DISPLAYING HONOURABLE SCARS
A ROMAN GIMMICK
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ABSTRACT
There are several references in the literature to what appears to have been a particular Roman practice during, at least, the republican period, namely the display of, or the promise to exhibit publicly, scars won as a result of honourable service to the res publica during military campaigns. The extent of the notices concerning these cicatrices ought to indicate that the bearers of bodily disfigurements, once healed, were ready to indulge in a remarkable degree of exhibitionism at some appropriate moment, either for the delectation of the crowd or to curry favour with their fellow citizens. However, to what extent does the information provided by various Greek and Roman writers reveal a special feature of public life in the Republic, or does this apparent evidence actually constitute nothing more than a literary topos?

Naked, Marcus Mummivs looked something like a bear, with broad shoulders, a broad middle and dense swirls of black hair all over his body, except where he was marked by scars. Eco seemed particularly intrigued by a long slash that ran across his left pectoral like a cleared furrow in a forest.

'Battle of the Colline Gate,' Mumivs said proudly looking down and pointing to the scar. 'Crassus’s proudest moment, and mine. That was the day we retook Rome for Sulla; the dictator never forgot what we did for him. I was wounded early in the day, but fortunately it was on the left side, which allowed me to go on using my sword arm.' Eco smiled back at him crooksly and curiously examined Mumivs for more scars, of which there was no shortage. Tiny nicks and plugs were scattered all over his limbs and torso like badges, easily discernable where they interrupted the general hairiness of his flesh.

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(Steven Saylor, Arms of Nemesis, New York 1992, 49–50.)

The pivotal word is cicatrices,1 and honest ones at that! And this word is tied inextricably to the complicated issue regarding the veracity of displays

1. The vulnus was the wound that in time healed to become the cicatrix, Cic. Invent. 1.47: 'Quoniam cicatrix est, fuit vulnus'. The vulnus was the transient feature, which could not be displayed for long, the scars or cicatrices were the permanent

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of body scars analogous to the citizen body, primarily in the republican period of Roman history. The subject is complex, because there is a need to clarify whether or not such displays of honourable scars, as recalled by various writers, actually occurred on attested public occasions, were regularly a 'histrionic trick' in the courts of law, or were simply literary tropes? The beginning of the extant section of Petronius' The Satyricon certainly might suggest that the latter was the case:

our professors of rhetoric are hag-ridden in the same way, surely, when they shout 'I got these wounds fighting for your freedom! This eye I lost for you. Give me a hand to lead me to my children. I am hysteric, my legs can't support me.'

From all the information available, can an established pattern of social behaviour be shown to have existed in which a public figure boasted firstly about the existence of personal 'cicatrices' and, secondly, exhibited them, presumably as an indication of his warrior status? An enhanced standing in the community would be realised, at least in theory, and become a prerequisite to the attainment of political prominence in the res publica.5 However, the presence of tropes, propaganda or misrepresentation also cannot be ignored here since the literary evidence is notoriously replete with all such items, and muddies the results of previous studies which have delved into this topic. By way of summation, a novel proposition will be advanced; and some sense may begin to emerge from the discrete sources about what

blemishes on the body, and proof of the actions of the bellator. There was no clear differentiation between the two, however, and scars and cicatrices were employed in the sense of 'being wounded' or 'having received wounds'. It is the permanent scarring and its visual impact that are of primary interest here.

2. J.M. May, 'Persuasion, Ciceronian style?', CQ 71 (1994) 41, appears to consider this action a regular feature of trials throughout the period under examination here.

3. Petronius, The Satyricon, trans. J.P. Sullivan, Penguin Books (London 1986) 37. Note that the word cicatrice is not used by the author, but neither is there an explicit reference to scars. Aen. 3.150-151, two scars and wounds in quite a different fashion, heroic language for comic effect, hence 'vulnus' becomes a tear in a fabric and 'cicatrice' the patch. Note also Publilius Syrus, C 33: 'cicatrix conscientiae pro vulnere est'.

4. Not just scars, of course, for heroism could be measured by outstanding action in battle, Caes. B.C. 5.44, and even, as in the case of the centurion Titus Pullo, the number of times a shield was pierced by the enemy missiles.

5. The scope of discussion here is Butter, M. Leigh, 'Wounding and Popular Rhetoric at Rome', BICS 40 (1995) 197-199, also assesses Greek examples and possible antecedents, but his main thesis is a link between a display of scars, which he believes continued throughout the period, ties boeremone and popular politics; 'in Rome the scar was a mark of authentication, a thing to be displayed and observed', 205. There are certain differences to similar activities in Greek history, for example, of incidents which may have taken place in the Athenian agora, Xen. Mem. 3.4.1: παραθυρό. Even here there seems to be some ambiguity about it being an accepted practice.

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may, or conversely what may not, have been a fascinating spectacle; if indeed it can be proved to ever having taken place in Rome in a verifiable context.

In the post-election oration attributed to the newly elected consul Gaius Marius, by Sallust (Iug. 85.30), the speaker is made to declare: non possum fidez causa irrumpere neque traham aut corrosus maiorum osterrtare. at si res postulet, hæc vexillum, phaleras, alia militaria dona, praeterea circinerem adversus corpus.6 He drew attention, among many other things, to his honesta cicatrices, which the haughty nobles lacked, in order to show that he possessed personal virtus, and so deserved to win his consulship on merit. Since the position regarding the promise to display his scars was surely meant to hold an emphatic place, coming at the end of the passage, hence commanding the reader’s attention, it must surely have had some significance. It was not simply a fiction inserted to fill up the line. It is worth bearing in mind at this early juncture, however, that Sallust did not write that Marius actually displayed his scars, nor is a display reported by Plutarch, who gives essentially the same information7 only that he claimed to possess them, an actionless self-advertisement, and could show them if required. He does not seem to have been so required.

