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Building in words : representations of the process of construction in Latin literature

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Chapter IV

Engineering Poetry:

The Aesthetics of Construction in Statius' Silvae

1. Introduction¹

In chapters 1 and 2, I considered how representations of the making of a monument alter the impact of the completed edifice. I then turned to the literary-metaphorical potential of descriptions of construction: in chapter 3, I began to investigate how descriptions of construction aim to alter the reader's assessment of the finished text. In this chapter I argue that descriptions of the building process in Statius' *Silvae* are designed to combine both effects – to influence the reader's assessment of the architectural as well as the textual construct.

The *Silvae* are a collection of short poems initially written for specific occasions but later combined into books by the poet. The first three books of the *Silvae* appeared (either all at the same time or in quick succession) between AD 92 and 94, a fourth book followed in 95 AD, the final book was published posthumously.² The themes, metres, length and addressees of the individual poems are extremely varied, and only a small proportion of the poems concern building and the construction process. These poems, *Silvae* 1.1, 3.1 and 4.3, will be the focus of this chapter. All three commemorate the construction of specific monuments. In *Silvae* 1.1, Statius describes a recently dedicated honorific equestrian statue of the emperor Domitian and its erection in the Forum. *Silvae* 3.1 concerns the construction of a temple in the grounds of Statius' patron Pollius Felix, and *Silvae* 4.3 deals with the building of the Via Domitiana, a road leading from Sinuessa to

¹ Section 4 of this chapter has been published in a briefer form in Reitz (2012), 332-41.

² Arguing for a joint publication of the first three books (analogous to Horace's *Odes*) are e.g. Vollmer (1898), 3-13 (on the basis of a 'Gesamtkonzeption'), Newmyer (1979) 46-9, Bright (1980), 53-4, and Coleman (1988), xvi-xvii, who deftly summarises earlier arguments and argues for a date no earlier than January 93. Successive publication in yearly intervals (between 92 and 94) is defended by van Dam (1984), 3, Nauta (2002), 287-9.

Puteoli. The individual poems praise the achievement of construction in different ways, and they recreate (a version of) the building process to heighten the reader's esteem for the completed work, using strategies familiar from chapters 1 and 2. In the *Silvae*, these strategies are combined with a sustained metapoetic dimension. Statius describes the process of construction as a means of commenting on and justifying a specific aesthetic appropriate to the collection. He also exploits the coexistence of these two levels of meaning and the interaction between them.

2. Memories of Construction

The texts under consideration in this chapter represent construction in order to heighten the impact of built structures. Each of the poems was written for the occasion of a monument's dedication and presented or performed in connection with it.³ They all offer their readers an exemplary interpretation of the monument and render the process of construction, or rather the 'memory' of it that they produce, part of that interpretation. In this section, I give an overview of how the texts represent the monuments and, especially, their construction process. The resulting picture will then be modified in section 4, where I reconsider these descriptions on a metapoetic level and point out how the two levels interact.

The very structure of *Silvae* 1.1 guides the reader towards the desired reception. The poem begins with a series of questions about the provenance and possible makers of the equestrian statue (*Stat. Silv.* 1.1.1-7):⁴

Quae superimposito moles geminata colosso	1
stat Latium complexa forum? caelone peractum	
fluxit opus? Siculis an conformata caminis	
effigies lassum Steropen Brontenque reliquit?	
an te Palladiae talem, Germanice, nobis	5

³ *Silvae* 1.1 was presented to the emperor on the occasion of the dedication of the equestrian statue (see *Stat. Silv.* 1.ep.17-20): see Nauta (2002), 422 with n. 141 for the dating of the poem, 361-2 on the unlikelihood of oral presentation, and 365-74 more generally on the practice of presenting poems in writing. *Silvae* 3.1 was most likely performed for or presented to Pollius Felix in connection with the dedication of the temple of Hercules (cf. *Silv.* 3.ep.10-11). The context of presentation or performance for *Silvae* 4.3 is unclear. Coleman (1988), 105 tentatively suggests that the poem may have formed part of (hypothetical) celebrations for opening the Via Domitiana, while Nauta (2002), 359-60, stresses that the *deixis* of the poem only establishes a *fictional* context.

⁴ The text of the *Silvae* is that of Shackleton Bailey (2003) unless otherwise indicated. The translations are also adapted from Shackleton Bailey (2003).

effinxere manus qualem modo frena tenentem
Rhenus et attoniti vidit domus ardua Daci?

What is this mass that stands embracing the Latian Forum, doubled by the colossus on its back? Did it glide from the sky, a finished work? Or did the effigy, moulded in Sicilian furnaces, leave Steropes and Brontes weary? Or did the hands of Pallas fashion you for us, Germanicus, in such guise as the Rhine of late and the lofty home of the astounded Dacian saw you holding your reins?

These opening lines immediately draw attention not only to the work of art itself, but also to the question of *what it took* to get the statue there. The list of possible mythical builders encourages reflection on the superhuman achievement of constructing the huge equestrian statue. These lines are followed by a detailed description of the work of art. The author describes how the emperor on his horse surveys and controls the forum with his gaze, while being viewed himself,⁵ and he admires the fact that the representation is so lifelike that you might expect the statue to breathe, and the horse to gallop off.⁶ This first section of the poem creates a static impression, but in line 61, in a moment of ‘flashback’, the poem shifts from the description of the horse and rider as they stand in the forum and away also from its overall time-frame (1.1.61-70):

Nec longae traxere morae. iuvat ipsa labores	61
forma dei praesens, operique intenta iuventus	
miratur plus posse manus. strepit ardua pulsu	
machina; continuus septem per culmina Martis	
it fragor et magnae vincit vaga murmura Romae.	65
Ipsae loci custos, cuius sacrata vorago	
famosique lacus nomen memorabile servant,	

⁵ *discit et e vultu* (25), *tuentur* (29), *videt* (31), *prospectare videris* (32), *visum* (52), *aspiciens* (55), *viso* (73), *tueri* (77), *lumine fesso* (87), *despectus* (88), *videre* (89), *videas* (107). The statue renders the monuments of the forum mere spectators of its own beauty (lines 29-31) and also exerts control over its surroundings by gazing out over the forum, over the other monuments and up towards the Palatine (lines 32-6). The precise location of the statue in the forum is unclear; see Thomas (2004) for a recent suggestion. For a broader consideration of Domitianic architecture in terms of ‘surveillance’, cf. Fredrick (2003), esp. 214-20 on *Silv.* 4.2 and *Silv.* 1.1.

⁶ A type of observation often made in connection with viewing or judging art in antiquity: the best art strains the boundaries of its own medium by appearing completely lifelike. On this phenomenon in the Roman discourse about art, see the forthcoming study by Bussels. In line 57, this liveliness of the statue even communicates itself to the physical surroundings: the earth ‘pants’ under the great weight of the horse: *insessaque pondere tanto / subter anbelat humus* (cf. also 3.1.54: *anbelantes agros*).

innumeros aeris sonitus et verbere crudo
 ut sensit mugire Forum, movet horrida sancto
 ora situ meritaque caput venerabile quercu.

70

No long delays drew out the time. The god's present likeness itself makes labour sweet and the men intent upon their task are surprised to find their hands more powerful. The lofty crane⁷ rumbles as it is set in motion, and an incessant din runs through Mars' seven hills, drowning the diffuse noises of great Rome. The guardian of the place in person (whose name the sacred chasm and the famous pool preserve in memory), when he hears the countless clashes of bronze and the Forum resounding with harsh blows, raises a visage stark in holy squalor and a head sanctified by well-earned wreath of oak.

All at once, the statue is no longer finished, standing in the forum being admired and itself looking out over the space. We have stepped back in time, and it is only in the process of being constructed. The description of the erection of the statue picks up the questions asked at the very beginning of the poem about the supposedly divine origins of the statue. In effect, questions and answers about the construction of the horse frame the description of its visual impact. The connection between the first lines and lines 61-5 is emphasised by verbal echoes.⁸ *Operi* (62) recalls *opus* (3); the *manus* (63) of the workmen recall mention of Minerva's hands (6). The theme of divine involvement in the manufacturing of the statue (2-7) is taken up by *forma dei praesens* (62).

⁷ *machina* (64) can mean both 'crane' (*TLL* 8.12.70-13.7) and scaffolding (*TLL* 8.13.11-22). The first meaning is the more probable in this case. A scaffolding (supported by Shackleton Bailey 2003, 36, n. 19) would certainly have been required, since the assembling of the elements of a bronze statue involves the joining together of different pieces at considerable height. On the other hand, a crane (supported by Vollmer (1898), 226 *ad loc.*) is associated with noise also in Sen. *Phoen.* 468 (*stridente tardum machina ducens onus*, on which see also p. 182-3 below), and the high *machina* in Vergil's description of the building works at Carthage (*Aen.* 4.89) is also generally thought to refer to a crane (see p. 189 n. 55 below). If *machina* is taken as 'crane', *pulsus* may here mean 'the action of setting in motion' (*OLD* s.v. *pulsus* 3, a meaning similar to that of *impulsus*): the crane is moved by means of workmen walking in a wooden treadmill (see Vitr. 10.2.7: *calcantes homines*), undoubtedly a noisy activity. The Haterii relief (fig. 7) shows such a Roman crane and its treadmill in which several workmen are busy moving the crane. The noise and the need for a crane (or scaffolding) in any case suggest that the statue was not completely finished in the workshop, but transported to the forum in parts, and only combined and finished there. This is a strong argument in favour of those who argue that the statue was a *colossus*, or at least significantly larger than a 'normal' equestrian statue, since a normal-sized statue would have been completed in the workshop. On the colossal size of the statue, see Nauta (2002), 422 n. 142 and Dewar (2008), 78-80 refuting Geysen (1996), 24-7. On the technology of ancient large bronzes, see Bol (1985), 118-72.

⁸ Geysen (1996), 103.

By dwelling not only on its finished state but framing the contemplation of its appearance with passages about its production, the poem inscribes admiration of the achievement of the statue's manufacture into the canon of appropriate reactions to it. The representation of construction specifically stresses certain elements of the construction, such as speed, the noise of construction, and the divine presence and assistance that facilitate the great work.⁹ It engineers a 'memory' of construction which influences how the statue is viewed and evaluated.

Comparable framing strategies can also be observed in the other two construction poems. In *Silvae* 3.1, which deals with the temple of Hercules in the grounds of Pollius Felix' villa at Surrentum, reflections on the process of construction likewise frame the central section of the poem (the description of the picnic and thunderstorm which led Pollius Felix to initiate construction). *Silvae* 3.1 opens with a series of amazed comments on the differences between the humble old shrine and the splendid new temple (3.1.1-15).¹⁰ Stressing above all the speed of the alterations, the passage opposes the earlier uncultivated state of nature to the domesticated landscape, enriched through the building of the temple.¹¹ The juxtapositions of the 'then' and the 'now' subsequently merge into a series of questions recalling those that open *Silvae* 1.1 (3.1.10-11, 15-17):¹²

unde haec aula recens fulgorque inopinus agresti Alcidae? ...	10
quaenam subito fortuna rigentes ditavit scopulos? Tyrione haec moenia plectro an Getica venere lyra?	15

⁹ The speed of construction is expressed in the phrase *nec longae traxere morae* (61) which introduces the description of the manufacturing. *fluxit opus* (3) and *plus posse manus* (63) also dwell on the same theme. On speed as part of the memory of construction created in building inscriptions, see p. 20 with n. 15 in ch. 1 above and DeLaine (2002), 222-3 on speed of construction as a 'virtue in itself'. Noise is especially emphasised in lines 63-9, the divine presence of the likeness of the emperor in lines 61-2.

