

Extract from Robert Fagles. Introduction to *Virgil: The Aeneid*.¹

... Anchises introduced ... a Roman hero, Marcellus, who won the *spolia opima* at Clastidium in 222 B.C.E. by killing the chief commanding the Insubrian Gauls. And Aeneas, who sees a handsome but sad young man walking by Marcellus' side, asks who he is, to receive the answer that he is also named Marcellus but is destined, after a short but brilliant career, to die young. He is the son of Octavia, Augustus' sister, and when he died suddenly, perhaps at age twenty, in 23 B.C. he had been considered a likely successor to Augustus. "Oh, child of heartbreak! If only you could burst / the stern decrees of Fate!" (6.1017-18).

Extract from Robert Fagles, translation of Virgil. *Aeneid*, Book Six.²

‘And you, famous Maximus, you are the one man
whose delaying tactics save our Roman state.

"Others, I have no doubt,
will forge the bronze to breathe with suppler lines,
draw from the block of marble features quick with life,
plead their cases better, chart with their rods the stars
that climb the sky and foretell the times they rise.
But you, Roman, remember, rule with all your power the peoples
of the earth—these will be your arts:
to put your stamp on the works and ways of peace,
to spare the defeated, break the proud in war."

They were struck with awe as father Anchises paused,
then carried on: "Look there, Marcellus marching toward us,
decked in splendid plunder he tore from a chief he killed,
victorious, towering over all. This man on horseback,
he will steady the Roman state when rocked by chaos,
mow the Carthaginians down in droves, the rebel Gauls.
He is only the third to offer up to Father Quirinus
the enemy's captured arms."

¹ Virgil. *The Aeneid*, translated by Robert Fagles, Harmondsworth: Viking Penguin, 2006, pp. 31-32.

² Virgil, translated by Fagles, 2006, pp. 210-211.

Aeneas broke in now,
for he saw a young man walking at Marcellus' side,
handsome, striking, his armor burnished bright
but his face showed little joy, his eyes cast down.
"Who is that, Father, matching Marcellus stride for stride?
A son, or one of his son's descendants born of noble stock?
What acclaim from his comrades! What fine bearing,
the man himself! True, but around his head
a mournful shadow flutters black as night."

"My son,"
his tears brimming, father Anchises started in,
"don't press to know your people's awesome grief.
Only a glimpse of him the Fates will grant the world,
not let him linger longer. Too mighty, the Roman race,
it seemed to You above, if this grand gift should last.
Now what wails of men will the Field of Mars send up
to Mars' tremendous city! What a cortege you'll see,
old Tiber, flowing past the massive tomb just built!
No child of Troy will ever raise so high the hopes
of his Latin forebears, nor will the land of Romulus take
such pride in a son she's borne. Mourn for his virtue!
Mourn for his honor forged of old, his sword arm
never conquered in battle. No enemy could ever
go against him in arms and leave unscathed,
whether he fought on foot or rode on horseback,
digging spurs in his charger's lathered flanks.
Oh, child of heartbreak! If only you could burst
the stern decrees of Fate! You will be Marcellus.
Fill my arms with lilies, let me scatter flowers,
lustrous roses—piling high these gifts, at least,
on our descendant's shade-and perform a futile rite." ‘