

The Agency of Prayers: The Legend of M. Furius Camillus in Dionysius of Halicarnassus

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IN THIS PAPER, I examine the ‘curse’ that Camillus casts on his fellow citizens as they ban him from Rome on the accusations of mishandling the plunder from Veii and omitting to fulfill a vow to Apollo.¹ Accounts of this episode (including Livy’s, Plutarch’s, and Appian’s) more or less explicitly recall, in their description of Camillus’ departure, the Homeric precedent of Achilles withdrawing from battle after his quarrel with Agamemnon, when he anticipates “longing” for him by the Achaean warriors. Dionysius of Halicarnassus appears to follow a different inspiration, in which literary *topoi* combine with prayer ritualism and popular magic. In his rendering, Camillus pleads to the gods for revenge and entreats them to inflict punishment on the Romans, so that they would be compelled to revoke their sentence. As I show, the terminology used in Dionysius’ reconstruction is reminiscent of formulas in *defixi-*

¹ I.e., the affair of the *praeda Veientana*. Livy, followed by other sources, relates that before taking Veii Camillus had vowed a tenth of the plunder to Apollo. Because of his mismanagement, the vow could not be immediately fulfilled and, when the pontiffs proposed that the populace should discharge the religious obligation through their share of the plunder, Camillus faced general discontent and eventually a trial (Liv. 5.21.2, 5.23.8–11, 5.25.4–12, 5.32.8–9; cf. Plut. *Cam.* 7.5–8.2, 11.1–12.2; App. *Ital.* 8; also Cass. Dio 6.24.4 and Zonar. 7.21). See B. Poletti, “*Auri sacra fames: oro e sacralità nella tradizione romana sui Galli*,” in P. Barral et al. (eds.), *Les Celtes et le Nord de l’Italie* (RAE Suppl. 36 [2014]) 151–157. On Camillus’ trial for *peculatus* see R. M. Ogilvie, *Commentary on Livy, Books 1–5* (Oxford 1965) 698–699.

ones, and specifically in curses classified as ‘prayers for justice’.² I argue that this uncommon formulation was deliberate and intended as a narrative device: it is inserted within a carefully-crafted sequence of prayers that follow similar patterns, with Camillus acting as the agent for change and narrative development by his subsequent appeals to the gods, and it is meant to emphasize the efficacy of Camillus’ action through the recognizable allusion to an ‘actual’ means of manipulation of divine forces.³

1. *The legend of Camillus in the literary tradition*

It will be useful first to recall a few essential facts about Camillus. Regardless of the historicity of his figure, which is irrelevant here, Camillus’ life and career were traditionally placed in a crucial period of early Roman history—a time, the late fifth and the first half of the fourth centuries BCE, when conflicts with external powers intersected with major consti-

² According to the classification proposed by H. S. Versnel, “Beyond Cursing: The Appeal to Justice in Judicial Prayers,” in C. A. Faraone et al. (eds.), *Magika Hiera* (New York 1991) 60–106. On the function and context of *defixiones* in Greek society see D. R. Jordan, “A Survey of Greek *Defixiones* Not Included in the Special Corpora,” *GRBS* 26 (1985) 151–197; J. G. Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (New York 1992); C. A. Faraone, “The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells,” in *Magika Hiera* 3–32. See also the excellent collection in R. L. Gordon and F. M. Simón (eds.), *Magical Practice in the Latin West* (Leiden 2010), with rich bibliography. For a recent overview including up-to-date developments and bibliography see L. C. Watson, *Magic in Ancient Greece and Rome* (London 2019) 57–98. A. Audollent, *Defixionum Tabellae* (Paris 1904), remains fundamental, although much evidence has been uncovered since its publication.

³ All the evidence suggests that the curse tablets were believed to work, as nicely summarized by Watson, *Magic in Ancient Greece and Rome* 84: “the ubiquity and longevity of the practice (which lasted for over a thousand years); the very real fear that people manifested of them; the various stratagems devised to counter their effects; the fact that in notorious cases where orators ‘dried up’ unexpectedly in court, they were able with a degree of credibility to claim to have been the victims of a well-established type of *defixio*, which sought to bind the tongues of forensic opponents.”

tutional and social changes in the Republican government. Highpoints of Camillus' career included victories on both the military and the civil fronts: capture of the Etruscan city of Veii, defeat of the Gauls who had occupied Rome, successful command of the wars against Aequi, Volsci, and Etruscans, as well as mediation in the patrician-plebeian conflict culminating in the Licinian-Sextian laws of 367 BCE.⁴ His legend was not fashioned overnight; in fact, it may have taken over three centuries for its main elements to accrue. Scholars as early as the 1870s recognized at least two layers in the relevant literary tradition.⁵ The older one took shape before the Second Punic

⁴ The victory over the Gauls who had sacked Rome and had exacted an exorbitant ransom from it was deemed the acme of Camillus' career; upon liberating the city, he was hailed as *parens patriae* and "second founder" (or "second Romulus"): Liv. 5.49.7, *Romulus ac parens patriae conditorque alter urbis ... appellabatur*; 7.1.10, *dignusque habitus quem secundum a Romulo conditorem urbis Romanae ferrent*; Plut. *Cam.* 1.1, κτίστης δὲ τῆς Ῥώμης ἀναγοραφεὶς δεύτερος; cf. Eutr. 1.20.3, Julian *Caes.* 323a. On the association between Camillus and Romulus see G. B. Miles, *Livy: Reconstructing Early Rome* (Ithaca 1995) 69, 88–92, 94, 107, 126, 133; T. R. Stevenson, "Parens patriae and Livy's Camillus," *Ramus* 29 (2000) 27–46, at 33–42; J. v. Ungern-Sternberg, "M. Furius Camillus: ein zweiter Romulus?" in M. Bonnefond-Coudry et al. (eds.), *L'invention des grands hommes de la Rome antique* (Paris 2001) 289–297. B. Mineo argues that Livy saw a cyclical pattern in Roman history with cycles of 360/365 years; each cycle had a 'founder' and an 'apex', with Camillus as the second founder and Augustus the third: "Livy's Historical Philosophy," in *A Companion to Livy* (Oxford 2015) 139–152. On Camillus' career and feats, as well as his 'historicity', see C. F. M. Bruun, "What every man in the street used to know': M. Furius Camillus, Italic Legends and Roman Historiography," in *The Roman Middle Republic. Politics, Religion and Historiography* (Rome 2000) 41–68; T. P. Wiseman, *The Myths of Rome* (Liverpool 2004) 126–130; T. J. Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome. Italy and Rome from the Bronze Age to the Punic Wars* (London 1995) 313–322, esp. 316–317.

⁵ See Mommsen's treatment of 'Die Gallische Katastrophe': *Römische Forschungen* II (Berlin 1879) 297–381; F. Münzer, "M. Furius Camillus (44)," *RE* 7 (1910) 324–348; O. Hirschfeld, "Zur Camillus-Legende," in *Kleine Schriften* (Berlin 1913) 273–287; A. Klotz, "Zu den Quellen der Archaologia des Dionysios von Halikarnassos," *RhM* 87 (1938) 32–50, and "Zu den Quellen der Plutarchischen Lebensbeschreibung des Camillus," *RhM* 90 (1941) 282–309; A. Momigliano, "Camillus and Concord," *CQ* 36 (1942)

War and is represented by the accounts of Polybius (for the Gallic War) and Diodorus. It had Camillus intervene in the siege of Veii and the later campaigns against Aequi, Volsci, and Etruscans, but ignored his trial and exile and his leading the Gallic campaign.⁶ The later layer, represented by the accounts of Dionysius, Livy, and Plutarch, comprised Camillus' exile and exploit against the Gauls.⁷ These episodes are coated in a

111–120, and *Secondo Contributo alla Storia degli Studi Classici* (Rome 1984) 89–104; Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome* 317–319; H. Tränkle, “Gebet und Schimmeltriumph des Camillus: Einige Überlegungen zum fünften Buch des Livius,” *WS* 111 (1998) 145–165. Ogilvie discusses possible influences and sources for the single episodes: *Commentary* 626–630 (Veii), 685–686 (Falerii), 698–699 (the trial of Camillus), 727–728 and 736–737 (Camillus against the Gauls). Recent treatments of the formation of Camillus' legend include Bruun, *The Roman Middle Republic* 42–44; M. Coudry, “Camille: construction et fluctuations de la figure d'un grand homme,” in *L'invention des grands hommes* 47–81; J. F. Gaertner, “Livy's Camillus and the Political Discourse of the Late Republic,” *JRS* 98 (2008) 27–52, at 29–33, with further bibliography at nn.1, 9, 10.

