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Introduction

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Dionysius of Halicarnassus: A Greek Historian and Rhetorician in Rome

Dionysius, son of Alexander, was born in Halicarnassus, before 55 BC. He came to Rome in 30/29 BC, 'at the very time that Augustus Caesar put an end to the civil war'. Having settled in the capital of the Roman world, he learnt Latin, developed an extensive network of colleagues, students and patrons, and wrote several Greek treatises on rhetoric and literary criticism. In 8/7 BC he published the first part of his monumental history of early Rome.³ He probably lived on in Rome well beyond that date, while he was working on the remaining part of the Roman Antiquities, the complete edition of which was to be published in twenty books, covering the history of Rome down to the year 264 BC. The first eleven books plus some excerpts have been preserved. We do not know when and where Dionysius died.

Apart from the Roman Antiquities, ten of his works have survived, the chronological order of which can be partly established. ⁴ The early essays are On Imitation (which partially survives in fragments and an epitome) and the first part of his On the Ancient Orators, including the treatises On Lysias, On Isocrates and On Isaeus. The works of the middle period are On Demosthenes, On Composition (or On the Arrangement of Words), the Letter to Pompeius and the First Letter to Ammaeus. The later essays are On Thucydides along with its appendix, the Second Letter to Ammaeus, and

¹ See Dion. Hal. Ant. Rom. 2.6.4: Licinius Crassus led his army against the Parthians 'in my time' (κατὰ τὴν ἐμὴν ἡλικίαν); cf. Hidber 1996, 2; Fromentin 1998, xiii.
² Ant. Rom. 1.7.2: 'in the middle of the 187th Olympiad'. ³ Ant.

³ Ant. Rom. 1.3.4 and 7.70.2.

⁴ On the relative order of the rhetorical-critical works, see Bonner 1939, 25–38; Aujac 1978, 22–8; De Jonge 2008, 20-3.



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On Dinarchus. Nothing survives of the treatises On Figures and On Political Philosophy.⁵

The extensive oeuvre of Dionysius of Halicarnassus is characterized by a dual tension between cultures and between genres. These two themes determine the agenda of this volume, which seeks to understand Dionysius as a writer positioned between Greece and Rome and between rhetoric and historiography. More specifically, the current volume examines how Dionysius' rhetorical and critical works are connected and intertwined with his history of early Rome, and the complex ways in which both components of this dual project – rhetorical criticism and historiography – fit into the social, intellectual, literary, cultural and political world of Rome under Augustus.

Rhetoric and Historiography

One of the most striking aspects of modern scholarship on Dionysius is its division, with a few exceptions, into two separate halves. Although it is often rightly asserted that Dionysius' rhetoric and historiography are really inseparable, it is still largely true that one group of scholars work on the *Roman Antiquities* and another group on the rhetorical-critical works. More problematic is the fact that specialists focusing on one genre have not always taken (the scholarship on) the other genre sufficiently into account. One important aim of this volume is to bridge the gap between the two genres (and between the two groups of scholars), by interpreting Dionysius' rhetorical criticism and historiography as two closely connected components of one overarching intellectual and educational project.

Readers of the twenty-first century might be surprised by the fact that one ancient author devoted his life to both rhetoric and historiography, as these disciplines are nowadays sometimes thought to be hardly compatible. But ancient authors and readers were well aware that the two genres are naturally related, as any historical text inevitably starts from invention (selection of material), disposition and style, which are the basic tools of

On Political Philosophy: Dion Hal. Thuc. 2.3. Cf. Aujac 1991, 46 n. 2. On Figures: Quint. Inst. 9.3.89. We may doubt that Dionysius ever wrote the treatise On the Selection of Words, which he hoped to present as a sequel to On Composition (see Comp. 1.10). The Ars Rhetorica attributed to Dionysius is not his work.

Important exceptions include Goudriaan 1989; Gabba 1991; Fox 1993; Wiater 2011a (esp. 120–225). For the idea that the historical and rhetorical works are closely connected and inseparable, see, e.g., Gabba 1991, 4; De Jonge 2008, 19; Wiater 2011a, 123.



