STOICISM AND WAR WOUNDS: MUCIUS SCAEVOLA, SERGIUS SILUS AND QUINTUS SERTORIUS

Abstract: Soldiers sustaining battle wounds was both an historical reality as a popular literary theme in the Late Republic and the Early Empire. Battle scars were often instrumentalised as tokens of bravery on the battlefield and equated with military honours, symbolising true virtus. In this paper we analyse how some ancient authors constructed the behaviour of injured soldiers in their writing based on stoic ideals such as an indifferent attitude towards damaged body parts. We further argue that these literary depictions served as powerful metaphorical exempla that had educative and moral purposes not restricted to a military context but in a broader sense, relevant for all aspects of life. The targeted readership was encouraged for introspection and to discern popular from philosophical views in their own frame of mind on achieving virtus. In addition, a stoic framework was cleverly selectively deployed against boasting soldiers and their ideological allies which proved to be very efficient.
Keywords: *Roman soldiers, war wounds, stoicism, indifference, exempla, Mucius Scaevola, Sergius Silus, Quintus Sertorius.*

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INTRODUCTION

In 2005, Sherman proved stoicism to be of relevance in our present day.[1] As a lecturer of ethics at the United States Naval Academy she started to inquire how this ancient philosophy can play a role in achieving happiness, self-control and discipline in the military. By reading and analysing ancient writers such as Epictetus and Cicero and comparing these ideas with modern anecdotes, she demonstrated many parallels with the modern (American) soldier's mind though without embracing all stoic ideas. The approach of this article is somewhat different and is solely concerned with the ancient (Roman) material. Its focus is on the portrayal of stoic warriors and their opposites in the ancient sources and its purpose and relevance in Roman society.

Soldiers priding themselves in their mutilation became a popular literary theme in the Late Republic and the Early Empire. A clear example is Marius' speech, constructed by Sallust, in which he criticizes the aristocratic politicians who have not realised any great deeds themselves but instead feed on the reputation of their grandfathers. True virtue however one has to earn, not inherit. With this moralising message Marius wants to convince his electorate that he has at least as much *virtus* as the aristocrats. As a *homo novus*, he had climbed the social ladder and had joined the political elite and stands for consul at the next elections.[2] The key passage of the speech reads:

[1] SHERMAN 2005.
[2] Plut. *Mar*. 9.

> *I cannot, to justify your confidence, display family portraits or the triumphs and consulships of my forefathers; but if occasion requires, I can show spears, a banner, trappings and other military prizes, as well as scars on my breast. These are my portraits, these are my patent of nobility, not left to me by inheritance as theirs were, but won by my own innumerable efforts and perils.*[3]

This passage is a typical illustration of equating military honours, the so-called *decora*, on the one hand and battle scars on the other hand to illustrate a soldier's merits. War wounds are instrumentalised as tokens of bravery on the battlefield. Any mutilation is a sacrifice for the Republic which should be admired. This line of reasoning was employed by politicians and by biographical writers of 'great (states)men'.[4] A 'Roman gimmick' is how Evans referred to men displaying their honourable wounds and their literary depiction. Evans believes the display of cicatrices became socially unacceptable over time and remained solely a literary theme from the Second Punic War (218-201 BC) onwards.[5] Recently, this thesis has been informed and brought to nuance. Certainly for men outside the aristocracy the display of wounds functioned until the Late Republic as powerful evidence of personal qualities and credentials in the public arena. However, Evans is right the exhibition of the bodily disfigurements often met with discomfort which could result in opposing reactions of bystanders as the absence of iconographical representation of heroic wounded soldiers suggests.[6]

Authors inspired by stoic values, however, disapproved of these soldiers' behaviour and its literary depiction. In a reaction, they created their own ideal war wounded soldier based on the stoic value of indifference (*indifferentia*). Based on three case studies, this paper examines the characteristics of the stoic war hero. We have selected three authors from the first and second century AD, a period which runs contemporaneous with authors frequenting the so-called 'Roman gimmick' (e.g. Livy and Plutarch). This paper further illustrates that stoic writers denounced other authors very straightforward. But they also expressed their criticism in a more subtle and concealed manner.

Of key importance in the stoic philosophy is the concept of *indifferentia*, or indifference. According to Stoic ethics we can only reach true happiness (*felicitas*) if we live consistently with nature (to which fortune, all events that befall men, belongs). And since nature itself is rational, we should lead our existence according to our *ratio*, or reason. Emotions, be they positive or negative, are not allowed to influence our rationality in our strive to *virtus*, or true virtue. Put briefly, we might not control the events that have an impact on our lives but we are responsible of how we react to these events.

