Conspiracy narratives and authorial intervention in the 'Roman Archaeology' of Dionysius of Halicarnassus

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Introduction

Conspiracy may be defined as the secret confederacy of a homogeneous or motley group of people, who act unlawfully and aim to harm someone or something.[1] Their purposes vary: to overthrow a regime on a political or military level, to harm or to neutralise one or more individuals, to protect or to serve a family member. This general and modern definition mirrors the conspiracies in antiquity, despite the temporal gap, if only one can recall the conspiracy of the oligarchs to overthrow the democratic regime in Athens in 411 BCE, or the Catilinarian Conspiracy in 63 BCE.

So far, bibliography about ancient conspiracies is narrowly focused, articles on individual conspiracies excluded. On the one hand, Roisman (2006) dealt with conspiracies described in rhetorical texts of the ancient Greek classical period. He distinguished them according to their targeting and he also discussed the rhetorical, cultural and psychological parameters that govern a conspiracy, in order to highlight the historical aspects of classical Athens, through conspiracy as a rhetorical technique. Roisman also offers a valuable catalogue of verbs and their derivatives relevant to conspiracies.[2] On the other hand, Pagán (2005) dealt with conspiracy narratives in historiographical texts from Sallustius to Appian, but she was limited to case studies of successful and unsuccessful conspiracies focusing on the role of women and

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https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/conspiracy (Accessed on 17/08/21).

[2] Roisman 2006:2–3.

slaves, and highlighting how historians maintained the suspense, despite the readers' prior knowledge of the events.

Conspiracies hold a great portion in the *Antiquitates Romanae* of Dionysius of Halicarnassus. His twenty books were created as a sign of a profound gratitude to Rome during his stay (I.6.5). Pelling (2007:225) characterised them as '...the best contribution that Greek culture can make to the understanding of Rome'.[3] Dionysius deals with events from the earliest years of Rome to the outbreak of the First Punic War (264 BCE). As Wiater (2011:189) shows, the text bridges the gap between the classic past and the classicist present. From the authorial and historical points of view, Dionysius stresses that the large or small extent and development (ἐξεργασία) of an episode shows its importance or its insignificance respectively (*Thucydides* 13). This is reflected on the preface (I.5.4) where he criticizes the earlier *epitomae* of historians dealing with Roman history.

In addition, in *Epistula ad Pompeium Gemimum* 3, Dionysius—comparing Herodotus and Thucydides—makes observations on the theme and structure of a historical text: an historian should select an overall pleasant subject (καλὴν καὶ κεχαρισμένην), on which he should comment in order to show his true attitude towards the events. According to Dionysius, pauses between different topics are appropriate in order to avoid audience's exhaustion. Finally, he claims that the order of events should be chronological and geographical simultaneously according to Herodotus' style. In the preface of the *Antiquitates Romanae*, Dionysius states his name and patronymic to identify the primary—but semi-covert—external narrator of the text. This "monotony" falls apart every time Dionysius pauses his narration to interfere in it using first singular person, in order to show that he is the one who decides how the events will be

[3] Cf. Hill 1961:88, where he expounds Schwartz's harsh opinion on Dionysius' historiography.

narrated. The pauses escalate from a small period to a few chapters of a book which refer to various topics. Dionysius supports authorial interventions in historical events.

The aim of this paper is to investigate how Dionysus intervenes in conspiracy narratives. The questions asked concern his references to methodology, his criticism of the sources, and his elaboration of conspiracies by referring to his present or by explaining the Roman culture. Answering this kind of questions, it is expected that conclusions will be drawn regarding the methodological principles of Dionysius and his style of narration specifically on these occasionally obscure narratives.

1. Aspects of historical narrative

Dionysius tendency to intervene in his narrative is apparent when he uses different sources to enrich the conspiracy narrative. He introduces them by using stereotypical words or phrases such as οἱ μέν, οἱ δέ, τινές followed by verbs such as φασί, λέγουσι or γράφουσι.[4] The historian expresses his opinion upon sources mostly on mythical accounts and occasionally on other type of events, while he is equally uncertain and/or silent about his point of view on other passages. His methodology is only expounded twice in order to explain why he chooses to narrate an event or a part of it, as he does in his preface. Most of the times, though, he also uses intratextual references to remind his readers where something was said by pointing to another part of the text.