⁶ Diod. 14.93, 113–117; Polyb. 2.18. On Polybius' sources for this passage see Mommsen, *Römische Forschungen* II 301; F. W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius* I (Oxford 1957) 184–187; Tränkle, *WS* 111 (1998) 147–148; the agreement seems to be Fabius Pictor. On Diodorus' sources see Momigliano, *CQ* 36 (1942) 112–114, and *Secondo Contributo* 90–93. The question of the sources for the 'older layer' is summarized in Gaertner, *JRS* 98 (2008) 30 nn.12–13, with further bibliography.

⁷ See nn.1, 6, 14 for the sources. The Gauls' attack on Rome was already known to Aristotle, Theopompus, and Heraclides Ponticus (respectively, fr.610 Rose = *FGrHist* 840 F 23 = Plut. *Cam.* 22.4; *FGrHist* 115 F 317 and 840 F 24a = Plin. *NH* 3.57; fr.102 Wehrli = Plut. *Cam.* 22.3). Aristotle mentions a certain Lucius as the saviour of Rome; cf. Bruun, *The Roman Middle Republic* 59; Gaertner *JRS* 98 (2008) 30 n.11, 31 n.23. Plutarch also has a Lucius (L. Albinus) in the same context and praises his *pietas* for saving a group of Vestal Virgins during the sack of the city (*Cam.* 21.1–2); cf. L. Piccirilli, “La componente ‘alba’ di M. Furio Camillo,” *CCC* 1 (1980) 95–102. According to L. Braccesi, the tradition of Camillus' retrieval of the gold paid to Brennus could be traced back to the pseudo-etymology of Pisaurum, where their armies met: *Epigrafia e storiografia* (Naples 1981) 95–115.

dramatized vest, redolent of late Republican and Augustan motifs, such as the unjust exile, the bickering of the tribunes of the plebs, and the general's *pietas* and 'refoundation' of the city.⁸ Supposedly, this second group of sources depended extensively on Roman annalistic writers, and especially on the 'falsifications' of Roman history of the later annalists, although the extent of these falsifications and their influence is now much debated.⁹

As to Dionysius' sources specifically, we know from references scattered through the *Roman Antiquities* that he used or knew the work of no less than fifty Roman early and later annalists and Greek historians and poets, and often also relied on inscriptional and material evidence.¹⁰ Most of his citations

⁸ On Augustan influences on Camillus' legend see, e.g., Miles, *Livy* 120–122; Gaertner, *JRS* 98 (2008) 27–52, esp. 28, 51–52.

⁹ Doubts as to the actual influence of the later annalists on Livy have been cast by T. J. Luce, *Livy. The Composition of his History* (Princeton 1976) 161–162, and S. J. Northwood, "Livy and the Early Annalists," in C. Deroux (ed.), *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History* 10 (Brussels 2000) 45–55. Attributions of elements of Camillus' legend to individual annalists have also appeared futile; on this point see Gaertner, *JRS* 98 (2008) 30 n.14; cf. Tränkle, *WS* 111 (1998) 149–150; Bruun, *The Roman Middle Republic* 60–63. On another note, Cornell has plausibly argued that distortions of early Roman history may have occurred at an earlier stage, and by the time Valerius Antias, Claudius Quadrigarius, Licinius Macer, and Aelius Tubero were writing, there was little room for major changes or additions to the historical core: "The Formation of the Historical Tradition of Early Rome," in I. S. Moxon et al. (eds.), *Past Perspectives. Studies in Greek and Roman Historical Writing* (Cambridge 1986) 67–86.

¹⁰ It is broadly accepted that Dionysius was bilingual, of great erudition, and likely had access to rich libraries. To my knowledge, the most comprehensive treatment on his sources remains C. Schultze, "Authority, Originality and Competence in the *Roman Archaeology* of Dionysius of Halicarnassus," *Histos* 4 (2000) 6–49, esp. 22–26, 30–40. Schultze analyzes how Dionysius engaged with the various types of sources he claimed to have read or seen and how he used references to them to bolster his credibility. Cf. E. Gabba, *Dionysius and the History of Archaic Rome* (Berkeley 1991) 81–90, 93–98; N. Wiater, "Expertise, 'Character' and the 'Authority Effect' in the *Early*

are concentrated in the early books of the *Antiquities*, and especially in Book 1, while for the later books (including the fragmentary ones considered here) they are almost absent.¹¹ This should invite caution, as efforts to identify Dionysius' sources for Camillus' legend are unlikely to produce definitive results;¹² yet, some elements of his account might be telling. The nefarious role he ascribes to the tribunes of the plebs in prosecuting Camillus (13.5.1), for instance, may indicate a philo-*optimates* source of the Sullan age, at the peak of tribunician agitations and partisan struggles.¹³ In the same narrative, Dionysius omits a notable episode of Camillus' legend, the cele-

Roman History of Dionysius of Halicarnassus," in J. König et al. (eds.), *Authority and Expertise in Ancient Scientific Culture* (Cambridge 2017) 231–259.

¹¹ On the different use of sources in Book 1 and the rest of the *Antiquities* see Gabba, *Dionysius* 96–98; Schultze, *Histos* 4 (2000) 30–32; D. Hogg, "Libraries in a Greek Working Life: Dionysius of Halicarnassus, a Case Study in Rome," in J. König et al. (eds.), *Ancient Libraries* (Cambridge 2013) 137–151, at 145–148. On the general historiographical aims and methods of the *Roman Antiquities* see Dionysius' own remarks at 1.1–8 and, among scholarly treatments, Gabba 60–90; M. Fox, "History and Rhetoric in Dionysius of Halicarnassus," *JRS* 83 (1993) 31–47; Schultze 6–49; A. Delcourt, *Lecture des Antiquités Romaines de Denys d'Halicarnasse* (Brussels 2005) 47–80; N. Wiater, *The Ideology of Classicism: Language, History, and Identity in Dionysius of Halicarnassus* (Berlin 2011) 165–223; S. P. Oakley, "The Expansive Scale of the *Roman Antiquities*," in R. Hunter et al. (eds.), *Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Augustan Rome* (Cambridge 2019) 127–160.

¹² On the impact of *Quellenforschung* on the appreciation of writers such as Livy and Dionysius see, e.g., Luce, *Livy* xv–xxvii; Cornell, in *Past Perspectives* 82–86 and *The Beginnings of Rome* 4–7; Miles, *Livy* 1–7; Oakley, *Dionysius of Halicarnassus* 152–155.

¹³ This could be sufficient to exclude the radical *popularis* Licinius Macer as a possible candidate. On Macer see R. M. Ogilvie, "Livy, Licinius Macer and the *libri lintei*," *JRS* 48 (1958) 40–48; S. Walt, *Der Historiker C. Licinius Macer* (Stuttgart 1997); T. J. Cornell, *The Fragments of the Roman Historians* (Oxford 2013) 320–332. For a general overview of post-Gracchan and Sullan-age historiography see E. Badian, "The Early Historians," in T. A. Dorey (ed.), *Latin Historians* (London 1966) 1–38, at 18–23; R. Mellor, *The Roman Historians* (London 1999) 21–24; A. Mehl, *Roman Historiography. An Introduction to its Basic Aspects and Development* (Chichester 2011) 63–71.

bration of his overly extravagant triumph, which is related by most other accounts.¹⁴ Since the episode would have been fashioned on the model of Caesar's triumph of 46 BCE (and the criticism it attracted),¹⁵ Dionysius' silence might depend on a source sympathetic to Caesar and likely a contemporary.¹⁶ Cursing the Romans after being unjustly exiled by the tribunes of the plebs seems a picture well-suited to the political climate of the civil wars and might thus derive from a late Republican source as well. In the absence of more compelling evidence, however, my focus remains on the literary context and the narrative function of Camillus' curse, which is more likely to produce appreciable results in terms of understanding Dionysius' work in its own right. I thus begin with a comparison of Camillus' prayer in different authors to highlight the peculiarities of Dionysius' text.

