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## THE BALD AND THE BEAUTIFUL: IMPERIAL HAIR-ENVY AND THE END OF PTOLEMY OF MAURETANIA?\*

DAVID WARDLE

The elimination of Ptolemy, King of Mauretania, by Caligula has given rise to a large body of modern scholarship. Historians have put forward a wide range of explanations that include Caligula's psychological condition, his understandable aspirations to expand the empire, Ptolemy's involvement in a conspiracy, and rivalry over the high-priesthood of Isis.<sup>1</sup> By comparison, the ancient sources Suetonius (*Cal.* 35,3) and Dio (59,25,1) attribute the arrest and execution to jealousy and greed. Recently David Woods has added a refining dimension to the ancient picture, namely that one 1<sup>st</sup> century AD source used by Suetonius held that the balding Caligula killed Ptolemy out of envy for his full head of hair.<sup>2</sup>

My discussion will examine distinct elements of the new argument advanced by Woods: firstly the plausibility of a Roman popular audience being able to twit an emperor on his hairlessness, as Woods requires, secondly whether ancient Romans in general and Suetonius in particular could seriously contemplate hair-envy by Caligula as a motive for some of his actions, and

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\* John Atkinson made useful comments on a draft version of this paper, for which I thank him.

<sup>1</sup> E. Gozalbes, "El final del rey Ptolomeo de las Mauretaniae", *Gerión* 23 (2005), 189–204, is the latest contribution to the debate, usefully summarising the main lines of argument pursued previously (esp. 199–203). Add to his bibliography, G. Firpo, "L'imperatore Gaio (Caligola), I TURRANODIDASKALOI e Tolomeo di Mauretania", *MGR* 10 (1986) esp. 248–50 and M. Lenoir, "La piste égyptienne de Marc-Antoine, la cagnotte dilapidée et l'empereur psychopathe: l'élimination de Ptolémée, roi de Maurétanie" in C. Hamdoune (ed.), *Ubique amici. Mélanges offerts à Jean Marie Lassère*, Montpellier 2001, 117–127.

<sup>2</sup> D. Woods, "Caligula, Ptolemy of Mauretania, and the Danger of Long Hair", *Arctos* 39 (2005) 207–14.

thirdly the plausibility of the philology and source criticism fundamental to Woods' case.

While this is no place for an extended social history of hairlessness in the Roman context,<sup>3</sup> it is enough initially to establish that baldness was a condition which was frequently ridiculed in Roman life and which could be particularly embarrassing for someone in the social position of the emperor.<sup>4</sup> That baldness, particularly of those who were not old, aroused laughter finds reflections in a range of literary genres.<sup>5</sup> In essence Woods suggests that the crowd attending the gladiatorial contest at which Ptolemy made a prominent appearance contrasted the abundant locks (*caesaries*) of Ptolemy with the thinning and receding strands of Caligula, punning that the former made a better 'Caesar'.<sup>6</sup> In general, Romans were alert to the possibility of puns on proper names.<sup>7</sup> A surprising number of Roman *cognomina* arise from bodily features, especially from hair.<sup>8</sup> Ancient glossators accepted a link between *caesaries* and *Caesar*, lost writers such as Valens made the connection explicit,<sup>9</sup> and it can be argued

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<sup>3</sup> The study of hair in scholarly and more popular genres (e.g. A. Synnot, "Shame and Glory. A Sociology of Hair", *British Journal of Sociology* 38 [1987], 381–413 and K. Segrave, *Baldness. A Social History*, 1996) does not deal adequately with the ancient world.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. R. Garland, *The Eye of the Beholder*, London 1995, 6.

<sup>5</sup> Cicero noted that physical features were a legitimate source of humour or ridicule for the orator (*De orat.* 2. 239) and applied the theory in several speeches. *Calvus* does not appear in Cicero, Horace or Virgil and is rare in the more elevated genres, but is not of itself either coarse or obscene (cf. P. W. Fulford-Jones, "*Calvus ex Nanneianis*", *CQ* 21 [1971] 183–4. Baldness and the aged, see T. G. Parkin, *Old Age in the Roman World*, Baltimore 2003, 82–3).

<sup>6</sup> If this kind of pun was actually made, it is tempting to go further and suggest that the ironical contrast to Caligula's detriment is even sharper, when one considers Ptolemy's ancestry. His father's name, Juba, means in Latin 'flowing hair on the back of the head or neck', on which Cicero was able to make play (*Leg. Agr.* 2.59). Ptolemy, then, might have been thought to live up to his ancestral name, whereas Caligula fell far short of his. Ptolemy's own name (his *cognomen* in the Roman nomenclature C. Iulius Ptolemaeus) might also have given the audience reason to reflect, if it were aware that Caligula's much-vaunted campaigns had little substance (but see below p. 186): Ptolemy, as the Senate's award of *ornamenta triumphalia* demonstrated, had indeed proved 'warlike' (πτολεμαῖος).

