NOTES • KORT BYDRAES

VERGIL AND THE MAUSOLEUM AUGUSTI:
GEORGICS 3.12-18*

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primus ldumeae reforam tibi, Mantua, palmas,
et viridi in campo templum de marmore ponam
propter aquam, tardis ingens ubi flexibus erat
Mincius et tenera praxedit harundine ripas.
in medio mihi Caesar erit templumque tenebit:
illi victor ego et Tyrio conspectus in ostro
centum quadriugos agitabo ad flumina currus.

In this famous passage Vergil promises to build a temple at Mantua and by the river Mincius to celebrate the greatness of Imperator Caesar, the later Augustus. It has been rightly stressed that this edifice is metaphorical rather than literal, echoing notable imagery in Pindar and elsewhere,¹ and that the poet’s triumphal tone and language evoke the historical context of writing, looking forward to the triple triumph of Caesar in 29 BC.² It has also been suggested that the metaphorical tempulum recalls a real building in Rome,

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perhaps the "aedes Herculis Musarum" or the temple of Palatine Apollo. Such an allusion to a real edifice would not be excluded by the symbolic or fictional nature of the "templum" here, or even by the fact that it is specifically placed in a different geographical location; comparable allusions have been suggested (for example) at *Aeneid* 2.225-57, where the cult-statue of Athena described in Troy seems to echo some details of the great image of Athena Parthenos in Athens, and at *Aeneid* 7.170-91, where the temple-palace in the city of Latinus bears some resemblance to the Roman Capitoline temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus. My purpose here is to present another suggestion of the latter kind; the "templum" described in the proem of the third *Georgic* recalls a real building indeed, in addition to the temple of Palatine Apollo, which is primarily recalled in the description of its decorations which follows (26ff) — the Mausoleum of Augustus, being erected at that very time on the Campus Martius in Rome.

The location, materials and design of the Mausoleum all seem to be echoed in Vergil's description of the "templum" here. Its riverside location in a grassy plain, notionally in the bends of the river Mincius, recalls in its details the exceptional site of the Mausoleum Augusti on the Campus Martius, in the bend of the Tiber. Both the reedy fringe of the Mincius and its bends, though conventional features of rivers in poetry, recall Vergil's own descriptions of the Tiber in *Aeneid* 8 (cf. 8.34, where the river-god Tiberinus has as a garland *umbrosa...barundo*, and 8.95, where the Tiber has *longos...flexus* on the approach to the site of Rome). The location of the Mausoleum by the banks of the Tiber is alluded to again by Vergil at *Aeneid* 6.873-74, where he marks the interment of Marcellus in that select and privileged place. *Campus* at 3.13 can refer tout court to the Campus Martius as often, and the reference to driving chariots in line 18 fits this, the Campus being

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5 Cf. R.D. Williams, 'A second note on the structure of the *Aeneid*', *CQ* n.s. 9 (1959) 53-56, at 54.
6 For reedy rivers cf. e.g. *Georg.* 2.414 (general), 4.478 (infernal Cocytus), *Eccl.* 7.12 and *Aen.* 10.205 (both Mincius again); for *flexus* and *erare* of poetical rivers (both frequent) cf. *TLL* 6.910.80ff. and 5.2.808.71ff.
8 Cf. *TLL* 3.216.78ff.
the standard Roman location for equestrian exercises, including chariot-racing; indeed, Strabo’s contemporary account of the Campus mentions its use for chariot-racing in close collocation with his description of the Mausoleum (5.3.8-9, my translation): ‘And the size of the plain [the Campus Martius] is extraordinary, providing at the same time tracks for chariots and other horsemanship, without obstruction ... especially worth seeing is the so-called ‘Mausoleum’, a great mound on a high base of white marble by the river, covered to its top with evergreen trees; on its summit is a bronze statue of Augustus Caesar.’

The fact that the templum is of marble (13) matches the material of the Mausoleum, conspicuously sheathed in white marble as we have already seen from Strabo, and the status of templum, consecrated area, is one shared by both temples and burial places. The design of the templum is also analogous to that of the Mausoleum in a particular respect which has caused commentators some difficulty. In the middle of both there is to be a representation of Caesar. Vergil’s phrase, in medio mini Caesar et templumque tenet (16), suggests with the verb tenet that Caesar is to be the divine occupant of the temple, implying a cult-statue in its central and most sanctuary. The Mausoleum, as we know from the already cited contemporary account of Strabo, was topped by a bronze statue of the emperor, which stood in the centre of the circular monument, and which, though not strictly a cult-statue, clearly made exalted claims about the status of the great man it represented.

But perhaps most interesting are the links between the ideological contexts of the two monuments; both seem to celebrate the same occasion. As already noted, Vergil’s fictional and symbolic temple clearly honours the victorious Caesar on the occasion of his triumphal return to Rome in 29 BC, and it is at about this time that the project of the Mausoleum emerges into public view, though it is quite probable that it was begun before Actium. The adjacent park was certainly open by 28 BC (Suet. Aug. 100), and the building itself was available in 23 BC for its first interment, that of the heir

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9 For further references on equestrian exercises in the Campus, see R.G.M. Nisbet and M. Hubbard, A Commentary on Horace’s Odes Book 1 (Oxford 1970) 112.
11 Cf. Nonius p. 743.12 Lindsay: templum et sepulchrum dicij potest veterum auctoritate (citing Sychaeus’ burial-shrine at Aen. 4.457 de marmore templu m, where the language closely echoes Georg. 3.13); cf. too the templum of Dido’s tomb at Silius, Punica 1.84.
12 For tenere of divine occupation of a temple or consecrated area cf Horace, CS 69; Ovid, Met. 1.750; 11.361; 15.866; Fasti 2.670; 3.704; 6.52; Lucan 3.403; 9.520.
apparent Marcellus (Dio 53.30.5). Its purpose was clearly political and ideological as well as practical; no one needs a family tomb eighty-seven metres in diameter and nearly forty metres high, and Zanker is surely correct to argue that 'when the Mausoleum was completed, after the defeat of Antony, it no doubt gave the impression of a triumphal monument, one erected by the victor himself.' Vergil's poetical tribute to the victorious Caesar in 29, a metaphorical monument, thus appropriately echoes the form of one of Caesar's major tributes to himself, a real piece of architecture, and one of which Vergil's Roman readers would doubtless have been aware.

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14 Zanker (note 13) 76.
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