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rhetoric.⁷ The historian constructs the past, just as the rhetorician carefully shapes the narration in a forensic speech. The very close connection in antiquity between rhetoric and historiography has even been suggested to anticipate – in one sense – the theories of the historian Hayden White. In his influential *Metahistory* (1973), White pointed out that historical writing mirrors literary writing, since both genres rely on narrative, which implies selecting, omitting and structuring material: the historian constructs a version of the past and moulds it into a coherent story.⁸ Such an understanding of historical writing sits well with Dionysius' criticism of Herodotus and Thucydides, but also with his own practice in the *Roman Antiquities*.

This volume will suggest various ways in which Dionysius' two fields of interest are related and intertwined. From a general perspective one could distinguish three levels where Dionysius' rhetorical-critical works are connected with his *Roman Antiquities*. One level is that of theory and practice.⁹ Dionysius' choices in writing his own history of Rome can be understood as reflecting the theories in his rhetorical-critical works. Three of his essays are obviously of essential importance here: the Letter to Pompeius, which contains an extensive comparison of Herodotus and Thucydides; the treatise On Thucydides, a critical discussion of the content and style of Thucydides' Histories; and the Second Letter to Ammaeus, an analysis of Thucydides' often obscure language. ¹⁰ In the *Letter to Pompeius*, Dionysius explains how historians should proceed when choosing their topic, determining the beginning and end of the narrative, selecting the events, arranging the material and adopting the right attitude towards the events described (*Pomp.* 3.2–15). All such theoretical instructions can be compared with Dionysius' own practice as a historian. Several authors in this volume indeed demonstrate that Dionysius' literary criticism helps us to

On rhetoric and historiography, see esp. the seminal work of Woodman 1988, who focuses on Cicero and Latin historians. Fox and Livingstone 2010 discuss Greek rhetoric and historiography.

⁸ White 1973. On Dionysius and Hayden White, see Wiater 2011a, 123–6, 160–1. He rightly warns (p. 123), however, that Dionysius should not be called a 'Hayden White of antiquity'. On White, see also Fox in this volume.

⁹ Schwartz 1903, 936 summarizes the *Roman Antiquities* as 'ein genauer Commentar zu seinen theoretischen Ausführungen über Historiographie'. For Schwartz, however, this is purely negative: the *Roman Antiquities* confirm that Dionysius did not understand anything of ancient historiography ('dass D. von dem, was die antike Historiographie wollte und konnte, auch nicht die ersten Elemente begriffen hat').

For Dionysius' theory of historiography in the rhetorical works, see Halbfas 1910, Pavano 1936, Grube 1950, Sacks 1983, De Jonge 2017. See further Pavano 1958, Pritchett 1975, Aujac 1991, Hunter in this volume on *Thuc.*; Aujac 1992; Fornaro 1997; Wiater 2011a, 132–54 on *Pomp.*; Aujac 1992, De Jonge 2011 on *Amm.* 2.

Such comparisons have been presented by Halbfas 1910; Heath 1989, 71–89; Wiater 2011a, 132–54.



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understand specific passages of the *Roman Antiquities*, but also the other way around – that his own history of Rome casts light on his criticism of Herodotus and Thucydides.

A second level at which rhetoric and historiography come together is that of 'imitation' (μ i μ η σ 1 ς), the central concept that may be said to encapsulate the intentions of all of Dionysius' works. ¹² In the *Roman Antiquities*, Dionysius aims not only to inform his readers about the obscure origins of Rome, but also to provide models of imitation:

(...) Rome from the very beginning, immediately after its founding, produced infinite examples of virtue in men whose superiors, whether for piety or for justice or for life-long self-control or for warlike valor, no city, either Greek or barbarian, has ever produced. (*Ant. Rom.* 1.5.3)¹³

The moral conduct of the early Romans should instruct and inspire the (Roman) readers of the *Roman Antiquities*:

And again, both the present and future descendants of those godlike men will choose, not the pleasantest and easiest of lives, but rather the noblest and most ambitious, when they consider that all who are sprung from an illustrious origin ought to set a high value on themselves and indulge in no pursuit unworthy of their ancestors (μηδὲν ἀνάξιον ἐπιτηδεύειν τῶν προγόνων). (Ant. Rom. 1.6.4)

For Dionysius it is an essential function of historiography to provide inspiring models for the present and the future – *exempla*, as the Romans would say. In the *Letter to Pompeius* he argues that Herodotus did and Thucydides did not understand this central purpose of historical writing: Herodotus' Greeks accomplished 'wonderful deeds', whereas Thucydides describes a war that was 'neither glorious nor fortunate' and should have been forgotten altogether (*Pomp.* 3.2–4).