¹⁰ Attributes associated with the old temple (and its patron deity) in 1-15: *pauper* (3), *vagis habitabile nautis* (4), *reclusum limen* (8-9), *parva ara* (9), *inglorius custos* (9), *steriles harenae* (12), *sparsum pelago montis latus* (13), *hirta dumis saxa* (13-14). Associated with the new temple: *maior tholos* (3), *nitidi postes* (5), *Grais effulta metallis culmina* (5), *aula* (10), *fulgor inopinus* (10).

¹¹ References to speed in the opening lines: *recens* (10), *velox*, *nuper* (12), *subito* (15), *annus, angusti bis seno limite menses* (18).

¹² On Statius' use of questions as an opening device in the *Silvae*, see Geysen (1996), 38-40.

Where did rustic Alcides get this new mansion, this unlooked-for splendour? ... What fortune has suddenly enriched these stark cliffs? Did these walls arrive by Tyrian quill or Getic lyre?

While 1.1 names as potential makers of the equestrian statue Vulcan and the Cyclopes or Pallas Athena (1-6), the rhetorical question here already hints at the close connection between construction and poetry by suggesting Amphion and Orpheus as possible builders.¹³

The stress on the speed of building (*aula recens, subito*) continues when we learn that the building was completed within only one year, and the lines which immediately follow give the poet's explanation for the astonishingly fast execution of construction: the god himself must have participated in this Herculean labour (*labores*, 3.1.17) to render such a miracle possible (3.1.19-22):¹⁴

deus attulit arces
erexitque suas atque obluctantia saxa
summovit nitens et magno pectore montem
repulit; immitem credas iussisse novercam.

20

It is the god that brought and erected his towers, straining to dislodge reluctant boulders and pushing back the mountain with his great breast; one might suppose his harsh stepmother had given the order.

Instead of the presence of the emperor's divine *genius* as an inspiration for the workmen in 1.1, the element of divine presence is developed much further here. The god takes an active role in the heavy physical work. He helps to overcome resistant nature (*obluctantia saxa*, 20) by physical force (*magno pectore*, 21).¹⁵

Towards the end of the poem, the motifs of these first lines recur, in an even more extensive reflection on the process of construction (3.1.117-38), already prepared

¹³ On the myth of Amphion, see ch. 5 below, with p. 184-5 especially on Amphion in the *Silvae*. On Orpheus in the *Silvae*, see Lovatt (2007).

¹⁴ See Laguna (1992), 133 *ad* 17b on Herculean *labores* in 3.1. In 134-5, too, it is because of Hercules' intervention in construction that astonishing progress is made overnight: *rosea sub luce reversi / artifices mirantur opus*.

¹⁵ The expression *magno pectore* recalls a description of Pollius Felix' Epicurean mindset in companion-poem *Silvae* 2.2.124-5: *...qui pectore magno / spemque metumque domas*. The *pectus magnum*, the brave spirit, of Pollius Felix helps him to tame the forces of *spes* and *metus*, while Hercules uses his more 'physical' *pectus* for the taming of nature (*domare* is also used of Pollius' taming of nature at 2.2.56, and of Hercules' at 3.1.168). On the phrase *magno pectore*, see also further n. 62 below.

for by the god's own appeal to Pollius Felix (91-116) and his promise to lend a hand himself. The divine involvement leads to astonishingly fast progress overnight (134-5) and to the short construction time of only a year; the speed of the works is picked up in 135-8. The theme of taming resistant nature returns in 110-13 and 123-4.¹⁶ A rich description of the sound of construction (128-33) picks up another theme already familiar from *Silvae* 1.1. *Silvae* 3.1 thus develops further the motifs of the noise and speed of construction and divine involvement in it, combining them with the contrast between 'then' and 'now' and the human struggle against resistant nature.

Silvae 4.3 praises the newly built Via Domitiana. Unlike a temple or a statue, a road can hardly be praised for its beauty or other aspects of its appearance: its main asset is its utility. Yet again Statius combines praise of the construction process and its (useful) end-result by means of time-shifts.¹⁷ *Silvae* 4.3 opens with a question about origins, recalling its companion-poems 1.1 and 3.1. However, in this case the question immediately makes clear that the building is currently underway (4.3.1-3):

Quis duri silicis gravisque ferri
immanis sonus aequori propinquum
saxosae latus Appiae replevit?

What monstrous sound of hard flint and heavy iron has filled paved
Appia on the side that borders the sea?

Several explanations for the loud noise are rejected (Hannibal's troops, Nero's canal-building activity), before it is revealed that it is the sound of the emperor

¹⁶ In 110-13, Hercules announces that he will help with removing a mountain that stands in the way: *nec te, quod solidus contra riget umbo maligni / montis et immenso non umquam exesus ab aevo, / terreat. ipse adero et conamina tanta iuvabo / asperaque invitae perfringam viscera terrae.* – 'And be not daunted [Pollius] because a solid hump of unfriendly mountain that measureless time has never consumed stands stark in the way. I myself shall be there to assist so great an enterprise, breaking through the rugged bowels of the reluctant earth.' Removing or breaking through a mountain is a sublime achievement, which for example Trajan draws attention to in connection with the construction of his forum (see p. 20-2 in chapter 1 above); cf. also Plin. *Pan.* 16.5. Contrast with this forceful rhetoric Pliny the Elder's emotive appeal to respect the natural boundaries of the earth, where he describes the function of mountains as *compages telluris visceribus densandis* – 'a structure for holding firmly together the innards of the earth' (36.1). Since it is the god himself speaking, the action is (to some extent) protected from appearing hybridic or transgressive.

¹⁷ On time-shifts in 4.3 see Nauta (2002), 359-60.

Domitian's road-building activity (9-26).¹⁸ Time-shifts occur in lines 27-39, where the road appears completed and its utility is praised (it has reduced a travel time of one day to only two hours) and again in line 40, where we return to the construction in progress. The labour of laying the road is described in detail, and the precise wording of the description links 4.3 to 1.1 and 3.1.¹⁹

While 1.1 and 3.1 both contain the speech of a divinity who reacts to the new monument, 4.3 contains *two* speeches in praise of the new road. One is pronounced by the river god Volturnus, who seems to be raised from his riverbed by the noise of construction (like Curtius from the Lacus Curtius in 1.1) and praises the work as it is nearing completion. As the climactic conclusion of the poem, the Sybil of Cumae then prophesies a glorious future for the emperor.²⁰

The theme of human struggle against and victory over nature, already present in 3.1, is developed at much greater length in 4.3. The description is a challenge for the poet. Representing large-scale human intervention in nature brings with it the difficulties discussed in chapter 2. In praising the emperor Domitian's achievement, Statius stretches the very limits of what is possible in panegyric, while walking the fine line between imperial triumph and dangerous *hybris*.²¹ Statius' poem displays the typical features of the triumphal rhetoric of control over nature. He represents the emperor's actions as a war against nature, and his victory as a triumph over a vanquished foe.²² The emperor's military triumph over nature is

¹⁸ On Nero's abortive attempt at building a canal between Lake Avernus and Ostia, see above, p. 66.

¹⁹ For example, the description begins with *hic primus labor* (4.3.40) recalling the theme of the Herculean *labores* in 3.1. Coleman (1988), 116 notes that the 'declamatory use of pronouns' in lines 4.3.50-60 (*hi...hi...illi...hi...hae...his*) recalls 3.1.118-29. The busy *manus* of the workmen appear in 4.3.49 as well as 1.1.63 and 3.1.118 (*innumerae cotiere manus*). 4.3.62 picks up 1.1.65 (*it fragor* is repeated).

²⁰ Volturnus: 72-94, Sybil: 124-63. The description of the noise and its echoes (62-5) just before the appearance of Volturnus makes the situation recall the appearance of Curtius. The description of the river god also evokes Vergil's Tiber in *Aeneid* 8: Smolenaars (2006), 229.

²¹ See ch. 2 above, especially p. 64-8.

²² See Kleiner (1991) on Roman bridge-building as victory over the river, esp. 184-6 on *Silvae* 4.3. The strongest (and, for the modern reader, most uncomfortable) concentration of such language is found in the speech of the river god Volturnus (*Silv.* 4.3.72-84). The river has been forced to submit, as the martial metaphors show, only after a struggle in which man has triumphed over river. The river god now speaks of himself in the language of a slave taken in war: he is bound (*ligasti*) and suffers servitude (*servitus*), while the builder is in command and gives orders (*te duce, te iubente*) – at the same time, however, he professes himself glad with his slavish new role and enjoys being trampled by those crossing the bridge (*iam pontem fero perviusque calcor*), since he is happy to have submitted to the illustrious emperor. This kind of martial

also connected to a sense of universal, cosmic control over nature. Not only can the emperor apparently (metaphorically) move Baiae closer to Rome (25-6),²³ but he would even be able to bring about beneficial global climate change (135-7).²⁴

Stattius' means of dealing with the potentially undesirable connotations of his description is so unusual that it has led some commentators to suppose that he may be playing a double game and actually conveying a much more critical or at least 'anxious' attitude towards the emperor through his ostensible praise.²⁵ For example, he explicitly mentions the negative *exempla* with which the activity might be connected. In the opening lines of the poem the *sonus immanis* of the road-building is at first (falsely, as it turns out) associated with two classic examples of *hybris*, Hannibal and Nero (4-8) – an implicit acknowledgement that the building-activity of Nero would have sounded no different from that of Domitian, but at the same time also a means of tackling undesirable connotations head-on. Similarly, the classic *exempla* of Xerxes' projected canal through Mt Athos and his bridge of ships over the Hellespont, both a byword for a tyrant's *hybris* and sinful interventions in nature, are brought up in the description of road construction (4.3.56-60):

hae possent et Athon cavare dextrae

56

language is also employed in *Silvae* 2.2 (esp 52-9) and 3.1 (20: *obluctantia saxa*, and 12-16). Newlands (2002) well analyses this aspect of 2.2, see esp. 134-5. See also Pavlovskis (1973), 2-21.

²³ The arresting phrase (*aestuantes / septem montibus admovere Baiae*) is paralleled in an inscription from Puteoli, in which the inhabitants of Puteoli officially express their thanks for Domitian having moved their town closer to Rome (*AE* 1973, 137): *colonia Flavia Augusta Puteolana ... urbi eius admota*. On the wording of the inscription see Coleman (1988), 110 *ad loc.*, on the monument and the inscription's reuse Flower (2001), on its erasure after Domitian's *damnatio memoriae* Flower (2006), 256-8 and fig. 72. *legere* (84) also has a double significance: Domitian 'shall be read of' in an inscription on the bridge against which Voltumnus is leaning, as well as in Stattius' poetry: Smolenaars (2006), 231 and Coleman (2008), 39-42.

²⁴ *Natura melior potentiorque, / hic si flammigeros teneret axes / largis, India, nubibus maderes / undaret Libye, teperet Haemus* – 'If he [i.e. Domitian] had the flaming chariot in his keeping, better and mightier than Nature, India would be damp with generous clouds, Libya watered, Haemus warm.' Following the arguments of Coleman (1988), 132, *ad loc.*, I retain the original line order. Shackleton Bailey (2003) transposes 135 after 136. For *axes* as 'chariot' not 'sky', see Smolenaars (2006), 239, Nauta (2010), 262 n. 85.

²⁵ Ahl (1984a), 92, in his analysis of *Silvae* 1.1 argues that Stattius' ostensible rejection of a possible negative interpretation serves only to draw the reader's attention to it. Newlands (2002) suggests that Stattius' panegyric poems do not so much voice criticism as reveal the poet's 'anxiety' as to the nature of Domitian's autocratic rule by means of 'faultlines' (23-6): for her interpretation of the negative *exempla* in 4.3 in terms of 'anxiety', see 290-3.

et maestum pelagus gementis Helles
intercludere ponte non natanti;
his parens, nisi di viam vetarent,²⁶
Inous freta miscuisset Isthmos.

