



The Old Man Vanishes: Magic, Literature and Political Philosophy in Libanius' "Or." 19.30

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The Old Man Vanishes: Magic, Literature and Political Philosophy in Libanius' *Or.* 19.30*

The pagan sophist Libanius of Antioch narrates in his oration 19.30' how an old man became magically and gradually younger until he vanished during the events that took place in the Riot of Statues in Antioch 387 AD, when the portraits and statues of the emperor Theodosius and his family were desecrated and destroyed. This paper attempts to show that Libanius composed this passage by blending together literary leitmotifs from the Classical tradition (especially the Platonic myth of the Cosmic Cycles) with his first-hand knowledge of magic practices, with the intention of deflecting the culpability for the incidents from his fellow citizens, and thus presenting his native city as innocent to the emperor Theodosius' eyes. *Or.* 19.30 contains references to pagan culture which, in fourth century AD Antioch, aspired to counteract the influence of the Christian culture, and especially that of John Chrysostom and of Flavian, one of the bishops of Antioch at that time.

In what follows, a brief account of the riot and a translation of *Or.* 19.30 will be given. Then, examples of rejuvenation and invisibility from Classical and late antique authors, and from late antique papyri will be provided to show that Libanius' episode dealt with a well-known theme of his period. His *paideia*, his religious tenets, and his personal acquaintance with magical practices will contribute to our understanding of the background against which the episode was composed. Finally, an interpretation of the position of this passage within the sophist's work will be provided by analysing the situation of Libanius in an increasingly Christian society.

The Riot of the Statues

The Riot of the Statues in Antioch 387 AD epitomizes the *Zeitgeist* of Late Antiquity, a tumultuous period in which financial crisis, the complexity of the Roman Administration, changes in the religious landscape, and the pressure of the barbarian invasions combined to create a strained atmosphere within the administration of the Roman Empire. The setting of this episode is an attractive one since it happened in Antioch, a city shaped during the Hellenistic era but which was mostly Christian by the end of the fourth century AD². At the core of this incident were a pagan

* I wish to express my deepest gratitude to Dr. Javier Campos Daroca for his criticism and constant encouragement, and to the anonymous reviewers of this paper for their valuable suggestions and criticism.

1 On the textual problems of *Lib. Or.* 19.30–31, see FÖRSTER vol. II, 399.

2 Antioch, in fact, was the city in which the disciples were first called "Christians" (*Acts*, 11.26), but its inhabitants attended pagan, Jewish and Christian celebrations with the same festive spirit. See GLEASON (1986), 110–111. Surprisingly, these three cultures coexisted in Antioch without the violent actions that were so common in other cities of the Roman Empire such as Alexandria, see HAAS (1997), especially 19–43.

sophist – Libanius of Antioch – who longed for the good old times, a Christian priest renowned for his oratorical skills – John Chrysostom –, and one of the bishops of Antioch who intervened in a schism within the Antiochene Church – Flavian.

According to Libanius' account, the riot developed as follows: the uprising took place in February 387, when the emperor Theodosius levied an extraordinary tax (*Or.* 19.25; 22.4) the quantity and exceptional nature of which was intended either to commemorate his son and his own anniversary as Emperor, or to financially support his continuous wars against barbarians and usurpers³. The letter with the decree was read in the *δικαστήριον* of Antioch (the place that served as the Court and as the office of the *consularis Syriae*)⁴. After the initial protests of *honorati* and *curiales* (*Or.* 19.25–26; 22.5), a spontaneous demonstration passed through Antioch, becoming more and more violent (*Or.* 19.27; 20.3; 22.5–6). As Libanius makes clear (*Or.* 19.28, 32–33), the theatrical *claque*, very active in the political milieu of Late Antiquity, participated in the riot⁵, and collaborated in the destruction of public buildings such as the public baths (*Or.* 20.3; 22.6). Finally, the imperial statues and portraits were stoned, desecrated and torn down (*Or.* 19.29, 31; 20.4; 21.5; 22.7–8)⁶. The authorities – especially the *comes Orientis* – reacted immediately by arresting and executing part of the population (*Or.* 19.37, 23.5–26), whilst those who were still at liberty fled in panic. The Emperor Theodosius sent two emissaries to Antioch – Caesarius, *magister officiorum*, and Hellebichus, *magister militum* – to evaluate the situation (*Or.* 21 and 22). In the meantime, bishop Flavian travelled to Constantinople as an ambassador to persuade Theodosius to forgive the city. Finally, the emperor absolved Antioch and the punishments (the closure of public places – the public baths and the hippodrome –, the cancellation of distribution of food, and the loss of the status of metropolis) were annulled.

