

DECLAMATORY *SENTENTIAE* IN VALERIUS MAXIMUS

The nature of Valerius' affiliation with the rhetorical schools of Tiberian Rome cannot be determined from existing evidence: he may have been a professor or a practicing speaker or merely an interested observer, but neither he nor any external authority provides specific details (1). Whatever the answer — to my mind the question is not of crucial importance — it is abundantly clear that his purpose in compiling the *Facta et Dicta Memorabilia* was to equip rhetoricians and declaimers with a comprehensive repertory of historical *exempla* (2).

Not surprisingly Valerius shares certain tendencies and interests with declaimers portrayed in the *Oratorum et Rhetorum Sententiae Divisiones Colores* of his contemporary Seneca the Elder (3). His lack of deference for historical truth is no less conspicuous than theirs, and some of his transgressions are identical to their own (4). The subjects he treats in individual *exempla* reflect at several junctures the *themata* of both

(1) For diverse estimates see J. W. Duff, *A Literary History of Rome in the Silver Age*², ed. A. M. Duff, London 1960, 56; C. J. Carter, *Valerius Maximus. Empire and Aftermath*, ed. T. A. Dorey, London 1975, 34; R. Helm, *Valerius* no. 239, *RE* Reihe 2, Hlbbd. 15 (1955), 93. Biographical *testimonia* were compiled by C. Kempf (ed.), *Valeri Maximi Factorum et Dictorum Memorabilium Libri Novem*, Leipzig 1854, pp. i-xi.

(2) Cf. the programmatic statement of his epitomator Julius Paris in Kempf's editio minor (Leipzig 1888, rep. 1966), p. 473: *exemplorum conquisitionem cum scirem esse non minus disputantibus quam declamantibus necessariam, decem Valerii Maximi libros... ad unum volumen epitomae coegi*. Of moderns see Kempf (above n. 1), p. viii; Carter (above n. 1) 34-36; Helm (above n. 1) 93-94; G. Thormeyer, *De Valerio Maximo et Cicerone quaestiones criticae*, diss., Göttingen 1902, 27-29; S. F. Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome*, Berkeley 1977, 261-262.

(3) Probably the *Facta et Dicta* was published between 27 and 31: see Helm (above n. 1) 90-93; C. Elscher, *Quaestiones Valerianae*, diss., Berlin 1864, 19-24. Thormeyer (above n. 2) 9-27 put the lower *terminus* at 31 on grounds of Velleius' priority, though that cannot be proved. Seneca's collection appeared a few years later, early in the reign of Caligula: see H. Bornecque, *Les déclamations et les déclamateurs d'après Sénèque le Père*, Lille 1902, 24-25.

(4) I shall treat this subject at greater length elsewhere. For the moment see T. P. Wiseman, *Clio's Cosmetics: Three Studies in Graeco-Roman Literature*, Leicester 1979, 32-33, 38-39. More generally on Valerius' errors, Kempf (above n. 1) pp. xxix-xxx; Carter (above n. 1) 38-39.

Controversiae and Suasoriae (5). He appreciated conciseness of expression and describes it in terms not unlike those of Seneca himself: while the latter praises Cassius Severus' *explicationes... plus sensuum quam verborum habentes* (Cont. 3. pr. 7) Valerius reports a *dictum* of Hannibal with the enthusiastic comment *si verba numeres, breviter et abscise, si sensum aestimes, copiose et valenter* (3.7.ext.6) (6). Further, his work abounds in declamatory *sententiae*, though this feature of his immersion in the school rhetoric of his day has gone all but completely neglected.

