

SERIOUS FUN IN A POTTED HISTORY AT THE
SATURNALIA? SOME IMPERIAL PORTRAITS IN
JULIAN THE APOSTATE'S *CAESARS*, A
MEDALLION-IMAGE OF JULIAN AND THE
'GALLIENAE AUGUSTAE' *AUREI**

age, libertate Decembri, quando ita maiores voluerunt, utere: narra.

Horace, *Sat.* 2.7.4–5.

Abstract: Within a fantastical narrative setting, Julian's *Caesars* offers a 'potted history' of Rome's rulers from Julius Caesar to Constantine; in its story, five 'Caesars' and Alexander the Great enter a contest to determine which of them had been the greatest. Julian's prologue to the story represents it ambiguously as both a satirical contribution to the fun at a Saturnalia, and a 'myth' offering profitable instruction on serious matters. The assessment of Julian's underlying mood and purposes in composing *Caesars* is accordingly problematic: questions arise about the balance of humour and earnestness in his narrative voice, the extent to which his fiction's 'instructiveness' was implicitly a lesson in historical 'facts', the extent and idiosyncrasies of his own knowledge of Roman history, and the level of literary and historical awareness he anticipated in his target-audience. This paper addresses these questions with reference to Julian's depictions of some particular emperors and of Alexander in *Caesars*, and to potentially relevant visual images on a medallion dated to Julian's reign and in an earlier coin-series. Its argument falls into five sections: (I) introductory discussion of the 'Saturnalian' cultural context of *Caesars* and the circumstances of its composition, and of modern 'psychologising' readings of its author's purposes and state of mind; (II) assessment of the hypothesis that Marcus Aurelius and Alexander serve in *Caesars* as exemplary 'models' for emulation in its author's eyes; (III) assessment of a visual image of Julian that some adduce as evidence of 'Alexander-imitation' by him at the time of *Caesars*' composition; (IV) critique of a hypothesis that postulates suppressed anger and prurience at the heart of *Caesars*' ostensibly humorous 'potted history'; (V) a speculative closing discussion relating *Caesars*' depiction of a particular emperor (Gallienus) to his portrait-head in a much-discussed coin-image, and to an episode in his reign as reported in a lost account by a third century historian (Dexippus). The discussion reverts in closing to two central matters: *Caesars*' problematic standing as a guide to the extent of Julian's historical knowledge, and the balance of humour, fact and fiction in the piece.

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I. Introduction: *Caesars* as Saturnalian Literature and Potted History: the Question of the Author's Purposes, Narrative 'Voice' and State of Mind

The satirical fiction by the Emperor Julian now commonly designated *Caesars* originally bore a different title: *Symposium or Kronia*.¹ That was presumably Julian's own chosen title for it: in his prologue, he represents it as his contribution to the festivities at an annual Saturnalia (a 'Kronia', in Julian's Greek—'at which time the god permits us to be playful [*παύζειν*]'); and in his *Hymn to Helios* he mentions a work 'on the Kronia' he had previously written.² Ostensibly, a convivial *jeu d'esprit* is in prospect, and the story Julian goes on to tell has an aptly festive setting: he imagines a grand Saturnalian banquet attended by gods and *quondam* Roman emperors; and in the voice of a licensed jester at the feast, the satyr Silenus, the narrative offers jokes and touches of raillery. But notwithstanding this fantastical setting, evocations of historical persons and events are central to the action of the story, and to its humour: *Caesars'* comedy resides chiefly in its depictions of the imperial guests. And notwithstanding the jokes, Julian's prologue avows that the story will not be wholly frivolous. He represents it as 'a mixture of truth and fiction' that Hermes has privately imparted to him; Saturnalian merriment, he tells the interlocutor with whom he is conversing in the prologue, calls for a talent to amuse that he entirely lacks—'but if you want, as my part in the entertainment, I could recount a myth to you which perhaps contains many things worth hearing' (306b–c). It will be a 'myth', he implies, in the Platonic fashion, in which an instructive element can blend with the seasonal humour (but he does not specify the import of the lesson: the tale itself, he intimates, will reveal it). That might seem to indicate a predominantly serious purpose in the mind of *Caesars'* author—but how seriously should we take what he professes? It has been acutely observed that the prologue itself is slyly playful: the narrator teases and subverts the interlocutor's expectations, and the very words in which he disavows his own comic talent are probably quoted from a comic poet.³ Julian's prologue thus poses nice questions about his intentions, and the pitch of his voice *qua* narrator, in his depictions of the historical persons who figure as major players in *Caesars'* story. What was the *mixis* of instruction and amusement meant to be in these

¹ The MS tradition is unanimous on the original 'double' title; '*Caesars'* figures in it only as a subscription. As a popular title, '*Caesars'* is first attested in a fifth-century Christian source (Socr. *HE.* 3.1); its adoption in Cantoclarus' *editio princeps* of 1577 has made it conventional.

² *Caes.* 306b; *Or.* 4.157c.

³ Relihan (1989).

depictions, and in what sense was the purportedly earnest lesson conveyed in them supposed to rest on historical ‘facts’? Does the prologue’s opening disclaimer of comic talent turn out to herald an earnestly didactic story in which the jokes are only a brittle sugar-coating—or is there a steady vein of mischief pulsing in *Caesars*? Is the disclaimer better construed, in the light of the sequel, as a litterateur’s *captatio benevolentiae*, a faux-modest preamble to an exuberant twitting of famous names? As a preliminary to close discussion of these questions with reference to some particular ‘imperial portraits’ that figure in *Caesars* and in two potentially relevant numismatic images (§§II–V), I will amplify on its ‘Saturnalian’ cultural context and on the circumstances in which it was written—and on a surmise made by some modern scholars about its author’s purposes and state of mind. At the outset, a summary of *Caesars*’ story is in order.⁴

Quirinus, the deified Romulus, is hosting a banquet to mark the Saturnalia in the skies above Olympus; he has invited all the deceased ‘Caesars’ of Rome to dine with ‘all the gods’ (Kronos is naturally the guest of honour; he and Zeus recline at the highest table). The imperial invitees arrive in chronological order, a long line from Julius Caesar to Constantine and his sons: Dionysus’ friend Silenus offers teasing comments about many of them as they enter; a few notoriously wicked ones are summarily ejected or consigned to Tartarus. When all of those admitted are at their places, Hermes arranges an entertainment for the gods: a contest to establish which Caesar had been the best and greatest ruler. Heracles insists that Alexander the Great must be summoned, too, to champion the claim for a single Greek’s pre-eminence over the crowd of Romulus’ descendants. Five Caesars are shortlisted along with him: Julius Caesar, Augustus and Trajan are picked as outstanding militarists; Marcus Aurelius is nominated by Kronos for his philosophic virtue; Constantine is mischievously added on a whim of Dionysus, as a consummate hedonist. Each of the contestants makes a speech, and later responds to questions put by Hermes—and to further teasing interjections from Silenus. A secret ballot of the gods makes Marcus the winner, by majority vote (no runner-up is specified). Zeus then instructs Hermes to proclaim that each of the contestants should choose a protective patron. Marcus joins the table of Kronos and Zeus; Alexander, Caesar, Augustus and Trajan are portrayed as meritorious losers, and they too acquire respectable patrons. The sixth man, Constantine, stands out starkly as the fall-guy of the piece; he ends up condemned not just as an avaricious pleasure-lover, but as an impious murderer of his kin. He tries to escape the Furies’ justice by running off with Pleasure, who leads him to the company of Incontinence and Jesus—but unavailingly. The Furies set to work on him and his sons, until

⁴ I here adapt the summary I offered in Smith (2012) 281–2.

ordered by Zeus to desist; only Zeus' generosity towards the family's virtuous dynastic forebears spares Constantine his full and condign punishment.

That ends the narrative proper—and on the face of it, the instructive 'lesson' in *Caesars'* story has proved simple to the point of triteness: the heart of regal virtue is piety; the gods will reward the pious in soul; the impiously wicked will be punished. A short epilogue appended to the story as a *sphragis* serves to advertise the author's own 'good hope' on that score. Julian had claimed in the prologue to have got the story he recites from Hermes, and *Caesars* closes with Hermes' words of farewell to him: they urge him always to be obedient to the commands of Father Mithras, and thus find a secure protector throughout, and beyond, his earthly life. A personal cultic allegiance of *Caesars'* author has intruded in these closing lines: Mithras has not figured at all by name in the preceding story, but Julian was an initiate of the Mithraic Mysteries;⁵ and what Hermes says is a highly compressed reprise of the instructions and 'good hope' that he and the sun-god had given Julian at the end of the autobiographical 'Helios myth' which Julian had composed in Spring 362 (some nine months before the composition of *Caesars*) as part of his *Against Heraclius*.⁶

It would be perverse to construe this brief 'Mithraic' pendant to the narrative as other than heartfelt, and some modern accounts of *Caesars* postulate that the whole piece was thoroughly infused with an earnest religious-political purpose. Athanassiadi, for instance, construed it as a kind of pagan-activist manifesto, ignoring its author's 'apparently satirical intent' as merely a pretext: by means of '[this] careful reconsideration of the policies of his predecessors', Julian was 'explaining to everybody how the political mission of the empire and its spiritual vocation were interdependent'; 'under the spell of [this] one major idea, he set out to prove that [it] was not the dream of a madman, but a reasonable ambition which had fired many a predecessor'.⁷ That reading presupposes, *inter alia*, a text intended for dissemination

⁵ Smith (1995) 124–37. Note also the hypothesis of Beck (1998) 338–40 that some Mithraists may have celebrated an 'initiation into immortality' at the Winter Solstice (which would follow within days of the Saturnalia of 17–19 December). Pack (1946) 153–4 had partly anticipated Beck's suggestion, and had related the point to Julian: from a detail in the *Hymn to the Mother of the Gods* (*Or.* 5.172a–c), Pack hypothesised 'a connection of some sort [in Julian's mind] between the Winter Solstice and the ascent or exaltation of the soul' (Pack assumed that a Neoplatonic, rather than a specifically Mithraic, teaching was at issue).

⁶ *Against Heraclius* = *Or.* 7.230c–234c. Note that 'Helios', if not 'Mithras', does figure briefly in *Caesars'* story: at 314a, he intercedes on behalf of his devotee Aurelian, who is arraigned on a charge of multiple murder. For the dating of *Caes.* to Dec. 362 (when Julian also composed his *Hymn to King Helios* (*Or.* 4)), see below at n. 16.

⁷ Athanassiadi (1992) 197–8.

to a broad readership (and certainly, the ‘target-readership’ Julian envisaged will be germane, if the pitch of his voice in *Caesars* is in question). But what is the evidence for that presupposition?

The only direct witness on this score is *Caesars*’ prologue. Julian is conversing there in a playful Saturnalian setting with a cultivated (unnamed) ‘friend’; he commends his story as ‘a part of the entertainment’ that he hopes his friend will find ‘worth *hearing*’ (306b). These details might conceivably be construed as a literary flourish, but if taken at face value they would clearly imply that *Caesars* was composed for delivery in congenial company at a Saturnalian gathering. The brevity and lively pace of the narrative accord well with that assumption—and on more general grounds, such a ‘performance context’ is entirely plausible. The enduring popularity of the Saturnalia in antiquity needs no emphasis. The Romans’ love of it went so deep, a Flavian poet reckoned, that they would observe it as long as their city stood—and that prediction held good up to, and beyond, the reign of Julian: Macrobius, writing in the early fifth century, represents the Saturnalia as still flourishing late in the fourth.⁸ An aetiological account of the festival transmitted by Macrobius recounts its beginnings in terms that a champion of pagan ‘Hellenism’ such as Julian would have happily endorsed; it speaks reverently of a ‘sacrum’ even ‘older than the city’, imported to Rome from a Greek original and institutionalised there by an archaic king.⁹ In the round, though, the ancient literary testimonies dwell much less on the Saturnalia’s sacral pieties than on its licensed jollities and its temporary inversions of social norms. Many of the texts are overtly or implicitly celebratory, and historians of antique satire and popular culture nowadays read them with an eye to Bakhtin’s theory of the ‘carnavalesque’: their ‘free fantastic’ plots and mimicry and *parrhesia* can echo, in a literary mode, the Saturnalia’s spirit of communal *libertas*.¹⁰ At Rome, the fetters that normally bound the limbs of Saturn’s statue in the Forum were removed each year on 17 December, to usher in three days of fun: there were gift-exchanges and dicing-games, and feasts at which slaves dined freely with their masters; for those so inclined, there were ‘rivers of wine’, and ‘girls easily bought’.¹¹ But for cultured persons with a literary bent, a Saturnalian dinner-party could offer

⁸ Stat. *Silvae* 1.6.98–102; Macrobi. *Sat.* 1.1–2 and 9 (composed after 430, but recreating a Saturnalia dramatically dated to ca. 382–4; Cameron (2011) 230; 243–7).

⁹ Macrobi. *Sat.* 1.7.36–8.1; the speaker there is Macrobius’ idealised Praetextatus (whose historical original Julian had met in 362 and appointed governor of Achaëa: Amm. Marc. 22.7.6).

¹⁰ See e.g. Relihan (1993) 4–11; Kennedy (2005) 301–5; Graff 202–5; Toner (2009) 92–6.

¹¹ Versnel (1993) 146–50; I quote Stat. *Silv.* 1.6. 67 and 95.

tamer amusements: recitations of lampoons or verses composed for the occasion, or quizzes on points of history or mythology or literary usage, with a crowning of the best-informed contestant as king of the feast.¹² On the face of it, *Caesars'* 'free fantastic' review of dead emperors being quizzed in a competition at a Saturnalian banquet on Olympus would have suited such an occasion very nicely.

By contrast, the Saturnalia was hardly a likely setting for an earnest elucidation of imperial policy—and by the mid-fourth century, its 'carnivalesque' appeal had broadened in a connection that would have rendered it a markedly incongruous platform for dissemination of a pagan propagandist vision of the empire's spiritual destiny; by then, the annual Saturnalia was a tradition enjoyed by many Christians as well as pagans. A page in the 'Codex-Calendar' of 354—a deluxe item commissioned by a wealthy Christian—graphically attests the tradition's 'non-denominational' appeal at Rome in Julian's day. The Calendar's illustrator (himself a Christian) clearly assumed that its commissioner would view the season's party spirit indulgently: he personified the twelfth month as a caped Saturnalian reveller with a torch and festive mask and gaming-dice.¹³ The appeal by now reached broadly, too, beyond Rome: localised variants of the Roman Saturnalia were celebrated in cities and military bases across the empire.¹⁴ A likely case in point is Syrian Antioch, with its large mixed population of Christians and pagans¹⁵—and famously, Antioch served as Julian's headquarters from July

¹² Aulus Gellius (*NA* 18.2.1–16) reports how students at Athens celebrated the Saturnalia in his day. Feasts were arranged for groups who were studying under a particular teacher, at which there were '*quaestiones*'—literary round-quizzes and sophistic puzzles, and teasing contests on set topics in history and philosophy. A Master of Ceremonies awarded prizes of laurels, and copies of works by classical authors; if a *quaestio* went unanswered, the laurels were dedicated to a statuette of Cronus.

¹³ Salzman (1990) 25–8, 75–6, 203–6.

¹⁴ For a military example, Versnel (1993) 210 (Durostomium, a camp in Moesia). In civic contexts see e.g. Aul. Gell. *NA* 18.2.1 (Athens); Tert. *de Idol.* 14.4 (Carthage); Belayche (2004) 13–15 (Gaza and Scythopolis). These December variants on Rome's Saturnalia might be called Kronia in Greek contexts, but they are to be distinguished from the earlier 'indigenous' civic Kronia of (e.g.) Athens; it is not clear that all of them were technically public festivals. They are also to be distinguished from the New Year celebrations of the Kalends (January 1–3), a festival increasingly popular in the fourth century; it is attested, e.g., at Antioch by Libanius' *Or.* 9 and John Chrysostom, *Hom.* 35.5; see Liebeschuetz (1972) 228–30; Soler (2006) 25–7).

¹⁵ On the pagan-Christian mixture of the Antiochene population in the fourth century, see most recently Soler (2006) 1–6 and 239–42. Soler makes no mention (and I am not aware) of any explicit textual testimony to the celebration at Antioch of a public Saturnalia/Kronia annually in December (as opposed to the January Kalends, on which see my

362 to the spring of 363, for nearly half of his reign as sole emperor; it is virtually certain that he wrote *Caesars* there, to mark the December Saturnalia of 362.¹⁶

The exact occasion of its original delivery can only be guessed at—but in my view, an argument from silence can refine the possibilities. Libanius, who was resident at Antioch and in contact with Julian at the time in question, must surely have either known the piece directly, or heard about it (one presumes that copies were soon available to friends there); and Libanius in his voluminous speeches and letters makes reference to a fair range of Julian's writings—but he never once mentions *Caesars*. Nor did Ammianus (supposing he had read it) think it merited any mention when he composed his account of Julian's reign in the 380s—and that, too, is an eloquent silence, inasmuch as Ammianus took particular care to highlight the political context and import of another work (the *Misopogon*) that Julian had composed at Antioch very close in time to *Caesars*.¹⁷ Moreover, no other fourth-century external testimony even registers the work's existence; the single clear reference to *Caesars* in any extant ancient text comes only in mid fifth century, in the *Church History* of Socrates Scholasticus. The utter dearth of contemporary testimonies militates against a reading of *Caesars* as in any significant sense public propaganda, even on the assumption that its author's

preceding note); but it reasonable to assume that the Kronia was traditionally celebrated at Antioch in some form.

¹⁶ The MS tradition is explicit that Julian composed his '*Symposium or Kronia*' (i.e. *Caesars*) while sole emperor (*Autokrator*), and *Caes.* 306b indicates it was produced for a Saturnalia; that would entail composition/delivery either at Constantinople in December 361, or else December 362 at Antioch. In his *Hymn to King Helios*, composed at Antioch to celebrate the festival of Sol Invictus of 25 December 362, Julian addresses its dedicatee, his intimate friend Secundus Salutius: he says he has dedicated it to Salutius 'because what I have lately written on the Kronia seemed not entirely worthless to you' (ἐπεὶ σοι καὶ τὸ πρότερον εἰς τὰ Κρόνια γεγραμμένον ἡμῶν οὐ παντάπασιν ἀπόβλητον ἐφάνη, *Or.* 4.157c). It is natural to assume that the text referred to here as '[εἰς] τὰ Κρόνια' is *Caesars*, and on this basis modern scholarship is almost unanimous in placing *Caesars* at Antioch in 362: for discussion and bibliography, see Sardiello (2000) vii–ix. But a complication arises, inasmuch as the *Souda* credits Julian with composing both a *Caesars* and a *Kronia*, and ascribes to the latter a short snippet of text (= Jul. F 4 in the Loeb) which does not figure in any extant MS text of *Caesars*. Some scholars have inferred from this that the εἰς τὰ Κρόνια mentioned by Julian at *Or.* 4.157c was a quite separate work from *Caesars*, and have placed the latter in 361 on the ground that Julian would have been hard-pressed to have written both of these pieces and the *Hymn to Helios* in December 362. Pack (1946) 154 n. 9 cites the two relevant entries in the *Souda* and sets out the problems and possible solutions clearly: by far the likeliest explanation is that the *Souda*'s compiler was simply confused and mistaken.

