

MALLONIA

Abstract: The horrific tale of Mallonia related by Suetonius at *Tiberius* 45 is a brilliant fiction.

Keywords: Tiberius, Suetonius, Capri

In the seclusion of Capri Tiberius transformed himself into a monster of depravity. Words almost fail Suetonius when he comes to describe the debauchery on the island: ‘He burned with still greater and fouler infamy, hardly right to be discussed or listened to or even believed.’¹

Nonetheless the biographer bravely continues his catalog of corruption. It culminates with the horrific Tale of Mallonia:

feminarum quoque, et quidem illustrium, capitibus quanto opere solitus sit inludere, evidentissime apparuit Malloniae cuiusdam exitu, quam perductam nec quicquam amplius pati constantissime recusantem delatoribus obiecit ac ne ream quidem interpellare desiit, ecquid paeniteret; donec ea relicto iudicio domum se abripuit ferroque transegit, obscaenitate[m] oris hirsuto atque olido seni clare exprobrata. unde mora in Atellanico exhodio proximis ludis adsensu maximo excepta percrebruit, hircum vetulum capreis naturam ligurire.

Just how much he was in the habit of insulting the heads of women as well, and highborn ones at that, could be seen very clearly in the death of a certain Mallonia, whom, when she was delivered to him and most resolutely refused to endure anything more, he threw to the informers. And even when she was on trial he did not stop interrupting her, whether she was sorry, until, having left the court, she tore herself home and ran herself through with a sword, after loudly reproaching the shaggy and foul-smelling old man with the obscenity of his mouth. Hence a saying in the Atellan farce at the next games that met with great approval and circulated widely: ‘the little old he-goat licks the private parts of she-goats.’²

¹ S 43: *secessu Caprensi*. 44.1: *maiore adhuc ac turpiore infamia flagravit, vix ut referri audirive, nedum credi fas sit*. Unless otherwise indicated, S refers to Suetonius’ *Life of Tiberius*, T to Tacitus’ *Annals*, and D to Cassius Dio’s *History*. My thanks for invaluable comment from R. A. Kaster, J. T. Katz, and A. J. Woodman, and from the anonymous readers.

² S 45. The text is that of Ihm’s Teubner. For *mora* as ‘saying’, see the discussion below.

Suetonius' *Lives of the Caesars* runs to 334 pages in the standard Latin text. In all of its riotous exuberance, there is no anecdote more bizarre. Indeed, with Mallonia as our Alice, we tumble into Wonderland.

Let us read the tale again three times.

I.

When first re-considered, its meaning dissolves in a chaos of incongruity, implausibility, and incomprehension. Tiberius was accustomed to taking pleasure in being fellated by women: the technical term is *irrumatio*, whether served by a man or a woman. His indulgence in that particular vice, fellatio by women (for which this passage is the only evidence against him), is supposed to be made extremely obvious (how so, is not apparent) by one example, that is, the death of a noblewoman who is otherwise unknown to history. She is brought to him and she is thrown to prosecutors when she refuses to suffer anything more. The act itself is omitted. What more would she not suffer? More *irrumatio*? Or some other, worse assault? The nature of the act and its sequel is worth defining, as will be seen in a moment. More disquieting at this point is that the Latin, as transmitted in most manuscripts and printed in the standard text, and ignored by translators, reads *nec ... recusantem*, which means at first glance that she did *not* refuse to endure anything more.³

The tale rushes on, as he throws her to the *delatores*. Even when she is on trial he does not cease to interrupt proceedings. The Latin is elided. Tiberius' question is not quite attached syntactically to the preceding clause, for the sentence reads literally 'and he did not cease to interrupt her even when she

Capreis is commonly translated as 'does', that is, female roe deer. *Caprae*, female deer, and *caprae*, she-goats, were confused in antiquity, as is demonstrated in detail by Holford-Strevens (2004). The Atellan line surely refers to intra-species (goat/goat), rather than inter-species (goat/deer), sexual intercourse. Unfortunately 'doe' is used in English not only for a female deer but for a female goat as well. For clarity, I render *capreis* here as 'she-goats'.