<sup>7</sup> See E. S. McCartney, "Puns and Plays on Proper Names", *CJ* 14 (1919) 343–58 and V. Matthews, "Some Puns on Roman *Cognomina*", *G&R* 20 (1973) 20–4

<sup>8</sup> See I. Kajanto, *The Roman Cognomina*, Helsinki 1965, esp. 222–4.

<sup>9</sup> Fest. 50 L: *Caesar, quod est cognomen Iuliorum, a caesarie dictus est, qui scilicet cum caesarie natus est; CGL* 5,177,30: *caesariem comam unde et omnes imperatores antiqui*

that learned poets of the early imperial period made subtle play with the connection.<sup>10</sup> But something more crude and common is needed for the kind of popular witticism readily appreciated by a large crowd that Woods' argument requires, even though Suetonius provides evidence that Roman mass audiences were alert to allusions.<sup>11</sup> Indirect evidence for a connection between *caesar* and hair is also found in Suetonius, who notes that Julius Caesar's receding hair featured in songs sung at his Gallic triumph (*DJ* 51: *calvum moechum*),<sup>12</sup> and in the quips of his detractors.<sup>13</sup> We should see in these insults not just simple ridicule of his baldness or even connotations of Caesar as a randy goat, but also a contrast of Caesar's *cognomen* with the sad reality of his alopecia.<sup>14</sup> It seems

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*Caesares dicti sunt quod comati essent.* Valens' account is preserved by Johannes Lydus (Mens. 4,102): Οὐάλης δὲ, ὃ καὶ αὐτὸς τὰ Καίσαρος ἔγραψε, φησὶν ἄριστον μὲν αὐτὸν καὶ πρεπωδέστατον ἐν μεγέθει γενέσθαι, ἔτι μὴν καὶ κομήτην· τὴν γὰρ κόμην πατρίως οἱ Ῥωμαῖοι καισάριεν προσγορεύουσι, καὶ φησιν, ὡς διὰ τὸ ἐξ αὐτῆς κάλλος Καίσαρ προσγορεύετο. κύριον δὲ αὐτῷ ὄνομα Γάιος, εὐγενείας δὲ σημαντικὸν Ἰούλιος, ἀπὸ Ἰούλου τοῦ Αἰνείου τοῦ Ἀφροδίτης, ἀρετῆς δὲ ὁ Καίσαρ. I have not seen G.-J. Pinault, "Analyse de latin – caesaries", in B. Bureau and C. Nicholas (edd.), *Moussylanea. Mélanges de linguistique et de littérature anciennes offerts à Claude Moussy*, Louvain 1988, 15–30.

<sup>10</sup> Virg. *Aen.* 1,589–90, *Ov. Met.* 1,180. See Y. Nadeau, "Caesaries Berenices (Or the Hair of the God)", *Latomus* 41 (1982) 101–2.

<sup>11</sup> See e.g. Suet. *DA* 53,1, 68. The ability of Roman audiences at the theatre to pick up allusions, probably even those unintended by the dramatist, is exemplified well by an incident from 59 BC (Cic. *Att.* 2,19,3).

<sup>12</sup> See L. Ciro, "Moechus calvus", *Sandalion* 10–11 (1987–8) 83–9. A general assertion that the Romans associated baldness with sexual deviance (T. P. Wiseman, *Cinna the Poet and Other Essays*, Leicester 1979, 148), based on this piece of Suetonius, two fragments of Lucilius (972 and 1211 Marx) and Plautus *Amph.* 462, perhaps goes too far. E. Cantarella claims (*Bisexuality in the Ancient World*, London 1992, 159) that baldness was considered 'a sign of inadequate virility', something hard to square with Caesar's reputation.

<sup>13</sup> *DJ* 45.2: *calviti deformitatem iniquissime ferret saepe obtrectatorum iocis obnoxiam expertus*; cf. Dio 43.43.1: στεφάνω τῷ δαφνίνω ἀεὶ καὶ πανταχοῦ ὁμοίως ἔκοσμεῖτο καὶ πρόφασιν μὲν ἐποιεῖτο τούτου ὅτι ἀναφαλαντίας ἦν.

<sup>14</sup> There has been scholarly discussion of the role of physiognomics in the creation of Suetonius' physical descriptions (e.g. E. C. Evans, "Roman Descriptions of Personal Appearance in History and Biography", *HSCP* 43 (1935) esp. 60–70, J. Couissin, "Suétone physiognomoniste", *REL* 31 (1953) esp. 246–8, 251, J. Gasco, *Suétone historien*, Paris 1984, esp. 608–10, F. Stok, "Ritratti fisiognomici in Suetonio", in I. Gallo and N. Nicastrì (edd.), *Biografia e autobiografia degli antichi e dei moderni*, Naples 1995, 109–35), but even popular notions of physiognomy are probably irrelevant, or of minor importance in these responses to Caesar.

