Introduction

If there is any literary work that embodied and defined a cultural identity for the readers of its time, it is Vergil's *Aeneid.* When I started writing this book I wanted to understand more fully how the poem's Roman readers thought about themselves as Romans and how this poem affected their conceptions of Roman identity. The time was ripe for an analysis of this kind. Recent classical scholarship has shown an increasing interest in ancient conceptions of identity, subjectivity, and the self. Scholars have approached these issues from a variety of contexts and with a number of theoretical frameworks. Studies of gender and ethnicity in the ancient world are as much a part of an exploration of ancient conceptions of identity as are studies concerned with the construction of the self in literary texts. Much work has been done, for instance, on ancient conceptualizations of sexuality and gender.[1] In the area of Roman literature there are numerous studies concerned with gender and sexuality.[2] There is also an increased interest in questions of ethnic identity in antiquity.[3] This renewed interest in the ancient self is the result of modern concerns such as contemporary interest in the issues of gender, ethnicity, and identity in general, as well as modern theories of the self, such as psychoanalysis.

For several reasons, Vergil's *Aeneid* is an important text for the study of the history of the ancient self. The self-consciously new national epic of the Roman Empire, written at perhaps the most significant political turning point in Rome's development from republic to autocracy, the poem stands at a historical and cultural watershed. Culturally, the Augustan Age is an interesting time in the history of the ancient self because it is situated

at the end of the Hellenistic period in which ancient conceptions of the self underwent a gradual transformation from a more socially determined model relevant for the *polis* culture of Classical Greece to one determined more by internal experience in the Roman imperial period.

What is interesting about the *Aeneid* is that it fuses an interest in the inner workings of the self with an articulation of the individual's place within the social structure. Like a Janus-headed hybrid in the history of the ancient self, the *Aeneid* looks both backward and forward in time: back to earlier conceptualizations of the self within the structures of *polis* and *res publica,* and forward to the later rising interest in the interiority of the self, as we see it, for instance, in Augustine. Both modes of conceptualization of the self are important to the *Aeneid,* and both are analyzed in this book.

An analysis of the *Aeneid* adds to our understanding of the history of the ancient self in two significant ways. First, since the *Aeneid* belongs to a period of transition in the history of the ancient self, it allows us to observe more closely how this shift took place. Secondly, as a work that speaks to the imagination, the *Aeneid* provides an important supplement to discussions based on philosophical and other theoretical texts, which discuss the ancient self more explicitly than literary texts.

The disadvantage of focusing exclusively on ancient philosophical texts is that they are interested primarily in a prescriptive definition of the ancient subject, that is, in the question of how one should govern oneself. But poetry and mythology should form a vital part of the study of ancient subjectivity, because mythology was omnipresent even to the illiterate, and because some works of poetry (such as the Homeric epics and the *Aeneid*) were so central a part of ancient education that knowledge of them was almost equivalent to literacy. Looking at mythology and epic poetry, therefore, provides us access to the stories that formed a sense of self for large sections of the population of the ancient world. An analysis of how such stories influenced the Romans' sense of self adds to more theoretical and therefore more prescriptive definitions of the subject a more descriptive one, less determined by precepts and more focused on the imagination.

The present study of Vergil's *Aeneid* is a contribution to the study of the Roman self as it is articulated in this influential poem. I argue that the *Aeneid* had a significant impact on its Roman readers' sense of self as Romans and that the poem articulated Roman identity for them through the reader's identification with and differentiation from its fictional characters. The identity articulated in the poem for the reader is conceived both as a

personal and a collective identity, that is, the poem constructs its version of the reader's individual self from the constituent elements of the self and further defines this individual self in terms of collective determinants such as gender and ethnicity.

In analyzing how the poem constructs Roman identity, I focus on these two levels of identity: the individual and the collective. That is, I deal with both the level of the subject and the level of ethnicity and gender. This double focus proceeds from the textual strategies of the *Aeneid* itself: the poem intertwines collective determinants of identity with determinants of identity on the level of the subject, for instance, when a character's emotional life is linked to his/her gender and/or ethnicity. Dido and Aeneas are good examples for this linkage of the individual and the collective levels of identity. I argue that the emotional lives of both figures are linked to and motivated by their gender and ethnic identities.

