

THE LOST HEIR: C. CLAUDIUS MARCELLUS IN AUGUSTAN POETRY

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ABSTRACT

C. Claudius Marcellus (42-23 BCE), Augustus' nephew, son-in-law and one-time destined successor, died at a tragically early age. This paper considers the interesting and diverse traces of his short career and premature end to be found in the Latin poets Vergil, Horace and Propertius and in the Greek epigrammatist Crinagoras.

Keywords: Marcellus; Vergil; Horace; Propertius; Crinagoras; elegiac lament; epic hero.

RESUMO

C. Claudius Marcellus (42-23 BCE), sobrinho de Augusto e genro destinado a sucedê-lo, morreu tragicamente jovem. Este artigo examina os interessantes vestígios diversos de sua curta carreira e fim prematuro encontráveis nos poetas latinos Vergílio, Horácio e Propércio e no epigramatista grego Crinágoras.

Palavras-chave: Marcelo; Vergílio; Horácio; Propércio; Crinágoras; lamento elegíaco; herói épico.

1. INTRODUCTION

C. Claudius Marcellus (42-23 BCE), Augustus' nephew, son-in-law and one-time destined successor, died at a tragically early age. This paper considers the interesting and diverse traces of his short career and premature end to be found in the Latin poets Vergil, Horace and Propertius and in the Greek epigrammatist Crinagoras.¹

2. MARCELLUS' EARLY EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Marcellus' father C. Claudius Marcellus (cos. 50) died in 40 BCE, and within a few months the small boy became the stepson of Marcus Antonius,

¹ This is a fitting topic to honour and remember Alexandre Piccolo, fine scholar and person, cruelly taken from us much too soon: *tot bona tam paruo clausit in orbe dies*.

following the latter's marriage to his mother Octavia as part of the pact of Brundisium in the autumn of the same year.² Antony spent most of the 30s BCE in the East with Cleopatra,³ and Marcellus was principally brought up by Octavia and (like her younger children by Antony) partly by the *princeps* himself.⁴ Octavia's household seems to have been cultured; she was a patron of poets and philosophers,⁵ amongst whom were Vitruvius, the key writer on architecture (I praef.2) and the Mytilenean poet Crinagoras, whose interesting epigrams are preserved in the *Greek Anthology*.⁶ One of the latter gives a glimpse of the young Marcellus' education (AP 9.545 = G/P 11):

Καλλιμάχου τὸ τορευτὸν ἔπος τόδε· δὴ γὰρ ἐπ' αὐτῶ
 ὦνήρ τοὺς Μουσέων πάντας ἔσεισε κάλους,
 ἀεῖδει δ' Ἐκάλῃς τε φιλοξένοιο καλιῆν
 καὶ Θησεῖ Μαραθῶν οὓς ἐπέθηκε πόνους,
 τοῦ σοὶ καὶ νεαρὸν χειρῶν σθένος εἴη ἀρέσθαι,
 Μάρκελλε, κλεινοῦ τ' αἴνον ἴσον βίωτου.

This chiselled poem is by Callimachus, for over it
 He let out all the ropes of the Muses.
 He sings of the hut of hospitable Hecale,
 and the labours that Marathon imposed on Theseus.
 May the young strength of hand of the hero be yours,
 Marcellus, and an equal praise for a distinguished life.

This poem accompanies a gift of Callimachus' *Hecale* to Marcellus, just as AP 9.239 (= G/P 7) accompanies a later gift of Anacreon to Marcellus' younger step-sister Antonia Minor, future mother of Germanicus and Claudius. The end of the epigram looks forward to Marcellus' potential military career, relevant to his teenage years, perhaps 29-26 BCE; he had already appeared at the age of twelve or so amongst the ruling family in the young Caesar's triumph of 29 (Suetonius *Tiberius* 6.4), and was to serve with Augustus in Spain at the age of sixteen or so in 26-5. Callimachus' *Hecale* is a sophisticated Hellenistic text which had a major impact on the Roman poets of the period;⁷ Marcellus' potential reading is fashionable.

