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Conclusion

Construction in Reverse

1. Memories of Destruction

In the preceding five chapters, I investigated different strategies of representing construction in ancient Rome, and analysed how these representations relate to finished physical as well as literary constructs. I propose to recapitulate and contextualise my results by considering construction ‘in reverse’: I conclude this study with a brief discussion of destruction, investigating whether strategies similar or analogous to those discussed with respect to construction are also to be found in representations of the process of destruction.

While representing construction adds new dimensions to the ways in which its finished product is or should be perceived (knowing where something has come from changes how we think about it), representing destruction changes the way in which we look at – what? The point of destruction is that as soon as it is complete, its object is either unrecognisable or gone. Nevertheless, destruction always leaves something behind: a lacuna, a ruin, a reconstruction, a new building in the place of the old one. In the first part of this dissertation, I introduced the concept of ‘memories’ of construction: representations of construction in different media are used to create or manipulate a mental image of the construction process in order to heighten the impact of the monument. This chapter returns to this concept of ‘memories’. Can a ‘memory’ of destruction then influence the way in which the reader thinks about, and even looks at, the absence of a monument formerly there or a new structure that has taken the place of the old one? What representational strategies are used in creating those memories? And do such representations also aim to influence the reader’s impression of the durability and stability of monuments that still exist?

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1 Cf. my opening example of the construction at Ground Zero, where new buildings are rising while the lacuna has been monumentalised in the 9/11 Memorial.

2 See p. 7 above.
In the second part of this thesis, I analysed how representations of construction can be made to impact on the reader’s assessment of the text itself. Can a similar effect also be detected with regard to destruction? We have already seen that it can: I argued that Statius’ portrayal of the destruction of Amphion’s walls reflects on the power and powerlessness of poetry. In this chapter I investigate more closely how representations of destruction can influence the reader’s response to the text itself or to text more generally.

2. Construction – Destruction – Reconstruction

Representations of destruction seem to derive much of their power from the awareness of the ‘constructive’ prequel of making, and the (possible) sequel of reconstruction. In the same way, representations of construction often gain extra meaning from being juxtaposed or in some way connected with (the possibility of) destruction. Rebuilding-inscriptions, which I briefly touched upon in chapter 1, are a case in point. Apart from recording the act of rebuilding, they frequently provide details of the destruction that necessitated the repairs, such as the extent to which destruction had occurred or the means by which it had happened (e.g. *vetustate, terrae motu, vi ignis, vi maris, vi torrentium, vi tempestatis or longa incuria ... conlapsum*). The detail sketches the events preceding the constructive intervention of the builder, setting off his prestigious activity against the destructive past.

Visual representations, too, make use of the juxtaposition of destruction and construction as a way of giving added meaning to both activities. I considered the representations of building on the Column of Trajan, arguing that they serve to enhance the viewer’s appreciation of the monument and surrounding architecture. However, I did not in that context pay much attention to the numerous scenes of destruction on the column. In the scheme of the spiral relief, the sculptors regularly juxtapose construction of Roman camps with the destruction of Dacian buildings, using this interplay to stress Roman superiority. Roman buildings are shown under construction, while Dacian buildings are torched and demolished both by Roman troops (scenes XXV, XXX, LVII-LVIII, CXVI, and CLII-CLIV)

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3 An example was discussed on p. 18-20.
4 Horster (2001), 52-3, and see p. 18, n. 12 above.
5 See p. 42-7 above.
6 See now Wolfram Thill (2011) for a detailed analysis of destruction of architecture on the columns of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius ‘as a metaphor for cultural erasure’ (283).
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and by the Dacians themselves (LXXV-LXXVI, CXIX). Construction is the mark of the superior party, the victors’ prerogative.\(^7\)

The juxtapositions of construction and destruction or the activation of the one in the context of the description of the other is an equally effective device in literary representations. In the introduction, I mentioned the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitoline, destroyed in the civil war of AD 69.\(^9\) Tacitus’ famous description of its destruction in the course of the fighting between the followers of Vespasian and Vitellius (Tac. \textit{Hist}. 3.71) is followed by an ‘obituary’ of the temple, in which Tacitus recalls the monument’s venerable history (3.72.2-3): it was vowed by Taquinius Priscus, built under Servius Tullius and Tarquinius Superbus, completed after the institution of the republic, and restored and renovated several times.\(^9\) Setting off the description of the temple’s senseless burning against its construction-rich past heightens the pathos and significance of the event. At the same time, Tacitus’ juxtaposition of the physical destruction and his literary reconstruction of the temple implicitly contrasts the durability and stability of architectural and literary monuments.

