12.2 The Historical Present

I argue in this section that the primary motivation for using the historical present (hereafter, HP) is to *highlight* and that, particularly in Mark and John, what is highlighted by the HP is not so much the speech or act to which it refers but the event(s) that follow. In other words, like other devices employed for highlighting, the HP usually occurs *prior* to the event or group of events that are of particular significance.

The historical or historic present is the name given to the use of the present tense in a narrative when the verb would be expected to have been in the past tense or perfective aspect. In Greek, this means that the verb would normally have been in the aorist.

Thus, in **Matt. 26:36a**, ἔρχεται 'comes' is used where the expected verb is ἦλθεν 'came'. Since the genre is narrative, ἔρχεται is said to be in the historical present.

| (35b) | ὁμοίως | καὶ | πάντες οἱ | μαθηταὶ | εἶπαν. |
| | likewise | + | all the | disciples | 3P.said |

| (36a) | Τότε ἔρχεται | μετ' αὐτῶν ὁ | Ἰησοῦς εἰς | χωρίον λεγόμενων | Γεθσημανί |
| | then 3S.comes | with them the | Jesus to | place called | Gethsemane |

The HP is not peculiar to NT Greek, as it is found also in narrative texts in classical Greek and in the LXX translation of the Old Testament (see Fanning 1990:226-39). The frequency of the HP in the Gospels and Acts is as follows:[238]

Matthew	93	(including 68 speech verbs such as λέγει 'he says')
Mark	151	(including 72 speech verbs)
Luke-Acts	22	(including 17 speech verbs)
John	162	(including 127 speech verbs).

Note. It is normal to divide HPs in Koiné Greek into two types: those involving speech verbs (hereafter, "speech HPs") and those involving other verbs ("non-speech HPs").

Grammarians regularly associate the HP with two features:[239]
- boundaries in the discourse
- prominence.

I consider these features in turn.

Boundaries in the discourse

Thackeray (1909) claimed that the main function of the HP was to introduce "a fresh paragraph in the narrative," while Porter writes (1992:301), "Verb tense-forms are frequently shifted (e.g. aorist to present, and so forth) to indicate the boundaries of a discourse." Porter cites Mark 7:1 as an instance in which the "historical present (συνάγονται) introduces a new pericope, the previous one (which goes back at least as far as Mk 6.53) having ended with a series of aorist and imperfect tense-forms."

However, Porter also observes (op. cit. 31), "Some have argued that the historical present is used to mark significant changes in the narrative flow. Whereas... this category must be considered when formulating an explanation of this usage, the instances where it does not mark significant change are too manifest to endorse this scheme as a sufficient explanation." In **Mark 2:1-4**, for instance, the HPs of vv. 3 and 4b are used only *after* the episode has begun and are not contiguous, being separated by a verb in the aorist (v. 4a).

(1) When he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported (ἠκούσθη) that he was at home. (2) So many gathered around (συνήχθησαν) that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking (ἐλάλει) the word to them.

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[238] The figures are from Hawkins (1909), as quoted by Fanning (op. cit. 234 fn. 75).

[239] Porter (1992:30-31) discusses *four* proposals concerning the use of the HP: dramatic use, tense reduction, change of setting or character, and verbal aspect.

(3)   καὶ   ἔρχονται   φέροντες   πρὸς αὐτὸν παραλυτικὸν
       and   3P.come   carrying   to   him   paralytic

       αἰρόμενονὑπὸ   τεσσάρων.
       being.carried   by   four

(4a)   And, being unable to bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed
       (ἀπεστέγασαν) the roof above him;

(4b)   καὶ   ἐξορύξαντες χαλῶσι   τὸν   κράβαττον   ὅπου
       and   having.opened 3P.lower   the   mattress   on.which

       ὁ παραλυτικὸς κατέκειτο.
       theparalytic   3S.was.lying

In Matthew's Gospel, nearly every non-speech HP occurs at a generally recognized paragraph boundary. Nevertheless, there is still no need to claim that the HP is *marking* the boundary. This is because other features that tend to occur at boundaries are also present, such as τότε (e.g., in 26:36a above—see sec. 6.1.1) or a temporal point of departure (3:1, 17:1, 25:11, 25:19), including a genitive absolute (2:13, 2:19). Matthew 26:40 (καὶ ἔρχεται 'and he comes') is an exception.

I therefore conclude that it is not the presence of a HP per se that indicates the boundary (contra Levinsohn 1992:141-44). Rather, the nature of its function as a marker of prominence (see below) often leads to its occurrence early in a paragraph. (See sec. 17.2.10 for further discussion of shifts of tense forms, whether from the aorist to the HP or *vice versa*, as supporting evidence for a boundary.)