'Hairy', standard in English translations, is too mild for *hirsutus*, which is usually applied to animals: hence, here, 'shaggy'.

³ The sense necessary for the logic of the story can be variously restored. Some manuscripts read *ne* for *nec*; less attractively, others read *et*; and Bentley conjectured *ac*. Woodman wonders (*per litteras*) about the remote possibility of the passage representing some kind of direct speech within indirect speech: *et 'non quicquam amplius pati' constantissime recusantem*, 'and most persistently refusing, [to the effect that] "she would not endure anything more"'. Kaster (citing Madvig, *Adversaria* 2: 573–4 (1873)) notes that this sort of Suetonian incoherence—inverting reality with a negative—is also found at *Divus Iulius* 78 and *Nero* 42. If *nec* is to stand, the fault might lie with Suetonius imperfectly condensing his source. Cf. Vogt (1975) 217.

was a defendant, whether she were sorry'. One might easily infer a verb of speaking ('[asking] whether'), but to understand this as a direct question, as some translations do—'are you sorry?'—seems unnecessarily melodramatic from all that we know of Tiberius' devious character and of Roman trials. It might better be taken to suggest that he was sending her signals to reconsider her position, but without an explicit verb the meaning must remain uncertain.⁴ That he did not stop interrupting her even when she was a defendant is awkward as well, for, although sense can be wrung from the Latin—her resolution might reflect his repeated interjections—on the surface the text suggests that he had been interrupting her on some previous occasion. Again, the Latin is confused and confusing.

But the trial itself is baffling. This is clearly a formal tribunal (*iudicium*), with prosecutors (*delatores*) and a defendant (*rea*)—that is, the court should be one of the standing criminal courts with juries (*quaestiones perpetuae*). Tiberius here plays a role for which he was well known, sitting as a self-appointed assessor to the magistrate and freely intervening in the interests of justice.⁵ But again, in the rush we are not told what the actual charge against Mallonia was, nor do we know the date or the place of the affair. This is a formal trial with prosecutors, and Mallonia runs home to denounce her persecutor. The scene should be set in Rome. But the context demands that the tale unfold on Tiberius' private property of Capri, for Suetonius recounts it in his catalog of vices indulged on the island. And persuasive for Capri as the setting is the fact that the alleged popular reaction to the tragedy surely depends on a spectacular geographical pun. The line so rightly appreciated by the audience means 'the little old he-goat licks the private parts of she-goats', but it also means 'the little old he-goat licks private parts on Capri'⁶—a pun which demands that we situate Mallonia on the island.

This creates a chronological impasse. Tiberius departed from the city of Rome in 26, never to return, and he retired into his life of vice on Capri the following year. Nowhere is it alleged by any source that he indulged in sexual enormities during his years in Rome, and there is no evidence for his participating in trials on Capri or elsewhere afterwards; indeed the criminal trial of a Roman citizen could not be held anywhere but at Rome.⁷ The choice is

⁴ *Ecquid paenitet* in the context of—but not in—an imaginary trial is found in a text contemporary with Tiberius, at Seneca *Controversiae* 7.2.2.

⁵ See especially T 1.75.1, S 33, and D 57.7.6 (all dependent on a single source), with Bahlitz (2009).

⁶ That is, *capreis* can be taken as either a dative of reference or (with capital C) a locative.

⁷ It must be understood (a) that this is a formal trial with all the trimmings, from which the accused can withdraw into public, not a *cognitio* conducted by the *princeps*, and (b) that

stark—prosecution in Rome before 26, debauchery on Capri thereafter—but the two should not overlap. The affair floats out of time and space.

