

Fragments of Historical Fiction in Juan Luis Vives

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Juan Luis Vives is known as an early sixteenth century philosopher, educational reformer, satirist, and political commentator. His fictitious writings, including dialogue, satire, fable, declamation, and imaginary journey, among which we find the *Declamationes Sullanae* (here abbreviated *DS*), have attracted notice. He is less well known (or perhaps not known at all) as the writer specifically of what we would consider historical fiction.¹

In 1520, with a 1538 revision, Vives published the *Declamationes Sullanae*, a series of five speeches centering on whether or not the Roman dictator Sulla should end his bloody reign and lay down his supreme office. In Declamations 1 and 2 a pair of advisers («Fundanus», a fictional character, and Fonteius) argue respectively for and against Sulla's retention of power. Declamation three is Sulla's own resignation speech. Declamations four and five are anti-Sullan attacks in the voice of Marcus Aemilius Lepidus, inspired by Sallust, *Histories* 1,55, which is a short but complete oration ascribed to Lepidus upon assumption of the consulship of 78 BCE after Sulla's withdrawal.² Fictitious interludes occur, rather without warning, in a literary fabric that in general is solidly

¹ C. Bernal Lavesa, «Instrumentalización de la ficción en J.L. Vives», en F. Grau – J. M^a Maestre – J. Pérez (eds.), *Litterae humaniores del Renacimiento a la Ilustración. Homenaje al Profesor José María Estellés*. València, Universitat de València, 2009, pp. 87-100, has surveyed the examples of Vives's fictitious writings, with the conspicuous and puzzling absence of the *DS*. I will argue here that the *DS* contain fictitious episodes and insertions that fall in a hazy area beyond the boundaries which he elsewhere stipulates, and respects, for fiction.

² I abbreviate the declamation titles as d1, d2, etc. Quotes from the *DS*, with my translations, are taken by permission from J. L. Vives, *Declamationes Sullanae II*, ed. and translated by Edward V. George, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 2012. I cite passages by declamation paragraph number, and by volume and page number in *VOO*.

grounded in Plutarch, Sallust, Appian, Livy, Cicero, Florus, Lucan, Valerius Maximus, and a range of other ancient sources. The result exhibits qualities of what we are accustomed to call historical fiction. In this study I will sketch some of the fictitious interludes, and will then point out some ways in which they are extraordinary among Vives's writings.

Vettius Picens

Vettius Picens is one of some dozen scoundrels Vives's *Lepidus* reviews in d5. From the sources on Vettius there is copious evidence of his later involvement with the conspirator Catiline; but the only document pertinent here is the speech of Sallust's *Lepidus*:

...in other words, [I am labeled an agitator] because you will not be saved and secure enough in your power unless Vettius of Picenum and Cornelius the scribe squander the honestly earned goods of others, unless you endorse all the proscriptions of the innocent committed for the sake of their wealth, the torture of illustrious men, the devastation of the city by flight and slaughter, the disposal of wretched citizens' goods put up for sale or given away like booty from the Cimbri. (Sall. *Hist.* 1,55,17)³

Here is what Vives makes of this allusion:

I will name some illustrious examples [of Sulla's rotten associates]: Vettius of Picenum, hopelessly swamped in debt, insatiably greedy for plunder, ruinously prodigal in luxurious living...⁴

Then something had to be saved for the fine leader of Gallic butchers, although he is less an owner of anything he might part with than a seeker of anything he can prey upon and rob.⁵ For the luxurious needs of this one man the whole state with all her bag and baggage (as they say) would not be enough. Everybody knows Vettius Picens, or better «Pitchy», as he is blacker than pitch. He presented himself to you, fellow Romans, seeking the praetorship.

³ «scilicet, quia non aliter salvi satisque tuti in imperio eritis nisi Vectius Picens et scriba Cornelius aliena bene parta prodegerint, nisi approbaveritis omnes proscriptiones innoxiorum ob divitias, cruciatus virorum illustrium, vastatam urbem fuga et caedibus, bona civium miserorum quasi Cimbricam praedam venum aut dono datum». Vettius also occurs later as a henchman of Catiline (Q. Cic. *Comm. pet.* 10).

⁴ Ego vobis nonnullos edam, illustres sane viros: Vettius Picens, obrutus aere alieno, inexplibili in rapiendo avaritia, perditissima in luxu prodigalitate. (d5.27; *VOO* 2:457)

⁵ Vettius is called a Gallic butcher because Picenum is in a district of Italy called Gallia Togata.

