

Suzanne ADEMA The whereabouts of the narrator: Deictic orientation in Latin Epic and Historiography

The epic genre is a genre of oral performance. Although Vergil took his time to compose the *Aeneid*, this does not mean that observations on oral performance are not applicable to the *Aeneid*. On the contrary: Vergil took his time in order to make the *Aeneid* look like a piece of oral poetry (cf. Fleischman 1990:87). In my paper I will argue that this pretense of oral performance is reflected in the tense usage of the poem.

The narrator of the *Aeneid* uses two deictic orientation points as far as tense is concerned. Firstly, he may use the present and perfect tense to comment and narrate from his own point in time and thus use the ‘singing of the song’ as the deictic orientation point. Secondly, he may use the narrative present to denote events and situations as contemporaneous to *reference time* (in the sense of Partee 1983), thus turning reference time into the deictic orientation point from which he presents his story. The narrator of the *Aeneid* prefers reference time as the deictic orientation point and narrates most of his poem from the so-called *re-enacting stance*, as an oral performer would do (Fleischman 1990:274).

This shift of the deictic orientation point is a presentational game of which both narrator and reader are aware (Chafe 1994:208, Bakker 1997:78). The public should picture the re-enacted events as ‘now’ taking place on a (mental) podium. The role of the narrator is to guide the public through these re-enacted events; he knows what’s coming next and may, for instance, use prospective words such as *nequiquam* within the re-enacting stance (e.g. 9.364).

The connection between the re-enacting stance and the epic genre becomes clearer when a comparison is made with the genre of historiography. Although the re-enacting stance is used in Livy’s *Ab Urbe Condita*, the narrator of this historical work seems to prefer to use the perfect tense as the basic tense of his narrative. The question arises whether a narrator within the genre of historiography may take reference time as a deictic orientation point to the same extent as a narrator within the epic genre. In my paper I will further elaborate upon the differences in use of the re-enacting stance in the works of Livy and Vergil.

References

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