Our story rushes to its conclusion. Mallonia tears herself home from the courtroom, procures a convenient sword, attracts an audience for her parting words, and runs herself through after denouncing Tiberius in no uncertain terms.⁸ Implicitly but emphatically she compares the old man to a goat, shaggy and smelly, and one who uses his mouth for obscene purposes.⁹ But confusion is complete when we contemplate the magnificent punch line. We might be concerned that yet again we must ignore or emend the standard text to make sense of it: the word translated as ‘saying’ is *mora*, which means rather ‘delay’ or ‘lapse of time’, which is nonsense.¹⁰ Be that as it may, soon after Mallonia has denounced the obscenity of the mouth of the shaggy smelly old goat of Capri (‘Goat Island’), the perfect pun is pronounced to an appreciative public: the old goat licks the private parts of female goats, or he licks private parts on Goat Island. Unquestionably, Tiberius is here presented as enjoying *cunnilinctio*, an act which in Roman terms would be submissive and degrading for him. But the whole point of the Mallonia anecdote is that it is the supreme example of his cruelly forcing women to *fellate* him. The two activities are, both physically and in the estimate of society, exact opposites. We have indeed fallen into Wonderland.¹¹

the only possible evidence for such a trial on Capri is the fragile and inconclusive text of T 6.10.2. The matter of imperial *cognitiones* is too complicated and tangential to argue here.

⁸ Her home is on Capri? Her audience astonished Capraeans?

⁹ (a) The goat’s hairiness and odor are classically conjoined at Horace *Epodes* 12.5, *namque sagacius unus odoror, / polypos an gravis hirsutis cubet hircus in alis*, ‘for whether it’s a stinking cuttlefish or a goat that lurks in your hairy armpits’ (Loeb translation, N. Rudd). Cf. Juvenal 5.155, *hirsute capella*, and Catullus’ remarks on the goat-like odor of the armpits of the amorous Rufus, for which he uses both *hircus*, 69.6, and *capere*, 71.1.

(b) ‘Odor’ and ‘lust’ are adjacent rubrics in the *TLL* entry for *hircus*, goat, at VI.2821.69–80 and 2822.19–33 (*odor*), and at VI.2821.80–2822.4 (*libido*).

(c) The goat’s lust and hairiness occur at Martial 12.59.4–5: *te pilosus / hircoso premit osculo colonus*, ‘the hairy farmer crushes you with a kiss like a billy-goat’ (Loeb translation, Shackleton Bailey).

¹⁰ *Mora* makes no sense: cf. Vogt (1975) 218. Hurley (2011) reads *nota*, which is found in some manuscripts, and neatly translates it as ‘tag’.

But we should read *vox* for *mora*. Vogt persuasively accepts Bentley’s suggestion of *vox* in the sense of *dictum*, ‘saying’, which is often used, as here, with *excipere*, to mean ‘to hear with approval’. Particularly compelling parallels are Livy 8.6.7, *adsensu populi excepta vox consularis*, and Curtius Rufus 5.9.2, *adsensu excepere ceteri hanc vocem*. Ihm noted Bentley’s suggestion in the apparatus of his 1907 edition, but not in his standard *editio minor* of 1908. Kaster adds that Oudendorp’s *unde mira in Atellanico exodio <vox> proximis ludis* neatly accounts for the corruption of *mira* into *mora* and the loss of *vox* before *prox-*.

¹¹ A defense of the text might be attempted: perhaps *cunnilinctio* was the ‘anything more’ that Mallonia refused to endure, but on the Roman scale of values it would hardly be

2.

Nevertheless, on a second re-reading of the text, behind this fog of confusion we can discern a sophisticated intelligence at work (not Suetonius, but his source)¹² with a coherent story to tell. This is particularly striking in the vigorous verb forms, rich and sometimes subtle, which whirl us through the tale.