L. Antonius is insulted as *calve* in two extant Perusine *glandes* (*CIL* xi. 6721 nos. 13 and 14),

likely, then, that a Roman audience could make a connection between the terms *caesaries* and *Caesar*, although it cannot be established that there were on this particular occasion the kind of stimuli that are necessary for humour to be generated or that Caligula's sensitivity to his baldness was commonly known at the time.<sup>15</sup>

Even if we accept that puns on imperial baldness could be made, or appreciated, by ordinary members of Roman society, imperial responses to such witticisms are a separate issue. Suetonius regularly evaluates his emperors on the way they responded to criticism of all kinds: good Caesars were tolerant.<sup>16</sup> Although sensitive about his appearance, Caesar did not punish his detractors. For the young Caligula, his receding and thinning hair was more embarrassing: in a very hostile caricature his contemporary Seneca alleges that he resorted to an unsuccessful hairpiece,<sup>17</sup> and Suetonius alleges that he would not permit anyone to look down on his bald patch or mention 'goats' (*Cal.* 50,1), and even took immediate action against any handsome and hirsute men who came across his path.<sup>18</sup> As part of the portrait of his effeminacy, Otho's toupé attracts an ostensibly less hostile description, although Suetonius' use of the diminutive *galericulum* may suggest ridicule.<sup>19</sup> Domitian too was highly sensitive about his early baldness, but, rather than punish wits, he wrote a *libellus de cura capillorum* in which he treats his loss with some humour, as well as with a

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although it is not certain whether this relates to the pubic or anal depilation commonly practised by the *cinaedus* rather than to baldness (cf. J. P. Hallett, "Perusine *glandes* and the Changing Image of Augustus", *AJAH* 2 (1977) 167 n. 37).

<sup>15</sup> For example, the Roman theatre audience that applauded a verse mentioning a *cinaedus* who ruled the world (*DA* 68), spontaneously linking this with Octavian, had at the very least been prepared to make such links by the pervasive anti-Octavian propaganda of the period.

<sup>16</sup> This theme appears in many *Lives*, but the correct imperial response to verbal criticisms is best given in Augustus' own words to Tiberius: *noli in hac re indulgere et nimium indignari quemquam esse qui de me male loquatur; satis est enim, si hoc habemus ne quis nobis male facere possit* (*DA* 51,3), although Augustus did not shrink from responding in kind or from seeking legal remedy (*DA* 55–56,1).

<sup>17</sup> *Sen. Const.* 18: *tanta capitis destituti et emendaticis capillis aspersi deformitas.*

<sup>18</sup> *Cal.* 35,2: *pulchros et comatos, quotiens sibi occurrerent, occipitio raso deturpabat.* Caligula's sensitivity to the mention of goats is now linked by D. T. Benediktson ("Caligula's Phobias and Philiias: Fear of Seizure" *CJ* 87 (1991–2) 162–3) with Caligula's epilepsy: epileptics in seizure were thought to act like goats (Hippocr. *Morb. Sacr.* 4: ἴγα μιμῶνται).

<sup>19</sup> *Suet. O.* 12,1: *galericulo capiti propter raritatem capillorum adaptato et adnexo, ut nemo dinosceret.*

degree of literary sophistication.<sup>20</sup> It is clear that Suetonius represents Caligula's response to his shortcoming as far more extreme than that of any other emperor and that he considers that a bad emperor could indeed inflict punishment on others for reasons as trivial as their criticism of his appearance.

Suetonius did his writing in close proximity to the imperial family, under emperors who were not plagued by alopecia and at a time when writing on baldness was not politically dangerous: neither Trajan nor Hadrian is represented as sensitive to criticism of their appearance.<sup>21</sup> But, as we have seen, his imperial *Lives* provide the bulk of information to survive from antiquity on imperial hair and this may well reflect one of the elements of his lost *De vitiis corporalibus*.<sup>22</sup> In short, then, I suggest, Suetonius himself would not have

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<sup>20</sup> Suet. *Dom.* 18,1: *calvitio quoque deformis ... calvitio ita offendebatur ut in contumeliam suam traheret, si cui alii ioco vel iurgio obiectaretur quamuis libello, quem de cura capillorum ad amicum edidit, haec etiam, simul illum seque consolans, inseruerit:*

οὐχ ὀρά(α)ς, οἷος κἀγὼ καλός τε μέγας τε;

*eadem me tamen manent capillorum fata, et forti animo fero comam in adulescentia senescentem. scias nec gratius quicquam decore nec breuius.* The first part of Suetonius' information would seem contradicted by Martial's readiness to use baldness as a satirising element (*Ep.* 6,12, 10,83), especially in books dedicated to, and hopefully read by, Domitian (see 5,49). On Domitian's literary efforts, see L. Morgan, "*Achilleae comae*: Hair and Heroism according to Domitian", *CQ* 47 (1997) 209–14 and D. F. R. Page, "Two Things which Occupied Domitian", in J. P. Bews et al. (edd.), *Celebratio. Thirtieth Anniversary Essays at Trent University*, Peterborough Ontario 1998, esp. 113–5, for the argument that it predates his reign and had a practical dimension. If Dio of Prusa's *Encomium on Hair* dates from the period of his exile under Domitian, one might be tempted to see in it some irony, but the circumstances of its composition are too uncertain.