¹⁷ Amm. Marc. 22.14.2–3.

purpose was ‘serious’. The silence of Libanius and Ammianus, especially, gives us good cause to doubt that *Caesars* was meant for delivery at a major public gathering or was ever officially published or widely disseminated in Julian’s lifetime; it accords far better with what *Caesars*’ preface would naturally lead one to infer—that Julian was composing an occasional piece, with a select ‘private’ audience and readership in mind. The best guess is that *Caesars* had its first outing at a Saturnalian dinner in the Imperial Palace on Antioch’s Island, in the congenial company of elite courtiers and friends. For an analogy, one could adduce the setting that modern scholarship postulates in the case of an early-imperial satirical work with which *Caesars* has some obvious affinities, the *Apocolocyntosis* of Seneca: it is commonly assumed (no ancient text confirms it) that Seneca’s account of the dead Claudius’ interrogation on Olympus and passage to Hades in the company of Hermes was delivered at Nero’s court as a Saturnalian entertainment in December AD 54.¹⁸

Caesars’ humour has struck some (not all) of its modern readers as wooden: they think Julian’s avowal in the preface that his temperament was ill-suited to Saturnalian jesting—be it honestly meant, or just a faux-modest litterateur’s preamble—proves all too true in the sequel.¹⁹ Whether *Caesars* amuses modern readers is irrelevant, for my purposes—but to be clear, the consensus of an earlier age was very different: notable postclassical connoisseurs of Julian’s writings (Edward Gibbon, for one) have ranked *Caesars* as a miniature masterpiece of learned wit. I have explored elsewhere the particular grounds of its appeal in this postclassical ‘reception’; my interest here lies with its author’s own cultural tastes and subjective ‘sense of humour’, and with the level of literary awareness and historical knowledge he could anticipate in its original target-audience or readers. Genre-analysis will offer us something in this connection, of course: literary theorists classify *Caesars* (like the *Apocolocyntosis*) as a kind of ‘Menippean satire’, and as formally comparable to some of Lucian’s pieces.²⁰ But that is a very broad rubric, and it does little to elucidate the particular temper of *Caesars*’ learned wit: the impulses that give rise to satirical humour can vary greatly from case to case, on a spectrum running from ebullient mischievousness to *saeva indignatio*. With that variable in mind, I wish to appraise the pitch of Julian’s humour as it emerges in his characterisations of some particular imperial predecessors.

¹⁸ Thus Nauta (1987); Versnel (1993) 207; Graff (2005) 204; Relihan (1993) 124–7 (proposing—in my view, unpersuasively—that Julian had himself read the *Apocolocyntosis*). On the combination of historiographical with poetic generic elements in Seneca’s Menippean piece, see Damon (2010) 49–70.

¹⁹ Bowersock (1982) 159; Baldwin (1978) 449–50.

²⁰ Relihan (1993) 119–134 is a deft reading; note also Weinbrot (2005) 50–62.

The wit in Julian's depictions of these bygone rulers was patently informed by his historical reading, and that lends *Caesars* a singular interest for modern historians of Julian: for them, it can illuminate not only the sources and range of his knowledge of Roman imperial history, but also the bearing of that knowledge on his own guiding aims and policies. As Gibbon put it, 'The value of [*Caesars*] is enhanced by the rank of the author; [...] a prince, who delineates with freedom the virtues and vices of his predecessors, subscribes, in every line, the censure or approbation of his own conduct'.²¹ Julian himself, when he invited his audience to draw an instructive lesson from his fable, had surely anticipated such an interpretation; in passing judgement on earlier rulers in the name of the gods, he was implicitly prescribing what constituted virtue in an emperor, and ascribing a measure of it to himself. And *Caesars'* interest on that count is further sharpened, once a composition-date in December 362 is acknowledged.

Julian had moved his court to Antioch in summer 362 to prepare a grand invasion of Persia. By December the preparations were well advanced, and a Persian offer of peace-talks made around this time was brusquely spurned—but there were dissenting voices disputing the wisdom of Julian's radical solution to the 'Persian problem', and counselling diplomacy as much the better option.²² There were also signs by this time—not least, at Antioch—that his project for a pagan restoration was faltering. Even the substantial pagan segment of the city's population had conspicuously failed to warm to Julian's brand of pagan activism; his personal relations with the Council and populace of Antioch were souring badly as a consequence (and it did not help matters that the provisioning of the large army gathering there had severely disrupted the city's food-supply). For a reader attentive to this background, its tensions resonate in some distinctive particulars of *Caesars'* narrative. It is easy, for instance, to account for the enlistment of the 'Invincible' Macedonian conqueror of Persia in a contest originally arranged for Roman emperors, and easy to see why the sterling quality that finally wins Marcus the victory in the contest is the imperturbability of his pagan piety; in both cases, a pointed rejoinder by Julian to doubters and critics is implicit.

Julian will certainly have expected *Caesars'* original audience or readership to catch his point in these two particular cases; no savvy listener or reader in December 362 could possibly have failed to do so. On one view, though, there are details in *Caesars'* cameo-portraits of earlier rulers that of-

²¹ Gibbon (1994) I.909–10.

²² Lib., *Or.* 18.164 asserts that many hoped the Persian offer would be accepted; on the contemporary dissenters, see *CAH XIII*.73–4.

fer deeper insights than its author might have wished to disclose into his state of mind at this sensitive juncture in the reign. There is a tempting parallel to adduce in this connection: a month or so after composing *Caesars*, Julian famously chided the Antiochenes for their frivolity and ingratitude in the *Misopogon*. Like *Caesars*, the *Misopogon* was a satire of a kind, but readers from Ammianus onwards have sensed behind its surface-ironies an author straining to conceal an *ira interna*; Gibbon called it ‘a singular monument to the resentment, the wit, the humanity, and the indiscretion of Julian’.²³ Some modern biographers of Julian have argued for comparable moments of unwitting self-disclosure in the earlier satire, too.

Bowersock, notably, has offered an ingenious reading of *Caesars* in this psychologising vein: it is implicit in brief remarks in his biography of Julian, and developed in an article he published shortly afterwards.²⁴ On his reckoning, *Caesars* is ‘a work not only of self-revelation, but in the end, like the *Misopogon*, of self-justification’: the potted account of Roman imperial history it purveys is both ‘highly personal’ and ‘conspicuously imperfect’, disclosing an author ‘intellectual[ly] isolat[ed] from his contemporaries’, and lacking genuine historical curiosity; ‘in the history of the past he sought only models for himself, and he acknowledged ultimately only Alexander and Marcus Aurelius’ as worth his while to emulate; ‘he [saw] himself as the best of all the emperors of Rome apart from Marcus’.²⁵ And Bowersock discerns anger and anxiety beneath *Caesars*’ ostensible jokiness, the mark of ‘an essentially humourless’ author impelled to write by a ‘consciousness of failure’, and venting his ‘frustrations’ and ‘bitterness’ in the face of resistance to his policies and mockery of his person: Bowersock hears ‘the authentic voice of Julian’ in exasperated remarks that the Alexander of *Caesars* is made to utter about men who had thwarted him.²⁶ The anxiety, moreover, is traced partly to a sexual root: on Bowersock’s diagnosis, ‘*Caesars* betrays a taste for erotica that goes well beyond the requirements of the Menippean genre’; ‘suppressed prurience’ is bubbling up within it, the consequence of an austere ‘self-denying’ author’s efforts to abstain totally from sexual relations, for which he harboured a ‘fanatical loathing’—and at one point (it is argued) the prurience meshes with Julian’s hatred of Christianity to offer ‘a glimpse into personal obsessions such as few writers of antiquity have ever allowed’.²⁷

²³ Amm. Marc. 22.14.2; Gibbon (1994) I.915.

²⁴ Bowersock (1978) 15–16, 18–19, 101–2; Bowersock (1982) 159–72.

²⁵ Id. (1982) 171–2.

²⁶ Id. (1982) 159, 161–2; (1978) 101.

²⁷ Bowersock (1982) 161–2.

The argument that *Caesars'* content reveals an intellectually isolated and neurotically resentful author is certainly arresting—but it requires close scrutiny. In the first place, it ought to be distinguished from Bowersock's generalising depiction, in his biography, of Julian as 'the Puritanical Pagan'. That broader imputation, whatever one thinks of it, rested on Bowersock's interpretation of a wide range of evidence relating to Julian's public actions in 362 and early 363. His reading of *Caesars* was plainly meant to chime with the broader imputation—but it constitutes an independent argument about a specific text, and its claims must be tested chiefly by interpretation of particulars in that text itself.²⁸ On that score, it is important to be clear that Bowersock's reading of *Caesars* fuses two separable questions: a discussion of the sources and slants of Julian's knowledge of Roman imperial history is linked with, and deployed to support, the judgements about his personal character. On the first count, Bowersock's discussion is often incisive on particulars. For instance, Alexander, Caesar and Augustus speak much more expansively than the other three shortlisted contestants, and with more clearly individualised traits of character—a bias that Bowersock plausibly traces to a prolonged acquaintance on the author's part with Plutarchan biography (both the relevant *Parallel Lives*, and the now lost biographies of the early emperors).²⁹ And the related suggestion that Julian had never read Suetonius is also, to my mind, persuasive: the notion of some earlier scholars that certain details in *Caesars* derive from the author's direct acquaintance with Suetonius' *Lives of the Caesars* is certainly fragile. Bowersock has some penetrating observations, too, on slants and omissions in Julian's portraits of his predecessors that suggest indifference, at least, to the *de Caesaribus* of his close contemporary (and personal acquaintance) Aurelius Victor, and to the so-called *Kaisergeschichte* tradition in Latin historiography that Victor reflects.³⁰ Of course, what Julian chose to write in a short satirical fiction can only suggest, not prove, the range or limitations of his historical reading; but it is safe to assume that he was predisposed to read his history in Greek—

²⁸ 'The Puritanical Pagan' is a chapter-title (ch. 8) in Bowersock's biography (1978). In my view, his broad characterisation of Julian as such is misleading: see Smith (1995) 46–8, 83–6, 110–12, 212–18; but to be clear, that is a point outside my purview in this paper. It is not my formal purpose here to affirm or deny the validity of Bowersock's broader characterisation of Julian; the question at issue is whether the content of *Caesars* offers any substantial support for it. So far as the hypothesis of repressed anger/emotion is concerned, an analogy drawn with the *Misopogon* might be suggestive in its way; but to presuppose the mood of *Caesars'* author on the strength of the *Misopogon* would risk a *petitio principii*; and in any case, the analogy's aptness could be contested (see below, at p. 261).

²⁹ Bowersock (1982) 171.

³⁰ Bowersock (1982) 167–8. For the personal relations of Julian and Victor, and the publication-date of Victor's *de Caesaribus* (361 rather than 360?), see below at n. 95.

and on any view, his omission from *Caesars* of a clutch of mid-third century emperors ruling from 235 to 253 is noteworthy, and puzzling.³¹

In my view, though, what Bowersock postulates in the round about Julian's intellectual and emotional disposition on the strength of *Caesars* is distinctly less persuasive. I shall here contest the claim that Julian's depictions of certain imperial predecessors in *Caesars* disclose him as an embittered and prurient eccentric with a myopically self-justifying vision of the past: his deployment of historiographical traditions in the passages at issue, I will argue, was more conventional—and, also, more adroitly playful—than Bowersock (and others) have surmised. I look first to the roles and characters assigned to Marcus and Alexander in *Caesars*: I dispute the claim that the terms in which Julian depicts them show him up as an 'over-achiever' obsessed with a wish to emulate them (§II); and I deny the relevance of a contemporaneous item of numismatic evidence adduced by some scholars as corroboration of the claim, as it relates to Alexander (III). I then refute the claim that features of *Caesars*' depictions of Constantine and Trajan, and of several of the un-shortlisted emperors, disclose suppressed anger and prurience at the heart of its ostensibly humorous satire (IV). In a more speculative final section (V) I relate *Caesars*' depiction of one of these un-shortlisted emperors (Gallienus) to a visual image of him that had featured in his official coinage, and to an episode in Gallienus' reign that is known to have featured in a now lost historical work (the *Chronica* of Dexippus): the discussion serves to highlight the difficulty of assessing the range of Julian's historical knowledge on the strength of *Caesars*, and leads me back in closing to the question of the balance of humour, fact and fiction in the piece.

³¹ Given the extreme sparseness of texts for comparison, Bowersock's suggestion ((1982) 170) that Julian significantly diverged even from the Greek historiographical tradition in his depictions of particular emperors is more fragile; in my view (see below at n. 84 and pp. 238–41) he exaggerates the divergences between Julian and Dio: and the omission of the emperors intervening between Severus Alexander and Valerian need not imply Julian was unaware of their existence (see below at p. 258).

II. 'Models': the Depictions of Marcus Aurelius and Alexander in *Caesars*

On Bowersock's reading of *Caesars*, '[Julian's] identification of himself with Alexander the Great and with Marcus Aurelius is easily discernible from the treatment each receives, and—in the case of Alexander—from the very fact that he is included at all'.³² And on this point, at least, Athanassiadi's view was very similar, though she couched it in far kindlier diction.³³ She, too, discerned in *Caesars* an inwardly 'troubled' author 'react[ing] against disillusionment', 'urgently seeking an answer from history' to questions that had come to preoccupy him in the face of 'dangerously strong opposition'. *Caesars*' 'leitmotif[s]', she thought, disclose 'particular obsessions that [Julian] had developed to counter-balance his lost self-confidence': a visionary conception of 'peaceful universal empire' (and hence the annexation of Persia) as Rome's destiny and his duty, and a swelling emotional impulse in that connection to identify with and emulate the achievements of Alexander—but in a spirit of philosophic piety for which another ruler supplied the paramount model. '[Julian's] admiration of Marcus Aurelius', she insisted, 'went beyond all conventions': when he made the gods vote Marcus the victor in *Caesars*, he was 'unconscious[ly]' pledging his own piety to them as his best hope of retaining Fortune's favour. On Athanassiadi's reading, Marcus was a balancing model in Julian's mind that momentarily held him back from identifying unequivocally with Alexander (an impulse, in her view, to which he ultimately would succumb).³⁴

That Julian warmly admired both Alexander and Marcus is not in question. At the start of his 'letter' *To Themistius*—a text he wrote at least a year (most likely, several years) before *Caesars*—he paired them as idealised exemplars (253a); the one had excelled in 'courage' (*ἀνδρεία*), the other in 'perfected virtue' (*τελεία ἀρετή*).³⁵ But to suppose that Julian came to imagine himself in a close spiritual affinity with either, and obsessively strove to match their achievements—that is a claim of a different order. Granted, the start of *To Themistius* contains a detail that at first sight signals a psychological predisposition on his part to emulate the pair—but it is double-edged ev-

³² Bowersock (1978) 101.

³³ Athanassiadi (1992) 199–200. Her short account of *Caesars* took a rosier view than Bowersock's of the soundness of Julian's historical knowledge in the piece (in her view, it offered '[a] careful reconsideration of the policies of his predecessors'); and Julian's putative prurience did not figure in it.

³⁴ Athanassiadi (1992) 192–3, 224.

³⁵ *Ad Them.* 253a: see Smith (2011) 84–6 for further discussion of this passage and its composition-date (either 361 or 355).

idence, when closely read. Julian refers to a time in the past (*πάλαι*) when he had quaked at the thought that he should try to rival Alexander and Marcus—but also, he adds, ‘anyone else who has stood out for his virtue’ [*καὶ εἴ τις ἄλλος γέγονεν ἀρετῇ διαφέρων*]; and moreover, if we take him at his word, this had only been the passing notion of a callow youth, a fancy he had long since outgrown and abandoned (253b). But in any event (and more important to register), the whole passage only amplified a cliché. *To Themistius* was Julian’s reply to a letter in which Themistius had exhorted him to model his rule on sterling examples of past virtue—and when Julian cited Alexander and Marcus there as inspirational exemplars for a prince to copy, he was voicing platitudes in response to platitudes. Alexander’s pre-eminence in martial valour was a topos that nobody in antiquity disputed; and fourth-century writers conventionally ranked Marcus and the Alexander-imitator Trajan as the best of all the Roman emperors, and as the yardstick against which subsequent rulers should be measured: Ammianus would thus praise Julian as a match for Marcus in his pursuit of ‘perfect wisdom’, and for Trajan in the field of war.³⁶ What Julian wrote in *To Themistius*, then, is certainly not sound evidence of obsessive emulation of Marcus and/or Alexander; it merely establishes that the pair came readily to his mind as conventional models of excellence to adduce in an epistolary exchange about the regal virtues. The ‘obsessive emulation’ hypothesis requires far stronger support than that—and its proponents look to *Caesars*, chiefly, to supply it. But at this point, one needs to separate the cases.

Marcus is shortlisted by Kronos on the strength of his devotion to philosophy (317b); its physical manifestation is the dignity and beauty of his face and sage’s beard, and a body gleaming pure as light on account of his abstemious diet (318c–d). At his first entry, Silenus is irked to find no scope for his mocking wit; even the satyr ‘revere[s] the magnitude of his virtue’ (312a–c), and in his case—uniquely, among the contestants—Silenus’ jokes and critical interjections are depicted as wholly lacking purchase. When called upon to stake his claim, Marcus confounds Silenus’ expectations of a prolonged and intricate Stoic sermon; he declines to make a competitor’s speech, saying simply that the gods, who know everything, will decide his merit—a mark of his consummate wisdom, the narrator observes, ‘for he understood when to speak and when to be silent’ (328b–d). When asked later what his guiding ambition had been, he says it had been ‘to imitate the gods’ (which he glosses as ‘to have the fewest possible needs and to benefit the greatest number’); and when Silenus objects that a true ‘god-imitator’ would

³⁶ Amm. Marc. 16.1.4: *bellorum gloriosis cursibus Traiani simillimus [...] rectae perfectaeque rationis indagine congruens Marco*. For the Alexander topos, Smith (2011) 45–9.

not have eaten mortals' food, the pious sagacity of Marcus' reply renders him silent, 'as if stunned by an expert boxer' (333b–334a). The verdict of the gods follows only a few lines later: they find Marcus not just the best Roman emperor, but better in the round than the greatest king that Greek history had to offer. The stress placed on his philosophic piety is notable, and telling: in one of his earliest extant private letters, Julian had professed his own guiding aim as service to 'true [i.e. pagan] philosophy' (and implicitly, the reply of Marcus that stuns Silenus is also a rejoinder to those who had criticised as excessive the appetite Julian displayed for cult-sacrifice at Antioch).³⁷ In this connection, the Marcus of *Caesars* was plainly an inspirational figure for Julian—and in this case, the modern hypothesis of emulation was anticipated by an ancient author: Ammianus retrospectively depicted Julian as not only 'like' Marcus in his love of perfect wisdom, but as having 'modelled his actions and *mores* in emulation of him'.³⁸

The hypothesis, though, is only acceptable with a significant qualification. Serious 'Marcus-emulation' by Julian might be taken to imply a study of Marcus' philosophic writings, and close attention to the historical accounts of his reign and person. One naturally thinks in the first place of the *Meditations*—but the brute facts are that there is no allusion to it to be found in *Caesars*, and nothing anywhere else in Julian's extant writings to establish that he had ever read it, or even knew of its existence; at best, they only establish that he *may* have read some items of Marcus' correspondence.³⁹ As for the historiographers' and biographers' accounts of Marcus, there is nothing in *Caesars* to lead one to think that Julian had trawled widely for information, or had perused any particular historical authors especially closely. Whereas the speeches he allots in *Caesars* to Julius Caesar and Octavian and Alexander often allude to specifics in their careers that point to Julian's familiarity with Plutarch's *Lives*, only two points about Marcus' conduct as emperor are ever mentioned. Silenus, struggling to find anything whatsoever to say to Marcus' discredit when he enters, insists on 'meddlingly harping on about his errors regarding his son and wife' [τὰ περὶ τὸν υἱὸν καὶ τὴν γυναῖκα πολυπραγμονῶν ἀμαρτήματα]; he had mourned an unworthy spouse excessively (an allusion to the deification of Faustina), and he had 'allowed his son to encompass the empire in his own ruin' by leaving the vicious Commodus as his successor, when a meritorious son-in-law was available (312a–b). Sile-

³⁷ *Ep.* 1 (= 13 Bidez) and Hunt (1995) 295.