1.1 Source criticism

Amulius' conspiracy against Numitor's offspring gives rise to a series of events that needed clarification by citing different sources. Indeed, only in this conspiracy, as well as in

[4] As Usher (2016:819) observes, Dionysius follows Herodotus in this practice.

conspiracies where Romulus is somehow involved, Dionysius refers to so many different written or oral sources, which he criticizes either by agreeing with one and disagreeing with the other, or by not taking sides.

According to Dionysius' sources, Ilia was defiled either by a suitor who was in love with her, or by Amulius—in costume to stay *incognito*—or as most people say by the image of a daemon while supernatural phenomena were taking place (I.77.1–2).[5] No one knew what happened, not even Dionysius who ends that section with a dilemma about what to believe regarding divine and daemonic intervention in human affairs. Should readers scorn such accounts about gods raping mortals, because 'God cannot do any unworthy deed thanks to his uncorruptible and serene nature', or should they accept them as proof of the three-dimensional *ordo mundi* of men, daemons, and gods, and their interactions? Dionysius neglects to elaborate on the matter because philosophers have done it before him, thus he picks neutrality.[6]

Regarding Ilia's punishment for being defiled while a Vestal Virgin, Dionysius mentions two alternate versions: either she was beaten to death or she was imprisoned in a hidden place, and she was set free after Amulius' death (I.39.2–3). It seems that Dionysius cannot decide which account to follow because of the disunity of the sources.[7] In his effort to unravel the impact of Amulius' conspiracy, Dionysius makes a last remark on the two versions: '[...] both of them have a grain of truth. For this, also, I have recalled both of them, so that each of my readers shall believe whichever they want' (I.79.3).

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[5] On Ilia's defilement and Dionysius' point of view on theological and mythological aspects, see Driediger-Murphy 2014:334–337.

[6] Dionysius is also not taking sides about the two different versions of Remus' capture by Numitor's shepherds (I.79.12–80.3), where he cites Fabius Pictor's and Aelius Tubero's accounts, stating in the end that Remus was captured either way and was led chained to Alba Longa.

[7] This disunity is due to the modulation of the punishment over the years. Dionysius mentions multiple punishments of other Vestal Virgins in II.67.3–4, III.67.3 and IX.40.3.

After the Abduction of the Sabine Women, Titus Tatius declared war on Rome and it is thought that a Roman, Tarpeia, formed a conspiracy with him against the Romans (II.38–40). Dionysius uses three sources from the 3rd and 2nd c. BCE to crack the case: Quintus Fabius Pictor, Lucius Cincius Alimentus and Lucius Calpurnius Piso. In a prolepsis, Dionysius states that, according to Fabius and Cincius, Tarpeia yearned (ἔρως εἰσέρχεται) for the Sabines' jewellery, while Piso claimed that she sought to disarm the Sabines (καλοῦ πράγματος ἐπιθυμίᾳ γυμνοὺς τῶν σκεπαστηρίων ὅπλων). Indeed, Tarpeia asked for what the Sabines had in their left arm and agreed with Tatius about the time and place of the invasion; all historians concur. The sequence of the events varies. Piso states that Tarpeia ordered a messenger to inform Romulus about her plan to repel the Sabines, but he defected to Tatius. Fabius and Cincius disagree on that, stating that Tarpeia kept her word and betrayed Rome.

The three historians agree that Tarpeia opened the promised gate and let the Sabines in, after sending away the guards. The historians disagree on the rest: Piso states that the Sabines were to give Tarpeia their jewellery, but she asked for their shields; Fabius claims that the Sabines were infuriated by the amount of gold that was to be paid. Both accounts lead to Tarpeia beaten to death by Tatius and the Sabines with their shields. Dionysius exclaims that Piso's account is the most truthful as the outcome shows: Tarpeia was buried and honoured with a tomb and libations once a year on the Capitoline Hill. Dionysius supports Piso's version on Tarpeia's story, thus disagreeing with Fabius', by using two conditional tenses (εἰ προδίδουσα...εἴ τι λείψανον...) and an argument κατὰ τὸ εἰκός.[8] No one can know if she truly formed a conspiracy against the Romans or the Sabines, that is why Dionysius lets his readers believe what they want.

[8] More on Tarpeia and her silenced status as a Vestal Virgin, see Neel, J. (2019). "Tarpeia the Vestal." *Journal of Roman Studies* 109:103–130.