60

These hands could have hollowed out Athos and separated lamenting Helle's mournful sea with a bridge that did not float. Obedient to these hands, Ino's Isthmus could have mingled waters, if the gods did not forbid the passage.

Naturally, Domitian is cast as a completely different kind of ruler from Nero and Xerxes, religiously observant and committed to restoring and guarding Roman laws and morals (9-19), but at the same time his achievements are placed in competition with those of insane tyrants. I am not persuaded by the view that Statius' panegyric poetry is intended as criticism in disguise.²⁷ Rather, as I argued in chapter 2, the discourses of triumph and *hybris* deal in the same themes and categories, and their extremes lie uncomfortably close to one another. Statius' strategy for preventing his praise from eliciting undesirable connotations is to make them explicit and then to dismiss them.²⁸

The three poems all offer their audience an exemplary way of viewing and interpreting the respective construction projects. By means of time-shifts, Statius frames reflections on the finished state of the monuments with descriptions of

²⁶ This line presents several difficulties. Shackleton Bailey (2003), emending substantially, prints Barth's conjecture *di viam* for the transmitted *deniae* (also accepted by Courtney (1990)) and *parens* for the transmitted *parvus* (which Courtney (1990) and Coleman (1988) retain, the latter cautiously explaining it (119 *ad loc.*) as 'an easy task for these', i.e. the labourers).

²⁷ Statius' *Silvae* have often been read as clever, ironic expressions of criticism of the emperor, see e.g. Ahl (1984a and 1984b) or Klodt (1998 and 2001), further bibliography in Leberl (2004), 15 n. 35. This view has also been variously attacked, e.g. by Römer (1994), esp. 100-13, Dewar (1994), Geysen (1996), Nauta (2002). It is just as impossible to exclude either alternative as an 'incorrect' reading as it is to reconstruct the author's personal convictions. Panegyric by its very nature has to touch and extend the boundaries of the 'sayable', and irony is always a possible reading of any hyperbole or comparison: Nauta (2002), 424-6. The effectiveness of panegyric is a function of its clearly defined context, as Nauta (2002) argues (426): '... panegyric is only possible on the basis of a contract between the poet and his audience which defines the context of utterance as, precisely, panegyric.' Cordes in a forthcoming article shows how the meaning of panegyric texts is already unstable in antiquity, when, for example, Martial or Pliny under Trajanic rule re-interpret their earlier praise of Domitian as forced and insincere.

²⁸ Cordes (forthcoming) analyses the strategy of 'preferred readings' at work in *Silvae* 1.1: Statius disambiguates praise that may possibly be interpreted ironically by adding explicitly which reading is to be 'preferred'. Cf. also Nauta (2002), 426 on 'disclaimers' in the speech of the Sibyl in *Silvae* 4.3. Another example is the comparison with Phaeton (135-7, quoted in n. 24 above), analysed by Nauta (2010), 262-4 and Cordes.

their construction process. The poems inscribe admiration of the achievement of manufacture or building into the canon of appropriate reactions to the monument. In Statius' poetic representations of construction, a number of themes turn out to be especially prominent. One of them, the speed of construction, is readily explicable and familiar from the representations of construction studied in chapter 1. Other recurring themes are more difficult to understand, such as for example the intense focus on the sound and noise of construction: noise is hardly a 'positive' element of construction that one would commonly choose to stress as a means of praise. I argue below that some of these specific choices with respect to the descriptions of construction are (additionally) motivated on a metapoetic level.

3. The Making of the *Silvae*

Before I reconsider the descriptions of construction in this metaphorical light, I briefly turn to one special feature of the collection. When the individual poems were republished in book form under the title '*Silvae*', the poet composed a prose preface for each book in the form of a short epistle addressed to the book's dedicatee. Johannsen has argued that these dedicatory texts are designed to 'frame' the poetry book and steer the reception of the poems.²⁹ In reading the prefaces, it immediately becomes apparent that this framing predominantly consists of creating an image of the *composition* of the poems by describing the circumstances and, especially, the speed at which this composition was effected. The *praefatio* to the first book of poems begins (1-15):

Diu multumque dubitavi, Stella, iuvenis optime et in studiis nostris eminentissime, qua parte [et] voluisti, an hos libellos, qui mihi subito calore et quadam festinandi voluptate fluxerunt, cum singuli de sinu meo pro<dierint>, congregatos ipse dimitterem. quid enim <opus eo tempore hos> quoque auctoritate editionis onerari, quo adhuc pro Thebaide mea, quamvis me reliquerit, timeo? sed et Culicem legimus et Batrachomachiam etiam agnoscimus, nec quisquam est illustrium poetarum qui non aliquid operibus suis stilo remissiore praeluserit. quid quod haec serum erat continere, cum illa vos certe quorum honori data sunt haberetis? Sed apud ceteros necesse est multum illis pereat ex

²⁹ Johannsen (2006) offers a thorough investigation of function and design of the prose prefaces in Martial and Statius. On the prefaces as 'rezeptionssteuernde Rahmung' (framing) see 45-7. On the prose prefaces as paratexts see 38-45. For her detailed analysis of the prose prefaces of the *Silvae* see 241-370.

venia, cum amiserint quam solam habuerunt gratiam celeritatis. nullum enim ex illis biduo longius tractum, quaedam et in singulis diebus effusa. quam timeo ne verum istuc versus quoque ipsi de se probent!

Much and long have I hesitated, my excellent Stella, distinguished as you are in your chosen area of our pursuits, whether I should assemble these little pieces, which streamed from my pen in the heat of the moment, a sort of pleasurable haste, emerging from my bosom one by one, and send them out myself. For why <should they too> be burdened with the authority of publication <at a time> when I am still anxious for my *Thebaid*, although it has left my hands? But we read *The Gnat* and even recognise *The Battle of the Frogs*; and there is no one among our illustrious poets who has not precluded his works with something in lighter vein. Moreover, it was too late to keep them back, since you at least and the others in whose honour they were produced already had them. But the rest of the readership will necessarily grant the poems much less indulgence, since they have lost their only commendation, that of fast production. For none of them took longer than a couple of days to compose, some were turned out in a single day. How I fear that the verses themselves will testify on their own behalf to the truth of what I say!

In what follows the speaker invokes the addressees of the individual poems as witnesses for the truth of his claims about near-miraculous *celeritas*. For each poem, he indicates briefly the content and the addressee and pays special attention to the time required for composition (usually only one or two days). For example, the third poem of the first book, a description of the Villa of Manlius Vopiscus at Tibur, is introduced as follows (1.ep.24-7):

Manilius certe Vopiscus, vir eruditissimus et qui praecipue vindicat a situ litteras iam paene fugientes, solet ultro quoque nomine meo gloriari villam Tiburtinam suam descriptam a nobis uno die.

Certainly Manilius Vopiscus, an extremely learned man and one who is especially rescuing from neglect scholarship that is already almost vanishing, often boasts of his own accord and on my behalf that my description of his villa at Tibur was done in one day.

In the prefaces to the second and third book, the theme of fast composition returns, while the indications of time required for composition diminish even further.³⁰ The veracity of these claims has been doubted, but it is not at issue here.

³⁰ Johansen (2006), 317.

Whether fictional or not – the ‘memory’ of composition created in these prefaces is a means of steering their reception, analogous to the memories of construction steering the reception of monuments.

How do these *praefationes* interact with the metapoetic dimension of the descriptions of building and construction that I am about to analyse? On the most basic level, the *praefationes* sensitise the reader for the aesthetic reflections to follow. They fix the process of composition in the mind of the reader at an early stage as a crucial context of reception and so prepare for further reflections on the making of poetry. In the following section, I analyse how the aesthetic and poetological pronouncements of the prefaces are strengthened, supplemented and modified through Statius’ representation of construction.

4. Engineering Aesthetics

The themes that receive special emphasis in the construction poems, such as speed, sound, or the manipulation of rivers or trees are not only part of the ‘memory’ of the physical construction process, but also specifically appropriate to the special aesthetics of the *Silvae* that Statius is seeking to justify. The way in which the process of construction is figured shapes the reader’s perception of the *Silvae*.³¹ The aim of the descriptions of construction is to influence not only the way in which the reader regards the construction projects, but also the way in which he reads the poetry that praises them. The metaphorical relation between construction and poetry is a flexible tool in the *Silvae*, and building and poetics are linked in a variety of different ways. ‘Building’ is by no means always a straightforward metaphor for ‘writing poetry’: different aspects of the construction process are exploited for their particular associations, while the ‘literal’ and the ‘metaphorical’ levels of construction interact in different ways. The positive associations of one particular feature in one sphere can be exploited for the other.

³¹ Since both *Silv.* 1.1 and *Silv.* 3.1 are placed at the opening of their respective books, they are particularly suited to being used for establishing a poetic programme for the *Silvae* and formulating their aesthetic categories: see Geyssen (1996) on 1.1, esp. 122, Newlands (1991) on 3.1 and Newlands (2002), esp. 49-50 and 69-73. On the metapoetics of *Silv.* 4.3, see Newlands (2002), ch. 9, and Smolenaars (2006).

Speed

Statius' emphasis on the speedy progress and completion of the work highlights one of the features by which high-budget building projects were meant to impress.³² However, the emphasis placed on fast construction also recalls the strong focus on fast composition in the *prae-fationes*, where Statius describes his poetry as composed at impressive speed for specific occasions. While fast construction is a conventional element of praise for a builder, fast writing is a very unusual, perhaps even (for Statius' contemporaries) perverse, poetic boast. With these claims Statius violates one of the most widely accepted principles of Latin poetic aesthetics, which Latin poets ultimately (claim to) derive from the influential pronouncements of the Hellenistic poet Callimachus.³³ Latin poets regularly pride themselves on slaving over their work for decades, working through the night and polishing every single word. The accusation of hasty production is a standard element in attacks on 'bad' poets.³⁴ Statius' claim to have composed 300 hexameters in only two days (1.ep.22-3) reads like a deliberate reaction to Catullus' and Horace's criticism of inferior colleagues who write too many lines too quickly.³⁵ Statius' challenge to 'mainstream' aesthetics (or the mainstream *articulation* of aesthetics) is communicated and justified in a number of ways. One

³² See e.g. p. 19, n. 15, p. 25 and p. 50 above.

³³ Nauta (2006), 35: 'we see in Statius not just a neutralization, but even an inversion of the Callimachean apologetic scheme'. For a recent treatment of Latin poets' engagement with Callimachus, and an overview of earlier literature, see Hunter (2006). Cf. also Fantuzzi/Hunter (2004), 444-85 on 'Callimacheanism' in the Greek world and in Rome. The manifold Roman adaptations of the initially very specific Callimachean aesthetic principles turned them into an extremely flexible tool of literary self-reflection, open to Roman poets working in any genre. Generally, there was only one thing a Roman poet could not do: to disagree with the Callimachean principles, in whatever way adapted.

³⁴ Callimachus himself does not explicitly mention the fast production of poetry. He condemns poetry that is not carefully made, is too long, or not sufficiently original. In the *Aetia* prologue (Callim. *Aet.* fr. 1 Harder), he rejects poems of many thousand lines (Callim. *Aet.* fr. 1.3-4 Harder) and recommends judging poetic merit by the standards of art, and not the Persian 'chain', a land-measure (Callim. *Aet.* fr. 1.17-18 Harder). However, Roman 'Callimachean' poets as a rule do condemn fast composition, and praise poetry that is the product of years of laborious execution: cf. Catull. 95.1-3, Hor. *Sat.* 1.4.9-10, Hor. *Arx. P.* 291-4, 386-90. Statius himself makes the common poetic claim to careful polish achieved during long years of composition for the *Thebaid*, both in the poem itself (Stat. *Theb.* 12.810-12) and in the *Silvae* (Stat. *Silv.* 3.5.35-36; 4.7.26), for which cf. also Callim. *Epigr.* 27 Pf on Aratus' work during the night.

