and participants.

A fourth use of the present tense in framing out interior monologues especially in third person narratives where an extradiegetic narrator shoulders up the task of narration and pokes into the characters' minds. The present tense in

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such a case encodes the **now** of the narrated as it is closely tied up to the monologue time.

To sum up, the present tense is conventionalized to perform a host of functions in narrative discourse. It has a textual function of foregrounding or backgrounding certain narrative information. It is a means by which other discourse types can embed within each other if needed. It can be expressively used to make clear point of view and the narrative stance.

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الخلاصة :

يعتبر الماضي البسيط الزمن السردي التقليدي في اللغة الإنكليزية، و مع هذا غالبا ما يلجئ الراوي في الخطاب السردى إلى توظيف أزمانا أخرى في النص ومن ضمنها الزمن المضارع. عندما يختار الراوي كسر الزمن التقليدي في النص أي الماضي البسيط، فهو عندها إنما يسخر الزمن أو الأزمان الجديدة لأداء وظائف محددة تنعكس على بناء النص وتخدم موضوعاته. تناولت الدراسة الحالية أشكال الزمن المضارع و وظائفه السردية في (١٤) نصا روائيا بين الحديث و الكلاسيكي. فجاءت النتائج لتبين وجود أربع أشكال من الزمن المضارع في الخطاب السردى عموما و الرواية على وجه الخصوص. أولا، يظهر الزمن المضارع على شكل المضارع التاريخي الذي يحتل استخدامه " بصفته زمنا" بديلا" عن الماضي البسيط. ثانيا، يحدث أيضا أن يوظف الزمن المضارع لأغراض إيضاحية/شرحية في وصف المكان/الزمان و الشخصيات و الأشياء المتواجدة في المحيط السردى. ثالثا، يلجئ الراوي أو الكاتب (حقيقي أو ضمني) إلى استخدام المضارع لنقل تعليقاته و آرائه التي يقيم بها المواقف السردية المختلفة. و أخيرا، يميز الزمن المضارع ما يسمى بالحوار الداخلي و تيار الوعي الذي يسير أغوار الشخصيات و يغوص عميقا في أفكارها و تأملاتها.