Dionysius gives three different versions on Romulus' death, without naming his sources.[9] Some—following a mythological account—believed that Romulus was taken by his father, Mars, when one day the sky darkened and a thunderstorm struck, while Romulus was making a speech at the camp (II.56.1). The other two accounts, which Dionysius characterizes as more probable (πιθανώτερα),[10] attribute Romulus' death to conspiracies formed either from the patricians who, because of his despotic behaviour, killed him in the Curia Hostilia,[11] and cut him to pieces to eradicate the body (II.56.3), or by the new Roman citizens who murdered him when the sky darkened, while he was making a speech before the people (II.56.5). Despite mentioning the reasons why the patricians decided to brutally murder Romulus, Dionysius does not give any credit to the new citizens. In the end of the chapter, though, the historian considers Romulus' obscure conception and death as the *aetion* for the deification of mortals (II.56.6).[12]

All in all, Dionysius is rather unstable in his point of views when he narrates conspiracies and uses different sources.[13] This instability is based on his effort to manipulate mythical accounts about the founders of Rome and the conspiracies which they were involved in as victims.[14] Thus, he chooses to abstain from expressing his opinion and to declare his status as

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[9] Similarly, Dionysius also claims neutrality about Tatius' death (II.52.3–4); when narrating three alternatives for Cloelius' death (III.5.1–2) (cf. Livy 1.22–23, who does not mention any of the information on Cloelius' death); in the account of Maelius' death to show his respect to Roman laws (dictatorship) and leadership (XII.1–4); when referring to the order to Decius to invade Rhegium (XX.4.4–6).

[10] Dionysius claims probability on one of the two sources also on the death of the alleged conspirator Spurius Cassius (VIII.59.1), basing his opinion on the letters and witnesses summoned to confirm his guilt.

[11] See Pagàn 2004:116, on the alignment of Caesar's assassination with Romulus' death in the Curia.

[12] See Cicero *De Republica* 2.4 who is reluctant towards Romulus' deification. Cf III.35, where Dionysius supports that Tullus Hostilius' death was due to the wrath of gods and not the outcome of a conspiracy.

[13] Cf. Usher 2016:834, who states that Dionysius is conservative and reluctant to depart from a chosen source, like Livy, upon the matter of speeches.

[14] Cf. *Thucidides* 6, where Dionysius refers to the absence of myth in historiography, along with de Jong C. (2017) 'Dionysius of Halicarnassus on Thucydides', in *The Oxford Handbook of Thucydides*. Ed. Forsdyke S. et al. New York.

an historian by disaggregating himself from the philosophers. The absence of a critique on the abduction of Romulus and its labelling as an aetiological myth seems to have first pointed to a contradiction in his previous statement. In fact, he links both events (conception and death) only to a natural phenomenon, but he does not criticize those versions. Clearly, he leans to a more rational point of view, but he struggles to be inoffensive towards the myth of the Roman origins, as it is part of his historiography, which aims at glorifying Rome.[15] That is also the case with Tarpeia's account: Dionysius aspired to be unbiased towards Tarpeia's greediness,[16] which almost got Rome sacked, but he would ultimately eliminate the possibility of a Tarpeian crime, as is characterized by Propertius about the same time the *Antiquitates Romanae* were being written.[17]

1.2 Methodology

After the revelation of Tarquinius, Mamillius and the poor people's conspiracy against the elite, Servius Sulpicius Camerinus formed a counter-conspiracy to arrest the conspirators (V.53.3). Dionysius immediately pauses the main narration for a chapter (V.56.1), where he expounds why he is going to describe extensively the arrest and execution of the conspirators. Dionysius states vaguely, using the distributive pronoun ἄλλος, that 'Another historian might have thought it sufficient to summarize the event, namely, that the consul arrested the conspirators and executed them, as if the facts needed little elaboration (δηλώσεως)'.

Dionysius expresses his opinion on the matter: he believes that the way of the arrest should be mentioned, because his readers would not be benefited only by reading (ἀκοῦσαι)

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[15] Cf. I.84, where Dionysius cites a rational version about the twins' origins, which was narrated by all those who believed that mythology is unsuitable for historiography.

[16] See Hill (1961:88) who claims that Dionysius is often objective by criticizing the wretchedness of Roman ethics after the archaic era.