Prominence

Concerning the HP and prominence, Porter concludes (loc. cit.), "Whereas the aorist is merely used in its common narrative function, the present form draws added attention to the action to which it refers." He cites **Acts 10:11** as an instance in which the HP is used "to highlight Peter's vision" (see also sec. 12.2.2).

(9)   The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up
       (ἀνέβη) on the roof to pray about noon. (10) He became (ἐγένετο) hungry and was
       wanting (ἤθελεν) to eat something. While they were preparing it, a trance came (ἐγένετο)
       over him

(11)   and he sees (καὶ θεωρεῖ) heaven opened and something like a large sheet coming down,
       being lowered to the ground by its four corners, (12) in which were all kinds of four-footed
       creatures and reptiles and birds of the air.

(13)   And a voice came (ἐγένετο) to him, "Get up, Peter, kill and eat."

Particularly in Mark and John, however, the HP "does *not* draw attention to the event which the HP verb itself refers to, as those events, in themselves, are not particularly important—*to go, to say, to gather together, to see, etc. ...* [I]t has a *cataphoric* function; that is, it points on beyond itself into the narrative, it draws attention to what is following" (J. Callow 1996:2).

So, in **Mark 1:21**, it is not the action of entering Capernaum itself that is particularly important. Rather, the presence of the HP points on beyond itself and draws attention to the subsequent events that take place in Capernaum.

(20)   And immediately he (Jesus) called (ἐκάλεσεν) them; and, leaving their father Zebedee in
       the boat with the hired men, they followed (ἀπῆλθον) him.

(21a) Καὶ   εἰσπορεύονται εἰς   Καφαρναούμ·
       and   3P.enter   into   Capernaum

(21b) And immediately, on the sabbath, having entered the synagogue, he was teaching
       (ἐδίδασκεν).

(22)   And they were amazed (ἐξεπλήσσοντο) at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one
       having authority, and not as the scribes.

Other instances in which the event presented in the HP appears to be particularly insignificant include Mark 8:6 (UBS text—and he gives orders (παραγγέλλει) to the crowd to recline on the ground) and Luke 7:40 (ὁ δέ, Διδάσκαλε, εἰπέ, φησίν 'and he, "Teacher, speak" says'). In both cases, it is what follows the event or speech associated with the HP that is highlighted. (See sec. 15.1 on how the distribution of articular and anarthrous references to speakers in John provides further evidence that HPs do not highlight the speech that they introduce but a later speech or event.)[240]

However, Callow also points out (loc. cit.), "While most speech HPs are cataphoric, Johnson [(1984)] maintains that when a speech HP closes off a verbal interchange... the content is important in itself, and is not pointing forward to something following it."[241]

In **Mark 2:17**, for example, the use of λέγει would appear to highlight Jesus' speech itself, not the episode of vv. 18ff. that follows it. (See also the reference to Jesus by name—sec. 8.3.)

(15)   And as he sat at dinner in Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were also sitting (συνανέκειντο) with Jesus and his disciples—for there were many who were following him. (16) When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, they were saying (ἔλεγον) to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

(17)   καὶ   ἀκούσας   ὁ   Ἰησοῦςλέγει   αὐτοῖς,
         and   having.heard   the   Jesus   3S.says to.them
         "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners."

(18)   {This new episode concerns why the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, whereas Jesus' disciples do not.}

Nevertheless, I suggest that, even in such instances, the HP continues to have cataphoric overtones. The incident of Mark 2:15-17 is the first of four occasions in which Jesus interacts with the Pharisees (2:18-22, 2:23-28 and 3:1-5 are the others), culminating in 3:6: 'the Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him how to destroy them.' If the HP of 2:17 has cataphoric overtones, it indicates that, even though the conclusion of one incident has been reached, more is to follow. (See secs. 14.3 and 15.1 for similar claims concerning HPs that introduce concluding speeches in Matthew and John.)

I now concentrate on the function of *non-speech* HPs in Matthew (sec. 12.2.1) and John (sec. 12.2.3; the five non-speech HPs found in Luke-Acts are discussed briefly in sec. 12.2.2). See secs. 14.2-3 for speech HPs in Matthew. See sec. 15.1 for speech HPs in John.

While there are similarities in the way Matthew and John use the HP, there are some important differences. For example, whereas HPs in Matthew mark as significant the participant they activate, the implications of using a HP to activate a participant in John are rather weaker. Instead, the cataphoric overtones of using the HP are more to the fore. (The use of the HP in Mark appears also to have primarily a cataphoric function—see Levinsohn 1977,[242] Johnson 1984 and J. Callow 1996—whereas non-speech HPs in Luke-Acts function more like those in Matthew.)

Section 12.2.1 identifies a number of *conditions* that must be met if a HP is to be used in Matthew. In addition, one condition that appears to be applicable to all the Gospels and Acts is the following:

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[240] The cataphoric effect of using a HP may result naturally from portraying an event or speech as incomplete (the present tense prototypically has imperfective aspect—sec. 10.2.2).