When he failed, Sulla made him a surveyor at Forum Corneliai, in which post he was manhandled by veterans for his sordid and rapacious habits; it looked as though he might get killed, but he threw away his measuring pole, decamped to Sulla's hangout on a stormy night, and pleaded that he could not go on living without Sulla's company. Then he apportioned everything over to himself; if you wish to calculate it all with that ordinary ten-foot pole, you will be sorry you didn't make an aedile out of this wonderful supervisor of measures.⁶

It is Vives who seizes on the pun latent in *Picens*. More striking is how concrete, specific, and dramatic is his fabrication out of whole cloth of Vettius's failure at the praetorship, surveying career, cowardly flight, and ultimate self-aggrandizement. No source connects Vettius with Forum Corneliai.⁷

Tarulla and Scyrrhus

This is a pair of slaves mentioned but once, in this bare allusion by Sallust's Lepidus:

Or who does not want everything altered, save the victory? The soldiers, for example, by whose blood the riches of Tarulla and Scyrrhus, the meanest of slaves, were acquired?⁸

This slight remark inspires Vives to four enhancements in Lepidus's words:

⁶ Tum etiam bono carnificum Gallorum duci aliquid erat dandum, quamquam hic non tam habet quod relinquat quam quaerit quod praedetur et rapiat. Huius enim unius luxuriae tota haec civitas cum suo (ut dicunt) victu et vestitu non suffecerit. Vettius Picens (immo Piceus, est enim atrior quavis pice) notus est omnibus, qui petiit a vobis, Quirites, praeturam; quam cum non impetrasset, factus est a Sulla decempedator ad forum Corneliai, in quo munere, cum propter sordes et rapacitatem manus essent ei a veteranis allatae, spectaretque res ad extremum discrimen, abiecta decempeda, intempesta nocte confugit ad Sullae ganeam; cuius desiderium negabat diutius se posse perferre. Hic intus sibi omnia decempedavit, quae si volueritis metiri vulgari ista vestra decempeda, paenitebit vos tam bonum auctorem mensurarum aedilem non creasse. (d5.42; VOO 2:466)

⁷ For Vives's choice of Forum Corneliai as the scene of Vettius's fictitious disgrace before the soldiers see Prudentius, *Peristephanon* 9,1-2: «Sylla Forum statuit Corneliai». Lepidus's speech (Sall. *Hist.* 1,55,23), complaining that the soldiers' allotments were poor farmland, provides evidence of a reason for turmoil over the assignment process.

⁸ Nam praeter satellites commaculatos quis eadem volt aut quis non omnia mutata praeter victoriam? Scilicet milites, quorum sanguine Tarulae Scirtoque, pesumis servorum, divitiae partae sunt? (Sall. *Hist.* 1,55,21)

[Sulla] asserted that it was possible to reestablish the republic only if every one of you were to be driven off your fathers' and grandfathers' farms and possessions, and forced to surrender the soil, while it was all to be given away as the booty of war. And to whom? To Tarulla and Scyrrhus, archetypal worthless and defiled slaves;...⁹

Who, then, will run for office? Bandits and murderers, Fufidius, Tarulla, Scyrrhus, swept in from the worst of barbarity, thus making magistrates out of men who were never even citizens, conferring royal status on people whose backs are still scarred with the whip and purple with welts.¹⁰

Heaven forbid that I should pass over Tarulla, or I will appear to have slighted the honor of Sulla. In recognition of his service presiding over Greek banquets and his superiority over Greekling profligacy in drinking, Sulla wished to name him Master of Horse, to ensure that the equites would have no better a master than did the general populace. He would have succeeded, had he been able to circumvent the laws for this man whom no laws had ever restrained. Tarulla said that in place of the office he was content to receive five thousand tax-free iugera of Venafran, Campanian, and Setinian land.¹¹

I do not know this Scyrrhus, a gladiator (as they say) with numerous victories, rumored to have been an innkeeper in Thessaly, and later to have done battle as a net fighter repeatedly at Ephesus and Tralles. We all know which fields he possesses, the actual property of Roman knights, men of real valor.¹²

⁹ Neque enim aliter constitui rem publicam posse dictitabat, nisi vos omnes patriis et avitis maiorumque vestrorum fundis et possessionibus deiecti solum verteretis, eaeque in mercedem bellorum darentur. Quibus? Tarullae ac Scyrrho, nequissimis et conspurcissimis omnium servorum... (d5.27; VOO 2:456)

¹⁰ Quinam ergo tandem petent? Latrones et parricidae, Fufidius, Tarulla, Scyrrhus, ex ultima barbaria deducti, ut magistratus essent qui numquam fuerant cives... (d5.35; VOO 2:461)

¹¹ Non possum tacere de Tarulla, ne invidisse videar honori Sullae. Hunc enim, quod Graecis conviviis praefuisset nequitiamque Graeculam bibendo superasset, magistrum equitum voluit Sulla dicere, ne equites meliorem multo haberent magistrum quam populus; et fecisset, si potuisset eum solvere legibus, quem nullae umquam leges tenuissent. Hic pro magisterio equitum contentum se esse dixit quinque milibus iugerum agri Venafrani, Campani, Setini, immunibus. (d5.43; VOO 2:466)

¹² Scyrrhum non novi, gladiatorem (ut aiunt) multarum palmarum, quem in Thessalia ferunt fuisse cauponatorem, postea Ephesi et Trallis retiarium saepe depugnasse. Quos habet agros equitum Romanorum fortissimorum virorum, omnes novimus (d5.45; VOO 2:467). I render *depugnasse* as intransitive, vs. Vives 2012:275.