Tiberius enjoyed insulting the heads of women, *feminarum capitibus inludere*. *Inludere* is aggressive, ‘to make sport of’, ‘to mock’, ‘to fool’. It also has the precise and not uncommon meaning of ‘to use for sexual pleasure’, as every reader of Suetonius knew. When a *caput* is involved, the verb means to enforce fellatio, *irrumatio*, an aggressive act, as here. The closest parallel commonly cited is likewise Suetonian, from the *Life of Julius Caesar*. Caesar could not refrain from boasting in the senate how he had outmaneuvered his enemies to win his Gallic command: ‘I got exactly what I desired despite the moans and groans of my reluctant rivals: from now on I will be mounting the heads of all of them,’ (*insultaturum se omnium capitibus*). Here ‘insult’ takes on its full vigor of ‘leaping upon’, and the ‘moans and groans’ (*invitis et gementibus*) represent involuntary submission. That is, his boast can be read as simple crowing over a political victory, but it is expressed in coarsely sexual terms. Moreover, a second wordplay is evident from the context of both the Tiberian and the Caesarian anecdotes. *Caput* commonly signifies not only ‘head’ but ‘legal status’, ‘legal personality’, hence the emphasis on highborn women and senatorial rivals. The two men are portrayed as trampling on civic rights: Caesar gleeful in his metaphor of lust and groaning victims; Tiberius grimly physical.¹³

Mallonia is delivered to Tiberius, *perductam*. Again, within the general meaning of *perducere*, to bring someone or something somewhere, there is the more precise denotation of ‘to convey a woman to a man’s bed (as a pimp)’, a sense again familiar to Suetonius’ readers and derived from a standard use of the basic *ducere* to signify engaging in paid intercourse.¹⁴ *Ducere* and *perducere* are also commonly used to describe the bringing of a defendant to a trial.

Mallonia most resolutely refuses anything more, *recusantem*. Tiberius throws her to the informers, *obiecit*. The verb *obicere* is startlingly vivid, com-

worse than *irrumatio* for her, and any confusion is the fault of the text itself. For the act, the term *cunnilingus* (used by Adams (1982)) should be preferred to the misleading *cunnilingus*.

¹² A subject to be pursued elsewhere.

¹³ S. *Iul.* 22.2. The wordplay on ‘heads’ in the two tales was observed by Holford-Strevens (2004) 73, note 17: ‘women as bearers of social and legal status, not merely as bodies’. *Inludere* and *insultare* as sexual assault: discussion and references at Vogt (1975) 216; Adams (1982) 200. Cf. *capiti non parcere* at Lactantius *Div. Inst.* 6.24.

¹⁴ Vogt (1975) 217; Adams (1982) 174–5.

monly used to describe the action of throwing living creatures, animal or human, as food to wild beasts, to be torn to shreds, munched, devoured.¹⁵

He does not stop interrupting her at the trial, *ne ream quidem interpellare desiit*, to discover whether she is sorry, *ecquid paeniteret*. Yet again, what stands out here is the wordplay of the verbs. *Interpellare*, to interrupt, also has a precise meaning: to accost, to solicit a woman. Tiberius, the well-known dissimulator, brazenly seeks her favors while pretending to ask if Mallonia repents whatever crime she may be accused of.¹⁶

She leaves the trial and hurries home, *domum se abripuit*. *Abripere* is yet another strikingly dramatic verb, and the construction, snatching, dragging, tearing oneself home, is unique.¹⁷

She loudly reproaches her persecutor, *clare exprobrata*, and runs herself through with a convenient sword, *se ferro transegit*. Again, vividly expressed, although suicide by transfixing oneself with a sword is commonplace in Latin.¹⁸

The saying derived from an Atellan farce then circulates widely, *percrebruit*: ‘the little old he-goat licks the private parts of she-goats’, (*naturam ligurire*). Again, a precise and colorful verb, meaning ‘to lick’, and yet again it and its derivatives can be employed, as here, to convey an obscene oral act, whether *fellatio* or *cunnilingio*.¹⁹ And, among its broad and universal meanings,

¹⁵ Grim examples at *TLL* 54.75–55.6, *obicio*. An anonymous reader aptly recalls Suetonius *Nero* 37.2: *creditur etiam polyphago cuidam Aegypti generis crudam carnem et quidquid daretur mandere assueto, concupisse vivos homines laniandos absumendosque obicere*, ‘It is even believed that it was his wish to throw living men to be torn to pieces and devoured by a monster of Egyptian birth, who would crunch raw flesh and anything else that was given him’ (Loeb translation, J. C. Rolfe).