The study is divided into three parts. Part 1 explores why the *Aeneid* should be seen as having had a profound influence on its Roman readers' conceptions of Roman identity. In this section I consider the power ascribed to the *Aeneid* over its audiences by ancient rhetorical and philosophical theories. Part 2 argues that the reader finds his[4] identity by sharing the gaze of some fictional characters on the events of the poem—which facilitates identification with them—and by differentiating himself from other characters who are conceived as spectacles for this gaze. In part 3 I analyze several of these figures of identification and differentiation in terms of their gender and ethnic identities to understand how these fictional figures collectively contribute to the reader's sense of identity as a Roman.

To clarify what I mean by "identity" here, let me define the terms *subject position* and *subjectivity* I will use in my analysis: every fictional text constructs a subject position for its readers, a vantage point or perspective from which to encounter the fictional world of the narrative. This subject position emerges from the way the text constructs its fictional characters, inviting readers to enter into the vantage points or emotional lives of some characters while separating them from those of others through various textual strategies. The readers' perspective on the fictional world of the *Aeneid* and their emotional response to it is shaped by their relationship to the perspectives and emotional lives of the poem's characters. An example may best illustrate this point: readers have strong emotional responses to the Dido narrative, and their reactions to that narrative are shaped by the way the text depicts Dido's emotional life. A reader's emotional reactions to Dido's story contribute to what may be called his or her subject position.

While the subject position is constructed by the text for the reader to occupy, I use the term *subjectivity*, by contrast, to denote both the reader's subject position and the way the fictional characters are constructed in the narrative, a construction that can have a powerful impact on the reader's subject position. So the term *subjectivity* is used in this book to express the relationship between the reader's sense of self and the characters of the narrative. Unlike other Vergil scholars I do not use the term *subjectivity* to discuss the poet's sympathies with his fictional characters or his outlook on the world. Instead I draw on various overlapping theoretical frameworks such as semiotics and psychoanalysis to arrive at a definition of the subject that suits the discussion of fictional characters and the impact they have on the reader's sense of self.

In my analysis of the fictional characters' subjectivities I focus on three constituent elements of the subject that are particularly important to the way the poem constructs the fictional characters, as well as the reader, as subjects. These are a character's (and reader's) gaze, emotions, and voice. Through the characters' gazes, emotions, and voices, the reader's subject position emerges as the reader's gaze on the poem's fictional world and his emotional reactions to the events of the narrative. I focus on vision or the gaze as an integral constituent element of the readers' and the characters' subjectivities, because ancient theories of poetry and the self ascribed to the visuality of poetry a special power over its audiences. Another constituent element of subjectivity I concentrate on is emotion. The emotions of some fictional characters are central to their construction as subjects. Correspondingly, the reader's emotional responses to poetry were central to ancient discussions of the effects of poetry on the self. A third constituent element of subjectivity I consider here, although not in as much detail as the other two, is the voice. Many characters of the poem are constructed primarily through their voices, rather than their gazes or emotions. It was precisely the acquisition of a voice, that is, of correct Latinity and the ability to speak publicly, which was the goal of the rhetorical education that often formed the context of the study of the powers of poetry.

I deliberately chose the term *gaze* in this study because the space the poem creates for its readers is more than a "point of view." We will see that the *Aeneid* was regarded as having the power to shape its reader's voice and emotions, through *phantasia* and the gaze, through its language, and through moral precepts. By shaping the reader's gaze, his voice, and his emotions, the poem was seen as influencing those elements of the reader's self that ancient thinking considered as central and important parts of the

self, its constituent elements. But my choice of terminology in this study also shows that the questions I ask here are shaped by modern discourses and modern concerns, such as theories of the self and of identity in general.