\(^7\) Numbers refer to the scene numbering of Cichorius (1896-1900). In almost all cases, scenes of destruction and construction are horizontally or vertically adjacent, their position on the column further enhancing their contrasting effect. XXV (destruction) is placed directly above XIX-XX (Roman construction). LVII-LVIII is framed by LV-LVI (bridge construction) and LX (construction). CXIII-CXVI (attack on Dacian fortress and its destruction) is opposed to CXVII (timber working). Almost exactly above CXIX (Dacian destruction of their own buildings) appears CXXVII-CXXIX (construction). The scheme in Wolfram Thill (2011), 288, fig. 2, shows the position of destruction sequences on the column. She analyses the contrasting effect of construction and destruction on the column in some detail (297-9), stressing the ‘equation between architecture and culture’ (299).

\(^8\) This contrast is also expressed through the way the artists combine construction and deconstruction with other elements. For example, XXXIX-XL shows soldiers building the wall of a camp. Along the left-hand wall, a file of Dacian old men, women and children descends (XXXIX), while within the encampment, Trajan accepts the surrender of three Dacian leaders. By contrast, CXIX shows a group of Dacians destroying their own buildings, and breaking down their walls. The significance of this action is emphasised by the adjoining scene (CXX) of Dacians committing suicide by poison. While construction represents energy and strength, destruction signals weakness, failure and death.

\(^9\) See p. 2 with some bibliography.

I have so far discussed destruction only as the negative equivalent of construction. Tacitus’ Vitellians impiously destroy the temple built by (mostly) venerable ancestors; Statius’ Capaneus is shown to transgress every human boundary in undoing the work of Amphion and unfounding Thebes.\textsuperscript{11} I now turn to a passage from Pliny’s \textit{Panegyricus} where the interplay of construction and destruction works very differently. There, the act of construction is depicted as transgressive, while its undoing is praised; the reversal of construction is used retrospectively to discredit the original construction. The passage offers further insight into the interplay of destruction and construction, especially given that his text deconstructs a monument built up in a text also discussed at length in this thesis: Statius’ \textit{Silvae}. As such, Pliny’s representation of destruction allows us to revisit a number of the key strategies of representing construction discussed in this thesis, most importantly the double functionality of construction on a literal and a metaliterary level.

3. Toppling the Statue: Pliny’s \textit{Panegyricus}

In chapter 4, I discussed the opening poem of Statius’ first book of \textit{Silvae}, the description of the colossal equestrian statue of Domitian in the Forum Romanum which he represents as a symbol of imperial power and control as well as an embodiment of his own panegyric poetry.\textsuperscript{12} This equestrian statue and many other images of Domitian were obliterated in accordance with a decree passed by the senate after the emperor’s assassination.\textsuperscript{13} The object of these powerful, officially enforced memory sanctions was, however, not the obliteration of all recollection of the emperor Domitian. Rather, sudden and often extremely conspicuous \textit{lacunae} in the visual and epigraphic landscapes of the empire (at least initially) preserved