³⁸ Amm. Marc. 16.1.4 (*perfectaeque rationis indagine congruens Marco, ad cuius aemulationem actus suos effingebat et mores*): on the Julian-Marcus motif elsewhere in Ammianus, see Hunt (1995) 288–9.

³⁹ Hunt (1995) 289–90; Smith (2011) 87 is agnostic on Julian's reading/awareness of the *Meditations*.

nus here picks up on commonplaces in the historiography of Marcus: in the tradition, the deification of the disloyal Faustina is reported as a mark of his grief without overt criticism; and the succession of Commodus is a cause for sorrow, not for blame.⁴⁰ Silenus works them up into an accusation, and the narrator's voice—momentarily focalised, perhaps, through that of Silenus—refers to them as 'errors' [ἀμαρτήματα]: Marcus will respond to the charge at a later point in the contest, in the second of the two short speeches *Caesars* allots him.⁴¹ But it is notable that, except for these two details, the events of his reign pass entirely without comment: *Caesars* is otherwise quite silent on Marcus' policies and activities as a Roman emperor. As David Hunt has nicely argued, the Marcus of *Caesars* is not characterised as a historical figure on whom Julian was seeking to model himself. He personifies, rather, the austere philosophic piety that Julian idealised as the pinnacle of human virtue; he serves schematically as the formal antithesis to the godless hedonism of *Caesars*' Constantine—and in that connection, to quote Hunt, '[Marcus]' part in the fable finds its ideal *exemplum* in Julian, not the other way round'.⁴² Hunt's perception is surely essentially correct, though the compressed formulation of his conclusion (as just quoted) is perhaps potentially misleading. Denuded as he is of any specific historical attributes, *Caesars*' Marcus boils down to an austere gleaming body and a set of clichés of popular philosophy: true virtue is indifferent to worldly success and esteem; true kingship is the preserve of the sage who rules his own passions; 'likeness to god' is the final aim and fruit of philosophic wisdom.⁴³ On this score, one can surely discount Athanassiadi's assertion that Julian's admiration of Marcus 'went beyond all conventions': on the contrary, it was thoroughly conventional. For any *bien-pensant* ancient reader who paid lip service to the primacy of these philosophic clichés as a test of virtue, Marcus' victory in *Caesars* was well-nigh assured from the moment of his short-listing: his deeds *qua* Roman emperor are left aside as entirely incidental to his winning merits; his being an emperor is merely a formal condition of his participation in the contest. In *Caesars*, then, as in *To Themistius*, Marcus serves as an emblem of perfect

⁴⁰ Faustina's infidelity and posthumous deification: Dio 71.22.3; 29.1–31.2; *HA Marc.* 19.2–11; 26.4–9. Commodus: Dio 72.36.4 ('One thing alone prevented him from being completely happy, namely, that after rearing and educating his son in the best way possible, he was greatly disappointed in him'); cf. *HA Marc.* 18.4; 19.1–2; *HA Comm.* 1.5–7; Ausonius, *de XII Caes.* 16–17 (*successore suo moriens, sed principe pravo, / hoc solo patriae, quod genuit, nocuit*).

⁴¹ See below at pp. 221–3.

⁴² Hunt (1995) 295–8 (I quote 298).

⁴³ For Julian's deployment of these commonplaces elsewhere (*Orr.* 6 and 7), see Smith (1995) 64–9, 81–2.

philosophic virtue, and *qua* emperor he constitutes for Julian the ideal *exemplum* of a philosopher-king—but it does not follow that when Julian depicted him he was craftily drawing an imperial self-portrait: *Caesars'* Marcus does not represent a Roman emperor that Julian ever claimed or supposed himself to be.

Bowersock would have readily agreed that the Marcus of *Caesars* projects an idealising *exemplum* unanchored in historical reality, and that Julian's own historical knowledge of the man and his reign was possibly quite rudimentary. But he wished to claim that, in one connection, *Caesars'* author did implicitly measure himself against the historical Marcus—and implicitly, to his own advantage. The narrator had momentarily spoken of Silenus 'meddlingly harping on about errors' in Marcus' conduct as a widower and parent (312a). On Bowersock's view, Marcus 'openly confesse[s] his error' in his response to Silenus' taunts; the reader is to assume from what Marcus says that '[he] was wrong to have had his wife deified and to have entrusted the succession to his son'.⁴⁴ Bowersock implies that Julian was here highlighting imperfections in Marcus so as to covertly praise his own conduct on these counts as irreproachable. To be sure, at the time he was writing *Caesars*, Julian was unmarried and heirless: his dynastic marriage to Helena on his elevation as Caesar in 355 had produced only miscarriages and a still-born child, and after she died in 360 he did not remarry. If we credit Ammianus (25.4.2), he remained entirely celibate thereafter. Praise of an emperor's sexual continence and extra-marital chastity, one should note, was a familiar trope in the fourth century panegyrists: the bedroom of Gratian (whose own marriage was childless) is as pure as Vesta's altar, we read, as chaste as the couch of a holy priest or prophet; Constantine is a stranger to all 'vagae cupiditates', Theodosius a paragon of 'pudicitia'.⁴⁵ Each of these three, though, had a living spouse at the time he was so praised, and two of them had sons; Julian's sexual abstention as a childless widower in his early thirties is rather different. Libanius' *Epitaphios* (*Or.* 18.181) purports to quote Julian's dusty answer to a relative who had urged him to remarry and sire a successor: 'he said that that was the very thing that deterred him [from remarriage], lest his children, if degenerate, should be legal heirs to the throne and bring ruin on themselves, suffering the fate of Phaëthon'. That diction sounds more like an admirer's retrospective invention than a sentence ever uttered by Julian—but in any event, the notion that he chose to remain celibate solely on a principle of statecraft does not seem plausible. Bowersock construed it as a pretext to account for the celibacy; he diagnosed the true cause as a 'fanati-

⁴⁴ Bowersock (1978) 15 and (1982) 172.

⁴⁵ Ausonius, *Grat. actio* 14.66 (Gratian); *Pan. Lat.* 7.4.1; 4.34.1 (Constantine); *id.* 2.12.5 (Theodosius).

cal loathing' of sex on the philosophically austere Julian's part (and in his view, we shall see, Julian's 'self-denying' efforts to repress his own sexuality had in practice fostered in him a prurient interest in erotica disclosed in certain details in *Caesars*).⁴⁶ Bowersock wished to link this 'loathing' to the depiction of Marcus as a husband and parent in *Caesars*: Julian's temperamental disinclination to approach another woman, he argued, now 'found its justification in the error of Marcus'.⁴⁷ But even if one concurred with Bowersock's implicit diagnosis of Julian as a prurient sexual neurotic (I leave that matter aside for the moment), his particular argument here would still be unacceptable on a basic test: it misrepresents the content and import of the passages from *Caesars* that it adduces.

Firstly, Marcus by no means 'openly confesse[s] his error' when he responds to Silenus' taunts about his treatment of his wife and son. At the end of the speech, he begs the gods' indulgence for one thing only: the presumptuousness inherent in a mortal's attempt to explain his actions to an audience of all-knowing divinities (335b). He makes no confession of any personal error in what he says about his deification of Faustina and his entrusting of the empire to Commodus (334b–335a). On the contrary, he adduces Homer to acquit himself on both of these counts, asserting that 'in this, too, I was imitating the gods': in the case of Faustina, he had honoured the precept of 'divine' Achilles that 'any man of virtue and prudence will love and cherish his wife'; in Commodus' case, he had imitated Father Zeus' indulgence to the sometimes wayward Ares—and he is insistent that he had had no cause in his lifetime to assume that Commodus would turn out an irreparably wicked ruler.⁴⁸ Moreover (Marcus continues), in both cases he had been scrupulously holding to hallowed traditions, avoiding odious innovations: all men, kings included, quite properly wish to hand on whatever they possess to their sons as their successors; it is a custom universally observed. As for the practice of deifying empresses, Marcus says, its initial introduction had been 'not sensible, perhaps'—but that was not of *his* doing; the practice had become a time-sanctioned tradition by his day, and to have denied the honour to his own dead wife would have been a species of injustice.⁴⁹ That

⁴⁶ Bowersock (1982) 162–3.

⁴⁷ Bowersock (1978) 15–16.

⁴⁸ Julian quotes *Il.* 9.343 and alludes to *Il.* 5.897.

⁴⁹ *Caes.* 335a: ἴσως δὲ τὸ μὲν ἀρξασθαι τῶν τοιούτων οὐκ ἔστιν εὐλογον, τὸ δὲ ἐπὶ πολλῶν γενόμενον τοὺς οἰκειοτάτους ἀποστερεῖν ἐγγὺς ἀδικίας.

closes Marcus' self-defence—and it persuades *Caesars'* gods, if not its modern critics:⁵⁰ Marcus' victory follows in short order.

Second, there is no good base for the implication that Julian was slyly highlighting these two particular 'errors' of Marcus specifically to praise his own personal continence as surpassing even that of the heroic Marcus. In the otherwise adulatory historical tradition about Marcus, his indulgence to his wife and son were the standard (and virtually the sole)⁵¹ reservations: one finds them in the Greek tradition in Dio (quite likely, directly or indirectly, he was Julian's main source for Marcus),⁵² and in Latin in the *Historia Augusta* (which amplifies on Faustina's adultery). If Marcus was to be subjected to questioning in *Caesars*, along with the other contestants, it was a simple dramatic necessity that these two alleged shortcomings should come to notice in the story; in his case, the tradition offered no other charges. Julian accordingly put them into Silenus' mouth—and then let Marcus' voice roundly rebut them. There is no cause to suppose that Julian was here engineering a clandestine self-glorification; he was only addressing, and dismissing, what anyone remotely acquainted with the literary tradition about Marcus would have thought of as requiring mention and rebuttal.

Marcus wins 'most'—not all—of the votes in *Caesars* (335c). Hunt thought that an oddly deflating touch.⁵³ The detail is probably best explained as a nod to the signal merits of his rivals (bar Constantine)—and especially, perhaps, to Alexander's. Dramatic logic would certainly assure

⁵⁰ Relihan (1993) 128 correctly observes that Marcus' technique in his second speech is sophistic, but I dissent from his inference that Julian subversively depicted Marcus here as 'declin[ing] from the nobility' he had been granted in his laconic first speech at 328d, and as peddling arguments that Julian expected his readers to find 'insufficient' and 'ever-poorer' for their dependence on poetry and tradition rather than philosophy.

⁵¹ I set aside a late fantasy in the (post-Julianic) *Historia Augusta: HA V. Marci* 15.3–5 reports (but dismisses as malicious slander) a rumour that Marcus had murdered his colleague Verus by serving him a poisoned sow's womb at a dinner. The *HA* at *V. Marci* 22.5–6, 8 and 23.2–5 also represents Marcus as criticised by some of his contemporaries (nobles who disliked the dangers of his military campaigning on the frontiers), *quia durus videbatur ex philosophiae institutione ad labores militiae atque ad omnem vitam*; but for the *HA's* author, that is a ground for praise, not censure (*laudi potius datur quam reprehensioni*). In the tradition (as at *Caes.* 334c), Commodus is Marcus' misfortune, not his 'error': see above, n. 40.

⁵² See above, n. 40; and cf. below at n. 84 for a detail on Antoninus Pius. Julian would have had more of Dio to read than we have: the relevant book (71) of Dio is now extant only in Xiphilinus' epitome.

⁵³ Hunt (1995) 296; cp. Relihan (1993) 123–4, construing the absence of any formal announcement of the winner as a tactical 'Menippean' subversion of the starting-rules of the competition.

Alexander of one vote: he competes by special dispensation as the favoured protégé of Heracles, and after the decision is announced he picks Heracles as his personal protector (316b, 319b, 335d). Alexander is clearly no match for Marcus on the privileged criteria of ‘philosophic’ self-control and indifference to worldly fame and reputation: his fiery *philotimia* almost leads him to withdraw from the contest in a temper at the very outset, when the lot denies him the role of first speaker (319b). But Alexander would surely have proved hard to beat, on *Caesars*’ showing, if martial virtue and success had been the crucial test. Romulus fears that his participation in the contest will consign the Roman competitors to the second rank (316b), and Alexander implicitly has the edge, *qua* commander, over Julius Caesar; in his speech, he cannily marks Caesar down as a *quondam* Alexander-imitator (326c). Trajan openly professes himself an imitator, and ends up picking Alexander as his own protector (333a, 335d). These details evoke and endorse the topos of Alexander’s invincible energy in the military sphere—and in that light, his intrusion into the Roman emperors’ company is hardly surprising: his trump card, of course, is his conquest of the entire Persian empire (323c–d, 324c–d)—and *Caesars*’ author would soon be marching out to Persia.

But none of this, it must be stressed, requires us to think that by late 362 Julian had become obsessed with thoughts of rivalling the scale of Alexander’s conquests, or had any great concern to cast himself as an Alexander-like figure in his publicity. On this point, I can refer the reader to an earlier paper published in *Histos* in which I scrutinised all the allusions to Alexander in Julian’s writings, and all the relevant external textual testimonies: I argued that nothing in any of these texts constitutes solid support for the hypothesis that Julian engaged in ‘Alexander-imitation’ in his imperial publicity, still less that he privately aspired to rival him.⁵⁴ Here I need only briefly reiterate my argument as it relates specifically to *Caesars*. It is not just that Alexander does not win the competition; Julian does not choose to specify that he was the runner-up. In the course of the contest, Alexander is sharply confronted with a substantial criticism of his conduct and character as a ruler—and his attempts to rebut it are notably ineffective. It first arises when Julius Caesar, puffing his own *clementia*, tartly observes that Alexander’s vindictive anger had not spared his friends, still less his enemies: ‘You treated the Thebans cruelly [*πικρῶς*]; you burned down their cities to ashes’ (321c–d). The best that Alexander can find to say against this is that ‘if some of the things I did were harsh [*πικρόν*], they were never directed at the innocent, but only at those who had often in many ways thwarted me and failed to make fitting use of their opportunities; and even then, remorse soon fol-

⁵⁴ Smith (2011); see esp. at 92–4, for the application of the argument to *Caesars*.

lowed after [my] offences'.⁵⁵ In Bowersock's view, I noted earlier, 'the authentic voice of Julian', angrily resentful, has surfaced in this passage—as if it implied a warning to the Antiochenes not to overtax their emperor's patience: he thought Alexander's words 'betray Julian's obsession with the problem of excessive severity' in the face of opposition.⁵⁶ But both of the excuses that Alexander produces—remorse on the part of the perpetrator, and disloyalty or perversity on that of the victims—came ready-made to Julian (they had been offered as mitigating factors by Plutarch and Arrian),⁵⁷ and moreover, the charge that Julius Caesar had levelled at Alexander recurs later in *Caesars* in colours that do not square with Bowersock's reading. When Alexander comes to be interrogated by Hermes (330a), Silenus teases him for his intemperate drinking—which leads him on to the aspect of Julius Caesar's accusation that had been left hanging. Silenus raises the notorious episode of Alexander's murder of his friend Cleitus in a fit of drunken rage, quoting the lines from Euripides that Cleitus, in Plutarch's version of the story (*Alex.* 51.6–8), had fatally quoted—at which point Dionysus advises Silenus to drop the matter, 'lest he does to you what he did to Cleitus' (331b–c). Alexander is badly discomfited, and finds nothing to say this time in his own defence: 'he flushed red, his eyes became suffused with tears, and he stayed silent'. There is a pointed verbal echo in the detail of the blush—only a page earlier (329d), Constantine has 'flushed red' at a jibe of Silenus—and Alexander's role as a contestant in *Caesars* concludes with this moment of embarrassed silence: he does not reappear until after the gods' verdict is announced.

The charges relating to the razing of Thebes and the killing of Cleitus could not fail to figure in *Caesars*, of course: they were standard, and routinely highlighted as 'black marks', in the historiography of Alexander; Julian surely drew them from Plutarch and Arrian, along with the strained defence of Alexander's remorsefulness in the sequel.⁵⁸ What matters, for my argument, is the way Julian chose to place and slant this material in *Caesars*' narrative. Alexander's bid to secure the prize culminates with an archly comic vignette of a perturbed and weeping contestant reduced to speechlessness by

⁵⁵ 325ab: εἰ δέ τι πικρὸν ὑφ' ἡμῶν ἡμῶν ἐπράχθη, οὐτι παντάπασιν εἰς ἀναιτίους ἀνθρώπους, ἀλλὰ ἢ πολλάκις καὶ ἐπὶ πολλοῖς προσκρούσαντας ἢ τῷ καιρῷ μὴ καλῶς μηδὲ πρεπόντως χρησαμένους, ἠκολούθησε γοῶν ἐπὶ μὲν τοῖς διὰ τὸν καιρὸν ἐξαμαρτηθεῖσιν ἢ μεταμέλεια κτλ.

⁵⁶ Bowersock (1978) 101; (1982) 161.

⁵⁷ Alexander's remorse as mitigation: Plut. *Alex.* 13.1–3; 50.2; 52.1, Arr. *Anab.* 4.8.4–6; 4.9.1–4.

⁵⁸ On Plutarch's and Arrian's accounts of the Cleitus episode, see now Fulkerson (2013) 97–113.

a wounding criticism that is not refuted; a fervent Alexander-wannabe would surely have spared his hero these unflattering particulars. On *Caesars'* showing, Julian's admiration of Alexander was quite conventionally framed: he shared Plutarch's and Arrian's admiration of him as antiquity's foremost soldier-king—but like Plutarch, he depicted his *philotimia* and *pothos* as problematic: they betokened a wilful streak which had issued in some culpably harsh actions—and which notably contrasts with the philosophic self-control of *Caesars'* Marcus. The verdict, overall, was indulgent, just as Plutarch's and Arrian's had been—but significantly, *Caesars* does not indulge in the kind of special pleading that Arrian had attempted:⁵⁹ the admiration stands hedged with reservations.

If one were to judge exclusively from the depiction of Alexander in *Caesars*, then, the hypothesis that by December 362 Julian had come to imagine a close affinity between himself and Alexander would remain unproven. To be sure, the reservations voiced in *Caesars* do not suffice to *preclude* the hypothesis: its proponents might claim that these reservations were merely token echoes of criticisms of Alexander that were commonplace in ancient declamation, and that what really counted in Julian's mind was Alexander's energy and glamour. But they would need to adduce external evidence to commend this claim—and if the argument of my earlier paper is accepted, the claim finds no support elsewhere in Julian's oeuvre, or in the writings of his contemporaries. In that paper, though, I was dealing exclusively with textual testimonies, and I left aside an intriguing item of material evidence which calls for closer discussion now: a 'contorniate' medallion struck during Julian's sole reign—most likely late in 362, around the time of *Caesars'* composition. Bowersock himself (to be clear) made no mention of the medallion, but the doyen of contorniate scholars, Andreas Alföldi, adduced this object as an independent proof of Alexander-imitation by Julian at this very time. In my view, though, Alföldi's ingenious learning led him badly astray in this case: I shall argue that the medallion is quite irrelevant to the question.