Another epigram by Crinagoras marks the youthful beginning of Marcellus' military career under Augustus (AP 6.161 = G/P 10):

² For a clear narrative see Pelling 1996: 17-19.

³ See Plutarch *Antony* 36-53.

⁴ See Harders 2009: 231.

⁵ See Hemelrijk 1993: 104-9.

⁶ For orientation here see Gow and Page 1968: II.210-13.

⁷ For the influence of the *Hecale* at Rome in the Augustan period see Hollis 1990: 31-35.

Ἐσπερίου Μάρκελλος ἀνερχόμενος πολέμοιο
 σκυλοφόρος κранаῆς τέλσα πάρ' Ἴταλῆς,
 ξανθὴν πρῶτον ἔκειρε γενειάδα· βούλετο πατρις
 οὕτως, καὶ πέμψαι παῖδα καὶ ἄνδρα λαβεῖν.

Marcellus, returning from the western war,
 Bearing spoils, to the boundary of rocky Italy,
 First cut his blond beard; his country wished this,
 To send him out a boy and receive him back a man.

Here we find juxtaposition of twin rites of passage for the Roman male, the shaving of the first beard and the first military campaign. The 'Western war' is the campaign against the Cantabrians in Spain, where Marcellus accompanied Augustus in 26-5 and returned a year before the *princeps* himself in order to marry his daughter Julia in 25 (Dio 53.26.5),⁸ to which event I now turn.

3. MARCELLUS' MARRIAGE TO JULIA IN 25 BCE

The key poetic passage here is Horace *Odes* 1.12.45-8:

*Crescit occulto velut arbor aevo
 fama Marcelli; micat inter omnis
 Iulium sidus, velut inter ignis
 luna minores.*

The fame of Marcellus grows, like a tree
 With the hidden march of time; there shines out amongst all
 The Julian star, like the moon amid
 The lesser lights.

Gordon Williams' persuasive arguments, following a brief suggestion of Moritz Haupt,⁹ that this refers to the wedding of Marcellus and Julia in 25 BCE have been somewhat underrated by commentators.¹⁰ Williams suggests that this Horatian passage focuses on this dynastic union of the two Roman families of the Marcelli and Iulii in the political context of the likely succession to Augustus in the period 26-23; this can be reinforced by more literary considerations.

⁸ Augustus' own return is marked in Horace *Odes* 3.14, where Octavia is specifically mentioned as welcoming him back.

⁹ Haupt 1876: III.61.

¹⁰ His first brief treatment (Williams 1968: 271) was not available to Nisbet and Hubbard 1970 (preface dated 1968); his second treatment (Williams 1974) is picked up by West 1995: 59 but not by Mayer 2012.

The stanza cited above has a chiasmic structure (ABBA): the simile of the tree precedes the *fama Marcelli* which it describes, while the *Iulium sidus* is followed by its characterising simile of the moon which outshines all the lesser stars. As Nisbet and Hubbard note, the proximity of the young Marcellus to the Julian imperial house must be the connecting link of thought between the two,¹¹ but Williams' suggestion of a specific allusion to the Marcellus/Julia marriage makes particular sense of the link: the fame of the great Marcellus of the Punic Wars balances the star which is the symbol of the divinity of Julius Caesar, thus honouring both bridegroom and bride through their families as Menander Rhetor later suggests for the wedding speech.¹² The balancing chiasmic structure of the sentence reflects the equal union of the two great Roman houses, though the greater space given to the *sidus Iulium* suggests which of the two is now more important.

Another element which strongly suggests that a marriage is at issue here is the Sapphic colour of both images. As Nisbet and Hubbard point out, the comparison of a young man to a growing tree which they rightly see here goes back to Homer (e.g. *Iliad* 18.56-7), but Menander Rhetor points out that in the wedding speech both bridegroom and bride can be compared to plants,¹³ and in Sappho's epithalamia we find a passage not cited by Nisbet and Hubbard in which the bridegroom is specifically compared to a sapling (115 Voigt):

τίωι σ', ὃ φίλε γάμβρε, κάλως εἰκάσδω;
ὄρπακι βραδίνωι σε μάλιστ' εἰκάσδω.