For an era long before Marius, Gellius and the elder Pliny both yield valuable material about another man’s honourable scars. Gellius (NA 2.11.3.4): L. Sicinius Dentaturn, qui tribunus plebi fuit Sp. Tarpeio, A. Aetnian consulibus, serius est in litteris annalibus plus quam credo debeat strenuum belolorem fuisse numerosque ex factis quibus imperiis fortissimis appelleturisque esse Achillem Romanum. In qua hausisse in hostia dicerat centum et singulis praebas, circiter nonsem suum, adversus quoque et quotidiana talisse. Pliny (NH 7.101), on this same celebrity states: sed tamen in quo maxime exstiterit numerus quaestiones est . . . Ennius T. Q. Catilina Tuscuarum fruticentisque eum praeposuit minister eos sestum decenniis adhibiti annis, ob ingens virorum et pulcherrima ac cicatricibus vestrum spectaculum. L. Siciunus Dentaturn, qui tribunus plebi fuit Sp. Tarpeio A. Aetnian consulibus, hodie post eas peccas rex, sed numerosissima vita etque cicatrices prope, haud multo post actas reges, vel numerosissima sui erat viciens pro bello victor, octens ex provocatione victor, quadragesima quattuor cicatricibus adversus corpore insignis, nullis in tergo.

6. The military prizes mentioned by Marius must refer to those he had won in Spain in the 130’s, and to possibly a spell in the East, though that military service is not attested by any ancient source. E.L.J. Farmer, Caius Marius: A Political Biography (Princeton 1994) 50, 170. The cicatrices must also be the result of wounds received in these campaigns, Farmer (1994) 27-30, 57 a. 9, 69-70.

7. Plut., Rep. 9.2: ‘. . . that he boasted with his own wounds before the people, not with monuments of the dead, nor images of other men’ (xai sparjyacrrv oixeior< xplOV = τρυπήματα προσώπων πολλά ζητείται). Plutarch fails to name his sources but it may have been Sallust himself or Sallust’s opera in a Greek translation by Zenobius, C.P. Jones, Plutarch and Rome (Oxford 1971) 84-86.
L. Sicinius (or Siccius) Dentatus, was reputedly a tribune of the plebs about 454 BC, and in this early period of Roman history may well be a legendary figure. Nevertheless, the undisputable fact remains that a Roman in the public eye is recorded as having possessed this number of scars on his chest. Someone must surely have observed these scars at some time! At the time of the elections, says Plutarch (Cor. 14.1.15.1), candidates went about dressed only in their togas, either to display their wounds (Græch) as tokens of their bravery or to dispel rumours of ambitus. Coriolanus' wounds, after seventeen years a soldier, did him so good whatever, it should be noted, for his conceited manner turned the electorate against him and his candidac was rejected.

Gellius, Pliny and Plutarch could have obtained their information from any number of earlier sources, such as the history of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, which dealt with the early history of Rome. In fact, Ennius is ascribed by Pliny! Even though Ennius was one of the first writers of Roman history, he cannot have seen Dentatus, but he may have counted material closer to his subject's life, which was not literary. He could have seen: a tombstone, or an epitaph associated with an image. Documentary evidence, since lost, may have been available to those writing history in the early days of Latin literature. The Gellius and Pliny passages are not history per se, instead they function as a table-talk anthology concerning manly courage or fortitudo, or the making of a warrior. Going further than Gellius in his confabulation, Pliny offers other candidates in this competition to find the most courageous bellator. M. Manlius Capitolinus, who is said to have had twenty-three scars on the front of his body (XXXIII cicatrices adversa corpore excepit), is described as the equal of Dentatus (rei militaris haut minora), but that he threw away his virtus by plotting to

8. T.R.S. Broughton, The Magistrates of the Roman Republic (New York 1912-1953) Vol. 1:43. Dentatus also appears in the description by Dionysius, 10.37.2, of the struggle between the patricians and plebeians. He notes the forty-five scars, and adds the interesting detail that Dentatus received twelve on the same day: μετανευσαμενος τον καιρον η οικονομικη του Δηντατος, αυτος η η η η η η η η. Livy has no mention of this character unless it he the L. Sicinius, 3.4, who was murdered in the orders of the decemvirs, ca. 450. His virtus did not see him.

9. Pliny's refers to the Annals of Ennius, but possibly knew it only through Varro's encyclopedia (Antiquitates rerum humanarum et divinarum, to which he also appears to refer, XV 7:83-85. On Gellius' use of source and especially of Pliny, see L. Holford-Strevens, Aulus Gellius (London 1988) 47-58; B. Badian, Studies in Aulus Gellius (Kansas 1975) 24-25, 56-70.

10. If they are not late republican inventions, Cic. Att. 6.1.17, the Scipionic epitaphs of L. Cornelius Scipio Barbatus (cos. 298) and his son (cos. 259), ILS 1, 2 & 3; ILS/RL 310-337, would provide such early examples. And the epitaph of Barbatus besides the manly 'fortis vir sapiensque' also includes 'forma', presumably a reference to this politician's good looks. For the authenticity of the inscriptions, see T. Frank, 'The Scipionic Inscriptions', CQ 16 (1921) 169-171, contra E.W. Fay, 'Scipionic Forgeries', CQ 16 (1920) 163-171.
establish a tyranny at Rome (NH. 7.103-4). Pliny also adds the name of M. Sergius (great grandfather of Catiline) who lost his right hand during the Second Punic War, received twenty-three wounds (ter et vicies vulneratus est) which left him a cripple in both hands and feet (neutra manu, neutro pede salis ultus), twice taken prisoner by Hannibal from whom each time he escaped. He was elected a praetor for 197, and later overcame fierce opposition regarding his participation in religious ceremonies since he was infirm (NH. 7.105; cf. Liv. 32.31.6, 33.21.9, 33.24.4). Glorifying a scarred body could, therefore, obviously work for or against the bearer of honestae cicatrices.

