**Virgil, *Aeneid*** 2.768-794

2.740ff. (edited)

*“Never again was she restored to my eyes,* nor did I look back for my lost one, or cast a thought behind, until we came to the mound and ancient Ceres’ hallowed home. Here at last, when all were gathered, she alone was missing and **had vanished from the company, her child, and her husband**. […]

*“*I myself seek again the city, and gird on my glittering arms. I am resolved to renew every risk, to retrace my way through all Troy and once more expose my life to every peril.

“First I seek again the walls and dark gateway by which I had left the city; I mark and follow back my steps in the night, scanning them with close eye. Everywhere dread fills my heart; the very silence, too, dismays. Then I turn homeward in case—in case she had made her way there! The Danai [= Greeks] had rushed in and filled all the house. Forthwith the devouring fire rolls before the wind to the very roof; the flames tower above, the hot blast roars skyward. I pass on and see once more the citadel and Priam’s home. And now in the empty courts of Juno’s sanctuary Phoenix and dread Ulysses, chosen guards, watched the spoil. Here the treasures from all parts of Troy, torn from blazing shrines, tables of the gods, bowls of solid gold, and plundered raiment, are heaped up…

ausus quin etiam voces iactare per umbram 768

implevi clamore vias, maestusque Creusam

nequiquam ingeminans iterumque iterumque vocavi.[[1]](#footnote-0) 770

Why, I dared even to cast my cries upon the shadows (of night); I filled the streets with shouts and in my misery, uselessly repeating (her name), called Creüsa again and again.[[2]](#footnote-1)

quaerenti et tectis urbis sine fine[[3]](#footnote-2) ruenti

infelix[[4]](#footnote-3) simulacrum atque ipsius umbra Creusae

visa mihi ante oculos et nota maior imago.

As I searched and rushed endlessly among the buildings of the city, there rose (= *visa*) before my eyes the sad phantom and ghost of Creüsa herself, a figure larger than the Creusa I knew.[[5]](#footnote-4)

obstipui, steteruntque comae et vox faucibus haesit.[[6]](#footnote-5)

tum sic adfari et curas his demere dictis: 775

I was astonished, my hair stood up, and the voice choked in my throat. Then thus she spoke to me and with these words dispelled my cares:

*A speech that is both a farewell, and prophetic; it contains moreover strong consolatory elements, both in urging Aen.to cease from his laments (776f., 784), and in advising him of realm, prosperity and new family to come. (She does not mention the war to be fought...but that’s hardly surprising!)*

'quid tantum insano iuvat indulgere dolori,[[7]](#footnote-6)

o dulcis coniunx? non haec sine numine divum

eveniunt;[[8]](#footnote-7)

‘Of what possible use is it to yield to frantic grief, my sweet husband? Not without the will of heaven do these things happen;

nec te comitem hinc portare Creusam

fas, aut ille sinit superi regnator Olympi.

that you should take Creüsa from here in your company cannot be/ is not permitted (*nec...fas*), nor does the mighty lord of high Olympus allow it.

longa tibi exsilia et vastum[[9]](#footnote-8) maris aequor arandum,[[10]](#footnote-9) 780

et terram Hesperiam venies, ubi Lydius arva

inter opima virum leni[[11]](#footnote-10) fluit agmine Thybris.

You will have a long exile, and you must plough a vast stretch of sea; and (then) you will come to the Western Land,[[12]](#footnote-11) where amid the fertile fields of the inhabitants, the Lydian Tiber[[13]](#footnote-12) flows with gentle sweep.

illic res laetae regnumque et regia coniunx

parta tibi; lacrimas dilectae pelle Creusae.[[14]](#footnote-13)

There in store for you (*parta tibi*) are happy days, kingship, and a royal wife.[[15]](#footnote-14) Banish tears for your beloved[[16]](#footnote-15) Creüsa.

non ego Myrmidonum sedes Dolopumue superbas 785

aspiciam aut Grais servitum matribus ibo,

Dardanis et divae Veneris nurus;

I shall never look upon the proud homes of the Myrmidons or Dolopians,[[17]](#footnote-16) or go to be the slave of Greek matrons, I a Dardan woman[[18]](#footnote-17) and wife of the son of divine Venus; .

sed me magna deum genetrix his detinet oris.

iamque vale et nati serva communis[[19]](#footnote-18) amorem.'