Of the few who have deigned to bring up the subject most add little or nothing to the epitomator Nepotianus' desultory observation that Valerius *se ostendat sententiis* (7). Others assemble lists of examples (8), but so far as I know only Morawski made so much as a limited attempt to espy similarities in the Senecan collection: he convicted Valerius of "furtum manifestum" in that his *sententia* on necessity — *humanae igitur inbecillitatis efficacissimum duramentum est necessitas* (2.7.10) — bears a striking resemblance to Votienus Montanus' *necessitas magnum humanae inbecillitatis patrocinium est* (Cont. 9.4.5) (9). 'Theft' in the strictly literary sense can be ruled out since Seneca's work postdates the *Facta et Dicta* and there is no compelling evidence that Montanus' own *scripta* (Cont. 9.6.18) had anything to do with *sententiae* (10). Rather, it is likely that Valerius was present on some occasion when Montanus spoke his rendition or, since *sententiae* were widely circulated outside the schools (Tacitus, *Dial.* 20.4), it reached him at second or third hand by word of mouth (11). He did not repeat it verbatim; the challenge to

(5) E.g., cf. 2.9.3 and Cont. 9.2; 5.3.4 and Cont. 7.2. Helm (above n. 1) 111 lists other instances.

(6) Cf. *iam Platonis verbis astricta, sed sensu praevalens sententia...* (7.2.ext.4). Here and throughout I cite Kempf's editio minor (above n. 2) and, for elder Seneca, M. Winterbottom's excellent two-volume Loeb (Cambridge U.S.A. and London 1974).

(7) Kempf (above n. 2) 592. Typical in this respect are Carter (above n. 1) 45 and A. D. Leeman, *Orationis Ratio*, I, Amsterdam 1963, 253-254. E. Norden, *Die antike Kunstprosa*, I, Leipzig 1898, 303-304 pointed to Valerius' fondness for declamatory artifice but refused to discuss it in any detail.

(8) Duff (above n. 1) 60-62; Helm (above n. 1) 99-100; C. F. Gelbcke, *Quaestiones Valerianae*, diss., Berlin 1865, 8 ff.

(9) C. Morawski, *De sermone scriptorum latinorum aetatis quae dicitur argentea observationes*, "Eos" 2, 1895, 8-9.

(10) See J. Fairweather, *Seneca the Elder*, Cambridge 1981, 40, arguing against the position held by, among others, L. A. Sussman, *The Elder Seneca*, Leiden 1978, 83.

(11) On the oral dissemination of *sententiae* note also Cont. 2.4.9, 7.6.15, 9.2.23, 10.1.14, 10.2.10. Montanus was still alive and active in 25 A.D.: see Tacitus, *Ann.* 4.42 with the comments of Bornecque (above n. 3) 200.

every declaimer was to outdo in whatever way possible the *bons mots* of his fellows. Thus he replaced *magnum* with the impressive *efficacissimum* and *patrocinium* with *duramentum*, a very rare word normally used of viniculture (12).

That Valerius *se ostentat sententiis* is an understatement: he uses them with remarkable frequency while indulging himself in every precious conceit known to Roman declamation. I offer a series of examples with brief comments and appropriate citations from elder Seneca (13).

hactenus istud, quia publica religione consecrata virtus nulla privata laudatione indiget (3.2.3). *Publica* and *privata* make for a contrived antithesis of a sort that appealed to at least some declaimers: Florus' *refulsit inter privata pocula publicae securis acies* (Cont. 9.2.24) invites Seneca's disapproving comment *numquam Latro sic composuisset ut, quia publicam securem dicturus erat, diceret privata pocula* (ib.). In Valerius the combination is almost formulaic: cf. *nunc privatae actionis calumniam ipse conpescuit, adulterii crimen publicae quaestioni vindicandum reliquit* (8.2.2); ... *commisit ut privatum obprobrium publicus rubor existeret* (9.13.1).

... *ex fortissimis vulneribus tuis plus gloriae quam sanguinis manavit* (3.2.14). The jolting zeugma produces a form of hyperbole duplicated in Albucius Silus' *deerat iam sanguis, supererat fides* (Cont. 2.5.9). In both instances an abstract quality is in greater supply than blood itself.

nihil hac fiducia generosius, nihil praedicatione verius, nihil celeritate efficacius, nihil etiam dignitate dignius (3.7.1a). This unwieldy concatenation bears no more than a formal resemblance to Muredius' *serviebat forum cubiculo, praetor meretrici, carcer convivio, dies nocti* (Cont. 9.2.27), the only *sententia* which Seneca labels as *tetracolon*. However, there can be little doubt that its impetus came from the schools; like Latro's *census senatorium gradum ascendit, census equitem Romanum a plebe secernit, census in castris ordinem promovit, census iudices in foro legit* (Cont. 2.1.17) it uses anaphora for cumulative effect. Valerius himself provides the closest parallel in *suspectus erat locus, suspectum tempus, suspecta matris familiae persona, suspecta etiam adulescentia ipsius* (8.1.12).