In his discussion of instances where actions overcame the power of rhetoric, Quintilian (2.15.7) seems relevant. He cites the trial for repetundae in about 97 of M'. Aquillius (cos. 101), who had recently returned from quelling a serious rebellion of slaves. He was elected a praetor for 197,

11. The number 'twenty-three' occurs often. Servilius Gerninus, discussed below, fought 'twenty-three' single combats with the enemy, Liv. 45.39.16. Either then a topos or of some obscure mystical significance. The Romans were highly superstitious, witness the significance of a man's 63rd year. Clearly numbers such as 7, 23 and 63 had a particular meaning for a Graeco-Roman audience.

12. Pliny, NH 7.105, refers to the speech of Sergius (‘ex oratione eius’) against his detractors, which suggests that this very early work was either still in circulation or was quoted in extenso by one of the earlier historians. Either again, who also remained accessible. Pliny clearly regarded Sergius as the greatest of his three examples discussed here, NH 7.106. For Sergius’ partnership and sources see Broughton (note 8) Vol. 1.333, passim. His left hand holds both his sword and the severed head of an enemy. He had a right hand of iron made for him (‘dextram sibi ferream fecit’). On the date of the trial see Broughton (note 8) Vol. 2.2 and n. 10; E.S. Gruen, Roman Politics and the Criminal Courts, 149-78 B.C. (Harvard 1968) 194-195, 308.

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15. One tiny point of criticism here since Aquillius saw no fighting in the Germanic Wars when he was Marius' senior legatus, 103-102. His scars also dated to a time in his younger days, and he was not necessarily an out and out military man. Leigh (note 5) 206, claims that Cicero and Antonius used the same technique as Antonius. But this assertion makes rather too much out of Quintilian's statement, 6.1.21, merely that it became customary to draw attention to former military.
Cicero was no warrior, having had little military experience, and certainly no history of personal valour in battle, but he still achieved the highest magistracy at a time when senators could rise to eminence through civil distinction. Cicero obviously admired the ingenuity of Antonius more than he approved of the military distinction of the consul Aquillius, especially since he states that the defendant was guilty of extortion as charged (Flacc. 98). Aquillius was acquitted because of Antonius' departure from regular rhetorical procedures (Verr. 2.5.3):

venit enim mihi in mentem in undisce M. Aquilum quosquam anciestrii... qui, ut erat in divinio non salutem suprius sed, etiam fortis, eum quaque veritatis quae arsenat M. Aquilum constitutique in conspectu omnium, tunc... quae addunt eos, qui sunt indicii, sed, etiam fortis, causa prope perorata ipse arripuit M. Aquilium. constituitque in conspectu omnium, tunicamque eius a pectore abscidit, ut cicatrices Romanus iudicesque aspicerent adverso corpore exceptas... cf. de Orat. 2.194-196). It is obvious from Cicero's account that, for the audience, the precise moment of the display of the scars was electric and extremely emotional. The case was won for this 'honourable' servant of the state, and the episode must have impressed Cicero enormously, who mentions it several times, but also other writers who picked up this item from his well-read works.

However, here as in other places where Aquillius' acquittal features it was really meant to serve the purpose of provoking a contrast. In the trial of Verres, for instance, the main thrust of the prosecution's case was to illustrate the terrible rapacity of this politician, especially during his proconsulship in Sicily. The defamation of Verres' character, if it was needed, was the primary means to this end. The defence led by Q. Hortensius (cos. 69) had attempted to portray its client as a general of some ability (Verr. 2.5.4); and Verres had indeed to deal with the threat

16. Cicero served very briefly in the Social War, Phil. 12.27, Plut. C, 3.2. Sulpicius Rufus (cos. 51) and the younger Pliny (cos. suff. 100) are two other notable senators who won consulships, but had no military distinctions worth speaking of.

17. The emotion could have been just as much directed towards Antonius and his skill in defending Aquillius. Antonius had become indistinguishable from his client, as any good orator ought, says Cicero, de Orat. 2.182, and his own reputation was, therefore, at stake (note 3). 39--39.

18. If Livy, Per 76, is correct in saying that Cicero was the sole source for this trial, 'Cicero enim non minus aureus', his fame may be accounted for on account of the number of times it appears in the surviving Ciceronian corpus.
of an invasion to his province by pirates in 71/70. Cicero, on the other hand, utterly demolished the defendant’s claim to virtus, fortitudo, and other sorts of military ability by dwelling on the scars Cicero would have obtained from his particular life-style (Verr. 2.5.22). These scars were definitely not for display nor, as far as we can tell, were they shown off in court: Hunc tu optavi imperitorem esse defendis, Hortensio! Hunc furia, rapinos, expeditatem, crudelitatem, superstium, sedas, vaduum versus yestorum magnatudine atque imperatoris laudatas tegere conatus? Hec udeo est metuantem, ne ad extrae defensionis haec vetus ilia Antoniana devendi ratio atque auctoritas preferatur, ne exspectet Verres, ne demudatur a pector, ne civitates populus Romanus aspirat, ex uendarum moriar vestigia libellus atque neipagne.:

From Cicero’s evidence it transpires that there could be both honourable scars, and those scars which were not, and what is more intriguing again, that there could also be the total absence of scars. This last theme is fully exploited by Cicero (Phil. 7.17-18) in one of his many attacks on Antony in the Philippics: Graecorum potestatem minimorum fasae arbitrorum, quam haec gladiatoris futura sit? Quem gladiatorum non sua appellass at interdum c[u]m M. Antonius gladiatur appellares solet, sed ut appellares eis, qui plane et Latine loquantur. Myrmillo in Asia depugnavit. Omne ornamet theoedidicis constent et familiares suum, illum miserum fugitentium impulsit, fraudulentam tamen quae plagam accept, ut declarat cuestus. Qui familiares impulsit, quid in occasione data faciet inimico? Antony had a scar but it could hardly been described as an honourable cicatrix since it had been received in a gladiatorial combat with a friend, who was killed in the brawl.