[17] Propertius *Elegy* 4.4.

the outcome. 'Everyone', exclaims the historian using another distributive pronoun (ἕκαστος), 'demands that the causes of events be narrated (ἱστορῆσαι) and the ways in which things happened, and the thoughts of the doers, and the divine interventions, and generally all the things accompanying an event by nature' (V.56.1). Dionysius holds that these are the things, which political men need to know in order to have examples to use in various situations that arise.

The second instance is in a "positive" conspiracy (X.17).[18] The leading senators secretly met with each other and agreed upon whom they would appoint as the consul alongside Gaius Claudius, who was dunned by the tribunes to reconsider the law of equation between citizens, as it was promised by the late Publius Valerius Poplicola (X.1–5). It is not clear if the elections were rigid, but the consul elected was Lucius Quintius Cincinnatus, an enemy of the plebeians. The delegates of the Senate found him ploughing his field with his oxen, wearing humble clothes. They immediately saluted him as consul and adorned him with the insignia of his magistracy. Cincinnatus paused, shed some tears and said: 'So my field will be unsown this year, and we will be in danger of not having a source of alimentation'.

Dionysius justifies this narrative. He wants to show his readers who the greatest Romans of that time were: they were prudent men who did manual labour without begrudging their honourable poverty, they abstained from royal power and even denied an office when offered to them. Immediately, Dionysius uses a γὰρ-clause to highlight the difference between men like Cincinnatus and men of his own times: there is no resemblance between them, because the latter act exactly the opposite way.[19] Dionysius might have noticed that he put everyone in the same sack and he instantly says that there are only a few exceptions thanks to whom the

[18] On the positivity of a conspiracy, see Roisman 2006:8–9.

[19] See Livy 1.12, where he claims a similar position on the degradation of mores during his times. See also Horace *Carmina* 3.6.

dignity of the commonwealth is still maintained and the resemblance to those men preserved. With this explanation followed by a reference to his present, Dionysius rationalises the Senate's or rather the army's decision to elect Cincinnatus, who will be the only one to be able to handle the plebeians (X.18–19).

It can be concluded that Dionysius shows himself to be both a generous and insightful historian. These two characteristics are shown both through his interest for his readers' demands, which are based on their curiosity for obscure events, and his principle that history has a practical use for statesmen. Perhaps, that is why he narrates the above-mentioned conspiracies extensively. Where Dionysius thinks that his readers need guidance to learn from his narrative, he bids them make a comparison between men of the past and their present.

1.3 Intratextuality

Dionysius intervenes in conspiracy narratives to inform his readers about where (not always exactly) something was narrated, thus turning this kind of interventions into "memos,"[20] for instance, in the conspiracy of the anonymous sons of Ancus Marcius (III.72.2). They often tried to dethrone Tarquinius Priscus, because they believed that the Roman throne was their legacy. Dionysius declares: 'I will narrate the way of the plot, beginning with their first attempt'. The first impression is that the suspense is eliminated, considering also that Dionysius states at the beginning of chapter 72, that Tarquinius 'died murdered by the sons of Ancus Marcius, who had tried even before to dethrone him'. On the contrary, by declaring that he will narrate from the beginning, Dionysius leaves the readers with the question 'But how did they finally kill Tarquinius?' This question is answered in IV.4.1, where Dionysius points to his previous book in order to continue his narration of the malevolent plans of the Marcii against Lucius

[20] A rather obscure intervention concerns an appendix of harangues in XII.1.15, but I cannot be sure if Dionysius omitted Minucius' speech or the scribe of the text.

Tarquinius Priscus (III.72), after making a digression to narrate the origins of Servius Tullius (IV.1–3), who—by Tanaquil's "positive" conspiracy—ascended to the throne in the end. In this way, Dionysius connects the two conspiracies. Thus, he restores suspense.

The same technique is also used in V.12.3 where he notes: 'as I also said before' to remind his readers of Poplicola's origin which was narrated in IV.67.3 during the beginning of the conspiracy against Tarquinius Superbus. As in this case, so during the conspiracy of the Decemvires, who allegedly led Lucius Siccius Dentatus to his death,[21] Dionysius notes: 'of whom I said that…'. In this way, a reader instantly remembers who Siccius was and which were his exploits during his office; information narrated in X.36.2–39 and X.43–44 respectively. In both cases, Dionysius wants to underline the nature of these men, who were either part of a conspiracy against tyranny or the victims of a tyrannical institution, due to both their dignity and indignation towards despotism. Simultaneously, he avoids reiterations.

