

Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God:

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The Poet's Epic Question (*Aeneid* 1.11) and Jupiter's Answer (*Aeneid* 12.829-831)

The role of *ira* in the ending of the *Aeneid* continues to be debated. The question has been progressively broadened (e. g. Putnam, Galinsky, Hardie, Cairns); we now understand that, not only the final action of Aeneas, but also the action of Jupiter in loosing his agent the Dira reflects this role of anger in the poem, a role analyzed by Feeney 1991 (pp. 151-155). Scholars have, however, neglected the significance of anger in the speeches of Jupiter (12.793-806, 830-840) and Juno (12.808-828) that precede the sending of the Fury, perhaps because of the --at times-- simple language. Jupiter's first speech, intended to put an end (*finis*) to Juno's *mora* (Fowler 1997), is plain, direct and forceful in its *incisa* (from the opening colon to, above all, the close, "ulterius temptare veto"). The most important of these powerful brief utterances, however, is probably the most neglected; Jupiter's second speech, in response to Juno's reply begins simply (12.830): "es germana Iovis // Saturnique altera proles." The initial monosyllable is easily overlooked, and commentators have either neglected it or, like Heyne, emended it out of existence. But the tiny word "es" is forceful because unique; no other line of Virgil's, no other sentence or speech, opens with this form of the copula. Jupiter recognizes that Juno *is* his sister; the next line (12.831) explains how: "irarum [again the emphatic first word] tantos volvis sub pectore fluctus." Translate: "You *are* my sister, and another child of Saturn; it's your *anger* that tells me; you have those great rolling waves of it in your heart." With these simple words Jupiter acknowledges his and Juno's shared *essence*, the wrath that is a marker in their common DNA. The tiny verb carries an immense ontological burden, the very nature of the gods.

Scholars have noted in the second line the internal allusion to the sea storm caused by Juno in Book 1. What has not been fully noted is (a) another internal allusion, and (b) an external one. (a) The epic question of the proem (1.11), "Tantaene animis caelestibus irae?" finds an answer in Jupiter's speech, an affirmative answer that would have been unsurprising to Jonathan Edwards but which shocked Heyne. Jupiter's words here echo down the length of the epic, in response to Virgil's proem. (b) In antiquity also there were those who shrunk from such a view of the gods. Lucretius emphatically denies that the gods can feel anger; if this is imagined, it is, he says, because (6.73-74) of the false picture that you, poor fool, create for yourself ("...sed quia tute tibi placida cum pace quietos / constitues magnos *irarum volvere fluctus*"). Jupiter's association of "rolling waves of anger" with the very being (*esse*) of the gods is the more impressive if one understands Virgil's clear allusion here as rejection of the Epicurean doctrines of his early youth and as defiance of a powerful poetic model. A close examination of Jupiter's speeches in the episode shows him aware of this and openly acknowledging his inherited and internal – not merely internalized— *ira*.