divites sunt aliorum iacturis, locupletes calamitatibus, immortales

(12) Cf. Columella 4.27.6; Palladius 3.12.1, 3.16.1. It is unattested before Valerius, who used it on this and one other occasion (8.7. pr.: *quae cum sit perfectissima virtus, duramento sui confirmatur*).

(13) I adopt Quintilian's catholic view of *sententiae* (Inst. 8.5.1 ff.) as verbal reflexions both gnomic and specific in application, as both self-contained utterances and *lumina... in clausulis posita* (8.5.2). These last I preface with three dots (...).

funeribus (4.7.ext.2). Seneca calls such *sententiae tricola* and bemoans their newfound popularity with school rhetoricians (Cont. 2.4.11-12). Of the instances he reports none is better suited for comparison than Catus Crispus' *nos sine deliciis educamur, sine muris vivimus, sine vita vincimus* (Suas. 2.16). Both employ a climactic arrangement of *cola*, and *sine vita vincimus* is no more arresting a paradox than *immortales funeribus* which itself invites comparison with Musa's *mortibus vivimus* (Cont. 10. pr. 9).

itaque, Syracusana civitas, maxima clade tua aliquid admixtum gratulationis habuisti, quia si tibi incolumem stare fas non erat, leniter sub tam mansueto victore cecidisti (5.1.4). Valerius combines three ingredients — the apostrophe, the congratulation, and the clause explaining it. Similar in format and intent — both speak of a mixed blessing — is Julius Bassus' *gratulor sorti tuae, provincia, quod desiderante tale spectaculum meretrice plenum carcerem damnatis habuisti* (Cont. 9.2.4).

non legatum locutum, sed ipsam curiam ante oculos positam crederes (6.4.3). Ps.-Longinus mentions that the purpose of the indefinite second-person singular is vividness; by placing the audience in the centre of the action a speaker could more effectively rouse its interest (Subl. 26). Fuscus uses the device in *putares puellam demitti, non deici* (Cont. 1.3.7), and Seneca, quoting Vergil's *credas innare revolsas / Cyclades* (Aen. 8.691-692), remarks that no matter how incredible such a statement may be, *propitiis auribus accipitur... quod excusatur antequam dicitur* (Suas. 1.12). Perhaps for added effect Valerius typically delays the qualifying verb: cf. *ab illo quoque statuam et quidem aequae frustra temptatum putes* (4.3.ext.3); *non mortalem aliquem, sed propitiae Fortunae benignum esse diceres sinum* (4.8.ext.2).

nec recusavit se ipsam proscribere ut ei fides sua in coniuge proscripto constaret (6.7.3). As in Arellius Fuscus' *et uno proscriptus saeculo proscribes Antonium omnibus* (Suas. 7.8) the trick here is the juxtaposition of two forms of *proscribere*, the one carrying a meaning extended from that of the other ('condemn' and, more formally, 'proscribe'). Gamesmanship of this sort appealed to Valerius: cf. *quam recte quis dixerit longum et beatum honorem esse sine honore* (2.10.pr., 'esteem' and 'public office' respectively), *cineres ei* (sc. *rei publicae*) *suos negavit quam in cinerem conlabi passus non fuerat* (5.3.2b).

caduca nimirum et fragilia puerilibusque consentanea crepundiis sunt ista, quae vires atque opes humanae vocantur (6.9.ext.7). Like Latro's *fragilis et caduca felicitas est, et omnis blandientis fortunae speciosus cum periculo nitor* (Cont. 2.1.1) this *sententia* appears at the beginning of a *locus de fortuna*. No great significance can be attached to the iden-

tical adjectives; Cicero had used the same combination in *res humanae fragiles caducaeque sunt* (Amic. 27.102), and once it had been appropriated by one declaimer it easily acquired currency. Predictably Valerius goes in for outlandish effect: the simile signalled by *consentanea* is without parallel in Seneca or any other writer.