III. A Phantom Numismatic Testimony: the 'Julian-as-Alexander' Contorniate

Shortly after Julian's death, his detractor Gregory Nazianzen and his admirer Libanius both deployed the Julian-Alexander comparison to imply that he had either wished to become, or had become, a divinity: Gregory claimed the fatally wounded Julian had attempted to become a 'new god' by throwing himself into a river, as Alexander supposedly had tried to do in his

⁵⁹ Fulkerson (2013) 109–10 reckons Arrian's 'special pleading' near-panegyric.

last days; Libanius in his *Epitaphios* imagined the dead Julian comparing himself to ‘Alexander, son of Zeus’, and declared him a *paredros* of the gods.⁶⁰ Both claims are utterly fantastic, but they are testimonies by contemporaries of Julian, and they were formulated independently of each other; they were presumably picking up, however distortedly, on *something* in the atmosphere at the time—‘sparks thrown off by Julian’s own publicity’, perhaps.⁶¹ Alföldi thought he discerned such a spark in a contorniate of exceptional artistic quality which he had found in the Museo Archeologico of Florence, and which he subsequently published with a discussion.⁶² Contorniates were a type of medallion struck regularly at Rome from the late 350s onwards, for distribution as New Year’s gifts or at the Games. As well as portrait-heads of ruling emperors, they showed many images of ‘good times past’: the head of Alexander the Great often figured on contorniates in that connection, sometimes with the legend ‘Filius Dei’ attached.⁶³ The obverse of the Florentine contorniate at issue shows a finely executed portrait-head of a ruler, diademed and bearded (Fig. 1); Alföldi established beyond dispute that this image represented Julian and had been struck during his reign as sole emperor. Then he pushed his argument further: the image on the Florentine contorniate, he thought, bore a peculiarly close resemblance to that on another contorniate, kept at Berlin, which he had already studied and published some years earlier. The Berlin contorniate showed on its obverse the head of Alexander (Fig. 2); in this case, of course, the head was beardless—but its aquiline nasal profile significantly differed from the classical ‘Alexander-profile’ as it figured in all other extant Alexander-contorniates. To Alföldi, the profile and eye and hairstyle of the Berlin contorniate’s Alexander appeared to match exactly those of the Florentine contorniate’s Julian; he concluded that the bearded and the beardless images had both derived from the same die, with some retooling of the subject’s cheek intervening between the striking of the two medallions. On that view, the Florentine medallion represents the die in its original form: a die-engraving that originally depicted a bearded Julian had later been skilfully modified (the beard being tooled away and the cheek smoothed down) so as to transform the head into a beardless Alexander.

⁶⁰ Greg. Naz. *Or.* 5.14 (*PG* 35.681a–b); Lib. *Or.* 18.297; 308: on the literary contexts and mythologising affinities of these passages, see Smith (2011) 57–8, 62–3 and 70–73.

⁶¹ I quote Lane Fox (1997) 250.

⁶² Alföldi (1962).

⁶³ Alföldi (1976) catalogue nos. 1–18 (Alexander’s head on contorniates).

Figs. 1-4 (enlarged from Figs. 5 and 6 at Plate 19, *AJA* 66 (1962))



FIG. 1

Obverse of contorniate-medallion in Florence (Museo Archeologico) showing head of a bearded and diademed ruler (Julian)



FIG. 2

Obverse of contorniate-medallion in Berlin (Münzkabinett) showing head of Alexander



FIG. 3

Reverse (for the obverse, see Fig. 1 above) of contorniate-medallion in Florence, Museo Archeologico, showing *venatio* scene with hunter, hunting-dog and boar.



FIG. 4

Reverse (for the obverse, see Fig. 2 above) of contorniate-medallion in Berlin (Münzkabinett) showing a male figure, holding victory palm and orb, in a chariot drawn by yoked lion and boar led by a second figure (Heracles?)

This further step in the argument, it must be stressed, is certainly not beyond challenge. Notwithstanding what Alföldi claimed, the nasal profiles and eyes of the two heads at issue cannot be described as identical, as they appear in the photographs (here reproduced) that he offered of them:⁶⁴ at the very least, the ‘single retooled die’ hypothesis, if it is to stand as a possibility, would need to be adapted to allow for re-tooling of significantly more than just the bearded cheek.⁶⁵ To my eye, the differences are distinctive enough to suggest that Alföldi’s claim of a single originating die for both portrait-heads was probably factually mistaken; as one early reviewer (an expert on Julianic portraiture) politely put it, ‘la ressemblance, si elle existe, est excessivement fugace’.⁶⁶ But inasmuch as that sceptical verdict relies on photographic images, I forbear to press the point (arguably, only close scrutiny and laser measurement of the originals’ surfaces could conclusively settle this question). In the absence of conclusive evidence to the contrary, I am content leave the question open, and will allow the formal possibility that Alföldi was right to claim that both portrait-heads derive from the same die. Just what would that putative ‘fact’ imply?

In Alföldi’s view, it implies a particular date and purpose for the striking of the Florentine contorniate. He argued that the portrait-head on this contorniate had been intended as a portrait of Julian specifically ‘in the guise of Alexander’, and had been struck for distribution at New Year 363; ‘[it] celebrated in advance the hoped-for conquest of the Orient on the eve of [Julian’s] Persian campaign’.⁶⁷ On that basis, Alföldi explained the later re-tooling of the die as a natural and inevitable consequence of the campaign’s failure, and of Julian’s death in the East. In the wake of that catastrophe, Julian’s head could no longer serve as a celebratory emblem, so ‘his portrait had to disappear’. But because of the exceptionally fine artistic quality of its design, the original die was not discarded entirely; instead, a craftsman modified the image to transform it into a beardless Alexander.

On the hypothesis that both images derive from a single die, some explanation of the purpose of its re-tooling is needed, and the purpose that Alföldi postulated seems quite plausible, *per se*: his argument would satisfactorily account both for the tooling away of the beard, and for the a-typicality of the nasal profile of Alexander’s head on the Berlin contorniate, by com-

⁶⁴ Alföldi (1962) Plate 119, fig. 5 (Berlin, Münzkabinett), here enlarged as my Figs. 2 and 4: Alexander on obverse, triumphal chariot-scene on reverse; fig. 6 (Florence, Museo Archeologico, enlarged as my Figs. 1 and 3: Julian on obverse, *venatio*-scene on reverse.

⁶⁵ I concur with Lévêque (1963) 82–3.

⁶⁶ Lévêque (1963) 83.

⁶⁷ Alföldi (1962) 404.

parison with his usual ‘classical’ profile on others. But what Alföldi postulated about the die in its original state is another matter entirely: even on the ‘single die’ hypothesis, the modification of the die to transform an image of Julian into one of Alexander would not entail that the die had originally represented Julian ‘in the guise of Alexander’. In fact, that claim entirely dissolves on close analysis. When Alföldi first viewed the Julian-portrait on the Florentine contorniate, he did so with a prior question in his mind: he had already studied the Alexander-portrait on the Berlin contorniate, and had been puzzled by its atypical profile; his ‘single die’ hypothesis now served to explain that atypicality. But if one viewed the bearded portrait-head on the Florentine contorniate by itself, and without prejudice, one would need the eye of faith to see any visual allusion *whatsoever* to Alexander’s facial features as they were conventionally represented in ancient coins or sculpture, or in any of the (numerous) standard ‘Alexander-contorniates’. There is only one Alexander-contorniate to which the image of Julian on the Florentine medallion arguably bears a suggestively close resemblance—namely, the atypical Alexander-contorniate at Berlin. Alföldi’s argument, then, turns out to be entirely circular: the ‘fact’ (supposing it *is* a fact) that the portrait-head of Julian on the original die was modified to produce a stylistically idiosyncratic Alexander-head does not imply in the slightest that the original portrait-head of Julian had represented him ‘in the guise of Alexander’.

Alföldi’s ‘Julian-as-Alexander’ contorniate, I submit, is a scholar’s phantom: it only ever existed in Alföldi’s mind. The bearded portrait-head on the original (Florentine) contorniate was intended simply as a celebratory representation of *Julian*, not as a ‘Julian-as-Alexander’ portrait. Nor is there any conclusive proof, for that matter, that the original Julian-contorniate was struck for distribution at New Year 363, with the forthcoming Persian campaign especially in mind.⁶⁸ Alföldi fixed on that particular date because he had persuaded himself that the Florentine contorniate depicted a Julian ‘in the guise of Alexander’—but once that erroneous assumption is jettisoned, another dating for this medallion becomes quite possible: it could have been distributed at the previous New Year, following closely on Julian’s emergence as sole Emperor. And even if it was struck late in 362 for distribution

⁶⁸ Alföldi’s argument on this score, too, is circular. The Berlin contorniate has a head of Alexander on its obverse, and on its reverse (my fig. 4 above) a triumphal chariot-scene (evoking his conquest of Persia). The obverse of the Florentine contorniate has a head of Julian (or on Alföldi’s view, of ‘Julian-as-Alexander’); its reverse [my fig. 3 above] shows a conventional *venatio* scene, with no Persian connotations. Alföldi chose to assume (p. 404) that, as originally struck and distributed, the (hypothetical) ‘Julian-as-Alexander’ portrait had figured as the obverse of a contorniate whose reverse had shown the triumphal chariot-scene attested on the reverse of the (Berlin) Alexander-contorniate. But all this was utter speculation on his part; it only underlines the arbitrariness of his basic hypothesis.

at New Year 363, as Alföldi envisaged, scholars are nowadays much less quick than Alföldi was to construe contorniates as vehicles of imperial publicity or propaganda.⁶⁹ The Florentine contorniate was struck at Rome, presumably on the initiative of some senatorial bigwig; his identity and motives invite speculation⁷⁰—but there is certainly no cause to suppose that instructions emanating from Julian’s court at Antioch had elicited the medallion. The case would be very different, if we could adduce a relevant item from Julian’s official coinage—a *solidus*, say, minted at Antioch in late 362, on which Alexander was unambiguously evoked. But the brute (and telling) fact is that there is no such item: Alexander’s image never features at all in Julian’s (quite plentiful) extant coinage.⁷¹ In short: the Julian-portrait on the Florentine contorniate it is quite irrelevant to the question of Julian’s ‘Alexander-imitation’. It does not matter whether or not the ‘single die’ hypothesis is accepted, or in which year of Julian’s sole reign this medallion was struck: either way, and whichever the year, it offers no support for the claim that when Julian wrote *Caesars* he closely identified himself with, or aspired to rival, Alexander.

IV. ‘Authentic Voice’: the Hypothesis of Repressed Anger and Prurience in *Caesars*

I pass now to the other distinctive feature of Bowersock’s reading of *Caesars* that I signalled in my introduction (above, pp. 214–15): his claim that certain details in the piece disclose its author as a humourless eccentric writing to justify himself out of a consciousness of failure—an angrily frustrated author, austere overachieving and sexually self-denying, but also sexually prurient. I have already disputed this psychologising claim as it relates to a detail in *Caesars*’ depiction of Alexander (it was mistaken, I argued, to suppose that Julian’s ‘authentic voice’ burst through in Alexander’s exasperated claim that, if he had occasionally done harsh or cruel things, they had never been inflicted on innocent persons but only on ‘those who had often thwarted

⁶⁹ See Salzman (1990) 194–6; 213–18; Cameron (2011) 691–8.

⁷⁰ One might speculate (no more) about the identity of the person at issue on the strength of Ammianus’ report (23.1.4) of an ambassadorial group of elite Roman senators received by Julian at Antioch early in 363: the group included Apronianus Asterius (*PLRE* I, 88–9), now appointed Prefect of Rome by Julian, and Volusius Venustus (the father of Nicomachus Flavianus), now appointed Vicar of Spain (*PLRE* I, 949).

⁷¹ For an overview, see Kent (1959) 109–17. The absence, in Julian’s case, of numismatic imagery evocative of Alexander stands in contrast, it should be noted, with the cases of some earlier emperors to whom ‘imitatio Alexandri’ was traditionally ascribed; see, e.g., Harl (1987) 40 and 48, with Plates 14.4–5 (Caracalla).

[him] in many ways'). But Bowersock's argument for repressed anger in *Caesars'* author looks chiefly elsewhere, to the depiction of Constantine's flight at the close of the story. On Bowersock's reading, this passage discloses Julian as sexually prurient as well as angry—and he adduced details in *Caesar's* depictions of four other emperors (Titus, Trajan, Hadrian and Gallienus) as further evidence of the prurience. I shall discuss these passages individually, taking the flight of Constantine first.

The passage at issue depicts Constantine encountering two allegorical figures, personified as wanton females, as he searches for a divine protector:

Failing to find among the gods any model for his own career, Constantine saw Pleasure [*Tryphē*] standing not far off, and ran to her. She received him tenderly and embraced him in her arms, dressed him up in shimmering garments to beautify his appearance, and led him away to Incontinence [*Asōtia*]; in that place he discovered Jesus, too, who was dwelling there and proclaiming to all-comers: 'Whoever is a seducer, whoever is a murderer, whoever is accursed and infamous—let him approach me in good heart! For by washing him in this water I will immediately make him pure, and if he should repeat the same offences he need only beat his breast and strike his head and I will make him pure again.' Constantine took great delight in meeting him, having led his sons away from the gods' assembly. But the avenging Furies nonetheless pressed in to crush both him and them as punishment for their impiety, and exacted the penalty for their shedding of the blood of kinfolk, until Zeus granted them a reprieve.⁷²

For Bowersock, 'anger breaks through' here: the passage is 'breathtaking in its bitterness', 'display[ing] Julian's pent-up fury against his uncle Constantine in combination with his intolerance of the Christians and his aversion to sex'; 'its linkage of Christianity and harlotry offers a glimpse into personal obsessions such as few writers in antiquity have ever allowed'.⁷³ And as

⁷² *Caes.* 336a–b: ὁ δὲ Κωνσταντῖνος, οὐχ εὐρίσκων ἐν θεοῖς τοῦ βίου τὸ ἀρχέτυπον, ἐγγύθεν τὴν Τρυφήν κατιδὼν ἔδραμε πρὸς αὐτήν: ἡ δὲ ὑπολαβοῦσα μαλακῶς καὶ περιβαλοῦσα τοῖς πήχεσι πέπλοις τε αὐτὸν ποικίλοις ἀσκήσασα καὶ καλλωπίσασα πρὸς τὴν Ἀσωτίαν ἀπήγαγεν, ἵνα καὶ τὸν Ἰησοῦν εὐρὸν ἀναστρεφόμενον καὶ προαγορεύοντα πᾶσιν, 'Ὅστις φθορεύς, ὅστις μαιφόνος, ὅστις ἐναγῆς καὶ βδελυρός, ἔτω θαρρῶν: ἀποφανῶ γὰρ αὐτὸν τουτῶι τῷ ὕδατι λούσας αὐτίκα καθαρὸν, κὰν πάλιν ἔνοχος τοῖς αὐτοῖς γένηται, δώσω τὸ στήθος πλήξαντι καὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν πατάξαντι καθαρῶ γενέσθαι,' σφόδρα ἄσμενος ἐνέτυχεν αὐτῷ, συνεξαγαγὼν τῆς τῶν θεῶν ἀγορᾶς τοὺς παῖδας. ἐπέτριβον δ' αὐτὸν τε κἀκείνους οὐχ ἦττον τῆς ἀθεότητος οἱ παλαμναῖοι δαίμονες, αἱμάτων συγγενῶν τιννύμενοι δίκας, ἕως ὃ Ζεὺς ... ἔδωκεν ἀναπνεῦσαι.

⁷³ Bowersock (1978) 18, 102; (1982) 163.

Bowersock saw it, one of the obsessions' springs was sexual anxiety. 'The strong [ascetic] demands which [Julian] made on himself did not eradicate and probably encouraged his prurient interest in [sexual behaviour]'; '[his] interest in [it] arose from his fanatical loathing of it, and in the person of Constantine he could bring together his hatred of Christianity with his suppressed prurience'.⁷⁴

To be sure, Julian's hatred of Christianity was closely bound up with his hatred of Constantine. One does not need *Caesars* to establish that: it is manifest in the 'Helios myth' which he incorporated in an oration he wrote in Spring 362, the *Against Heraclius*. In that myth, Constantine figures as a superlatively rich man who despises the gods' temples; he seeks to enlarge his wealth with no regard to justice or the gods, and he raises the sons who will inherit his estate on the avaricious principles of a quack-healer, with disastrous consequences for the wider family: the sons turn on one another, and soon there is a general slaughter (*Or.* 7.227c–228c). Julian was alluding here to the murder of his own father and eight close relatives in autumn 337, soon after Constantine's death: the immediate instigator of that slaughter was Constantius II, but Julian's myth clearly traces the ultimate cause of it back to the immoral greed of Constantine. The same characterisation of Constantine recurs in *Caesars*, in a different dramatic register: hedonistic, impious, avaricious and murderous, Constantine now serves and suffers as the antitype of Marcus; and the quack-healer now comes into focus as the all-pardoning baptiser Jesus, who consorts with personifications of sensual pleasure and indulgence (Julian, 'a maliciously good reader' of the Gospels' claims for Jesus' healing power, punningly makes Constantine's prospective 'protector' cohabit with the profligate *Asôtia*, whose etymology marks her out as a conspicuous 'non-Saver').⁷⁵ The abrupt intrusion of Jesus at the end of *Caesars* gives the whole story an explicitly anti-Christian twist, disclosing at last the true import of the lesson that *Caesars*' preface had promised but had left unspecified: the message is that Christianity is a noxious imposture—a huckster-baptist's invention that a criminal ruler had selfishly espoused and imposed on the empire. On that score, *Caesars*' lesson was plainly offered in earnest—and to a Christian eye, of course, its mockery of Jesus perpetrated an outrageous blasphemy.

But does any of this require us to interpret *Caesars*' closing scene as an eruption of 'pent-up fury against Constantine', or as revelatory of the author's 'suppressed prurience'? It is not as if Julian had been straining, prior

⁷⁴ Bowersock (1982) 162–3.

⁷⁵ Moles (2011) 172 (here quoted) nicely observes the pun. Julian disputes the Gospels' claims for a salvific Jesus more expansively in a longer text that he was at work on at Antioch 'in the winter nights' of 362/3, *Against the Galilaeans* (see *Lib. Or.* 18.178).

to the writing of *Caesars*, to keep his own opinions about his uncle secret, or to conceal the personal reasons he had for hating his memory; the myth in *Against Heraclius* had already testified to that. Nor had he disguised his hatred of Christianity: his ‘Education-edict’ of June 362 and his ‘letter’ to the Bosphorians (issued on 1 August that year) had publicly classified it as a mental disease.⁷⁶ And within the context of *Caesars*’ narrative, the depravity of Constantine is patent from the moment of his enlistment in the contest. The closing passage’s depiction of him as a sensualist in unchaste company is no sudden turn; it has been carefully prefigured at earlier points in the narrative. Constantine had only been shortlisted as an egregious hedonist, on a whim of Dionysus (318a), and while waiting to make his speech (he speaks last, of the six) he had gazed intently at an alluring figure standing by the Moon’s doors, at some distance from the gods: it was Pleasure [*Tryphé*], ‘and he was so in love with her that he attended to nothing else but her, heedless of the whole business of the contest’ (329a). And in the wake of his speech, sensuality and greed had been underlined as his hallmarks in Hermes’ interrogation of his motives: his highest ambition, he says, had been ‘to amass vast wealth, and to spend it lavishly to gratify my desires’ (335b).

Constantine’s flight to Pleasure’s tender embrace at the end of the contest is entirely predictable, then, in the light of what the narrative has already signalled. And anyway, there is another, crucial, factor. The whole scene patently evokes and plays on a topos that was enduringly popular in ancient moralising literature, and which Julian had already evoked in his earlier ‘myth’ of Helios—the famous allegory of ‘the Choice of Heracles’ at the crossroads, in which Hermes offers Heracles a choice between two female personifications, seductive Pleasure and arduous Virtue (a ‘myth’ now given a nice twist, in *Caesars*, by Heracles’ own witnessing of the contest).⁷⁷ On that score, the depiction of Constantine as a fugitive scoundrel introduced by wanton females to a huckster-baptist friend of theirs named Jesus would have struck a pagan eye as artfully mischievous, and an apt finale to the satire. Fraudulent imposture and ‘immoral’ sexual activity were standard charges in the repertoire of ancient satire and polemic, and they were readily deployed in combination when the target in view was a cult-founder, or

⁷⁶ *Epp.* 36 = 61c Bidez at 424a; 41 = 114 Bidez at 438c.