The idea of $\mu i \mu \eta \sigma \iota \varsigma$ is also central to the rhetorical works. Dionysius scrutinizes the writings of ancient poets, orators and historians, whose best qualities he feels should be carefully studied by his students. The concept of imitation was of such importance to Dionysius that he published a separate work on $\mu i \mu \eta \sigma \iota \varsigma$, its aims, methods and techniques, as well as the literary models to be imitated and emulated. Unfortunately, his work *On Imitation* is largely lost, but apart from a few fragments and an epitome, we also have a long passage of the work

See Delcourt 2005, 43–7; De Jonge 2008, 19–20. On the role of mimesis in Greek imperial literature, see esp. Whitmarsh 2001, 46–57.

Translations of the Roman Antiquities in this introduction are borrowed or adapted from Cary 1937–1950.



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that Dionysius cites in the Letter to Pompeius. 14 Even if we did not have these precious remains, the importance of μίμησις to both sides of Dionysius' project would still be abundantly clear, as it is such a dominant theme in all of his works. In the preface to On the Ancient Orators, often seen as a 'manifesto of classicism', Dionysius emphatically presents the rhetorical culture of classical Athens as the model of rhetorical and literary writing in Rome under Augustus.¹⁵ The Attic Muse, which had been driven away by an Asian harlot after the death of Alexander the Great, had recently been restored thanks to Rome and 'its leaders' (δυναστεύοντες); as a result, Dionysius claims, many historical, political and philosophical treatises are published in his own time by 'both Romans and Greeks' (καὶ 'Ρωμαίοις καὶ "Ελλησιν, Orat. Vett. 3.2). After a period of decline, which Dionysius associates with 'Asian' influence and which modern readers in the wake of Gustav Droysen label the 'Hellenistic period', Rome becomes the new Athens, resulting in a revival of Attic eloquence. 16 This revival is grounded, of course, in the concept of μίμησις, the creative and eclectic imitation and emulation of classical Greek models, not only of oratory, but also of morality and lifestyle, as becomes clear from Dionysius' programmatic questions:17

Who are the most important of the ancient orators and historians? What manner of life and style of writing did they adopt? Which characteristic of each of them should we take over, or which should we avoid? (Orat.

The formulation of these questions, juxtaposing lifestyle and writing style, suggests a third level at which the genres of rhetoric and historiography are connected. One important ideal underlying all of Dionysius' works is that of moral education and civilization, closely connected with Isocratean παιδεία. 18 Readers of the Roman Antiquities will become better citizens if they look carefully at the early Romans; readers of the rhetorical works, like the young student Metilius Rufus, the addressee of On Composition, are likewise trained to become good citizens, who are both verbally and

¹⁴ For On Imitation, see the editions by Aujac 1992 and Battisti 1997; see also Hunter 2009. On the citation of Imit. in Pomp. 3, see Weaire 2002.

On the preface to *Orat. Vett.*, see Hidber 1996, who labels this text 'das klassizistische Manifest'. See also De Jonge 2014a.

On Augustan Rome as the revival of classical Athens, see Hidber 1996, 75–81.

See Hidber 1996, 56–75. Translations of the critical essays in this introduction are adapted from Usher 1974-1985.

On this important theme, see Goudriaan 1989; Hidber 1996, 44-75.



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morally ready to play an active part in Roman society. In his treatise *On Isocrates*, Dionysius poses a series of rhetorical questions, which eloquently bring out the moral connotations of his program:

Who could fail to become a patriotic supporter of democracy and a student of civic virtue after reading Isocrates' *Panegyricus*? (...) What greater exhortation could there be, for individuals singly and collectively for whole communities, than the discourse *On the Peace*? (...) Who would not become a more responsible citizen after reading the *Areopagiticus* (...)? (*Isoc.* 5.1, 7.1, 8.1)

Throughout his works, Dionysius is a patient and passionate teacher, whose lessons are not only concerned with rhetorical theory, literary criticism and the history of Rome, but also with virtue, civic life and human civilization. His program of moral education, as we will see, in many ways resonates with the concerns of Rome at the end of the first century BC.