Elsewhere, Cicero (Sest. 23) poke fun at a politician who obviously had no scars, forgetting perhaps that he also had none to speak of. It is curious that, as a result, in the same passage, he also has to assert, that part and parcel of a citizen’s duty in his service to the state was precisely the collection of honourable scars:

Laudabat homo doctus philosophos nescia quis neque eum tamen nominis potentis dicere, sed tamen nos lavabat marinae, quae denuat propter eorum esse auctores et


20. C.G. Philip, ep. 1.5.2: ‘Vitelliana cuestus stigma’, how used figuratively for collaboration with the regime of that princeps.

21. In effect, the charge here was one of effeminacy and treachery, and this must have stung Antony for he afterwards insisted on Cicero’s death in the proscriptions in 43, Plut. Ant. 19.2-20.2; R. Syme, The Roman Revolution (Oxford 1939) 192 and n.1.

22. Although the text of the pro Sexto has subsciva instead of cicatrices, their senses, on this occasion, to be little or no intrinsic difference, hence its consideration here.
lausatorum voluptatis; curis et quo tempore et quo modo, non quærebat, neque ipsum omnibus faverat animum et corpora devorarat, cujus et quo tempore et quo modo, non quaerebat, verbum ipsum omnibus [viribus] animi et corporis devorarat; eosdemque praeclare dicere azebat sapzentis omnza sua causa facere, rem publicam capessere hominem bene sanum non oportere, nihil esse praestabilius otiosa vita plena et conferta voluptatibus: esse autem, qui diversum dignitati esse servirendum, ret publicae causse mandatum, offici rationem in omnibus vitis, non commodi esse durandum, adunum pro patria pericula, vulnera excepindae, mortem appetendum, naturae: aequum: materne diebore. Yet, L. Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus (cos. 58), the object of Cicero's invective, was a highly successful politician, and like the orator had obtained all his public offices suo anno (Cic. Pia 2: sine repulsa). Moreover, like Cicero, Caesoninus did not have an extensive army career behind him, and he was not remembered for his generalship, hence here the additional abuse concerning a devotion to Epicurean philosophy. But the orator and his audience must have been all too well aware that many of Caesoninus' fellow senators were similarly unmilitary. Cicero's invective, while expected in this place appears rather weak and, furthermore, the denigration of Caesoninus, which emanated from personal inimicitia resulting from an acquiescence in the orator's exile in 58, was harmless. Caesoninus stood at the pinnacle of the public career, and he went on to serve as censor in 50. Neither the absence of scars nor Cicero's words in the oratio in Pisonem or pro Sestio obstructed or diminished an illustrious career.

Next, take the case of C. Rabirius (Sub. perd. 36), where there is more mention of cicatrices, this time in support of a client. How much more like Aquillius whose contemporary Rabirius was: ****itemet; qui hanc are adversum pro te publica cicatrices ac notns virtutis accepit, is ne quod accipiat famae vulnus perhorrescit; quem numquam incursiones hostium loco moverat, is, nunc impetum civium, cui necessariod exterior est, perhorrescit. The very elderly senator Rabirius was prosecuted in 63 for having participated in the murder of Saturninus thirty-seven years earlier. The charge would probably have succeeded even though Rabirius himself was merely a scapegoat through whom senatorial authority, in matters such as passing the senatus consultum ultimum, might be undermined. In fact, the prosecution for perduellio failed, because of the invention of the presiding praetor, Q. Casciullus Metellus Celer (cos. 60), but in his defence Cicero drew attention to Rabirius' good services to Rome.24

23. Broughton rightly questions whether or not Caesoninus was praetor in 61 (note 8) Vol. 2.179, since 'sine repulsa' is not necessarily the same as suo anno, though it must have been close in meaning, as the author admits, Vol. 3.47. Caesoninus cannot have been born much before 101, his father was quaestor ca. 100 and died before reaching high office, his grandfather, cos. 112, was killed in 107.

24. Cicero's fellow speaker Q. Mortelerius seems to have followed the same route in his defense of Rabirius, R. Malzondet, Oratorum Romanorum Fragmenta (Torino 84
So besides worthies such as Aquillius and Rabirius, Cicero also has the three very contrasting negative subjects in Verres, Piso Caesoninus and Antony. In each instance, attention is drawn to honourable or dishonourable scars in strikingly different contexts, but the aim was the same, an estimation of the bearer of the cicatrices. Still the diversity by which the theme occurs should indicate that a concept of honestae cicatrices had become little more than a topos to be used in the political and forensic rhetoric of the day. Possession of honourable scars alone would not have saved either Aquillius or Rabirius from certain condemnation; and it took unprecedented amateur dramatics to save the former, and a crafty ruse to stop the trial of the latter from proceeding further. Cicero had also claimed that a citizen's duty to the state required him to fight honourably and to bear any scars he received with pride and dignity, but honourable scars were not a mandatory requirement for success in public or political life. While the activities of Verres, Antony and Caesoninus, may have been reprehensible in Cicero's view, it did not make them more susceptible to successful censure because they were either scarless or possessed the wrong sort of scars. Besides, Cicero himself was hardly a paragon of scarless virtue. So the dichotomy broadens in that it may have been ideologically correct to have the front of the body covered with scars, but it did not necessarily do a politician much good, nor was it an insurance policy to success. In the rumbustious political life of the Republic having scars was irrelevant. The scarless villains of Cicero's speeches could be raised high, a generalisation here, but not so far from the truth, and the scar-ridden who-should-have-been heroes were brought low. Cicero might well have had cause to declaim 'O tempora, o mores!' (Cat. 1.1). He would have liked his audience to believe that the old warrior ideal, together with the old virtues, had been turned on its head. Yet in such convolutions

25. A red flag was raised on the Janiculum while the comitia centuriata was in session, if it was lowered while the assembly was meeting it signified that the Etruscans were about to attack the city, and that all public proceedings be at once terminated. In 63 there were no Etruscans, of course.