⁷⁷ Originally invented by Prodicus, this allegory was known to Julian in various adumbrations: it is alluded to briefly in Plato’s *Symposium* (177b2–4) and recounted at length in Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* (2.1.20–1), both of which are texts evoked in *Caesars*. Julian had earlier composed a variant of his own on the allegory in his ‘Helios myth’ in *Against Heraclius*, casting himself as the traveller to whom Hermes points the way to Virtue (*Or.* 7.230c–234c); a clear influence there was Dio Chrysostom’s version in his *First Oration on Kingship* (*Or.* 1.49–84): see Smith (1995) 134.

professedly a philosophic healer or moral beacon. What Julian says of Jesus and Constantine on this score is strongly reminiscent (and perhaps was meant to put readers in mind) of passages in satirical works by Lucian—*The Death of Peregrinus*, say, or *Alexander the False Prophet*, or *Philosophies for Sale*.⁷⁸ Lucian's Peregrinus combines a career as a Christianising Cynic with enthusiastic adultery and pederasty; his Alexander starts out as a male prostitute, then founds and markets a fraudulent oracular cult, and exploits his reputation as a wonder-worker to sodomise his novice-priests and seduce the wives and children of his followers—*inter alia*, he stages an erotic extravaganza called 'The Amours of the Moon and Alexander', with a beautiful female disciple cast in the role of the Moon (and 'Pleasure' in *Caesars*, I have noted, has a close lunar association).⁷⁹ *Philosophies for Sale* (12) dishes out similar treatment to Aristippus of Cyrene, famous as the founder of Hedonism: he is touted as a drunkard revelling with flute-girls, 'an ideal choice for the incontinent (ἄσωτος) purchaser'.⁸⁰ The theme crops up, too, in Christian literature. Christian apologists ridiculed rumours that the Eucharist was a cover for murders and orgies; Origen dismissed as malicious Jewish slander the story that Jesus was the illegitimate offspring of Mary's adulterous fling with a Roman soldier; John Chrysostom would later return the slander, depicting the synagogues of Antioch as houses of homosexual vice and prostitution.⁸¹ And it was routine, of course, in Christian polemic, to dwell on the mythical amours of the pagans' gods as proofs of their immorality. An apt case in point is Firmicus Maternus, writing his *Errors of the Pagan Religions* soon after Constantine's death. 'It would be difficult', Firmicus insisted, 'to count the total number of their adulteries ... [but] anyone with a wish to commit adultery [could] look to Jupiter' and applaud and imitate his plentiful liaisons, rapes and subterfuges—not to mention his incestuous bedding of his sister and mother; and 'someone who liked boys could look to Ganymede in Jove's lap, or to Heracles burning for Hylas, or to Apollo seized with desire for Narcissus'.⁸²

⁷⁸ Playful echoing by Julian of any of these three texts would be quite possible. Other ('Menippean') pieces by Lucian were plainly an influential model for *Caesars*' satire (see Relihan (1993) 122, 133); and it is a crudely prejudicial notion that Lucian's comic deflations of the Olympian gods and of the famous sages and philosophers would have struck Julian as offensively irreverent.

⁷⁹ Lucian, *De morte Per.* 9; *Alex. Pseudomantis* 5, 38–42, with Robinson (1979) 57–61 on the blending of fiction and fact in this pair of texts.

⁸⁰ Id. *Vit. auctio* 12.

⁸¹ Minuc. Felix, *Octav.* 9.4–7, 28.1–6, 30.1–31.5; Origen, *c. Celsum* 1.32; cp. J. Chrys., *adv. Iudaeos* 1.2.7; 1.3.1 (PG 48.847), most recently discussed in Drake (2013) 78–98.

⁸² Firmicus Maternus, *de Errore* 12.2–4.

Caesars' closing vilification of Constantine as a criminal sensualist, and of his 'saving' Jesus as a fraudulent hoaxer, is colourful and cutting. But that is no reason to construe the passage as an eruption of repressed anger and prurience in the author. The vilification instantiates a familiar literary pattern in satirical squibs and invectives: colourful abuse of this sort was run of the mill in them, and often laced with accusations of sexual impropriety. Insofar as Julian's hatred of Constantine and Christianity is at issue, there is no 'pent-up fury [...] break[ing] through' in the passage: Julian had no wish or need, when writing *Caesars*, to dissemble or conceal his hatred; he simply expressed it within a given satirical frame. As for the 'suppressed prurience' supposedly disclosed in the passage, one should be clear about the scope of the claim at issue. Construed as a general claim about Julian's personality, the hypothesis of suppressed prurience is an argument about probabilities (it is impossible to prove or disprove it conclusively, if it postulates unconscious impulses in a Freudian manner). External testimonies to Julian's celibacy and personal austerity could be adduced, of course, in favour of the hypothesis. The point at issue for us, however, is not the plausibility of the general hypothesis, but a more specific question—namely, is there any substantial support for it to be found within the text of *Caesars*? On Bowersock's view, there is: *Caesars*, he claimed, 'betrays a taste for erotica which goes well beyond the requirements of the Menippean genre'⁸³—and he took the closing depiction of Constantine to be highly revealing in that connection. But on my reading, the passage offers singularly poor evidence for the claim. Its imputation of sexual misconduct to its target and its engendered personification of sensual pleasure as female are traditional; and its sexualising detail is minimal, almost non-existent. It would have been entirely easy, for instance, for Julian to have expatiated on the physical alluringness of 'Pleasure' and 'Incontinence'—but each stands plainly as a personified name, unadorned by descriptive epithets. The only detail in the passage that makes any allusion to the *actualité* of sexual activity is Pleasure's 'tender embrace' of Constantine—and that is hardly a detail that requires or implies a salacious or a scopophiliac author. If *Caesars* has details that reveal prurience in its author, they must surely be looked for elsewhere than in this passage. What other evidence is there?

Bowersock offered four further details in this connection, all drawn from the opening parade of all the emperors; they relate to Titus, Trajan, Hadrian and Gallienus.⁸⁴ I will list the cases chronologically, interpolating com-

⁸³ Bowersock (1982) 162.

⁸⁴ Bowersock (1982) 162, 169 n. 65. I set aside Bowersock's passing remark ((1982) 169), à propos of the characterisation of Antoninus Pius at *Caes.* 312a, that 'once again [Julian] lays emphasis on *ta Aphrodisia*'. Pius is characterised in that passage as 'a man temperate

ments. None of them, I will argue, can plausibly be reckoned evidence of any idiosyncratic prurience or repressed sexual hang-ups in the author: in each case, Julian was picking up on piquant biographical commonplaces about the relevant persons that had been highlighted in the mainstream historical tradition, and which begged to be exploited in any satirical review of the Roman Caesars.

1. Of Titus, as he enters, Zeus dismissively remarks to Serapis: ‘Tell him to go and sport with Aphrodite Pandemos’ (311a).

Zeus’ remark is easily explicable. In the historiographical tradition available to Julian, both Greek and Latin, Titus epitomised clemency and sunny goodwill in a ruler—he had been universally adored as ‘the love and the darling of the human race’.⁸⁵ He was no less celebrated for a feature of his private life, and its public ramifications—his prolonged love affair with an exotic Jewish beauty, Queen Berenice. She had previously had three husbands, and was rumoured to have committed incest with her brother.⁸⁶ Dio, who is a likely source for Julian, directly or indirectly, had highlighted the culmination of this affair (Dio 65.15.3–4):

Berenice was now at the very height of her power, and came to Rome with her brother Agrippa ... She dwelt in the palace, cohabiting with Titus. She expected to marry him, and was already behaving entirely as if she was his wife; but when he perceived that the Romans were displeased with the situation, he sent her away ...

‘Aphrodite Pandemos’, likewise, was a very familiar figure. The epithet has both cultic and literary connotations. ‘Aphrodite of All the People’ was a

in affairs of state, though not in those of Aphrodite’ (*ἀνὴρ ... σώφρων, οὐ τὰ ἐς Ἀφροδίτην, ἀλλὰ τὰ ἐς τὴν πολιτείαν*). There is nothing prurient in this sentence’s content, or in its diction; it shows only a Menippean satirist mischievously observing a paragon’s Achilles’ heel. The contrast between the rectitude of Pius and his wife’s exasperating misbehaviour was a standard item in the tradition that Julian draws on here: compare, e.g., *HA Ant. Pius* 3.7, which appends to its fulsome depiction of Pius’ personal excellence the comment: *De huius uxore multa dicta sunt ob nimiam libertatem et vivendi facilitatem, quae iste cum animi dolore compressit*. Julian’s own source for the comparison was quite likely Dio, whose account of Pius’ reign survives only in an extremely brief epitome: but the epitome (Dio 70.3.3) includes the detail that ‘scoffers called Pius “the Cumin-splitter” [the proverbial *Κυμνοπρίστης*]’, and Silenus at *Caes.* 312a scoffs at him as ‘one of the sort who would split up cumin-seeds’.

⁸⁵ Aur. Vict. 10.6; cf. Suet. *Titus* 1; Dio 66.18.1–19.2.

⁸⁶ Jos. *AJ* 19.51; 20.73; Juv. *Sat.* 6.156.

well-known cultic deity at Athens and elsewhere; but Plato's *Symposium* (a text repeatedly evoked in *Caesars*) had famously drawn a contrast (181a–d) between the 'Heavenly' [Ourania] and the 'Common' [Pandemos] Aphrodite—'common', in this setting, evoking the ubiquitous power and indiscriminate erotic proclivities of the sub-lunar goddess. When Zeus points *Caesars'* Titus in the direction of Aphrodite 'Pandemos', the connotations of the title 'Pandemos' in its cultic and its literary meanings converge, to comic effect. Famous in his public face as the beloved 'darling' of all humanity, and in his private face as the lover of the irresistibly beautiful Queen Berenice, Titus is especially fitting company for the 'Aphrodite of All the People'.⁸⁷ This touch is deft, and learnedly witty; there is no secret prurience in it.

2. As Trajan enters, carrying the trophies of his victories over the Getae and Parthians, there is a loud stage-whisper from Silenus: 'Our master Zeus had now better watch out, if he wants to keep Ganymede for himself' (311c).

In this instance, too, Julian is drawing on a stock item in the historiographers, and lacing it with a literary allusion; Silenus' joke would have put a cultivated listener immediately in mind of certain satirical texts of Lucian's. The martial Trajan's hearty appetite for pederasty was a familiar 'fact' in the historical tradition. Dio represented it as common knowledge, and took an indulgent view (68.7.4):

I know, of course, that he was devoted to boys and to wine; but if he had ever committed or endured any base or wicked deed as the result of this, he would have incurred censure; as it was, however, he drank all the wine he wanted, yet remained sober, and in his relations with boys he harmed no one.

So too, in the late fourth century, the 'fact' is taken for granted by the author of the *Historia Augusta*: he represents Trajan's palace as awash with handsome boys (*Hadr.* 2.7; 4.5). In *Caesars*, the boy-loving Trajan of the historiographers is transferred from his palace to Olympus—and with a touch

⁸⁷ The dismissive tone of Zeus' aside does not chime with the admiring consensus-view of Titus in the ancient historiography. Bowersock ((1982) 168) construes this as an indication that Julian was probably ignorant of the consensus-view, 'or at best, indifferen[t]' to it. In my view, what it indicates is simply that Julian was happy to play teasingly on the consensus-view for the sake of a momentary joke. In any case, the consensus-view as reflected in Dio did not maintain that Titus was a paragon that nobody ever criticised: Dio's Romans 'were displeased at the situation' when Berenice paraded as if she were Titus' wife.

that surely nods to the comedy of Lucian's *Dialogues of the Gods*. The humour of these short conversational pieces turns mostly on the complications of Zeus' sex-life. One of them transmits his first conversation with the freshly snatched Ganymede—as written down by his amanuensis Hermes (in *Caesars*, of course, Hermes will find his own amanuensis in Julian); another sets out Hera's complaints at Zeus' neglect of her for Ganymede.⁸⁸ In a third—especially apt for us—there is a precedent for Silenus' warning about the rampant appetites of Trajan: Hera lets Zeus know that he has an unexpected mortal rival for her affections—King Ixion, recently arrived as a guest on Olympus, has taken a strong fancy to Hera and is determined to seduce her.⁸⁹ The evocation of these droll scenarios is highly compressed, of course, in Silenus' warning—but no reader of *Caesars* who knew his Lucian would have missed the oblique allusion at this point. Silenus' joke offers no evidence of a suppressed fascination with sexual misbehaviour (or of suppressed homosexual inclinations) in the mind of *Caesars*' author.

3. Hadrian, entering immediately after Trajan (311c), is described by the narrator as 'a disdainful type, sporting a full beard, expertly active in a range of things, especially in the works of the Muses, a man constantly peering up at the heavens and prying curiously into their hidden secrets' (τὰ ἀπόρρητα, implying the mystical sciences of astrology, divination and magic). Silenus at this point interjects: 'What do you make of this sophist? Is he looking for Antinous, perhaps? Someone ought to tell him that the youth is not here among us, and put a stop to his silly nonsense.'⁹⁰

The story of Hadrian's infatuated love and obsessive memorialisation of the beautiful Antinous was notorious, and almost all that is said of Hadrian in *Caesars* derives either from details in Dio, directly or indirectly, or else from a source common to Julian and Dio—as will be clear from the italicised sentences in my selective quotation from the passage in Dio (69.11.2–4):

⁸⁸ Lucian, *Dial. Deorum* 4 and 5.

⁸⁹ Lucian, *Dial. Deorum* 6.

⁹⁰ *Caes.* 311c–d: μετὰ τοῦτον ἐπεισέρχεται βαθείαν ἔχων τὴν ὑπὴν ἄνῃρ σοβαρὸς τὰ τε ἄλλα καὶ δὴ καὶ μουσικὴν ἐργαζόμενος, εἰς τε τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀφορῶν πολλάκις καὶ πολυπραγμονῶν τὰ ἀπόρρητα. τοῦτον δὲ ἰδὼν ὁ Σείληνός ἔφη, Τί δὲ ὑμῖν οὗτος ὁ σοφιστὴς δοκεῖ; μὲν Ἀντίνοον τῆδε περισκοπεῖ; φρασάτω τις αὐτῷ μὴ παρεῖναι τὸ μειράκιον ἐνθαδὶ καὶ παυσάτω τοῦ λήρου καὶ τῆς φλυαρίας αὐτόν.

Antinous [was] Hadrian's boy-favourite... He died in Egypt, either by falling into the Nile (as Hadrian writes), or having been offered in sacrifice (which is the truth). *For Hadrian, as I have said, was very keenly observant in such matters [τά τε γὰρ ἄλλα περιεργότατος] and made use of all kinds of divinations and magical practices.* Thus Hadrian honoured Antinous—either on account of his love for him, or because the youth had voluntarily undertaken to die for him (a willing soul being needed for what Hadrian wished to accomplish)—by founding a city on the spot where he met his fate, and naming it after him. Hadrian also set up statues of him—or rather, sacred images of him—over practically all the world. *Finally he declared that he had seen a star, which he took to be that of Antinous, and he gladly listened to the assurances of his myth-spinning companions that the star really had come into being from the soul of Antinous ... On account of these things, he was ridiculed.*

In the ancient historical tradition, Hadrian's love of Antinous was depicted in darker colours than Trajan's promiscuous enjoyment of boys. Dio's claim of a sacrificial murder on the Nile is repeated by Julian's contemporary, Aurelius Victor; the Hadrian of Victor, moreover, is 'devoted to luxury and lasciviousness', and suspected of 'debauching of the young' (14.6–8). The author of the *Historia Augusta* assumes there was either a magical sacrifice or a crime of passion on the Nile—and he adds the mocking comment that Hadrian 'wept like a woman' for his lost boy (*HA Hadr.* 14.5–7). The fleeting picture of Hadrian in *Caesars* is light-hearted, by comparison. There is no implicit imputation of lasciviousness or debauchery or effeminacy to him, and no mention of a sacrificial murder for magical purposes: Hadrian's mystical interests are linked in *Caesars*, rather, to his strong concern for 'the works of the Muses'.⁹¹ On the other hand, what Silenus ridicules in Hadrian

⁹¹ The phrase Julian uses (*μουσικὴν ἐργαζόμενος*) connotes not only the emperor's personal love of literary and musical diversion, but his public interventions to promote and regulate these arts in civic culture (an initiative which Julian—who himself funded a school of music (*Ep.* 49 = 109 Bidez)—would have applauded). Hadrian had undertaken a general overhaul of the cycle of the Greek athletic and artistic festivals, promulgating detailed instructions for public inscription at hosting cities in old Greece and Asia Minor. Striking new evidence of this was unearthed in 2003 at the Odeion in Alexandria Troas: instructions from Hadrian in an inscription of over 90 lines, on a stone of 180 x 90 cm, complete in sixteen pieces: see Jones (2007). Assuming it survived the Gothic invasion of 267, we have good reason to think that Julian himself will have seen this inscription. In a letter of 362/3 (*Ep.* 19 = 79 Bidez), he recalls a journey he had made as a prince some eight years earlier (in 354), in the course of which (he specifies) he had visited Alexandria Troas. Having stayed the night there, he passed on the next day to visit New Ilium, 'where Pegasius [the local bishop] met me: I wanted to explore [*ἱστορέειν*] the city (it gave me a pretext for visiting its temples), and he acted as my guide, taking me all around its

is precisely what Dio says had caused him to be ridiculed—his obsessive efforts to contact his deceased lover by means of mystical knowledge and astrological star-gazing, and his self-deceiving wish to convince himself that Antinous had become a star-god in the sky. Hadrian’s obsessive devotion to Antinous’ memory, then, was another commonplace, and ripe for twitting in a satirical parade of Roman Caesars; it was generally acknowledged as a signal example of an infatuated lover’s folly, and as conduct singularly unbecoming in a Roman emperor. On that score, the fact that the object of Hadrian’s love was a Greek glamour-boy is not entirely irrelevant to Silenus’ mockery of him, perhaps—but it is tangential, and there is nothing to suggest any prurient interest in the sexual element of the affair on the part of *Caesars*’ author: not a word is said about it.

There is a further detail that is perhaps significant. The Hadrian who delves so curiously into τὰ ἀπόρρητα—‘the secret arts’—is ‘fully bearded’. The historical Hadrian had worn a full beard, of course (he was the first emperor to do so); it was a mark of his philhellenism and cultural interests. But if *Caesars*—as I conjectured earlier—was first delivered at a Saturnalian dinner-party at the Palace at Antioch, these details would have had a particular resonance for its original target-audience. Julian himself had notably abandoned the clear-shaven style of Constantine and Constantius; he wore the full beard as a signifier of his cultural Greekness—and his own keen interest in the mystical arts of the theurgists was no secret to his court-intimates. In my view, this allusive comparison was intentional; to raise a smile, the author likened himself lightly to the very Caesar he was twitting. That does not suggest to me that Julian was the ‘essentially humourless’ author Bowersock discerned in *Caesars*.

4. Of Gallienus, the narrator reports that he entered στολῆ τε καὶ κινήσει χρώμενος μαλακωτέρα ὥσπερ αἱ γυναῖκες—‘wearing a *stola* [i.e., a female’s robe] and walking with a languid gait, in the manner of women’ (313b). On seeing him, Silenus is prompted to quote (more or less) a line from Homer: ‘The man is decked out all in gold, and as delicate as a girl!’ (*Il.* 2.872); ‘But Zeus’, the narrator continues, ‘ordered [him and his father] to depart from the feast.’⁹² Gallienus and his father Valerian had entered as a pair together, and the father also was bizarrely attired: he wore the fetters in which he had been bound

sights’. Troas also had fine sights that had surely interested Julian on this journey—and its Odeion was one of the grandest.