[241] HPs that introduce concluding speeches are not taken to be cataphoric in the sense that they point forward to the speech that they introduce because, as Johnson (1984) notes, most speech HPs look beyond the speech they introduce to the following speeches or events.

[242] The HP in Mark "is always *cataphoric*, anticipatory, pointing to another action connected with it" (Levinsohn 1977:14).

It is used only in connection with *the interaction of two participants or groups of participants*. In other words, it is never used in situations in which the actions or speeches of only one participant are given... (Levinsohn 1977:14)

So, no HP is found when Jesus is praying to his Father, since no response is recorded. Nor is it used when Jesus is teaching but his listeners' response is not recorded. Thus, there is no HP in Matt. 11:20-30, for example.

The question of why a HP is *not* used when all the conditions have been met is left until sec. 14.3, after the function of speech HPs has been considered.

12.2.1 Non-Speech Historical Presents in Matthew

Non-speech HPs in Matthew may be divided into three categories, the first being by far the most common (the first two categories are found also in John—sec. 12.2.3):

- those that *activate* a participant who has a significant role to play by introducing him or her to the scene of a previous interaction between participants
- those that *move* active participants to the location of the next significant events
- those that describe the *conclusion* of an interaction between participants when significant event(s) are still to follow.

What is noteworthy about these categories is that the HP is used only if it has been preceded by a subsection of a larger episode; see further below. Furthermore, while cataphoric overtones may well be present with the first two categories, the participant or location concerned is also significant, in the case of Matthew.

Historical Presents and the Activation of Participants

These next paragraphs show that, for a non-speech HP to be used in Matthew to activate a participant, two conditions must be met:

- the participant must have an active role to play (by taking an initiative)
- the participant must be introduced to the scene of a previous interaction between participants.

I first consider some examples that meet both conditions, so a HP is used. In **Matt. 3:13**, for instance, Jesus is introduced to the scene in which John has been baptizing people (see sec. 6.1 on the use of τότε to associate together subsections of an episode) and he has an active role to play in subsequent events at the scene. The HP marks the introduction of Jesus as significant.

(7-12) {The previous subsection ends with John speaking (εἶπεν) to those who have come to him for baptism}

(13)

Τότε	παραγίνεται	ὁ	Ἰησοῦς ἀπὸ	τῆς	Γαλιλαίας
then	3S.arrives	the	Jesus	from	the	Galilee

ἐπὶ	τὸν	Ἰορδάνην	πρὸς	τὸν	Ἰωάννην
at	the	Jordan	to	the	John

τοῦ	βαπτισθῆναι	ὑπ'	αὐτοῦ.
of.the	to.be.baptized	by	him

(14) John was preventing (διεκώλυεν) him... (15) In answer, Jesus said (εἶπεν) to him...

See also Matt. 9:14, 15:1, and 25:11. (In each of these examples, the initiative taken by the participant who was introduced with the HP is the speech that is introduced in a postnuclear participial clause of the same sentence.)

The HPs in Matt. 26:40 and 26:45 may fit into the same category. In both instances, Jesus comes to the disciples (ἔρχεται πρὸς τοὺς μαθητὰς) with whom he had previously been interacting and says (καὶ λέγει) something to them. In the case of 26:45, the HPs point forward to the arrival of the armed band led by Judas (v. 47).[243]

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[243] On the intervening occasion that Jesus returns to the disciples (26:43), no HP is used in most MSS, as there is no interaction between them; see the discussion below of Matt. 1:18-20.

When the participant to be introduced to the scene of a previous interaction does *not* subsequently have an active role to play in that he never takes an initiative, a HP is *not* used. This is seen in **Matt. 19:13**; the participants who are introduced (the children and those who brought them) have no active part to play in the ongoing events which, as in the previous subsection (vv. 10-12), involve an interaction between Jesus and his disciples.

(11-12) {The previous subsection ends with Jesus teaching (εἶπεν) his disciples about celibacy}

(13a) Τότε   προσηνέχθησαν   αὐτῷ παιδία ἵνα   **τὰς   χεῖρας**
       then   3P.were.brought   to.him children so.that the   hand
       ἐπιθῇ   αὐτοῖς καὶ   προσεύξηται·
       3S.may.put.on   them   and   to.pray

(13b) But the disciples rebuked (ἐπετίμησαν) them. (14) But Jesus said (εἶπεν), "Let the little children come to me..." (15) And, having laid his hands on them, he departed (ἐπορεύθη) from there.

See also Matt. 12:22. Contrast 27:38, in which the two thieves are activated with a passive HP (σταυροῦνται 'are crucified'), but take the initiative later in the episode (v. 44).