26. It would, indeed, be fascinating to know whether or not Catiline and Cicilian were also scarless for we are uninformed on this matter. In modern novels the villain is often scarred or deformed in some way, though it should also be noted that Fleming's hero, James Bond, had, in the manner of the Prussian Junker, a three inch thin vertical scar on his right cheek and another on his right shoulder, From Russia with Love; cf. Thunderball. "many scars all over his body'.

27. In a recent movie entitled Dragon Heart (1996), based on a story by P.R. Johnson & C.E. Pogue, much the same scenario occurs: this time it is the ancient knightly code of ethics which, has been overturned. Bowen, one knight above, his body covered with scars, holds out and with him the dragon called, naturally enough, 'Draco'. Right triumphs, of course, even if the dragon—the last of his species—is sacrificed.

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some decency prevailed for Verres spent his misbegotten wealth in exile, at least, and Antony never fulfilled his grand ambitions, but both Aquillius and Rabirius were acquitted, however dubiously it was managed. Embarrassing, highly unpleasant scarring and severe disfigurement were not for public consumption. That is clear from a number of references in literary sources. Military service could evidently be avoided by claiming the possession of a single testicle—monorchidism. This strategy was both difficult to confirm and easily abused, as Polybius noted (35.4: ... τοὺς νόμους καθιστάνει τὴν καταγγελίαν καὶ τοὺς τροφίδες ποιναὶς προφέρεται ὡς ἐπίθεμα εἰρήνης ... ἡ ἐπίθεσις ἀποτελεῖ, ἐπίθεσις ἡ ἀποτελεῖ ...]. . . but worst of all was that the young men avoided enrolment, finding such excuses as it was disgraceful to allege, unseemly to examine and impossible to check.21 Then there was Q. Fabius Maximus Eburnus (cos. 116) who had the unfortunate youthful nickname of pdlls Iovis (‘Jupiter’s Chick’) since it was said that he had been struck by lightning on his buttocks (Festus, 286L).22 His disability, if it was such, did not, however, prevent this politician from becoming censor in 108 nor ordering the execution of his own son for adultery (Val. Max. 6.1.5), Cicero (de Orat. 2.249) also describes a Sp. Carvilius who was lame as a result of military service and was ashamed to be seen outside his home, though his mother urged him to carry his physical burden with dignity. It may well be that Carvilius was afraid

28. Verres lived on in Massilia in relative obscurity until he was caught by the proscriptors in 43, Pliny, NH 34.6: ‘proscriptus ... ad Augusto, quoniam Cotta eum neminem eo si mitigaret;’ Syme (note 21) 193.
29. It should be noted, however, that Aquillius died a particularly revolting death. He was captured by Mithridates of Pontus in 88, who ordered that he be forced to drink molten gold—presumably on account of either his own or of Roman rapacity, hyp. Mith. 21.
30. In one of the latest sources, Ammianus, 31.2.1-11, a degree of revulsion may be detected about the physical appearance of the Huns: ... ut pilorum vigor tempestvus emergens corrugatis cicatricibus hebetetur. This was cosmetic scarring, a habit alien to a Roman and, at least, the Huns lived beyond the frontiers of the empire.

Physical defects did not prevent some Romans from carrying out their military duty, while a minor deformity at birth was also no impediment to service in the army as the Digesta (49.16) of Justinian shows: qui cum uno testiculo natus est quiue amisit, iure militabit secundum divi Thziani rescriptum: nam et duces Sulla et Cotta memorantur eo habitu Juisse naturae. Presumably Sulla the dictator and perhaps the orator C. Aurelius Cotta (cos. 75), the eldest of the three Cotta brothers cos. 74 & 65. But this could be the reason why Sulla undertook no military service in his youth.
of becoming the public butt of other men’s jokes as happened to a certain Calvinus, who was also a cripple, by Glaucia, the quick-witted political ally of Saturninus:


Witness also the treatment of Tidius Sextius (Plut. Pomp. 64.4) who was subjected to laughter and jeering just because he was very old and was lame in one leg (… οὐκ αὐτὸν νῦν ὧν δὲ ταχύρρυθος γενόμενος έκκολο). Deformities from birth or those which had derived from valour in battle could have the effect of making a man equally the object of ridicule and, in extreme circumstances, make him tantamount to a social outcast. And there was one very notable such outcast, Q. Sertorius, who, although said to have been proud of his wounds and the loss of his eye in battle (Sall. Hist. 1.88M; Gell. NA 2.27: quae vivvs facie sua ostentabat aliquot adversis cicatricibus et effosso oculo), nonetheless, spent most of his career as an outlaw in Spain.33 There is no record of him displaying his cicatrices to his followers. It was, therefore, eminently sensible to avoid excessive wounding if possible, and it could be detrimental not to hide some if not all of those scars or deformities, however honourable their origin.34

In support of this contention a curious incident is related by Livy. In 167, following the successful conclusion of the Macedonian War a public meeting took place in Rome in which the granting of a triumph to the victorious general L. Aemilius Paullus was debated (Liv. 45.35.5-45.39.20). Paullus was accused by the tribunus militum Ser. Sulpicius Galba (cos. 144) of parsimony and mistreatment of his soldiers (Liv. 45.35.7-9). Although the senate had already decreed the honour of a triumph to Paullus the debate seemed to be going the way of Galba and his supporters. One of the most senior members of the senate, M. Servilius Pulex Geminus (cos. 202), came forward to speak in Paullus’ favour (Liv. 45.37.1-39.20). He employed


34. A further point of conjecture here. The use of the short stabbing sword by the legions from the end of the first century BC might well have reduced the sort of scarring inflicted by long slashing swords. But javelins aimed mainly at the face were still quite daunting for equites, Plut. Cäs. 45.1. Note that Caesar fails to mention the tactics in his description of the battle of Pharsalus, B.C. 3.93, probably because it was not politic to record instructions designed to disfigure fellow aristocrats.