⁹² *Caes.* 313b: ὁ δὲ στολῆ τε καὶ κινήσει χρώμενος μαλακωτέρα ὥσπερ αἱ γυναῖκες. καὶ ὁ Σείληνος ἔφη πρὸς [...] τὸν Γαλλιῆνον, “Ὅς καὶ χρυσὸν ἔχων πάντη τρυφᾷ ἢ ἴτε κούρη· τούτῳ δὲ ὁ Ζεὺς εἶπε τῆς ἐκέλευε θοίνης ἐκβῆναι.

as a captive of King Sapor in Persia (where he had remained Sapor's prisoner till he died). Their accoutrements present a striking visual opposition: effete luxury, as against extreme degradation and bodily privation.

For Bowersock, 'this characterisation [of Gallienus] reflects Julian's preoccupation with erotica'—and on the face of it, it might seem to offer rather better evidence for his claim than the other details he adduced. The word *μαλακωτέρα* in Julian's sentence—translated above as 'languid'—implies an effeminate softness of some sort.⁹³ In itself, the word need not have any lubricious sexual connotations—but applied to a male in certain contexts, it might hint (as 'languid' might, in English) at unmanly passivity in one's sexual proclivities or conduct. In this case, the context does seem suggestive: the languidness stands in combination with the vivid detail of Gallienus' transvestism: the detail of the *stola* is quite specific, and Silenus' Homeric quotation enhances its visibility to the reader; the garment is luxuriously golden. Moreover, unlike the details I have itemised in connection with Titus and Trajan and Hadrian, the detail of Gallienus' effeminate transvestism cannot be *straightforwardly* accounted for as a commonplace of the mainstream historiographical tradition. The imputation of effeminacy to certain emperors was standard in the tradition, of course: Dio, say, routinely imputes it to the teenage emperor Elagabalus (whom *Caesars* (313a) is content to gloss simply as 'the little boy [*παιδάριον*] from Emesa').⁹⁴ But no extant source earlier than *Caesars* explicitly imputes effeminate transvestism to Gallienus. The closest parallel in an earlier writer comes in the extremely hostile account of Gallienus to be found in the *de Caesaribus* of Aurelius Victor, a work composed about two years before Julian wrote his *Caesars* (he will certainly have known of its existence, and probably had at least looked at it cursorily):⁹⁵

⁹³ If the comparative form of the adjective has force, the contrast will be with the laboured steps of the fettered father.

⁹⁴ Dio, whom I have postulated as a likely source (direct or indirect) for Julian in the cases of Titus, Trajan and Hadrian, is irrelevant, of course, in the case of Gallienus: his *History* had closed with the death of Elagabalus, a good thirty years before the reign of Gallienus (ruling jointly with Valerian 253–260, then as sole emperor till 268). In *Caesars*, Elagabalus is among those summarily expelled from the banquet on arrival—but *παιδάριον* at 313a lets him off quite lightly: Dio's account (80.13–15) of his antics with his male 'husband' Hierocles and the athlete Zoticus (the possessor of Rome's largest penis) would have offered a prurient author abundant pickings; and throughout Book 80, Dio routinely uses the name of a proverbially effeminate monarch, 'Sardanapalus', to designate Elagabalus.

⁹⁵ Victor had published his (Latin) *de Caes.* (probably in 361) prior to his meeting with Julian late in 361 at Sirmium, in the wake of which Julian appointed him to the governor-

Victor's Gallienus is a depraved sensualist who selfishly ignores a military crisis in the empire, preferring to indulge himself in the taverns and brothels of Rome and the bedrooms of his wife and his mistress.⁹⁶ Victor does not, though, characterise him as an effeminate. Nor do the later (and also hostile) brief fourth century accounts in Latin by Eutropius and the anonymous Epitomator. And from that, it would seem to follow that this specific characterisation of Gallienus had not figured, either, in the work of *ca.* 340 that modern scholarship hypothesises as these three writers' common Latin source—the so-called (now entirely lost) *Kaisergeschichte*.⁹⁷

There is a rather closer, late fourth century, parallel in the *Historia Augusta*'s perplexing farrago of historical fact and fantasy: its author (writing *ca.* 395–400, a good three decades after *Caesars* was written) depicts Gallienus as a selfish sensualist, in language reminiscent of Aurelius Victor's (the similarities between the two accounts indicate that the author was drawing either directly on Victor, or else on the *Kaisergeschichte*). But the *Historia Augusta*'s author adds a further twist: his Gallienus had 'squandered his days and nights in wine and debauchery and caused the world to be laid waste by some twenty [*sic*] pretenders, so that even women ruled better than he';⁹⁸ and his Gallienus is abused near the end of his reign, in the voice of a rebelling general, as *sordidissimus feminarum omnium*—'more contemptible than any woman'.⁹⁹ The *Historia Augusta*'s author is expansive, too, on Gallienus' love of luxury and golden decorations and finery in dress (*HA, Gall. duo* 16.2–4):

In Spring he had a bedchamber of roses [...], his table-covers were always golden [...], he sprinkled his hair with gold-dust ... And whereas the [earlier] emperors, when at Rome, always appeared in the toga, he appeared in a purple cloak [*chlamys*] with jewelled and golden clasps, and [beneath it] he wore a man's tunic [*tunica virilis*] of purple and gold.

ship of Pannonia Secunda: for the context, Nixon (1991); Bird (1996) 872–4. Bowersock (1982) 166 notes differences between Victor's and Julian's *Caesars* in sundry instances, and judges that 'if Julian had read Victor's work [...], it had made no impression whatever'.

⁹⁶ Aur. Vict. *de Caes.* 33.6.

⁹⁷ Modern views of the (entirely unattested) *Kaisergeschichte*'s character and date of composition can be sampled in Burgess (1995): Burgess himself, to be clear, disputed the dating of the work to *ca.* 340, arguing for *ca.* 358.

⁹⁸ *HA Gall. duo* 16.1. A specific contemporary is surely evoked: Queen Zenobia of Palmyra had figured three chapters earlier (13.1), and her power is stressed in the *HA* at *V. Aur.* 27.1–28.4.

⁹⁹ *HA Tyr. trig.* 12.11.

The *Historia Augusta's* roses and cosmetic gold-dust might hint at 'languid' effeminate softness, and its emphasis on Gallienus' love of gold chimes with the Homeric quotation in *Caesars*. But as the passage just cited indicates, the parallel is not exact. Whereas Gallienus' effeminate dress and gait constitute his defining characteristic in *Caesars*, in the *Historia Augusta* the overt comparison of Gallienus to women only figures fleetingly as a minor incidental—and its import is only metaphorical: it serves as a measure of 'unmanly' inactivity and dereliction of public duty, not as a marker of androgynous personal identity. The author of the *Historia Augusta* finds Gallienus contemptible for his luxury and his debaucheries—but his *chlamys* and *tunica*, albeit extravagantly luxurious, are still explicitly garments of *male* attire, and his debaucheries are explicitly heterosexual (his sexual partners, the author goes on to say, were troupes of concubines and beautiful young girls).¹⁰⁰ These differences—and the *Historia Augusta's* expansiveness on details of Gallienus' clothing that are entirely absent in *Caesars*—are substantial enough to establish one thing. If the author of the *Historia Augusta* was drawing—as his expansiveness suggests he was—on an earlier literary source in his depiction of Gallienus' foppishness and/or his comparison of him to a female, the source he drew on was certainly *not* the two-line cameo of Gallienus in *Caesars*.

The specific detail of Gallienus' transvestism, then, is unique to *Caesars*, in the texts as now extant. But that is a very necessary proviso. The fact that the *Historia Augusta* contains even a passing comparison of Gallienus to a woman gives us reason to suspect that *Caesars's* effeminate Gallienus was not a quirkily salacious invention of Julian *ex nihilo*. The identification of the historical sources used by the author of the *Historia Augusta* is a scholarly minefield—but at least it is clear (I here anticipate a point to which I will return) that in his biography of Gallienus he was drawing on certain influential historical works that are now lost, but which had been in circulation well in time to have directly or indirectly influenced Julian's portrait of Gallienus three decades earlier.¹⁰¹ Bowersock himself assumed—in my view, quite correctly—that the basic characterisation of Gallienus as an effeminate had originated before Julian's writing of *Caesars*: 'it presumably entered the tradition with the propaganda of the Second Flavian dynasty'¹⁰² (which is to say, the Constantinian dynasty: the line that begins late in third century with the Tetrarch Constantius Chlorus, then continues with Constantine and his sons, and ends with Julian). The denigration of Gallienus played a signifi-

¹⁰⁰ *HA Gall. duo* 17.7–9.

¹⁰¹ Bray (1997) 9–13.

¹⁰² Bowersock (1982) 169 n. 65.

cant role in this dynastic propaganda; its purpose was to glorify, by means of contrast, the reputation of Gallienus' successor, Claudius Gothicus—the emperor from whom the 'Second Flavians' claimed (by a patent fiction) to be descended. This propagandist fiction, first perpetrated by a panegyrist of Constantine in 310,¹⁰³ represented Claudius as Constantine's grandfather—and it has left its mark in certain features of *Caesars*. When Zeus mitigates Constantine's punishment at the end of the piece (336b), he only does so 'on account of his regard for Claudius [Gothicus] and Constantius [Chlorus]'; and when Claudius Gothicus makes his entry in the opening parade in *Caesars*, 'all the gods' are deeply impressed (313d): 'In admiration of his greatness of soul, they granted the empire to his descendants, for it seemed just to them that the family line descending from so great a lover of his country should rule for as long as possible'. On this showing, Claudius Gothicus might easily have made the shortlist.¹⁰⁴ By the same token, it was necessary that Gallienus should cut a contemptible figure in *Caesars*, as the other side of the coin: the report of the gods' admiration of Claudius stands in sharp contrast to what immediately precedes it—the image of the transvestite Gallienus summarily expelled from the feast by command of Zeus, along with his fetter-clad father. Together, the father and son represent the humiliating nadir of the empire's fortunes in the mid third century: military catastrophe abroad, and a wastrel preening himself at Rome as provinces seceded.¹⁰⁵

On this reading, the tradition of Gallienus' 'effeminacy' (connoting shameful dereliction of his public duties in his pursuit of private debaucheries, vain parading of his person in luxurious garments, and supine ineffectiveness in response to the political and military crises of the 260s) had originated in Constantinian propaganda half a century before Julian wrote *Caesars*. His very cognomen (prosopographically, an extremely rare one) had presumably encouraged the imputation: 'Gallienus' begged to be punned on

¹⁰³ *Pan. Lat.* 6.2.1–5. For the context, and the strong modern argument that this claimed ancestry was a fictive invention, see Syme (1974) and Potter (2004) 353, 666. n. 96. The claim's fictiveness is overwhelmingly likely, though not amenable to *absolute* proof, on the extant evidence: the latest discussion (Chausson (2007) 42–9, 73–95) is formally agnostic on the point.

¹⁰⁴ But Claudius had died after a reign of only a year and nine months (its brevity is regretted in the epitomators, e.g. at Eutrop. 9.11). The unanimity of the gods' admiration of him at 313d is noteworthy, given that Marcus himself only wins by majority vote (so Hunt (1995) 293).

¹⁰⁵ It is well known that fourth century Christian historiography took a kinder view of Gallienus: an edict he issued in 260 as sole ruler (Euseb. *HE* 7.13.1–3) granted peace and property-rights to the Christians, annulling an earlier edict issued jointly by his father and himself as co-emperors in 257. No hint of this tradition of a 'Christian-friendly' Gallienus surfaces in *Caesars* (which is not to say that Julian knew nothing of it).

to suggest effeminacy, by association with the famously cross-dressing eunuch priests of Cybele, the ‘Galli’.¹⁰⁶ The fourth century Latin epitomators do not report the tradition, because they relied on the lost *Kaisergeschichte*, whose author (for whatever reason) had ignored it—but it circulated in other (now lost) authors, and was picked up by the author of the *Historia Augusta* in the mid-390s. Julian, whose own legitimacy as an emperor derived from his membership of the Constantinian dynastic nexus, happily subscribed to the fiction that heroised Claudius Gothicus as the dynasty’s ancestor, and to the tradition that disparaged Gallienus as Claudius’ corrupt and ineffective predecessor. Gallienus in *Caesars* is despatched accordingly, in conformity with that hostile tradition, as a contemptible fop luxuriously parading in golden costume—an absurdity (as the *Historia Augusta* was to put it) ‘more contemptible than any woman’, a ridiculous travesty of a Roman emperor, fit only for immediate expulsion from the imperial party.

The author of the *Historia Augusta*’s capacity for invention is patent, but it is highly improbable that his depiction of Gallienus parading at Rome in luxurious garments was *entirely* his own invention. His account of the parading follows immediately after his description of Gallienus’ debauchery at Rome—and that description, as I have noted, demonstrably drew on an earlier source; it has verbal parallels in Aurelius Victor.¹⁰⁷ The author’s expansive account of the debauchee’s luxuriously foppish self-display at Rome will surely likewise owe something, at bottom, to an account of it he had read in an earlier writer. And once the existence of such a tradition is accepted, the distinctive element in *Caesars*’ cameo-portrait of Gallienus is readily explicable. It was not a prurient invention of Julian’s *ex nihilo*. He was playing, rather, on a pre-existing literary characterisation—and on an established convention in antique visual representation. Philostratus had envisaged that an artist commissioned to paint a picture of a *kômos* (a revel) might very aptly include something of the sort—‘for at the *kômos* it is possible for a woman to play a man’s role, and for a man to wear the female’s *stola* and to walk as a female walks’.¹⁰⁸ Building on features of a hostile tradition that had depicted Gallienus as ‘unmanly’ in his neglect of his duties for debauchery and his parading in luxurious apparel, Julian mischievously accentuated the luxury to turn the parading fop into sauntering woman; his Gallienus arrives

¹⁰⁶ John Moles alerts me to this point. For the rarity of the cognomen, Bray (1997) 22–3; for the female clothing and cosmetics of the ‘Galli’, see Roller (1999) 230; 308 (and for late antique testimonia, add Aug. *CD* 7.26; Firmicus Maternus, *De errore* 4.2).

¹⁰⁷ See above, p. 243.

¹⁰⁸ Philost. *Imagines* 1.2: συγχωρεῖ δὲ ὁ κῶμος καὶ γυναικὶ ἀνδρίζεσθαι καὶ ἀνδρὶ θῆλυ ἐνδύειν στολὴν καὶ θῆλυ βαίνειν.

on Olympus for Romulus' feast as if he has come directly from one of his debauches. *Pace* Bowersock, Julian's detail of Gallienus' 'languid gait' in a *stola* does not 'betray a taste for erotica [going] well beyond the requirements of the Menippean genre', and there is no cause to postulate a 'suppressed prurience' as the stimulus for it: it offered a twist of just the sort that an ancient reader would expect in a Menippean satire.

In the form in which I have set it out, my explanation of Gallienus' walk-on role in *Caesars* rests on an assumption made about the *Historia Augusta's* depiction of him some forty years later. I have assumed that when the *Historia Augusta's* author depicted him as a luxurious fop, *sordidissimus feminarum omnium*, he was drawing on a now lost literary source that had characterised him as an effeminate. I have not assumed that that particular source was ever read by Julian; but on my explanation, it helped to shape (or else, it drew upon) a fourth-century tradition imputing effeminacy to Gallienus that was already established by the time *Caesars* was written. (And I have tentatively placed the tradition's beginnings in the context of a Constantinian propagandist fiction first perpetrated in 310.) I anticipate two related objections. A sceptic might object, firstly, that the 'lost source' and the 'established popular tradition' are easy to postulate, but that there is no conclusive proof of their actual existence: in the literature now extant, the effeminate Gallienus makes his first appearance in *Caesars*. Second, it might be objected that the postulation is not just unproven, but hazardous. My hypothesis assumes that *Historia Augusta's* depiction of Gallienus as an effeminate fop draws on an earlier literary source: but the *Historia Augusta* is notoriously the work of a hoaxer, and highly unreliable as a source of historical 'facts'—especially in its biographies of the third century emperors. Its author readily invented both 'facts' and bogus 'sources': in his account of Gallienus, for instance, he directs his readers to the histories of 'Annius Cornicula' and 'Palfurius Sura'—a pair of phantoms.¹⁰⁹ At a pinch, then, the objecting sceptic might deny that the *Historia Augusta's* author was drawing on any earlier sources when he depicted Gallienus as a fop, or when he abused him elsewhere as 'more contemptible than any woman'; the sceptic might insist that this depiction, and the abusive comparisons of Gallienus with a woman, are merely two further instances of the author's capacity to conjure scenes and details out of his own imagination.

That objection would strike most specialists in *Historia Augusta* studies as hyper-sceptical, and as special pleading. But the sceptic could still register a qualified objection. All the specialists, he could observe, concur on one point: in his narrative of the three decades 238–270 (and *a fortiori*, the entire

¹⁰⁹ *HA Gall. duo* 17.2, 18.6.

reign of Gallienus), the *Historia Augusta's* author was heavily dependent on one particular historical source. In his account of Gallienus, the author did not entirely discard his old friend, the now-lost *Kaisergeschichte* (the parallels between his and Victor's accounts of Gallienus' debauches at Rome suggest it was their common source). His fundamental source, though, was not the *Kaisergeschichte*; it was the Greek historian Dexippus—read either in the Greek, or through a Latin intermediary.¹¹⁰ But if one is looking for a source for the *Historia Augusta's* mockery of Gallienus as an effeminate, neither Dexippus nor the *Kaisergeschichte* is a plausible candidate. The *Kaisergeschichte* is immediately precluded on my own earlier argument (p. 243): it had *not* characterised as Gallienus as an effeminate. What of Dexippus? His name is cited seventeen times as an authority by the author of the *Augustan History*. He was the author, *inter alia*, of the *Chronica*, a 'Universal History' in twelve books, relating events from mythical times to the reign of Claudius Gothicus; its last book(s) covered the reign of Gallienus annalistically, in some detail.¹¹¹ Dexippus' *Chronica* is now lost except for a few bare fragments, none of which relate to Gallienus' person; but it became the canonical account of Gallienus in later Greek historiography, and it clearly had broad circulation among readers of history in the fourth century. Julian, who liked to read his history in Greek,¹¹² must certainly at least have heard of it; if he had a mind to, he might easily have read its account of Gallienus.

On the face of it, an author who had written an account of Gallienus' reign which had demonstrably been an important source of the account in the *Historia Augusta*, and which was widely known to fourth-century Hellenophone readers, might seem a rather attractive candidate to propose as a common source for the mocking depictions of Gallienus in the *Historia Augusta* and in *Caesars*. But on my explanation, at least as it stands, it is impossible to propose Dexippus for that role. On my argument, the hostile characterisation of Gallienus as an effeminate probably had its origin in a propagandist fiction of 310 that appropriated Claudius Gothicus as the Constantinian dynasty's ancestor; but Dexippus' *Chronica* had been composed some four decades earlier, in the mid-270s. In principle, of course, one could try to circumvent that problem by abandoning the hypothesis of the characterisation's origin in Constantinian propaganda, and hypothesising instead that it had originated much earlier—with Dexippus himself in the mid 270s. But to

¹¹⁰ Barnes (1979) 108–13; Paschoud (1990) 217–69; Potter (1999) 206 n. 82 (Latin intermediary).

¹¹¹ Martin (2006), a new critical edition of Dexippus' fragments, is now essential: see esp. at 155–61 for the *Chronica*.