³⁵ Catullus in 95.1-3 praises Cinna's *Zmyrna*, carefully composed over the course of nine years, and favourably contrasts this with Hortensius' production of five hundred thousand lines in the same time. Horace in *Sat.* 1.4 and 1.10 likewise condemns Lucilius for composing too many lines too quickly: *in hora saepe ducentos, / ut magnum, versus dictabat stans pede in uno* (*Sat.* 1.4.9-10).

of them is the metaphor of construction for poetic composition. It helps to formulate speed as a new category of poetic achievement, by allowing the poet to harness the positive connotations of fast construction in real building for the production of his own poetic work.

The link between poetic and architectural production is forged at the very beginning of *Silvae* 1.1 through a direct reference to the immediately preceding dedicatory *epistula*. In the *praefatio*, Statius claims that the poems *mibi subito calore et quadam festinandi voluptate fluxerunt* – ‘streamed from my pen in the heat of the moment, a sort of pleasurable haste’ (1.ep.3-4). Lines 2-3 of poem 1.1 on the erection of the Domitianic statue run: *caelone peractum / fluxit opus?* – ‘Did it glide from the sky, a finished work?’³⁶ Apart from the opening questions about miraculously sudden appearance, the theme also opens the description of the destruction proper, which begins in 61 with the words *nec longae traxere morae* – ‘no long delays drew out the time’, possibly a hint at the interruption of the narrative ‘delay’ of ecphrasis.³⁷

The other two construction poems further explore the aesthetics of speed. In *Silvae* 3.1, the poet combines the celebration of impressive speed of building with the theme of divine help with construction.³⁸ The idea is already present in 1.1, where the *forma dei praesens* (62) inspires the workmen, but in 3.1 the theme is developed at much greater length. In section 2 above, we saw that the involvement of Hercules himself is celebrated (especially in 3.1.19-22) as the reason for the astonishing speed at which construction is completed.³⁹ Divine inspiration of the poet and his

³⁶ The parallel is noted by Geyssen (1996), 43-4 and Newlands (2002), 54.

³⁷ Cf. also 3.1.117, where an ecphrasis of the temple is succeeded by a description of the process of construction, yet again marked by the words *nec mora* (117). The description of the forging of the shield of Aeneas in the *Aeneid* is introduced by an exhortation of Vulcan to the Cyclopes: *praecipitate moras* (*Aen.* 8.443). Statius’ play on *mora* at the opening of two anti-ecphrastic passages interprets Vergil’s *praecipitate moras* likewise as anti-ecphrastic signposting. Vulcan’s work produces the shield, an ecphrastic object (8.626-738). Hercules’ activity in *Silvae* 3.1 recalls Vulcan’s creative activity (see p. 160 below), when he likewise creates an object for a (much less privileged) ecphrastic description. However, in *Silvae* 3.1 as in 1.1, the ecphrastic description is displaced, occurring before, rather than after, the description of the object’s production.

³⁸ Newlands (1991) explores the metapoetic layer of *Silh.* 3.1: see esp. 449-50 where she notes the connection between speed of building and fast poetic production.

³⁹ These lines are quoted on p. 142 above. The importance of divine intervention for the speed of construction and the miraculous transformation is also strengthened by links between *Silh.* 3.1 and the Ovidian episode of Philemon and Baucis (*Ov. Met.* 8.626-720). A pious elderly couple offer humble shelter to a god (see esp. *Silh.* 3.1.32-3: *felix simplexque domus fraudumque*

work is also a stock feature in ancient poetic texts. Here, it is responsible for speedy building as well as rapid poetic production. Hercules' helpful intervention thus helps to formulate a new, valid aesthetic for the *Silvae* that suits quickly produced but also divinely sanctioned and inspired poetry.⁴⁰

Silvae 3.1 offers further opportunities for connecting architectural and poetic production, since it describes the construction of a temple. As mentioned in the previous chapter, temple-building was already an established poetic metaphor, most famously employed at the opening of Vergil's third book of *Georgics*.⁴¹ I suggest (tentatively, considering the nature of the evidence) that Statius here adapts another well-known and possibly Callimachean topos for a sharper definition of his poetic ideal. A fragment from Callimachus' *Aetia* (fr. 118 Harder), in very bad state of preservation and completely unplaceable,⁴² has been suggested by Thomas as a common model for *Georgics* and *Silvae* 3.1.⁴³

].φ.οεῖς οἷ τε μάλισ[τα	1
]ν. [λ]ειαινουσι · τὸ δ' ἱερ[ὸν	
ἐξ αὐ]τοσχεδῆτης καῖνο τεκ[
]..ὐ..ι σταφύλη.[.]ο.[
].....ν λειάμ[ε].[5
].....ησι μελιχροτ[
]ἀχορ[ῖ]βες καὶ τότε Λητο[ῖ]δ	
]..τὸ δ' ἔμελλεν εσο[
]..ἀμφιπερικ[
]ωη.αν..ε.[10
].[

malarum / inscia et hospitibus superis dignissima sedes), and subsequently divine intervention turns a lowly hut (*Silh.* 3.1.82: *tenuis casa*) into a gleaming temple at incredible speed. The connection with Philemon and Baucis is also touched on by Thomas (1983), 104, who mentions it as another theoxeny-episode also related to the Callimachean *Victoria Berenices* and the Hercules-episode there, where the hero stays in the simple hut of Molochus before his fight against the Nemean lion (cf. *Silh.* 3.1.29-30).

⁴⁰ The preface to book 3, addressed to Pollius Felix, the builder of the temple, already suggests that we should read the poem as divinely inspired. There, the poet characterises his poem as a spontaneous expression of piety in response to the divine presence: *nam primum limen eius Hercules Surrentinus aperit, quem in litore tuo consecratum, statim ut videram, his versibus adoravi* – ‘For its threshold is opened by Hercules of Surrentum; as soon as I saw him consecrated on your shore, I paid him homage with these verses.’

⁴¹ *Georg.* 3.12-16: see p. 117-18 and p. 125 above.

⁴² On the impossibility of placing the fragment within a certain book or context of the *Aetia* see Harder (2012), 908-9.

⁴³ Thomas (1983). He himself stresses the speculative nature of his arguments.

Although the passage is so fragmentary as to be untranslatable, the vocabulary suggests that Callimachus focusses on the workmanship of a number of temples, quite possibly different (phases of) temples of Apollo at Delphi (Λητο[ῖ]δ, 7).⁴⁴ Apparently one of the temples was ‘improvised’ on the spot (ἔξ αὐτοσχεδίας, 3), there are workmen (or do they not yet exist, as Harder thinks?) who smooth (λειαινουσι, 2) stone (?), and something, possibly one of the temples, is described by the adjectives μελιχρός (6, in the comparative or superlative) and ἀκριβές (7). Although there is certainly no clear indication of a poetic temple-metaphor in the text as it stands, the expressions used here by Callimachus to describe architecture are also attested in literary-theoretical or poetological contexts, and μελιχρός is in fact used only twice more in the extant oeuvre of Callimachus, both times in passages setting out Callimachus’ aesthetic programme.⁴⁵ The passage is even more appropriate as a potential model for *Silvae* 3.1 than Thomas recognises, since Callimachus and Statius both deal with earlier and later phases of temples and the contrasting workmanship of these phases. As far as we can tell, Callimachus distinguishes between an earlier temple built ἔξ αὐτοσχεδίας, and a later temple (or temples) described as more accomplished and artistically pleasing. I tentatively suggest, in the light of the fragmentary evidence, that *if* Statius is indeed referring to the Callimachean (possibly metapoetic) temples in fr. 118, his reason for doing so may well be to show that his own work unites un-Callimachean, fast, *ex tempore* composition with artistically satisfying result. Statius’ poems can be *both* μελιχρός *and* composed ἔξ αὐτοσχεδίας.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Pfeiffer (1949), *ad loc.*, Asper (2004), 187, and Harder (2012), 906-7 all connect the fragment with the temple of Apollo in Delphi (cf. Paus. 10.5.9-13, Str. 9.3.9): Harder (2012), 907). Pfeiffer (1949) *ad loc.* argues that Callimachus is comparing *two* temples: ‘Fort. de templo quodam, vel potius de duobus templis, narratur, priore “ex tempore” facto, altero ab architectis arte peritis aedificato.’ Harder (2012), 907 argues for *three* temples.

⁴⁵ *Aet.* fr. 1.16 Harder and *Epigr.* 27.2-4 Pf: Thomas (1983), 98 and n. 38. The occurrence of μελιχρός in this passage appears to me the strongest argument for a metapoetic reading. Harder (2012), who rejects a metaphorical reading, admits that ‘it is not easy to see what this word must refer to in a context of building’ (910 *ad* 118.6).

⁴⁶ For similar modifications of Callimachean poetic metaphors see below, p. 162 and especially n. 74. The link between *Silvae* 3.1 and the *Aetia* appears particularly strong. Laguna (2002), 129 *ad* 2 interprets the reference to *causas* (3.1.2) and *exordia* (3.1.49) as generic markers of aetiological poetry, but the use of the word *causa* can also recall the title of Callimachus’ *Aetia* more specifically: cf. *Ov. Fast.* 1.1 and Green (2004), 27-8. Statius may be inviting us to read the poem as a response to the *Aetia*: the close thematic links (on which see also Thomas (1983), 104-5; note especially the mention of Molorchus in *Silv.* 3.1.29) are offset by a contrasting poetic aesthetic.

The theme of speed is most pervasive in *Silvae* 4.3, the poem praising the construction of the *Via Domitiana*. The theme there is no longer exclusively linked to construction – it has spread to different areas and elements of the poem. The stress on the fast construction of the road links this poem to 1.1 and 3.1. The description of the physical construction suggests feverish activity: *o quantae pariter manus laborant* (49) is followed by *hi ... hi... illi ...hi* (50-5), indicating that work is progressing in many different places at the same time. The theme of divine inspiration as the reason for faster construction (and poetic production) is recalled during the appearance of the river god Volturnus: his divine presence possibly facilitates the completion of a stretch of the road, which is hyperbolically described as *marmoratus* (95-6).⁴⁷ However, the main theme of the poem is the speed of travel which the newly constructed road allows. The contrast between the slow and laborious progress on the old road and the freshly gained travelling speed on the new one is stressed throughout the poem.⁴⁸ Not only construction, but also travel along a road is an extremely well-established poetic metaphor – there may be a connection between the fast travel and fast poetic composition.⁴⁹ Finally, the fast-moving hendecasyllabic metre commonly indicates fast movement, and could here mimic poetically the speed of travel and/or the speed of construction.⁵⁰ In 4.3, the speed of construction, transport, and poetic composition are thus bound together in a nexus of imagery. The fast movement on the road functions as a metaphor for rapid poetic composition, and is also itself metaphorically indicated by the fast-moving metre and the speed of construction. Speed forms the centre around which poetic praise for road, emperor and poet revolves.

⁴⁷ For the idea that divine presence facilitates construction, see Vollmer (1898), 458 *ad loc.* Coleman (1988), 126-7 *ad loc.* points out that there is no direct expression of Volturnus' influence in the text. The interpretation of the passage (*se levarat / ingenti plaga marmorata dorso*) is contested. Coleman (1988) takes *plaga* as a stretch of road, *marmoratus* as hyperbole for 'paved'.