¹⁶ This may account for the syntactical ellipsis noted earlier. The proper way to phrase the intervention would be in the passive, *interpellata ab eo, ecquid* (as at Valerius Maximus 1.8 ext. 10, *interpellatus ab eo ecquid ... mandaret*), rather than in the awkward active (as here). Examples of the verb *interpellare* signifying sexual solicitation are all third century or later (*TLL* VII.2242.73–80), but the related *appellare* (II.273.40–3) and *compellare* (III.2029.22–6) are to be found with that meaning in writers precisely of the age of Tiberius.

Interpellare can also be the verb used for ‘to bring a criminal charge’, and *de stupro interpellavit* can mean in the same author ‘brought a charge of illicit sex’ and ‘accosted [a female] for sex’: Servius *ad Aen.* 6.445 and 286.

¹⁷ Suetonius does however use forms of *se proripere* no fewer than six times in just the same sense. Might the variant *se abripere* derive from his source?

¹⁸ E.g., T 14.9.2 (*Mnester se ipse ferro transegit*), 37.3 (*se ipse gladio transegit*); Aurelius Victor 5.16 (*semet ictu transegit*); Silius Italicus 2.648 (*transacto tremebunda per ubera ferro*); 13.376 (*per pectora transigit ense*); Aulus Gellius 17.16.6 (*se ipse gladio transegit*).

¹⁹ Examples at Adams (1982) 140–1.

the noun *natura* also has the precise denotation of private parts, especially female.²⁰

But, much more commonly, the verb *ligurire* and its compounds and derivatives signify not just the basic action of licking but the concept of licking up, licking clean, of consuming avidly, both food and (metaphorically) money, property, inheritances. Perhaps then we could read *natura* in a broader sense. Might *naturam ligurire* also suggest that Tiberius devours the essence of his victims, their nature, their humanity? That would neatly recall, in ring composition, the *capitibus inludere*, insulting the heads of women, with which the Mallonia affair is introduced, sexual assault conceived also as an attack on human rights. While *natura* can admittedly stretch to ‘human nature’ in Latin, it does not quite have the essential meaning of ‘humanity’. But it does in its Greek counterpart, *φύσις*, and, as we shall see, there is a Greek twist to the tale of Mallonia.²¹

The portrait of a tyrant emerges from this second re-reading of these few lines, both directly and by implication from the tumult of the tale which they convey. Tyrants trample on the rights of their subjects, tyrants notoriously abuse the system of justice. Tyrants are notorious sexual predators. Tyrants notoriously eat their people and drink their blood. That is, political oppression is here interwoven with sexual abuse and aggressive consumption (wild animals, oral sex), all of it sketched swiftly, in ten lines and a rush of word-plays. Never mind that it makes no sense as a story or as an illustration of Tiberian vice. It coheres as a ferocious attack on tyranny.

Mallonia inevitably recalls the two legendary female victims of tyrannical injustice in Roman history. The first is Lucretia, the chaste wife of a cousin of Tarquin the Proud, the last king of Rome. Raped by Tarquin’s son, she summons her relatives, denounces the attack, plunges a dagger into her heart—and the monarchy is soon overthrown.

The second avatar is Verginia, the freeborn daughter of a Roman centurion, in the time when Rome was ruled by the decemvirs. The wicked decemvir Appius Claudius lusts after the girl and has one of his clients drag her into his court, claiming her as his slave. Her father, frustrated in his attempts to assert her free birth, stabs her to death before the crowd—and the decemvirate soon collapses. Verginia is particularly apposite to Mallonia and Tiberius, in that her civic status, her *caput*, is at issue, and the court trying her case

²⁰ E.g., Cicero *Div.* 2.145; Varro *Rust.* 2.7.8; 3.12.4.