For Tarulla, as with Vettius, a near miss at high political office is followed by an alternative disgraceful role: in Tarulla's case, supervision of the licentious parties for which Sulla was known.¹³ Scyrrhus's low birth and degraded occupations intensify the disgrace of his ownership of lands belonging to respectably-born Roman citizens. Where Vettius emblemizes the proscriptional land grab, Tarulla and Scyrrhus act as examples of the Sullan gang's moral profligacy and inferiority to the sterling Romans whom they threaten to supplant.

«Antronius» and Publius Sulla

Cicero mentions Publius Cornelius Sulla, a relative of the dictator, as a proscription profiteer.

Nor indeed will the seed and source of civil wars ever be absent as long as depraved men both recall that bloody auction spear and hope for its return; Publius Sulla had brandished it when his relative was dictator, and that selfsame Sulla has not put away that spear stained even more criminally now after thirty-six years.¹⁴

In the historical record, Publius is found later in shady company with Publius *Autronius* Paetus as co-consul designate in 66, when both were convicted of bribery and failed to take office.¹⁵ In the speech of Vives's Lepidus, Publius Sulla and one *Antronius* appear in close succession, interrupted briefly by another Sulla:

The standard bearer of the lot is Publius Sulla, Lucius's close associate and partner in crime, who prides himself on having collected enough money to purchase a dictatorship and seized enough land to form the basis of a conspiracy. Every morning, before descending into the forum, he and his sweet little wife and fellow-plotters would reckon what his profit would be from that day's auction. Then there was Lucius Cornelius, Sulla's scribe, whose inscribers were such as to enable him to turn from a scribe into a proscriber! Let this wonder be added to the long record of prodigies that we witnessed

¹³ Cf. e.g. Plutarch, *Sulla* 36,1.

¹⁴ Nec vero umquam bellorum civilium semen et causa deerit, dum homines perditam hastam illam cruentam et meminerint et sperabunt: quam P. Sulla cum vibrasset dictatore propinquo suo, idem sexto tricesimo anno post a sceleriore hasta non recessit. (Cic., *off.* 2,29). «...thirty-six years later in the still more extensive sales of the Caesarian proscriptions Sulla was an eager participant» (Macdonald in Cicero 1989:302). Vives overlooks Cicero's commendation of Publius Sulla's alleged service in saving senators and knights during the purges (Cic. *Sul.* 72).

¹⁵ T.R.S. Broughton, *The Magistrates of the Roman Republic*, Atlanta, Scholars Press, 1986, vol. 2, p. 157.

in those years. Next, Publius Antronius, from Antronia (I think), the city in Magnesia that gave birth to the Greek proverb: «That's where you find the big asses and the dumbest natives». He is the same man as that hawk of good land lots, whom Sulla produced from the cave of a gladiatorial school because word has it that he is an expert at making straight for the vitals and killing his opponent with the first blow.¹⁶

Vives employs the auction-spear image as the starting point for his creation of the daily morning profit forecast scene between Publius and his conjured-up wife. For «Antronius», meanwhile, Vives has dipped into Erasmus's *Adagia*:

Antronius asinus / An Antronian ass... was in old days applied to a man of shapeless and overgrown physical bulk, and at the same time in mind a boob and a blockhead. Antron was a city in Thessaly, which got its name from its abundance of caverns and grottoes. Here, they say, the asses were at one time exceptionally large, which gave the proverb its currency. The authorities are Stephanus and Suidas.¹⁷

The disreputable *Autronius*, later a Catilinarian conspirator whose character Cicero excoriates, is simultaneously evoked and replaced by the fictitious Thessalian oaf.¹⁸

¹⁶ Antesignanus omnium Publius Sulla, Lucii Sullae propinquus et in sceleribus germanus, qui se iactat satis pecuniae ad emendam dictaturam collegisse, satis agrorum ad alendam coniurationem invasisse, qui quotidie mane in forum proditurus, domi prius cum uxorcula et collusoribus computabat quantum ad se ex illius diei esset auctione rediturum. Et Lucius Cornelius, scriba Sullae, qui sic scripsit ut posset iam fieri ex scriptore proscripserit. Hocque prodigium accedit ad tam multa quae per hosce annos vidimus. Publius deinde Antronius, ex Antronia puto Magnesia civitate, quae locum dedit Graeco proverbio, quo ingentes asini et stolidissimi homines denotantur. Neque enim alius est iste praeco bonorum laterum, quem ex antro ludi gladiatorii Sulla produxit; quod, ut ferunt, primo ictu petere vitalia et hominem conficere probe calleat. (d5,41; *VOO* 2:465.) «P. Sulla», as auctioneer, in Cicero, and «Cornelius» as a «scribe» in Sallust *Hist.* 1,55,17, are considered one and the same by modern commentators; Vives makes them two people. Elsewhere Vives's Lepidus describes Publius as a «slanderer of citizens, buyer of the citizens' loot that surrounded his birth and upbringing» (d4.66; *VOO* 2:439).