A comparison of Matt. 2:19 and 1:20 suggests that, for a HP to be used to activate a participant, there must have been a previous interaction between participants. In both passages, following a genitive absolute, a supernatural participant is activated. In the case of **Matt. 2:19** (and 2:13), previous events have formed a separate subsection of a larger episode and a HP is used.

(17-18) {The previous subsection ends with a quotation from Jeremiah that was fulfilled (ἐπληρώθη) when Herod had the infants slaughtered—v. 16}

(19)   <u>Τελευτήσαντος</u>   δὲ   <u>τοῦ</u>   <u>Ἡρῴδου</u>   ἰδοὺ ἄγγελος κυρίου
       having.died   DE   the   Herod   behold angel   of.Lord
       φαίνεται κατ' ὄναρ τῷ   Ἰωσὴφ ἐν   Αἰγύπτῳ   (20)   λέγων,
       3S.appears in   dream to.the Joseph in   Egypt   saying,
       "Rising up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel..."

(21)   Then he, rising up, took (παρέλαβεν) the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel.

In contrast, **Matt. 1:18-19** do not describe a previous interaction between participants, but are simply part of the setting for the events that are to follow (the RSV translates vv. 18b-19 as a single sentence). This may be why no HP is used in v. 20.

(18)   Now <u>the</u> <u>birth</u> of <u>Jesus</u> <u>Christ</u> took place in this way. <u>When</u> <u>his</u> <u>mother</u> <u>Mary</u> <u>had</u> <u>been</u> <u>engaged</u> <u>to</u> <u>Joseph</u>, before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit; (19) and <u>Joseph</u> <u>her</u> <u>husband</u>, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly.

(20)   <u>ταῦτα</u>   δὲ   <u>αὐτοῦ</u> <u>ἐνθυμηθέντος</u> ἰδοὺ ἄγγελος   κυρίου
       these   DE   of.him thinking.on   behold angel   of.Lord
       κατ'   ὄναρ ἐφάνη   αὐτῷ λέγων,
       by   dream 3S.appeared to.him saying,...

To sum up, it appears that for a HP to be used to activate a participant in Matthew's Gospel, the participant must be introduced to the scene of a previous interaction between participants and must have an active role to play.

Historical Presents and the Movement of Active Participants to a New Location

Sometimes, when Jesus has been interacting with other people, a HP is used to bring all the participants to the *location* of the next significant events in which they are involved. The HP gives

prominence to the following events that take place at that location, or even to the location itself because of its significance for subsequent events.

In **Matt. 26:36**, for instance, two HPs are used: one to move all the active participants to Gethsemane and a second to introduce Jesus' initial speech to his disciples. These HPs are readily interpreted as pointing forward to and highlighting "Our Lord's agony at Gethsemane" (Alford 1863.I:270). Furthermore, the location itself is significant for subsequent events, as it will be the place to which Judas will bring an armed group to arrest Jesus.

(35)   {The previous subsection ends with Peter saying (λέγει)[244] to Jesus, "Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you." And so said (εἶπαν) all the disciples.}

(36)
| Τότε | ἔρχεται | μετ᾽ | αὐτῶν | ὁ | Ἰησοῦς | εἰς | χωρίον |
| then | 3S.comes | with | them | the | Jesus | to | place |

| λεγόμενον | Γεθσημανί | καὶ | λέγει | τοῖς | μαθηταῖς, |
| called | Gethsemane | and | 3S.says | to.the | disciples |

"Sit here while I go over there and pray."

(37)   And, having taken Peter and the two sons of Zebedee with him, he began (ἤρξατο) to be grieved and distressed.

See also Matt. 4:5, 4:8 (with πάλιν 'again').[245]

In contrast, when Jesus and the disciples move to a new location in Matt. 13:36, no HP is used (Τότε ἀφεὶς τοὺς ὄχλους ἦλθεν εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν 'then, having left the crowds, he went into the house'). This may be because the location itself is of no significance for subsequent events or because the interpretation of the parable of the weeds of the field (vv. 36-43) does not warrant being given special prominence.

Historical Presents and Conclusions

On two occasions, a HP is used in Matthew in connection with the *concluding event* of an interaction between participants. In both, the HP appears to be used not to highlight the concluding event itself but to point forward to and give prominence to the events that follow.[246]

In **Matt. 3:15**, for instance, the event presented with the HP concludes an interaction between John and Jesus. The HP points forward to and gives prominence to the coming of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus and the voice from heaven (vv. 16-17).

(13)   Then Jesus arrives (παραγίνεται) from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him.

(14)   John was preventing (διεκώλυεν) him... (15a) In answer, Jesus said (εἶπεν) to him, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness."

