



Teaching Vergil's Aeneid: Furor & Pietas with Karen Moore

Lecture 2: Book 2: A
Consideration of the
Fury of War and
Destruction

Outline:

The Fury of War and Destruction

- *The Serpent and the Flame* by Bernard Knox (article)
 - “The serpent is an apt comparison for the essential nature of the Greek attackers, ferocity, their typical method, concealment, and their principal weapon, fire.” (Knox, 380)
 - Ferocity (nature)
 - Concealment (method)
 - Fire (weapon)
 - Consider the snake and the flame in their natural elements:
 - Snakes shed skin and are renewed, and they can enter the earth/underworld and return.
 - Fire destroys yet provides fertile ground from which new life springs.
- Aeneas would not leave for Rome if Troy had been so clearly destroyed beyond salvation as confirmed by 3 heralds
 - Hector's Ghost
 - Venus
 - Creusa
 - These three visions command him such that Aeneas is not coward to leave the city.
- Three snake passages from Book 2:
 - Laocoon and the snakes (2.201-231)
 - Laocoon's death as prophetic foreshadowing
 - Laocoon passage
 - Fall of Troy (The Burning of Troy, Johann Georg Trautmann, c. 1759)
 - Androgeos is compared to a man who unknowing comes upon a snake (2.370-393).
 - Pyrrhus is compared to a snake who had just shed his skin.
- Aeneas is the one telling this story.
 - He is relating the story to Dido.
 - He saw the snakes destroy Laocoon and his sons.
 - He saw the Greeks slipping into Troy and causing destruction as serpents with fire.
 - Aeneas watched Pyrrhus slay Polites before the eyes of his father.



- What is Aeneas' response to this Fury?
 - His paternal side kicks in, and he rushes home to protect them.
 - Fire rises up in his soul. Anger rises up. He wants to avenge the falling Fatherland.
 - Aeneas is stopped, by his mother, from slaughtering a defenseless woman.
 - Venus reveals to Aeneas that neither Helen nor Paris in all their folly are the cause of Troy's downfall. It is the gods themselves.
 - Here she gives him new eyes to see the divinities themselves tearing down the walls of Troy.
 - She reminds him of the words spoken by Hector's ghost - take up your destiny and go.
 - The death of Troy is the rebirth of Rome.