Greece and Rome

Dionysius' works bear witness to the complex dialogue between Greek and Roman identities at the end of the first century BC. ¹⁹ This is a second main theme of this volume. The subject of Greek identity in the Roman Empire has been at the heart of recent research on the Second Sophistic (very roughly 50-250 AD): authors such as Plutarch, Dio of Prusa, Lucian and Philostratus show a very wide range of diverse attitudes towards Hellenic and Roman identity, depending on such factors as location (within the Empire), genre (history, rhetoric, biography, novel, etc.) and literary context.20 Authors of Greek texts may emphasize continuity between the glorious Greek past and their own time, but they may also applaud the transformation of the world affected by the Roman Empire and the new opportunities that it offers to them. There was not one Greek identity: literary texts adopt a variety of strategies by which identities are constructed and re-constructed in differing and dynamic ways. A similar variety of perspectives on Greek and Roman identities was available to the Greek authors of the Augustan period (27 BC-AD 14), who witnessed the gradual emergence and early development of the Roman Empire. As a substantial

¹⁹ See esp. Luraghi 2003, Peirano 2010.

²⁰ Cf., e.g., Swain 1996, Goldhill 2001, Whitmarsh 2001. See also Whitmarsh 2013 with further bibliography. Barchiesi 2009 examines Roman responses to Greece, Whitmarsh 2009 Greek responses to Rome.



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amount of Greek literature of the Augustan Age is either lost or survives in excerpts or fragments only (e.g., the works of Caecilius of Caleacte, Nicolaus of Damascus, Timagenes of Alexandria), Dionysius of Halicarnassus is — with Strabo of Amasia and Antipater of Thessalonica — our principal literary witness for Greek perspectives on Rome in the Augustan period.²¹

On the one hand, Dionysius is thoroughly Greek. He comes from Greek-speaking Asia Minor; he consistently writes in the Greek language; and he teaches about the literature of (what we call) archaic and classical Greece, from Homer to Demosthenes. He is especially interested in the styles of the Attic orators and historians, which are to be imitated and emulated by his students and readers; but he is also more generally intrigued by what he identifies as the highlights of classical Greek culture: Pindar, Plato, Polyclitus and all the great representatives of Greek poetry, music, sculpture, painting and philosophy. Furthermore, as a literary critic he self-consciously presents himself as working in the Greek tradition of learning and scholarship, represented in his works by such celebrated names as Isocrates, Aristotle, Theophrastus, Aristoxenus and Chrysippus.

On the other hand, Dionysius is very Roman. He arrived in Rome at a very significant moment in Roman history and became bilingual, after 'learning the language of the Romans and acquiring knowledge of their writings' (*Ant. Rom.* 1.7.2). Some of the sources of Roman history that he studied were in Greek, like those of Quintus Fabius Pictor and Lucius Cincius Alimentus (*Ant. Rom.* 1.6.3), but Dionysius also read the works of historians who wrote in Latin: 'Porcius Cato, Quintus Fabius Maximus, Valerius Antias, Licinius Macer, the Aelii, Gellii and Calpurnii, and many others of note' (*Ant. Rom.* 1.7.3); elsewhere, Dionysius mentions his older contemporary Varro (*Ant. Rom.* 1.14.1) and several other Roman historians.²² Furthermore, Dionysius was personally in direct contact with Romans and Greeks who lived at Rome: 'Some information I received orally from men of the greatest learning, with whom I associated' (οἶς εἶς ὁμιλίαν ἦλθον, *Ant. Rom.* 1.6.3).

On Dionysius' knowledge of Latin, see Marin 1969; Rochette 1997, 231–3; Delcourt 2005, 28–30; De Jonge 2008, 60–5; Nesselrath 2013. On Dionysius and Varro, see De Jonge forthcoming. On Dionysius' sources in *Ant. Rom.*, see Schwartz 1903; Oakley in this volume. 'Aelii' (*Ant. Rom.* 1.7.3) refers to Quintus Aelius Tubero (and possibly his father): see below.