(15b)
| τότε | ἀφίησιν | αὐτόν. |
| then | 3S.permits | him |

(16)   And having been baptized, Jesus immediately came up (ἀνέβη) from the water (17) and behold, the heavens were opened (ἠνεῴχθησαν)...

See also Matt. 4:11a (Τότε ἀφίησιν αὐτὸν ὁ διάβολος 'then the devil leaves him'), which concludes the interaction between the devil and Jesus, and points forward to the arrival of the angels to serve him (see the use of ἰδού in v. 11b).

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[244] See sec. 14.2 on the use of the HP in Matt. 26:35.

[245] Some MSS have a HP (λέγει) also in 4:9, which would result in every event and speech of vv. 8-11a being presented with a HP.

[246] Pope (p.c.) disagrees. He feels that, in both 3:15b and 4:11a, the concluding event is highlighted.

I argued above that a HP is only used to activate a participant in Matthew's Gospel when the participant is introduced to the scene of a previous interaction between participants and has an active role to play. If that conclusion is valid, then the use of a HP in **Matt. 3:1**, which activates John the Baptist, implies that the episode is to be understood as part of a larger whole, even though he is introduced to a different location than that of the events of the end of chapter 2 (Nazareth). In this connection, see Alford's comment (1863.I:18), "the ἡμέραι ἐκεῖναι must be understood to mean that we take up the persons of the narrative where we left them."

(2:23)   And having come, he settled (κατῴκησεν) in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He will called a Nazorean."

(3:1)   Ἐν   δὲ   ταῖς   ἡμέραις   ἐκείναις   παραγίνεται
         in   DE   the   days   those   3S.comes

         Ἰωάννης   ὁ   βαπτιστὴς   κηρύσσων   ἐν   τῇ   ἐρήμῳ
         John   the   Baptist   preaching   in   the   desert

         τῆς   Ἰουδαίας   (2)   [καὶ]   λέγων,
         of.the   Judea   and   saying,
         "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

Review Questions

(a)   If a HP is used to activate a participant in Matthew's Gospel, what does this imply?

(b)   If a HP is used to move active participants to a new location, to what does it give prominence?

Suggested Answers

(a)   If a HP is used to activate a participant in Matthew's Gospel, this implies that the participant will have a significant role to play in the following events. Furthermore, a HP is used only if the participant is being introduced to the scene of a previous interaction between participants.

(b)   If a HP is used to move active participants to a new location, this gives prominence to the following events that take place at that location, or even to the location itself because of its significance for subsequent events.

Note the use of the HP in the following passages, then answer the questions.

Illustrative Passage 3: Matthew 25:14-20

(14-18) {A man entrusted (παρέδωκεν) his property to three servants. Two gained (ἐκέρδησεν) more talents, whereas the third hid (ἔκρυψεν) the money in the ground.}

(19)   μετὰ   δὲ   πολὺν   χρόνον ἔρχεται ὁ   κύριος τῶν
         after   DE   much   time   3S.comes the   master of.the

         δούλων   ἐκείνων   καὶ   συναίρει   λόγον   μετ'   αὐτῶν.
         slaves   those   and   3S.settles accounts with   them

(20)   And he who had received the five talents, approaching, brought (προσήνεγκεν) five more talents, saying, "Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents."

Question

Why are HPs used in v. 19?

Suggested Answer

HPs are used in v. 19 to reactivate the master of the slaves (following a previous interaction between participants) and to indicate that he has an active role to play.

Passage 4: Matthew 16:28-17:2

(28) "Truly, I say to you, some standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

(1a)
Καὶ	μεθ'	ἡμέρας ἓξ	παραλαμβάνει ὁ	Ἰησοῦς	τὸν	Πέτρον
and	after	days six	3S.takes the	Jesus	the	Peter

καὶ	Ἰάκωβον	καὶ	Ἰωάννην	τὸν	ἀδελφὸν	αὐτοῦ
and	James	and	John	the	brother	his

(1b)
καὶ	ἀναφέρει	αὐτοὺς εἰς	ὄρος	ὑψηλὸν	κατ' ἰδίαν.
and	3S.leads.up	them to	mount	high	privately

(2) And he was transfigured (μετεμορφώθη) before them...

Question

What does the presence of the HPs in Matt. 17:1 imply?

Suggested Answer: see Appendix 12(4).

12.2.2 Non-Speech Historical Presents in Luke-Acts

Only five non-speech HPs are found in Luke-Acts. All involve introducing to an existing scene information that both is significant in its own right and leads to further significant events:

- the arrival of someone with the news that the daughter of the synagogue ruler has died (Luke 8:49)
- the sight of Abraham and Lazarus in his bosom (Luke 16:23)
- the sight of the linen cloths by themselves (Luke 24:12)
- the sight of heaven open and something like a sheet coming down (Acts 10:11)
- the discovery of many Gentiles assembled to hear Peter (Acts 10:27), which leads Peter to say what he did in vv. 28-29.