¹⁷ «Ἀντρονίως ὄνος, id est *Antronius Asinus*, olim dicebatur, qui deformi praegrandique mole corporis esset, caeterum ingenio stupido baroque. Antron autem ciuitas erat Thessaliae, nomen inde sortita, quod cauernis et specubus abundaret. Illic aiunt asinos insigni magnitudine quondam fuisse, unde prouerbium increbuit. Autores Stephanus et Suidas». (*Adagia* 2,5,68; *ASD* II-3:450.)

¹⁸ Cicero's attack on Autronius: *Sull.* 71.

Lucius Luscius

Asconius, the commentator on Cicero, says simply:

This man whom Cicero names, Lucius Luscius, well-known centurion of Sulla made rich by the victory –for he had owned a hundred thousand sesterces– was condemned not long before Cicero’s speech [the *In toga candida* of 64 BCE]. He was charged with the murder of three proscription victims.¹⁹

Dio Cassius cites very briefly Luscius’s later trial and punishment for his role in the proscriptions.²⁰

Here is what Vives makes of the jejune material:

Next comes Lucius Luscius, Sulla’s torchbearer, a destitute cutthroat before the victory but afterward a well-off centurion. That leech on the blood and the property of Romans is now worth more than a hundred thousand sesterces. Sulla put him in charge of his pack of jades and strumpets, with one limitation: that he not desert and betray them the way his uncle Turpilius did to a garrison of our soldiers at Vaga. «In good faith», as he puts it, he consented to perform the commission, as long as the pay was not the same as the amount that Titus Turpilius had taken from Jugurtha in Numidia. Luscius took possession of a vast field as compensation for his duties as leader and prefect. This good shepherd, not satisfied with the usufruct of his flock and a share of Sulla’s power, also obtained a reward for his unbearably reckless audacity; for here in mid forum, in broad daylight and before the eyes of all, in order to butcher those proscribed by Sulla, he unhesitatingly made an attack on a group of citizens. Some of them, innocent and never proscribed, were wounded; others, fatally injured but still breathing, he dragged off by the feet and threw into the Tiber.

Luscius’s associate Marcus Fonteius, not an altogether bad citizen, used to caution him: «Friend Lucius, pardon my frankness: you are in possession of all that land in violation of the law, even the law of your own master.» «If I violate the Cornelian law,» Luscius replied, «I am not breaking the Luscian law». I pray you, fellow citizens, bring this fellow Luscius out –that is, if he can open his eyes, crawl out of the dark of his eatery, and squint at the splendor of daylight. Let

¹⁹ «Hic quem nominat L. Luscius, notus centurio Sullanus divesque ex victoria factus –nam amplius centies possederat– damnatus erat non multo ante quam Cicero dixit. Obiectae sunt ei tres caedes proscriptorum». Asc. *Tog.* 81 (OCT ed. A. C. Clark, 1962).

²⁰ «In the following year [64 BCE],... the man who had slain Lucretius at the instance of Sulla, and another [i.e. Luscius] who had slain many of the persons proscribed by him, were tried for the murders and punished». (Dio Cassius 37,10,2; trans. Loeb.)

him instruct us on just what this Luscian law is that treats citizens' land and property so freehandedly.²¹

In addition to the lurid creation of a shameful, greed-stoked, and violent backstory for Luscius, the appearance of Turpilius is a complete surprise. When Turpilius's army was caught unawares and massacred at Vaga in Numidia against Jugurtha three decades earlier, he was the lone survivor. He was flogged and beheaded in disgrace.²² There is no evidence that Turpilius had anything at all to do with Luscius. Perhaps it was the fortuitous echo of *turpis*, «disgraceful», in the name that influenced Vives to make him Luscius's uncle.²³

These are among Vives's most imaginative creations. Others may be found, such as when he spins out into a pair of scenes the ancient anecdote that Faustus Sulla, the dictator's young son, boasted so annoyingly of his father's proscriptional achievements that Cassius, his schoolyard companion and the future conspirator, punched him.²⁴ In the first setting elaborated by Vives, at a gory victory banquet, Sulla reassures Faustus that when he grows up he can proscribe whom he wishes. In an immediately following scene, Lepidus is sitting before his house, looking on as little Faustus, passing by with his pedagogue, throws a tantrum and hurls threats