<sup>21</sup> In reality Trajan may have suffered from a receding hairline (see J. Bennett, *Trajan*, Bloomington 1997, 53, 201), while Hadrian had hair in abundance (cf. SHA *Hadr.* 26.1).

<sup>22</sup> The fragments of this are particularly exiguous (see C. L. Roth, *C. Suetoni Tranquilli quae supersunt omnia*, Leipzig 1858, 302). The title of the work suggests a far wider interest than is betrayed by the extant fragments. Dio (58,19, 1–2) is our only source for the praetor L. Caesarianus' strange prank at the *Floralia* which Dio represents as aimed at poking fun at the bald Tiberius (a feature oddly not in Suetonius' description; cf. Tac. *Ann.* 4,57,2) and which ended with all bald men being called *caesiani*: ἐκείνου μὲν ὑπερφρονήσας τά τε ἄλλα πάντα διὰ φαλακρῶν ἐν τοῖς Φλωραλίοις μέχρι νυκτὸς ἐπὶ τῇ τοῦ Τιβερίου χλευασία, ὅτι τοιοῦτος ἦν, ποιήσαντος, καὶ φῶς τοῖς ἀπιούσιν ἐκ τοῦ θεάτρου διὰ πεντακισχιλίων παίδων ἀπεξυρημένων παρασχόντος (τοσοῦτον γὰρ ἐδέησε δι' ὀργῆς αὐτῷ γενέσθαι ὥστ' οὐδὲ προσεποιήσατο ἀρχὴν ὅτι περὶ αὐτῶν ἠκηκόει, καίπερ Καισιανῶν ἐξ ἐκείνου πάντων τῶν φαλακρῶν ὀνομασθέντων). Perhaps memory of this made the link of *caes*-with hair and baldness sharper in the minds of the people of Rome.

thought it impossible that Caligula had punished any individual for criticism of his baldness nor, since it fitted with his overall belief in a thoroughly wicked Caligula, would he have sought to conceal a prominent example of such punishment. Thus again this suggests that none of his sources presented hair-envy as a factor in the elimination of Ptolemy.

Woods' argument requires that a source of one of Suetonius' major sources for the reign of Caligula 'wrote in Greek' and that this was a cause of misunderstandings which we can detect at two removes in Suetonius. Both the philological and historiographical elements of his argument are, however, problematic.

Woods' philological argument revolves around the Latin term Suetonius uses for the egregious purple cloak worn by Ptolemy at the gladiatorial contest, namely *abolla*. He sees this as a transliteration of a Greek word ἄβολος, which is to be understood as meaning 'with a full head of hair', and suggests that Suetonius' intermediate source misunderstood the Greek term to mean 'a cloak'. There are severe problems to this argument. Firstly and most importantly, there is no evidence that ἄβολος is used in the sense that Woods requires. Of the twenty-six examples thrown up by a search of the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, twenty-three, the vast majority, relate to horses that had not shed their foal-teeth;<sup>23</sup> the remaining three come from the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, where they are Greek transliterations of the Latin term describing cloaks which were carried as cargo and were sold at Red Sea ports.<sup>24</sup> It is a large leap from horses' teeth to a head that has not begun to suffer from baldness. Secondly, it requires a serious level of misunderstanding to turn an adjective ἄβολος into a noun *abolla*. Thirdly, in Suetonius we have an expert on ancient clothing: the Suda reveals that he was the author of a work Περὶ ὀνομάτων καὶ ιδέας ἐσθημάτων καὶ ὑποδημάτων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων οἷς τις ἀμφιέννυται, the short Latin title of which was probably *De genere vestium*.<sup>25</sup> Suetonius' only use of *abolla* in his extant works may reasonably be taken as deliberate and to have

<sup>23</sup> The majority of surviving citations come from ancient dictionaries and etymologies, recycling quotations from Sophocles (fr. 408) and Plato (*Leg.* 834c1) and simple *scholia* on these texts. Of other mainstream authors only Aristotle (*Hist. An.* 576b) uses ἄβολος.

<sup>24</sup> See L. Casson, *The Periplus maris Erythraei*, London 1989. This text goes back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. AD.

<sup>25</sup> For the extant fragments, which include a discussion on Numa and the *chlamys*, see Roth (above n. 22), 281–2 and A. Reifferscheid, *C. Suetonius Tranquillus praeter Caesarum libros reliquiae*, Leipzig 1860, 266–71.

been understood by him as a reference to a kind of cloak, moreover to a kind of cloak the significance of which could be appreciated by his ancient readers, even if not by us. It is logical to go further and argue that, if Suetonius' source used *abolla*, that source had also incorporated the word into an account with other details, such as the adjective *purpureus*, which made it difficult for Suetonius, without knowledge of ancestry of the account, to attach another meaning to it.