It appears, therefore, that, while HPs are seldom used in Luke-Acts, those that do occur function more or less like those found in Matthew's Gospel, viz., to mark as significant the information associated with the HP and to give prominence to what follows.

12.2.3 Non-Speech Historical Presents in John

HPs in John, whether or not they introduce a reported speech, are usually cataphoric, i.e., point forward to and highlight what follows.

A difference between John and Matthew is that it is the norm in John for non-speech HPs to be followed, often immediately, by speech HPs. (In Matthew, this only occurs in connection with the movement of active participants to the location of the next significant events.) See sec. 15.1 for discussion of whether or not the speech HP is cataphoric.

A further difference between John and Matthew is that the conditions that must be met for a HP to be used appear to be less stringent in John than in Matthew. Thus, although the non-speech HPs of John may be divided into three categories, the first being by far the most common, the conditions attached to them are weaker:

- those that *activate* a participant by introducing him or her to the scene of a previous interaction between participants (whether or not he has a significant part to play)
- those that *move* active participants to the location of the next significant events
- others that describe events that lead immediately to a highlighted event.

As in Matthew, the majority of non-speech HPs in John activate participants by *introducing them to an existing scene*. In **John 6:19a**, for instance, Jesus is introduced as the object of θεωροῦσιν to the scene in which the disciples are struggling against the elements.

(16)   <u>When</u> <u>evening</u> <u>came</u>, his disciples went down (κατέβησαν) to the sea (17) and, having
         embarked in a boat, were going (ἤρχοντο) across the sea to Capernaum. Darkness had
         already come (ἐγεγόνει), and Jesus had not yet come (ἐληλύθει) to them. (18) Because a
         strong wind was blowing, the sea was becoming rough (διεγείρετο).

(19a)   ἐληλακότες   οὖν   ὡς   σταδίους   εἴκοσι πέντε   ἢ
         having.rowed   then   about   furlongs   twenty five   or

         τριάκοντα θεωροῦσιν   τὸν   Ἰησοῦν   περιπατοῦντα ἐπὶ   τῆς
         thirty   3P.see   the   Jesus   walking   on   the

         θαλάσσης καὶ   **ἐγγὺς τοῦ   πλοίου** γινόμενον,
         sea   and   near   the   boat   becoming

(19b)   and they were afraid (ἐφοβήθησαν). (20) But he says (λέγει) to them, "It is I; do not be
         afraid." (21) Then they were willing (ἤθελον) to take him into the boat, and immediately
         the boat reached (ἐγένετο) the land to which they were going.

Similarly, following the Prologue to the Gospel (1:1-14), John the Baptist is activated in 1:15 with a
HP that relates him to the existing scene (μαρτυρεῖ περὶ αὐτοῦ 'testifies about him', i.e., the Word), as
is Jesus in 1:29, Simon in 1:41, Philip in 1:43, and Nathanael in 1:45. See also 2:9 (the bridegroom), 4:7
(a woman of Samaria), 5:14 (Jesus), 8:3! (a woman taken in adultery), 9:13 (the Pharisees), 12:22a
(Andrew), 12:22b (Jesus), 13:6 (Simon Peter), 13:26 (Judas), 18:3 (Judas and those with him), 20:1
(Mary Magdalene), 20:2 (Simon Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loved), 20:6 (Simon Peter again),
20:12 (two angels), 20:14b (Jesus), 20:18 (the disciples), 20:26 (Jesus), and 21:20 (the disciple whom
Jesus loved).

Significant objects are also introduced with a HP. See 20:1 (the stone taken away from the tomb) and
20:5 and 6 (the various cloths in the tomb).

At the beginning of an episode, in contrast, participants are activated without a HP. See, for example,
John 2:1-2, where the mother of Jesus, Jesus, and his disciples are all activated without a HP. (The
servants, in contrast, are activated as the addressees of λέγει in v. 5.)

(1)   <u>On</u> <u>the</u> <u>third</u> <u>day</u> there was (ἐγένετο) a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus
         was (ἦν) there. (2) Both Jesus and his disciples were invited (ἐκλήθη) to the wedding.

Similarly, Nicodemus is activated without a HP at the beginning of chapter 3.

The participants who are activated with a HP are of varying importance. In 6:19a (above), Jesus is
very significant, as is the action he is performing. In **John 2:9b**, in contrast, the bridegroom has no
active role to play (in Matthew, the participant must have an active role to play before a HP may be
used—sec. 12.2.1). Rather, what is significant is what is said to him (v. 10), which is also introduced
with a HP.[247]

(9a)   When the master of the feast tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know
         where it had come from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew),

(9b)   φωνεῖ   τὸν   νυμφίον   ὁ   ἀρχιτρίκλινος
         3S.calls   the   bridegroom   the   master.of.feast

(10)   καὶ   λέγει   αὐτῷ,
         and   3S.says to.him,
         "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have
         become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now."