¹¹² By the same token, the Latin *Kaisergeschichte* would scarcely have interested Julian: for my concurrence with Bowersock on that score, see above, p. 215.

attempt this would be pointless, because there is another, compelling, objection to the casting of Dexippus as the ‘lost common source’ of the slander: to suggest that he had mockingly depicted Gallienus as an effeminate fop in his history would be to ignore entirely what we know about the character of Dexippus’ person and writings, as disclosed in the surviving fragments and the ancient testimonies (and as set out in a classic modern discussion).¹¹³ Dexippus (born *ca.* 200/205, died *ca.* 275/6?) was a serious-minded Athenian gentleman-antiquarian and patriot—a member of his city’s local nobility, and a holder of its highest public offices and priesthoods. He aimed high, too, when he turned to the writing of history, taking Thucydides as his literary model—and he was in his late sixties or early seventies when he wrote his account of Gallienus’ reign in the *Chronica*. Dexippus was simply not the sort to transmit salacious details or invent mischievous slanders about an emperor’s luxurious tastes or private sex-life, even if his view of Gallienus had been basically hostile. But in any case, there is no cause at all to think that it *was* hostile: in the *Quellenforschung* of the ancient accounts of the reign of Gallienus, Dexippus is reckoned the source of a more favourable tradition than the fourth century Latin authors we have so far encountered, and it has been well argued—partly for a specific reason that I will shortly highlight—that on one count his treatment of Gallienus will have been positively appreciative.¹¹⁴

These considerations are decisive: we can be sure that Dexippus’ *Chronica* did *not* mock Gallienus as an effeminate. But that poses no significant problem for my explanation of *Caesars*’ depiction of Gallienus. It is not necessary, for my purposes, to establish and identify any particular historiographical author as the lost source on which Julian was playing, still less to identify that author with Dexippus. It suffices to establish the likelihood that a strand in the fourth-century historiographic tradition had characterised Gallienus as an ‘unmanly’ fop and luxurious debauchee, and there is ample justification for that claim in the *Historia Augusta*: only a hyper-sceptic would insist that the *Historia Augusta*’s characterisation of him was entirely its author’s own invention; he was drawing on an earlier source—and the source was certainly not Julian’s *Caesars*. On that score, then, the explanation as I have previously set it out could stand without adjustment. But in any case, as I will argue in closing, my explanation of Julian’s transvestite Gallienus could be enriched, rather than jeopardised, if one postulated that Dexippus’ friendly account of Gallienus was a text that Julian had encountered. The argument will be highly speculative, of course, because the surviving frag-

¹¹³ Millar (1969).

¹¹⁴ Armstrong (1987) 239 and 253–8; see below, p. 257.

ments of the *Chronica* are nugatory; but there is a unique item of non-textual evidence that can be brought to bear on the question.

V. A Prefiguration of *Caesars'* Transvestite Gallienus? The 'Gallienae Augustae' *aurei* and the *Chronica* of Dexippus

Dexippus, I have just noted, is reckoned to have depicted Gallienus without hostility—and even if he had been unfriendly, the elevated 'Thucydidean' narrative-tone to which he aspired would not have stooped to mocking abuse of a Roman emperor as an effeminate 'more contemptible than any woman'. But there is a possibility, I wish to suggest, that in Dexippus' *Chronica* Gallienus may nonetheless have made a public appearance as an emperor adorned with feminine accoutrements: an unusual spectacle, to be sure, but one that Dexippus could have thought entirely respectable, indeed admirable—the accoutrements being those of a venerable Athenian goddess. To explain this suggestion, I turn again to numismatic evidence that was first systematically studied by Andreas Alföldi. In this case, his interpretation was sounder, at bottom, than his argument for the so-called 'Julian-as-Alexander' contortiate that I have refuted earlier in this paper.

A series of gold coins—*aurei*—struck at the mint of Rome in Gallienus' reign has long exercised the ingenuity of numismatists. The reverses on this series show nothing unusual: a figure of Victory, either driving the *biga* [Fig. 5] or crowning Gallienus with laurels [Fig. 6], with one of two legends, *UBIQUE PAX* or else *VICTORIA AUG.* But what appears on the obverse is very remarkable: the legend *GALLIENAE AUGUSTAE* surrounds a portrait-head of the bearded Gallienus wearing a crown of wheat stalks.



Fig. 5 Aureus of Gallienus (Mint of Rome) *RIC* 74 (Image: Deutsche Bundesbank)
 Obverse: head of Gallienus, wearing the *corona spica*, with legend *GALLIENAE AUGUSTAE*
 Reverse: Victory driving a *biga*, with legend *UBIQUE PAX*



Fig. 6: Aureus of Gallienus (Mint of Rome), *RIC* 82 (Image: *LHS Numismatik*).

Obverse: head of Gallienus, wearing the *corona spicea*, with legend *GALLIENAE AUGUSTAE*
 Reverse: Gallienus holding globe and sceptre, crowned by Victory, with legend *VICTORIA AUG*

A variant series from the same mint has the identical reverses, and the same portrait-head—but with the accompanying legend in the masculine, as one would have expected: *GALLIENO AUG(USTO)*. A further variant series, which Alföldi identified as struck at the mint at Siscia, likewise has the obverse’s legend in the masculine, but with reverse images and legends depicting the *Fides* of the army, and referring to Gallienus’ seventh consulship—which securely dates this variant series to 266. Alföldi took that to be the emission-date of all the *aurei* at issue, probably rightly (but on his own argument, we shall see, the Siscian variant postdates the *GALLIENAE AUGUSTAE* series; and if that were so, then the *GALLIENAE AUGUSTAE* coins might conceivably be pushed back a year, to 265). *GALLIENO AUG(USTO)* hails the emperor in the dative: ‘[to] Gallienus Augustus’. By analogy *GALLIENAE AUGUSTAE* will translate as ‘[to] Galliena Augusta’. But that is not the name of any known historical person—and in any case, the portrait-head that the legend glosses is the bearded Gallienus, not an empress. The hostile tradition of Gallienus’ effeminacy immediately springs to mind—but we are not dealing, now, with retrospective slander in some literary source: in this case, the image of a Roman emperor on his own official gold coinage (these *aurei* are certainly genuine) has been glossed with a legend implying that the emperor is female. And indeed, the crown of wheat-stalks Gallienus wears does have a clear feminine association: his headgear is the *corona spicea*, a traditional attribute of Ceres/Demeter in her iconography.¹¹⁵ There are some precedents for this detail in imperial portrait-sculpture and coinage, mostly relating to Julio-Claudian women. In Claudius’ coinage, the *corona spicea* is worn by the dei-

¹¹⁵ Spaeth (1996) 137–8, 188 n. 33.

fied Livia and the deified Antonia posthumously, and by the living Agrippina Minor; coin-images of Domitian's wife Longina show it, too. In these instances, it evokes the benevolent bounty of Ceres¹¹⁶ (but arguably with a nod to Eleusinian Demeter: Suetonius (*Claud.* 25.5) reports that Claudius had attempted to transfer the Eleusinian cult to Rome). The same distinctive crown also figures on a coin-image of Hadrian; and in imperial portrait-sculpture, in a bust of a youthful Julio-Claudian male usually identified as Augustus.¹¹⁷ Now when the *corona spicea* was worn by males in imperial portrait sculpture in combination with *infulae* (a head-dress of woollen fillets), it served as an attribute of the Arval Brethren,¹¹⁸ and its occurrence in Augustus' case is conventionally explained with that in mind, as a mark of his care for Rome's grain-supply. Perhaps it was so: but to be clear, there are no accompanying *infulae* in Augustus' case—and here again, there might be an Eleusinian connotation: Augustus had visited Athens in 22/1 and 19 BC, and had been initiated at Eleusis; and an important recent discussion of this initiation marks it out (like that of Hadrian, later) as 'a function of statesmanship as much as personal taste'.¹¹⁹ The association with Eleusis in the case of Hadrian's sestertius is indisputable (and it surely constitutes an *imitatio Augusti*): he wears the *corona spicea* as an initiate and a patron of Eleusis.¹²⁰ There are parallels of a sort, then, for Gallienus' wearing of the *corona spicea*—but worn alone, by a male, the head-dress is only elsewhere attested for Hadrian in imperial coinage, and in the case of the image now at issue the head of the emperor that it adorns is glossed with a feminine version of his name and title: that is unprecedented, and unique, in Roman imperial coinage.

Various explanations of this puzzle have been offered. Some seek to explain away the peculiarity, either by construing *GALLIENAE AUGUSTAE* as adjectives that qualify an implicit feminine name or proper noun (Demeter, say, or the Victory/Pax of the coinage's obverse), or else by construing the *AES* in *GALLIENAE AUGUSTAE* as a coiner's 'hypercorrection' of *E*, which would allow the phrase to be read as an acclamatory vocative.¹²¹ The authors of these solutions—neither of which is convincing—were reacting partly to an explanation of the image that had been offered a good deal earlier by Alföldi-

¹¹⁶ Varner (2004) 62; Ginsburg (2006) 63–4; Spaeth (1996) Appendix II (a catalogue).

¹¹⁷ Hadrian: Alföldi (1979) 585 = id. (1997) 204. Augustus: Alföldi (1979) 582 = id. (1997) 201; on a recent view (Varner (2004) 62) the statue may rather portray Nero.

¹¹⁸ Alföldi (1979) 580 = id. (1997) 19.

¹¹⁹ Suet. *Aug.* 93, with Spawforth (2012) 167–9 and (here quoted) 247.

¹²⁰ Spawforth (2012) 246.

¹²¹ De Blois (1976) 151–5 and Kent (1973).

di. He had set it out in a paper first published in 1928, and reissued in 1967;¹²² he was to amplify on it, with responses to his critics, in a paper of his old age, published in 1979.¹²³ From the start, Alföldi combined his explanation of the image with a broader hypothesis proposing a grand Gallienic programme for a quasi-Neoplatonic pagan cultural renaissance to counter Christianity which is nowadays (with good reason) judged illusory—but Alföldi’s explanation of the image itself is not rendered invalid on that count, and much of it was endorsed in the 1990s in a major numismatic study.¹²⁴ I will briefly sketch its essentials (incorporating some additions, refinements and minor corrections supplied by other scholars).¹²⁵

Having dated the *GALLIENAE AUGUSTAE aurei* to 266 (in my view, 265 is not precluded), Alföldi argued that their depiction of Gallienus wearing the *corona spicea* should be explained with reference to a state visit he had made to Athens a little earlier. The episode is only reported in the *Historia Augusta*, but its historicity and the main details as recounted in this problematic source can be trusted, because in this case the report derives from a reliable eye witness: in James Oliver’s words, ‘the facts, unlike the aspersions, are from Dexippus’.¹²⁶ The visit was made in autumn 264 (not 265, as Alföldi thought), at a time when ‘Skythai’ and other marauders were destabilising the eastern sector of the empire (famously, the Heruli would sack Athens in 267/8). For the Athenians, the visit of 264 was a tonic, and a grand event: Gallienus was probably the first emperor to have visited Athens since Commodus, some eighty years earlier.¹²⁷ He stayed there for at least a month and showed a cultivated interest in the city’s traditions and culture; he accepted Athenian citizenship, and the archonship (attested epigraphically), and membership of the Areopagus; and he was initiated into the Eleusinian

¹²² Alföldi (1928).

¹²³ Alföldi (1979), reissued posthumously with revisions in Alföldi (1997).

¹²⁴ Bastien (1992) 124–127.

¹²⁵ See esp. Armstrong (1987).

¹²⁶ Oliver’s remark is quoted by Armstrong (1987) at 243. The account of the visit in *HA* (*Gall. duo* 11.3–6) reads as follows: *Cum tamen sibi milites dignum principem quaerent, Gallienus apud Athenas archon erat, id est summus magistratus, vanitate illa, qua et civis adscribi desiderabat et sacris omnibus interesse. quod neque Hadrianus in summa felicitate neque Antoninus [i.e. Marcus Aurelius] in adulta fecerat pace, cum tanto studio Graecarum docti sint litterarum ut raro aliquibus doctissimis magnorum arbitrio cesserint virorum. Areopagitarum praeterea cupiebat ingeri numero contempta prope re publica. fuit enim Gallienus, quod negari non potest, oratione, poemate atque omnibus artibus clarus.*

¹²⁷ Armstrong (1987) 235; Clinton (1989) 1535.

Mysteries of Demeter.¹²⁸ In the autumn of 265, the year following his visit, he sent a letter to the Athenians, a copy of which was inscribed on stone and displayed at Eleusis. Extant fragments of the inscription show that the letter conveyed instructions pertaining specifically to Eleusis; they had either to do with its festival-regulations (as most modern editors think), or else with arrangements for its defence and fortification in the event of a Herulian invasion.¹²⁹ Alföldi took the letter as evidence of a strong and continuing interest in the cult of Eleusinian Demeter on the part of Gallienus; and he interpreted the image and legend on the ‘Gallienae Augustae’ *aurei* struck at Rome in 266 (or 265) on that assumption. He explained the feminine form of Gallienus’ name, in the light of his wearing the *corona spicea*, as a symbolic representation of the emperor’s participation in the divine identity of the goddess Demeter, on the occasion of his initiation into her Mysteries. On Alföldi’s view, this was only one case in a complex programme of quasi-Neoplatonic propaganda through which Gallienus was seeking to project himself to his subjects as a redeeming cosmic divinity.¹³⁰ But the androgynous symbolism of the legend, Alföldi conjectured, proved too innovative to be intelligible to the public at Rome, and provoked an adverse reaction; so the *GALLIENAE AUGUSTAE* series of *aurei* was soon discontinued, and replaced with a variant series in which the legend read *GALLIENO AUG(USTO)*, a conventional masculine formula.

Alföldi’s speculations about the larger programme have long since been exploded¹³¹—but in my view, his linking of the *GALLIENAE AUGUSTAE* series to the Eleusinian initiation is nonetheless basically cogent. He was right (I think) to maintain against some critics that the ‘Galliena’ of the legend serves as a proper noun referring to Gallienus, and right that it was meant to imply that the male person of the emperor had blended somehow with the power of a feminine divine principle of benevolent abundance (as one of Alföldi’s critics acknowledged, ‘[the obverse’s] legend and iconography suggest an original, even unconventional, mind at work in the mint of Rome’).¹³² And even if one construed the legend as adjectival, or dismissed its *AEs* as a

¹²⁸ The annual Eleusinian festival, held on 15–21 Boedromion (roughly, September), occurred in the course of the autumn visit; the initiation is implicit in the *HA*’s phrase *sacris omnibus interesse* (see preceding note), and can be inferred from the fact that Gallienus’ letter of 265 (see below) relates specifically to Eleusis.

¹²⁹ Armstrong (1987) proposes the latter (in the event, Eleusis was spared the devastation inflicted on Athens by the Heruli in 267/8).

¹³⁰ Alföldi (1979) 590–600 = id. (1997) 208–19.

¹³¹ See e.g. de Blois (1976) 185–93; Edwards (1994).

¹³² Kent (1973) 68.

coiner's 'hypercorrection', the detail of the *corona spicea* would still require an explanation: it bestows on Gallienus' head a traditional attribute of the goddess Ceres/Demeter. Granted, that does not necessarily signify, in itself, an evocation of the Eleusinian Demeter specifically—but in this case there is a supporting context. Gallienus had been initiated at Eleusis in autumn 264, and in 265 had sent a letter to Athens evincing an interest in Eleusis' festival-regulations and/or material security; there is fair reason, then, to connect the initiation with the visual detail of the crown in a coin-series minted in 266—or perhaps even 265, the year of the letter. A recent attempt to identify the goddess evoked in the image with a Palmyrene divinity rather than Demeter is entirely unpersuasive, in my view: the evidence and context support Alföldi's original case for Eleusinian Demeter.¹³³

As for Alföldi's explanation of the demise of the *GALLIENAE AUGUSTAE* coinage as a response to adverse reaction, it cannot be proven; but *some* explanation is warranted, to take account of the masculine formula in the variant series. An innovative image struck at Rome to advertise Galerius' intimate association with the philanthropic bounty of Athenian Demeter might perhaps have seemed offensively androgynous to some Romans—or perhaps it simply provoked ridicule. One might speculate further, on that line. Perhaps the ultimate origin of the hostile characterisation of Gallienus as an effeminate lay further back in time than the Constantinian propagandist fiction of 310 that appropriated Claudius Gothicus as the grandfather of Constantine. Perhaps—who knows?—the coin-image prompted jokes in hostile quarters that derided Gallienus as a woman in his own lifetime, and that were exploited in the publicity of the general who (surely) conspired in 268

¹³³ MacCoull (2001) concurred that the image implies a close association of Gallienus' person with a female deity, but identified her as the Palmyrene goddess Allat: he postulated (p. 236) that the purpose of the coin-series was to give public thanks to Odaenathus of Palmyra, as *corrector totius orbis*, for his successes in military campaigns against the Persians in the years 260–265/6. But the claim is untenable for two reasons. (i) Crucially (*pace* MacCoull's claim at p. 238), the *corona spicea* is *not* attested as an attribute of Palmyrene Allat in her iconography (she traditionally appears enthroned between lions, like Atargatis, and/or as a warrior-goddess with a spear and helmet and shield—and sometimes with the *aegis*, in partial assimilation to the Greek Athena: see Kaizer (2002) 104–6). (ii) In any case, even if there *were* evidence that the *corona spicea* had featured in Allat's iconography, the imagery on the 'Gallienae Augustae' *aurei* would still entirely fail to serve the purpose postulated by MacCoull: supposing that Gallienus had wished to express gratitude to Odaenathus publicly at Rome in his official coinage (and it is hardly clear why he would have wished to do), the *corona spicea* on a head of Gallienus would not, by itself, have done anything at all to put a Roman viewer in mind of the Palmyrene Allat, as opposed to the culturally familiar Ceres/Demeter; something over and above the *corona spicea* would have been needed, either in the imagery or the legends on the coins, to lead the viewer to associate the image specifically with Palmyra or Allat or Odaenathus.

to murder and succeed him. In that case—this is only speculation, I stress—the characterisation would run back to the publicity of Claudius Gothicus himself.¹³⁴

One could speculate, too, about the etiquette of Gallienus' initiation at the *Eleusinia* of autumn 264. We are in the 'mid-third century crisis', of course; but the festival was still a popular occasion.¹³⁵ It lasted a week, and thousands traditionally attended as initiands and spectators. After several days of purification at Athens, the participants—Athenians and visitors, males and females, 'first-timers' and 'repeaters'—processed along the Sacred Way to Eleusis, led by finely costumed priests and priestesses and a company of ephebes, to be initiated *en masse* over two days and nights in a Hall of the Mysteries that could seat three thousand persons. The initiation ritual climaxed with the showing of 'a blade of wheat harvested in silence' to the initiates; on the last day, they were presented with myrtle garlands.¹³⁶ But a Roman emperor—the first to have visited Athens for eighty years—was no ordinary initiand, and the occasion plainly offered a platform for imperial publicity: Gallienus would have been the object of close attention and popular acclamation on the Sacred Way and at the Hall of the Mysteries, and assured of special treatment by the priests. It is surely not impossible to imagine the royal visitor being marked out from the crowd with an award of the Eleusinian goddess' distinctive crown of wheat stalks to signify her especially high regard for his excellence—as if he were a new Triptolemus, maybe, re-

¹³⁴ One would need to square this hypothesis with Gallienus' posthumous deification by Claudius; which would be awkward, but not impossible. For Claudius' part in the conspiracy of 268, see Potter (2004) 264. I note (solely for interest) that a parallel of a sort for the traducing of Gallienus as a woman might be hypothesised as a feature of Claudius Gothicus' propaganda, if only one could believe there was any historical reality at all to be extracted from *HA Tyr. trig.* 29.1–4. That passage alleges that in Gallienus' reign a pretender named Celsus was created emperor in Africa at a ceremony at which he donned the robe (*peplos*) of the goddess Caelestis, only to be killed seven days later by one Galliena, a cousin of Gallienus. But in this case, the whole story and the persons it names surely *are* utter fiction.