Woods' broader argument is historiographical: one of Suetonius' sources wrote in Greek and was highly inventive in his use of that language, creating unique words such as ἄξιοθριάβευτος and ἄδιατρεψία, use of which he attributed to Caligula.<sup>26</sup> One major problem in accepting this thesis in relation to the two words above is that in each case Suetonius is the only author to cite them; in each case just one Greek word is cited and Suetonius emphasises that the word is Caligula's own term.<sup>27</sup> The use of single Greek words was permitted in a whole range of Latin genres without violating the rules of style, and in fact, in these cases rules out only major annalistic historians as Suetonius' source.<sup>28</sup> It does not prove, or even suggest, that the source wrote in Greek. Secondly, Woods' asseveration that the use of Greek by Caligula as he planned 'that most Roman of celebrations' his triumph 'strains credibility', does not do justice to the complexity of code-switching by the Roman elite nor to Caligula's verbal ingenuity in creating terms for which there was no Latin equivalent.<sup>29</sup> We should further question the overall competence of Woods' putative intermediate translator of these terms, if he errs in attributing to Caligula's authorship words which the original Greek source indicated that Caligula merely used. If we do not accept that the only non-Homeric Greek words in Suetonius' *Caligula* do not come from Woods' Greek source, it weakens his case for supposing that *abolla* was another misunderstanding by this source. Lastly, it is inconceivable that Caligula's elimination of Ptolemy should have been transmitted by only one

<sup>26</sup> Woods (above n. 2), 210–11.

<sup>27</sup> *Cal.* 29,1: *nihil magis in natura sua laudare se ac probare dicebat quam, ut ipsius vebo utar, ἄδιατρεψία, hoc est invecundiam* and 47: *procerissimum quemque et, ut ipse dicebat, ἄξιοθριάβευτον*.

<sup>28</sup> See G. B. Townend, "The Sources of Greek in Suetonius", *Hermes* 88 (1960) 98–9.

<sup>29</sup> See now J. N. Adams, *Bilingualism and the Latin Language*, Cambridge 2003, esp. 297–396. Also M. Dubuisson, "L'ἄδιατρεψία de Caligula", *Latomus* 57 (1998) 589–94 and F. Gasti, "Un neologismo di Caligola e una probabile glossa: (Suet. Cal. 29, 1)", *Paideia* 57 (2002) 167–175.

source, and is indeed likely that it featured in all the annalistic histories available to Suetonius. If the tradition of hair-envy were present in these Roman sources, which provided the bulk of Suetonius' material, it would have fitted admirably with Suetonius' picture of Caligula and arguably would have provided an even more striking version than that involving Ptolemy's purple cloak. If we reject Woods' argument that *abolla* comes from a misunderstanding of a Greek word, there is nothing whatsoever in Suetonius' version that would cause us to think of a non-Roman origin for the story.

It is worthwhile to discuss how Suetonius constructs the rubric in which Suetonius' description of the incident that won Ptolemy severe disfavour in the eyes of Caligula occurs. It appears in the final section of an extended rubric on *saevitia* which the biographer constructed with great care.<sup>30</sup> The sub-sections of the rubric are arranged in order of ascending atrocity, to highlight to the reader the extent to which Caligula's reign was ruined by his cruelty: the words with which he introduces the relevant subsection, *nec minore livore ac malignitate quam superbia saevitiaque* (34,1), advise the reader of a range of negative attitudes which inform Caligula's actions, while the final sub-rubric, *nullus denique tam abiectae condicionis tamque extremae sortis fuit, cuius non commodis obtrectaret* (35,3), both points ahead to the climactic examples that Suetonius will employ and also illuminates the principle of organisation used in the earlier section – i.e. the *exempla* are organised hierarchically.

(35,1) *uetera familiarum insignia nobilissimo cuique ademit, Torquato torquem, Cincinnato crinem, Cn. Pompeio stirpis antiquae Magni cognomen.*<sup>31</sup> *Ptolemaeum, de quo ret<u>uli, et arcessitum e regno et exceptum honorifice, non alia de causa repente percussit, quam quod edente se munus ingressum spectacula conuertisse hominum oculos fulgore purpureae abollae animaduertit. (35,2) pulchros et comatos, quotiens sibi occurrerent, occipitio raso deturpabat. erat Aesius Proculus patre primipilari, ob egregiam corporis amplitudinem et speciem Colosseros dictus; hunc spectaculis detractum repente et in harenam deductum Thr<a>eci et mox hoplomacho comparauit bisque uictorem constringi sine mora iussit et pannis*

<sup>30</sup> See D. Wardle, *Suetonius' Life of Caligula. A Commentary* (Collection Latomus 225), Brussels 1994, 23–4, 268.