2. *The prayer of Camillus in the ancient sources*

The background of Camillus' prayer is well known. After the Roman conquest of Veii and acquisition of its wealth, Camillus

¹⁴ Diod. 14.117.6; Liv. 5.23.4–6; Plut. *Cam.* 7.1–2; Cass. Dio in Zonar. 7.21 and 52.13.3; cf. Pliny *HN* 33.111, *Vir.ill.* 23.4. Another 'suspicious' element in this sense might be the omission, in Dionysius' account, of Camillus' trial for *peculatus* (see n.1 above).

¹⁵ Cf. H. S. Versnel, *Triumphus* (Leiden 1970) 63, 67–68, 305; S. Weinstock, *Divus Julius* (Oxford 1971) 68–75; M. Beard, *The Roman Triumph* (Cambridge 2007) 234–236; I. Östenberg, *Staging the World: Spoils, Captives, and Representations in the Roman Triumphal Procession* (Oxford 2009) 208.

¹⁶ The safest choice, in this case, seems Q. Aelius Tubero, a personal friend and possibly patron of Dionysius, mentioned in two of his treatises (*Thuc.* 1 and 55, *Amm.* 1) and among the sources for his history (*Ant.Rom.* 1.7.3). While Tubero's political orientations are uncertain, he may have gravitated towards Caesar, who pardoned him and his father after Pharsalus and, possibly, granted patrician status to his family. On Tubero see E. Rawson, *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic* (London 1985) 89, 97, 213, 220; Cornell, *The Fragments of the Roman Historians* 361–368; J. H. Richardson, "L. Iunius Brutus the Patrician and the Political Allegiance of Q. Aelius Tubero," *CP* 106 (2011) 155–161, on Tubero as a plausible source for Dionysius' claim that L. Brutus had no descendants (*Ant.Rom.* 5.18.1–2) and thus could not be the ancestor of M. Brutus, the murderer of Caesar.

becomes the object of general resentment—possibly caused by his mishandling of the spoils—and he leaves the city for Ardea, where he spends one year as an exile, before being recalled to take up the command against the Gauls.¹⁷

The sources depict the moment of Camillus' departure as a most dramatic scene, marked by his bitter words against his ungrateful fellow-citizens. The exact words present variations from one account to another, although maintaining a generally negative and pitiful tone. Livy, who offers the best-known version of the whole legend, relates that Camillus prayed to the effect that, if he was being condemned unjustly, the gods would cause the Romans to long for him: "Having prayed to the immortal gods that if that offence was done to him although innocent, at the first occasion they would cause yearning for him in his ungrateful city" (*precatus ab dis immortalibus si innoxio sibi ea iniuria fieret, primo quoque tempore desiderium sui civitati ingrata facerent*, 5.32.9). Plutarch repeats the scene almost identically to Livy, adding that Camillus left "like Achilles, after setting curses upon the citizens" (ὡσπερ ὁ Ἀχιλλεύς, ἀρὰς θέμενος ἐπὶ τοὺς πολίτας, *Cam.* 13.1).¹⁸ The reference is to the famous

¹⁷ In 386/7 Gauls from the Po Valley crossed the Apennines into northern Etruria and advanced southwards. The Roman army was routed at the River Allia, and the survivors fled to Veii (Diod. 14.114.5–7, 115.2; Liv. 5.38.5–9; Plut. *Cam.* 18.6–7). The Gauls proceeded to Rome and laid waste the city, except for the Capitoline Hill held by a small Roman garrison (cf. Polyb. 1.6.2, 2.18.2). On the formation of the historiographical tradition about the Gallic invasion see A. Alföldi, *Early Rome and the Latins* (Ann Arbor 1965) 355–365; Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome* 313–322. D. Briquel, *La prise de Rome par les Gaulois, lecture mythique d'un événement historique* (Paris 2008), offers an extensive study of the event.

¹⁸ At 12.3: "There [at the gates] he stopped and, having turned back and lifted his hands towards the Capitol, prayed to the gods that, if not justly, but through the insolence of the people and being treated with ill-will he was being driven out, the Romans might repent quickly and make it clear to all persons that they needed and longed for Camillus" (ἐκεῖ δὲ ἐπέστη, καὶ μεταστραφεὶς ὀπίσω καὶ τὰς χεῖρας ἀνατείνας πρὸς τὸ Καπιτώλιον ἐπέυξατο τοῖς θεοῖς, εἰ μὴ δικαίως, ἀλλ' ὕβρει δήμου καὶ φθόνῳ προπηλακίζομενος ἐκπίπτει, ταχὺ Ῥωμαίους μετανοῆσαι καὶ πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις φανεροὺς γενέσθαι

Homeric passage in which Achilles, deprived of his war prize Briseis and outraged at Agamemnon's insult, withdraws from combat, prophesying that the Achaeans will regret their behaviour (*Il.* 1.233–244). Specifically, Achilles declares (240–244):¹⁹

Some day longing for Achilles will come to the sons of the Achaeans, all of them. Then stricken at heart though you be, you will be able to do nothing, when in their numbers before man-slaughtering Hector they drop and die. And then you will eat out the heart within you in sorrow, that you did no honour to the best of the Achaeans. (transl. R. Latimore)

This parallel is also invoked in the later account of Appian, who relates that Camillus departed “having prayed the prayer of Achilles, that in due time the Romans would yearn after Camillus” (εὐξάμενος τὴν Ἀχίλλειον εὐχήν, ἐπιποθῆσαι Ῥωμαίους Κάμιλλον ἐν καιρῷ, *Ital.* 9). In his discussion of Camillus' legend, Alain Gowing suggests that the reference to Achilles and the Homeric episode had conceivably the purpose to align Camillus “with Greece's most famous warrior as well as [invest] him with a slightly more sophisticated patina.”²⁰ Gowing also observes that this reference does not occur in any Latin author but is unique to Plutarch and Appian. It should be noted, however, that while Livy does not mention Achilles explicitly,

δεομένους αὐτοῦ καὶ ποθοῦντας Κάμιλλον). Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are mine.

¹⁹ ἢ ποτ' Ἀχιλλῆος ποθὴ ἴξεται υἱας Ἀχαιῶν
σύμπαντας· τότε δ' οὐ τι δυνήσεται ἀχνύμενός περ
χραιομεῖν, εὐτ' ἂν πολλοὶ ὑφ' Ἑκτορος ἀνδροφόνου
θνήσκοντες πίπτωσι· σὺ δ' ἔνδοθι θυμὸν ἀμύξεις
χῳόμενος ὅ τ' ἄριστον Ἀχαιῶν οὐδὲν ἔτισας.

²⁰ A. M. Gowing, “The Roman *exempla* Tradition in Imperial Greek Historiography: The Case of Camillus,” in A. Feldherr (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Historians* (Cambridge 2009) 332–347, at 340. Cf. the account in Cass. Dio 6.24.6, who—more succinctly—makes no mention of either Achilles or sentiments of longing, although his language does contain Homeric references (as noted, again, by Gowing 341): e.g., διὰ μὲν δὴ ταῦτα εὐχήν τε ὑπ' ὀργῆς ἐποιήσατο χρεῖαν αὐτοῦ τὴν πόλιν σχεῖν.

his phrasing of Camillus' prayer is very close, in both structure and terminology, to the later ones of Plutarch and Appian. All three authors refer to the "longing" that Camillus' absence would cause to the Romans using the equivalent terms *desiderium*, ποθοῦντας, and ἐπιποθῆσαι (Liv. 5.32.9; Plut. *Cam.* 12.3; App. *Ital.* 9), which are reminiscent of the Homeric ποθή (1.240). The Homeric model may thus be implicit in Livy, too, and may have supplied the inspiration for this episode already in Livy's source.²¹

Significantly different is the version given by Dionysius. Unlike the mild supplication reported by the other sources, he has Camillus pray to the gods, not to induce "longing" for him, but instead to avenge him, should they find him innocent of the accusations laid against him (13.5.2–3):²²

O gods and divine powers, who oversee human actions, I ask you to become judges for me of both my measures for the country and all of my past life; then, if you find me guilty of the charges on which the people have passed a vote against me, [I ask you] to give [me] a grievous and shameful end of life, but if in all things with which I have been entrusted by the country in both peace and war, [you find me] pious and just and free of every shameful suspicion, [I ask you] to become my avengers, imposing upon those who have injured me such dangers and fears, by which they will be forced to have recourse to me, seeing no other hope for salvation.