²¹ 44. «Est et Lucius quidam Luscus, lanternarius Sullae, ante victoriam inops et egens sicarius, post victoriam opulentus centurio. Amplius enim quam centies possidet hirudo illa cruoris et bonorum civium. Istum praefecit Sulla gregibus exoletorum et scortorum, sed ea lege, ne illos ita desereret ac proderet ut Turpilius avunculus eius praesidium nostrorum militum Vaccae. Ipse curaturum se commissa ac servaturum recepit bona (ut dicit) fide, modo non offeratur tanta pecunia quantam Titus Turpilius in Numidia a Iugurtha acceperat. Hic occupat latissimum agrum, stipendium ducatus et praefecturae suae; non contentus bonus pastor usufructu sui gregis, communi cum Sulla dominio, praemium etiam non ferendae temeritatis et audaciae, quod hic medio foro, luce et palam, ut proscriptos a Sulla mactaret, impetum in globum civium facere non dubitavit. Et sauciatis aliquot civibus innocentibus, non proscriptis, illos alios ad mortem vulneratos, verum tamen adhuc spirantes, tractos per pedes in Tiberim praecipitavit. Propinquus eius Marcus Fonteius, civis non usque adeo malus, solet illum admonere: 'Luci noster, bona venia, contra leges omnes possides tantum agri, etiam contra legem tui domini'. 'Si contra legem' inquit 'Corneliam, non contra legem Lusciam'. Oro vos, Quirites, prodeat huc iste Luscus, si modo aperire oculos et ex tenebricosa illa popina lucem splendoremque intueri sustinet, doceatque nos omnes quaeenam sit ista Lusciana lex, de agris et bonis civium tam liberalis» (d5, 44-45; *VOO* 2:467).

²² 109 BCE. Sallust, *Jugurtha*, 67-68.

²³ It happens that Luscus and Turpilius, two early comic poets, turn up together in a canon attributed by Gellius (15,24) to Volcacius Sedigitus.

²⁴ Val. Max. 3,1,3; Plut. *Brut.* 9,2.

of death and disaster.²⁵ But enough has been presented here to illustrate Vives's liberal use of fictitious details.²⁶

Before analyzing the fictions, it is pertinent to note that to a degree unparalleled in any known surviving declamatory predecessor, Latin or Greek, ancient or later, Vives evokes historical writing in several ways: in the thoroughness with which he nearly always draws his details from massively documentable ancient historical sources; in the presentation of speeches of the kind that occur in alternation with narrative in ancient histories, as emphasized by his use of Sallust, *Histories* 1,55 as a springboard for ideas; in the dramatic chronological unfolding of the action underlying the declamations over a period of time; and, finally, in the addition of *argumenta* to the 1538 edition, which provides a modest sense of narrative-speech alternation as in classical historians. For good measure, as we have seen above, he introduces narrative into the speeches. Thus, the fictitious departures occur in an otherwise quasi-historical literary texture.

To proceed: the fictions in the *DS* acquire added significance if we consider them in the light of Vives's theoretical concerns over the preservation in literature of *veritas*, veracity, and then attempt to locate the *DS* among his observations. In the first place, none of the introductory materials to the *DS* themselves, two dedicatory epistles (1520, 1538) plus a 1520 Preface, takes up the question of veracity.

The *Veritas fucata sive de licentia poetica* of 1522, a satirical dialogue that problematizes literary adherence to truth, narrates a compromise between the *falsiani*, who desire to deviate from truthful discourse, and *Veritas* personified.²⁷ *Veritas* consents to

²⁵ d4. 50-51 (VOO 2:429-30).

²⁶ A. Lintott, in the course of making the argument that an extant fragment of Roman *acta diurna* was a forgery, and Vives could have been the forger, noted briefly some of Vives's fictions: «In the *Declamationes Syllanae* we find both recherché knowledge and invention of facts. The latter is admittedly acceptable in such compositions but still indicative of as cast of mind». (Lintott, Andrew, «Acta Antiquissima: A Week in the History of the Roman Republic», *Papers of the British School at Rome* 54 (1986), p. 225.) When reading Lintott's reference to «such compositions» one must be aware that Vives's employment of historical underpinnings in an otherwise securely authenticated dramatic series makes the *Sullan Declamations* one ensemble of a kind. It was, of course, beyond the scope of Lintott's study to fully explore what we can call historical fiction in the *DS*.

²⁷ VOO 2:517-31. This dialogue supersedes and passes beyond the concerns of Vives's earlier *Veritas fucata* of 1519 / 1514, a *praelectio* to his dialogue *Triumphus*

a deal in hopes of winning over more followers. In summary, it is agreed that falsehoods are permissible in carefully defined cases: a) poetry on events prior to the First Olympiad (technically, 776 BCE); b) additional material originated by great authors, endorsed by public consensus, and altered by subsequent poets, as with the story of Vergil's Dido; c) «Milesian tales», in the manner of Lucian or Apuleius, since they are recognized on sight as fiction; and d) fables, comedies and dialogues, also obviously fictitious, if invented for the purpose of fostering decent and moral conduct. The fictitious interludes of the *DS* fail to find a place among any of these specified classes, either because they are not poetry or because they lie outside the genres exempted.

