



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

Lecture 3: Book 4: A Consideration of Fury and Foreign Entanglements

Outline:

The Fury of a Woman and the Problem with Foreign Entanglements

- Washington and Vergil
 - In 1796 George Washington issued his Farewell Address as U.S. President.
 - He warned our country to be careful to the extent in which it favored other nations and became entangled in foreign affairs.
 - Book 4 seems to carry a similar warning.
 - Aeneas and his favoring Dido, could be construed as a foreign entanglement that threatens to derail his destiny.
 - Why is this such a concern so as to devote an entire book to the dreadful dalliance?
- Antony & Cleopatra
 - Cleopatra was the first to flee in the battle of Actium.
 - Antony fled with his queen rather than join his fighting soldiers.
 - Antony traded his loyalty to Rome to the loyalty of a foreign woman.
 - Horace Odes (1.37)
 - John Conington
- Syphax and Sophonisba, Livy (30.12.11-15.11)
 - Sophonisba
 - She is the daughter of Carthaginian Leader Hasdrubal Gisco (not Barcid).
 - She is a Carthaginian woman of political influence and great beauty.
 - She had been betrothed to King Masinissa as part of an alliance between Carthage and the Massylii (eastern Numidians)
 - Syphax
 - He is an ally of Rome, some say he was in love with Sophonisba and asked for the marriage.
 - The Carthaginian Senate orders Sophonisba to marry Syphax, chieftain of the western Masaesyli (western Numidians) - 206 BC.
 - Sophonisba persuades Syphax to join her father and take up arms against Rome.
 - Syphax becomes Carthage's most powerful ally in the lands of Africa.



- Syphax is eventually defeated and made prisoner at Battle of Cirta - 203 BC.
- Masinissa is sent to take charge of his city and Sophonisba.
- When Scipio asked Syphax why he, a favored ally of Rome, would turn traitor, he replies it was his blind love for Sophonisba.
- Masinissa
 - Convinced that Sophonisba married Syphax against her will, Masinissa frees her and marries her.
 - Sophonisba begs him to keep her from the Roman triumph and Roman wrath.
 - Scipio, worried about the influence of Sophonisba, refuses to recognize the marriage and demands that Masinissa hand her over.
 - Masinissa sends his new bride a vile of poison and says that while he could not keep the first promise, this is his way of keeping the second.
 - Sophonisba takes the poison with all nobility while chastising Masinissa for making their marriage short and bitter.
- History provides context for a much greater concern: it is not two hearts, but two nations whose fate lies in the balance. If Aeneas stays in Carthage as Dido's husband, Rome cannot be born.
 - Mercury chastises Aeneas (Williams' translation).
 - Aeneas' response:
 - No fault in Aeneas' decision to leave.
 - He chose to be Masinissa, loyal to Rome, cutting his losses.
 - He refused to be the traitor Syphax or (even worse) Antony.
 - His fault comes in how he handles the matter.
 - Indecisiveness
 - Deceit
 - Aeneas silently orders ships to be prepared.
 - Buying time? Sneaking away?
 - Who can deceive a love?
 - Why Fury? Why deceit? – Aeneas fears the fury of a woman scorned.
 - You reap what you sow (Aeneid 4.622-9).
- Where is Furor?
 - Furor arises here as a result of Aeneas' choices.
 - Aeneas actions are contrary to his clearly stated mission/destiny.
 - Furor arises in Dido.
 - Watch for comparisons between Dido and the Bacchae/Medea 4.296- 308.



- The lesson is to take care how you treat lovers.
 - Considering the examples of Syphax and Antony, this is not overstated.
 - Consider also Solomon - foreign women/alliances