The language employed confers an unusually harsh tone on

²¹ Cf. Ogilvie, *Commentary* 699, who points out a parallel between Livy's *precatus* and Appian's τὴν Ἀχιλλεῖον εὐχὴν.

²² ὦ θεοὶ καὶ δαίμονες, ἔφοροι τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων ἔργων, ὑμᾶς ἀξιῶ δικαστὰς γενέσθαι μοι τῶν τε πρὸς τὴν πατρίδα πολιτευμάτων καὶ παντὸς τοῦ παρεληλυθότος βίου. ἔπειτ', ἐὰν μὲν ἔνοχον εὐρητέ με ταῖς αἰτίαις, ἐφ' αἷς ὁ δῆμος κατεψηφίσαστό μου, πονηρὰν καὶ ἀσχήμονα τελευτὴν δοῦναι τοῦ βίου, ἐὰν δ' ἐν ἅπασιν, οἷς ἐπιστεύθην ὑπὸ τῆς πατρίδος ἐν εἰρήνῃ τε καὶ κατὰ πολέμους, εὐσεβῆ καὶ δίκαιον καὶ πάσης ἀσχήμονος ὑποψίας καθαρὸν, τιμωροὺς γενέσθαι μοι, τοιούτους ἐπιστήσαντας τοῖς ἡδίκηκόσι κινδύνους καὶ φόβους, δι' οὓς ἀναγκασθήσονται μηδεμίαν ἄλλην ἐλπίδα σωτηρίας ὀρῶντες ἐπ' ἐμὲ καταφυγεῖν.

this prayer. Camillus entreats the god to act as his judges (δικαστάς) and, ultimately, avengers (τιμωρούς), and to carry out their punishment by inflicting “dangers and fears” (κινδύνους καὶ φόβους) upon the Romans. The desired effect is to raise in them a feeling not of mere regret or want (the *ποθή* alluded to by the other sources), but of pressing necessity (ἀναγκασθήσονται).

Gowing rightly notes that Dionysius makes “no attempt ... to link Camillus with Achilles.” But—perhaps hastily—he concludes: “Thus for Dionysius, as for Livy, Camillus remains the quintessential representative of Roman values.”²³ There is little doubt that Dionysius sought to promote Roman values through his historical work and, overall, Camillus does emerge as an exemplary character in it; but his present harshness, which degenerates into a wish for national disaster, has hardly any patriotic connotation, as Camillus seems entirely focused on his personal feelings and treatment. Marianne Coudry tries to explain Camillus’ hostile tone by arguing that Dionysius was following an earlier tradition, which had not been touched by the later (Augustan) refashioning of the character.²⁴ This is a plausible hypothesis; still, it does not clarify why Dionysius would prefer an earlier—and rather unflattering—tradition to describe a crucial event of Camillus’ legend. To answer this question and, hopefully, suggest plausible sources of inspiration for the episode, I think it necessary to consider the broader narrative context of Camillus’ prayer—specifically, the sequence of prayers he is made to utter—and, next, to compare Dionysius’ language with the language commonly found in prayers and curses.

3. *The narrative context of Dionysius’ version*

From a narrative and chronological perspective, Camillus’ departure from Rome and exile follow his capture of Veii and the subsequent problems caused by his faulty distribution of the

²³ Gowing, in *The Cambridge Companion* 340.

²⁴ Coudry, in *L’invention des grands hommes* 59–62, with n.64.

spoils. The exile at Ardea ends after the Gauls attack Rome and the Romans beg for his return to repel the invaders. The idea that Camillus brought about both victories for the Romans according to the divine will is embedded in his legend. Livy famously calls him an instrument of fate (*fatalis dux*, 5.19.2), but Dionysius goes even further. His Camillus has a privileged relationship with the gods, whose will he almost seems to control: “The gods listened to his prayers, and a little after, the city was taken by the Gauls except for the Capitol.”²⁵

Despite the fragmentary state of Dionysius’ accounts of the capture of Veii (12.10–16) and the Gallic invasion (13.5–12),²⁶ it is possible to identify in the extant text three other instances of prayers and prophecies related to the one under examination. The first two occur during the Roman siege of Veii. In an unparalleled detail, Dionysius relates that when a portent²⁷ signals the city’s imminent fall, the inhabitants of Veii send an embassy to Rome offering voluntary submission of the city and asking the senate to stipulate a peace treaty (12.13.1). When the senators refuse to grant this and spare Veii from destruction, one of the envoys, foreseeing that Rome would eventually

²⁵ *Ant. Rom.* 13.6.1, ὑπήκουσαν δὲ αὐτοῦ ταῖς εὐχαίς οἱ θεοί, καὶ ὑπὸ Κελτῶν μετὰ μικρὸν ἢ πόλις ἐάλω ἄνευ τοῦ Καπιτωλίου. On this passage Gowing (in *Cambridge Companion* 341) fittingly observes that the Gallic attack appears entirely as a divine punishment, with “the effect ... to focus attention directly on Camillus and his role in rescuing Rome.”

²⁶ On Dionysius’ description of the Gauls in the fragmentary books (and especially his characterization of them as “barbarians”) see X. Lafon, “Denys d’Halicarnasse et les Gaulois à travers les fragments des *Antiquités Romaines* (Livres 14–20),” in S. Pittia (ed.), *Fragments d’historiens grecs: autour de Denys d’Halicarnasse* (Rome 2002) 265–281.

²⁷ The anomalous flooding of the Alban Lake, after which the Romans sent envoys to consult the Delphic oracle. As it turned out, the portent signified that the gods guarding Veii would abandon the city and let it be conquered by the Romans when these would divert the waters of the lake from their natural course through channels—which they promptly did (12.10–11; cf. Liv. 5.15, 16.8–11; Plut. *Cam.* 3–4).

suffer destruction too, bitterly comments (12.13.2–3):²⁸

A noble and magnanimous decree you have passed, o Romans, thinking that you have leadership over your neighbours because of your valour, not considering it right to hold in subjugation a city neither small nor insignificant that has laid aside its arms and submitted [to you], but you wish to destroy it root and branch, not fearing wrath from the gods, nor taking heed of retribution from men; in return for that, avenging justice will come from the gods inflicting [upon you] a similar punishment. For having deprived the Veientes of their country, after a not long period you will lose your own.

After this gloomy prophecy,²⁹ we are introduced to Camillus, whose first appearance in the text is marked—perhaps not accidentally—by reflections on the human condition and a plea to the gods. Absorbed in contemplating Veii, which is being raided by the Roman troops, Camillus prays to the gods asking that they spare Rome or himself from retribution (12.14.2):³⁰

²⁸ καλόν, ἔφησεν, ὦ Ῥωμαῖοι, δόγμα ἐξεννόχαστε καὶ μεγαλοπρεπές, οἱ τὴν ἡγεμονίαν ἀξιούντες ἔχειν τῶν περιόικων δι' ἀρετὴν, πόλιν οὔτε μικρὰν οὔτε ἄσημον ἀποτιθεμένην τὰ ὄπλα καὶ παραδιδούσαν ὑμῖν ἑαυτὴν οὐκ ἀξιούντες ὑπήκοον ἔχειν, ἀλλὰ πρόρριζον ἀνελεῖν βουλόμενοι, οὔτε τὸν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ δείσαντες χόλον, οὔτε τὴν παρ' ἀνθρώπων ἐντραπέντες νέμεσιν. ἀνθ' ὧν ὑμῖν δίκη τιμωρὸς ἦξει παρὰ θεῶν εἰς τὰ ὅμοια ζημιούσα· Οὐτιεντανοὺς γὰρ ἀφελόμενοι τὴν πατρίδα μετ' οὐ πολὺ τὴν ἑαυτῶν ἀποβαλεῖτε. Wiseman, *The Myths of Rome* 126–128, detects an anti-patrician tone in the older version of the story of Veii's capture, of which this passage would be representative.