⁴⁸ For example, before the new road was built, *nec cursus agiles, sed impeditum / tardabant iter orbitae tenaces...* (32-3), and the change in speed achieved by the building project is elaborated in the contrast of *hic quondam* (27) and *at nunc* (36). Words indicating speed abound (see e.g. *citus* in 101 and 110; *velox* in 39 and 103).

⁴⁹ For travelling along a road as a poetic process in Callimachus, see Wimmel (1960), 'Die Symbolgruppen des Weges', 103-11 and Asper (1997), 21-107, extensively on Callimachus and his predecessors. In Latin poetry cf. e.g. Hor. *Epist.* 1.19.20-1, Lucr. 1.925-6, where the point of the metaphor is walking on previously untrodden ground. The common charioteer image also implies that the chariot is travelling along a poetic road, cf. e.g. Verg. *Georg.* 2.541-2, Prop. 2.10.2, Ov. *Ars am.* 3.467-8.

⁵⁰ Coleman (1988), 105, Morgan (2000), 114-19, Newlands (2002), 309.

Sound

The second prominent theme of Statius' descriptions of constructions is the noise that accompanies building. Unlike speed, noise seems a surprising choice for a panegyric poem. It is an undeniably realistic feature, but must surely have been one of the side effects of construction that annoyed and irritated people, and that one would not want them to think about when viewing the finished product.⁵¹ One reason for the prominence of sound and noise in all three poems is the metapoetic potential of the theme, which Statius exploits in two different ways to reflect on the poetics of the *Silvae*.

Firstly, the sound of building and the 'sound' produced by poetry are related to each other in terms of their range of impact, especially in poems 1.1 and 4.3. In *Silvae* 1.1, the shift from the contemplation of the statue to its production brings with it a switch from one sense-perception to another. In the ecphrastic description of the equestrian statue's position and appearance in the first 60 lines the pertinent experience is the visual. When the focus shifts to the statue's manufacture, a different sense-experience takes over: (1.1.63-70)

strepit ardua pulsu	63
machina; continuus septem per culmina Martis	
it fragor et magnae vincit vaga murmura Romae.	65
ipse locis custos ...	66
innumeros aeris sonitus et verbere crudo	68
ut sensit mugire Forum, movet horrida sancto	
ora situ meritaque caput venerabile quercu.	70

The lofty crane rumbles as it is set in motion, and an incessant din runs through Mars' seven hills, drowning the diffuse noises of great Rome. The guardian of the place in person ... when he hears the countless clashes of bronze and the Forum resounding with harsh blows raises a visage stark in holy squalor and a head sanctified by well-earned wreath of oak.

⁵¹ Conversely, if one were trying to discredit the monument or building activities, one might stress noise: see especially Pliny's criticism of the din caused by Domitianic building activities (Plin. *Pan.* 51). Tib. 2.3.47-8 also refers to the *tumultus* of transporting building materials in a passage on the corrupting influence of *praeda*. Juvenal complains about the noise of waggons and the dangers of transportation to the building sites of Rome: Juv. 3.236-8, 254-61, cf. also Hor. *Epist.* 2.2.72-3.

The reference to the loud sounds of construction offers the poet a way of reflecting on the potential impact of his own poetry. The sound of the building site, travelling far and wide through the city, metaphorically suggests Statius' own poetry. The sound announces the presence of construction works long before they come into view. The impact of the monument is communicated far beyond its immediate surroundings not only through the sound of the construction works, but also through its poetic recreation by Statius. This interpretation is supported by the fact that Curtius, raised by the sounds of construction, greets the statue as follows (74-75): *salve, magnorum proles genitorque deorum, / **auditum longe** numen mihi.* – 'Hail, offspring and begetter of great gods, deity that I have heard (of) *longe*.' *Auditum longe mihi* can be understood, with Shackleton-Bailey, as 'known to me by distant report'⁵² but following directly upon a passage which dwells quite literally on sensations of hearing, it might also be a play on the way in which the sounds of construction/the poem announce the fame of the ruler before one even lays eye on the statue ('heard from afar', i.e. from deep under water). The statue is visible only in the forum, but its 'sound' (both real and poetic) can be heard throughout and even underneath the city.⁵³

In 4.3, sound is established as a key theme of the poem in the opening lines (quoted above, p. 143). The impact of the sound clearly surpasses that described in 1.1. The reach of the sound described in 1.1.64-5 (*continuus septem per culmina Martis / **it fragor***) is picked up and outdone by 4.3.62 (***it longus medias fragor** per urbes*). While in 1.1 the *fragor* filled the seven hills, now it fills the cities along the road. The fame of the builder and his poet spread simultaneously. The single (divine)

⁵² Shackleton Bailey (2003), 37.

⁵³ This interpretation of the sound of construction is also supported by the fact that Statius regularly speaks of his poetry as 'sound' in the sense of poetry presented orally or as song: see e.g. the transition between his song and that of the Sibyl in 4.3.119-20 and 141-4. On the emphasis on oral culture in the *Silvae* see Coleman (2008), 30; on Statius as *vates* see Lovatt (2007), 146-8. Contrasting passages where the reference is clearly to *written* poetry are rarer (cf. *Silv.* 2.1.17-18; see Coleman (2008), 30 on the scarcity of references to writing in the *Silvae*). Nauta (2008), 171 discusses 4.8.35-41, where the illusion of singing and lyre-playing simply coexists with the realities of commissioned writing. Since the *Silvae* refer to themselves both as song and as text, these references are difficult to interpret in establishing whether a particular poem was performed, presented in writing or both. Some of Statius' poems appear to have been presented orally (at least in a preliminary version) before being published in writing, while others were immediately offered in writing (see in detail Nauta (2002), 256-77 and 356-64 on oral presentation, 277-90 and 365-74 on presentation in writing). In any case, the oral performance and recitation as well as the poetic illusion of song, lyre-playing and vatic utterance create a strong sense of the *Silvae* as poetry that can be *heard*, and this concept may also lie behind Statius' use of the metaphor of the sound of construction.

listener of 1.1 (Curtius) is multiplied in 4.3.62-71 (Gaurus, Massicus, Cyme, the Litrernian marsh, Savo, Volturnus). The mention of sound itself is multiplied as well: the *innumeros sonitus* (68-9) in 1.1 are matched by *immanis sonus* (2), *sonant* (4), and *miratur sonitum* (65) in 4.3.⁵⁴ Again, the poet marshals the fame of the builder also for his poetic achievement: just as the audience of the construction achievement is no longer confined to the city of Rome but extends to all cities along the road, so the audience of this poetry, too, will be enlarged, and his poetic fame will travel not only through all of Rome but far beyond. This reading of 1.1 and 4.3 suggests that the sound produced by construction can metaphorically be related to the poetry produced by the poet. Statius uses this relation to reflect on the difference in range of influence between visual and aural sensations and to stress the ability of his poetry to reach a larger audience than the finished monument alone.

The second way in which Statius exploits the connection between construction noise and poetic sound is related not to the range of impact but rather to aesthetics. This may surprise, since the sound-descriptions chosen by the poet appear deliberately unpleasant. Expressions such as *strepere*, *fragor*, *rugire* or *immanis sonus* suggest sounds that are violent and disruptive, sounds one would not enjoy hearing. How could this tally with a metapoetic dimension of the sound of construction?

In the *Aetia* prologue, Callimachus repeatedly refers to the desired sound of poetry. Bad poetry is indicated by sounds that are loud and unpleasant to the ear. The braying of asses (θήρουβον ... ὄνων, 30) or thundering (βροντᾶν, 20) metaphorically represent the bloated and bombastic poetry that he rejects in favour of the well-crafted. The metaphor is subsequently modified and adapted. In the poetological pronouncements of Latin texts, loud and ugly sounds also often function as an image for undesirable poetry, though not necessarily (as for Callimachus) 'bad' poetry. Instead, loudness often comes to be connected with the kind of poetry that the poet is excusing himself from writing at this point: usually epic, often in a

⁵⁴ Perhaps the phrase *miratur sonitum* also hints at a competition, already implied in 1.1, between the visual impact of a physical monument and the auditory impact of its construction, as well as the poetry about it. The verb *mirari* is usually applied to visual sensation (when used in the meaning 'to look at in wonder and awe' (OLD 3)), but here, it is the sound rather than the appearance of the road that is marvelled at. Cf. also Newlands (2002), 296, on *miratur* 'as an expression of the aural rather than the visual imagination'.

panegyric mould.⁵⁵ These (mock-)modest refusals of too-large or too-difficult poetic tasks become formalised in Latin poetry as so-called *recusationes*.⁵⁶

I suggest that Statius, in the face of convention and ‘Callimacheanism’, tries to justify a rhetoric of loud, powerful, and overwhelming sound. Loud sound, like fast poetic production, is part of his formulation of a bold poetic aesthetics for the *Silvae*. Just as the greatness of the building projects he describes causes them to be particularly noisy, so the greatness of Statius’ poetic subjects justifies loud and thundering poetry.⁵⁷

A link between the noise of construction and the sound of Statian poetry is hinted at through the connections noted above in terms of the range of its impact. But in *Silvae* 3.1, Statius also makes the link more explicit with regard to the aesthetics of sound. In 3.1, Hercules appears not only as a temple-builder (who makes a large amount of noise) but also as a poet. In lines 91-102, trying to convince Pollius Felix of the wisdom of building him a new temple, he provides a short version of Statius’ earlier poem for Pollius Felix, *Silvae* 2.2. Hercules’ tendentious abbreviated version of this poem especially stresses that Pollius’ house proves his prowess as a builder, and that there can be no reason for him to neglect the god’s abode in comparison.⁵⁸ Hercules as poetic figure is brought into the poet’s traditional invocation of the Muse that introduces the aetiology of the new temple (3.1.49-51):

Sed quanam subiti, veneranda exordia templi
dic age, Calliope. socius tibi grande sonabit
Alcides tensoque modos imitabitur arcu. 50

⁵⁵ For example, Calliope in Prop. 3.3.40-2 uses the sound of horses and the blaring of the trumpet as an illustration of the poetry Propertius is not supposed to write. The loud, ugly sound is there presented as a violation of aesthetic principles, but also made more specifically appropriate to the rejection of epic on warlike themes.

⁵⁶ The authoritative treatment on the Augustan poets is still Wimmel (1960), although his brief discussion of Statius’ use of *recusatio* (316-19) as ‘biedere Gesten’ (319) does not do justice to the complexities of Statian aesthetics. On Flavian *recusationes* see Nauta (2006).

⁵⁷ In *Aet.* fr. 1.29-30 Harder, Callimachus says of himself that he sings among those who love the sound of the cicada. The sound of the cicada is invoked for its special acoustic quality (called λυγός, 29), but it is also a quieter sound than the braying of asses or the thundering of Zeus. Perhaps Callimachus also implies that the sound of the cicada is more ‘exclusive’, since only a few select people can hear it at the same time. In that case, Statius also differs from Callimachus in that respect, approving of sound (and poetry) with the largest possible reach.

⁵⁸ For the verbal and thematic parallels between 2.2 and 3.1, see Laguna (1992), 161-3 *ad* 97b-102a. For example, Statius’ own pronouncement *non innumeras valeam species cultusque locorum Pieriis aequare modis* (2.2.36-42) is shortened by Hercules to *vix opera enumerem* in 3.3.102.

But come, Calliope, tell of the reverend origins of this sudden shrine.
Alcides will accompany you with loud (grand, powerful) sound, and
make mock music with his taut bowstring.