Of course, stoic philosophers were not blind to elements or factors which make it harder to lead a life without daily concerns, emotions and irrationality such as health issues, poverty, imprisonment and so on. That is why indifferent things were divided into advantageous and disadvantageous or 'preferred' and 'dispreferred' indifferents. Someone born as a free person with good health and financial well-off is less likely to be distracted by external misfortunes than a person without these benefits. The latter, however, is still able to achieve true virtue as the mind is always free. The paragon of such stoic success is the philosopher Epictetus. He himself was born a slave and early on in his life he became cripple.[7] Nevertheless he became a teacher and influential voice of stoicism and reached the status of sage. Still, the person blessed by 'preferred' indifferents is not guaranteed a virtuous life as he may become slave to his emotions.[8]

Stoic philosophers and writers influenced by stoicism often use military metaphors such as war, battle and wounds to explain the strife to virtue and being indifferent to misfortune. In what follows, I will discuss three text fragments (Seneca, Aulus Gellius, Pliny) in which the portrayal of a warrior (fictitious and historical) is imbedded in a stoic framework. How these warriors are characterised and to what purpose this was done is the focus of this paper. Thus, it builds on the works of Roller (2018) and Langlands (2018) that investigates the role of exemplarity *(exempla)* in Roman society.

CASE 1: GAIUS MUCIUS SCAEVOLA

In a letter to his friend Lucilius,[9] the stoic philosopher Seneca Minor (ca. 4 BC – ca. AD 65) argues that an ugly, deformed and mutilated body can still hold a virtuous soul, and thus becomes beautiful. To illustrate his point, Seneca turns to Rome's mythical past and refers to the story about Gaius Mucius Scaevola. The Etruscans, led by king Porsenna, were besieging Rome for a long time. As Rome ran out of supplies the senate allowed Mucius to sneak out of the city to assassinate Porsenna. Mucius failed to do so and was imprisoned by Porsenna who ordered to throw him into the flames if he would not tell which other plans the Romans had to kill him. Standing before the Etruscan king, Seneca tells what happened next to Mucius:

> *Should I hesitate whether to give greater praise to the maimed and shrivelled hand of Mucius than to the uninjured hand of the bravest man in the world? There stood Mucius, despising the enemy and despising the fire, and watched his hand as it dripped blood over the fire on his enemy's altar, until Porsenna, envying the fame of the hero whose punishment he was advocating, ordered the fire to be removed against the will of the victim.*[10]

[3] Sal. *Jug.* 85.29 (trans. J. C. Rolfe): Non possum fidei causa imagines neque triumphos aut consulatus maiorum meorum ostentare, at, si res postulet, hastas, vexillum, phaleras, alia militaria dona, praeterea cicatrices advorso corpore. Hae sunt meae imagines, haec nobilitas, non hereditate relicta, ut illa illis, sed quae ego meis plurumis laboribus et periculis quaesivi.

[4] For example Plutarch in his biography of Cato Maior, Plu. Vit. Ma. 1.5-6. For the impact of battle scars in court, see Cic. *Orat.* 2.124; 2.194–196; *Flac.* 98; *Ver.* 2.5.1.3; *Rab. Perd.* 13.36–37; Livy 70; Quint. *Inst.* 2.15.7; Quint. *Inst.* 4.1.69; 6.1.21. The reference to battle scars became an efficient rhetorical device, see e.g. Livy 2.23.3–7; 2.27.2; 4.58.13. Studies on the symbolic value of war wounds include LEIGH 1995; EVANS 1999; BAROIN 2010; and most recently, VAN LOMMEL 2015 with many other references to sources and an extended bibliography.

[5] EVANS 1999, 90-94.

[6] VAN LOMMEL 2015, esp. 105-109.

[7] The sources disagree on whether he was born with this disability or it was the consequence of a severe beating by his master, see LONG 2002, 10; MOSER 2012; GEVAERT 2017, 215.

[8] SHERMAN 2005, 28; GEVAERT 2017.

[9] Sen. *Ep.* 66.

[10] Sen. *Ep.* 66.51 (trans. R.M. Gummere): Ego dubitem quin magis laudem truncam illam et retorridam manum Mucii quam cuiuslibet fortissimi

His right hand completely consumed by the flames, Mucius and his descendants earned the *cognomen* Scaevola, the left-handed. Although the original story was concerned with punishment for betrayal and heroism in enduring punishment – a typical punishment for a traitor was burning the right hand – in Seneca's lifetime the legend was already altered in Mucius who voluntarily burned his own hand. Moreover, Seneca stages Mucius as a conqueror of physical pain. This idea is also shared by other authors as they portray Mucius who does not fear torture.[11] Mucius reaches the stoic ideal of indifference by despising the fire and by acknowledging his own body on its own has no value. This message is emphasised by contrasting Mucius attitude to that of Porsenna who orders the fire to be removed because, as Heikkinen has proposed, he did not wish to see suffering even of someone else.[12] The virtue of Mucius is enhanced because, as Seneca writes, "it is more of an accomplishment to break one's way through difficulties than to keep joy within bounds".[13]