In the following two chapters I use terms such as *gaze, desire,* and *the subject* because my modern frame of reference for inquiries into the self in literature takes many of its central concepts from psychoanalytic theory and postmodern literary criticism. These modern theories of identity are concerned with the subject, its entry into language, its gaze, and the birth of desire. In psychoanalytic theories, language and desire are associated with the emergence of the self. A baby's voice, its use of language for communication, can emerge only at the point at which it can distinguish between the self and the outside world. This same moment of recognition is also associated in psychoanalysis with the birth of desire. Hence, the emotions are again a defining element of the self.[5]

The gaze is seen as a constituent element of subjectivity in the context of psychoanalysis and film theory. For film criticism, the gaze is the defining component of the audience's subject position, because the audience takes in the visual cinematic narrative through their gazes.[6] As we see below, ancient theories of the self also consider vision or the gaze as having an important influence on the emotions and hence on the self. Ancient and modern literary theories of the gaze thus converge in assigning to the gaze a defining force for the self. This striking convergence of ancient and modern theories of the self encourages an analysis of the poem's visuality and of the fictional characters' gazes as a means of better understanding the ancient self. But it is not as a validating gesture that I make the observation of the convergence between ancient and modern theories of the self. I also do not see any continuity between ancient and modern articulations of the gaze. The ancient discourse on *phantasia* comes from a completely different milieu (rhetoric and education) than the modern discourse of psychoanalysis (science and medicine). The purposes to which the two discourses are put are completely different. Nevertheless, their convergence in assigning to the gaze a formative force for the self is striking, and it motivates the central importance of the gaze for this book's study of the self in the *Aeneid*'s characters and readers.

My interest in subjectivity in Vergil's *Aeneid* is a well-established line of inquiry in Vergilian scholarship. Critics have concerned themselves intensively with various aspects of the question of how subjectivity is expressed in the poem. Discussions have often focused, however, on the poet's voice and his sympathies with particular characters of the poem. Ever since the

publication of Adam Parry's famous article, "The Two Voices of Vergil's *Aeneid*" in 1963, the voice of the poet has become a hotly debated issue.[7] Another line of inquiry into the subjectivity expressed in the poem was represented by Heinze (1928) and Otis (1964), who used the terms *Subjektivität* and *Empfindung,* or *subjective style,* to talk about the poet's voice. Otis, for instance, distinguished between the poet's empathy with his characters and his sympathy for them.[8] Conte (1986) used very similar terminology—*sympatheia* and *empatheia*—to connect this debate with the pessimist interpretation of Vergil that flourished mainly after the publication of Otis's book. Conte argued that while Vergil's *empatheia* allows multiple voices to be heard within the poem, his *sympatheia* operates as a counterforce, pulling together with a unifying voice the multiplicity of other voices and integrating them rather than allowing them to clash with each other.[9]

My focus on the gaze, the voice, and the emotions in the *Aeneid* is by no means unprecedented. Vergilian scholarship has long been interested in the poem's voices, whether critics interpreted them as expressions of the poet's intentions, as has been the tendency in much work commonly labeled Two-Voices scholarship, or as multiple and divergent perspectives on the events of the poem, as Conte has understood them in his seminal work on the *Aeneid.* Work on the poem's voices has also often been concerned with the emotions expressed in the poem by various characters and by the narrator, discussing the poet's ability to empathize with his characters and the sympathies and subjective statements he occasionally expresses.

More recently Vergil scholars have become more interested in the poem's gazes as well. Much work has been done on the ecphrastic passages of the *Aeneid,* which are among the most obvious parts of the poem in which the reader's imaginary gaze is engaged.[10] From the theoretical framework of narratology, the poem's gazes have become an object of study in Don Fowler's work, who has formulated his interest in the question "who sees" (as opposed to "who speaks") in the narratological concept of focalization.[11] Fowler's narratological approach to the poem's voices and gazes has much in common with what follows, but I will not use the terminology of narratology, because my interest in the poem's voices and gazes is psychologically and culturally motivated. Terms such as *gaze, voice, desire,* and *subjectivity* can be applied equally to the psychological makeup of fictional characters and to the elements that constitute the reader's self. Hence, they allow me to explore the relationship between the characters and their readers more easily than does the terminology of narratology. The terminology I do use, however, is not unprecedented in Vergilian scholarship, either.