Hercules, companion and accompanist of the Muse Calliope,⁵⁹ is humorously made to intervene in matters of poetic aesthetics. While standard *recusationes* reject loud sound, this one is inverted to offer a justification for loudness. Hercules himself intervenes, and being Hercules and using his bow as a musical instrument, the sound he produces is not small and subtle but *grandis*: loud, large, powerful, elevated. In *recusationes*, deities usually intervene to suggest to the poet a smaller genre or a more refined sound, but Hercules' intervention does the opposite: it calls the poet to create something larger and louder.⁶⁰ However, Hercules does not only sound *grande* in a poetic sense, but also as a builder. The inverted *recusatio* is recalled during the most extensive description of Hercules' construction activity and the noise it causes: *non tam grande sonat ...* (130).⁶¹ Hercules' activities as a builder and as a poet explicitly link the loud sound of construction to Statius' poetics of loudness.⁶²

In *Silvae* 3.1 an important intertext for Statius' sound-descriptions also comes into sharper focus, indicative of the ambition connected to the aesthetics of loud sound. Already in *Silvae* 1.1.3-4, the speaker asked (of the statue of Domitian): *Siculis an conformata caminis / effigies lassum Steropen Brontenque reliquit?*⁶³ Brontes and Steropes are the names of two of the Cyclopes, who are usually said to work in Vulcan's Sicilian workshop. Their most prominent literary appearance is in *Aeneid*

⁵⁹ On the association of Hercules with the Muses and literary testimonies for the *Aedes Herculis Musarum* see Laguna (1992), 147 *ad* 50b-1.

⁶⁰ For a similarly humorous divine intervention as part of a *recusatio*, cf. *Ov. Am.* 1.1, which features Cupid stealing a foot and offers this as an excuse for the avoidance of epic. Hercules' music on his bowstring justifies the 'loud' rhetoric of the *Silvae* in the same humorous way in which Cupid in the *Amores* justifies the writing of elegiacs about matters of love.

⁶¹ Laguna (1992), 172 *ad* 130, van Dam (2006), 204.

⁶² A similar link is perhaps suggested through the expression *magno pectore* in 3.1.21: ostensibly, Hercules there moves boulders by pushing against them with his broad chest, but the expression may also be suggestive of (anti-Callimachean) sound: contrast Propertius 2.1.40: *intonet angusto pectore Callimachus*. Laguna (1992), 147 *ad* 50b-1 also links both *grande sonabit* and *magno pectore* to the loud voice of Hercules. Voltumnus is another god who imports into the poem his own (un-Callimachean) sound. His speech is introduced by the phrase *raucis talia faucibus redundat* (4.3.71): the river comically features a hoarse throat (*fauces* can refer to both throat and river-mouth, Coleman (1988), 122 *ad loc.*) while Smolenaars (2006), 229, rightly suggests that *redundat* is a play on excessiveness.

⁶³ See Newlands (2002), 53, on 1.1.3-4 and the epic significance of the Cyclopes there.

8, where they help the god to forge the shield of Aeneas (*Aen.* 8.424-53).⁶⁴ In *Silvae* 3.1, the Cyclopes feature in the cluster of sound-descriptions that accompany Hercules' construction activities (3.1.125-34):

hic pater ipse loci ...	125
... fodit, ditesque Caprae viridesque resultant Taurubulae et terris ingens redit aequoris echo.	128
non tam grande sonat motis incudibus Aetne cum Brontes Steropesque ferit, nec maior ab antris Lemniacis fragor est ubi flammeus aegida caelat Mulciber et castis exornat Pallada donis.	130

Here the father of the place ... is himself digging, and rich Capri and verdant Taurubulae reverberate and the sea's mighty echo returns to the land. Not so loud does Aetna resound when the anvils shake at Brontes' and Steropes' blows, nor greater is the din from Lemnos' caverns even when fiery Mulciber embosses an aegis, adorning Pallas with chaste gifts.

The parallels between this passage and *Aeneid* 8 are evident. The phrase *Brontesque Steropesque* is repeated exactly from 8.425, the epithet *Lemniacis* as referring to Vulcan recalls *Aen.* 8.454 (*pater ... Lemnius*), and the forging of weapons for Pallas in *Aen.* 8.435-8 is recalled by *castis exornat Pallada donis*.⁶⁵

However, the sound produced by Hercules is said to outdo even the thundering of the Cyclopes, and by analogy, the sound produced by Statius in relating it is louder than the 'thundering' of Vergil's famous epic scene of forging. Phrases such as *non tam grande sonat* or *nec maior ... fragor* make it clear that Statius' temple poem is claiming not to imitate, but to trump the epic Cyclopes' sound.⁶⁶ The word *maior* in

⁶⁴ On this scene see Egelhaaf-Gaiser (2008). They are referred to as *Brontes Steropesque* in *Aen.* 8.425.

⁶⁵ The passage in *Aeneid* 8 is also itself reminiscent of a simile from Verg. *Georg.* 4.170-5, and the close of *Silv.* 3.1.130 recalls Verg. *Georg.* 4.173 (*gemit impositis incudibus Aetna*): Laguna (1992), 172. *Brontes* might also evoke the Callimachean $\beta\rho\omicron\nu\tau\tilde{\alpha}\nu$ (*Aet.* fr. 1.20 Harder).

⁶⁶ Laguna (1992), 172 *ad* 130 ('el tono épico') and van Dam (2006), 204: Statius 'surpass(es) the *Aeneid* in one of its most thundering passages'. Van Dam discusses imitation of epic models in the *Silvae*, on epic and the *Silvae* see also Gibson (2006a).

particular often carries overtones of generic ascent, and emphasises the play on epic ambitions in this passage.⁶⁷

In Statius' earlier epic poem about the Seven against Thebes, the *Thebaid*, the Cyclopes also appear, having forged (together with the Telchines and Vulcan himself) Harmonia's fateful necklace (*Theb.* 2.273-4).⁶⁸ However, the Cyclopes are there said to forge the necklace *docti quamquam maiora* (*Theb.* 2.273) – 'although they were trained for bigger projects'. In his epic, Statius' stance of self-disparagement and inferiority compared to the *maiores* of epic, Homer and Vergil, is visualised through the smallness of the necklace, demeaning to the Cyclopes who forged the shields of Achilles and Aeneas.⁶⁹ In the ostensibly 'small-scale' *Silvae*, on the other hand, Hercules' construction activity is not only equal but actually superior to the sound of Vergilian epic, contributing to Statius' 'forging' of a new aesthetics of loudness.

The sound that accompanies building contributes, like the speed at which construction is executed, to the configuration of a new poetics suited to the panegyric of the *Silvae*. Statius humorously responds to Callimachean strictures against loud, noisy poetry: in the *Silvae*, 'thundering', the daring use of fulsome rhetoric and unrestrained hyperbole, is an integral feature, and one that can be expressed, defined and justified through the use of the construction metaphor.

Managing the Poetic River

Descriptions of engineering and interventions in nature, too, can offer the poet a way of influencing the reader's view of the finished poem. This becomes especially clear in poem 4.3, where the manipulation of the river Volturnus not only conveys the emperor's victory over nature, but also contributes to Statius' reflections on the aesthetics of the *Silvae*.

The river's transformation as a result of Domitian's construction works activates the famous and influential Callimachean comparison of bad poetry to a dirty river

⁶⁷ For *maior* with overtones of generic or literary ascent, cf. *Silv.* 4.4.96 (and e.g. *Aen.* 7.44-5, *Ecl.* 4.1). For *minor* and generic descent, cf. 4.4.3.

⁶⁸ The *Thebaid* seems to have been published before January 93: see Coleman (1988), xvi-xvii, cf. n. 2 above on the dating of the *Silvae*.

⁶⁹ Feeney (1991), 363-4.

(Callim. *Hymn* 2.108-12). It has so far been argued that Voltumnus' transformation, as it is described in 4.3.73-94, turns the river into an image of Callimachean poetics.⁷⁰ I disagree with this reading. Voltumnus is not turned from a muddy river into the fresh and untouched fountain of Callim. *Hymn* 2.110-12 or *Epigr.* 28 Pf. Instead, the river which was previously *pulvereus* and *gravis caeno* (88) and *turbidus minaxque* (76) is turned into a channelled, proper stream (*amnis esse coepi*, 80), which can proudly claim (4.3.92-4):

sed talis ferar ut nitente cursu
tranquillum mare proximumque possim
puro gurgite provocare Lirim.

... but so I flow that I can challenge the smooth sea with my shining
course and neighbouring Liris with my limpid stream.

The river has been cleared of the debris it was carrying, and it has been tamed, but nowhere does the text claim that the river is now narrow, as Newlands suggests.⁷¹ In fact, Statius makes it explicit that the river is *not* narrow: *limite me colis beato* (85).⁷² Earlier in the poem, it was precisely small ponds that were unwelcome (54) and lesser streams (*fluvii minores*) that were diverted in the course of the road construction.⁷³ Voltumnus even invites comparison between himself and the sea, another metaphor for bad poetry in Callimachus (*Hymn* 2.106). The river represents exactly the kind of poetry that Statius is creating in the *Silvae*, poetry that deliberately *departs* from the Callimachean stylistic ideals, although it still proudly claims for itself stylistic purity and brilliance (*nitente*, 92).⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Newlands (2002), 306-9, Smolenaars (2006), 231-3, Gibson (2006b), xxvi.

⁷¹ Newlands (2002), 306: 'Voltumnus ... has become a safe, narrow stream'.

⁷² For *beatus* here and elsewhere in the *Silvae* meaning *locuples*, see TLL 2.1918.20-24.

⁷³ Perhaps *minores* also hints at the generic inferiority of the Callimachean 'clean little spring-poetry' compared to the strong and broad river of the *Silvae*? Cf. the *maior*-rhetoric of sound in 3.1.131-2 (p. 160-1 and n. 67 above).

⁷⁴ A similar reinterpretation of 'Callimachean' water metaphors is found several times in the *Silvae*: see e.g. *Silv.* 1.5.23-29 (water of the Roman aqueducts as poetic fount) with Newlands (2002), 215-16, and 4.7.11-12 with Johannsen (2006), 312-13. Wimmel (1960), 318, scornfully talks of Statius' 'kritiklose und ungehemmte Vermischung von Zügen des Großen und des Reduzierten', correctly identifying the 'Vermischung' but rejecting a poetic design behind it. The taming of the Voltumnus seems to have its counterpart in *Theb.* 4.823-30, where a previously clear stream is muddied by the Argive soldiers, a scene linked by Parkes (2012) to the 'narrative's return to traditional martial epic' (xxiii, see also 323 *ad* 824-7 and McNelis (2007), 87). This reinterpretation of stylistic excellence in 4.3 is also further developed through the adaptation of another Callimachean poetic-polemic metaphor, that of the busy highway (Callim.

The Wood for the Trees: *silvae* in the *Silvae*

The domination and manipulation of nature is a key theme of the *Silvae*, and one intimately connected with narratives of construction, as already discussed in section 2 of this chapter.⁷⁵ To conclude my investigation of poetic construction in the *Silvae*, I shall focus on one specific aspect of this manipulation of nature: the manipulation of trees and woods, *silvae*, and the special relevance of this theme in a collection of poems entitled *Silvae*.⁷⁶ Newlands notes: ‘It is not surprising, perhaps, that in a collection entitled *Silvae*, “Woods”, the domination of nature should be an important theme.’⁷⁷ But there is a more specific connection to be detected between poetic and physical *silvae*. Considering how self-consciously other aspects of the construction process are shaped to relate to poetic aesthetics, those stages of the process which actually involve a manipulation of *silvae* deserve the reader’s special attention.⁷⁸

The precise meaning of the title *Silvae* has been the subject of some debate.⁷⁹ Two different basic meanings of the word *silva* lead to two substantially different

Aet. fr. 1.25-8 Harder, see Cameron (1995), 358). The point of 4.3 is praise of a busy highway, and Statius encourages reflection on the metapoetic relevance of the topic and on the aesthetic differences between Callimachean and his own poetics. He alludes to the highway metaphor in 78, where Voltumnus proudly claims: *iam pontem fero perviusque calcor*, recalling the use of *στεῖβειν* in Callim. *Aet.* fr. 1.26 Harder. It will be clear that I take a different view to Smolenaars (2006), who argues for an ‘obvious clash between subject matter and poetics in the “Via Domitiana”’ (233).