Elsewhere, in the *De ratione dicendi* and the *De disciplinis*, Vives similarly considers the role of *veritas* in the writing of history. In this case there is no compromise: truthfulness is simply the historian's first obligation, and the best way to achieve verisimilitude is to tell the truth.²⁸ Thus historical material which *merely* projects verisimilitude is unnecessary and not worth attempting.²⁹ Types of history such as the writings of Thucydides, Livy, Sallust, etc., «pertain to the narration of a deed, to delight and engagement for the reader.» *Verba, sententiae, and orationes* may be added: fictitious details are not countenanced. As long as the *summa* of a narrative accords with the truth, the documents in question remain entitled to be called «veracious narrative». «The body itself must necessarily be dedicated to truth; color and embellishment are bound by no requirements».³⁰ Here the language is strikingly solemn: «*corpus ipsum oportet sacrari veritati*». Vives approves Lucian's assertion

Christi (EW 1:69-83; VOO 7:101-08). That work, mostly occupied with allegorical descriptions of *Veritas* and *Mendacium* (the latter a daughter of the devil) and a lament by the former, denounces the corrupting influence of the lies of pagan or otherwise degraded poets beginning with Homer. On the possibility that Vives's target in this first *VF* might have been Fausto Andrelini, creator of licentious verses, or the moral climate of the University of Paris during the reigns of Charles VIII and Louis XII, see A. Bonilla, *Luis Vives y la filosofía del Renacimiento*, Madrid, 1929, vol. 1, p. 69 and Charles Fantazzi in EW 1:61.

²⁸ *De ratione dicendi*, Bk. 2, ch. 3 (*De historia*), ch. 4 (*Narratio probabilis*); VOO 2:206,213.

²⁹ «Ea sunt maxime probabilia quae et vera, nam quicumque ex veritate sumatur fucus, nullus est tam expressus et germanus quam ipsamet veritas»; VOO 2:213.

³⁰ «modo rei summa vero consentiat, non amittunt verae narrationis nomen; corpus ipsum oportet sacrari veritati, colorem et cultum nihil est necessum», VOO 2:206.

that history can no more convey anything false (*falsum quid*) than a windpipe can deliver anything except breath.³¹ The *De causis corruptarum artium*, Book 2, chs. 5 and 6 in Vives's *De disciplinis*, discusses the nature of history; its early corruption by lies; and the proper matter and procedure in the writing of history. *Veritas* as the first rule is again implicit in Vives's review of the insinuation of falsehoods.³²

This takes us to the *Sullan Declamations*. Where, in the landscape of fictions accepted by Vives, should they be situated? On the one hand, fabrication in declamation is a common practice. Vives even introduces a fictitious speaker, Fundanus, in d1 without comment on his historical nonexistence: «First, in the person of Quintus Fundanus I urged Sulla not to abdicate the dictatorship».³³ Further, these five declamations, with particular and conscious exceptions such as those shown above, are founded on a fabric of meticulously authenticated historical details. In this respect, Vives takes the fusion of history and fiction to a level unprecedented in all declamatory literature to date, ancient or later, Latin or Greek.³⁴ Thus, in the *DS*, despite his fidelity to the ancient writers, and his acknowledged particular debt to a historical source in the form

³¹ VOO 2:206. In discussing *descriptio*, near his coverage of *historia*, Vives countenances introduction of details that engage various human senses (sight, hearing, etc.); although one must fall back on such details in describing a discipline such as philosophy, he cites anthropomorphic delineations of certain philosophical truths and «cetera quae de tanta disciplina non minus magnifice dici possunt quam vere» («other truths which can be expressed about so lofty a discipline no less grandly than truthfully»: VOO 2:199). None of his advice regarding *descriptio* verges toward acceptance of complete fictitious scenarios.

³² VOO 6:101-109. History, as Cicero says, is «the light of truth» («lux veritatis», 102); early myths are deceptions (ibid.); populations, the Greeks especially, slant narrative in their favor (103-04); Greeks roam afield to create foreign histories (e.g. of the Persians or Egyptians) and thus protect themselves from being caught in lies (104); Romans' achievements are exaggerated, as Cicero asserts (105); right history is the absolute image of truth, neither belittling nor exaggerating («...historiam esse imaginem veritatis: imago ea est absolutissima, quae rem neque maiorem reddit neque minorem», 106); what does not contain the truth is not entitled to be called history («si veritatem non habet, obtinere nomen suum non potest», 109); etc.

³³ «Nos ergo primum persona Quinti Fundani dissuasimus Sullae ut dictaturam ne deponeret». Vives, *DS* Part One, 14-15; from the 1538 dedication. The 1520 preface is more succinct; referring merely to himself, Vives says «I have first spoken against, then for the proposition...» («Nos igitur dissuasimus prius, deinde suasimus...») (*DS* Part One, 108-09.)

³⁴ See note 42 below.

of Lepidus's Sallustian speech, the rule of historical veracity is vulnerable to deviation.