35. In 167 Pulex Geminus must have been about seventy years of age since he had been aedile in 204, Broughton (note 8) Vol. 1.306, hence presumably born between
his auctoritas to denounce the allegations of Galba which he exposed as defamation of character; and at the climax of his oration Pulex Geminus declared (45.39.16-19):

'It is quite clear that it was not the honestae cicatrices which caused so much mirth among the audience standing closest to Geminus but the 'tumor inguinum'. Although the word inguin is extensively employed by authors (Hor. Sat. 1.2.26; 11. Ep. 1.1.36; Ovid, Fast. 2.346; Ovid, Fast. 2.346; 6. 370) for the male genitalia, the use of the term appears to refer to an advanced and extremely large inguinal hernia. Excessive horse-riding without the aid of stirrups, which were unknown to the Romans, places the stomach area under considerable pressure and might in time cause a hernia or the 'tumor' as that described by Livy, who evidently realised the cause of this affliction. Geminus' own diagnosis may well be the invention of the historian. That it should be a cause of amusement is hardly surprising since this hernia was clearly longstanding and had never been treated. The hernia would have started the size of a golf-ball, grown to the size of a tennis-ball and, in a man of Geminus' age plus the time he had spent on horse-back, the scrotal sack would almost certainly have been distended to nearly the size of a football.' And for all the hilarity this scene caused, it was the speech by Geminus that won the day. The existence of the 'tumor' probably helped Paullus' case, for the triumph took place soon afterwards, and it was the hernia rather than the honourable scars which lent the most aid. M. Servilius Pulex Geminus, an old man, wanted to indulge in an ancient tradition of pointing out individual scars, but his prominent deformity made the exercise comical.
and a little obscene, as the evidence plainly shows.

In his life of the elder Cato (1.5 6), Plutarch, notably one of the few Greek writers to draw his readers attention to the display of scars by Roman politicians, states that his subject had, 'as a young man, fought in the war against Hannibal and 'had covered the front of his body with honourable wounds' (Er. κατέθεσεν διὸ τὸ γαμαίνα τὰ τύμπανα ἁριστῶς ὑπερήφανα εὐφράσιον). Elsewhere (Mor. 276 C-D) Plutarch comments on the fashions of earlier Romans who wore a toga without a tunic underneath for, among other possibilities, showing off their wounds and scars on their bodies (τραύματα καὶ οὐκ εὑρίσκεται) as an illustration of their artes and fortitudo (cf. Cor. 14.1).

Elsewhere (Mor. 276 C-D) Plutarch comments on the fashion of earlier Romans who wore a toga without a tunic underneath for, among other possibilities, showing off their wounds and scars on their bodies (τραύματα καὶ οὐκ εὑρίσκεται) as an illustration of their artes and fortitudo (cf. Cor. 14.1).

Like Pliny and Gellius, Plutarch may have regarded this phenomenon as a normal pattern of behaviour in these far-off times, but that it eventually became unfashionable. And this is certainly the impression he gives in his biography of the younger Cato who, once he had been elected praetor in 54, attended his quaestio de repetundis without wearing a tunic in clear emulation of Cato the Censor but, far from impressing, it is said that this attire was merely viewed by the people as an affectation and as undignified (Plut. Cat. Min. 44.1: ἀνευμοδυγούσα καὶ δύτηνα).

Tacitus also relates another aspect of displaying honourable scars (Ann. 1.16-18). But for the veterans in the Pannonian legions, their vulnera were no longer their tokens of honour, but an indication of the severity of service in the army. Poor conditions and lack of pay caused them to mutiny in AD 14. And the scars these men had received on the front of their bodies in the service of the state had become little better than the scars from the beatings on their backs given by their officers (Ann. 1.17). They had evidently not received the rewards to the actions which had resulted in their scars.40

Livy also notes this sort of occurrence during his account of the unrest between patricians and plebeians in 495 BC. Voices were raised in opposition to oligarchic rule (Liv. 2.23.1-7), and one of the most vociferous complainants was an old man in rags who revealed that, though he had once been a person of some importance, because of the existence of the nexum, had lost all his possessions and status: ... ipses testes honestarum aliquot locis pugnarum cicatrices adverso pectore ostentabat. ... Inde ostentare tergum fondum remotissis, vestigium recentibus, verberum. He had been brought into penury in spite of the fact that he served the res publica honourably, just...

40. M. Grant, Julius Caesar (London 1969) 124, rather misses the point by ascribing Cato's behaviour to a hot summer. Yet Grant also recognises, 115, that Cato's tactics in opposing Caesar and the command in Gaul was precisely by recourse to the nos maiorum, the sort virtues which were supposedly common in early Rome, which had also been championed by his famous ancestor, and which he believed his enemy had sacrificed in a ruthless pursuit for personal glory.