²⁹ On prophecy as a form of divination see G. Luck, *Arcana Mundi*² (Baltimore 2006) 285–286, 296–300. Luck explains the link between spontaneous prophecies and the place of their occurrence in these terms (300): “A prophetic vision may occur spontaneously and out of context ... In these cases, it almost seems that a certain location is already charged or filled by the vibrations of a terrible event that is about to happen, and a ‘psychic’ picks up these vibrations.” This notion appears well suited to the account of the Veientine embassy, in which the envoy foresees Rome's destruction while standing in the senate house (ἐκ τοῦ βουλευτηρίου, 12.13.2), which is the heart of Rome's government and political life.

³⁰ ἔπειτ' ἐνθυμηθεῖς, ὡς ἐπὶ μικρᾶς αἰωρεῖται ροπῆς ἢ τῶν ἀνθρώπων εὐδαιμονία, καὶ βέβαιον οὐδὲν διαμένει τῶν ἀγαθῶν, διατείνας εἰς οὐρανὸν τὰς χειρὰς εὔξατο τῷ τε Διὶ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις θεοῖς, μάλιστα μὲν ἀνεπίφθονον ἑαυτῷ

Thereupon, pondering that humans' prosperity depends on a small turn of the scale and that no blessing remains fixed, having stretched his hands to the sky he prayed to Jupiter and the other gods that above all the present success may be least invidious for both himself and his country; but if some calamity was going to befall openly the city of the Romans or his own life as a counter-balance for the present blessings, that it might be the smallest and most tolerable.

Right after this prayer, Camillus stumbles and falls to the ground—an omen that he erroneously interprets as if the gods had granted his request by sending a lesser misfortune upon him.³¹

Besides recognizable Herodotean themes, which confer a typically Greek moralizing tone on the envoy's and Camillus' words,³² by emphasizing the rigour of divine intervention in

τε καὶ τῇ πατρίδι γίνεσθαι τὴν παροῦσαν εὐδαιμονίαν· εἰ δέ τις ἔμελλε κοινῇ συμφορὰ τὴν Ῥωμαίων πόλιν ἢ τὸν αὐτοῦ βίον καταλαμβάνειν ἀντίπαλος τῶν παρόντων ἀγαθῶν, ἐλαχίστην γενέσθαι τούτην καὶ μετρισιότατην.

³¹ 12.16; cf. Liv. 5.21.16, Val. Max. 1.5.2, Plut. *Cam.* 5.7. See D. Engels, "Dionysius of Halicarnassus on Roman Religion, Divination and Prodigious," in C. Deroux, *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History* 16 (Brussels 2012) 151–175, at 169, on the interpretative differences between Dionysius' and Livy's accounts; and Luck, *Arcana Mundi* 311, on omens provided by body movements and especially involuntary behaviours.

³² Such as the idea of mutability of fortune, on which see Hdt. 1.5.4, "For many of the cities that in ancient times were great, have become small, while those that were great in my time were formerly small. Being aware that human prosperity never stays in the same place, I will make mention of both alike" (τὰ γὰρ [ἄστεα] τὸ πάλαι μεγάλα ἦν, τὰ πολλὰ σμικρὰ αὐτῶν γέγονε· τὰ δὲ ἐπ' ἐμεῦ ἦν μεγάλα, πρότερον ἦν σμικρὰ. τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην ὧν ἐπιστάμενος εὐδαιμονίην οὐδαμὰ ἐν τούτῳ μένουσαν, ἐπιμνήσομαι ἀμφοτέρων ὁμοίως), cf. Thuc. 1.10; and the notion that wealth and prosperity attract the gods' grudge, on which see, e.g., Hdt. 1.32.1, "the divine is entirely envious and can cause disturbance" (τὸ θεῖον πᾶν ἐὸν φθονερόν τε καὶ ταραχῶδες); also 3.40.2 (τὸ θεῖον ἐπισταμένῳ ὡς ἔστι φθονερόν), 7.10ε (ὁ θεὸς φθονήσας), and 7.46.4 (ὁ δὲ θεὸς ... φθονερός). On moralizing in Greek historiography see L. I. Hau, *Moral History from Herodotus to Diodorus Siculus* (Edinburgh 2016), esp. 172–193.

human affairs Dionysius stresses the inevitability of Veii's—and most importantly, of Rome's—capture. In other words, Dionysius removes human involvement from the causes of the two defeats. This is made even more evident by comparing his account with that of Livy. In Livy's version, too, Camillus utters a prayer after witnessing Veii's destruction, but he is urged to pray by purely pragmatic preoccupations at the sight of the enormous plunder (5.21.14–15). Emphatically, the scene is preceded by a discussion in the senate concerning the plunder's distribution, which dwells on the difficulties of managing the massive fortune without angering either the army, the senators, or the plebs (5.20). In Livy's version, then, the central motives are human-related.³³ It is also worth noting (I shall return to this point later) that the gods' involvement is described by Dionysius exclusively in negative terms, namely, in their function as punishers (12.13.3, ἐκ τοῦ θείου χόλον and δίκη τιμωρὸς ... παρὰ θεῶν, and 12.14.2, ἀνεπίφθονον ἑαυτῷ τε καὶ τῇ πατρίδι γίνεσθαι τὴν παροῦσαν εὐδαιμονίαν and εἰ δέ τις ... συμφορὰ ... ἀντίπαλος τῶν παρόντων ἀγαθῶν, etc.).

The next prayer to be considered is included by Dionysius in the account of Camillus' exile. After the Gauls have sacked Rome, the citizens who have taken refuge in Veii send their commander, M. Caedicius, as ambassador to Camillus (13.6.1). When Caedicius asks him to go back to Rome and recover his powers,³⁴ Camillus replies with an emotional speech, in which

³³ This presentation is compatible with Livy's constant preoccupation with vice and the corruption of morals and it was likely meant to provide a motive for Camillus' later prosecution (as already argued by Ogilvie, *Commentary* 673, 677). On Livy's treatment of *avaritia* and *luxuria* see, e.g., Miles, *Livy* 98–100, 103–105.

³⁴ Dionysius relates that Camillus had been appointed *in absentia* “absolute commander with power over war and peace” (ἡγεμόνα πολέμου καὶ εἰρήνης ἔξουσίαν ἔχοντα ἀυτοκράτορα, 13.6.1), that is, dictator. Cf. the similar phrase used at 5.73.1 about the appointment of T. Larcus Flavius as the first dictator: πολέμου τε καὶ εἰρήνης καὶ παντὸς ἄλλου πράγματος ἀυτοκράτωρ. On Camillus' appointment as dictator cf. Liv. 5.46.10–11 and Plut. *Cam.* 25.4. On Dionysius' concept of the dictatorship see H. J. Mason, “Roman

he proclaims his firm resolve to help his fellow citizens. In this response, Camillus addresses the gods again, this time with the request of blessings for his country (13.6.3–4):³⁵

And to all of you, o gods and spirits, who watch over human life, I acknowledge much gratitude for the things which you have already honoured me with, and I pray for the future that my return should be good and fortunate for the country. If it were possible for a human to foresee the things that are going to happen, I would have never prayed that my country should come into such misfortunes and need me; ten thousand times I would have chosen that my life should become unenvied and unhonoured after this, rather than to see Rome subject to the savagery of barbarian men and to hold in me alone the remaining hopes of salvation.

From a narrative perspective, it is notable that Dionysius does not interpose between Camillus' departure, Caecidius' embassy, and the Gauls' final defeat—unlike Livy, who reports numerous episodes between Camillus' exile and his triumphant return, such as the causes of the Gauls' coming to Italy (5.33–35.3), the embassy of the Fabii (5.35.4–36), the battle at the Allia (5.37–38), and the sack of Rome (5.39–43.5). Also, Livy painstakingly describes all the constitutional practicalities involved in the abrogation of Camillus' exile and his election as a dictator, which is carried out, despite the occupation of the city, through a senatorial decree and the vote of the

Government in Greek Sources: The Effect of Literary Theory on the Translation of Official Titles," *Phoenix* 24 (1970) 150–159, at 153–154; A. Kalyvas, "The Tyranny of Dictatorship: When the Greek Tyrant met the Roman Dictator," *Political Theory* 35 (2007) 412–442, esp. 419–423.