\textsuperscript{11} See p. 194-7 above.
\textsuperscript{12} On \textit{Silvae} 1.1 see especially p. 138-41, 151 and 155-6 above.
\textsuperscript{13} On the so-called \textit{damnatio memoriae} of Domitian, see Suet. \textit{Dom.} 23, Cass. Dio 68.1.1, Flower (2006), 234-71. The term \textit{damnatio memoriae} is a modern coinage, usually used to refer to large-scale memory sanctions which could include the banning of the condemned’s \textit{praenomen} within the \textit{gens}, the erasure of his name from inscriptions, the confiscation of his property, the prohibition of mourning for his death, the destruction of his houses (on which see Roller (2010)), or the removal or mutilation of his portraits. These actions could be officially mandated by senate, emperor or army, or they could be ‘spontaneous’ actions. See in general Vittinghoff (1936), 12-51, 64-74, Flower (2006). On imperial portraiture and \textit{damnatio memoriae} see Varner (2004), especially 112-35 on the fate of Domitian’s portraiture after his death. On the broader cultural meanings of statue-destruction, see Stewart (2003), esp. 267-99.
and heightened awareness of the disgraced, unspeakable emperor. The damnatio memoriae created an ‘anti-memory’ of the emperor, devoid of all positive aspects of Roman memoria.

Pliny’s Memory of Destruction

The process of this destruction of the emperor’s images is represented in Pliny the Younger’s Panegyricus, a speech delivered in the senate AD 100, in which Pliny praised the new emperor Trajan for his political activities (chief among them his excellent relationship with the senate), his munera to the people, and his virtuous private life. I argue that Pliny’s representation of the obliteration of the emperor’s images is designed to create a ‘memory’ of destruction and thus to impact on the audience’s response to the absent Domitianic images as well as to the images that (in part) replaced them.

Pliny’s describes the destruction of the statues of Domitian as follows (52.4-5):

(4) Ergo istae quidem aereae et paucae manent manebuntque quam diu templum ipsum, illae autem <aureae> et innumerabiles strage ac ruina publico gaudio litaverunt. Iuvabat illidere solo superbissimos vultus, instare ferro, saevire securibus, ut si singulos ictus sanguis dolorque sequeretur. (5) Nemo tam temperans gaudii seraeque laetitiae, quin instar ultionis videretur cernere laceros artus truncata membra,

14 On visible absences and the ways in which they could be used to promote a memory of absence and degradation, see Carey (2003), 165-71, Stewart (2003), 279-83: ‘the point is not that the population should forget, but that the victim should be obviously unworthy of social existence.’ Cf. also the Domitianic inscription from Puteoli (discussed in ch. 2 above, p. 145 n. 23) which was for some years displayed in its mutilated state before the block of stone was reused for a Trajanic monument. Varner (2004), 133, argues that the erased inscription remained on display ‘as a visual marker of Domitian’s posthumous humiliation and repudiation’.

15 On ‘memory games’ as a political tool in Rome, see Flower (2006), passim. Cf. also Pliny’s claim that an emperor will always be remembered – the question is only how he is remembered: Plin. Pan. 55.9: Praeterea ut quisque factus est princeps, extemplo fama eius, incertum bona an mala, ceterum aeterna est. – ‘Furthermore, as soon as anyone is made princeps, it is in any case immediately clear that his reputation is eternal, although it is uncertain whether it will be good or bad.’

16 A lot of research is currently done on this long-neglected work. The collection edited by Roche (2011) showcases a range of promising approaches to the work, while a new commentary is in preparation by Bruce Gibson. Pliny represents his own delivery of the speech in Ep. 3.18.

17 Stewart (2003), 280 points out that ‘the melting of the bronze image of a face … has the disadvantage of leaving no trace of mutilation’, a shortcoming of the procedure which a description such as Pliny’s, in preserving a memory of the destruction, can compensate to some extent.
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postremo truces horrendasque imagines obiectas excoctasque flammis, ut ex illo terrore et minis in usum hominum ac voluptates ignibus mutarentur.

Therefore, these statues, made of bronze and few in number, stand and will stand as long as the temple itself, but those, made of gold and countless in number, have served, through their overthrow and fall, as a propitiating sacrifice to the public rejoicing. It was pleasurable to dash the very arrogant faces to the ground, to attack them with the sword, to rage against them with axes, as if blood and pain might really follow from every blow. No one was so moderate in their joy and long-delayed happiness that it did not seem like revenge to see the mangled limbs, the body parts hacked in pieces, and finally the savage and dreadful portraits thrown into the flames and melted down, so that they might be changed in the flames from such terror and menaces to something useful and pleasant for humankind.