It is noteworthy that Seneca leaves out an important aspect of Mucius' story which Dionysius of Halicarnassus mentions most explicitly. In the version of the latter Mucius actively strives for praise and immortal glory, an attitude not in line with the stoic ideals. In his speech to the senate he says, according to Dionysius:

> *As I am about to expose myself, then, to so great a danger, I do not think it right that the world should remain in ignorance of the high stakes for which I have played — in case it should be my fate to fail after all in the undertaking — but I desire in return for noble deeds to gain great praise, by which I shall exchange this mortal body for immortal glory.*[14]

Seneca, therefore, in a subtle manner alters the scenario to Porsenna envying the fame of Mucius. Thus, Mucius' urge to seek acknowledgement is totally suppressed in Seneca's version without calling into question Mucius' virtue, or *virtus*. Seneca's primary concern was educating Lucilius on the indifferent attitude he was supposed to take towards his body and therefore took the liberty of reshaping the story.[15]

The episode of Mucius was a school example to teach ethics, as Seneca indicates, and is referred to in another letter to Lucilius about fear of death and future. Mucius is portrayed as a mere soldier and a uneducated man *(non eruditum)*. Seneca then goes on listing other military men from the past who fearlessly faced death. The broader argument is that all manner of men, even those who acted like cowards in their lifetime, Seneca adds, are capable of performing incredible deeds in the final hour of their lives.[16] In this particular letter to Lucilius, the overall message is that one should not fear death and examples from the past must inspire us to follow this advice.[17]

CASE 2: SERGIUS SILUS

In the next case-study Pliny discusses the life of Sergius Silus. In his list of most virtuous men in history Sergius Silus holds first place because, Pliny argues, he even conquered fortune *(Sergius vicit etiam fortunam)*.[18] Throughout his life Sergius, as a soldier, had experienced various misfortunes as Pliny sums up: the loss of his right hand, twenty-three times wounded which crippled both hands and feet. Only his spirit remained intact *(animo tantum salvo)*.[19] Despite these disabilities he kept fighting in subsequent campaigns. Once back in Rome he was elected praetor which caused a lot of controversy with his political opponents who demanded his resignation as he could not lead the holy sacrifices being infirm.[20] The message Pliny wants to convey is clear. Despite all misfortunes suffered by Sergius Silus, he kept striving to excel. In listing his own achievements in the military, we should not interpret it as him bragging about his heroic deeds, but rather as him convincing others of his capacity to fulfil military and political functions no matter his physical condition. This continuous battle in life against misfortune and the refusal to feel discouraged are considered virtuous among stoics. Moreover, Seneca states one

> *"should bestow greater praise upon those goods that have stood trial and show courage, and have fought it out with fortune."*[21]

Or as he states elsewhere with a military metaphor:

> *"The wounded are more honoured than their fellows who fought as bravely but remained unscathed."*[22]

Sergius Silus is not staged as a politician who wants the office of praetor for personal glory, but rather as one who wants to serve the republic and his fellow citizens, just like Scaevola did, who volunteered to go on an almost certain suicide mission to kill the Etruscan king to serve the greater good, it being Rome's safety.

Prior to the praise of Sergius Silus, Pliny seems to

salvam? Stetit hostium flammarumque contemptor et manum suam in hostili foculo destillantem perspectavit, donec Porsinna cuius poenae favebat gloriae invidit et ignem invito eripi iussit.

[11] For example, Val. Max. 3.3.1, Livy 2.12-13, Polyaenus *Strat.* 8.8 , Plut. *Publ.* 17.

[12] HEIKINNEN 1997, 66-67.

[13] Sen. *Ep.* 66.49.

[14] Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 5.27.2 (trans. E. Cary): εἰς τοσοῦτον δὴ κίνδυνον ἐμαυτὸν καθιέναι μέλλων οὐκ ἀξιῶ λαθεῖν ἅπαντας αἰωρηθεὶς ὑπὲρ μεγάλων, ἐὰν ἄρα συμβῇ μοι διαμαρτεῖν τῆς πείρας, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ καλοῖς ἔργοις μεγάλων ἐπαίνων τυγχάνειν, ἐξ ὧν ἀντὶ τοῦ θνητοῦ σώματος ἀθάνατον ὑπάρξει μοι κλέος. Livy 2.12 also mentions, albeit less explicitly, Mucius strive for great glory ("en tibi" inquit, "ut sentias quam vile corpus sit iis qui magnam gloriam vident").

[15] HEIKINNEN 1997, 71. In fact, all of Mucius' emotions are omitted in Seneca's version. For example, in Val. Max. 3.3.1 Mucius' mind is troubled when Rome is under siege *(aegre ferret)*. As LANGLANDS 2018, 150 notes, Christian sources, like Tertullian (*ad Mart.* 4.4), also attribute a desire for fame to Mucius to undermine his heroism to that of Christian martyrs.