This is the context in which Libanius composed five orations (*Ors.* 19–23⁷) on the Riot of the Statues and narrated the episode of an old man rejuvenating and finally vanishing. Thus, in the turmoil of the events (*Or.* 19.30), “it is even said – λέγεται – that an old man whose activities against the equestrian statue surpassed those of any ordinary old men was greeted with the cry “Well done, old fellow”, and in full view of lots of eye-witnesses changed, first, into a youth, then into a child, and finally vanished; and they [sc., the Antiochenes] felt no small alarm upon seeing these transformations⁸”.

3 There are different hypotheses on the nature and intention of the tax: *lustralis collatio*, *superindictio* on the *possesores*, or a “crysargion” to commemorate Theodosius' *decennalia* and Arcadius' *quinquennalia*. See BROWNING (1952), 14; KING (1961), 50–65; QUIROGA, (2007), 3–10; VAN DER PAVERD (1991), 19–20.

4 PETIT (1955), 248.

5 AJA SÁNCHEZ (1998), 137–139. BROWNING (1952), 16–17. See also LIEBESCHUETZ (1972), 212–216 and 278–280.

6 On the destruction of imperial statues, see STEWART (1999), 159–160; see also STEWART (2003), 273, 289.

7 Orations 19 and 20 were addressed to the emperor Theodosius; orations 21 and 22 were panegyrics of Caesarius and Hellebichus; oration 23 chastises those Antiochenes who fled in panic. John Chrysostom's homilies on the riot attracted part of the pagan audience that Libanius regarded as his own (*Chrys. De Statuis XV.1; De Anna 6–7*, PG 54.634). Thus, he pretended that he had left Antioch and delivered oration 19 in front of the emperor (*Or.* 19.3–4), although he later acknowledged that he had remained in the Syriac city and had not gone to Constantinople (*Or.* 1.253; 23.15). In fact, except for oration 23, the rest of the speeches on the Riot of the Statues were written after the reconciliation with the emperor. See PETIT (1956), 493, 498; NORMAN (1977), 239–240; VAN DER PAVERD (1991), 16–17. For a new consideration of the total number of Chrysostom's Homilies of the Statues, see VALEVICIUS (2000). On the propagandistic nature of these homilies, see SOLER (2001), 509.

8 Translations from NORMAN (1977; 2000).

Such a prodigy was orchestrated by a κακὸς δαίμων (*Or.* 19.29) who used the claque and part of the population to carry out his evil deeds.

Rejuvenation and Vanishment in Greek Literature

The Classical *paideia* that Libanius learnt and taught for almost four decades at his school in Antioch was firmly rooted in a literary canon (in his case, Homer, Euripides, Demosthenes and Plato were the most influential authors⁹) that provided him with examples of rejuvenation and vanishment to be deployed in his letters, speeches and *progymnasmata*. Regarding rejuvenation, Greek literature and mythology offer numerous instances. Some scholars consider the topic of rejuvenation to be unfamiliar and infrequent in Greek culture¹⁰, but the theme of rejuvenation as an antidote to the burden of elderliness appears ubiquitously in Greek literature: its usage as a leitmotif or as an epigrammatic sentence demonstrates that reversing maturity in search of rejuvenation had developed into a literary commonplace¹¹. Imperial literature was also acquainted with this theme, as proven by papyrus fragments¹² and references to it in authors such as Lucian (*DMort* 19.2)¹³, and the oneirocritic Artemidorus (I.50, where he warns that dreaming of a sudden rejuvenation from *πρεσβύτης* to *παῖς* presages an immediate death, while a progressive rejuvenation is beneficial). In Libanius' times, late antique literature represented the Christian *theios aner* as having the power to age and to rejuvenate¹⁴.