To what, dear bridegroom, shall I rightly compare you?
I compare you above all to a slender sapling.

And though not in a specifically epithalamian context, the image of the moon outshining the other stars is found in a Sapphic poem which very likely used the simile for the beauty of a young girl (fr.34.1-4 Voigt):

ἄστερες μὲν ἀμφὶ κάλαν σελάνναν
ἄψ ἀπυκρύπτοισι φάεννον εἶδος,
ὄπποτα πλήθοισα μάλιστα λάμπη
γᾶν...

Around the beauty of the moon
The stars conceal their shining form,
Whenever in full form she especially
Illuminates the earth...

¹¹ Nisbet and Hubbard 1970: 163

¹² Menander Rhetor 2.6 Russell/Wilson. (402.21-404.14).

¹³ loc.cit. n.12.

This same simile occurs at fr.96.6-9 Voigt, addressed to Sappho's young beloved Atthis:

νῦν δὲ Λύδαισιν ἐμπρέπεται γυναι-

κεσσιν ὥς ποτ' ἀελίῳ
δύντος ἅ βροδοδάκτυλος σελάννα
περρέχοισ' ἄστρα·

Now she is prominent among the women of Lydia
Like the rosy-fingered moon, when the sun sets,
Surpassing all other stars.

Horace's *inter omnis* seems to point to Sappho's πάντα here.¹⁴ These allusions to Sappho, evoking the beauty of young women and men of marriageable age, decidedly support Williams' interpretation.

4. LAMENTS FOR MARCELLUS

After his early curule aedileship in 24 (Dio 53.28.3), in which he gave a set of games at Rome (Propertius 3.18.13-14, see below), Marcellus died at Baiae at the age of nineteen in 23 (Propertius 3.18.15) despite the efforts of the doctor Octavius Musa who had recently cured Augustus (Dio 53.30.4); Musa may have prescribed a stay at Baiae for health to Marcellus as he did a few years later to the poet Horace (*Ep.* 1.15.2-3). His death is said to have been particularly lamented by the people at large (Tacitus *Ann.* 2.41.1) and especially by Augustus; the *princeps* buried Marcellus in the new Mausoleum Augusti which was then being built, named the theatre he was already constructing the Theatre of Marcellus, and ordered 'that a golden image of the deceased, a golden crown, and a curule chair should be carried into the theatre at the Ludi Romani and should be placed in the midst of the officials having charge of the games' (Dio 53.30.5). Octavia is said to have retired heartbroken into private life, deaf to all tributes and honours to her son (Seneca *Dial.* 6.2.3-5); the famous story in the Vergilian biographical tradition (*Vita Donati* 31) that she fainted when Vergil himself read to her his lament for Marcellus in *Aeneid* 6 (below) seems apposite but may well be a romantic fiction.¹⁵

¹⁴ Both passages are cited with others by Nisbet and Hubbard 1970: 163, but without suggestion of specific allusion.

¹⁵ See Horsfall 2001.

There are two extant poetic laments for Marcellus; more may be lost.¹⁶ The earlier of the two is Propertius 3.18, which appears to mark the young man's death as a recent occurrence:

*Clausus ab umbroso qua ludit pontus Auerno,
 fumida<que exundant> stagna tepentis aquae,
 qua iacet Euboica tubicen Troianus harena,
 et sonat Herculeo structa labore uia,
 hic olim, <Hesperias> dexter cum quaereret urbes, 5
 cymbala Thebano concrepuere deo.
 nunc, inuisae magno cum crimine Baiae,
 quis deus in uestra constitit hostis aqua?
 <.....>
 <.....>
 his pressus Stygius uultum demisit in undas,
 errat et inferno spiritus ille lacu. 10
 quid genus aut uirtus aut optima profuit illi
 mater, et amplexum Caesaris esse focos?
 aut modo tam pleno fluitantia uela theatro,
 et per maturas omnia gesta manus?
 occidit, et misero steterat uicesimus annus: 15
 tot bona tam paruo clausit in orbe dies.
 nunc, tolle animos et tecum finge triumphos,
 stantiaque in plausum tota theatra iuuent;
 Attalicas supera uestes, atque omnia conchis
 gemmea sint Indis: ignibus ista dabis. 20
 sed tamen huc omnes, huc primus et ultimus ordo:
 est mala sed cunctis ista terenda uia;
 exoranda canis tria sunt latrantia colla,
 scandenda est torui publica cumba senis.
 ille licet ferro cautus se condat et aere, 25
 mors tamen inclusum protrahit inde caput.
 Nirea non facies, non uis exemit Achillem,
 Croesum aut Pactoli quas parit umor opes. 28
 at tibi nauta pias hominum qui traicit umbras 31
 hac animae portet corpus inane suae
 qua Siculae uictor telluris Claudius et qua
 Caesar ab humana cessit in astra uia.¹⁷*

Where the sea plays, enclosed by shady Avernus, <and> the steaming pools of warm water <overflow>, where the Trojan trumpeter lies on the sand at Euboean Cumae and the track constructed by Hercules' labour resounds,

¹⁶. Seneca (*Dial.*6.2.5) perhaps implies there were more, all rejected by Octavia: *carmina celebrandae Marcelli memoriae composita ... reiecit*.

¹⁷. Here I cite the text of Heyworth 2007a, like him excising lines 29-30 *hic olim ignaros luctus populauit Achiuos, / Atridae magno cum stetit alter amor* as out of place in this poem. A plausible alternative to the lacuna he posits after line 8 is to adopt Phillimore's conjecture Marcellus for *his pressus* in line 9 (the name of the dead person certainly needs to be mentioned).

here once, when he was propitiously making for the cities <of Italy>, cymbals clashed for the Theban god; but now, Baiae, hated for your great crime, what hostile god has stopped in your waters? <Marcellus.
 > Overwhelmed by these [i.e. forces] he dipped his face in the Stygian waves, and that spirit wanders by the infernal lake. What has been the use to him of his birth or excellence or his noble mother, and the fact that he embraced the hearth of Caesar? or the awnings fluttering recently in so crowded a theatre and all the things done by hands so young? He died, and the twentieth year stood still for the poor boy: time has closed so much good in so small a circle. Go now, lift up your spirits and imagine triumphs in your mind, and take pleasure in whole theatres standing to offer applause; outdo the golden cloth of Attalus, and let everything be jewelled with Indian pearls: you will give these things to the pyre. Yet everyone goes this way, this way the highest class and the lowest: that path is an unpleasant one but to be trodden by all; the three barking throats of the dog have to be won over; one must climb on the public ferry-boat of the grim old man. Though that man cautiously case himself in iron and bronze, death yet drags out his enclosed head. His appearance did not save Nireus, nor his might Achilles, or Croesus the wealth which the water of Pactolus produces. But may the sailor who transports the shades of righteous men carry your body empty of its soul on that route by which Claudius, victor in the land of Sicily, and by which Caesar passed from the human road to the stars.¹⁸

Propertius' poem reads like an expanded sepulchral epigram, with the traditional elements of announcing a death, lamenting the dead person with details of their life, and suggesting that they will somehow live on in commemoration; we may compare e.g. Callimachus' celebrated epitaph for Heraclitus, *Ep.* 2 Pf. = AP 7.80:

Εἶπέ τις, Ἡράκλειτε, τὸν μόνον, ἐς δέ με δάκρυ
 ἤγαγεν, ἐμνήσθην δ' ὀσάκις ἀμφοτέρω
 ἥλιον ἐν λέσχη κατεδύσαμεν· ἀλλὰ σὺ μὲν που,
 ξεῖν' Ἀλικαρνησεῦ, τετράπαλαι σποδιῆ·
 αἱ δὲ τεαῖ ζώουσιν ἀηδόνες, ἧσιν ὁ πάντων
 ἀρπακτῆς Αἴδης οὐκ ἐπὶ χεῖρα βαλεῖ.