[16] The same sentiment is found in Val. Max. 3.3. ext. 7.

[17] Sen. *Ep.* 24. Mucius is also briefly mentioned in *Ep*. 98. See also Plut. *Publ.* 17.

[18] Plin. *HN* 7.106.

[19] The reading of these words is contested but crucial in our discussion. One can read *uno tantum servo* or *uno tantum salvus* or *animo tantum salvo*. DE LIBERO 2002a, 173-174 argues that a slave probably supported and assisted Sergius due to his handicap and therefore prefers the reading *uno tantum servo*. However, the true intent of this text in our opinion is to contrast Sergius' mental and physical state which is most fitting in Pliny's philosophical overtones.

[20] On physical impurity and priesthood in the Roman world, see MORGAN 1974; DE LIBERO 2002a, 187-190, BEAGON 2002, 115-117, BAROIN 2010, 60-62, LAES 2011a, 73-75, and most recently VAN LOMMEL 2015, 113-116 with a focus on injured veterans as priests.

[21] Sen. *Ep.* 66.50: Itaque haec magis laudaverim bona exercitata et fortia et cum fortuna rixata.

[22] Sen. *Prov.* 4.4. Idem licet fecerint qui integri revertuntur ex acie, magis spectatur qui saucius redit.

deviate from a strict stoic discourse in his discussion of two other virtuous military men: Dentatus and Capitolinus. In listing their achievements and distinctions – note that Pliny primarily mentions their successes and decorations while during the discussion of Sergius Silus Pliny focusses on his obstacles and misfortunes – Pliny adopts the literary *topos* of wounds to the front of the body symbolising courage. It seems as if Pliny deliberately contradicts the stoic logic by valuing bodily and external features as symbols of inner virtue. Perhaps his goal was to contrast widely acknowledged heroes, also by the crowd who's opinion is often considered mundane and vicious by stoic philosophers,[23] like Dentatus and Capitolinus who are associated by external symbols like rewards and war wounds which should be considered indifferent to true happiness, with Sergius Silus, a fairly unknown soldier as he is only mentioned briefly by Livius and also appears on series of coins made by one of his descendants, who is associated by his inner strength *(animo tantum salvo)*.

Contrary to Seneca, Pliny was not a professional philosopher but was very much influenced by stoic ideals, as all well-educated Romans were.[24] The targeted readership of this passage is kept in suspense, hoping their own ancestor will be number one in his list of most virtuous men. The sudden change of discourse to a stoic one enhances the element of surprise and, as we will argue, makes it an effective educational style for any reader. The fact Sergius Silus was a fairly unknown soldier and the listing of the honours he did not win contributed to the surprise of the reader.[25] The educational intend seems to comprise two stages. The first stage focuses on what constitutes *virtus*. One can imagine a Roman reader browsing through his family tree searching for ancestors with great military achievements and rewards. With the revealing of Sergius Silus as the most virtuous man the reader, possibly disappointed at first, is reminded of the superior ethics of stoicism. Like all educated Romans well acquainted with the philosophical ideals he realises he is being reprimanded for his popular, and therefore reproachable, view on *virtus*. Material rewards and public acknowledgment are not to be confused with inner virtues. The second stage is more subtle and much more demanding of the reader as it focuses on how to achieve *virtus*. Relying on the introspective reflex of his audience Pliny holds a mirror to the human strive for glory and recognition which is denounced by stoic standards as Seneca made clear in his portrayal of Mucius Scaevola argued above. Pliny expects and in a way elicits his reader's common habit of claiming personal glory through his ancestors.[26] Other than Marius' speech quoted at the start of this article Pliny's critique is not on inherited prestige per se, but more fundamental, i.e. on the longing for glory *tout court*.

As Beagon has pointed out,[27] this fragment gives little information about Sergius Silus' philosophy of life, but all the more about Pliny's ideology. Perhaps Pliny has, just like Seneca, altered some elements of the narrative. Sergius Silus might not have been such a modest politician and may have exploited his military achievements, including priding in his war wounds, to get elected, but there is no possibility to confirm this as no other accounts of this episode survive in the sources. What we do know is that Pliny clearly seems to favour stoic ideas over popular views, as the stoic warrior is nominated the most virtuous.[28]

CASE 3: QUINTUS SERTORIUS

Although Pliny and Seneca – and many more example are to be found in Roman literature – write quite highly of a mutilated soldier,[29] not all battle-scarred soldiers are applauded.