. . but the Great Mother[[20]](#footnote-19) of the Gods keeps me on these shores. And now farewell, and guard your love for our common child.’

haec ubi dicta dedit, lacrimantem et multa volentem 790

dicere deseruit, tenuisque recessit in auras.

When she had spoken this, she left me weeping and eager to tell her much, and drew back into thin air.

ter conatus ibi collo dare bracchia circum;

ter frustra comprensa manus effugit imago,

par levibus ventis volucrique simillima somno.

Three times[[21]](#footnote-20) there I strove to throw my arms about her neck; three times the form, vainly clasped, fled from my hands, just like the light winds, and most like swift sleep/dream.[[22]](#footnote-21)

1. The M sound is prominent in these three lines and may (just possibly) be regarded as a pleading sound: Aeneas desperate to find Creusa. Aeneas is torn between duty to wife and to the rest of his party, between the need to find her and to escape discovery, between inner anguish and the need to remain in control of his first real command. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. Notice the frantic pleonasm, ingeminans/ iterum etc. He is not cool, calms and collected. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. Aen. has put wife before all; her intervention is needful if only to bring his search to an end and to return him to his party/mission. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. INFELIX is used seven times of individuals involved in the last night of Troy! The word thus heaps on the sympathy for the Trojans in the grip of the nasty Greeks. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. Virgil never really tells us what has actually happened to Creusa. Mysterious. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
6. Increasing tricolon emphasising the strange things happening to Aeneas: 1,2 and then 3 words. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
7. Lots of LONG syllables in the rhythm: tone? [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
8. Cr. checks Aen.’s desperation vigorously with her first words, but her reply is sober and gentle in tone. the enjambment of EVENIUNT leaves the key phrase ***numine divum*** highlighted at the end of the previous line. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
9. as well as VAST this word can also mean DESOLATE. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
10. The traditional imagery of ‘ploughing’ the ocean at one level prepares us for the richer farmlands of Latium and Etruria, ***arva opima***. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
11. The gently gliding river denotes calm and happiness. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
12. For now, this strange name tells the Trojans nothing. ‘West’ is in itself as vague as sailing beyond the sunset. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
13. A very subtle point. The inhabitants of Etruria, north of Rome, from where the Tiber rises, originally came - so it was believed - from Asia Minor. What Creusa is trying to say is that the foreign sounding river TIBER actually has a local connection familiar to Aeneas (LYDIA is just below Troy on the map). So it wont be a completely strange land. Beautiful stuff, Virgil! [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
14. Prominent soft/liquid sound of L in her statement: soft and soothing, like Lord Howe Island coconut & Tahitian lime hand cream from Maine Beach, Australia. Inspired by the magnificent world heritage site of Lord Howe Island bordering the tropical South Pacific, this new bodycare collection reflects the lush, island lifestyle of this idyllic region. Infused with the fragrance of coconut cream and Tahitian lime with - as you might not expect - fresh cilantro and sweet orange flower top notes. (\*Other hand creams are available; terms & conditions apply.) [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
15. Lavinia [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
16. ***dilectae*** is a key word. Creusa is effectively saying that she knows Aeneas loves her - he doesn’t need to tell her. All in one word! [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
17. Myrmidons = Achilles’ men etc. She will not be enslaved to the Greeks as a captive after the war (as Hector’s wife Andromache was). The Dolopes were understood as the followers of Pyrrhus from Scyros. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
18. Cr. as of the royal house of Troy, and, as a daughter of Priam, a descendant of the city’s founder Dardanus. She is slightly more royal, but clearly less divine than her husband, who was not the king’s son, but Venus’s. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
19. Ascanius/ Iulus, their son, will always be a bond between them. Notice the prominent M sound, soothing, like Lord Howe Island .. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
20. Cybele [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
21. Good epic antecedents for this: Achilles’ attempt to embrace the psyche (ghost/soul) of Patroclus, Iliad 23.99ff.. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
22. We sort-of-get the idea but it’s difficult Latin as the word means SLEEP (somnus). If Virgil intends us to read it as SOMNIUM, ‘dream’, there is a major novelty of usage, not clearly understood. The sense is of: sleep as fleeting, hard to grasp, easy to lose. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)