**Virgil, *Aeneid*** 2.721-740

haec fatus latos umeros subiectaque colla

veste super fulvique insternor pelle leonis,

succedoque[[1]](#footnote-1) oneri;

So I spoke, I cover my broad shoulders and bowed neck with the cover[[2]](#footnote-2) of a tawny lion’s pelt and stoop to the burden.

dextrae se parvus Iulus

implicuit sequiturque patrem non passibus aequis;[[3]](#footnote-3)

pone subit coniunx.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Little Iulus links his hand with my right, and follows his father with steps that do not match his. Behind comes my wife.

*Everything and everyone now depends on Aeneas, his leadership; the weight of this new responsibility, the beginning of the passage from Homeric hero to Roman appals him.*

ferimur per opaca locorum, 725

et me, quem dudum non ulla iniecta movebant

tela[[5]](#footnote-5) neque adverso glomerati examine Grai,

nunc omnes terrent aurae, sonus excitat omnis

suspensum et pariter comitique onerique timentem.[[6]](#footnote-6)

We pass on through the shadowy place;[[7]](#footnote-7) and I, whom of late no shower of missiles could move nor any Greeks thronging in opposing swarm[[8]](#footnote-8) - now every breeze terrifies me, every sound startles me, as I hesitating and fear alike for my companion[[9]](#footnote-9) and my burden.

iamque propinquabam portis omnemque videbar[[10]](#footnote-10) 730

evasisse viam, subito cum creber ad auris

visus[[11]](#footnote-11) adesse pedum sonitus, genitorque per umbram

prospiciens 'nate,' exclamat, 'fuge, nate;[[12]](#footnote-12) propinquant.

“And now I was nearing the gates, and thought I had emerged from all my journey, when suddenly the frequent sound[[13]](#footnote-13) of feet seemed to reach to my ear, and peering through the gloom, my father cries: ‘My son, my son, flee; they draw near!

ardentis clipeos atque aera micantia cerno.'

hic mihi nescio quod trepido male numen amicum 735

confusam eripuit mentem.

I see their glowing shields and glittering bronze.’

At this point, in my alarm, some malign power distracted and stole my wits (mind).[[14]](#footnote-14)

namque avia cursu

dum sequor et nota excedo regione viarum,

heu misero coniunx fatone erepta Creusa

substitit, erravitne via seu lapsa[[15]](#footnote-15) resedit,

incertum;[[16]](#footnote-16) nec post oculis est reddita nostris. 740

For while I pursue a course in a hurry down byways and leave the course of the streets I know well, alas, wretched me!- did my wife Creüsa halt, snatched <from me> by fate?[[17]](#footnote-17)

Did she stray from the path or sit down in a fall? I do not know. But never afterwards was she restored to my eyes.

1. The verb SUCCEDO is used of oxen going under the yoke of a plough. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Laurenz Lersch, (in 1843) suggested there is a sense that Anchises is to be preserved from (dirty, defiling) contact with the well-used, blood-stained armour. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Three words as entirely successful as any in V.: warm humanity, fine observation, gentle humour, and, naturally, pathos. (HORSFALL) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Creusa is shielded from ambush and unexpected dangers, and the poet will find it infinitely easier to construct her actual disappearance thus. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. ‘Not any throwing of weapons’ (‘enemy fire’, we would say today). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Key words at start and end of the line. Lines 728-9 *sonus excitat omnis suspensum* have a lot of hissing S sound (this includes the X sound). Virgilian acoustic terrors of the night. This anxiety will prove to have spread; from Aen.’s highstrung nerves we pass shortly to Anchises’s actual, tragic moment of panic. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Shaded by trees, explains Donatus; however, it is still night, though dawn is near. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The word is used of bees. Other manuscripts have ***agmen*,** column of an army. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Probably Ascanius, his son. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. The rhythm of this line is ‘heavy’ (spondaic) to reflect the trepidation of Aeneas as he carefully approaches. The alliteration of P may emphasise the hero’s determination to get safely out of the city the first step on the way to Rome”. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. They think they hear Greeks; as a result Anchises sees, or thinks he sees, Greeks and perhaps the flames suggest the play of light on shields or armour (cf. 734 *ardentis*). The Greeks are probably NOT present and Anchises simply fears this. It could be that his panic creates the situation in which Aeneas loses Creusa. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. *Gemination*: the doubling of a word (NATE) suggests panic, as do the short two-syllable phrases and the vague, dramatic verb at the end. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. It is the number of feet, not the frequency with which they are heard, that is significant. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. For those of you who have Greek, this phrase (stealing one’s wits) is used much by Homer. Virgil complicates effortlessly the issue of fault or blame. Anch.’s observation that the Greeks are approaching, whether correct or not, has panicked Aen. into taking a route he does not actually know. It was apparently the servants who were to come on by a different route (716); though Creusa has been told the common

    objective (713f.), Aen., whom she was to follow at a distance has, fatally, disappeared round an unknown corner. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. “Oddly obscure once an exact sense is sought: did C. fall over? or slip to the ground exhausted? did she then sit down? That she was exhausted and briefly sat down is entirely credible, perspicuous, and admirably expressed by V.’s use of the quotidian (= everyday) word.” HORSFALL [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Notice the position of this word before a pause and the dramatic ellipse of a verb such as EST, FUIT. The syntax of 738-740 is convoluted with enjambment: this suggests confusion/panic in Aeneas’ mind. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Take *misero* at dative of disadvantage, and not agreeing with FATO. I’ve changed my mind from what we did in the lesson. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)