On first reading this passage, more recent images may occur to the modern reader, such as the toppling of the statues of communist dictators after the end of the cold war, or the destruction of the images of Saddam Hussein after the surrender of Iraq (fig. 19).18 It is no accident that the image of the falling colossal statue of Saddam has become so well-known. The moment was skilfully staged and captured by carefully-directed footage to create a modern, powerful ‘memory of destruction’.19 Similarly, Pliny’s representation of the destruction of the statues of Domitian, disturbing and gruesome as it reads at first sight, with its fantasies of bloody revenge projected upon the images of the emperor, is carefully designed and calculated to create or manipulate his audience’s ‘memory of destruction’.

18 Cf. also the written account of the toppling of this statue on the website of the BBC News (source: http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/april/9/newsid_3502000/3502633.stm, accessed 23 July 2012): ‘The metal plaque at the base of the statue was torn off and the statue’s marble plinth attacked with a sledgehammer. The men scaled the statue to secure a noose around its neck but were unable to pull it down. Then US troops joined in, and used an armoured vehicle to gradually pull down the statue. … As the statue fell to the ground at last, the crowd surged forward and jumped on it. Chanting and jeering, they danced on the fallen effigy, kicking it and hitting it with their shoes in a symbolic gesture of contempt as it was torn to pieces. They then severed the head, tied chains around it, and dragged it through the streets.’ Stewart (2004), 28 also compares ancient damnatio memoriae to the destruction of the images of Saddam Hussein.

19 The extent to which the toppling of Saddam’s statue in front of the Palestine Hotel was staged and/or the footage (immorally?) instrumentalised by the US government has been hotly debated. For a thoughtful analysis see Maass (2011).
The representation of the statue’s destruction is prefaced by a comparison (characteristic of the *Panegyricus*) between Trajan and his reprehensible predecessor. Pliny praises Trajan’s admirable restraint in having only few statues of himself set up in the entrance court of the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus and compares this frugality favourably to the profusion of golden images of Domitian with which the emperor had allegedly crammed the temple (*Pan.* 52.3):

> Itaque tuam statuam in vestibulo Iovis optimi maximi unam alteramve et hanc aeream cernimus. At paulo ante aditus omnes, omnes gradus, totaque area hinc auro hinc argento relucebat, seu potius polluebatur …

Of your statues, we see only one or two in the vestibule of the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, and these are made of bronze. But a little while ago all entrances and all steps and the whole space shone, here with gold, there with silver, but rather [than sanctifying the space] they polluted it …

Here, Pliny introduces the destruction that follows (52.4-5) with a description of the present aspect of the sanctuary, now devoid of Domitian’s golden images. The memory of destruction is used to construct a model interpretation of the newly ‘bare’ sanctuaries and the visible absence of Domitian from the cityscape. We are
to read the absences as a sign of the piety of the new emperor and the contrast between him and his predecessor.\textsuperscript{20}

Pliny’s representation of the destruction proper, too, carefully manipulates his audience’s image of the event. For example, Pliny stresses repeatedly that the destruction gave expression to general public rejoicing about the death of the tyrant and the new freedom (\textit{publico gaudio ... invabat ... gaudii seraeque laetitiae}). This feature of his account of the destruction may well address a potential embarrassment: it appears (from our scarce sources) that the general populace was by no means as unequivocally delighted at the murder of Domitian and the \textit{damnatio memoriae} as was the senatorial class.\textsuperscript{21} The process of destruction is turned by Pliny into a performance of the general populace’s passionate hatred of Domitian and their joy at his murder.

The representation of the beheading, dismemberment and melting down of the statues is shocking in its bloodthirstiness and violence: the frenzied populace hacks away at the statues as if they could bleed and feel pain. The description also activates disturbing intertexts. There is some epic battle terminology,\textsuperscript{22} but the dismemberment and subsequent cooking of the emperor’s limbs are rather eerily reminiscent of dismemberment and even the cooking of human flesh in (Senecan) revenge tragedies, as is the focus on the pleasure of viewing the terrible deed (\textit{cernere}).\textsuperscript{23} Representing this violence as revenge (\textit{instar ultionis}) suggests that it represents retribution for similarly terrible deeds committed by the emperor, a ‘tit for tat’ that can now at least be visited upon the statues. The violent scene therefore becomes a mirror of Domitian’s own terrible violence, and allows Pliny to re-enact Domitian’s cruel and murderous reign through the description of

\textsuperscript{20} On descriptions of construction as part of ‘model interpretations’, see p. 138-47 above on the \textit{Silvae}.