In Aulus Gellius' *Noctes Atticae* Titus Castricius, Gellius' teacher in rhetoric and an authority of rhetoric in Rome highly regarded among others by Hadrian for his character and learning,[30] comments on both Philip II of Macedonia and Sertorius and their behaviour regarding their war wounds as described by Demosthenes and Sallust respectively. Both warriors lost one eye in battle. Therefore, they were not only impaired but also apparently deformed. Despite their resembling visible mutilation, Castricius advocates admiration for Philip II and despise of Sertorius. Which line of argument did he follow?[31]

> *The criticism of Titus Castricius passed upon passages from Sallust and Demosthenes, in which the one described Philip, the other Sertorius.*
>
> *This is Demosthenes' striking and brilliant description of king Philip: "I saw that Philip himself, with whom we were struggling, had in his desire for empire and absolute power had one eye knocked out, his collar-bone broken, his hand and leg maimed, and was ready to resign any part of his body that fortune chose to take from him, provided that with what remained he might live in honour and glory."*
>
> *Sallust, desiring to rival this description, in his Histories thus wrote of the leader Sertorius: "He won great glory in Spain, while military tribune under the command of Titus Didius, rendered valuable service in the Marsic war in providing troops and arms; but he got no credit for much that was then done under his direction and orders, at first because of his low birth and afterwards through unfriendly historians; but during his lifetime his appearance bore testimony to these deeds, in many scars on his breast, and in the loss of an eye. Indeed, he rejoiced greatly in his bodily disfigurement, caring nothing for what he had lost, because he kept the rest with greater glory."*
>
> *In his estimate of these words of the two writers*

[23] ROLLER 2018, 267-268.

[24] On the philosophical heritage in Pliny's time and the way in which stoic ideas were 'almost unconsciously absorbed and displayed' by well-educated Romans, see BEAGON 2005, 15-16 and passim.

[25] Contra OGILVIE 1965, 475-476 who states that Sergius Silus and Dentatus were commonly bracketed as a pair.

[26] See for example FLOWER 1996, 91-127 on how the Roman aristocracy relies heavily on the *imagines* or ancestor masks during funerals to commemorate and appropriate their ancestors' heroic deeds.

[27] BEAGON 2002.

[28] See LAES 2011b on distinguishing popular and ideological views in reading case studies of disability in antiquity. The case of Sergius Silus is also discussed.

[29] See for example the mutilated Caesius Scaeva who embodies the stoic ideal of indifference in Luc. 6.251-254 and Val. Max. 3.2.23.

[30] Gell. *NA* 13.22. Not a lot is known of Castricius. See chapter 5 on the teachers of Aulus Gellius in HOLFORD-STREVENS 2003, 83-97.

[31] Note that Aulus Gellius himself is silent in this passage. Aulus Gellius himself is not entirely negative about Sertorius, see Gell. *NA* 15.22.

Titus Castricius said: "Is it not beyond the range of human capability to rejoice in bodily disfigurement? For rejoicing is a certain exaltation of spirit, delighting in the realization of something greatly desired. How much truer, more natural, and more in accordance with human limitations is this: 'Giving up whatever part of his body fortune chose to take.' In these words," said he, "Philip is shown, not like Sertorius, rejoicing in bodily disfigurement, which," he said, "is unheard of and extravagant, but as a scorner of bodily losses and injuries in his thirst for honour and glory, who in exchange for the fame which he coveted would sacrifice his limbs one by one to the attacks of fortune."[32]

Castricius utters criticism on Sertorius for rejoicing in his bodily disfigurement. Indeed, Sallust depicts Sertorius as a *miles gloriosus*, a soldier showing off his mutilations as prove for his valour in battle. This behaviour is frowned upon as Sertorius rejoices in bodily disfigurement. It is characterised as *'insolens et immodicum'*, contrary to costume and extravagant, and as acting against nature, *(ultra naturae humanae modum)*. This behaviour is contrasted with Philip II who behaves according to nature by 'giving up whatever part of his body fortune chose to take', and by scorning bodily losses and injuries in the devotion for honour and glory. The acceptance of fortune and the indifferent attitude to physical pain and mutilation echoes the lifestyle as promoted by stoic philosophers.

The criticism of Castricius on Sallust's Sertorius can be read on several levels. First, as I just laid out, Sertorius himself is criticised for his perverse priding in his war wounds. It is perhaps no coincidence, Castricius chose Sertorius to be included in his comparison, as the latter turned against Rome by gathering an army in Spain and Africa to fight against Roman forces and by installing his own senate, no longer recognising the authority in Rome. His low birth and his rising on the political scene in Rome probably met with some resistance, and may have been an additional argument for disapproval.[33] All these elements may have contributed to the negative evaluation of Sertorius by Castricius.

