

## Divine Response to Battlefield Prayer in *Aeneid* 7-12

Jupiter and *Fata* are frequently associated in the *Aeneid*, but the relationship between them is complex. Despite Jupiter's appearance of authority over the other gods, his power is frequently diminished by the presence of *Fata*. At the beginning of Book 10, Jupiter orders the gods (himself included) to refrain from further interfering with the war between the Trojans and the Italians (10.6-15). Jupiter, however, does not enforce this decree to any extent. Following it, several gods intervene by helping individual characters. Additionally, even Jupiter intervenes in several crucial episodes of the war (catalogued by Hejduk-2009). Therefore, Jupiter's prohibition has little impact and is frequently circumvented. Instead, gods answer or ignore invocations as *Fata* allows. Wilson argues that Jupiter serves as a guide to interpreting *Fata* as the process of history (Wilson-1979) while Coleman argues that Jupiter intervenes to keep the workings of *Fata* on schedule (Coleman-1982). Although Jupiter does often align himself with *Fata*, such as when he consoles Venus in Book 1, he does not have the *imperium* over the other gods that he asserts throughout the poem.

To demonstrate the façade of Jupiter's authority, this paper examines the instances of battlefield prayer that occur in the second half of Vergil's *Aeneid*, particularly those that occur after Jupiter's prohibition to the gods. Four battlefield prayers are considered: Nisus' to Diana in Book 9, Pallas' to Hercules in Book 10, Arruns' to Apollo in Book 11, and Turnus' to Faunus in Book 12. Each suppliant asserts their worthiness of the god's help, illustrating their devoted worship or opulent sacrifices given to the god (following the pattern identified by Hickson-1993). Although the characters follow a pattern in their prayers, the gods' responses are varied. In particular, a god's response is tempered by forces that are outside of their control, particularly

the constraints of fate. I argue that it is not Jupiter's prohibition, but *Fata*, that is the true driving force behind a god's ability to respond to prayer. Two examples of my approach follow below.

The influence of *Fata* is clear in the language Jupiter uses to prevent Hercules from answering Pallas' prayer in Book 10. Jupiter does not invoke his own prohibition, but rather tells a distraught Hercules that *Fata* is what prevents the god from interfering: *stat sua cuique dies* (Their own day stands for each person, 10.567). Hercules acknowledges Pallas' prayer but is distressed by his inability to intervene: *audit Alcides iuvenem magnumque sub imo/corde premit gemitum lacrimasque effundit inanis* (Hercules heard the youth and pressed a great groan deep in his heart and cried useless tears, 10.464-65). Pallas does not receive Hercules' assistance not because he is unworthy, but because he is fated to die and later become the motivation for Aeneas to kill Turnus, thus fulfilling the ultimate *Fata* of the poem.

Another example of the power of fate occurs in Book 11. Arruns prays to Apollo for two things: the god's aid in defeating Camilla and a return to his homeland. Apollo, in direct disobedience of Jupiter's decree, helps Arruns kill Camilla, but he does not allow for Arruns' homecoming: *sterneret ut subita turbatam morte Camillam/adnuit oranti; reducem ut patria alta videret/non dedit...* ([Apollo] allowed his suppliant to strike down Camilla, overthrown by a sudden death; he did not allow that the high fatherland see Arruns' return, 11.796-98). This partial fulfillment happens because, as Vergil tells his readers, Arruns' life is owed to fate: *tum fatis debitus Arruns* (11.759). Apollo is able to fulfill the part of the prayer that does not contradict fate—even if it contradicts Jupiter—but he is powerless to answer the second half of Arruns' prayer because of the constraints of *Fata*. Diana avenges her favorite Camilla by sending Opis to kill Arruns (another intervention against Jupiter's decree), fulfilling Arruns' death and his lack of homecoming (11.836-67). Thus, both gods work within the confines of fate in the deaths

of Arruns and Camilla because they do not alter Aeneas' fate. Neither Apollo nor Diana consider Jupiter's prohibition, but rather adhere to *Fata*.

Further examples show how Jupiter's authority over battlefield prayer is successfully challenged by the other gods, and that in the end, the real power is in the hands of *Fata*, which connects specific prayers to subsequent actions yet unknown to the characters themselves.

#### Works Cited

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