\textsuperscript{21} Suet. \textit{Dom.} 23.1: \textit{Occisum eum populus indifferenter, miles gravissime tuit statimque Divum apellare conatus est ...} - ‘The people bore the fact that he had been killed with indifference, but the military took it very badly and immediately tried to call him \textit{Divus} ...’. See Flower (2006), 239 on the people’s reaction, and Varner (2004), 113 on the senatorial bias of Pliny’s account of the event.


\textsuperscript{23} E.g. Sen. \textit{Thy.} 60-2, 755-67. See also [Sen.] \textit{Oct.} 794-9 on the savage dismemberment of the statues of Octavia by an angry mob, foreshadowing her impending death. On the internal and external audience of performances of extreme violence in Seneca’s tragedies, see e.g. Mowbray (2012).
destruction. At the same time, Pliny makes it clear that while Domitian may have tortured real people, this retribution is only visited upon statues, not real people; when he stresses that the statues were attacked *ut si singulos ictus sanguis dolorque sequeretur*, it is clear that in fact they do *not* feel pain.  

The word *litaverunt* (52.4) fulfills an important function in Pliny’s description. The destruction of the statues is framed in terms of religious observance, as a pious sacrifice, perhaps also necessary for purifying the polluted temple (*polluebatur*, 52.1).  

Turning the destruction into a religious act renders it morally and religiously unimpeachable. The sanctity of the Domitianic dedications themselves is definitively denied, while the violent removal and destruction of temple dedications is in itself a ritual act of atonement.

To summarise: this specific, tendentious representation of the process of destruction frames the statues’ destruction as evidence of the public hatred of Domitian and the general rejoicing at his death. The violence re-enacts Domitian’s own excesses, and is doubly justified as deserved retribution and in being confined to statues. Religious overtones, too, render the destruction of the images morally acceptable. This representation of destruction as a whole is designed to influence the reader-viewer’s interpretation of the visible absence of Domitian from the cityscape.

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24 However, the thrill lies precisely in the fact that the statue is so close to the ‘real thing’. Roman imperial portraits were not only representations of the emperor but also objects of veneration that were garlanded and received prayers and sacrifices (Stewart (2004), 27-8, with more bibliography on responses to Roman portraits). While these ways of responding to imperial portraits suggest that the ‘presence’ of the emperor in his image was somehow felt, in this instance Pliny clearly demarcates these images as different from a living thing.

25 Pliny claims that the images of the gods in and around the temple had been polluted by the images of Domitian, since he was guilty of incest with his niece (52.3): … *cum incesti principis statuis permixta deorum simulacra sorderent.*

26 For a dedication of a statue of the emperor by a private individual represented as an act of extreme piety, see Stat. *Silv.* 5.1.189-90.

27 A similar connection between the impiety of Domitian’s statue and thus the piety of its removal is drawn in 52.7 on which see p. 208-9 below.
be destroyed, texts and the ideas they preserve are more resistant to obliteration. In chapter 4, I argued that *Silvae* 1.1 offered a model interpretation of the equestrian statue of Domitian in the Forum Romanum (part of which was awareness of the effort of erecting it). Even though the statue itself had been removed, texts like that of Statius, and presumably others like it, were still in circulation.\(^{28}\)

On another level, then, Pliny’s description of the destruction of the images of Domitian also aims to invalidate or overwrite Domitianic panegyric, foiling the efforts of texts like *Silvae* 1.1 to perpetuate the monument and its originally opportune interpretation. Pliny’s description of destruction specifically addresses and contradicts many of the points of Statius’ poem. A poem cannot be toppled and melted down, but Pliny’s text constitutes a determined literary attack on the Statian poetic statue. This is indicated by broader thematic links as well as more specific correspondences between the two passages.