³⁵ ὑμῖν δέ, ὦ θεοί τε καὶ δαίμονες, ὅσοι τὸν ἀνθρώπινον ἐποπτεύετε βίον, ὧν τε ἤδη τετιμῆκατέ μοι πολλὴν οἶδα χάριν, καὶ περὶ τῶν μελλόντων εὐχομαὶ καλὴν καὶ εὐτυχὴ τῇ πατρίδι γενέσθαι τὴν ἐμὴν κάθοδον. εἰ δὲ ἐνὴν ἀνθρώπων τὰ μέλλοντα συμβήσεσθαι προιδεῖν, οὐδέποτε ἂν εὐξάμην ἐς τοιαύτας ἐλθοῦσαν τυχᾶς τὴν πατρίδα δεηθῆναι μου· μυριάκις δ' ἂν εἰλόμην ἄζηλον γενέσθαι μοι καὶ ἄτιμον τὸν μετὰ ταῦτα βίον ἢ βαρβάρων ἀνθρώπων ἀμόττητη γενομένην τὴν Ῥώμην ὑποχείριον ἐπιδεῖν καὶ ἐν ἐμοὶ μόνῳ τὰς λοιπὰς ἐλπίδας τῆς σωτηρίας ἔχουσαν.

comitia curiata (5.46.7–11).³⁶ By contrast, Dionysius passes over legal and bureaucratic niceties, although these are normally important in his history.³⁷ The absence of such details may be attributed to the poor preservation of the text, but it is also conceivable that Dionysius deliberately curtailed the episode to emphasize the efficacy of Camillus' prayer and the fated character of his intervention.³⁸ As in the previous case, when Camillus' prayer is heard by the gods and provokes the Gauls' attack on Rome (13.6.1, above), here too the appeal of Camillus obtains a prompt response ensuring the Roman victory. Moreover, in this last prayer, Camillus wishes that he could take back his previous request and thus spare much suffering to his country (13.6.4), explicitly acknowledging the agency of his pleas in conditioning divine powers.

Taken together, these four passages (12.13.2–3, 12.14.2, 13.5.2–3, 13.6.3–4) create a narrative and emotional climax, which begins with the siege of Veii and the premonition of impending calamity for Rome, builds on Camillus' misfortune, and culminates in Camillus' reintegration into Roman society and his victorious fight against Rome's enemy. Dionysius' choice of a harsh language for Camillus' prayer at 13.5.2–3 has thus an important narrative function, as the prayer is part of a series of prayers and prophetic utterances, which together support the depiction of Camillus as the 'instigator' of Roman

³⁶ Cf. Ogilvie, *Commentary* 732–733. Plutarch, too, relates that Camillus, on being asked by the Roman ambassadors to take his command back, refused to do so before the citizens could legally elect him (*Cam.* 24.3, 25.3–4; cf. *Cass. Dio* 7.25.6).

³⁷ E.g., his account of the foundation of the Republic (4.71–84). Through an evocative term, C. Schultze defines Dionysius' inclination for punctilious legality as "hyperconstitutionality": "The Sole Glory of Death: Dying and Commemoration in Dionysius of Halicarnassus," in V. Hope et al. (eds.), *Memory and Mourning. Studies on Roman Death* (Oxford 2011) 78–92, at 87.

³⁸ I incline towards the second option. Dionysius' tendency to describe legal procedures down to minute details (see the previous note) suggests that if the account of Camillus' re-election was in the original text, it would have left traces elsewhere in relevant portions of the story.

fortunes through the force of his prayers as well as the idea that the gods, after all, were on Rome's side.

4. *Camillus' prayer and the 'prayers for justice'*

I now turn to my second point and consider plausible sources of inspiration for Dionysius' version. Similarities in structure, vocabulary, and tone suggest that to recreate Camillus' prayer, Dionysius (or possibly his source) may have borrowed elements from prayer ritualism and specifically prayers attested in Greek curse tablets as 'prayers for justice'.

To clarify how Camillus' utterances may be understood as 'prayers',³⁹ it will be good to recall a few facts about ancient prayers. In general, regardless of their specific context,⁴⁰ ancient prayers presented a standard structure and employed formulaic language. In his classic study, Ausfeld distinguished three components in prayers: the *invocatio* or invocation to the god(s), listing the god's epithets and powers; the *pars epica* or narrative part, in which the petitioner established his/her 'credentials' and right to request something from the god; and the *preces*, the petitioner's actual wish or request.⁴¹ The second and

³⁹ In keeping with the ancient sources: *Ant. Rom.* 13.6.1, ταῖς εὐχαῖς; cf. *Liv.* 5.32.9, *precatus*; *Plut. Cam.* 12.3, ἐπέύξατο; *App. Ital.* 9, τὴν Ἀχιλλεῖον εὐχὴν; *Cass. Dio* 6.24.6, διὰ μὲν δὴ ταῦτα εὐχὴν. The term εὐχή and its cognates are commonly used for prayers in both literary and magical texts (see D. Jakov and E. Voutiras, "Das Gebet bei den Griechen," *TheoCRA* 3 [2005] 105–141, at 108) and are also attested in curse tablets (Faraone, in *Magika Hiera* 5). F. Graf indeed emphasizes the ambivalence of the term, which may refer to prayers as well as spells or curses: "Prayer in Magic and Religious Ritual," in *Magika Hiera* 188–213, at 189.

⁴⁰ Graf, in *Magika Hiera* 188–213, argues against the traditional dichotomy between magical and non-magical contexts to understand prayers' formulation, although his analysis focuses on prayers in the Greek magical papyri. Cf. Versnel, in *Magika Hiera* 92, on the distinction between 'magic' and 'religion'.

⁴¹ C. Ausfeld, "De Graecorum precationibus quaestiones," *Jahrb. Class. Phil. Suppl.* 28 (1903) 502–547; see also H. S. Versnel, "Religious Mentality in Ancient Prayer," in *Faith, Hope, and Worship: Aspects of Religious Mentality in the Ancient World* (Leiden 1981) 1–64, with examples from both Greek and

third components were interchangeable depending on the urgency of the petitioner's wish.⁴² Compared to Greek prayers, Roman prayers could present a more elaborate *invocatio*, in which the precise identification of the deity called upon for help was felt as crucial.⁴³ In case of uncertainty, the Roman custom was to supply a name ad hoc or use formulas including either gender.⁴⁴ In complex invocations with multiple deities, the name of the individual gods preceded general divine categories.⁴⁵ There were naturally differences between prayers composed for and recited in public liturgies and individual prayers; yet the latter, however 'spontaneous', appear to have been modelled on the same standard structure.⁴⁶

Prayers or curses in magical contexts and *defixiones* were characterized by similar elements although they allowed for more flexibility and thus presented more numerous types and variations. In general (and except for the 'prayers for justice' type, discussed below), curse tablets or *defixiones* had a competitive nature, as they were mostly produced in agonistic

Roman texts; Graf, in *Magika Hiera* 189; Jakov and Voutiras, "Das römische Gebet," *TheoCRA* 3 (2005) 151–179, at 158–160.

⁴² For the function of the *pars epica* or narrative part see J. M. Bremer, "Greek Hymns," in *Faith, Hope, and Worship* 193–214, at 195–197.

⁴³ See Ch. Guittard, "Invocations et structures théologiques dans la prière à Rome," *REL* 76 (1998) 71–92.

⁴⁴ Such as *si deus si dea es*, vel sim.; see Ch. Guittard, "*Sive deus sive dea*: les Romains pouvaient-ils ignorer la nature de leurs divinités?" *REL* 80 (2002) 25–54; Versnel, in *Faith, Hope, and Worship* 14–15; J. Champeaux, "La prière du Romain," *Ktèma* 26 (2001) 267–283, at 277–278.

