Matthew ROLLER
Demolished houses and memory in Roman culture

This paper examines demolished houses as a monumental form in Roman culture-that is, as objects that propagate the memory of their owners and exemplify them as (bad) social actors. House demolition has been studied in relation to the so-called *adfectores regni* (Sp. Cassius, Sp. Maelius, M. Manlius), with an eye to the legal processes, capital penalties, and political violence in the early republic. Likewise, the demolition of Cicero's house has furnished a case study in the violent political wrangling of the late republic. In recent years, scholars have shown how the elite Roman house functioned as a monument to its owner, and studied anew the strategies of *damnatio memoriae* under the empire. This recent work raises the question of how house demolition is implicated in the dynamics of memory. Does it purport to efface the memory of the owner altogether? Or does it *dishonor* his memory, commemorating him as a negative exemplum? In this paper I argue for the latter view: I contend that Romans of the late Republic and Empire regarded house demolition as stitching the owner's misdeeds into the topographical and monumental fabric of the city, preserving and transmitting his memory in the same way as an honorific statue or other monumental form.

Two detailed accounts of house demolition-Livy on Maelius (4.13-16), and Cicero on his own house (*Dom.* 55, 59-62, 100ff.)-emphasize the house as the locus of its owner's sociopolitical power, the place his supporters and clients rally. Demolition effaces this locus, striking a symbolic and practical blow against his political face and force, though not against his memory *per se*. Since the *adfectores regni* are traditionally all demagogues, the demolitions connected to them in general can be interpreted this way.

Moreover, erections on the resultant empty lot tend to be interpreted as preserving, not effacing, the memory of the disgraced former owner. Clodius' temple of *Libertas,* erected on the ruins of Cicero's house, takes its point only in relation Cicero and his execution of the Catilinarians. Manlius is linked to the temple of Juno Moneta, which is said to occupy the site of his house; indeed, one aetiology of this temple-"the warner," whose cackling geese alerted Manlius to the Gallic threat [Cavajoni, *Suppl. adn. super Lucanum* 1.380]-transmits and presupposes the memory of his deeds, good and bad. That this aetiology is false simply proves that Romans tended to think in such patterns, and might construct narratives that "monumentalize" an extant structure. And a notice in Pliny (*Nat.* 34.15, from Piso) that in 158 B.C. the censors removed a statue of Sp. Cassius from the temple of Tellus, which itself stood on the site of Cassius' demolished house (Val. Max. 6.3.1b), makes sense only as a doublet-hence a recollection-of the original condemnation/demolition.

Finally, certain toponyms (e.g., *Aequimaelium, prata Vacci, area Flacci*) were routinely etymologized as being the sites of demolished houses of malefactors, whose misdeeds are then duly narrated. Three such cases are certainly unhistorical: those of the *Argiletum, Forum Cuppedinis,* and *Macellum* (e.g., Don. *in* Ter. *Eun.* 256, Serv. Auct. *in Aen.* 8.345). Such fictive retrojections, again, merely prove the strength of the expectation that

an open area near the city center may exist due to a house demolition, whose owner, along with his misdeeds, must then be specified.

Thus house demolition, far from symbolically obliterating the memory of a malefactor, is in fact closely connected with other monumental forms-temples, statues, toponyms-to which the narrative of the owner's misdeeds and punishment refers, and whose own aetiological/etymological explanations refer back to that narrative. Though physically absent, the demolished house remains a vibrant locus of memory.