The criticism of Castricius lies not solely with Sertorius, but also with Sallust. Contrary to many other historians, Sallust presents Sertorius as a great hero in his Histories.[34] And like the speech of Marius, battle scars are presented as tokens of bravery and personal valour, elements indispensable for men of low birth who wish to climb the social ladder. Sallust is well aware that his support for Sertorius is far from obvious as he explicitly refers to hostile historians who ascribe Sertorius a *dehonestamentum corporis*, a dishonourable body, or who simply did not include them in their writings out of envy (*per invidiam* – in which we can read a pun by Sallust as *invidia* refers to 'the hostile look against someone' and is associated by the evil eye).[35] This chapter in Aulus Gellius' *Attic Nights* should be read against the broader context of ancient literary criticism in other chapters, nine of which discuss the translation, imitation and aemulation of Greek passages into Latin.[36] Castricius clearly deems Demosthenes' work the better, not on a literary or stylistic basis, but on a moral and ideological basis. Castricius seems to approve the opinions of the hostile historians to whom Sallust refers, as Castricius himself also uses the terms *'dehonestamentum* corporis', by which he strangely deviates from a stoic logic by associating external features to internal qualities, in his judgement of Demosthenes and Sallust. Thus Castricius blames Sallust, as he is responsible as author, for elevating Sertorius to the exemplary status of a war hero like Philip II, although we do not even know if Sallust was thinking of Demosthenes' work when he wrote this passage, and ascribes failure to Sallust's supposed attempt to rivalry with Demosthenes. In any case, Castricius appreciation of Sallust is minimal, at least for this passage in which admiration is not seen fit for a boasting soldier.

Perhaps Castricius had also other authors in mind when he denounced Sallust for portraying a soldier this way, as the battle-scarred and boasting soldier became a popular theme in Roman literature. Castricius may also have aimed his criticism at another theme which today we would label as a story of 'overcoming a disability'.[37] Sertorius beats odds in life and manages to become a successful and inspirational military commander despite his visual handicap. Although this achievement is admirable – Sertorius was praised and applauded by many – Castricius seems to warn his readers that overcoming a disability on its own is not sufficient for

[32] Gell. *NA* 2.27 (trans. J. C. Rolfe): Quid T. Castricius existamarit super Sallustii verbis et Demosthenis, quibus alter Philippum descripsit, alter Sertorium. Verba sunt haec gravia atque illustria de rege Philippo Demosthenis: Ἑώρων δ' αὐτὸν <τὸν> Φίλιππον, πρὸς ὃν ἦν ἡμῖν ὁ ἀγών, ὑπὲρ ἀρχῆς καὶ δυναστείας τὸν ὀφθαλμὸν ἐκκεκομμένον, τὴν κλεῖν κατεαγότα, τὴν χεῖρα, τὸ σκέλος πεπηρωμένον, πᾶν ὅ τι βουληθείη μέρος ἡ τύχη τοῦ σώματος παρελέσθαι, τοῦτο προϊέμενον, ὥστε τῷ λοιπῷ μετὰ τιμῆς καὶ δόξης ζῆν. Haec aemulari volens Sallustius de Sertorio duce in historiis ita scribsit: 'Magna gloria tribunus militum in Hispania T. Didio imperante, magno usui bello Marsico paratu militum et armorum fuit, multaque tum ductu eius <iussu>que patrata primo per ignobilitatem, deinde per invidiam scriptorum incelebrata sunt, quae vivus facie sua ostentabat aliquot adversis cicatricibus et effosso oculo. Quin ille dehonestamento corporis maxime laetabatur neque illis anxius, quia reliqua gloriosius retinebat.' De utriusque his verbis T. Castricius cum iudicaret, 'nonne' inquit 'ultra naturae humanae modum est dehonestamento corporis laetari? siquidem laetitia dicitur exultatio quaedam animi gaudio efferuentior eventu rerum expetitarum. Quanto illud sinceriusque et humanis magis condicionibus conveniens: πᾶν ὅ τι ἂν βουληθείη μέρος ἡ τύχη τοῦ σώματος παρελέσθαι, τοῦτο προϊέμενον. Quibus verbis' inquit 'ostenditur Philippus non, ut Sertorius, corporis dehonestamento laetus, quod est' inquit 'insolens et inmodicum, sed prae studio laudis et honoris iacturarum damnorumque corporis contemptor, qui singulos artus suos fortunae prodigendos daret quaestu atque compendio gloriarum.'

[33] Contra HOLFORD-STREVENS 2003, 88-90 who argues Castricius' criticism is not politically motivated as his line of argument is based on stoic ideas. Both reasons for criticism, I propose, do no need to be mutually exclusive. MCGUSHIN 1992, 157-158 stresses the negative judgement of Sertorius by contemporary historians because of his lack of noble status *(ignobilitas)* and explains it as a 'characteristic of the 'senatorial' interpretation of Roman history'. This original senatorial and conservative bias may have influenced Castricius, we argue.

[34] KATZ 1981, 71-85, esp. 78-82.

[35] On the meaning of *invidia*, see KASTER 2005, 84-103.