Nevertheless, Dionysius also proleptically informs his readers about when he is going to narrate a conspiracy. In III.26.6, he says: '[…] last Tullus expressed his opinion, which everyone approved; about this I will talk in a while'. It takes chapter 27, where Dionysius expounds the counter-conspiracy of Tullus against Mettius Fufetius, for Dionysius to cite Hostilius' direct speech to the allied council. In addition, just before the narration of the conspiracy to bring back Tarquinius, Dionysius informs his readers (V.3.2): 'Who the heads of this conspiracy were and by what unexpected good fortune they were detected […] will be related, after I mention a few things that happened earlier'. Here again, it takes chapter 3, where he mentions Tarquinius Superbus' deeds and whereabouts after his expulsion from Rome, for Dionysius to begin with the conspiracy. In both interventions, which concern future narratives, Dionysius manages not only to pave the way for the conspiracy narrative to unfold, but also to excite his

[21] Cf. Livy 3.43, where Siccius is a conspirator against the Decemvirate.

readers' interest for the main conspiracy narrative by delaying it only for a chapter, thus intensifying suspense.

2. Elaboration of a conspiracy

Dionysius is firm about his opinion on the extent of narratives, many of which are of great extent, because he adds details not mentioned by his contemporary historian, Titus Livius, or other historians. Most of the times, he also supplements the already known facts with long fabricated speeches of prominent Romans, which he cites in every possible case, in order to present the arguments of the rival sides.[22] These additions correspond also to his interventions in conspiracy narratives: Dionysius adds information almost in all conspiracy narratives.[23] He comments on facts narrated at the moment, which he thinks they are in need of elaboration or further explanation. Language, customs, laws, ritual practices and geographical details are all components of a culture, and Dionysius seems to feel obliged to explain certain aspects of Roman culture to his readers, who are overall thought to be Greeks,[24] but only when he regards it essential.

2.1 Explanation of Roman culture

Dionysius gives the translation of three Latin words: *Brutus*, and *ala* and *Aquimaelium*. In the first case (IV.67.4), the translation of the word is given after the suicide of Lucretia: 'Brutus means stupid (ἠλίθιος) in Greek'. Immediately, he expresses his obligation (ἀναγκαῖον) to say a few words about Brutus, 'since Romans think of him to be the mastermind (αἰτιώτατον) behind the overthrow of the tyranny'. Lucius Junius Brutus' biography is unfolded in chapters 68 and

[22] Thomson 1979:304–308.

[23] Cf. IV.4.47–48, where the conspiracy of Lucius Tarquinius Superbus against Turnus Herdonius is narrated. This is the only succinct conspiracy narrative of Dionysius, while Titus' account (1.49.8–52.5) on the same event is rather extensive.

[24] See I.4.2 and I.5.4, where Dionysius stresses the Greeks' ignorance of Roman history.

69, where Dionysius explicates that Brutus pretended stupidity regularly in order to evade Tarquinius' wrath, when he was young. By translating a word to his readers, Dionysius negates any reservations about Brutus' mental capacity, which is connoted by his unsuitable cognomen (οὐδὲν αὐτῷ προσηκούσης). This intervention, then, introduces two analeptic chapters, which pause the narration of the conspiracy against Tarquinius, maintain the suspense, and induct Brutus in the conspiracy.

In the second case (XII.4.5), after the execution of Maelius, Dionysius says that Servilius got the cognomen Ahala, '[...] because he had his sword hidden under his armpit; Romans call armpit ala'. Immediately (XIII.4.6), Dionysius also translates *Aequimaelium* into flat Melium (ἰσόπεδον Μήλιον), '[...] because Romans call aequum that which has no eminences'. Dionysius also points out the pronunciation of the word: in early years it was called *Aequum Maelium*, but later 'because the two words were compounded, it was pronounced *Aequimaelium*'.[25] It is not exactly clear what Dionysius' aim was with these two translations. Nevertheless, his rhetorical craft is apparent; one should not forget that Dionysius wrote the treatise *De compositione verborum*.[26] Meanwhile, his insistence to clarify the meaning of Latin words points again towards a Greek audience. Through this explanation, it is evident that Dionysius uses also the language as a vehicle to show Romans' Greek heritage, as he states in his preface (I.5.2).