Both passages deal with sculptures of Domitian, made of precious metal and placed in the centre of Rome. Statius’ poem specifically emphasises the process of the statue’s erection, while Pliny’s passage contains a complementary focus on the process of destruction. The actual equestrian statue which is the subject of *Silvae* 1.1 specifically features in the *Panegyricus* as well, forming, according to Pliny, a hindrance to the oldest Roman religious practices, just as the statues in front of the temple in reality polluted it (52.7):\(^{29}\)

> Ante quidem ingentes hostiarum greges per Capitolinum iter magna sui parte velut intercepti devertere via cogebantur, cum saevissimi domini atrociissima effigies tanto victimarum cruore coleretur, quantum ipse humani sanguinis profundebat.

Yet previously huge herds of sacrificial animals were forced to turn away from their road, a large part of them intercepted, as it were, on the Capitoline way, so that the most savage image of the cruellest tyrant might be worshipped with as much blood of sacrificial animals as he himself had spilt of human blood.

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\(^{29}\) Commentators agree that Domitian’s equestrian statue is meant here: see Durry (1938), 164 *ad loc.*, Kühn (1985), 192 *ad loc.*, Moreno Soldevila (2010), 68 n. 400). The statue forms a hindrance to piety: cf. Suet. *Dom.* 15.2.
The central, controlling position of the equestrian statue in the Forum Romanum, represented as a great advantage and a reason for praise in Statius’ *Silvae* 1.1, is here associated with impiety.\(^\text{30}\) The presence of the statue next to the *clivus Capitolinus* serves to interrupt the victims’ progress up to the temple on the Capitoline (already defiled by Domitian’s golden images). Instead, many of them are slaughtered in honour of the emperor’s *genius* at the foot of his equestrian statue.\(^\text{31}\)

Both texts connect the representation of the emperor closely to the man himself, dwelling on questions of the presence of the emperor (or his *genius*) in the sculpture.\(^\text{32}\) For the workmen in Statius, the ‘presence’ of the emperor in his image renders their labour easier (*iuvat ipsa labores forma dei praesens*). In Pliny’s version, imagining the emperor as present in his image heightens the pleasure of destruction.

When Pliny stresses that it gives particular pleasure to dash the heads of the statues with their proud faces to the ground (*invabat illidere solo superbissimos vultus, instare ferro, saevire securibus*, *Pan.* 52.4), we recall that Statius had emphasised the pleasure of gazing at the face of the statue of Domitian in the forum (*Silv.* 1.1.15-16): *invat ora tueri.*\(^\text{33}\) Similarly, Pliny describes the joy of the populace in viewing the vengeance wrought on the statues (*nemo tam temperans gaudii seraeque laetitiae …*), in contrast with the joy felt by Curtius when he gazes upon the emperor (*laetus mag praeside viso*, 107).\(^\text{34}\)

Finally, irony is a powerful means of attacking an earlier text. In Statius’ poem, Domitian’s power and control over fire and flames is stressed (*Silv.* 1.1.33-5):

\[
\text{… prospectare videris,} \\
\text{an nova contemptis surgant Palatia flammis} \\
\text{pulchrius, an tacita vigilet face Troicus ignis …}
\]

\(^\text{30}\) See p. 139, especially n. 5, on viewing and control in *Silvae* 1.1.
\(^\text{31}\) That the animals are slaughtered in honour of the *genius* of Domitian can be deduced from the immediately preceding mention of Trajan foregoing any veneration of his own *genius* (52.6: *non apud genium tuum …*). Domitian’s behaviour is then contrasted unfavourably. Cf. also *Silv.* 1.1.57-8 where the earth is said to pant under the weight of the emperor’s *genius*: *nee ferro aut aere, laborat sub genio*.
\(^\text{32}\) Varner (2004), 112-13, analyses this aspect of Pliny’s description.
\(^\text{33}\) Noted by Trisoglio (1973), 1274 n. 19.
\(^\text{34}\) The expression of the countenance, stressed to be mild and peaceful by Statius (*mitis*, *Silv.* 1.1.15 and 25, bringing *placidam pacem*, 25), is described as *superbissimus, trux* and *borendus* by Pliny.
You seem to gaze before you, [observing] whether the new palace rises more beautiful than ever, despising the flames, or whether the Trojan fire keeps vigil with silent flame …