<sup>31</sup> On Caligula's response to Pompeius' *cognomen Magnus*, see H. Solin, "Namensgebung und Politik", *Tyche* 10 (1995) 205–6. Woods seems to accept (above n. 2, 209) the most plausible interpretation of this, that the *crinis* of which Caligula deprived Cincinnatus was his *cognomen* and not real curls. Cf. E. S. McCartney's suggestion ("Canting Puns on Ancient Monuments", *AJA* 23 [1919] 63) that Suetonius refers to the ancient equivalent of heraldic *parlants*

*obsitum uicatum circumduci ac mulieribus ostendi, deinde iugulari.*<sup>32</sup>

A consequence of this common organisational device of Suetonius is that it is not possible to deduce any chronological relationship between the *exempla* or to make any simple deduction about the sources he has used from the proximity of one *exemplum* to another. Woods argues rather for a close thematic link of the Ptolemy incident with the generalisation that follows immediately concerning Caligula's envy of other handsome men's hair. Because of Suetonius' methodology of excerpting from primarily annalistic sources, stripping out names and contexts so as to produce what reads as a generalisation, it is normally impossible to be clear at all as to who were his victims and in what contexts they incurred imperial wrath. In this case, however, Seneca provides valuable information (*De Ira* 2,33,3):

*C. Caesar Pastoris splendidi equitis Romani filium cum in custodia habuisset munditiis eius et cultioribus capillis offensus, rogante patre ut salutem sibi filii concederet, quasi de supplicio admonitus duci protinus iussit.*

Pastor's son was himself an *eques*, perhaps, as the adjective *splendidus* suggests, a member of the provincial elite,<sup>33</sup> and thus the *exemplum* is positioned precisely by Suetonius in the descending hierarchy of the chapter, after the client king whose honours marked him as the equivalent of a curule magistrate<sup>34</sup> and before the son of a *primipilus*, thus a member of the Equestrian Order. It is, nonetheless, difficult to secure a context for the offence of Pastor's son: while Barrett and others that have suggested the climate of terror in Caligula's last six months best fits the atrocity,<sup>35</sup> the *iustitium* after the death of Drusilla in June 38 is not ruled out, and may better fit the alleged crime if we are not inclined to believe in the historical reality of Caligulan hair-envy.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Text used here and throughout the article is from M. Ihm, *C. Suetoni Tranquilli Opera*, Leipzig, 1908.

<sup>33</sup> See S. Demougín, "*Splendidus eques Romanus*", *Epigraphica* 37 (1975) 174–87, for an argument based primarily upon epigraphical evidence from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD demonstrating that procuratorial rank is not essential for the designation *splendidus*; Seneca's literary use of the adjective is intended to indicate a Caligulan victim of some standing.

<sup>34</sup> See the discussion by D. C. Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, Beckenham 1984, 28–9.

<sup>35</sup> A. A. Barrett, *Caligula*, London 1989, 156; the conspiracy of Bassus, I. E. Grady, "Dio LIX 25. 5<sup>b</sup>. A Note", *RhM* 124 (1981) 263.

<sup>36</sup> In the *iustitium* Caligula himself displayed his grief by letting his hair grow (Suet. *Cal.* 24, 2) and may have interpreted the young *eques'* concern for his hair and appearance as *maiestas*.

Suetonius' next *exemplum*, the fate of Aesius Proculus, ostensibly presents a Caligula envious of another's physique, and perhaps in particular envious of his ample genitalia.<sup>37</sup> Again the *exemplum* is in its correct place in the chapter before that of two slaves. If we look at this section of the *saevitia* rubric altogether, the primary principle of organisation of the material is clear. Suetonius succeeds in presenting a Caligula who is envious of others' names, articles of clothing, abundant hair, excellent physique, long tenure of office and even of applause. In sum, Suetonius' Caligula exhibited a wide range of envies and directed them at individuals from every level of Roman society. There are no grounds for thinking that Suetonius saw the Ptolemy episode as connected with hair-envy at all.

Malloch correctly emphasises that Suetonius has moulded the narrative to present a Caligula who is capricious, rash and unjustified in his execution of Ptolemy, just as his depriving others of their honours was unacceptable.<sup>38</sup>

Woods attempts to shoehorn every reference to baldness in the ancient sources on Caligula to the Ptolemy incident: from Suetonius' account of an apparently cruel execution of prisoners taken without due cognisance of their crimes (*Cal.* 27,1: *cum ad saginam ferarum muneri praeparatarum carius pecudes compararentur, ex noxiis laniandos adnotavit, et custodiarum seriem recognescens, nullius inspecto elogio, stans tantum intra porticum mediam a calvo ad calvum duci imperavit*), Woods (above n. 2, 213) identifies the victims with the crowd members who had insulted Caligula through their hailing of Ptolemy as true Caesar and suggests that their baldness was a special, deliberate punishment inflicted by Caligula as a tit for tat or their mockery of his baldness. Dio (59.22.3: *ιδὼν γὰρ ποτε ὄχλον εἶτε δεσμωτῶν εἶτε καὶ ἄλλων τινῶν, προσέταξε τοῦτο δὴ τὸ λεγόμενον, ἀπὸ τοῦ φαλακροῦ μέχρι τοῦ φαλακροῦ πάντα αὐτοὺς σφαγῆναι*) also records this incident, but his fixing of it among a series of Caligulan atrocities committed in Gaul hardly fits well with the most plausible dates for Ptolemy's execution (see below).

