



History and Silence: Purge and Rehabilitation of Memory in Late Antiquity

Charles W., Jr. Hedrick

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The ruling elite in ancient Rome sought to eradicate even the memory of their deceased opponents through a process now known as *damnatio memoriae*. These formal and traditional practices included removing the person's name and image from public monuments and inscriptions, making it illegal to speak of him, and forbidding funeral observances and mourning. Paradoxically, however, while these practices dishonored the person's memory, they did not destroy it. Indeed, a later turn of events could restore the offender not only to public favor but also to re-inclusion in the public record.

This book examines the process of purge and rehabilitation of memory in the person of Virius Nicomachus Flavianus(?-394). Charles Hedrick describes how Flavian was condemned for participating in the rebellion against the Christian emperor Theodosius the Great—and then restored to the public record a generation later as members of the newly Christianized senatorial class sought to reconcile their pagan past and Christian present. By selectively remembering and forgetting the actions of Flavian, Hedrick asserts, the Roman elite honored their ancestors while participating in profound social, cultural, and religious change.

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