Someone told me of your death, Heraclitus, and brought me
 To tears: I recalled how many times we two
 Laid the sun to rest in talk: but you, I suppose,
 My friend from Halicarnassus, are ashes long ago,
 While your nightingales live on, on which
 The robber Hades will never lay his hand.

¹⁸ Translation by Heyworth 2007b.

Callimachean in flavour too are the learned antiquarian allusions to the history of Baiae in lines 3-6, referring to the burial of Misenus nearby, the causeway supposedly constructed across the Lucrine lake by Hercules, and an otherwise unattested visit to the area by Bacchus heading westward. Here in implicit encomium Propertius links Marcellus with two divine figures who anticipate his proposed apotheosis at the poem's close, Bacchus and Hercules, and with the trumpeter of Aeneas, who matches Marcellus in his early demise;¹⁹ like Misenus, too, Marcellus will be remembered through both a place and a poem,²⁰ just as Baiae itself was traditionally named after the death and tomb of Baius, companion of Odysseus.²¹ We might also link Marcellus with Bacchus and Hercules for their exploits in battle: Hercules like Marcellus had achieved victory in Spain, in his case against Geryon (cf. Vergil *Aeneid* 7.661-3), a struggle already evoked as an implicit parallel for the Cantabrian campaign of Augustus in which Marcellus himself fought by Horace in *Odes* 3.14.1 *Herculis ritu*,²² while Bacchus like Marcellus fought in youth to support a father-figure (Jupiter/Augustus) against barbarian opposition in the Gigantomachy, as already celebrated in Horace *Odes* 2.19.21-8. There might also be hints of Marcellus' games of 23 BCE which had just occurred: the *tubicen* Misenus could recall the use of the *tuba* at the commencement of the *ludi*,²³ while the reference (4) to the causeway across the Lucrine lake, recently rebuilt by Agrippa (Strabo 5.2.6) might evoke Marcellus' construction of cloth shades across the whole Forum in connection with his games of the same year (Pliny *NH* 8.65), likewise bridging an open expanse (sky not sea) with an impressive feat of engineering.

Propertius' poem provides important contemporary evidence on Marcellus, confirming the location of his end at Baiae, his age at death, and his precocious aedileship and games. Interestingly, it does not mention his military career with Augustus in Spain, already alluded to above; as we shall see below, this martial material is naturally more at home in the world of Vergilian epic. Propertius' deployment of the *topoi* of the universality of death and the impossibility of taking wealth to the tomb look to Horatian lyric as

¹⁹. All noted by Heyworth and Morwood 2011: 286.

²⁰. Misenus is famously commemorated by Vergil in the *Aeneid* (some of which is already available to Propertius at 2.34.61-6), mentioning his tomb which gives a name to Campanian Misenum (6.232-6), a key base of the Roman fleet, just as Marcellus will have a prominent memorial theatre in Rome, a building project already in hand when he died and renamed after him (Dio 53.30.5, above), perhaps alluded to *in tota theatra* (line 18) as well as the current poem and Vergil's obituary (see below).

²¹. So Varro according to Servius on *Aeneid* 6.107.

²². See Nisbet and Rudd 2004: 182.

²³. Cf. *Aeneid* 5.113 *et tuba commissos medio canit aggere ludos*, Wille 1967: 202-3.

well as the traditions of sepulchral epigram,²⁴ one of the ways in which this poem is (as we have already seen in the evocation of Hercules and Bacchus) reacting to the recent publication of *Odes* 1-3.²⁵ Its closure matches the pairing of the *gens Iulia* and the *gens Claudia* which we have already seen in *Odes* 1.12, here united not in marriage but in a heritage of immortality; this immortality is figurative for the dead youth's Claudian ancestor C. Claudius Marcellus of eternal Punic War fame, but literal for his mother's great-uncle and his wife's adoptive grandfather, Divus Iulius since 42 BCE.