It should be noted, however, that in the aforementioned examples the rejuvenation process stops at a certain age. By contrast, in Libanius' *Or.* 19.30 the process of the old man's rejuvenation did not stop but continued until he vanished among a crowd of children. Although its occurrence was not as frequent as the examples of rejuvenation, invisibility – either procured by means of magic, divine intervention or as a way to prove the supernatural nature of a human being – was a literary

9 NORMAN (1964), 159–161, 163–164, 167–169, 170–171; SCHOULER (1984), 442–482, 497–502, 542–561, 565–571.

10 MAHDIHASSAN, (1976). A contrary opinion in MCCARTNEY (1925).

11 See Hom. *Il.* 9.445–446 *Od.* 10.395–396 *Od.* 16.172–177. Expressions such as Ἡσιόδειον γῆρας and δις ἠβήσας have been interpreted as allusions to rejuvenation: *Anthologia Palatina* 3.10; Sin. *Ep.* 123 (ὄν φασιν αἱ ποιήσεις δις ἀνηβῆσαι, νέον ἐκ πρεσβύτου γενόμενον); *Schol. Bern. Verg. Ecl.* 6–95; Serv., *ad Verg. Ecl.* 6.70. A study of those examples in ΜΚΚΑΥ (1959), 4; SCODEL (1980). The theme of rejuvenation reached its zenith in the mythical episode of Medea and Pelias (Ovid, *Met.* 7.159–352). The references to this myth in the Classical literature Libanius was so fond of are numerous: from the Archaic period, see Pherecides (3 F113a JACOBY); Simonides (PMG, 548); *Nostoi* (EGF, p. 97, BERNABÉ 7). In the Classical period, Aeschylus also dealt with the rejuvenating powers of Medea in *Trophi* (*TrGF* 3, fr. 246a), Euripides composed a tragedy entitled *Peliades*, and Aristophanes parodied the theme in a line from his *Knights* (*Ar.*, *Eq.* 1321. Also Plautus, *Pseudolus* 868–872). See also Apollod. *Bibliotheca* I.9.27; Diodorus Siculus IV.50–53; Hyg. *Fab.* 24, 182; Pausanias, 8.11.2–3. Libanius referred to the episode of Medea and Pelias in one of his *progymnasmata* (9.1.6).

12 *P.Amsl.* 35. On the characteristics and nature of this papyrus, see SIJPESTEIJN, (1972).

13 In this passage Polystratus is an old man whose physical abilities were reinvigorated to the point that (19.2) ἅπαντα ἐδυνάμην. On the influence of Lucian on Libanius, see Norman, pp. 171–172. Another example of an old man with the strength of a young one can be found in Heliodorus, *Aethiopica* V.20.

14 See, for instance, Theodoret, *HRel* 1.4.

leitmotif in Classical antiquity that remains somewhat unexplored¹⁵. In one of the few comprehensive and thorough studies that have addressed this topic, Pease listed the numerous ways in which invisibility occurred in classical literature¹⁶. Natural elements – mist, dust, rain, tempests, to name but a few – helped concealment¹⁷. Thus, in the Homeric poems gods wrapped their protected heroes in clouds to make them vanish in dangerous situations¹⁸. Individuals becoming invisible at their own will were met by Apollonius of Tyana, according to Philostratus (VA III.13), or could be found among the monks of Palestine, as the Church historian Sozomenus narrates (*HE* 6.32)¹⁹. Magical devices to become invisible were also used. Note, for instance, how Athena (*Il.*, V.844–845) managed to elude Ares by wearing the Cap of Hades (Ἄϊδος κυνέη), a helmet that made the wearer invisible²⁰. According to Apollodorus (2.4.2), Perseus also wore it after the Stygian Nymphs armed him with it to help him decapitate Medusa²¹. The invisibility bestowed by the Gyges Ring also had a strong impact on classical literature²².

Examples of invisibility and vanishment abounded in Greek Imperial and late antique literature. Texts from the New Testament have been interpreted in a magical sense²³, and the collection of *Greek Magical Papyri* offers several instances of magical formulae containing rituals for invisibility²⁴. Eusebius of Caesarea, in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* VII.17, criticizes people's credulity, as they believed in the power of a demon that made a victim thrown into a sacred well vanish. The Christian Astyrius, Eusebius tells us, asked God to put an end to their delusion; after his prayer, the sacrificial victim reappeared and floated on the surface of the water²⁵. In an episode of Zosimus' *New History*, emperor Valens' entourage found the body of a man in the road. Motionless and speechless, the man had been beaten but still managed to gaze on those who asked him who he was and what had happened to him. Suddenly the body disappeared, something that was considered a portent (IV.31). Given his acquaintance with Classical literature and the number of contemporary literary parallels, it is not surprising that Libanius was familiar with passages and episodes of invisibility and vanishment. Note, for example, his direct allusion to both the Cap of Hades and the Gyges Ring, as he cites them in his defence on behalf of the dancers (*Or.* 64.35): "How is it then they are not brought to judgement?"; Libanius' asks Aelius Aristides, "How is it they are not punished when they have

15 One of the few monographs on the topic is PHILLIPS (2009). The methodology and structure of this study is similar to Pease's, although it provides new data and focuses on Late Antiquity.