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[247] The HP which introduces the speech of 2:10 may also be cataphoric, pointing forward to the conclusion of v. 11 ('This, the
first of his signs, Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him').

Similarly, in **John 12:22-23**, although HPs are used both to activate Andrew and Jesus, what is more significant is what Jesus says (vv. 23-28a) and in particular, since that speech is also introduced with a HP, the response of v. 28b.[248]

(20)   Now there were (ἦσαν) some Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the festival. (21) So they approached (προσῆλθον) Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and were asking (ἠρώτων) him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

(22a)	ἔρχεται	ὁ	Φίλιππος	καὶ	λέγει	τῷ	Ἀνδρέᾳ,
	3S.comes	the	Philip	and	3S.says	to.the	Andrew

(22b)	ἔρχεται	Ἀνδρέας	καὶ	Φίλιππος	καὶ	λέγουσιν	τῷ	Ἰησοῦ.
	3S.comes	Andrew	and	Philip	and	3P.say	to.the	Jesus

(23)	ὁ	δὲ	Ἰησοῦς	ἀποκρίνεται	αὐτοῖς	λέγων,
	the	DE	Jesus	3S.replies	to.them	saying,

"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified... (28a) Father, glorify your name."

(28b)	ἦλθεν	οὖν	φωνὴ	ἐκ	τοῦ	οὐρανοῦ,
	3S.came	then	voice	from	the	heaven,

"I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."

It appears, therefore, that the rhetorical effect of using a HP to activate a participant in John's Gospel is to highlight, but the reader must deduce from the context what is being highlighted. In particular, the participant activated with the HP may or may not be the one who performs the significant event(s) or speech.

In a few instances, when Jesus has already been activated, a HP is used to bring him to the *location* of the next significant events. In **John 4:5**, for instance, a HP is used to bring him to the city of Sychar. This is the location for the next significant interaction of his ministry.

(1)   When Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard, "Jesus is making and baptizing more disciples than John" (2)—although it was not Jesus himself but his disciples who baptized—(3) he left (ἀφῆκεν) Judea and departed (ἀπῆλθεν) again for Galilee. (4) Now it was necessary (ἔδει) for him to pass through Samaria.

(5)	ἔρχεται	οὖν	εἰς	πόλιν	τῆς	Σαμαρείας	λεγομένην	Συχὰρ
	3S.comes	then	to	city	of.the	Samaria	called	Sychar

near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph.

(6a)   Jacob's well was (ἦν) there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting (ἐκαθέζετο) by the well.

See also John 11:38 (Jesus comes to Lazarus' tomb) and 18:28 (they lead Jesus to the praetorium—with which Pilate is associated, as the articular reference to him in v. 29 suggests). In each of these examples, the location itself is important only insofar as significant events occur there, so the HP may be considered to have a cataphoric function.

Finally, HPs appear to be used cataphorically in **John 13:4a-b** (below) and again in v. 5a to highlight the immediately following event (vv. 4c and 5b respectively), which is presented in the aorist. (A similar effect is achieved in vv. 6b-7—see sec. 15.1. The HP in v. 6a is used to activate Simon Peter—see above.)[249]

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[248] Pope (p.c.) suggests a possible parallel between a chain of HPs such as that found in John 12:22-23 and a series of τέ's such as that found in Acts 21:30-31 (see sec. 6.3). Both have the rhetorical effect of building up tension in anticipation of the next significant development.

[249] See also Rev. 12:4 (καὶ ἡ οὐρὰ αὐτοῦ σύρει τὸ τρίτον τῶν ἀστέρων τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ ἔβαλεν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὴν γῆν 'and his tail drags the third part of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth').

(1)   Now before the festival of the Passover, since Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world to go to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved (ἠγάπησεν) them to the end.

(2)   While supper was taking place, since the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot to betray him, (3) knowing that the Father had put all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God,

(4a)   ἐγείρεται   ἐκ   τοῦ   δείπνου
          3S.rises   from   the   supper

(4b)   καὶ   τίθησιν   τὰ   ἱμάτια
          and   3S.puts.aside   the   garments

(4c)   καὶ   λαβὼν   λέντιον   διέζωσεν   ἑαυτόν·
          and   having.taken   towel   3S.girded   himself

(5a)   εἶτα   βάλλει ὕδωρ   εἰς   τὸν   νιπτῆρα
          then   3S.puts water   into   the   basin

(5b)   καὶ   ἤρξατο   νίπτειν τοὺς   πόδας τῶν   μαθητῶν
          and   3S.began   to.wash the   feet   of.the   disciples

          καὶ   ἐκμάσσειν   τῷ   λεντίῳ ᾧ   ἦν   διεζωσμένος.
          and   to.wipe   with.the towel with.which   3S.was girded

(6a)   ἔρχεται   οὖν   πρὸς   Σίμωνα   Πέτρον·
          3S.comes   then   to   Simon   Peter

(6b)   He says (λέγει) to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

(7)   Jesus answered (ἀπεκρίθη)...