²¹ I owe this point about Latin and Greek to the acute observation of Kaster, who also notes that Greek *phusis* likewise can mean not only ‘sex’ but precisely ‘private parts’, and female parts in particular.

is presided over by the very villain who wishes to assault her. And he, the infamous Appius Claudius, was a direct ancestor of Tiberius Caesar.²²

The legends of Lucretia and Verginia both lead from rape or intended rape by a tyrant to the stabbing martyrdom of his female victim before witnesses—and then to the overthrow of the corrupt regime itself. If the death of Mallonia is indeed meant to recall the deaths of Lucretia by suicide and of Verginia after a sham trial and the subsequent fall of tyrants, she surely embodies the political sentiments of the narrator from whom Suetonius has derived her story.

3.

A third review of that story may help here. Let us read it backwards.

The line from the Atellan farce is too good to be true. At first glance, it works. The pun on she-goats and the island of Capri is brilliant, innocent on the rough surface but drawing attention to its other meaning. Roman audiences were avid connoisseurs of the meaningful double entendre spoken at the games, dramatic lines lifted from their theatrical context, whether deliberately or by accident, and applied to real life. Yet some might have questioned how apposite this line really was. Mallonia's gibes about shaggy hair and foul smell find no clear echo in any description of the balding and health-conscious Tiberius, and certainly not in his public image, while 'little old he-goat' is not particularly apt to a tall and fastidious patrician: it is all rather forced, tailored to fit the spectacular goatish pun of the Atellana. Again, structurally, the Atellan line closing the anecdote is too neat a match for its opening, each with its wordplay on a sexual act representing the abuse of a tyrant. And again, the sexual act pilloried in the line is simply not the act of which the tyrant stands accused by Mallonia. The suspicion must arise that the verse—composed by an unknown author and recited at nameless games which were celebrated at an unknown date and an unknown place—is an artistic invention, created for the anecdote.

Goats and oral sex make for a striking, in fact a unique, combination, found nowhere else in the art or literature of antiquity. Goats—hairy and smelly and lustful—do not indulge in *cunnilingio*. But old men—hairy and smelly and lustful, and compared with goats—might. The general trope appears in Plautus' *Mercator*:

²² Registered by Suetonius in his *Life of Tiberius*, at 2.2. Note that in Livy's account (3.57.3) the wicked Appius Claudius is accused of imprisoning the girl's father and grandfather, 'upset more by his interrupted lust than by her death'. For interrupted lust, *stupro interpellato*, cf. the different meanings of *de stupro interpellare*—legal charge and sexual solicitation—in note fourteen above.

ieiunitatis plenus, anima foetida,
senex hircosus tu osculere mulierem?
utine adveniens vomitum excutias mulieri?

On an empty stomach, with stinking breath, you goaty old man would kiss a woman? In order to make her throw up when you approach her?²³

Horace and Catullus and Martial and others write not of goats but of men with goatish characteristics. Oral sex is a natural extension. ‘The little old he-goat licks the private parts of she-goats’ is heir to a long literary tradition, and the supposed gibe at the games is a notably sophisticated addition: Atellan farces were emphatically Oscan in origin and subject matter, and the Oscans were famed for their delight in oral sex.²⁴

The line is set up by, depends upon, the preceding tale of Mallonia. Who then was she?

The one fact that we are told about her is that she was well born, *illustris*, yet her name is distinctly unpromising. This is its only appearance in classical literature, and no Mallonius or Mallonia occurs in the epigraphy of the East, or of North Africa, or of the northwestern provinces of Europe. Indeed they do not occur in Greek at all. In their rare appearances on Latin inscriptions, they reveal a provincial and a distinctly Celtic flavor, found in Spain, in three of the Gallic provinces, and in Liguria. Moreover, in Liguria and in the rest of Italy they suggest a freedman character.²⁵ The only distinguished members of the family are local decurions at Cumae late in the third century and a

²³ 574–6 (Loeb translation, W. de Melo). The old man has previously dreamed of the woman as a she-goat: 225–71.