²¹ On Greek identity in the Augustan Age, see esp. the volume edited by Schmitz and Wiater 2011a, with contributions on Dionysius by Fox 2011 and Wiater 2011b. Bowersock 1965, 122–39 and Hidber 2011, 122–3 provide overviews of Greek literature under Augustus. On Strabo, Nicolaus and Antipater, see below, pp. 11–13.



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We know the names of several members of Dionysius' intriguing network in Rome.²³ Some of them were Greek, like Demetrius, the addressee of On Imitation (otherwise unknown), and Caecilius of Caleacte, the famous historian and rhetorician.²⁴ Some of them were Roman, like Metilius Rufus, the student who received his On Composition as a birthday present. Dionysius describes the father of this young boy as his 'most esteemed friend' (Comp. 1.4), which may imply that he acted as his patron; an additional argument for a relationship of patronage is the fact that Dionysius includes the family of the Metilii in his list of Alban principes (Ant. Rom. 3.29.7). 25 In introducing Metilius Rufus to the secrets of stylistic composition, Dionysius seems to have made a useful contribution to the political career of his Roman pupil: Metilius was to become governor of the province of Achaea, where he had ample opportunity to put his teacher's theories into practice.²⁶ Another important Roman connection was Quintus Aelius Tubero, the addressee of Dionysius' treatise On Thucydides. Aelius Tubero himself wrote a history of Rome (one of Dionysius' sources: see below), possibly in the Thucydidean style, but he was also a lawyer from an influential family, known to us through Cicero's Pro Ligario (20–9): Quintus Aelius Tubero's father was a legate in Asia; his sons were consuls in 11 and 4 BC.²⁷ Dionysius also mentions the names of Ammaeus, addressee of On the Ancient Orators and two letters, and Cn. Pompeius Geminus, the addressee of one letter, who was also in touch with Dionysius' friend Zeno.²⁸ We do not know whether Ammaeus and Pompeius Geminus considered themselves to be Greek or Roman. What is clear, however, is that Dionysius was well connected in Rome, not only with scholars, teachers and students, who stimulated his ideas and intellectual development, but also with influential families who seem to have supported his project.²⁹ Dionysius' Greek works have a social,

²³ On Dionysius' 'literary circle' or 'network of intellectuals' in Rome, see Roberts 1900; Wisse 1995, 78-80; Hidber 1996, 5-7; De Jonge 2008, 25-34. Applying social identity theory, Wiater 2011a, 22-9 interprets Dionysius' network of colleagues and friends as an 'elite community of classicists'.

²⁴ *Pomp.* 3.1, 3.20. For the fragments of Caecilius, see Woerther 2015.

²⁵ See Bowersock 1965, 132 n. 2.
²⁶ Bonner 1939, 2 n. 4; Bowersock 1965, 132; De Jonge in this volume. On Dionysius' strategies as the Greek teacher of a Roman student, see Weaire 2012.

Quintus Aelius Tubero: *Thuc.* 1.1, 55.5. See also *Ant. Rom.* 1.80.1 on Aelius Tubero's history of Rome as one of Dionysius' sources. Cf. Bowersock 1965, 130; Bowersock 1979, 68-70; Fromentin 1998, xiv-xviii. Dionysius may have been familiar with Strabo (who mentions him in Geogr. 14.2.16) via the Tuberones.

²⁸ Orat. Vett. 1.1; Amm. 1 1.1; Amm. 2 1.1; Pomp. 1.1.

The Tuberones were among the more prominent families in Rome, as Fromentin 1998, xiv–xv points out: 'une grande famille aristocratique qui comptait plusieurs personnages illustres et qui tenait, semble-t-il, une place de premier plan dans la Rome d'Auguste'. Cf. Bowersock 1979, 68 and



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intellectual and cultural context in Rome; Dionysius himself, moreover, explicitly reflects on the complex relationship between Greece and Rome, both in his rhetorical criticism and in his historiography.

In the preface to *On the Ancient Orators*, as we have just seen, Dionysius praises Rome for the cultural revolution it had achieved, and, in particular, for the restitution of the Attic Muse, who stands for a morally serious oratory and literature of high standards. According to Dionysius' manifesto, Rome and its 'leaders' (plural) shaped the political circumstances that facilitated the production of great texts, both in Greek and in Latin. Dionysius' words of praise have been interpreted either as mere flattery, or as the sincere gratitude of a newcomer who enjoyed Roman hospitality. Whichever reading one prefers, the preface stimulates us to understand Dionysius' works within their Roman context, and to ask how precisely the classical Greek orators (and historians and poets) were to be relevant to the political and cultural situation of the city in which he himself was writing and teaching.