[36] NETTLESHIP 1883, 404. On attitudes towards Greek culture and language in second century Rome, see SWAIN (2004), 3-40 and on Aulus Gellius in particular, 28-40.

[37] Stories, with the intent to inspire, about people with disabilities who overcome odds to achieve great success (the "supercrip" model) are a popular theme in modern, especially biographical, literature and movies – and popular media in general – and have been criticized for the use of reductive stereotypes. For insightful discussions on the depiction of disabilities in popular media, see KAMA 2004; RILEY 2005; contributions in DAVIS 2006; BLACK/PRETES 2007; ELLIS/GOGGIN 2015, esp. 57-77.

a virtuous life.[38]

In general, criticism aimed at other authors is no exception. In his letter to Lucilius, for example, Seneca utters his disagreement with Virgil's line of the Aeneid

"worth shows more pleasing in a form that's fair"[39]

as it contradicts the stoic moral of the letter. The intention of Seneca, however, is different and less hostile to Virgil. The letter contains lessons and instructions to lead a virtuous life. Seneca knows Lucilius is well acquainted, like all educated Romans, with Virgil's work and therefore thinks it is necessary to comment on this line. Seneca does not prejudice the qualities of the poet himself, but the criticism takes place in the context of education.

Castricius, however, seems to use stoic ideas as an invective to ideological opponents. Just like Seneca's version of Mucius Scaevola, Castricius does not hesitate to alter or silence some historical facts to bring across his message more clearly. It is true stoic descriptions of Philips II circulated with different historians. According to Pseudo-Demetrius, however, Philip II was far from the ideal stoic warrior who is indifferent to his mutilation. On the contrary, the Macedonian king forbade anyone from mentioning the term 'cyclops' or even the word 'eye' in his presence, for he felt ashamed of his mutilated face.[40]

CONCLUSION

To sum up, Roman authors reacted in various ways to soldiers showing off their scars and mutilations. The traditional Roman view we find in writers from the Late Republic and Early Empire endorsed soldiers priding themselves in their disfigurement and celebrated these war wounded soldiers which became a literary *topos* from the Late Republic on. In turn, these writings may have enforced the self-confidence of war wounded soldiers.

Stoic philosophers and authors inspired by stoic ideas were not primarily concerned with the physical mutilation of a soldier, but rather with how he reacted to his disfigurements. The war wounds do not necessarily assign virtue to the soldier as they are external factors, i.e. indifferents. The authors, however, did not have wounded soldiers themselves in mind as audience of their work. The moral and advice formulated in these case-studies were not targeted for the soldiers *per se*, but rather for the intellectual elite of Rome. Warfare and the military served as mere powerful and efficient metaphors with which the readership was familiar.

The stoic framework was used for educational and theoretical purposes (Seneca and Pliny) and for ideological invectives (Castricius in Aulus Gellius). Sergius Silus and Mucius Scaevola are depicted as exemplary actors of *indifferentia* (indifference) while Sertorius acts immorally valuing his body too much. Stoic writers constructed their own ideal war wounded soldiers based on stoic values while deliberately altering or silencing other deviating narratives, a necessary evil probably as the high demands were impossible to reach for soldiers in real life and a key essential characteristic of using *exampla* which is always a negotiation and interaction of two time frames with different sets of values. As a result, the heroic template of soldiers sacrificing their physical integrity was reshaped and adapted to the prevailing stoic ideals which in turn resulted in a 'new Roman gimmick'. This (concealed) criticism was read by and, as we argued, aimed at a limited readership of high-educated authors – fully in line with the traditional 'Roman gimmick' – who praised war wounded soldiers and attached great importance to their disfigurements. More generally, the authors wanted to uphold a mirror to a readership who neglected the stoic moral and were in need of a straightforward or subtle reminder.

Still, it is noteworthy these stoic writers did not wholly discard the principles of the physiognomy, nor were they always indifferent to the physical appearance of other people.[41] Recently, Gevaert (2017) informed the seemingly contradicting discourses of Seneca's philosophical work and his political satire on emperor Claudius *(Apocolocyntosis divi Claudii)*. By mocking his physical disabilities such has his limp, his speech disorder and his monstrous appearance which even frightened Hercules, Seneca derives Claudius' morally inferior and incapable persona as emperor. Judging someone, whether it be positively or negatively, right away based on his appearance is criticized by Seneca himself.[42] We can partly explain the change of discourse by making a distinction of genres between his satirical work and the other philosophical works. However, as Gevaert shows,[43] Seneca also mocks other physical deformities such as baldness and gout in his philosophical letters.[44] But because these are the results of a vicious lifestyle they deserve to be mocked.