16 PEASE (1942). See also ALVINO (1981).

17 Among many other examples, see Hom. *Ven.* 208–210; Herdot. 7.167; Apollon. Rhod. IV.1590; Plut. *Camill.* 33.7; Lib. *Or.* 18.110.

18 Hom. *Il.* 3.380–381; 5.344–346; 20.443–444; 21.595–596

19 In similar terms, Luc. *Philops.* 36.

20 For an analysis of these lines, see KIRK et al. (1985–1993), vol. 2, 147–148. See also CLAY (1997), 12–17. Also Aristoph., *Achar.*, 389–390.

21 Folktale interpretations of the passage in PHINNEY (1971).

22 Pl., *R.* II 359d–360b; X 612b; Luc. *Bis Acc* 21; *Navig.* 42.

23 See, for instance, Lk. 24.31; Acts 5. 17–24. Discussion of the invisibility topic in biblical passages, in SMITH (1978), 118–121.

24 *PGM* I.95, 222–267. The magico-medical work *Cyranides* includes instructions on how to make an onyx ring that renders people invisible, see OGDEN (2002), 273.

25 On a Christian holy man winning over a vanishing demon, *Apothg.* Joseph of Panephus 11.

left all men behind in wickedness? Tell me. But you can't. Unless, by Zeus, when they are doing wrong they have the helmet of Hades or the ring of Gyges, by means of which they escape notice²⁶."

One of the main features that have made Libanius a popular author among late antique scholars is his first-hand knowledge of magic. His hypochondriac character and the ailments he suffered from – gout, migraine, arthritis, neuralgia – led him to take recourse to alternative methods of medicine such as magic²⁷. This was a common tendency especially in Late Antiquity, bearing in mind the omnipresence of allusions to magic in late antique religion, and the emphasis on legislating against magic practices in the *Codex Theodosianus* (see, for instance, *CTh* IX, 16, 1–3; XVI, 10)²⁸. Libanius' references to magic are scattered throughout his work (mainly in his oration 1, *Autobiography*: 43, 62–64, 98) and directly dealt with in his *Or.* 36, *De Veneficiis*, a defence against the charges of magical practices brought against him. Libanius regrets that future generations will know him better for his relationship with magic (*Or.* 36.3) than for his work and devotion towards his fellow Antiochenes (*Or.* 36.4–13). Central to his bitter complaints is the episode of the twisted and mutilated chameleon he found buried in his lecture room²⁹ (*Or.* 1.249): "it was an old specimen and had been dead for several months, and we saw the thing with its head tucked in between its hind legs, one of its front legs missing, and the other closing its mouth to silence it³⁰". Modern scholars disagree in their interpretation of the passage³¹, although they coincide to consider that the chameleon's front leg was used to close its mouth, aimed at stifling the sophist's rhetorical flow, while the mutilation of the chameleon's forefoot was intended to ruin his rhetorical deliveries. In the case of *Or.* 19.30, however, the sophist should be credited with the ability to combine themes of magic, invisibility and vanishment with contemporary issues relating to religion and political philosophy.

Magic, Religion and Political Philosophy

The previous examples of interest in and practices of rejuvenation and disappearance prove that, in the cultural tradition Libanius was so embedded within and the *Zeitgeist* of the period in which he lived, these two phenomena were recurrent themes. What remains to be ascertained is the purpose of Libanius' *Or.* 19.30 in the context of an oration addressed to the emperor Theodosius. It is clear that deflecting culpability from the Antiochenes motivated the composition of the passage³². Holding demons responsible for human misbehaviour became commonplace in late antique literature.

26 Translation taken from MOLLOY (1996).

27 GAINZARAIN (1992).

28 MACMULLEN (1997), 32; SANDWELL (2005). See also DICKIE (2001), 251–272; PHILLIPS (1991).

29 BONNER (1932), 34–44; see also NORMAN (2000), 123–126.

30 Similar examples in AUDOLLENT (1904), 111–112, 139, 219, 222, 241. A comprehensive overview in HEINTZ (2000); KORENJAK (2000), 111–114; TREMEL (2004); TRZCIONKA (2007).

