

## On the Afterlife of the Mausoleum of Augustus: A Ruin-naissance in Soderini's Sculpture Garden

The Mausoleum of Augustus has had many lives: it has been a tomb to emperors, a converted fortress, a bullfighting ring, a sculpture gallery, a concert hall, and, perhaps most notoriously, a symbol of Mussolini's Fascist appropriation of the city of Rome. Throughout all these various iterations, this '*mons manufactus*' (Donkin, 2017) has consistently occupied an interesting liminal position somewhere between the built environment and the natural world in a way that mirrors its Augustan typology. (Reeder, 1992). When Strabo describes his visit to Rome during the Augustan period (5.3.8), he is immediately struck by the novel combination of nature and architecture within the Campus Martius, and he marvels at the ways in which the many monuments, including the Mausoleum, are inscribed into the landscape without spoiling its natural beauty. What Strabo describes is, in essence, a large-scale garden, where art, men, and gods meet in total harmony; and it is for this reason that he describes the newly landscaped space as 'the holiest of all', where Romans could place the tombs of their 'most illustrious men and women'.

Through his rejuvenation of the Campus Martius as a sacral-idyllic green space, Augustus not only tapped into the location's deep-rooted tradition of commonality, but also explicitly positioned himself at the centre of that same tradition. Following this, the ideological intent behind Augustus' Mausoleum appears to be predicated on creating potential 'moments of encounter' that relied on the entanglement of plants, humans, and human-made structures to 'root' the commemorative experience (Graham, 2018). It is unsurprising, then, that the accumulated earth that formed part of the Mausoleum took on an almost mythic quality during the post-classical period, when the author of the *Mirabilia Urbis Romae* (22) states that Augustus

himself ordered a handful of soil be brought to his tomb from all the regions of the world (*de omnibus regnis totius orbis iussit venire unam circothecam plenam de terra*) so that his memory would be kept alive to all who visited the city (*ut esset in memoriam omnibus gentibus Romam venientibus*).

In this context, this paper will consider one particular ‘afterlife’ of Augustus’ monumental tomb structure – the sixteenth century Soderini sculpture garden (Riccomini, 1996) – to investigate the role of garden space in the continual (re-)commemoration of this site. As a backdrop and setting for the famous ancient sculptures curated and displayed by the Soderini family, the Mausoleum’s new garden of remembrance actively participated in two of most notable ‘Ruin-naissance’ (Hui, 2016) trends in the city of Rome – the conscious collection of ancient sculptures by elites in private collections (Wren Christian, 2010), and the cultivation by humanists of garden complexes that often evoked the designs of the ancients in the midst of, or sometimes even directly on top of, Roman ruins (Coffin, 1991). In doing so, however, Soderini’s design complicated Strabo’s ‘original’ understanding of the space by containing the greenery firmly *within* the architectural surround, rather than allowing it to adorn the exterior.

In order to interrogate the relationship between past and present, between nature and architecture, at the Soderini sculpture garden, this paper will propose conceptualising the Mausoleum as a ‘heterotopia’ (Foucault, 1984) — a ‘counter-site’ that operates in or on the margins of what might be termed ‘hegemonic’ or ‘normal’ space, in which boundaries of time and space are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. As a mirroring space imbued with inversionary possibilities, I argue that the notion of the heterotopia is a useful tool for understanding the ways in which memory and site interact with one another in Soderini’s re-imagining of the Augustan site.

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