<sup>37</sup> I was previously sceptical of a specifically sexual meaning of the nickname Colossores (Wardle [above n. 30], 272–3), but the nature of the ultimate humiliation heaped on him by Caligula can plausibly suggest a sexual element (cf. H. Lindsay, *Suetonius Caligula*, London 1993, 128). Any attempt to locate a wider significance of the individual is impossible because of the uncertainty of the *nomen* (mss. Esius) and the frequency of the *cognomen* Proculus. That large genitalia were greatly valued in Roman society is established by C. A. Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, New York 1999, 86–9.

<sup>38</sup> S. J. V. Malloch, "The Death of Ptolemy of Mauretania", *Historia* 53 (2004) 38–45, at 40. Cf. a similar, nuanced reading of Suetonius' narrative of Caligula's actions in the North, S. J. V. Malloch, "Gaius on the Channel Coast", *CQ* 51 (2001) 551–6. Here, however, Malloch may be committing the same methodological error of which he convicts others, that is taking what 'is not mentioned in the sources and then using it as the key to understanding the episode as a whole' (551).

Indeed, his use of the expression *non alia de causa* (*Cal.* 35,2) underlines the alleged triviality of Caligula's action.<sup>39</sup> The biographer is striving to present Caligula in the worst possible light. As a consequence, it is natural for modern historians, reacting against this bias, to search for ways in which Caligula's actions can appear more justifiable, or explicable, according to modern standards. Malloch, for example, argues that Suetonius uses *abolla* (arguably a general term for cloaks) to conceal that Ptolemy was really sporting a *paludamentum*, an ill-considered action that reflected badly on Caligula's lack of military success in Germany and explains the emperor's angry reaction.<sup>40</sup> Although Woods points out reasonably that, if Ptolemy were wearing a *paludamentum*, it would have pointed only to his own military pretensions and not to a tradition of military glory that could rival the Julio-Claudians,<sup>41</sup> nonetheless a suspicious emperor, who had recently survived a plot mounted by members of his own family, might have reacted rashly against Ptolemy. Woods' further line of argument, 'would Ptolemy really have been so stupid ...', is fraught with danger, as history is replete with countless examples of people who were.

A certain answer as to whether Ptolemy did wear a *paludamentum* and what his intentions were is impossible given the ancient evidence at our disposal, yet there may be an advantage to hypothesising further on the setting of the incident described by Suetonius. The biographer's specification of a summons and honourable reception (*arcessitum e regno et exceptum honorifice*) may suggest that Ptolemy and other client kings were called to Rome for Caligula's celebrations of his achievements in the North.<sup>42</sup> At some moment in

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. *Dom.* 14,2. John Atkinson has made the point to me that very often when disciplinary action is taken, the final issue is 'as flimsy and lacking in substance as the last straw' and thus may conceal the greater problem.

<sup>40</sup> Malloch (n. 38) 40–3.

<sup>41</sup> Woods (above n. 2), 209. It has been suggested that the appearance of *ornamenta triumphalia* on *aureii* minted in 38–9 (J. Mazard, *Corpus Nummorum Numidiae Mauretaniaeque*, Paris 1955, no. 399) was a subtle affirmation by Ptolemy of Mauretanian independence from Rome (J.-C. Faur, "Caligula et la Maurétanie: la fin de Ptolémée", *Klio* 55 [1973] 263–4), although in fact this was nothing new or revolutionary. It can be argued plausibly that both Juba and Ptolemy were loyal to Rome, recognising their dependence on the emperor for their thrones (M. Cortelloni-Trannoy, "Le monnayage des rois Juba II et Ptolémée de Maurétanie: image d'une adhésion réitérée à la politique romaine", *Karthago* 22 [1990] 45–53).

<sup>42</sup> Dio (59,24,1) records a tradition that Agrippa of Judea and Antiochus of Commagene

his praetorship in the year 40, Vespasian proposed extraordinary games *pro victoria eius Germanica*, a detail Suetonius reveals only in the *Life* of the later emperor (Suet. *Vesp.* 2,3). Dio's account of 40 does not mention these games, but if they were celebrated and if the pattern of earlier years was followed, it is likely that they were added onto the *ovatio* which Caligula celebrated on his birthday (Suet. *Cal.* 49,2). If they occurred on 2<sup>nd</sup> September, they probably replaced or at least eclipsed the commemoration of Augustus' victory at Actium.<sup>43</sup> By either close temporal proximity of his own games to, or direct replacement of, the Actium anniversary Caligula would have presented himself as the equal of Augustus, a dangerous claim if there were no substance to back it up.<sup>44</sup>