The complex relationship between Greece and Rome is the main theme of the *Roman Antiquities*. That work powerfully presents the – for modern readers somewhat remarkable - thesis that the earliest Romans were Greeks, who lived a Greek life, characterized by Greek virtues and organized in Greek institutions. The Greeks, as Dionysius tells us, came to Italy in five successive stages: (1) Arcadian Aborigines, (2) Thessalian Pelasgians (from the Peloponnese), (3) Arcadians from Pallantium who were led by Evander, (4) Peloponnesians who were guided by Hercules and (5) Aeneas with the Trojans (who were in fact also Greeks). 30 All these groups founded settlements in Italy and contributed to the gradual progress of civilization. Evander founded Pallantium, Aeneas and the Trojans (now Latins) built Lavinium and Alba. Sixteen generations after the fall of Troy, the Latins surrounded Pallantium with a wall, and 'this settlement they called Rome, after Romulus' (Ant. Rom. 1.45.3). Dionysius' extensive narrative of these earliest events in Roman history finds its climax in his emphatic presentation of Rome as a 'Greek city':

Hence, from now on let the reader forever renounce the views of those who make Rome a retreat of barbarians, fugitives and vagabonds, and let him confidently affirm it to be a Greek city (Ἑλλάδα πόλιν), – which will be easy

contrast Schwartz 1903, 934, who thought that Dionysius' addressees were 'no distinguished people' ('keine vornehmen Leute').

³⁰ See Ant. Rom. 1.11.1-4, 17.1, 31.1, 34.1-2, 45.1, 61-2, 89.1-2. Important discussions include Gabba 1991, 98-118; Fromentin 1998, xxxi-xxxiv; Luraghi 2003, 277-81; Delcourt 2005; Fox in this volume.



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when he shows that it is at once the most hospitable and friendly of all cities, and when he bears in mind that the Aborigines were Oenotrians, and these in turn Arcadians (...). (Ant. Rom. 1.89.1)

Dionysius' portrayal of Roman institutions as essentially Greek, most clearly articulated in the famous Constitution of Romulus (*Ant. Rom.* 2. 3–26), has been challenged and rejected by readers through the centuries; more recently, however, his account has also provoked more positive responses. Dionysius' interpretation of Roman antiquity has received partial support from those historians and archaeologists who have identified Greek elements in the material culture of early Rome. Two millennia after Dionysius published his *Roman Antiquities*, the question 'Was Rome a *polis*?' turns out to be highly topical.³¹ Furthermore, Dionysius' understanding of Rome as a Greek city has – obviously in a strongly modified form – found serious approval in recent scholarship:

Greek culture leaves its mark on Rome at every moment we can document, and the more we learn about archaic Rome, the more we are inclined to accept, even if in a rather different sense, the argument of the Augustan historian, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, that Rome was from the first a Greek city.³²

This volume will not enter the debate on the historical (in)accuracy of Dionysius' portrayal of Rome as a Greek city. What matters here is the fact that the complex relationship between Greek and Roman identity deeply informs the Roman Antiquities, just as it informs Dionysius' rhetorical works. This raises numerous questions about Dionysius' project. How Roman are the Roman Antiquities? For whom does Dionysius write that work: for Greeks, Romans or both? And how would these readers feel about Rome as a Greek city? Does Dionysius' perspective belittle the Romans (whose civilization turns out to be Greek), or does it contribute to the harmony of the Pax Augusta by suggesting a peaceful continuity between Greece and Rome? Who is the intended audience of the rhetorical works?33 Was a student like Metilius Rufus supposed to apply Dionysius' analysis of Greek stylistic composition to his own (first) language, or was he trained to make speeches for audiences in the Greek-speaking parts of the Empire? Can we in fact adequately distinguish between Greeks and Romans in a world that is thoroughly bilingual? How does Dionysius' version of Rome's history differ from the Latin Ab Urbe Condita written by

³¹ Ando 1999. ³² Wallace-Hadrill 2008, 25. ³³ On Dionysius' audience, see below.