Review Questions

(a)   When a non-speech HP is used in John to activate a participant, does the participant necessarily have an active part to play in subsequent events?

(b)   When a non-speech HP is used to move Jesus to a new location, what does this imply?

Suggested Answers

(a)   When a non-speech HP is used in John to activate a participant, the participant concerned does not necessarily have an active part to play in subsequent events.

(b)   When a non-speech HP is used to move Jesus to a new location, this implies that significant events involving Jesus will take place at that location.

   Note the presence of non-speech HPs in the following illustrative passages.

Illustrative Passage 5: John 20:24-26

(24)   But Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came.

(25a)   So the other disciples were saying (ἔλεγον) to him, "We have seen the Lord."

(25b)   But he said (εἶπεν) to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

(26a)   And a week later his disciples were (ἦσαν) again in the house, and Thomas with them.

(26b)   ἔρχεται   ὁ   Ἰησοῦς τῶν   θυρῶν κεκλεισμένων
          3S.comes   the   Jesus   the   doors   having.been.shut

(26c)   καὶ   ἔστη   εἰς   τὸ   μέσον καὶ   εἶπεν, Εἰρήνη ὑμῖν.
          and   3S.stood   in   the   midst and   3S.said peace   to.you

Question

   Why is a HP used in v. 26b?

Suggested Answer

A HP is used in v. 26b to introduce Jesus to the scene of a previous interaction between participants and to indicate that he has an active part to play.

Illustrative Passage 6: John 21:7b-14 (UBS text)

(7b)   Simon Peter, having heard, "It is the Lord," tied (διεζώσατο) his outer garment around himself, for he was naked, and threw (ἔβαλεν) himself into the sea. (8) But the other disciples came (ἦλθον) in the boat,... dragging the net full of the fish.

(9)

ὡς	οὖν	ἀπέβησαν	εἰς	τὴν	γῆν
when	then	3P.disembarked	onto	the	land

βλέπουσιν	ἀνθρακιὰν	κειμένην	καὶ	ὀψάριον
3P.see	charcoal.fire	lying	and	fish

ἐπικείμενον	καὶ	ἄρτον.
lying.upon	and	bread

(10)

λέγει	αὐτοῖς	ὁ	Ἰησοῦς,
3S.says	to.them	the	Jesus, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught."

(11)   So Simon Peter went aboard (ἀνέβη) and dragged (εἵλκυσεν) the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn.

(12a)

λέγει	αὐτοῖς	ὁ	Ἰησοῦς,
3S.says	to.them	the	Jesus, "Come and have breakfast."

(12b)   Now none of the disciples was daring to ask him, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord.

(13)

ἔρχεται	Ἰησοῦς	καὶ	λαμβάνει	τὸν	ἄρτον	καὶ	δίδωσιν
3S.comes	Jesus	and	3S.takes	the	bread	and	3S.gives

αὐτοῖς,	καὶ	τὸ	ὀψάριον	ὁμοίως.
to.them	and	the	fish	likewise

(14)   Thus Jesus now manifested (ἐφανερώθη) himself for the third time to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Questions

(a)   Why is a HP used in v. 9?
(b)   Why are HPs used in v. 13?
(c)   What is the significance of the anarthrous reference to Jesus in the UBS text of v. 13? (Contrast the articular references to him in vv. 10 and 12.)

Suggested Answers

(a)   A HP is used in v. 9 to introduce significant objects to the existing scene. These objects are the charcoal fire and especially the fish and the bread.
(b)   The first HP in v. 13 brings Jesus to the location of the bread and fish, which implies that the events that occur there are of significance. Since the series of HPs continues, it appears that it is the act of giving the bread to the disciples that is particularly significant. Alternatively, the HPs point to the conclusion of v. 14.
(c)   The anarthrous reference to Jesus in the UBS text of v. 13 has the effect of highlighting the events that he performs. In this connection, Beasley-Murray (1987:400) states, "The provision of a meal—fish and bread—by Jesus, particularly in light of the language used in v 13, imparts to the occasion something of the quality of the Last Supper."[250]

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[250] "Since the [MS] support for an anarthrous reference is so limited I am inclined to suspect that the highlighting it achieves is a deliberate heightening of prominence by liturgically-minded editors of the words which resemble the language of the Last Supper" (Pope p.c.).