⁷⁵ See p. 144-6 above. A basic treatment of the theme in the *Silvae* (and Pliny’s *Letters*) is Pavlovskis (1973), who analyses these texts as expressions of enthusiasm for man’s skill in domesticating nature.

⁷⁶ The title is first used in the *praefatio* of the third book (3.ep.7: *tertius ... Silvarum nostrarum liber*), but its use there suggests that readers are expected already to be familiar with it: *Silvarum libri* may have been the *titulus* of the book rolls of books 1 and 2: Johannsen (2006), 305, Bright (1980), 20-1.

⁷⁷ Newlands (2002), 197. Cf. 100, where she is more specific in her analysis of the word *silvis* at 1.2.154.

⁷⁸ The construction poems 3.1 and 4.3 contain a particular cluster of occurrences of the word: *silvae* feature three times in 3.1 and twice in 4.3 – a further indication of the special status and importance of the construction poems for Statius’ poetic self-fashioning. There is only one further occurrence of *silvae* in each book 3 and book 4 (3.3.98, 4.4.90, see also 5.1.24, 5.1.154, 5.2.70, 5.2.139).

⁷⁹ Johannsen (2006), 305-6 judiciously sets out the debate. Wray (2007) offers another recent discussion of the semantics and significance of ‘*Silvae*’, relating the title to the Statian ‘poetics of genius’. I largely draw on Johannsen’s discussion of the title in what follows. See also the clear explanation of the semantic range of *silvae* in Coleman (1988), xxii-xxiv. For a selection of the

interpretations of the title. On the one hand, the singular *silva* can function as the Latin equivalent of the Greek ὕλη, meaning ‘raw material’ or ‘subject matter’.⁸⁰ This basic meaning probably also lies behind the use of *silva* as a technical term for an orator’s rough or rapidly improvised draft, attested in Quint. 10.3.17. On the basis of this first meaning, the title *Silvae* may be understood to refer to the improvised character and rapid execution of the poems.⁸¹ On the other hand, *silva* can mean a ‘forest’ or a ‘wood’, a large group of trees.⁸² If this idea of ‘woods’ lies behind the title, then *Silvae* may also be understood as a collection of many different trees, i.e. a miscellaneous collection of single poems – appropriate, too, since the *Silvae* are made up of different occasional poems only combined into books at a later stage.⁸³ It has plausibly been suggested that both meanings coexist in the title.⁸⁴ I would even argue that the slippage between *silva* as ‘material’ and as ‘tree’ is exploited by Statius in his description of the use and manipulation of wood in construction.

Trees (*silvae*) in the *Silvae* form part of a poetic landscape. Even before the process of manipulation and construction begins, *silvae* are imbued with a special poetic significance. This self-consciously poetic and metaphorical relevance of the word *silvae* is established by its use in 2.7, a poem unrelated to construction, but very much concerned with poetry. It is an ode addressed to Lucan’s widow on his birthday, and contains an exhortation to the Muses, which eventually merges into an exhortation of nature (12-13): *docti largius evagentur amnes / et plus, Aoniae, virete, silvae* ... – ‘let learned rivers stream more copiously, and you, Aonian *silvae*, be greener ...’. The passage is concerned with poetic inspiration and its expression through nature. In being *docti*, the rivers are clearly marked as the (Heliconian)

(extensive) bibliography on the significance of the title, see Nauta (2002), 252 n. 7 and Johannsen (2006), 305 n. 171.

⁸⁰ OLD s.v. *silva* 5(b). See esp. Cic. *Orat* 3.12 (*silva* as the raw material of the orator), and further Hinds (1998) 12.

⁸¹ For a defence of this interpretation of *Silvae*, see Nauta (2002), 252-4.

⁸² OLD s.v. *silva* 1(a).

⁸³ In favour of this interpretation e.g. van Dam (1984), 4 with n. 41-2. On the fashion of naming poetry collections after groupings in the natural world, see Newlands (2002), 36, Bright (1980), 40-2.

⁸⁴ Johannsen (2006), 305 with n. 173, Coleman (1988), xxii-iv, although for Coleman the aspect of miscellany is clearly the stronger, Newlands (2011), 6-7 and Newlands (2002), 36-7, who also interprets the ambiguity of *silvae* in light of the echo of Verg. *Ecl.* 4.3, where Vergil uses *silvae* to designate his pastoral poetry: ‘The title *Silvae* thus in fact conflates two of the major meanings of *silva* / *silvae*. Virgilian pastoral seen from the perspective of the late first century AD as material to be reworked ...’ (37).

rivers of poetic inspiration.⁸⁵ But the *silvae*, too, are Aonian, they grow in the region of Mount Helicon in Boeotia.⁸⁶ The exhortation to the *silvae* may here be understood not only as a reference to the remit of the Muses, but also as an appeal to Statius' own poetry to mourn Lucan appropriately.⁸⁷ Furthermore, Lucan himself also composed *Silvae*, of which he completed ten books (now lost),⁸⁸ and the word may also serve to acknowledge Lucan as a model for Statius' own *Silvae*.

The double function of *silvae* as elements of a natural and a poetic landscape is also relevant for a passage in *Silvae* 3.1. In 3.1.148, the completion of the temple of Hercules is celebrated with Greek-style athletic games (*fortibus ardens / fumat harena sacris*, 139-40). The entire Campanian landscape becomes spectator to the games (3.1.147-53):

spectat et Icario nemorosus palmitē Gaurus,	147
silvaeque quae fixam pelago Nesida coronat,	
et placidus Limon, omenque Euploea carinis	
et Lucrina Venus, Phrygioque e vertice Graias	150
addisces, Misene, tubas, ridetque benigna	
Parthenope gentile sacrum nudosque virorum	
certatus et parva suae simulacra coronae.	

Gaurus, too, watches, wooded with Icarian vine, and the wood that crowns Nesis fixed fast in the sea, and calm Limon, and Euploea, omen for ships, and Lucrine Venus; and from your Phrygian height, Misenus, you shall learn Grecian trumpets, while Parthenope smiles benignly at the rites of her people, the contests of nude athletes and the small likenesses of her own crown.

The *silva* here joins the other features of the Campanian landscape in viewing the athletic contests.⁸⁹ The Campanian landscape is traditionally also a literary

⁸⁵ For *doctus* meaning 'poetical' and the word's frequent appearance in 2.7, a 'poem about poetry as well as about a dead poet', see van Dam (1984), 457 *ad* 2 and 462 *ad* 12-5.

⁸⁶ Van Dam (1984), 462 *ad loc.* points out that the adjective *Aoniae* carries the meaning 'poetical', comparing 4.4.90: *silva Heliconide*.

⁸⁷ Johannsen (2006), 306.

⁸⁸ We learn this in an ancient *vita* of Lucan by the 6th century grammarian Vacca: *extant eius et alii complures ut ... Silvarum X*. The *vita* can be found in Haskins (1887), xiv-xv.

⁸⁹ Stärk (1995), 138: 'wie überdimensionale Ehrengäste sitzen die Orte im Naturtheater des Golfes'.

landscape, already before Statius and especially in the *Silvae*.⁹⁰ As Hinds argues, ‘anywhere that Statius directs his ephrastic gaze around the Bay of Naples, he will find himself invoking names charged not just with his own history but with Vergilian literary history, and nowhere more so than *Parthenope* itself’.⁹¹ Statius inserts into this Vergilian literary landscape, which contains Cape Misenum as well as Parthenope, a deceptively inconspicuous *silva* – refashioning the literary landscape of Campania to contain his own landmark, and refashioning himself not only as a mere admirer and emulator of Campanian poetic tradition who sits by the tomb of Vergil (*Silv.* 4.4.51-5) but also as an active participant in its literary landscaping.

For Statius, *silvae* constitute part of a meaningful landscape, both geographical and literary. But what happens when *silvae* are manipulated in the course of construction or when humans intervene in this landscape? How does the poet’s presentation of human interventions in nature, and specifically manipulation of *silvae*, relate to the poetics of the *Silvae*?

In both 3.1 and 4.3, trees are felled as part of the construction works described. In 3.1, *silvae* are cut down when building works are just beginning (3.1.118-20):

Innumerae coiere manus: his caedere silvas
et levare trabes, illis immergere curae
fundamenta solo.

Innumerable hands assemble. Some take on the felling of the woods and the smoothing of the beams, others the sinking of foundations in the soil.

The description of road building in 4.3 features a closely related passage (4.3.49-53):

O quantae pariter manus laborant!	49
hi caedunt nemus exuuntque montes,	50
hi ferro scolopas ⁹² trabesque levant,	
illi saxa ligant opusque texunt	

⁹⁰ See Hinds (2001), 246-54. On Campania as a ‘geistige Landschaft’, see Stärk (1995), esp. 134-43 on the *Silvae*.

⁹¹ Hinds (2001), 250.

⁹² *scolopas* (a transliterated version of the Greek σκόλοπας, ‘stakes’) is Nisbet’s conjecture for the transmitted *scopulos*, difficult in a line concerned with timber: Coleman (1988), 116-17, *ad loc.*

cocto pulvere sordidoque tofo ...

Oh, how many hands work in unison! Some fell the forest and strip the mountains, some with iron smooth stakes and beams; others bind stones together, weaving the work with baked sand and grimy tufa;

Even though this second passage does not contain the word *silvae*, the parallels between both passages forge a link between them. After a similar introductory marker (*innumerae ... manus* and *quantae manus*), *caedere* and *levare* occur in both passages to denote the same activities, which both also feature a distribution of labour between *hi* and *illi*. In both passages diction that can relate to poetry as well as construction surrounds the description of wood-working, signalling to the reader the metapoetic potential of the process: *cura* (3.1.119), too, can be used in a literary context to refer to poetic care and diligence,⁹³ while in 4.3.52-3, the fixing together of stones by means of cement is described through a weaving metaphor (*opusque texunt*, 52), one of the most common metapoetic figures.⁹⁴ Tree felling itself as a means of gathering construction material is a well-known epic motif, and has, as already mentioned in chapter 3, often been read as an indication that the author is conscious of venturing into poetic territory with a long tradition and of using earlier literary works as ‘material’ for his own poetry.⁹⁵ In *Silvae* 3.1 and 4.3, the process of tree-felling does not *per se* reflect a foray into the literary tradition, but it does plausibly relate to the gathering of material (ὕλη) for construction – and composition. In a second step, this woody material is then worked on and refined: both passages use the word *levare* to describe the action of smoothing the raw wood, but *levare* can also be used to refer to the smoothing and cultivation of

⁹³ TLL 4.1462.44-1463.70.

⁹⁴ On weaving and poetry, see Scheid/Svenbro (1996). The fitting together of individual elements for the construction of road and poetry is also visualised by the text: 50, 51 and 54 begin with *hi*, lines 46-8 all end in dative plural forms (*saxis ... coactis ... gomfis*), and this effect is repeated by the line endings *laborant ... levant ... texunt* (49-52). The words visualise the alignment of materials to form the sides of the road. See Morgan (2000), 114-5 on the hendecasyllabic verses looking like a road on the page.