²⁴ Everything that needs to be said on the *morbus Campanus* can be found in Adams’ splendid essay of 1983, a paper unknown to O. Knorr, ‘*Morbus Campanus* in Horace *Satires* 1.5.62’, *CQ* 62 (2012) 869–73. Ausonius’ epigram 87 (Adams’ subject) begins *Eunus Syrius, inguinum ligurritor / Opicus magister* ..., ‘Eunus the Syrian, who is a crude and sex-crazed schoolmaster’ (Loeb translation, H. G. Evelyn-White).

²⁵ Mallonii/ae appear in Lusitania (two: *AE* 1898.1; *HEp.* 15.96); Belgica (*AE* 2011.784); Aquitania (one: *AE* 1962.224 = *ILTG* 182); Lugdunensis (one: *CIL* XIII.3123); Narbonensis (two: *CIL* XII.1983, a freedman; 2452–2454a, apparently a senator); Liguria, at Albintimilium (one: *AE* 1990.381, with a Greek name); Latium, at Linternum (one: *AE* 2001.853, a freedman Augustalis) and Cumae (two: *CIL* X.3698, 3699, a magistrate and a priest), and at Rome (two families, both with Greek names, a husband and wife at *CIL* VI.21888, and a woman with (apparently) her husband and son at VI. 21889: all five of these people are Mallonii or Malloniae; and a later female, *ILCV* 2907).

Both Kaster and Woodman tried valiantly to find a wordplay between Liguria and *ligurire*, but I remained unconvinced: that would imply that our source was aware of one obscure Mallonius at Albintimilium (see previous note).

polyonymous senator from Vienne in Narbonensis, whose nomenclature is uncertain and who on any calculation lived much later than Tiberius, probably in the second century.²⁶ The family was not *illustris* under Tiberius. A distinguished Mallonia at Rome in the 20s or 30s is improbable in the extreme.

In fact, ‘Mallonia’ too is a pun, created for the occasion, yet another wordplay in a passage packed to overflowing with them. Here it is bilingual, based on Greek *μαλλός*, ‘a tuft of wool’. Mallonia is revealed as a Woolly Female. Who better than a nanny goat to complain about the unwanted sexual advances of a hirsute, malodorous billy goat? She stoutly refuses to suffer anything more from the tyrant. How better for her to express this than in Greek, on the Greek island of Capri: *nec quicquam amplius pati, οὐδὲν μάλλον?*²⁷

The lady vanishes.

The tale of Mallonia is a fabrication from first to last, a stunningly elaborate fraud. Who invented this angry, witty, extravagant fiction? That question is left for another occasion.

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²⁶ Respectively, again: *CIL* X.3698, 3699 = *ILS* 4175, 4174 (Cumae); and XII.2452–2454a (near Vienne: the fragments are a problematic mess). The senator is registered at *PIR*² I. 846. His elaborate polyonymity indicates a second-century date, and Mallonius is clearly not its main element.

Note Suetonius’ list of four *illustres feminae*, all supposedly seduced by Julius Caesar (*Iulius* 50.1): all senators’ wives, all from senatorial families.

²⁷ *οὐδὲν μάλλον* expresses a Pyrrhonist concept, signifying absence of determination and withholding of assent: on which see the analysis at Bett (2000) 30–2. It was discussed by the satirist and philosopher Timon of Phlius, an author probably known and loved by Tiberius: Diogenes Laertius 9.76, with 9.109.

A reader, entering into the spirit of things, wonders, ‘if bilingual word games are in order, perhaps the ending of Mallonia can be equally significant. *ᾠνία* could mean a woman for sale?’

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