



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

Lecture 5: Book 12: A
Consideration of Fury
in the Final Showdown

Outline:

Furor Continued:

- Allecto the Fury possessed the hearts of both Amata and Turnus in Book 7.
 - For Amata the rage drives her to take her own life in Book 12 when she believes Turnus has fallen in battle.
 - And [Amata] out of her mind uttered many things through sorrowful fury. (Moore)
 - It is of interest to note that Dante references Amata's suicide in Canto 17 of Purgatorio (the second canticle of his Divine Comedy, as an example of the terrible havoc unbridled anger works upon the soul).
- For Turnus, the fury drives him toward a final confrontation with Aeneas.
 - It is in this encounter, that Fury presents the pious hero his greatest challenge in a scene that resembles the infamous dual of the Iliad.

The Final Showdown

- The final battle was foreshadowed in Book 6.
 - Aeneas visited his father Anchises in the underworld to seek advice about the course of his journey through Italy.
 - He first encounters the Sibyl, a priestess of Apollo who warns him of another battle:
 - Tiber stained with blood as the Simois of Troy
 - Another Achilles awaits (Turnus)
 - The cause of woe shall be a bride-queen (Lavinia)
 - In the final books we see this prophecy unfold as Turnus and Achilles dual for the hand of Lavinia.
 - But there is another twist.
 - In the course of battle, Turnus has killed the young warrior Pallas.
 - Pallas is the son of King Evander, friend and ally of Aeneas.
 - Aeneas had looked upon Pallas as another son and had promised to watch over him.
 - As a trophy, Turnus had taken the baldric, the sword belt of Pallas, and wore it himself in an act of hubris.
 - This action had sent Aeneas into a rage.



- This triangle of fury and death among Aeneas, Turnus, and Pallas is a clear reference to that between Achilles, Hector, and Patroklos.
- The Scene - Here we now come to the final show down between Aeneas and Turnus, and also the final scene of the Aeneid.
 - Aeneas and Turnus are locked in a great dual before the eyes of both armies, Trojans and Latin tribes.
 - Turnus has seen an ominous bird that bears ill omen. He realizes that fate is against him. And so he weakens before Aeneas.
 - Aeneas has chased Turnus around the city walls.
 - Turnus finally makes his last stand and hurls a mighty boulder against his foe, which misses its mark.
 - But Aeneas' spear finds its victim and fells Turnus, piercing both his shield and his thigh
 - Turnus, still alive, acknowledges that he is vanquished. He relinquishes his claim to Lavinia and makes a dying request. Think of your father Anchises, return me living or dead to my own father and ease his grief.
 - What should Aeneas do? His foe has been humbled. Turnus asks for mercy. Does Aeneas show humility to the humbled, or does he crush the proud?
 - Can Aeneas rule the pinnacle of fury?
 - Aeneas is delivering the judgement that Pallas would utter.
 - Aeneas, boiling in rage, buries the sword in the chest. Pious Aeneas is now consumed with Furor.
 - The life of Turnus is deemed unworthy. Does this justify Aeneas taking Turnus' life? Aeneas has become Achilles, Aeneas has become the storm, and Turnus is his victim.
- Painting: The Fight Between Aeneas and King Turnus, Giacomo del Po
 - General information on this artwork:
 - c. 1710, oil on copper, 31 x 37 inches
 - The original location is unknown, but is alleged to be Naples.
 - It now resides at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art
 - Artistic Interpretation by Giacomo del PO, description of this painting:
 - Aeneas stands over Turnus in a fashion similar to the stance presented by Cortona, but with a few notable differences.
 - Aeneas is actually on top of Turnus, straddling him.
 - The position of the sword and shield of Aeneas are the same, but all symbols of destiny are stricken from his appearance.
 - Aeneas' face seems full of rage, his brow is drawn together and his mouth stands slightly agape.
 - Turnus is fallen and appears to be trying to rise. There is no sign of weakness or wound. Although he is down, his sword



and shield are handily ready, not pinned down. True to text, he reaches his right hand up in a defensive posture.

- Onlookers:
 - The figures in the foreground on all sides seem dismayed as if they are sending up the collective groan.
 - Just to the right of Turnus we see a horse fallen, whose image and position seem to mirror that of Turnus. The dismay and fury in his face add a sense of rage to the scene
 - King Latinus sits on a throne in the background to the right, serenely surveying the scene. Opposite him a Roman noble seems to mirror him in a statesman like position noting the downfall.
- Divine Presence:
 - The two Furies are present and placed on the side of Turnus.
 - Their presence also invokes a sense of fury and rage. One holds a torch which may indicate her identity as Allecto whom Juno sent to inflame Turnus.
 - Directly over Aeneas is a divine figure hovering over him seated on a cloud. This could be Jupiter or Venus.
- In the battle of Pietas vs. Furor, which seems to win in the heart of Aeneas?
 - Was his decision to kill Turnus, one made out of a sense of just duty to avenge the son of his ally, slain in war, treated ill by an arrogant conqueror?
 - Was his decision driven by furor that rendered him deaf to Turnus and his pleas of mercy that he forgot his father's admonition (*Parcere subiectis et debellare superbos*)?
 - Perhaps Vergil intended to extend the story, a plan thwarted by his death in 19 B.C. Or perhaps after an epic filled with lessons on the merits of piety over fury, he wished to leave this scene for you the reader to decide.