This encomiastic link of the young Marcellus with his great military ancestor, already shared with Horace's ode, is famously the starting-point of the lament in the sixth book of Vergil's *Aeneid* (855-86), in the context of a dialogue between Marcellus' even more distant ancestors Aeneas and Anchises:

<i>Sic pater Anchises, atque haec mirantibus addit:</i>	
<i>'aspice, ut insignis spoliis Marcellus opimis</i>	855
<i>ingreditur victorque viros supereminet omnis.</i>	
<i>hic rem Romanam magno turbante tumultu</i>	
<i>sistet eques, sternet Poenos Gallumque rebellem,</i>	
<i>tertiaque arma patri suspendet capta Quirino.'</i>	
<i>atque hic Aeneas (una namque ire videbat</i>	860
<i>egregium forma iuvenem et fulgentibus armis,</i>	
<i>sed frons laeta parum et deiecto lumina vultu)</i>	
<i>'quis, pater, ille, virum qui sic comitatur euntem?</i>	
<i>filius, ane aliquis magna de stirpe nepotum?</i>	
<i>qui strepitus circa comitum! quantum instar in ipso!</i>	865
<i>sed nox atra caput tristi circumvolat umbra.'</i>	
<i>tum pater Anchises lacrimis ingressus obortis:</i>	
<i>'o gnate, ingentem luctum ne quaere tuorum;</i>	
<i>ostendent terris hunc tantum fata nec ultra</i>	
<i>esse sinent. nimium vobis Romana propago</i>	870
<i>visa potens, superi, propria haec si dona fuissent.</i>	
<i>quantos ille virum magnam Mauortis ad urbem</i>	
<i>campus aget gemitus! vel quae, Tiberine, videbis</i>	
<i>funera, cum tumulum praeterlabere recentem!</i>	
<i>nec puer Iliaca quisquam de gente Latinos</i>	875
<i>in tantum spe tollet avos, nec Romula quondam</i>	
<i>ullo se tantum tellus iactabit alumno.</i>	
<i>heu pietas, heu prisca fides invictaque bello</i>	
<i>dextera! non illi se quisquam impune tulisset</i>	
<i>obvius armato, seu cum pedes iret in hostem</i>	880
<i>seu spumantis equi foderet calcaribus armos.</i>	
<i>heu, miserande puer, si qua fata aspera rumpas...</i>	

²⁴ For the inevitability of death even for the rich man and the consequent futility of his wealth, e.g. *Odes* 1.28.15, 2.3.17-25, 2.14.8-28, 2.16.17-32, 2.18.29-40.

²⁵ Cf. e.g. Nethercut 1970, Sullivan 1979.

*tu Marcellus eris. manibus date lilia plenis.
 purpureos spargam flores animamque nepotis
 his saltem accumulem donis, et fungar inani
 munere.'*

Thus Father Anchises, and as they marvel, adds: “Behold how Marcellus advances, graced with the spoils of the chief he slew, and towers triumphant over all! When the Roman state is reeling under a brutal shock, he will steady it, will ride down Carthaginians and the insurgent Gaul, and offer up to Father Quirinus a third set of spoils.” At this Aeneas said — for by his side he saw a youth of passing beauty in resplendent arms, but with joyless mien and eyes downcast: “Who, father, is he that thus attends the warrior on his way? Is it his son, or some other of his progeny’s heroic line? What a stir among his entourage! What majesty is his! But death’s dark shadow flickers mournfully about his head.” Then, as his tears well up, Father Anchises begins: “My son, seek not to taste the bitter grief of your people; only a glimpse of him will fate give earth nor suffer him to stay long. Too powerful, O gods above, you deemed the Roman people, had these gifts of yours been lasting. What sobbing of the brave will the famed Field waft to Mars’ mighty city! What a cortege will you behold, Father Tiber, as you glide past the new-built tomb! No youth of Trojan stock will ever raise his Latin ancestry so high in hope nor the land of Romulus ever boast of any son like this. Alas for his goodness, alas for his chivalrous honour and his sword arm unconquerable in the fight! In arms none would have faced him unscathed, marched he on foot against his foe or dug with spurs the flanks of his foaming steed. Child of a nation’s sorrow, could you but shatter the cruel barrier of fate! You are to be Marcellus. Grant me to scatter in handfuls lilies of purple blossom, to heap at least these gifts on my descendant’s shade and perform an unavailing duty.”²⁶