Alison Keith's recent study on women in Roman epic considers the deaths of women in the *Aeneid* as an object of the reader's gaze.[12] There are other Latin authors who have recently been approached by scholars with a similar theoretical framework. Spectacle and the gaze are a central concern of Andrew Feldherr's recent study of Livy.[13] The element of spectacle and the imaginary gaze is also a topic in Ann Vasaly's work on Cicero.[14]

Interest in the *Aeneid*'s readers as producers of the poem's meaning has also been on the rise recently. On both sides of the debate about the pro- or anti-Augustan tendencies of the *Aeneid,* scholars have been interested in ancient readers' potential attitudes to the events described and the sentiments expressed in the poem. Scholars opposing the pessimist interpretation of the *Aeneid,* which has become the mainstream interpretation of Vergil in Anglophone scholarship, have often invoked the ancient reader as having sensibilities different from modern critics.[15] On the other side of the debate, scholars have increasingly turned to theoretical frameworks that empower the reader as a source of meaning. Scholars whose interest lies in the uncovering of multiple and contradictory meanings have on occasion used the theoretical framework of reader response criticism as a response to those interpretations of the poem that would limit and fix its meaning by appealing to the poet's intention as the sole source of meaning.[16] While the theoretical framework of reader response criticism gives weight particularly to the modern reader and her response to the poem as a source of meaning, Vergil scholars working within this framework have also paid meticulous attention to reconstructing, as far as possible, the possible responses of ancient readers.[17]

My own interest in the ancient readers of the *Aeneid* and the poem's effect on their sense of self as Romans stems from a desire to understand more fully, in which ways ancient Roman culture was different from our own, or to put it somewhat differently, to get to know that ancient reader more intimately in all his foreignness and idiosyncrasies in comparison to ourselves today. This project must be largely conjectural, as it cannot primarily be based on ancient evidence of readers' reactions to reading the *Aeneid.* Instead, I suggest how the *Aeneid* shaped Roman identity based first on ancient theories of the power of poetry over its readers' selves (part 1), and secondly on my analysis of the construction of the reader's identity in the *Aeneid* (parts 2 and 3).

My study proceeds from the assumption that the *Aeneid* shaped the reader's sense of self by various textual strategies that establish a relationship between the reader and the fictional characters. It is therefore necessary to

make some remarks about the way I treat character as a critical category in this study. Contemporary criticism of the modern novel has two ways of looking at the concept of character in narrative. A more conventional way of conceiving of the characters of a novel is to treat them as entities that could have an existence prior to and independent of the text. The concern of such criticism is primarily whether the novelist accomplishes a rounded portrait of a person that could exist in the real world. Bound up as this approach is with the realism of the European novel, it has come under attack by postmodern critics who emphasize that what is called a character in a narrative is indeed no more than the sum total of those passages of the narrative that are concerned with that figure, that to treat the text as if it were reflecting a figure that could exist outside the text is to buy into the fiction of classic realism.[18]

When we approach the texts of the ancient world with this theoretical framework, we must take into account the differences between those ancient texts and the modern novel for which these theories of character have been developed. One difference between the modern novel and the *Aeneid* that seems to me important is that, unlike Jane Austen's Emma Woodhouse or Tolstoy's Anna Karenina, the figures we encounter in this poem do have an existence outside the poem, in the literary and historical texts of other ancient writers, and in the mythological imaginations of ancient readers. As mythological figures associated with the early history of Rome, the characters of the *Aeneid* were to ancient readers more historical and therefore more "real" than they can be to us today.

This is not to deny the fictionality of the poem, but it does mean that the portrait that emerges from the *Aeneid* of any given character must be seen in the context of other depictions of this character in Greek and Roman literature and of other uses a mythological figure was put to in ancient culture, such as its depiction in art or its use in religious and political contexts, such as coinage. Many of the mythological figures of the *Aeneid* were, in the eyes of ancient readers, familiar symbols with a life of their own, a history, and even a historical reality. This is an important point for my argument, because the kind of identification I imagine ancient readers experienced when reading the *Aeneid* was embedded in a well-established cultural practice of identifying with such mythological figures in contexts far removed from literary pursuits. When Alexander the Great or Pyrrhus of Epirus identified with Achilles, they did so because of their familiarity with the *Iliad,* but such identification went beyond the fancy of a literary connoisseur; it had personal and political meaning. It is

this personal and political dimension of identification with mythological figures that makes the following study of *Aeneid* characters and their relationship to the reader's sense of self of significance for Roman culture more generally.