The emperor himself carries certain fire-like qualities in Statius’ poem: he is said to shine above the temples (superfulges, 1.1.33), his eyes imitate the flames of the stars (tua sidereas imitantia flammias / lumina, 103-4). How ironic that a ruler with such complete control over flames both harmful and holy could end up melted down in flames (postremo truces borrendasque imaginis objectas excoctasque flammis).

This passage is by no means the only place in the *Panegyricus* where Pliny attempts to reinterpret features of Domitianic self-presentation and therefore also has to engage with the panegyric texts which codified Domitianic ideology. However, Pliny’s representation of the destruction of Domitian’s images is special in that it can also be read on yet another level of abstraction. The destruction of the statues also functions as an image of his (literary) undertaking in the *Panegyricus*. In the *Silvae*, the equestrian statue functioned as a programmatic image of Statius’ own panegyric poetry and its construction also represented, on a metaphorical level, the composition of this poetry. His poetry, like the statue, presented a supposedly faithful portrait of the glorious emperor, aesthetically pleasing and impressive in artistic execution, produced at astounding speed. Conversely, in Pliny’s text, the destruction of these statues is linked to the overwriting and invalidating of texts like *Silvae* 1.1. In describing the smashing of the statues, Pliny argues against the praise of the *Silvae* at the same time as metaphorically representing their literary demolition.

In *Silvae* 1.1, Statius made some large claims regarding the longevity of the equestrian statue (*Silv.* 1.1.91-4):

35 Another example is Pliny’s reinterpretation of the theme of the imperial gaze and of seeing the emperor. The controlling gaze of the emperor in *Silvae* 1.1 (see n. 30 above) is reinterpreted in *Pan.* 50.1, where it is suggested that Domitian wanted to own whatever he saw, while Trajan can look without wanting to possess. 51.3-4 develops the theme of seeing and being seen with respect to the circus. Cf. also the accounts of dining with the emperor in *Silvae* and *Panegyricus*: in *Silvae* 4.2, it is a particular honour and pleasure to be allowed to gaze upon the emperor himself (4.2.14-16, 40, 52); compare to this *Pan.* 49.4-8. For a full discussion of the reinterpretation of Domitian’s building activities in the *Panegyricus*, see now Roche (2011b).

36 On the process of building as an image of poetic production in *Silvae* 1.1 see p. 150-2 and 155-6 above. On the equestrian statue generally as a programmatic image of Statius’ poetry, see Geyssen (1996), esp. ch. 2 and Newlands (2002), esp. 49-50, 69-73, who argues that the poem sets up a competition between poetry and monumental sculpture.
This work fears not rainy winters nor the three-forked fire of Jupiter, not the troops of Aëolus’ prison and the long-drawn years: it shall stand, as long as earth and heaven and Roman day.

Through his choice of words, Statius activates the famous Horatian ode about the poet’s *monumentum aere perennius* (Hor. Carm. 3.30.1) and Ovid’s reworking of the Horatian passage (Ov. Met. 15.871-9), both of which deal with the longevity of the poetic *opus* which exceeds that of any physical monument. But unlike Ovid and Horace, Statius does not stress the superiority of poetic monuments, but rather ties the longevity of the statue to that of his poetry, using the intertextual references to stress that *both* statue and the authoritative reading of it, Statius’ text, will last forever.