A close look at Vives's remarks on *narratio*, adjoining his discussion of *historia*, is pertinent:

De narratione: ...quae ad explicandum paratur, veram esse par est, hanc historiam vocamus; ad persuadendum vero, si id volumus persuadere quod narratur, oportet esse probabilem, sin aliud per eam, apte est confingenda, quales sunt apologi, sin ad delectandum atque occupandos animos, ea est licentiosa.³⁵

Concerning *narratio*: ...It is reasonable that that which is composed for explication be veracious; this we call history. However, for persuasion, if we wish to persuade (the receiver) of what is narrated, it is necessary that it be probable. But if another end [is to be sought] through narrative, it is to be constructed [or fabricated] suitably, as with *apologi*. But if the aim is to delight and engage minds, that [narrative] is unrestrained.³⁶

Vives thus separates *historia* from the varieties of *narratio* in which narrator and reader may settle for probability, or suitable fabrication, or even wider latitude.³⁷ Turning to the *DS*, one observes that the fictions in the ensemble are introduced into a basically documentable tissue of narrative for persuasive purposes: the dominating effect of the fictions, as demonstrated above, is to bolster Lepidus's intention to magnify the proscription profiteers' greed, debauchery, and reckless destruction of the rule of law and the lives and fortunes of honorable Romans.

Vives's comments on declamation itself do not discuss the role of veracity one way or the other, beyond implicitly accepting the inevitability of fictitious scenarios in the genre.³⁸ This observation applies to the prefatory material to the *DS* proper (an early and a late dedicatory epistle, plus a Preface to the 1520 edition), as well as his advice for the pedagogical use of declamation in *De*

³⁵ VOO 2:204

³⁶ K. Kohut, «Retórica, poesía e historiografía en Juan Luis Vives, Sebastián Fox Morcillo y Antonio Lluall», *Revista de Literatura* 52, 104 (1990), pp. 348 is helpful here.

³⁷ Even *apologi* fall into a class that is more admittedly fictitious than *historia*; the term applies to fables such as those of Aesop. Cf. H. Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik*, 3rd edition, Stuttgart, Franz Steiner Verlag, 1990, p. 229, sec. 413.

³⁸ His own frankly non-historically oriented *controversia* replying to the pseudo-Quintilianic *Paries palmatus* (*The Handprint on the Wall*) exemplifies such scenarios.

tradendis disciplinis.³⁹ Vives touches on the traditional alternation between narrative and speech in classical history, but he does so with surprising brevity, and with attention to form rather than to any advice for preserving or violating veracity.⁴⁰ Orations in history should stick to the theme of the narrative, as well as to material the historian *finds* (not «creates») to facilitate utility and enjoyment.⁴¹

Where this leaves the *DS* is a more remarkable question than it might seem at first glance. As far as I can determine, Vives had, among ancient or Renaissance Greek or Latin models, no precedent for the *DS* ensemble. There is no known previous series of fully elaborated declamations, forming a whole that revivifies dramatically a critical period in classical history, generally adhering to the ancient sources save for fictitious departures, and interspersed in the definitive (1538) edition with argumenta which fill out the narrative continuity already woven into the speeches.⁴² In its use of fiction, the *DS* complex is in a twilight zone between the compromised genres spoken of in the *De veritate sive de licentia poetica*, to which it does not quite belong, and the formally kindred writing of history, with which it bears a deeply rooted affinity while straying from the privileged sway of *veritas* demanded by Vives himself. Meanwhile, it bears some kinship with loose *narratio* intended for delight and engagement. Vives in the *DS* redesigned the declamatory genre to resemble the speech portions of traditional histories; incorporated into these speeches narrative elements that resembled the narrative portions of traditional history; securely anchored the main drift of his narrative in a continuous flow of documentable events; then embellished the ensemble with fictitious narrative fragments.⁴³

³⁹ VOO 6:360-61; *De tradendis disciplinis*, Book 4, Ch. 3.

⁴⁰ *Conciones* or *orationes*: VOO 2:209, 211-12.

⁴¹ «...et ubi nactum se scriptor crediderit materiam ad utilitatem et delectationem» (VOO 2:209).

⁴² I have surveyed the pertinent literature in E. V. George, «The *Sullan Declamations* of Juan Luis Vives: Sources and Departures», *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 38 (1989), pp. 125-133.