As we have argued above, Pliny also employs different and contradicting discourses in his discussion of the most virtuous man in Roman history. With his discussion of Dentatus and Capitolinus, Pliny shows us how most Romans thought about military heroes. He does not wholly discard this popular view as he gives Dentatus and Capitolinus second and third place in his top three of men displaying *virtus*. They are primarily judged by external features, indifferents stoics would call them, such as battle scars, military prizes and triumphs. The most important realisation of both men, according to Pliny, was their service to the greater good of the

[38] For people applauding Sertorius, see Plu. *Sert.* 4.3.

[39] Sen. *Ep.* 66.2 citing Verg. *Aen.* 5.344. The entire passage reads: 'The poet who sang: "worth shows more pleasing in a form that's fair" is, in my opinion, mistaken. For virtue needs nothing to set it off. It is its own great glory, and it hallows the body in which it dwells. At any rate, I have begun to regard Claranus in a different light; he seems to me handsome, and as well-setup in body as in mind. A great man can spring from a hovel; so can a beautiful and great soul from an ugly and insignificant body.' And in Latin: 'Errare mihi visus est qui dixit: "gratior et pulchro veniens e corpore virtus." Non enim ullo honestamento eget: ipsa magnum sui decus est et corpus suum consecrat. Aliter certe Claranum nostrum coepi intueri: formosus mihi videtur et tam rectus corpore quam est animo. Potest ex casa vir magnus exire, potest et ex deformi humilique corpusculo formosus animus ac magnus.' In another letter (*Ep.* 28), however, Seneca invokes Vergil twice in a favourable way which shows Seneca's appreciation for the poet.

[40] LASCARATOS/LASCARATOS/KALANTZIS 2004, 256-261, esp. 257 on the psychological effect. Cf. SAMAMA 2013.

[41] On physiognomy and ridiculing people based on their deformities and gestures in antiquity, see WEILER 2004; BARTON 1997, 95-132; CORBEILL 1996, 30-35; LAES 1997 ; VAN HOUDT 2001.

[42] Sen. *Ep.* 66.

[43] GEVAERT 2017, 217-219.

[44] Sen. *Ep.* 95.20-23.

Republic which deserve praise *(laus)* and glory *(gloria)*:[45] the conviction of Romilius by Dentatus because of improper use of authority and the saving of the Capito0 by Capitolinus, hence his cognomen. In his discussion of Sergius Silus, all external features, except his battle wounds of which the description does not correspond with the stereotypical scars on the front, are absent. What is stressed is Sergius Silus' perseverance both in battle and the political scene despite the lack of any public recognition in the form of rewards. Pliny's goal was to contrast popular views on what it meant to be a heroic soldier with a philosophical, and thus truer, understanding of *virtus*.

More problematic is Castricius' negative assessment of Sertorius. Although he employs a similar distinction between the base popular view and the superior stoic view on the behaviour of war wounded soldiers, he gets ahead of himself by deploying 'unstoic' arguments to negatively depict Sertorius. Indeed, Sertorius' behaviour is called unheard and extravagant *(insolens et inmodicum)* as he rejoices in his own mutilated body as opposed to Philip's who remains unmoved by accepting fortune disfiguring his body. So far, the argument is clear while he cites Demosthenes. What follows is highly inconsistent, as he repeats the insult *(corporis dehonestamento)* of historians who refused to give any credit to Sertorius accomplishments. This attribution of negative characteristics based on physical deformities is in line with what Weiler (2004) called *negative Kalokagathie,* a theory which assumes that only one's righteous nature can only be reflected by an unblemished body.[46] The soldier's fear of being ridiculed or depreciated due to war wounds is well attested in Greek and Roman antiquity.[47] This partly explains why there were no depictions of battle scarred soldiers in Roman art, as they were always possibly subject to a negative reception.[48] Though familiar with stoic principles, Castricius core business was rhetoric in which a broader framework than pure philosophy was justified to make an argument and bring down an opponent.[49] Castricius' deviation of a stoic frame of reference – as well as Pliny's incorporation of Dentatus and Capitolinus in his top three and Seneca's mocking of disabilities – shows how deeply ingrained physiognomic ideas and the principle of *kalokagathia* were in the Roman mind.

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[45] On the competition for *laus* and *gloria* in military and political context in Roman republican times, see HARRIS 1985, 17-34.

[46] See also Vergil's quote we discussed above, "worth shows more pleasing in a form that's fair" which was not to the liking of Seneca.

[47] For Greek antiquity, see SAMAMA 2013.

[48] For Roman antiquity, see VAN LOMMEL 2015.

[49] He deviates further from a stoic discourse as he approves of Philip's pursuit of praise and honor *(studio laudis et honoris)*, i.e. public recognition for his deed, an aspect which Seneca deliberately omitted in his portrayal of Mucius Scaevola, as we argued above. On passion for glory and recognition as a problem in the stoic doctrine, see the chapter 'Cicero's politics in *De officiis*' in LONG 2006, 307-335.

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