41. Cf. Curt. 8.7.1: 'cum milites nihil damus praetore gratias civilissimaeque relatione sit!'
like the mutinous legionaries described by Tacitus. And this comparison introduces another dimension into the question of displaying scars. They could be employed to induce compassion or could be so described by a historian for the pathos this would evoke in the reader. Hence perhaps just another topical element in the genre.42

Finally, there is Terence's play The Eunuch, where anything but a positive note is struck on the question of displaying scars: *Atque haec qui nunt non nisi soli postulat/te vivere et sua causa excludi ceteros,/neque pugnas narrat neque cicatrices suas/neque tibi obstat, quod quidam facit;/verum ubi molestum non erit, ubi tu voles/ubi ternus erit, sat hactat si fum reciprocer.* The words (480-485) are delivered by the slave Parmenio about the 'eunuch' Dorus/Chaerea and are directed against the captain Thraeo. It seems to show that Parmenio regarded a display of scars as boorish and not the sort of behaviour expected in front of a woman, even if a courtesan such as Thais. Yet surely boasting in front of a crowd is miles glorious stuff, and warriors were supposed to behave like this, and impress their fellow males and their womenfolk.43 Not so by 161 BC, it appears, when this production was staged, and which should reflect something of the current norms in Roman society. And it may not be coincidental that this comedy appeared only six years after the triumph granted to L. Aemilius Paullus, following that potentially damaging display of scars by the elderly Servilius Gabinius...

It would be useful at this point to recap on the evidence presented to see where it is leading. As far as the legendary heroes are concerned, the prowess of Distentius and Capitolinus, through the possession of scars is presented, as if it were fact. This is not that unusual when historians in antiquity dealt with events much earlier than their own times. The tale of M. Sergius Silus also has a legendary feel about it and deservedly so, though much of the information provided by Pliny is presumably historical. However, it is interesting to observe, that, while Livy refers to Sergius' election as praetor, he does not recall this man's prodigious exploits in the Second Punic War.44 And it is rather curious that the deeds of Sergius Silus...

42. It is possibly significant that the great Pannonian mutiny features the last display of scars recorded by a historian. And this must surely be connected with the fact that mass meetings of citizens were no longer a common occurrence, not a functioning part of government. Harangues before the populace in which theatrical exhibitionism was a part was, therefore, no longer possible.

43. Bragging to fellow males could also backfire and result not in admiration but in acerbic put-downs, such as the episode related by Quintilian, 6.3.75, about a certain Pomponius who suffered at the hands of the lively C. Julius Caesar Strabo (aed. 90).

44. The military tribune, M. Sergius, killed in Locri in 263, Liv. 29. 9.10, cannot be the later praetor of 197. No other M. Sergius figures in Livy's account in Books 16-20.
should have been forgotten by an author who elsewhere relishes retelling a
good tale. This may well point to an instance of two writers using two quite
different sources, one of which had absorbed a great deal of propaganda-
from that family's personal gloria.45 M. Servilius Pulex Geminus removed
his own tunic to point out each scar in relation to his various military
exploits, and the writer's use of ostentare introduces the sense of boasting
about it. But Livy's use of se dicitur further adds that element of heaviness
which creates an uneasy feel about the whole event. There is a degree of
uncertainty in the narrative, and this may just suggest that the historian
was not acquainted with the practice. In Aquillius' case, Antonius may have
torn his client's tunic to point out the cicatrices that had been honourably
won—an incitement may not be assumed—but it was rather the position
of the orator and his emotional empathy which had to seem to be genuine
for his rhetoric to be convincing (Ovid. 2.196). The real indignation of
the speaker, coupled with the visual impact at the climactic point in the
speech, clinched the approval of the iudices.

A behavioural pattern of displaying one's honourable scars might arg-
uably be merely for cosmetic effect, much like the facial scarring popu-
larised by the German university fraternities of the 19th century. Exhibit-
ing scars was not necessarily an integral part of republican public life, and
it was rather the ability to lay claim to possession which became more
important. These honourable scars were not to be displayed, and to have a
multiplicity of them might have an adverse effect on a man's position
in the political career, especially where those healed wounds caused major
disfigurement to the body, and especially if there had been a loss of a limb.
The assembled citizen body may not have been unduly impressed by an
excessive amount of scarring or, at least, by the wounds which left a man
inferior or less than a man (vir). And it's noticeable that truly great and
historical figures such as Pompey, Caesar and Augustus did not dwell on
either their scarred or scarless bodies; indeed they appear to have been
under no compulsion to do so since their non-corporal achievements spoke
better for them. With the doubtful exception of Marius, who in 107 had
little else to boast about, none of the prominent politicians of the late
Republic is recorded as having said anything at all about their scars.46 It's

45. It is hard to imagine how the family of Catiline could have perpetuated stories of
good deeds after 63 BC, so the source was earlier than, if not contemporary with,
that figure's political ambitions. A family history in pamphlet form could have
been circulated during one of Catiline's three attempts at the consulship, and had
magnified the escapades of his ancestors, reducing his own allegedly contumacious
behaviour. There were also any number of possible authentic sources at hand for
these deeds, excepting Livy.

46. I am not at all sure on the basis of which sources Ch. Meier, Caesar, trans. D.
McLintock (London 1996) can declare, 46: "Marius was a man of simple nature,
rough and straightforward; he was also a brave officer who never spared himself
that time there was no tradition which obliged them to do so.\textsuperscript{47} The display of ecastriciae by Pulex Geminus, coupled with the unfortunate result of his horse-riding days, even if he seems to won the debate, was probably concomitant with the halat becoming less common. This is the message which shines through in Terence's play produced chronologically not long afterwards. The actions of an elderly ex-consul may have hastened the end of this ritual in public debates, and when Marcus won the consulship the display of scars was merely offered, but the promise was not fulfilled. This is why the action of Antonius in the trial of Aquillius was so memorable and so shocking, because it was by then a very uncommon practice. If all defendants in trials took their clothes off there would have been nothing special about it, and the exercise would have been a routine.\textsuperscript{48} Moreover, there could have been great risks attached if the jury found the sight unpalatable and convicted as a result. Aquillius' trial was clearly remembered as one of the great dramas of Roman legal history, hence its prominence in the literature.\textsuperscript{49} Just like the trial fifty years before of Ser. Sulpicius Galba, the same politician who had spoken against Paullus in 167. In his trial for the illegal slaughter of Lusitanians the defence had also employed actions over oratory in order to rescue the accused from certain conviction (Quint. 2.15.8). The tactics in Aquillius' trial took the process one step further and were therefore made to be even more dramatic than the sight of Galba dressed in rags with his tearful children clinging to their indicted father. Quintilian was quite right to stress that such activities devalued rhetoric, but it must also follow that the sophistication of the audience, whatever jury or readership, required more than just the oratorical discipline. And it is worth remembering how often Cicero, although undoubtedly a master of that art, also produced, on suitable occasions, visual aids to help bolster his case and the chances of his clients (Cael. 79, the aged father of Caelius Rufus).