Dionysius seems to be very familiar with Roman offices and responsibilities as well, due to his acquaintance with prominent Romans.[27] When narrating the conspiracy of the Decemvires against Siccius (XI.25–27), Dionysius intervenes in order to explain the office of the legatus: 'The legate has both the most sacred and honourable (of all offices) among the Romans,

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[25] See Varro *De lingua Latina* 5.157 who states that the word derives from the verb aequo, not from the noun aequum as Dionysius suggests.

[26] More on Dionysius' rhetorical treatises, see Bonner, S. F. (1969) *The Literary Treatises of Dionysius of Halicarnassus: A Study in the Development of Critical Method*. Amsterdam.

[27] See Roberts, W.R. (1900) "The Literary Circle of Dionysius of Halicarnassus." *The Classical Review*, 14.9:439–442.

possessing the power and authority of a magistrate and the immunity and respect of a priest'. By stressing the dignities that come with this office, Dionysius highlights the capital crime committed by the men of the Decemvires who led Siccius to his death upon deception and eventually prepared a motion to the overthrow of the Decemvirate, due to the soldiers' defection (XI.27.7) and Virginius' conspiracy.

Virginius' conspiracy was formed to avenge his family's dishonour caused by Appius Claudius' affection for the former's daughter, Virginia (XI.40–44). Virginius, after narrating the misfortunes that befell his family, bestirred the soldiers' sentiments against the Decemvirate. When he tried to make them move the army towards Rome, the soldiers were reluctant to move the sacred symbols, while they were not of the opinion to abandon their leaders and generals. Dionysius has already mentioned the military oath taken by soldiers during Cincinnatus' dictatorship (X.18.2), but he did not think it appropriate to explain the oath there. What moved him to explain it during the conspiracy is in fact Virginius' exhortation to break the oath. The historian, in his attempt to justify the soldiers' hesitance to defect, repeats what the military oath was about using a γάρ-clause (XI.43.2) and mentions the penalty for the soldiers who break it.[28]

2.2 References to the present

As Fox puts it, Dionysius' *oeuvre* represents Augustan literature, because he comments on the past based on his contemporary facts.[29] However, Dionysius refers to his present scarcely, while narrating conspiracies. In I.78.5, after the jury is informed about Ilia's pregnancy, Amulius, who wanted more than anything to extinguish his brother's bloodline, insists on following the law: if a Vestal Virgin got defiled, she should be scourged to death, and her

[28] Cf. Livy 22.38.2–5, where Livy gives more details on the oath.

[29] Fox 1993:40–47.

(unborn) child should be thrown into the river's current. Dionysius introduces the two different versions of Ilia's death, by referring to his contemporary punishment of the Vestals: 'Nevertheless, the sacred law ordains that such [offenders] shall be buried alive nowadays'. Thus, in I.79.2–3 Dionysius refers to two alternate endings of the story: either Ilia was instantly executed (possibly beaten to death) or she was chained and imprisoned forever somewhere hidden according to Amulius' orders, who did not want to deprive his daughter of her cousin.[30]

In a second case, Dionysius refers to his present in the middle of Tarquinius and Mamilius' conspiracy against the Romans (V.53.1–55.4). After setting the conspirators' plan out, Dionysius articulates why, how and by whom the conspiracy was exposed: 'However, the Divine Providence who always saves the city and continues until my times [to save the city] has exposed their plans [...]'. According to Dionysius, Publius and Marcus, two brothers and conspirators, were forced by divine compulsion (θείας ἀνάγκης) to divulge the plan:[31] they both had nightmares of severe punishments unless they stopped their enterprise. After a series of events, they decided to announce their plans to one of the consuls, Sulpicius, in fear of someone else betraying the conspiracy.

As Driediger-Murphy suggests, while discussing Dionysius' attitude towards myths, he supports divine interventions in mortals' lives, only if they deserve it, such as the case of the Vestals Aemilia and Tuccia who were saved by Vesta (II.68).[32] If she is correct, then it may be assumed that Dionysius considered the Romans' ancestors worthy of being saved, no less than his contemporary Romans.[33] In the case of conspiracy narratives though, Dionysius seems to

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[30] For Dionysius' point of view in these two different versions of Ilia's punishment, see chapter 1.1.