⁴⁵ The extreme example of this tendency is represented by the *invocatio* in prayers of *devotio*. For instance, the *devotio ducis* of Decius Mus as described by Livy begins with *Iane, Iuppiter, Mars pater, Quirine, Bellona, Lares, divi Nouensiles, di Indigetes, divi, quorum est potestas nostrorum hostiumque, dique Manes, vos precor*, etc. (Liv. 8.9.6–8). See H. S. Versnel, "Two Types of Roman *devotio*," *Mnemosyne* 29 (1976) 365–410, and Guittard, *REL* 76 (1998) 90–91. The *devotio* was essentially a self-sacrifice, in which the petitioner 'devoted' him/herself together with the enemy to the infernal gods (see discussion below).

⁴⁶ See Champeaux, *Ktèma* 26 (2001) 276–277.

contexts: the petitioner typically called upon infernal gods and demons with the expectation that they would hinder the petitioner's rival in various activities and fields of life—be they athletics, business, court, love affairs, etc.⁴⁷ Like prayers, early *defixiones* were conceivably not written but performed orally.⁴⁸ The group that Faraone identifies as “prayer formula” features *defixiones* containing a direct invocation to the gods or demons in the second person, often accompanied by epithets or the expanded description of their powers, and the request (generally through an imperative) to act “as agents of the binding.”⁴⁹ However, unlike prayers, which were fundamentally supplications or negotiations with the gods, *defixiones* had a coercive or “manipulative” aspect.⁵⁰ Also, they were more frequently addressed to unspecified gods and demons, as “in magic, it was perfectly normal for the practitioner not to know which demon he had called to his assistance.”⁵¹

The category of *defixiones* I would like to draw attention to has been identified in recent years by Henk Versnel, who labelled them—in a now widely accepted definition—as ‘prayers for justice’ and, in certain instances, ‘prayers for revenge’.⁵² Not to be confused with ‘judicial’ *defixiones*, in which

⁴⁷ Faraone, in *Magika Hiera* 1–32.

⁴⁸ Faraone, in *Magika Hiera* 4–5; Gager, *Curse Tablets* 7; Versnel, in *Faith, Hope, and Worship* 25–26.

⁴⁹ Faraone, in *Magika Hiera* 6, cf. definition at 10: “The prayer formula ... is exactly that—a prayer to underworld deities that they themselves accomplish the binding of the victim.” Faraone’s study is cited by Gager, *Curse Tablets* 13, and (extensively) A. Kropp, “How Does Magical Language Work? The Spells and Formulae of the Latin *defixionum tabellae*,” in *Magical Practice* 357–380; cf. Versnel, in *Magika Hiera* 61–62, and *Faith, Hope, and Worship* 21–26, on “offensive, indecent, and improper prayers.”

⁵⁰ Versnel, in *Magika Hiera* 92–93.

⁵¹ Versnel, in *Faith, Hope, and Worship* 15.

⁵² Or both (‘prayers for justice and revenge’); the distinction is often blurred. See in particular Versnel, in *Magika Hiera* 60–106, and “Prayers for Justice, East and West: New Finds and Publications Since 1990,” in *Magical Practice* 275–354. Objections to Versnel’s classification have been recently

the petitioner typically asked the deity to hinder or weaken an opponent in court,⁵³ these prayers did not have a competitive character but contained a request to the gods for compensation, after having received an offence, as well as punishment for the culprit(s):⁵⁴

I define ‘prayers for justice’ as pleas addressed to a god or gods to punish a (mostly unknown) person who has wronged the author (by theft, slander, false accusations or magical action), often with the additional request to redress the harm suffered by the author (e.g. by forcing a thief to return a stolen object or to publicly confess guilt).

The victim, Versnel suggests, seeks the help of a deity as his/her judicial authority, under whose care the case or the culprit or, in case of theft, the stolen object is solemnly transferred. In the subcategory of the ‘prayers for revenge’, “the punishment serves exclusively as satisfaction for the sense of justice of the injured person.”⁵⁵ In any case, the request is advanced without coercive formulas, and the person addresses the god or goddess in submissive and even flattering tones, for example, through titles expressing the god’s superiority (such as κύριος). Also, the gods invoked, unlike those in binding curses, are usually not chthonic ones. In some prayers for revenge, for instance, the god invoked is the Sun or another “overseeing” deity.⁵⁶

As the texts examined above show, the prayers of Camillus

advanced by M. Dreher, “Prayers for Justice and the Categorization of Curse Tablets,” in M. Piranomonte et al. (eds.), *Contesti magici = Contextos mágicos* (Rome 2012) 29–32. Gager refers to this category as “pleas for justice and revenge” (Gager, *Curse Tablets* 175–199). While there are abundant examples of ‘prayers for justice’ in the Latin language, especially from the later Imperial period, I focus here on earlier Greek *defixiones* to emphasize the relations between Dionysius’ text and the cultural tradition he appears to be drawing on.

⁵³ Cf. Faraone, in *Magika Hiera* 15–16, and Gager, *Curse Tablets* 116–150.

⁵⁴ Versnel, in *Magical Practice* 278–279.

⁵⁵ Versnel, in *Magika Hiera* 70.

⁵⁶ Versnel, in *Magika Hiera* 70.

loosely follow the characteristic prayer structure, as he calls upon the gods expressing his wishes while also alluding to his achievements and pious character as his ‘credentials’. In the first prayer in the narrative, he addresses Zeus and (presumably) the celestial gods, accompanying his words with the characteristic gesture of lifting his hands to the sky:⁵⁷ διατείνας εἰς οὐρανὸν τὰς χεῖρας εὔξατο τῷ τε Διὶ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις θεοῖς (12.4.2). This description corresponds to that of the other sources, which also have Camillus raise his hands and address the celestial gods.⁵⁸ His central prayer, as well as his last one, begins instead with an invocation to unknown gods and demons, which are moreover explicitly identified as the overseers of human life, ὦ θεοὶ καὶ δαίμονες, enhanced by the title ἔφοροι τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων ἔργων, “who oversee human actions” (13.5.2), and in the last prayer ὑμῖν δέ, ὦ θεοὶ τε καὶ δαίμονες, ὅσοι τὸν ἀνθρώπινον ἐποπτεύετε βίον, “who watch over human life” (13.6.3). While not definitive, this element sets some distance between Camillus’ language and the typical prayer formulas and draws a connection, however feeble, with the ‘prayers for justice’. Other elements may tie this connection faster. In their plea for compensation or revenge, the ‘prayers for justice’ imitate the formulaic language used in courts and feature terms referring to “(in)justice and punishment (e.g., Praxidike, Dike, ἐκδικέω, ἀδικέω, κολάζω, and κόλασις).”⁵⁹ In Camillus’ prayer (13.5.2–3) the gods are asked to act as judges and punishers (δικαστὰς and τιμωροὺς—a point stressed before), to evaluate whether Camillus’ life has been δίκαιος, and to take

⁵⁷ On the importance and types of gestures in prayer performance see Champeaux, *Ktèma* 26 (2001) 280–281; Jakov and Voutiras, *ThesCRA* 3 (2005) 163–165, with bibliography.

⁵⁸ Liv. 5.21.15, Val. Max. 1.5.2, Plut. *Cam.* 5.5–6.

⁵⁹ Versnel, in *Magika Hiera* 68; cf. *Magical Practice* 278–279. The examples examined by Versnel present numerous references to δίκη (e.g., the phrases in *IG* III App. 103, cited at *Magika Hiera* 64, τυχεῖν τέλους δίκης, and in *IG* XII.7 p.1, cited at 69–70, ποιῆσαι με τοῦ δικαίου τυχεῖν, and κρίναι τὸ δίκαιον) and τιμωρία (e.g., Audollent 41, cited at 65).

action against τοῖς ἡδικηκόσι, if they find him innocent. The reference to the gods as “punishers” of Camillus’ offenders may be further compared to evidence recently analyzed by Versnel. The text of a curse tablet from the sanctuary of Palaimon Pankrates (Athens), for example, reads δέομαί σου, ὦ Παλαῖμον, τιμωρὸς γένοιο,⁶⁰ bearing a close resemblance to Camillus’ formulation, ἀξιῶ ... τιμωρὸς γενέσθαι μοι.