Pliny’s description of destruction simultaneously dispels the statue’s and the poem’s claims to eternity – the statue is smashed, the poem overwritten. Superior claims of eternity are instead formulated for the images of the emperor Trajan. The new bronze statues of Trajan placed (modestly) only in the vestibule of the temple of Jupiter will be eternal, unlike those of Domitian (Pan. 52.4): *ergo istae quidem aereae et paucae manent manebuntque quam diu templum ipsum.* However, these new claims to eternity seem more brittle than those of Statius. Association with the temple and cult of Jupiter on the Capitoline is a well-established motif of eternity, but the evident failure of Domitian’s attempt at self-memorialisation on the Capitoline shows the fragility of these claims. Moreover, a little further on, Pliny stresses the...
short-livedness of physical monuments and their unsuitability for the preservation of memory (Pan. 55.9): *Arcus enim et statuas, aras etiam templaque demolitur et obscurat oblivio, neglegit carpitque posteritas* – ‘For oblivion demolishes and obscures arches and statues, even altars and temples, and posterity neglects and destroys them’. Trajan’s praise, on the other hand, does not suffer from a similar transience. This, Pliny suggests, is not due to the durability of the literary medium (Domitian’s praise, as he demonstrated, is not eternal at all), but to the *content* of that praise – the virtue of Trajan himself. The reputation and popularity of a good princeps are inviolable. The *fama* of the emperor’s virtues (or possibly of his lack of virtues), not his monuments, will be truly eternal (Pan. 55.9-10), and a good emperor will therefore be praised forever.

Pliny ends his description of the frenzied, vengeful destruction with a positive image of reconstitution and healing. The broken bits of statuary are melted down *ut ex illo terrore et minis in usum hominum ac voluptates ignibus mutarentur* – ‘so that they might be changed in the flames from that terror and those menaces to something useful and pleasant for humankind’ (Pan. 52.5). Cassius Dio (68.1.1) reports that the images were melted down into coins, but Pliny’s description rises above such mundane realism. While actual melting down into coins would presumably have occurred at a mint rather than in a public space, the transformation is in Pliny’s account a pleasure to watch for the populace. There is also a more general meaning to be sought behind this formulation. The process of destruction ends with reconstitution and a new, better beginning. The process of literary destruction, too, in reality provides the *materia* for a new, and better, literary construction. Statius’ statue may have been smashed, but from the fragments, the praise of a new and better emperor has been constituted *in usum hominum ac voluptates*.

4. Conclusion

This short glance at the destruction demonstrates to what extent representations of construction and destruction draw on each other – only the existence of the alternative can give each activity its full meaning. At the same time, the short excursion has allowed us to revisit some of the crucial results of this study.

The meaning of monuments is not fixed. Whatever the intentions of a builder (if we can ever know them) – once a structure exists, it is subject to debate and interpretation. Ancient texts that deal with monuments do not allow us easy access
to the way in which a monument was looked at – instead, they participate in a never-ending contest of interpretation. Pliny’s account of destruction yet again reveals that to tell the story of the making or unmaking of a structure is one extremely important way of participating in this debate, of giving meaning to something that is finished. Representing creation can raise awareness of the ‘made-ness’ of a monument and encourage admiration of artistry, cost, or labour (chapter 1). On the other hand, both construction and destruction constitute alterations of the status quo, and by representing them in certain ways, such alterations can be made to have a moral dimension (chapters 2 and 4).

Representing the process of creating architecture allows a writer to step away from his own activity, to consider what it means to create something and how this creation can be done – and undone. The different chapters show the polyvalence of the poetological image of construction. In writing about architectural processes, writers can think through the aesthetics or ambition of their literary work (chapters 4 and 3 respectively), and display the power as well as the powerlessness, the durability as well as the fragility of literature (chapter 5 and conclusion).

The literal and metaphorical dimensions of building processes are not confined to distinct texts, nor do they exist within the same text independently of each other. Pliny’s representation of statue-destruction confirms this yet again, in that it reveals his deep understanding of the way in which architectural and literary construction are tied together in the *Silvae* (chapter 4). In his reversal of the (physical and literary) erection of the statue, he represents architectural destruction in order to perform and at the same time reflect on a simultaneous process of literary destruction.

In representing construction, Roman writers use the ‘made-ness’ of their text as well as of the built environment as a means of giving meaning to both, but they are far from unique in doing so. Specific strategies of representation may differ, but in essence, telling a story of making in order to impact on the meaning of something made is a universally applicable process. In an epilogue, I look at an instance of ‘making memories’ that is at once completely different and yet closely linked to ancient Roman strategies of representing construction.