⁹⁵ Cutting down trees to clear a site is an integral part of the construction process, but it can also function as a metaphor for the manipulation of literary heritage. In his analysis of Vergil’s description of Aeneas’ tree-cutting in *Aen.* 6.177-82 and its links with the Ennian model, *Ann.* 175-9, Hinds (1998), 12-14 demonstrates how the action of felling trees is closely associated with the concept of carving out for oneself a place in the poetic heritage. Lucan’s descriptions of Caesar’s desecration of the grove in 3.432-45 and of the tree-felling in Brundisium (2.261-2) have also been interpreted as carrying metapoetic significance: Masters (1992), 26-8. See also p. 117 above.

literary style,⁹⁶ while the related adjective *levis* is commonly used to describe polished diction.⁹⁷

If this reading of the manipulation of wood is accepted, it can throw new light on the meaning of the title *Silvae* and on Statius' poetic ambitions. The reference to *silvae* as building material activates the interpretation of the title as 'rough drafts', but it is immediately made clear that raw material needs (and receives) smoothing and refining, an action which Statius implies not to have had time for in the prefaces.⁹⁸ Again, therefore, we find the poetic 'modesty' evinced in the prefaces substantially undercut by the *Silvae's* inherent poetics of construction.

A scrutiny of the manipulation of *silvae* also reveals how control over nature and poetic refinement are tied to each other in the *Silvae*. I discussed earlier how the taming of the river Volturnus turns him into an image of Statius' broad-stream poetics. In his speech of thanks, the river claims (4.3.79-80):

Qui terras rapere et rotare silvas
assueram, (pudet) amnis esse coepi.

I that was wont to carry off land and whirl⁹⁹ woods, begin (ah, shame!)
to be a river.

The river, tamed and poeticised (though not in the Callimachean mode), now no longer disorders (poetic?) *silvae*. The domestication of nature in the construction process is tied up with literary refinement. This connection between poetry and control over nature is also present in the myths of Orpheus and Amphion, who were able to move trees and stones respectively by means of their song.¹⁰⁰ Both are referred to explicitly several times in the construction poems and possibly also evoked implicitly in descriptions of the manipulation of trees and stones.¹⁰¹ The

⁹⁶ TLL 7.1237.64-5. Cf. Hor. *Epist.* 2.2.123: *luxuriantia compescet, nimis aspera sano / levabit cultu ... (poeta)*. Morgan (2000), 116, relates *levabit* (4.3.127) to the characteristics of the metre.

⁹⁷ For *levis* as applied to literary style, see TLL 7.1223.12-42, cf. e.g. Plin. *Ep.* 1.1.16: *inserit ... mollibus levibusque versibus duriusculos quosdam*.

⁹⁸ Statius especially stresses this aspect in the first *praefatio* (1.ep.12-15): see Johannsen (2006), 243-6.

⁹⁹ Cf. OLD s.v. *roto* 2(a) for *rotare* associated with uncontrolled, chaotic movement and disordered natural forces, in connection with fire, water or wind.

¹⁰⁰ See p. 141-2 above. On Amphion and control over nature, see also further ch. 5 below.

¹⁰¹ Explicit mentions in construction poems occur at 3.1.16-17 and 117, see also 2.2.60-2, also about Pollius Felix's building activities: *et tu saxa moves, et te nemora alta sequuntur*, on which see Hinds (2001), 243. An implicit evocation of Orphean/Amphionic miracle-working may be

connection forged in the *Silvae* between human intervention in nature and the writing of poetry is doubly efficient. On the one hand, the alignment of engineering with poetic activity is another means of stressing the morally acceptable, non-transgressive nature of the patron's or emperor's intervention in nature.¹⁰² On the other hand, Statius' own poetic activity and his mastery of the material is associated with the human triumphs over nature that his poetry describes.¹⁰³

A final manipulation of *silvae* occurs not in connection with the process of construction but with its ceremonial conclusion. At the close of 3.1, when the building of the temple has been completed, Hercules himself speaks in gratitude of Pollius' restoration of his temple. He praises the construction effort, but the poetic undertones of construction which run throughout the poem also resonate in this final speech: the temple that has been built will last forever (*templis numquam statuetur terminus aevi*, 180) – a brief recollection of the earlier allusions to *Georgics* 3 and the poetic temple envisaged there. The theme of taming nature, a feat accomplished both by Hercules and Pollius, is also recalled for the last time (*naturae deserta domas et vertis in usum / lustra habitata feris*, 168-9). To confirm his promises, Hercules finally proceeds to swear an oath on his own altar (4.3.184-6):

Sic ait, et tangens surgentem altaribus ignem
populeaque movens albertia tempora silva
et Styga et aetherii iuravit fulmina patris.

So he speaks, and touching the fire that rises from his altar and nodding his temples white with poplar leaves,¹⁰⁴ he swore by Styx and his heavenly father's thunderbolts.

found in 4.3.61: *fervent litora mobilesque silvae*, with Coleman (1988) *ad loc.*: 'perhaps ... a hint of Domitian as a second Orpheus', and Smolenaars (2006), 228 n. 8.

¹⁰² Tree-felling, especially, can have morally problematic connotations: Thomas (1988) has argued that tree-cutting is generally an ambivalent action, associated with violence and impiety in Vergil's *Georgics* and *Aeneid* and in the work of his epic successors. Cf. *Theb.* 6.84-117, where the cutting down of the grove for Opheltes' funeral is represented as an act of war and violence (110-13). The *Silvae* attempt a 'rehabilitation' of tree-cutting, freeing the process from its martial epic context and its sacrilegious connotations, and inserting it into the positive depiction of construction as a process beneficial to nature and to literary refinement.

¹⁰³ Cf. Hinds (2001), 244, on comparable tactics in *Silvae* 2.2: 'Statius uses *his* kind of capital ... to boost the value of Pollius' kind of capital, and also to increase his own by association'.

¹⁰⁴ *silva* is here unusually used in the singular to denote 'foliage', 'leaves': see *OLD* 3(a) and Johansen (2006), 306 n. 179.

Hercules is wearing a crown of poplar leaves, a head-dress usually worn by his priests. The *silva* here carries double significance. On the one hand, the *silva* has become the equivalent of poetic laurels, recalling familiar passages of poetic crowning as a closural motif of poetic works.¹⁰⁵ Hercules is crowned as a poet, since he earlier intervened in both architectural and poetic construction, plucking on his bowstring (51) and creating epic sound (128-35). Since he himself helped to shape the poetic *silva*, it forms an appropriate crown for him.¹⁰⁶ On the other hand, the crowning of Hercules with the *silva* also metaphorically reflects the fact that he has received *Silvae* 3.1 as a poem of praise. In the *praefatio* Statius had marked the poem as veneration of the god (*his versibus adoravi, Silv. 3.ep.9-10*), and it is now symbolically offered to the god in the shape of the *silva*.

This double interpretation is supported by the allusion of the *populea ... silva* to the songs of the *Salii* in Vergil's *Aeneid* (8.285-8):

tum Salii ad cantus incensa altaria circum
 populeis adsunt euincti tempora ramis,
 hic iuuenum chorus, ille senum, qui carmine laudes
 Herculeas et facta ferunt:

Then the *Salii* are present for their singing around the lit altars, having bound their temples with poplar leaves. Here is the choir of youths, there that of old men, who tell in their song the praise of Hercules and his deeds.

The *Salii* adorn themselves with boughs of poplar before they begin praising Hercules' deeds in song. In Statius' *Silvae*, Hercules *himself* is decorated with those poplar branches, because he has both been praised and also been the engineer of his own poetic praise.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. e.g. Hor. *Carm.* 3.30.15-16, with Nisbet/Rudd (2004) for further parallels.

¹⁰⁶ The section immediately preceding the crowning with the *populea silva* is also imagined as spoken by Hercules himself (4.3.166-83). According to Coleman (1988), xxii, Statius does not himself use *Silva* to refer to a single poem. In this case, however, *silva* is used as *totum pro parte*, meaning 'foliage', rather than 'wood'. On a poetic level, *Silva* might by the same token stand for a small part of the larger *Silvae*. On the possible relation between singular *silva* and the plural title *Silvae*, see also Hardie (1983), 76 (who is sceptical) and Newlands (2002), 36-7.

5. Conclusion

Descriptions of construction in the *Silvae* impact on the reader's assessment of the built monument and at the same time of the poetic construct. The poems function as 'reading instructions', presenting exemplary interpretations of monumental architecture. By means of time-shifts, they insert appreciation of the construction process into the model response to the monument they describe. The prefaces to individual books constitute analogous 'reading instructions' for the poems themselves. They frame the reader's reception of what follows and likewise raise awareness of the process of composing the poems, albeit with an apologetic rhetoric of speed and the resulting lack of polish. However, the inherent 'poetics of construction', expressed on a meta-level through the descriptions of construction in the *Silvae* themselves, substantially modifies the self-disparaging stance of the *praefationes*.¹⁰⁷ Through descriptions of construction, Statius expresses and justifies a new, provocatively anti-Callimachean literary aesthetic specifically appropriate to the panegyric *Silvae*. The interaction between the different levels of meaning is deftly exploited by the author: the advantages of a 'realistic' feature of construction are extended to an aspect of literary composition, and conversely, features of the poetic process are used to influence the reader's response to certain human interventions in nature.

How does the 'aesthetics of construction' developed in this group of poems affect the whole of the *Silvae*? On the one hand, the three poems are marked out as a coherent group, *ipso facto* helping to create a unifying strand in a multi-book collection. They cumulatively present and justify a revolutionary poetic aesthetic tailored to the *Silvae*, especially the panegyric ones. On the other hand, diversity is an inherent aesthetic quality of a collection made up of occasional poems initially composed as separate entities, and the *praefationes* urge us not to lose sight of the incidental origins of the poems. Therefore, it is not surprising that the *Silvae* do not all subscribe to a completely coherent aesthetic. In response to a specific occasion, addressee or subject matter, not only style or metre but also aesthetic principles are essentially pliable. For example, *Silvae* 4.6, dealing with a small statuette of Hercules

¹⁰⁷ Johannsen (2006) has studied the overlap in themes between the *praefationes* and the entire poetry collection. She mostly confines herself to direct comments in the poems on composition and aesthetics (although she takes into account Newlands (1991) on the metapoetics of *Silvae* 3.1). I fully agree with her conclusion that 'einige der sehr zentralen Gesichtspunkte der Programmatik der *Silvae* beinahe ausschließlich auf den Bereich des Textes bzw. des Paratextes beschränkt [sind], während sie im jeweils anderen so gut wie nicht zur Sprache kommen' (304).

belonging to Novius Vindex, has often (and convincingly) been interpreted as a strong statement of Callimachean poetics of smallness and exclusivity, and even as a reversal of the aesthetic values espoused in *Silvae* 1.1.¹⁰⁸ Since *Silvae* 4.6 aims to praise precisely the small size and exclusivity of the expensive gift, the poetic aesthetic follows suit.

Notwithstanding the inherent diversity of the *Silvae* and the corresponding flexibility of poetic ideals, the ‘aesthetics of construction’ that Statius develops in *Silvae* 1.1, 3.1 and 4.3 takes the exploitation of the construction metaphor to a new level by communicating and justifying aesthetic ideals through descriptions of architectural construction. In the *Silvae*, the analogy between builder and poet is a ‘win-win’ situation in which the advantages and prestige of one activity are transferred to the other. However, when Statius reappears in the following chapter, we face a disconcerting reversal: in his *Thebaid*, architectural metaphor serves to convey a deep unease about the stability of poetic structures as well as a sense of futility and belatedness.

¹⁰⁸ On the link between the aesthetics of the statuette and the poem see Newlands (2002), 73-87, esp. 77-8, and McNelis (2007), 69-70. Newlands (2002) especially brings out the dialogue between *Silvae* 1.1 and 4.6.