This celebrated passage has been much studied and discussed.²⁷ Some have thought that the praise of the young Marcellus here was written before his death and then suitably modified after that event;²⁸ others have suggested that the encomium of the young man here is based on that delivered by Augustus on the occasion of Marcellus’ funeral,²⁹ which can be neatly linked with the generally recognised resemblance of the Show of Heroes to a Roman funeral procession, in which ancestors were similarly paraded.³⁰ My purpose here is to suggest that the form of the Vergilian lament for Marcellus is

²⁶. Translation by Fairclough and Goold 1999.

²⁷. For a good summary see Horsfall 2013: 587-9 with much bibliography.

²⁸. So Pepe 1955.

²⁹. So Brugnoli 1988.

³⁰. See e.g. Williams 2007 and Molyviati 2011; Horsfall 1989 also sees this as the origin of the famous lines 6.847-53.

particularly influenced by its epic context, a generic contrast with the elegiac lament of Propertius, though both draw on the topics of Greek and Roman sepulchral epigram.³¹ In particular, I want to argue that this passage has more specifically Homeric colour than scholars have noted, looking back especially to the tragic deaths of young warriors in the *Iliad*. This is perhaps natural in the mouth of Marcellus' ancestor the Trojan hero Anchises, who is himself mentioned (though he does not appear) in the *Iliad* and who is the mortal hero of the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*.

The first characteristic of the young Marcellus emphasised here is the heroic beauty of the youthful epic warrior. Here we can see an implicit comparison with the Homeric Achilles, similarly doomed to an early death and the most handsome fighter at Troy (*Iliad* 2.674); the description of Marcellus as *egregium forma* (861) also matches him with the similarly distinguished but short-lived Vergilian warriors Lausus and Pallas, both picked out as *egregii forma* at *Aeneid* 10.435.³² His shining armour also follows epic tradition: 862 *fulgentibus armis* occurs five more times in the *Aeneid* of a warrior's arms,³³ and recalls the Homeric τεύχεα ... / αἰόλα παμφανόωντα, 'weapons flashing and shining' (*Iliad* 5.294-5). Epic too is the idea of the young Marcellus's head being surrounded by night (866 *sed nox atra caput tristi circumvolat umbra*), recalling the seer Theoclymenos' words to the suitors at *Odyssey* 9.351-2: ἄ δειλοί, τί κακὸν τόδε πάσχετε; νυκτὶ μὲν ὑμέων / εἰλύεται κεφαλαί τε πρόσωπά τε νέρθε τε γούνα, 'You wretches, what evil is this that you suffer? Your heads are enveloped in night, and your faces and your knees beneath you'.³⁴ In both cases a figure with knowledge of the future is predicting an early and tragic death for young men.

The allusion to Marcellus' burial (873-4) also has a Homeric tinge, though it combines this with a highly current allusion to the politicised topography of Augustan Rome. At the end of the *Iliad*, the Trojans move outside Troy to carry out the funeral rites for Hector's body, lament for him on the plain, and there heap up a barrow on top of the hero's grave (24.776-804). The *Aeneid*'s references to the 'fresh mound' of Marcellus' grave (874 *tumulum ... recentem*) and to the plain as the location for lamentation (*campus*, 873)³⁵ recall Hector's barrow and funeral; thus Marcellus has traces of both the Homeric Achilles and the Homeric Hector, the two greatest warriors of the *Iliad*. But the mention of the Campus Martius (simply *campus* (873), as so often)³⁶ and

³¹ For Vergil's use see Brenk 1986 = Brenk 1999: 76-86.