Additionally, Camillus articulates his argument according to a common structure found in ‘prayers for justice’ and particularly (but not exclusively) in spells dealing with false accusations. In these, the writer or commissioner of the curse entrusts his/her own life to the deity, with the provision that if found guilty, he/she will receive just punishment (namely, will die as a result of this self-consecration); but if found innocent, then the accuser(s) will have to pay the penalty requested by the author of the curse. This structure is recurrent in the tablets found in Demeter’s sanctuary at Cnidus and datable to the second or first century BCE. Since, as remarked by commentators,⁶¹ these tablets are highly formulaic, the following example will be sufficient to prove my point:⁶²

I, Antigone, make a dedication to Demeter, Kore, Pluto, and all the gods and goddesses with Demeter. If I have given poison/spells to Asclapiadas or contemplated in my soul doing anything evil to him; or if I have called a woman to the temple, offering her a mina and a half for her to remove him from among the living, (if so) may Antigone, having been struck by fever, go up to Demeter and confess, and may she not find Demeter merciful but instead suffer great torments. If anyone has spoken to Asclapiadas against me or brought forward the woman, by offering her copper coins...

Structure and terminology thus establish a compelling con-

⁶⁰ D. R. Jordan, “New Curse Tablets (1985–2000),” *GRBS* 41 (2000) 10; cf. Versnel, in *Magical Practice* 311–312, with bibliography at n.113. In another example, the petitioners consecrate their offender to the gods of the underworld ὅπως τιμωρηθεῖ (Versnel 317).

⁶¹ Versnel, in *Magika Hiera* 72–73; Gager, *Curse Tablets* 189–190.

⁶² Audollent 1 = *I.K. Knidos* I 147; transl. Gager, *Curse Tablets* 189.

nection between the text of Camillus' prayer at 13.5.2–3 and extant texts of 'prayers for justice'. To these elements can be added another to reinforce my argument. Versnel emphasizes the markedly emotional tone of several 'prayers for justice', and especially those demanding revenge or punishment for the culprit rather than redress: "This [tone] may be manifested in harsh terms of abuse, and especially in the cursing of (extended) lists of body parts ... that are to be afflicted, thus causing the target to suffer, waste away, and even die."⁶³ As we have seen, Camillus' tone is also highly emotional. In his prayer he expresses bitterness and frustration at his unfair treatment, which are chiefly manifest in his wish that the gods send "perils and fears" (κινδύνους καὶ φόβους) upon his offenders, forcing them to seek his help (δι' οὐς ἀναγκασθήσονται μηδεμίαν ἄλλην ἐλπίδα σωτηρίας ὀρῶντες ἐπ' ἐμὲ καταφυγεῖν, 13.5.3). The idea that through divine intervention the Romans will be compelled (ἀναγκασθήσονται) to demand Camillus' return—and thus to withdraw the charges that caused his exile—may be regarded as a request for redress, according to the scheme outlined above. Camillus implores the gods to be reinstated in his position as a benevolent and successful leader, of which he was unjustly deprived, not much differently from a victim of false accusations or a victim of theft asking the gods for the restitution of a stolen item. The stolen item, as it were, is Camillus' dignity and social stature.

Before concluding, I would add some considerations to broaden the present discussion and establish further connections between *defixiones* and Roman practices of *consecratio* of enemies and objects. The *sacratio capitis*—consecration to the gods of the head and possessions of a person found guilty of

⁶³ Versnel, in *Magical Practice* 280. The characteristics used to define 'prayers for justice' rarely occur all together in the same prayer; see Versnel, in *Magika Hiera* 64–68 and *Magical Practice* 327–342, on the 'border area', viz., on a hybrid group of prayers presenting mixed characteristics, some of which borrowed from 'straight' *defixiones*, making clear distinctions problematic.

heinous crimes—is an illuminating example. Traditionally, this practice was created to safeguard the Republic (from monarchical coups) and then the plebeians' rights and magistrates, around the same time when the *defixiones* were becoming popular tools to devote rivals and wrongdoers to the gods. The *sacratio capitis* had a public nature, whereas the *defixiones* entailed a private, secretive form of consecration, but they shared the same basic notion.⁶⁴ Another instance of public consecration at Rome was the *devotio*, a form of self-sacrifice in which one consecrated one's own and the enemy's life to the infernal gods, and which thus acted as a magical spell on one's enemy. The *devotio* created a link between the person 'devoting' oneself and the enemy, thus joining their fates.⁶⁵ Again, there is a clear correspondence between this practice and the *defixiones*, including the idea that both the people subjected to *devotio* and the curse tablets would be 'buried'.⁶⁶ Echoes of these motifs have parallels in literature. In his *Life of Sulla*, Plutarch relates that, before marching on Rome, Sulla dreamed that a goddess (either the Great Mother or Minerva or Bellona) gave him a thunderbolt and bade him smite his enemies with it, naming them one by

⁶⁴ Attilio Mastrocinque has directed my attention to the point made in this paragraph. The comparison between Greek *defixiones* and *sacratio capitis* is explored in his article "Lex sacra e teste votive," in A. Comella et al. (eds.), *Depositati votivi e culti dell'Italia antica dall'età arcaica a quella repubblicana* (Bari 2005) 25–30. The breadth of publications on the *sacratio capitis* and the juridical figure of the *homo sacer* is vast; the collection in Th. Lanfranchi (ed.), *Autour de la notion de sacer* (Rome 2017), offers, to my knowledge, the most up-to-date bibliography and approaches and is a good starting point for research on the topic.

⁶⁵ Versnel, *Mnemosyne* 29 (1976) 365; see n.45 above. In the Cnidian prayers the self-consecration was only temporary and functioned as a pledge, in the unlikely case that the petitioner was not declaring the truth to the gods (cf. Versnel, in *Magika Hiera* 73). In this sense, Camillus' prayer is closer to a 'prayer for justice' than to a *devotio*.

⁶⁶ The *devotio* may also be compared to the practice of burying or destroying statues (*kolossoi*) in place of humans; see Mastrocinque, in *Depositati votivi* 27.

one (*Sull.* 9.4—in a possible allusion to Sulla’s proscription lists). As observed by Silvia Marastoni in her study of Sullan-age ideology, the order of the goddess recalls the practice of individually naming rivals in *defixiones* of political content.⁶⁷

The idea that one could ‘gift’ oneself or one’s enemy or the enemy’s property or (in traditional *defixiones*) body parts and stolen goods to the gods in exchange for reparation or personal advantage was pervasive and widely shared by both Greeks and Romans as a common trait of their religious mentality.

5. Conclusion

Literary reconstructions of historical and legendary narratives employ a variety of sources, even unexpected or unusual, and including non-literary and popular traditions. The question why an author accords his preference to one source over another is important to ask since it may lead to a better understanding of an author’s aims and methods and may provide hints about the composition and expectations of the targeted audience. I hope to have shown that Dionysius (or his source) constructed the account of Camillus’ legend in a deliberate and unique manner by borrowing the language and sentiment of religious and magical practices. Through a well-wrought sequence of prayers and prophecies, his narrative develops around the divine intervention solicited, twice explicitly, by Camillus. The perception the reader has from this is that the Roman hero not only fulfills providential plans leading Rome to victory, but he also instigates the gods directly through the powerful language of his prayers. The words and structure of his central wish, which causes the Gallic invasion of the city, vividly recall those of ‘prayers for justice’ found in curse tablets, a widespread means of communication with the divine and—as far as we know—a means that was believed to work. Dionysius thus adds fascinating nuance to his description by implying that

⁶⁷ S. Marastoni, *Servio Tullio e l’ideologia sillana* (Rome 2009) 46 n.211, and on Sulla’s dream “Fulminare i nemici. Silla, Postumio e l’ars fulguratoria,” *Klio* 90 (2008) 223–233, with further bibliography.

Camillus, in all instances, obtained just reparation from the gods, while emphasizing that Rome's victory was, all along, the gods' design. Camillus' language, in a mixture of religious, juridical, and magical elements, adds immediacy and an emotional tone to the action and a sense that the events described had a divine source. Dionysius may have used here the work of a late annalist (Tubero?)—whose political views he would not necessarily share—but he certainly did so by adapting the source material to create an original and effective story.⁶⁸

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