31 CRACCO RUGGINI (1996); GONZÁLEZ GÁLVEZ (2002); MALTOMINI (2004); MARASCO (2002).

32 GONZÁLEZ GÁLVEZ (2002), 187: "Podría argumentarse que la descripción de prodigios como éstos forman parte de los recursos retóricos de un orador que no tiene más remedio que trasladar la responsabilidad del crimen a demonios a los que el emperador no podría castigar. Sin embargo, teniendo en cuenta el carácter de Libanio, es más que probable que la historia del demon maléfico se extendiera entre el populacho tras los sucesos y que el sofista le diera crédito". See also PEASE (1942), 12: "The purpose [sc., invisibility] may vary from divinely inflicted punishment to protective arrest, escape from enemies, suicide". See PHILLIPS (2009), 35–44 for invisibility as escape in criminal contexts.

As Peter Brown has argued, “For pagan and Christian alike, misfortune was unambiguously the work of suprahuman agents, the *daemones*”³³. The malign intervention of demons as an explanation for the Riot of the Statues can also be found in John Chrysostom (*PG* 49.56) and Theodoret of Cyrus (*HRel* XIII.7). In Sozomenus’ *HE* VII.23, the church historian also tells us about the apparition of a giant woman (φάσμα γυναικὸς θεαθῆναι μεγέθει ἐξάισιον) the night before the Riot of the Statues. In a forthcoming paper³⁴ I have argued that this ghost could be identified with the goddess Hecate. This identification is supported by the presence of boys and horses – both of which were common actors in Hecate’s epiphanies – in Libanius’ narration, one of the historical sources of Sozomenus³⁵. Accounts of the Riot of the Statues, therefore, resorted to paranormal phenomena to explain what had happened in order to deflect culpability from the Antiochenes.

As for the religious implications of *Or.* 19.30, it should be borne in mind that the κακὸς δαίμων was using the old man as a ὑπηρέτης to perform his evil acts³⁶. Therefore, the old man was not a practitioner of invisibility spells; on the contrary, he should be regarded as a victim of religious vengeance for the destruction and poor state of pagan temples. In this way, Libanius linked *Or.* 19.30 to the religious arena of the fourth century AD. The harmful actions of jealous gods and playful demons became a commonplace in Christian and pagan late antique literature³⁷. In fact, blaming demons for violent acts should not be considered an infrequent literary theme in Libanius’ rhetorical weaponry. In his *Autobiography*, he insisted on the culpability of the κακὸς δαίμων in the Riot of the Statues (*Or.* 1.252; 19.31, 34), and in his *Or.* 16.15 he made use of the demons to absolve Antioch from culpability in the context of the tense relationship between the emperor Julian and the Antiochenes. The conviction that divine agents and preternatural events intervened in earthly matters was firmly integrated in the sophist’s religious beliefs. In fact, John Chrysostom, a contemporary author³⁸, described Libanius as “the most superstitious man of all (πάντων δὲ ἀνδρῶν δεισιδαιμονέστερος ἐκεῖνος ἦν)”, thus using δεισιδαιμονέστερος with some of the derogative connotations of the term³⁹, reminding us of (Pseudo-) Plutarch *On Deisidaimonia*⁴⁰, which belonged to the late antique cultural landscape⁴¹. Libanius’ belief in the power of demons over humans fits with his religious views. As Misson pointed out, “Libanios croirait donc à la possibilité d’une mainmise des dieux sur la volonté humaine, d’une possession qui fait de l’homme un simple instrument au service de la divinité”⁴². In this sense, the sophist seems to have based his explanation of the demon’s aggressiveness during the Riot of the Statues on the fact that the religious policy of the emperor Theodosius neglected pagan rites – as exemplified by the destruction of the temple of Nemesis, the

33 BROWN (1972), 131. See also CRACCO RUGGINI (1977), 107–126.

34 For an interpretation of this event, see QUIROGA (forthcoming).

35 JOHNSTON (1990), 111–120.

36 ὑπηρέτης (“servant”) is an important term of magic spells and formulae, see *PGM* 1.47, 89, 112; 3.615, 623, 629.

37 CHESNUT (1977), 59–60, 93–94, 103–104.

38 For a convincing re-evaluation of the common opinion that has traditionally considered John Chrysostom to be a pupil of Libanius, see MALOSSE (2008).

39 On such connotations and the similarities between δεισιδαιμονία and latin *superstitio*, see BOWDEN (2008); JEFFERSON (2010). See also HALLIDAY (1930).