³² All three also famously receive the apostrophe *miserande puer* (Marcellus at 6.882 from Anchises, Lausus at 10.825 from Aeneas, Pallas at 11.42 from Aeneas again) – cf. Horsfall 2013: 604.

³³ 2.749, 6.217, 10.550, 11.188, 12.275.

³⁴ Cited by Horsfall 2013: 597.

³⁵ See e.g. Horsfall 2013: 600.

³⁶ See Horsfall 2013: 601.

the Tiber (*Tiberine*, 873) also reminds the reader of an important Augustan monument, as commentators have noted:³⁷ Marcellus in 23 BCE was the first member of the imperial family to be interred in the not yet completed Mausoleum of Augustus, conspicuously located on the Campus next to the river. It seems from *Aeneid* 3.301-5 that Vergil may have believed Hector's tomb to have been similarly located next to the river Simois.³⁸

The idea that Marcellus would have been an invincible warrior had he lived (880-1) could also be seen as an evocation of Achilles, who can similarly be seen as *invictus* (cf. *Ilias Latina* 61 *ducis invicti*); the specific idea that he would have been irresistible both as infantryman and as cavalryman (880-1) makes him the all-round Homeric warrior and picks up Odysseus' description of the Cicones' strong battle skills (*Odyssey* 9.49-50): ἐπιστάμενοι μὲν ἄφ' ἵππων / ἀνδράσι μάρνασθαι καὶ ὅθι χρῆ πεζὸν ἔόντα, 'knowing well how to fight with warriors both from horseback and when it is necessary to do so on foot'.³⁹

This Homeric colour elevates and intensifies the lament for Marcellus in linking him with heroic young victims of battle in the *Iliad*, appropriate for the epic world of the *Aeneid* and leaving a very different impression from Propertius' much more prosaic account of his death from illness at Baiae, which excluded all mention of his military prowess; though Marcellus as far as we know had only one military campaign in Spain (see above), not specifically evoked here, Anchises suggests with the hyperbole of the mourning relative that Marcellus would have been a legendary warrior had he lived. The comparison of Marcellus to dead Homeric heroes in both good looks and premature demise seems to pick up an encomiastic strategy from Propertius' lament, where Marcellus is already compared to Achilles and Nireus, beautiful young warriors who met their deaths at Troy (3.18.27). This, together with the circumstantial details of Propertius' poem which gives it the character of a recent obituary, suggests that Propertius' lament for Marcellus was produced shortly after the latter's death and was known to Vergil, which fits with the traditional chronology of Propertius Book 3 (after 23 BCE) and the *Aeneid* (finally emerging after 19 BCE).

5. CONCLUSION

This piece has brought together the few mentions of Marcellus in extant Latin and Greek poetry written during his lifetime and in the wake of his

³⁷. Dio 53.30.5.

³⁸. This is where Andromache seems to locate it (though in a grove, not on a plain) in her painstaking reconstruction of Trojan topography in Buthrotum (3.302 *falsi Simoentis ad undam*).

³⁹. Cited by Horsfall 2013: 603.

premature death, and has sought to show by detailed analysis that a well-known Horatian ode (1.12) certainly alludes to the marriage of Marcellus to Julia in 25 BCE and that the famous Vergilian obituary of Marcellus in *Aeneid* 6 characterises him as a Homeric-style hero who met heroic early death in battle, even if his actual demise by disease was more prosaic. This last strategy seeks to present Marcellus appropriately as an epic warrior in the context of the epic *Aeneid*, while Propertius' elegiac tribute in 3.18, equally appropriately given its metre, expands into a fuller poem some traditional topoi of sepulchral epigram. That Marcellus' life and death was so prominently marked by the greatest poets of the time shows his key status in the emerging imperial dynasty, and the major impact of his premature death on the newly monarchical Roman state.

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