

Wearied or Fallen: The Critical Reception of the Creusa Episode and Editorial History of *Aeneid* 2.739

This paper evaluates 20<sup>th</sup> century editions' treatment of line 2.739 of the *Aeneid*, where the manuscript tradition presents two readings of comparable textual strength: *lassa* and *lapsa*. Modern editions differ in which reading they print, and 2.739 remains an open issue within Virgilian textual criticism. Setting aside the suitability of one reading over another, I argue that each reading's reception within textual criticism is grounded in its interpretive value. The editorial history of line 2.739 reveals how textual critics' decisions, themselves a matter of judgement, influence readers' understanding of Creusa's disappearance, Aeneas' heroism, and human cost in the *Aeneid*.

I model my examination of the episode's critical reception on Richard F. Thomas' *Virgil and the Augustan Reception* (2001). Thomas (2001) has demonstrated how textual critics have previously "textually cleansed" elements of the Creusa episode which suggest that Aeneas contributes to his wife's loss. However, this paper moves beyond explicit acts of textual cleansing (i.e., emendation) to focus on subtler reactions that similarly infringe on the text's ambiguity.

I first examine ancient commentators' reception of the Creusa episode and their attempts to remedy the interpretive issues they identify within it. I argue that their efforts demonstrate a lurking anxiety that Aeneas' moral character is at stake. In my review of scholia, I show that Servius is troubled by instances in Aeneas' narration where he seems to lack concern for his wife. Servius' discomfort with the text results in him explaining away details that could implicate Aeneas (ad 2.711; Thomas 2001), twisting grammar (ad 2.729; Perzell 2021), and suggesting that the text itself is at fault (ad 2.743). I also argue that ancient commentators are

sensitive to Aeneas' role as a narrator, and that ancient readers considered whether Aeneas' account of the episode might be inordinately favorable to him (Servius ad 2.735, 2.744; Donatus ad 2.739; Nünlist 2011).

I then suggest that the urge to explain or reject ambiguous elements of the episode informs modern critics' treatment of line 2.739 and their reception of the readings *lassa* and *lapsa*. My review of 20<sup>th</sup> century editions of the *Aeneid* reveals that *lassa* is the reading that is most frequently printed, and that *lapsa*, which is only occasionally selected (Mynors 1969; Geymonat 1973; Conte 2009; Boyd 2013), has faced undue negative reception from textual critics (Stégen 1971; Boerma 1973; Kraggerud 2011; Casali 2017). I then demonstrate that commentators often prefer *lassa*, "the more homely word," because it imbues Aeneas' narration with pathos for Creusa (Austin 1964; Horsfall 2008; Casali 2017). On the other hand, *lapsa* has previously been selected by commentators for its ambiguity and interpreted as a critique of Creusa's strength (Boyd 2013; Perkell 2021). I argue that a critic's preference for one reading over another at 2.739 tends to promote the optimistic or pessimistic view that they espouse elsewhere. My paper demonstrates that the logic of textual criticism is unavoidably circular: interpretation of text decides textual reading, which in turn reinforces interpretation of the text.

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