⁴³ The achievement shows itself as even more specifically conscious when we contrast it with Vives's declamation *Pompeius fugiens*, produced a year earlier (1519), a lament in the voice of Pompey after the disaster of Pharsalia. That composition, though historically backgrounded like the *DS*, concerns itself largely with conventional lamentations of tragedy—in fact, classical tragedy is what came to mind for Bernal Lavesa, «Instrumentalización de la ficción...», p. 91, when she ana-

I close by citing two examples of authenticated Roman individuals whose stories a noted modern writer of historical fiction amplifies, much in the way we have seen Vives employ creativity to develop characters. Lucius Cornelius Chrysogonus, Sullan henchman and ruthless profiteer, was the villain behind the trumped-up charge of parricide against Sextus Roscius the younger, whom Cicero defended in the speech *Pro Roscio Amerino*. This oration is the only source for information on Chrysogonus. Colleen McCullough, in *Fortune's Favourites*, expands on his despicable career; when he comes to Sulla and asks to be named the administrator of the proscriptions, Sulla, recognizing in Chrysogonus a loathsome and therefore serviceable tool, consents.⁴⁴ Occasional appearances by Chrysogonus in McCullough's narrative end with a wretched fate after the trial of Roscius, who is acquitted. Now Sulla needs a scapegoat. He congratulates Roscius on the acquittal, hypocritically claims to regret his underling's reprehensible conduct, and has Chrysogonus hurled off the Tarpeian Rock to his death.⁴⁵

Another instance is McCullough's presentation of Metrobius, who occurs briefly only in Plutarch's *Sulla*: early, as an actor and Sulla's lover, (2,4) and late (36,1), as a drag queen for whom Sulla's fondness has never waned. McCullough artfully exploits the long and interrupted relationship. The aging dictator meets up with Metrobius briefly after decades of absence; their affection still burns.⁴⁶ Later, at the wild celebration of Sulla's abdication from the dictatorship, the lovers are united at last.⁴⁷ After Sulla's death, McCullough's bisexual Metrobius nobly offers to escape to Cyrenaica with his other beloved, Valeria Messala, the dictator's widow and a new mother, thus protecting her and her child from possible retribution at the hands of the dead Sulla's enemies. They depart: at Sulla's funeral they are nowhere to be seen, and after a fruitless near monthlong search they are presumed slain.⁴⁸ McCullough succeeds in the art of historical fiction on a scale incomparably greater than that of Vives's *DS*, but the techniques of

lyzed that earlier declamation. From the *Pompeius fugiens* fictitious interlacings of the type found in the *DS* are quite absent.

⁴⁴ C. McCullough, *Fortune's Favourites*, New York, William Morrow, 1993, p. 225.

⁴⁵ McCullough, *Fortune's Favourites*, p. 333.

⁴⁶ McCullough, *Fortune's Favourites*, p. 288.

⁴⁷ McCullough, *Fortune's Favourites*, p. 422.

⁴⁸ McCullough, *Fortune's Favourites*, pp. 432-435.

character elaboration upon limited source material are remarkably similar in the two writers.

Worth noting, finally, is the Renaissance view of history alluded to in various statements by Karl Enenkel and colleagues:

...in the early modern period... History was not considered as a series of events from the past that had to be reconstructed as completely and accurately as possible, but as a rich field of raw material, that could be used, recycled and adapted to new needs and purposes.⁴⁹

This is not the view of history that we find in Vives's theoretical insistence on the standard of *veritas*: but remarkably, he approaches this view in the *Sullan Declamations*, where we see him using the implicitly looser conventions of declamatory practice to acquire more latitude in systematic treatment of historically documentable events, undertaking a perhaps pioneering excursion into what we will later be labeled clearly as historical fiction.⁵⁰

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⁴⁹ Enenkel, Karl - de Jong, Jan L. - de Landtsheer, Jeanine (edd.), *Recreating Ancient History: Episodes from the Greek and Roman Past in the Arts and Literature of the Early Modern Period*, Leiden, Brill, 2001, pp. vii-ix. Further statements *ad loc.*: «...the history of classical Antiquity ... offered more artistic freedom than biblical or Christian history. ...Persons and institutions from the classical past were seen and studied as examples for the present. In the early modern period the criterion for judging works of art was not the extent to which they illustrate the past correctly. ...In some cases ancient history may indeed have been 'reconstructed', yet it was practically always very consciously recreated».

⁵⁰ For comments on an earlier version of this paper, I am grateful to those who attended the American Association for Neo-Latin Studies Panel at the American Philological Association convention in Philadelphia, PA, January 7, 2012. I am also indebted to Dr. Diana Spencer of the University of Birmingham, England, for valuable conversations on the area of historical fiction.

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ABSTRACT

Examples of historical fiction are presented from Juan Luis Vives's *Sullan Declamations* (1520/1538), recreating the end of Sulla's Roman dictatorship. Vives securely anchors the speeches in a continuous flow of massively documentable events, but also embellishes the ensemble with detailed fictitious scenarios.

KEYWORDS: Rhetoric; Neo-Latin; declamation; historical fiction, Roman Republic (reception).

RESUMEN

Se presentan ejemplos de ficción histórica a partir de las *Declamaciones Sullanae* (1520/1538) de Juan Luis Vives, que recrean el final de la dictadura de Sila en Roma. Vives fundamenta con toda seguridad los discursos en la corriente continua de sucesos documentados, pero también embellece el conjunto con detallados escenarios ficticios.

PALABRAS CLAVE: retórica; neo-latín; declamación; ficción histórica; República romana (recepción).

