

C. W. Hedrick Jr.: History and Silence. Purge and the Rehabilitation of Memory in Late Antiquity. Pp. xxviii + 338, 4 figs. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000, Cased. \$37.50. ISBN: 0-292-73121-3.

In AD 431 a statue of the senator Virius Nicomachus Flavianus was erected in Trajan's Forum at Rome. On its base was inscribed an imperial letter that rehabilitated Flavianus' reputation (CIL 6. 1783). Flavianus had committed suicide after the usurper Eugenius, whose revolt he had supported, was defeated in 394. In the aftermath, Flavianus was subject to damnatio memoriae for his part in the rebellion. This disgrace and subsequent rehabilitation form the theme of H.'s study, which has at its heart a study of the inscription on the statue base. Over 300 pages might seem excessive for such an undertaking, but H. has so much to say along the way about, for example, various manifestations of late Roman elite culture and historiographical method, that this study must rank as one of the most imaginative and stimulating books on late antiquity of recent years. Moreover, H. seeks to reopen a debate of central importance. Herbert Bloch's thesis of a senatorial 'pagan revival' in the 390s has been superseded by a new orthodoxy, advocated by Alan Cameron, which argues for a distinction between senators' political ambitions and their literary and religious interests. While he does 'not propose a crude or uncritical return to Bloch's position', H. challenges Cameron's 'idea that the various cultural activities of the late antique senatorial class have nothing to do with one another' or with politics (xix).

H. begins with a text and translation of CIL 6. 1783 (ch.1), supported by a detailed appendix on its physical condition and problematic readings (247-58).

Subsequent chapters enlarge upon themes suggested by the inscription. H. scrutinises first Flavianus' political career and its relationship to his cursus as given in the inscription (ch. 2). He argues against a tendency of much epigraphical and prosopographical research to quarry such inscribed cursus as sources for 'hard facts'. Instead of seeking to harmonise the inconsistencies between an individual's cursus as recorded in different inscriptions, H. stresses that 'any particular cursus must be regarded as an "edition" of a life, rather than as a "transcription"', and that it was 'manufactured for a certain occasion' (10). Moreover, H. contends that the omission of particular offices from a cursus would have been noticed by contemporaries. Thus the form of Flavianus' cursus on the inscription of 431 is important as much for what it leaves out as for what it includes (33-6).

The rest of the book considers such omissions in the context of Flavianus' disgrace and rehabilitation, and extrapolates from them broader insights into the nature of late Roman culture. The most obvious silence concerns Flavianus' paganism: Eugenius' usurpation was presented by Christian authors as a pagan revolt, and Flavianus has often been regarded as one of its ideologues. H. reassesses this question in a wide-ranging analysis of cultural and religious transformation among the Roman elite (ch. 3). He attempts to understand the ways in which paganism was viewed from the perspective of the 430s. The contemporary Saturnalia of Macrobius is central to H.'s investigation, since it emphasised Flavianus' paganism, thus making its omission from the inscription obvious (79-85). This does not get H. very far, however. He concedes that comparison of the inscription and the Saturnalia is 'both enlightening and puzzling', and that the 'utter silence' of the inscription 'is an enigma'. His conclusion — that 'paganism remained a matter of some sensitivity' (86-7) — is unsurprising.

H. moves next to a sophisticated analysis of the mechanics of damnatio memoriae (ch. 4). He emphasises how monuments from which names had been erased were often left in place, and speculates that Flavianus' monument (where the inscription of 431 is clearly carved over an earlier erasure) continued to stand in Trajan's Forum after his suicide as 'a mute reminder of [his] disgrace' (109-10; but cf. 11). Thus damnatio memoriae was designed not to expunge memory but to provide 'a continuing reminder of the disgrace of a public enemy' (113). Further chapters explore metaphors suggested by the text of the imperial letter. Most successful is ch. 6, where H. takes advantage of the letter's use of terms suggestive of textual emendation (e.g. emendatio, interpolatum) to launch an investigation of the editorial activities of the late Roman senatorial elite. Bloch saw these as a key manifestation of the senatorial 'pagan revival'; Cameron disagreed. For H., such editorial work is bound up with a senatorial sense of identity, as part of their complex negotiation of their pagan past in the Christian present of the fifth century. Rather less successful, to my mind, is H's exploration of the role of silence in historiography (ch. 5). Here H. has much that is interesting to say on history and silence in Tacitus, but I thought it sat uncomfortably with the focus of the book as a whole, and wondered if some late antique historian might have provided a more apposite case study. As it is, H.'s efforts to integrate Tacitus, by noting his late-antique readers (143-4), struck me as forced. The material on Tacitus surely deserves an audience: but is this the right place for it?

A final chapter summarises H.'s theses on history and silence in the context of Flavianus' rehabilitation. By emphasising certain aspects of his career and disgrace, and passing over others in silence, the inscription represents a renegotiation of a painful

episode in the senate's recent past. As such, it encapsulates the complex processes of transformation that characterise late antiquity as a whole. Thus H.'s conclusion vindicates his project as a whole: he has taken a brief text and made it speak volumes on issues of profound importance. It is refreshing to find a book on late antiquity that so honestly uses insights drawn from modern literary theory and semiotics, and does so, for the most part, without descending into obscure verbiage. Readers may not agree with all of H.'s conclusions, not least because in seeking to recover what has been passed over in silence he must resort repeatedly to speculation. But this book is so packed with interesting ideas that anyone who reads it will do so to their considerable benefit.

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