[31] Divine Providence punishes the conspirators Marcii (III.72.2) and the alleged conspirator Decius for his impious crimes at Rhegium (XX.5.1–5); she interferes to stop Roman youths' (Aquilii, Junii, Vitelii) plot to regain the sovereignty for the Tarquinii (V.3–13.1); she saves Rome from a shameful reputation (XV.3.1).

[32] Driediger-Murphy 2014:337.

[33] Tullus Hostilius declared to the people that Rome had enjoyed the favour of Divine Providence (IV.26.2), and

think that a divine intervention is required in order to forestall the inevitable. Nevertheless, considering the secrecy which pervades conspiracies, as well as the obscurity of conspiracy narratives, I would suggest that interrupting the narration in order to stress gods' help in human affairs is appropriate for him; lacking an eponymous—or even anonymous—informer to betray the conspiracy, only gods themselves could do the job, or instruct a mortal to do so. From the above-mentioned passages, it can also be concluded that Dionysius refers to Divine Providence and its affiliation to Rome, only upon sudden and crucially political matters which could lead Rome either to a shameful situation or a tyrannical regime; in short to a décadence.

One last case of a reference to the present is made in the end of Spurius Maelius' conspiracy to re-establish tyranny (XII.1–4). Dionysius mentions that after the execution of Maelius the Senate dealt out justice: his fortune and his house were confiscated and demolished respectively. According to Dionysius, even in his days that piece of land was out of use among other buildings and the Romans called it Αἰκυμήλιον.[34] For Dionysius, mentioning that Maelius' house was demolished was not enough; by stating Maelius' fortune current condition, he underlines Romans' severe punishments—even *post mortem*—to those who threatened their stable and just regime. Dionysius also creates a vertical antithesis between an upper and a lower level: the Senate voted to demolish the conspirator's house (κατασκαφῆναι) (downwards movement), but they also voted to erect a statue (στάσιν ἀνδριάντος) for Lucius Minucius (upward movement), who exposed Maelius. Thus, he shows the place of the protectors of (up) and the conspirators against (down) Rome in the Romans' ethical mindset.

Conclusion

Aulus Verginius states that it is 'the Divine Providence, which always preserves the Roman commonwealth, the one which brings to light the hidden plans and unholy attempts of the gods' enemies' (X.10.2).

[34] See also VIII.59.3, for a vacant space, until the days of Dionysius, after the demolition of Spurius Cassius' house as a sentence for his alleged conspiracy against aristocracy.

Dionysius' theoretical remarks from *Epistula ad Pompeium Gemimum* on the development of a narrative cannot all be implemented in conspiracy narratives, because conspiracies are overall negative, with nothing positive apart from the punishment of conspirators in the end, if they get uncovered. Thus, conspiracy narratives (if they can be taken as self-contained) can neither be of short extent, nor follow a positive-negative-positive structure.

What smooths out that negativity is the narratorial interventions which delay or detour from the narration and underline the points where Dionysius wishes to give more importance. By citing alternative sources about a narrated conspiracy, he manages to indicate lack of bias regarding either the individuals involved in or the outcome of that event. Nevertheless, his readers are occasionally put in a position to decide what to believe, while other times, when he directly criticizes his sources, they are indirectly driven to assume the same point of view as his. Dionysius' tendency to refer to Roman customs and laws is not a mere expression of admiration for Roman culture. On the contrary, he comments on details and contemporary facts that highlight the conspirators' and/or their victims' ἤθη and πάθη, in order to indirectly praise distinguished men who contributed to Rome's long duration and success. His references to the present illustrate connections between past and present. Dionysius points out that Rome was favoured by Divine Providence in critical situation, such as conspiracies.

All in all, Dionysius' interventions in conspiracy narratives reveal his attitude not only towards historiography, but also towards his readers: he gives as much information as possible in a way that the secrecy pervading the conspiracy narratives is eliminated. Thus, the readers can be acquainted with the conspiracy from as many perspectives as possible, in order to gain pleasure through suspense and knowledge, and get familiar with Dionysius' style of writing history. In this way, these interventions are not mare interjections, but they give a didactic and persuasive tone in the main narrative, i.e., the conspiracy.

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