Meanwhile, there is clear evidence to show that the Romans actually did not like this sort of exhibitionism, especially when there was great damage and liked to show off his scars.\textsuperscript{50} How very much like the comment with which this study began.

\textsuperscript{47} Hope you show off his scars]. How very much like the comment with which this study began.

\textsuperscript{48} Quite the reverse in fact. For example, Suetonius remembered the outrage which occurred when a nonagenarian was forcibly stripped of his clothes in court to ascertain whether or not he had been circumcised, Dom. 12.2; R.W. Jones, Suetonius: Domitians (London 1996) 104; B. Baldwin, Suetonius (Amsterdam 1983) 6.

\textsuperscript{49} Cicero refers to the trial several times and significantly to no other example of this sort, Verr. 2.5.32, for it would never have the same effect again. Cf. Leigh (note 5) 205-206.
to the body, and they preferred the deformed either to be kept well hidden or, if they ventured outside, they could be subjected to cruel baiting.50 If wounds, indeed the entire body, were to be decently covered in public (Pol. 35.4; Cic. de Orat. 2.249; Pliny, NH 7.105-106), this would likewise account for the amusing scene in 167 and the special theatrics in Aquillius’ trial. It may well be that in early times there was a habit of displaying one’s scars at an appropriate moment, but that probably following the Hannibalic War, when Rome had become an imperial power without external threat and when society had become more elevated in its tastes, this rather quaint activity became discredited as vulgar-glewed. It is at least likely, therefore, that the elder Pliny and Gellius have preserved what had become an obsolete practice through antiquarian interest, and that writers such as Plutarch recognised that these conventions were no longer operable. The conclusion ought, therefore, to affirm that it was honourable to possess cicatrices won in combat, but it was not socially polite to vaunt them openly, and that this became the acceptable standard in the second century BC.51

Scars clearly had a deeper meaning for, or made a deeper impression on, a contemporary audience of the Roman republic and early Principate than they do for the present day reader, but there is scant evidence to support an assumption that they were displayed on a regular basis. Roman men were, as Leigh also states, to some extent measured by their bodily disfigurement, and this statement is corroborated by Suetonius who says that Augustus required any man, who was visiting his exiled daughter, to have his height, complexion, marks and scars recorded (Suet. Aug. 65.3: quot colore esset, quibus corporis notis vel cicatricibus).52 This is

50. Generally on the subject of nudity, which she claims the Romans found repugnant see F. Dupont, Daily Life in Ancient Rome, trans. C. Woodall (Oxford 1992) 240-241. Note also the comments of R. Garland, The Eye of the Beholder: Deformity and Disability in the Graeco-Roman World (London 1995) 76-78, who states that deformity was a ‘target of cheap humour’, and that the Carvilius mentioned by Cicero was ‘too embarrassed to go about in public’. However, being deformed did not necessarily prevent a man from becoming influential as the example of Valerius at the court of Nero illustrates, Tac. Ann. 16.34, though he had also been subjected to abuse before his rise to eminence, ‘cunctiones adsumptus’.

51. Dio, 54.14.6, might be considered to present something of a problem here. He notes in 18 BC Augustus reduced the senate rolls, and that one individual, Licinius Regulus, complained bitterly that he had lost his position. Indeed, he tore open his tunic to reveal the scars which he had won in various military campaigns. To no avail, Augustus does not seem to have reinstated this ex-senator, even though he appears to have possessed honourable cicatrices. Dio may be indulging in an anachronism here, or may not have understood the significance of the episode. It is an isolated late example of displaying scars. It may not have taken place.

52. Suetonius also records, Claud. 16, in an amusing anecdote about the emperor’s inept handling of the censorship, a case where a knight was to be removed from the rolls for attempting suicide, but failed the accusation by tearing off his clothes and cried: ‘Then show me the scar’. However, one should note that a dishonourable scar could mean loss of social status.
highly reminiscent of the old British passport enquiry: 'any distinguishable marks'? In time, however, scars and wounds became literary topoi for the famous and the downtrodden alike, but in becoming such elements, rather like Shakespeare's 'He jests at scars that never felt a wound', over-use could also have made its contribution to the demise of this social and political gimmick.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{53}. Romeo \& Juliet, Act 2, Sc. 2.1: Note also R. Burns, Jolly Beggars Air 1, 1785: 'I am a son of Mars, who have been in many wars and show my cuts and scars wherever I come', and also in the African context see 'Ndlela son of Sompisi of the Ntuli clan', in Izibongo: Zulu Praise-Poems, ed. T. Cope (Oxford 1968) 186: 'Rattle of the spear! He who is unable to lie down, one side being red with wounds, He whose wounds are as numerous as the huts of a large kraal.'

54. Earlier drafts of this paper were delivered to the Biennial Conference of the South African Classical Association, University of Pretoria, 1997, to the Australian Association for Classical Studies, University of Sydney, 1997, and to The Classical Association, Royal Holloway College, University of London, 1997. I should like to thank those colleagues who contributed to lively discussion on each of these occasions, and whose contributions on various issues contained in this paper I have been happy to incorporate. I am also indebted to an anonymous referee and the Acting Editor of Acta Classica whose comments completed the fine-tuning of this article prior to its publication in the issue dedicated to the memory of my colleague Ursula Vogel-Weidemann (1930--1997).
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