an nos consulere scitis, consulem facere nescitis? (9.3.2). Cf. *peribit ergo quod Cicero scripsit, manebit quod Antonius proscripsit?* (Suas. 7.11), a *sententia* which Seneca dismisses as *cacozeliae genus... quod detractu aut adiectione syllabae facit sensum* (ib.). Nevertheless Valerius was fond of such jingles: cf. *eodem tempore et fraternae maiestati cessit et vita excessit* (5.5.3); *pro periclitantium enim capite non solum eloquentia sua uti sed etiam verecundia abuti erat paratus* (7.3.5).

tribunus senatus imperium despexit, senatus tribuni verbis paruit (9.5.2). The device on which this *sententia* turns is *commutatio*, the chiasmic arrangement of two pairs of words in the same cases. Seneca nowhere mentions it by name, but the opportunities it offered for antithesis and aural effect made it a favorite tool of the declaimers: Junius Gallio's *sacerdos nostra stuprum homicidio, homicidium stupro defendit* (Cont. 1.2.12) is as good an example as any. Valerius never tired of it: cf. ... *pauperque in divite quam dives in paupere imperio versari malebat* (4.4.9); *libertas sine Catone? non magis quam Cato sine libertate* (6.2.5); *sed tamen ex consule captivus et ex captivo consul est factus* (6.9.11); ... *non Catoni tunc praetura, sed praeturae Cato negatus est* (7.5.6); *sic verbis oratoriis aspectus et rursus aspectui verba serviebant* (8.10.2).

... *bis parricida, consilio prius, iterum spectaculo* (9.11.6). I conclude the series with a *sententia* illustrating Valerius' use of paradox. Under normal circumstances no one can be *bis parricida*, though the declaimer Capito accuses Popillius Laenas of just that: *deduxi ad vos reum omnium quos terra sustinet nocentissimum, ingratum, inpium, bis parricidam* (Cont. 7.2.5).

A substantial number of Valerius' *sententiae* — the majority of my examples included — occupy the terminal position in their *exemplum* and thus sum up or cap off their portion of the narrative; in this respect too they bear the unmistakable stamp of the schools. Seneca frequently remarks that one declaimer or another ended his treatment of a subject with a *sententia*. Cestius, for instance, when speaking in defense of the son who refused to kill his adulterous mother, *ultimam sententiam dixit* (Cont. 1.4.9), and on more than one occasion Latro received enthusiastic

applause for his terminal *sententiae* (Cont. 7.2.9, 7.4.10) (14). There is no need here to multiply examples of Valerius' use of the technique: almost every page of the *Facta et Dicta* yields one if not more (15). For a glimpse at the process which produced them, however, I point to his *exemplum* on the *abstinentia* of Diogenes the Cynic (4.3.ext.4). After describing Alexander's attempt to bribe Diogenes he quotes the latter's intransigent rejoinder and ends with the comment *quibus verbis illa nimirum sententia inbaesit: Alexander Diogenem gradu suo divitiis pellere temptat, celerius Dareum armis*.

Valerius' purpose, his intended audience, his personal experience in the schools and halls of declamation — these are the essential determinants of his style. By both instinct and design he treated his material in much the same way as his contemporaries in the schools treated their own, and in so doing he not only made available an exhaustive collection of historical *exempla* but in addition offered a suitably sententious rendering of them. Herein, I suggest, lies part of his value. His *sententiae* complement those in Seneca's anthology and thus enhance our knowledge of Roman school rhetoric.

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(14) For complete references see K. Barwick, *Martial und die zeitgenössische Rhetorik*, Berlin 1959, 19-20.

(15) At the risk of betraying a taste for bombast I append some personal favourites: *Romanos vicimus, ab Horatio victi sumus* (3.2.1); *itaque ut semper esse possent, aliquando non fuerunt* (7.2.ext.15); *adeo felicitatis et moderationis dividuum contubernium est* (9.5.ext.3).