40 See for instance Plu. *Mor.* 167 d–e.

41 VAKALOUDI (2000).

42 MISSION (1914), 100.

goddess of revenge and retribution (*Or.* 19.7)⁴³ – , and that Theodosius did not punish those monks and priests that illegally pillaged and destroyed pagan temples, an argument developed at greater length in his *Pro Templis* (*Or.* 30).

Libanius abided by the imperial decisions but his status as sophist of Antioch granted him a degree of *parrhesia* that allowed him to express his political and religious views. Thus, I would like to suggest that Libanius' criticism also drew on some passages of the platonic dialogue *Statesman* in the composition of *Or.* 19.30; more specifically, on the myth of the Cosmic Cycles (269b–274e)⁴⁴. This myth not only has cosmological implications but also refers to political issues: Plato tells us how the movement of the Universe and the normal cycle of life are reverted to a point at which old men rejuvenate to their earlier ages until they vanish (270e–271c) when the Platonic god leaves and does not exert his governance over the world (269c–d)⁴⁵. The striking resemblance between Plato's myth and Libanius' *Or.* 19.30 lies both in the content of the narrative and the context that frames the rejuvenation and disappearance: in both instances a state of disorder causes a reversal of the natural cycle of life and requires the intervention of the ruler to normalise the situation and to restore order. In the case of the Riot of the Statues, the unstable situation of an Empire in which pagan practices were being proscribed by the religious legislation implemented by Theodosius was, in Libanius's eyes, a situation that would lead to disorder and cause the reversion and disappearance of men⁴⁶. Moreover, Plato (269a1; 270b10) and Libanius (*Or.* 19.30) used the term μεταβολή to refer to the reversal of the natural order, and both authors compare ruling with shepherding. In Plato's narrative, the parts of the universe and the animals were under the control of δαίμονες (271d5–8); in Libanius's account, by contrast, it is a bad demon (*Or.* 19.29) who is responsible for the uncontrolled acts, while the emperor is the ruling figure compared with a shepherd who should care for his flock (*Or.* 19.23). It is also noteworthy that Libanius says that, immediately after the old man disappeared, the first word the sophist heard was “gold” (*Or.* 19.31). In my opinion, this may be a subtle allusion to Plato's comparison of the process of refining gold with the methodology to follow in order to improve the science of statesmanship (303d–304a).

In conclusion, Libanius' *Or.* 19.30 took recourse to leitmotifs – rejuvenation and vanishment –

43 In Hes., *Op.* 196–202 Nemesis – together with Aidos – left mankind helpless in the Iron Age. It would be tempting to consider that Libanius is implying that the destruction of the pagan temples will leave mankind helpless again.

44 I am indebted to Dr. Javier Campos Daroca for bringing this reference to my attention.

45 Explanations on the meaning and role of this myth in Plato's philosophy must be left outside of this paper. Important bibliographical references on this myth are VERLINSKY (2008; 2009), in which Verlinsky provides an up-to-date literature review and discusses modern interpretations of the myth (mainly L. BRISSON, *La Même et l'Autre dans la structure ontologique du Timée de Platon*, Paris, 1974, and G. L. CARONE, *Reversing the myth of the Politicus*, *CQ* 54 (2004), 88–108). See also CASADIO (1996); ROBINSON (1967); WHITE (2007), 37–59.

46 On Libanius' use of Plato, see NORMAN (1964), 170–171, and SCHOUER (1984), 567: “dans l'oeuvre de Platon et de ranger d'un côté les titres qui n'ont exercé aucun attrait sur Libanios, et qui correspondent soit aux ouvrages les plus techniques, comme le Parménide, le Politique et le Philèbe, sont aux dialogues suspects ou apocryphes”. O'MEARA's studies on Platonism in Late Antiquity, however, have evidenced the presence and use of Plato's *Statesman* in the cultural milieu of that period, see O'MEARA (2003), 56–58, 63 (for the presence of *Statesman* in the Platonic curriculum), 209–210.

from Classical literature and especially to Plato's myth of the Cosmic Cycles, in order to express his disagreement with the emperor Theodosius' policy on religious and cultural issues, and to downplay the role played by the bishop Flavian in the process of pacification⁴⁷.

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47 Throughout Chrysostom's homilies the figure of Flavian appears in a hagiographic light, as he is portrayed as the heroic representative of the city who managed to appease the emperor's wrath. By contrast, Libanius' references to Flavian (*Or.* 19.28; 30.11, 15) aimed to discredit the bishop. See also VAN DER PAVERD (1991), 141–145.

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