

There is much scholarship on civil strife in the *Aeneid*. Some critics argue that reminders of the recent wars are evidence of anti-Augustan sentiment (Putnam 1965, Lyne 1987), while others argue that civil discord in the poem offers Aeneas the opportunity to restore order (Williams 1967, Hardie 1986, Cairns 1989, Galinsky 1996). More recently, scholarship has emphasized that in spite of the presence of civil discord in the poem, Virgil takes pains to avoid use of this theme in relation to Actium (Quint 1993, Tarrant 1997). I consider Virgil's use of civil strife outside the frame of pro- or anti-Augustan sentiment. I argue that the *Aeneid's* projection of civil war onto the mythical past serves to naturalize the image of unified Italy.

Ronald Syme (1939) points out that Virgil's *Aeneid* is a poem not only of Rome, but of all of Italy. This, he argues, reflects Augustus' political reshaping of Rome into a territorial Italian state (465-66). The unification of Italy was one of the foundations of Augustus' power (Crawford 1996, David 1996), and the *Aeneid* reflects the new image of Rome. For example, Virgil's vision of Actium on the shield of Aeneas (8.675-730) shows Augustus as the leader of Italians against the armies of the East. The presentation of Augustus' war against Antony as a war against foreigners, instead of the civil war that it really was, helps to construct an image of Italy as a unified state. The *Aeneid* goes further than this, however, in its construction of a unified Italy. In spite of the historical fact of Rome's ancient conquest of the surrounding Italian areas, Virgil's poem projects the new Italian unity onto the ancient past. When Aeneas arrives at Italy, the Trojans' "*antiquem...matrem*" (3.96), he finds peoples with whom he shares common ancestry (7.203-11, 8.134-142). Aeneas' kinship with the peoples of Italy makes the war he fights against Italians a civil war. Paradoxically, the presentation of Aeneas' war as a civil war does not divide Italy, but instead unifies even the ancient peoples of Italy. The Augustan insistence that the war against Antony was a foreign war promotes the image of Italy as a natural unit. I argue that Virgil's suggestions that Aeneas' war against the Italians is a civil war advance the same image.

Virgil projects Italy's current unity into an ancient past that naturalizes it, with the result that ancient Italian wars are made civil. Benedict Anderson (1991) argues that it is often the case that a nation constructing an imagined community will recast conflicts between clearly distinguished groups as civil strife (199-203). Seen from this perspective, the *Aeneid's* preoccupation with civil war is not a troubling undercurrent running counter to official Augustan ideology, but a vital part of the construction of a unified Italy. My presentation will not argue, however, that the pervasive presence of civil war in the *Aeneid* is evidence of a pro-Augustan stance. The ideology of Italian unification is deeper than partisan politics. It is natural to imagine Aeneas' war as a civil war, but only because a profound shift in the character of Roman identity has naturalized the image. Regardless of political affiliation, social conditions made it necessary for Romans of the Augustan period to imagine their community through ancient Italian roots. This does not mean that Virgil was merely reflecting a cultural transformation or that Augustus was a passive instrument of inevitable historical progress. Rather the *Aeneid* works through the transformation of Roman identity. Virgil's poem plays its part in the construction of an ideology that makes sense of the Roman person's place in the world.