Is it possible, however, to reconcile this scenario with the likely date of Ptolemy's elimination? Only Dio provides a chronological context, placing the summons in 40: καὶ οἱ μὲν ταῦτ' ἔπραττον ... Γάιος δὲ ἐν τούτῳ τὸν τε Πτολεμαῖον ... μεταπέμψας (59,24,7–25,1). Around this Malloch constructs a chronology in which Ptolemy's death occurs after Caligula's return to the environs of Rome, which had happened by the end of May, after the period of imprisonment which Seneca mentions (*Tranq.* 11,12), but also in the first half of 40, in order for there to be sufficient time for a revolt in Mauretania to begin and be crushed by January 41.<sup>45</sup> However, the contradiction between the evidence of Pliny (*NH* 5,11) and Dio (59,8,6) on the dates of fighting in Mauretania is best resolved by the hypothesis that, although a Roman campaign was well underway by the time of Caligula's death, it was only concluded during Claudius' reign,<sup>46</sup> which opens up the possibility for a later date for Ptolemy's death, perhaps one as late as September 40. Seneca's testimony as to

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were with Caligula in 39/40 and an anecdote of Suetonius (*Cal.* 22,1) mentions an occasion on which client kings were in Rome *officii causa*. A far less likely occasion, given the chronological placement of Dio's notice, is the deification of Drusilla in 38.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Suet. *Cal.* 23,1 and Dio 59,20,1–2 for ancient discussions of the events of late August and early September 39.

<sup>44</sup> C. J. Simpson, "Caligula's Cult. *Imitatio Augusti*", *RBPh* 75 (1997), 107–12, makes a case that Caligula's linking of himself with and following the example of Augustus continued throughout his reign.

<sup>45</sup> Malloch (above n. 38), 42–3.

<sup>46</sup> See J. Gasco, "Marcus Licinius Crassus Frugi, légat de Claude en Maurétanie" in *Mélanges de philosophie, de littérature et d'histoire ancienne offerts à P. Boyancé*, Rome 1974, 299–310.

Ptolemy's imprisonment need not require a lengthy incarceration, nor one that Seneca saw firsthand.<sup>47</sup>

Malloch suggests that, by the time of Ptolemy's execution, it was clear to the Roman elite that Caligula had not secured 'any real military glory' and, as a consequence, that his *auctoritas* and links with the army were weakened, so that Ptolemy's parading of his own military success 'would have made for a humiliating and intolerable experience for a princeps'.<sup>48</sup> If, as Malloch suggests elsewhere,<sup>49</sup> Caligula made as much as he could of the surrender by Adminius of 'Britain', both by a symbolic enactment on the coast of the North Sea and by the sending of *litterae laureatae* to Rome (Suet. *Cal.* 44,2), and genuinely believed that this was the prelude to a physical extension of the empire and could legitimately be celebrated by an *ovatio*, it is difficult to argue that Caligula's military prestige was impaired, for his achievements were greater than the suppression of the bandit Tacfarinas, for which Q. Iunius Blaesus had been awarded triumphal insignia and been granted the right to receive acclamation as *imperator*.<sup>50</sup> If, however, Caligula had been thwarted by a mutiny of his troops on the Channel coast, and this was known in Rome, then his claims might have rung hollow, but Malloch plausibly denies that any mutiny occurred. By the time Caligula left Germany to return to Rome in 40 the campaigns he had advertised and planned for against the Germans had not begun; in fact, as Suetonius' *Galba* (6,3) reveals, there were no humiliating reverses and, in all probability, the foundations were laid for the successful campaigns of 41 against both the Chauci and Chatti, for which Claudius was to receive an imperatorial salutation (Dio 60.8.7). Malloch's take on the situation in 40 as 'the obvious disappointment of the German expedition' and Caligula needing 'to salvage credibility'<sup>51</sup> is hardly fair, and relies on the posthumous anti-caligulan propaganda; from the perspective of the troops, a donative received for a bloodless campaign might have been more attractive than glorious wounds at the hands of the Chatti. Moreover, if Ptolemy was executed in the first half of 40, i.e. shortly after Caligula's arrival outside the *pomerium*, as Malloch argues, then the campaigning season had barely begun. A later date

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<sup>47</sup> Cf. Malloch (above n. 38), 42.

<sup>48</sup> Malloch (above n. 38), 43.

<sup>49</sup> See Malloch (above n. 38), 551–6.

<sup>50</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 3,72,4, 74,4.

<sup>51</sup> Malloch (above n. 38), 554.

for Ptolemy's death would strengthen Malloch's case for a possible dissonance between Caligula's claims and the perceptions of the elite and would also provide a better context for Ptolemy's conspicuous cloak to be perceived "paranoically" by Caligula.

Although, following Suetonius' version, both Caligula and Ptolemy lost their heads, in this case hair-envy had nothing to do with it.

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