¹³⁵ The details of the Eleusinian procession and ceremonies that follow are selected from Parker (2005) 334–68 (now fundamental on the subject) and from Bremmer (2011) 379–97; these studies focus on an earlier period, but both make use of Roman imperial literary and epigraphic testimonies. For the regulation of the ephebes' procession in a decree of *ca.* AD 220, see Robertson (1998) 375; but cf. Parker (2005) 348.

¹³⁶ For the showing of the 'harvested blade of wheat' (Hippolytus, *Haer.* 5.8.39) and the initiates' garlands, Parker (2005) 357–61; Bremmer (2011) 14.

ceiving her primordial gift of grain to be spread across the world in agricultural bounty.¹³⁷

Be all that as it may, one thing is certain: Gallienus' enthusiastic interest and participation in Athens' cultural and religious traditions would have been extremely gratifying to the patriotic antiquarian Dexippus. At a time when the marauding 'Skythai' and Heruli were already giving cause for worry, Gallienus' visit was the act of a friend of Greece and of Athens, and Dexippus in his *Chronica* included a detailed account of it (an account that was to be used, and abused, over a century later by the author of the *Historia Augusta*). Not least, the culmination of the visit in the Eleusinian initiation would have seemed to him a glorious event that deserved commemoration. Dexippus—himself a member of the Eleusinian priesthood¹³⁸—was surely an eye-witness to Gallienus' initiation: for him, it will have brought to mind the good old days when the philhellene Hadrian and the philosophic Marcus had visited Athens and sought initiation at Eleusis. It might even be argued, if one took the reference to Hadrian and Marcus in the *Historia Augusta's* account of the visit to derive from Dexippus' *Chronica*,¹³⁹ that Dexippus had drawn that very comparison—but in terms that represented Gallienus as fitting company for these estimable predecessors. If one indulges the speculation that the emperor, by courtesy of the goddess, had paraded in Demeter's crown of wheat-stalks, it would be a detail that even the sober 'Thucydidean' historian Dexippus might have found a spot for in his story.

I put aside that speculation: it is surely clear, at least, that Dexippus' account of Gallienus' initiation will have portrayed him in a friendly light—which is plainly at odds with the depiction of Gallienus in *Caesars*. Now Julian himself, in his mid-twenties, had spent some months at Athens, had become an Eleusinian initiate, and proclaimed himself an Athenophile and in cultural terms a 'Hellene';¹⁴⁰ so one might think that the cultured Athenophile Gallienus in Dexippus' account would have cut an appealing figure in his eyes—if he had known it. On the face of things, then, the harsh treatment of Gallienus in *Caesars* might rather suggest that Dexippus' *Chronica* was a work that Julian had *not* read—and that suggestion might be strengthened by Julian's striking omission, in the *Caesars*' parade, of all the emper-

¹³⁷ Note that Triptolemus (in whose iconography the *corona epicea* sometimes features) appears to be associated with the emperor in a Gallienic 'antoninianus' coin: see Alföldi (1979) 578 and 605–6 with Taf. 35 Abb. 3 = id. (1997) 197 and 223 with Plate 69.3.

¹³⁸ See Martin (2006) 35–6: *ἱερεὺς παναγῆς* (*IG* II.2, 3198) designates a minor Eleusinian priesthood.

¹³⁹ For the *HA's* ref., see above at n. 126.

¹⁴⁰ Jul. *Ep. ad SPQAth.* 268a–c; 275a; *Misopogon* 367c; Eunap. *Vit. Soph.* 475–6.

ors or pretenders intervening between Severus Alexander and Valerian (313a): almost two decades, from 235 to 253, are thus skipped over—and for a fourth-century reader of Greek histories, Dexippus would have been an obvious source for this period. Bowersock astutely noted as a parallel here a late chapter in the *Historia Augusta's* life of Severus Alexander; disdaining to name any of the emperors intervening between Severus and Aurelian, it dismissively represents them all in a bunch as a sub-species scarcely deserving any attention.¹⁴¹ That attitude may be emblematic of a general tendency in fourth-century writers to groan at the mare's nest of short-lived rulers, usurpers and pretenders who populated this tranche of the third century empire in 'crisis', and to move on quickly: it was a tiresome mess, confusing to deal with, and the subject-matter was dispiriting. On *Caesars'* evidence, Julian would exemplify that general tendency—but Bowersock's further suggestion¹⁴² that he was unaware of the very existence of the whole run of the emperors he omitted (which *a fortiori* would mean he had not read Dexippus' *Chronica*) is surely excessive. Without naming him, Julian plainly alludes to Maximin Thrax as a murderous plotter whom Justice will consign to torment (313b); and while his omissions of Philip the Arab and of Decius are certainly noteworthy, in view of Philip's alleged Christian leanings and Decius' status as a persecutor of Christians in Eusebius and Lactantius, we should hesitate to assume they were quite unknown to him. It *might* be so (the historiographical tradition was clearly sparse in both cases)—but is tempting to think that, even if Julian had never read any pagan historiographer's account of either of them, his education under the direction of Christian bishops would have introduced him in passing to Decius, at least. Decius would have been an awkward figure, though, to compliment as a pagan champion: he had come to power by betraying and eliminating his trusting patron (Philip), and his own reign had quickly ended in a humiliating military disaster; he had perished in a Danubian swamp at the hands of the 'Skythai'.¹⁴³ Julian may have simply preferred to leave both him and Philip out, and the brevity of their reigns and of the piece he was writing would have facilitated that omission: on artistic grounds alone, to have attempted to find a place in *Caesars* for all the short-lived individual rulers of the third century's middle decade would have been an impossibility.

Behind these particular omissions, a broader question is hovering. The extent of Julian's reading of historical texts, no doubt, could easily be overestimated. An active emperor's leisure time for reading was limited, and phi-

¹⁴¹ Bowersock (1982) 170, citing *HA Sev. Alex.* 64.1–2.

¹⁴² Bowersock (1982) 165.

¹⁴³ Potter (2004) 241–6.

losophy, ‘theology’ and poetry plainly made stronger claims on Julian’s time than works of history. But there is a risk of being unduly minimalist in assessing his historical interests and knowledge.¹⁴⁴ In texts other than *Caesars*, Julian offered thoughts on the nature and function of history-writing and its study (historians should deal in facts, not fiction, he insisted; and their works had an ethical value, he was clear, in informing the attitudes and conduct of men in authority and of those they governed).¹⁴⁵ He also had a passion for books: in summer 362, he arranged for the entire library of his one-time guardian George of Cappadocia, ‘which was very large and complete and contained [...] many historians’, to be sent to him at Antioch.¹⁴⁶ Numerous historical and biographical works now lost to us were readily available to him: in connection with Alexander, for instance, I have argued elsewhere that Julian almost certainly knew the six-book *Alexander* composed by the pagan Praxagoras of Athens in the 330s—and I had occasion to observe that a remark in Julian’s *To Nilus* shows his awareness of a specific variant in the historical tradition which no longer survives in any extant ‘Alexander-history’.¹⁴⁷ The case of Dexippus is similar: as a pagan Athenian aristocrat, a patriotic general, and an Eleusinian priest, he was clearly the sort of historian Julian would have warmed to; his works had quite wide circulation in Julian’s day (far more so, clearly, than those of Praxagoras); and his popularity with readers in Julian’s own intellectual milieu is evident in the fact that Eunapius picked the year 270—Dexippus’ chosen closing-point—as the starting-point of his own *Histories*.¹⁴⁸ On general grounds, then, one might suspect that Julian would at least have sampled the *Chronica*. In *Caesars*, however, Julian was essaying a short satirical fiction, not a narrative history: he had no need or wish to deploy the full range of his historical knowledge about the half-dozen rulers he chose to shortlist, still less the many others who figured fleetingly in walk-on roles in the piece; nor was he under any obligation to list the minor players with unerring comprehensiveness, or to respect the spirit of reports of them he had encountered in earlier authors, or to abstain from inventing fictional details about them in order to raise a smile.

¹⁴⁴ Bouffartigue (1992), a fundamental study of Julian’s reading, in my view slips sometimes into over-minimalist assumptions; its review of the historiographical sources of *Caesars* (at 401–12) postulates a reliance on intermediary handbooks, rather than ‘canonical’ authors directly read *in extenso*.

¹⁴⁵ Jul. *Or.* 3.124b–c; *Ep.* 14 = 30 Bidez, with Kaegi (1964).

¹⁴⁶ Jul., *Ep.* 38 = 106 Bidez.

¹⁴⁷ Smith (2007) and (2011) 91 n. 161.

¹⁴⁸ Eunapius was critical of Dexippus’ strict chronological exposition, but appreciative of his work in the round: see Martin (2006) 98 = Dexippus, F 10 Martin.

Viewed in that light, the fact that Julian ridicules Gallienus as an effeminate in *Caesars* gives us no reason to suppose that he was unfamiliar with Dexippus' friendly depiction of Gallienus as a cultured visitor at Athens. One could consider, as a parallel case, a celebrated report about Gallienus in an elementary Neoplatonic biography that Julian would indubitably have encountered in the course of his philosophic studies, Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus*. Both the emperor and his wife Salonina, so Porphyry claims, had greatly honoured and venerated Plotinus—so much so, that the Master had solicited their support for a plan (unrealised only because of the pettiness of certain jealous courtiers) to establish in Campania a city of Neoplatonists, 'Platonopolis' (*V. Plot.* 12).¹⁴⁹ Julian surely knew this tradition of the 'philosopher-friendly' Gallienus, and one might expect that it would have predisposed him to grant Gallienus a respectable mention in *Caesars*—but it turns out to count for nothing in his favour. The reason for that is simple: however odious the thought of Constantine was to Julian, his own sense (and his subjects' sense) of his legitimacy as an emperor rested on his membership of the Constantinian dynastic nexus; he had rejected his uncle's religion, but he still wholeheartedly subscribed to the family's claim to descent from Claudius Gothicus—and to the specious dynastic fiction that had glorified Claudius by denigrating his immediate predecessor. Julian thus had an overriding reason, when he paraded his predecessors in *Caesars*, to hold to the hostile tradition that mocked Gallienus as a debauched and ineffectual effeminate, irrespective of Porphyry's depiction of him as a fervent admirer of Plotinus. By the same token, it is entirely possible, indeed likely, that Julian had read Dexippus' respectful account of Gallienus' visit to Athens—and merrily ignored it when he wrote *Caesars*. It would not, of course, have been so easily ignored, if Julian's intention in *Caesars* had been to produce (in Athanassiadi's phrase) 'a careful reconsideration of the policies of his predecessors'. But that was never his intention in *Caesars*. To ascribe such an earnest fixity of purpose to the piece is a strange distortion of its context and spirit: it mistakes an occasional satirical entertainment for a political manifesto.

Bowersock would certainly not have credited *Caesars*' author with 'a careful reconsideration of the policies of his predecessors'. But he did depict its author's mood as fundamentally earnest. In his view, the author was an

¹⁴⁹ This report was a pillar of Alföldi's hypothesis that Gallienus projected himself in his publicity as a universal redeemer-divinity with appeal to Neoplatonic theories. Alföldi's reading of the report as evidence that the emperor hoped to co-opt Plotinus' philosophic circle into an anti-Christian political alliance is refuted in De Blois (1976) 188–91; the notion that Plotinus would ever have involved himself in such an alliance is dismissed in Edwards (1994).

anxious and alienated eccentric who was hard put to repress his anger and prurience, and who identified himself closely with the stellar figures of Marcus and Alexander as ‘models’ in the conviction that he himself was the best Roman emperor there had ever been, apart from Marcus: ‘*Caesars* can be seen’, Bowersock concluded, ‘as a work not only of self-revelation, but in the end, like the *Misopogon*, of self-justification’.¹⁵⁰ The comparison drawn there with the *Misopogon* is revealing: when Bowersock ascribed suppressed anger and resentment to *Caesars*, he was reading it with an eye to what he called the ‘enraged outcry’ of the *Misopogon*, which Julian was to compose at Antioch a month or so later. The aptness of the comparison, though, is problematic. For one thing, the target-audience that the later piece addressed was very different: the *Misopogon* was directed to the population of Antioch at large, and displayed as a public text; it was posted up on the monumental ‘Tetrapylon’ arch, adjacent to the main entrance of the Imperial Palace, for all and sundry to contemplate.¹⁵¹ Moreover, a few years after Bowersock’s paper on *Caesars* appeared, an important re-interpretation of the *Misopogon* was published that set the study of the later piece itself on a new footing.¹⁵² Gleason’s admirable ‘Festive Satire’ emphasised the need to attend closely to the generic and cultural contexts of this particular Julianic text before diagnosing (as both Bowersock and Athanassiadi, among others, had) a pathological mental state in its author. Gleason persuasively argued that it is erroneous to postulate ‘repressed’ anger as a key to the historical interpretation of the *Misopogon*. When Julian affected to satirise himself in it through the eyes of the Antiochenes, he was not struggling to conceal a private inner rage: he was not dissembling or concealing the anger he felt towards them; he was modulating the performative expression of it, rather, in accordance with established precedents, to rebuke the Antiochenes publicly in an openly posted text of chastisement. On Gleason’s view, it may be added, the specific stimulus for the *Misopogon*’s composition was the Antiochene populace’s mockery of Julian in anonymous squibs and verses that circulated at the celebrations of the Festival of the Kalends over the first three days of January 363—which is to say, at an event that post-dated by a fortnight the Saturna-

¹⁵⁰ Bowersock (1982) 172.

¹⁵¹ John Malalas, *Chron.* 13.328.3–4.

¹⁵² Gleason (1986). Aspects of Gleason’s interpretation of the *Misopogon* have lately been disputed by Van Hoof and Van Nuffelen (2011), but their critique does not refute the heart of her argument: *pace* their implication at pp. 167–8, she did not deny that anger was a prime stimulus to the text’s composition (see e.g. Gleason (1986) 117), and their view (p. 169) that its author’s ‘suggestion of good humour must be seen as part of [its] rhetorical strategy’ is quite compatible with her reading of the piece.

lian festivities of 17–19 December 362 that Julian had celebrated by composing *Caesars*.¹⁵³

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It is obvious that the subject matter of *Caesars*' story encompassed political and religious issues that Julian regarded as serious: I acknowledged at the outset that when he prescribed in the gods' votes what constituted virtue in a monarch, he was implicitly ascribing a fair measure of it to himself—and that on this score, there are self-justificatory touches to be found in *Caesars*. And in some sense, plainly, any literary text composed by an emperor about emperors will be revelatory of its author's mentality. But on the reading of *Caesars* I have offered, it was not devised as an exercise in self-justification, and it is not a document of self-revelation in the sense that Bowersock claimed. I also drew a formal distinction at the outset between what Bowersock postulated about Julian's mentality and emotions on the strength of particulars in *Caesars*, and the broader characterisation of him, in Bowersock's biography, as 'the puritanical pagan'. My object in this paper has been to discuss Julian *qua* author of *Caesars*, not to offer a critique of that broader characterisation—but at least one can say that, on my reading, *Caesars*

¹⁵³ To judge by remarks in the published version (1994) of Bowersock's 1991 Sather Lectures, Gleason's reading of the *Misopogon* did not persuade him to modify his view that repressed anger and sexual anxiety suffused Julian's account of his predecessors in *Caesars*. Bowersock (1994) characterises *Caesars* as 'a savage review of the emperors of Rome' (p. 51); at p. 16, he represents Julian in his *Letter to Priest* (*Ep.* 89b, 301b; on which see below at p. 263) as 'complain[ing] in his puritanical way about a renewed popularity of fictional works composed in earlier times in the form of history', and at p. 142 one finds the following judgement: 'Julian disliked [the Greek novelists], but in his literary taste he was as atypical of his age as he was in most things. He had a horror of the erotic. The Christians, fortunately, did not ...' That last sentence alludes chiefly to the Byzantine copyists through whose labours the texts of the ancient Greek novels are preserved; but if it is meant also to carry the implication that in general the Greek Christian authors of Julian's age were more at ease with 'the erotic' in literature than he was, the suggestion is to my mind entirely unpersuasive. Readers who wish to judge this matter with reference to the 'banquet-literature' form, with which *Caesars* (more properly, '*Symposium or Kronia*') has certain affinities, could start by considering the presuppositions in fourth century Christian literature's prime exhibit of the species, Methodius' *Symposium of the Ten Virgins*—a paean in ten voices to the rewards attending sexual renunciation. More generally, they could consider the temptation to engage in unspeakable lusts that Basil of Ancyra's *Preservation of Virginity* foresaw in the chastest relative's kiss; or Basil of Caesarea's verdict (*Ep.* 199.18) that a dedicated virgin who 'fell' into marriage should be subjected to the severe penance reserved for an adulterer, as opposed to a mere fornicator; or John Chrysostom's condemnation of erotic singing at wedding-processions at Antioch, and of 'mixed-sex' attendance and nudity at the city's public baths and *maiuma* shows (Brown (1988) 313–6). All of these examples, and many more, receive nuanced discussion in Brown's classic study.

sars has offered nothing substantial to support the depiction of Julian as an essentially humourless and intellectually alienated eccentric writing out of a consciousness of failure, interested in history only as a source of compensatory personal ‘models’, rendered angry by his excessive expectations of others, and sexually prurient by the ‘self-denying’ demands he made on himself. On my reading, *Caesars*’ author was a good deal better-humoured, better-balanced and more intellectually adroit than Bowersock allowed. Nor was he the ‘troubled’ author surmised by Athanassiadi, ‘urgently seeking answers from history’ to formulate and broadcast a visionary conception of a ‘peaceful universal empire’ that he aspired to rule as an Alexander-cum-Marcus. At bottom, the piece deserves to be read, and enjoyed, as the playful Saturnalian fiction that was signalled in its opening sentence. As Donald Russell has nicely said, ‘pretending to be someone else, and composing imaginary speeches in character, is an essential part of most literary activity’;¹⁵⁴ on that score, Julian was able in *Caesars* to be half a dozen kings, a jesting satyr, Romulus, Heracles, Hermes and Dionysus—and momentarily, a baptising Jesus. He deployed his historical and literary knowledge in it selectively and mischievously—and with considerable literary dexterity—to amuse himself and a circle of court-intimates at a season which offered a bookish emperor a congenial opportunity for cultured relaxation. There is a distinction to be observed, here, between his private interests as a litterateur and his public persona. In his public capacity as Pontifex Maximus, for instance, Julian advised his priests in an encyclical letter to shun the scurrilities of Archilochus and Old Comedy in their reading, and confine their attention solely to works of philosophy; but that was a pious ideal prescribed for a restricted category, and certainly not one that Julian himself adhered to: in his speeches and private letters, he is quite familiar with Archilochus’ invective and penchant for myth, and readily quotes the Old Comedians for tags.¹⁵⁵ Likewise, a philosophically minded emperor could still relish the Saturnalia’s *libertas*; and if he had cared to, he could have explained its appeal—as a nineteenth century man of letters later would—by adducing Aristotle’s account of *mimesis* as an inherent constituent of the human mind, and as at the root of both comic and ‘serious’ literature:

¹⁵⁴ Russell (1983) 1.

¹⁵⁵ *To a Priest* (*Ep.* 89b Bidez) 300d; Smith (1995) 14 and Relihan (1989), for Archilochus and Old Comedy quoted in Julian.

‘The Stagyrite discovered that our nature delights in imitation, and perhaps in nothing more than in representing personages different from ourselves in mockery of them; in fact, there is a passion for masquerade in human nature ... The Saturnalia of the Romans is a remarkable instance of this characteristic.’¹⁵⁶

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¹⁵⁶ Disraeli (1834) 1, evoking Arist. *Poet.* 1448b3–1449a5.

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