

**Stephen HARRISON**

**Vergil and the Mausoleum Augusti : Vergil *Georgic* 3.12-18**

In this famous passage Vergil promises to build a temple at Mantua and by the river Mincius to celebrate the greatness of Emperor Caesar, the later Augustus. It has been rightly stressed that this edifice is metaphorical rather than literal, echoing notable imagery in Pindar and elsewhere, and that the poet's triumphal tone and language evokes the historical context of writing, the triple triumph of Caesar in 29 B.C. It has also been suggested that the metaphorical *templum* recalls a real building in Rome, 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. My purpose here is to suggest a further analogy for the *templum* described in the proem of the third *Georgic* : 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. 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. The Mausoleum, as we know from the contemporary account of Strabo (5.3.9), 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.

As already noted, Vergil's fictional and symbolic temple clearly honours the victorious Caesar on the (imminent) occasion of his triumphal return to Rome in 29 B.C., and it is at about this time that the project of the Mausoleum emerges into public view. The adjacent park was certainly open by 28 B.C. (Suetonius *Aug.*100), and the building itself was available in 23 B.C for its first interment, that of the heir apparent Marcellus (Dio 53.30.5). Its purpose was clearly political and ideological as well as practical, and it has been rightly interpreted as at least partly a triumphal monument for Caesar after Actium. 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 be aware.