

XIV.—Notes on the *Caesars of Julian*

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An examination of the circumstances under which the *Caesars* was written, and of the lunar paradise which forms its setting, reveals that this satire, in spite of its "Menippean" form, is not an isolated *jeu d'esprit* but is integrated philosophically with those *Orationes* which are basic to our knowledge of Julian's Neoplatonism.

The satire known as the *Symposium*, the *Saturnalia*, or the *Caesars*, appears to possess a twofold interest for modern readers: the judgments, now severe, now indulgent or even adulatory, which its author, the emperor Julian, passes on his predecessors, provide a sort of gallery of imperial portraits drawn by one of the most gifted members of the imperial succession itself, while the recognizable affinities to the *Apocolocyntosis* give it some claim to being regarded as "Menippean," and as belonging, therefore, to the curious literary tradition represented in varied and disputed degrees by the *Saturae Menippeae* of Varro and certain dialogues of Lucian as well as by Seneca's malicious lampoon.¹ Consequently, the piece holds a secure, if modest place in both literary and political history, but at the same time there is a less obvious phase of interest to which attention should be drawn if one wishes to make a balanced interpretation,

¹ That Julian adopted the traditional form of a Menippean satire and incorporated certain Menippean motives, is unquestioned, but their immediate source has been a matter of dispute. For instance, J. Geffcken asserted: "Seine (sc. Menippos') Wirkung war ebenso unmittelbar wie dauernd; das Altertum hat ihn nach seiner Form, der stillen Mischung von Prosa und Vers, wie nach seinen Erzählungen selbst immer wieder nachgeahmt, und es ist nicht ausgeschlossen, dass die mutwillige Satire Senecas . . . die römische Widerspiegelung eines griechischen Vorwurfs ist. Mit ihr ist am nächsten verwandt Julians Satire: 'das Gastmahl oder die Kronia' . . ." (*Kaiser Julianus* [Leipzig, 1914] 80 f.; cited below as *KJ*). This, to be sure, is noncommittal as to the nature of the "Verwandschaft" between Julian and Seneca. R. Helm, in his thorough study *Lucian und Menipp* (Leipzig u. Berlin, 1906) 73-75, had inclined to the view that the Menippean elements in Julian were drawn from Lucian rather than from Menippus' own writings, while Geffcken had argued, against Helm, that Lucian's contribution is not entirely patent and that the direct influence of the old Cynic of Gadara is a possibility by no means to be excluded (*NJA* 27 [1911] 477, note 6). A. P. Ball was content with the cautious statement that Julian ". . . probably had Lucian's style as his model, and whether he had ever read the *Apocolocyntosis* we have no means of judging" (*The Satire of Seneca on the Apotheosis of Claudius* [New York, 1902] 78).

that is, the position occupied by the satire in the corpus of Julian's writings and in his philosophical system.²

I

The most plausible theory as to the circumstances of its composition is that which relates the *Caesars* directly to the serious discourse *On King Helios* (*Oration 4* [Hertlein]). Addressing his intimate friend Sallustius,³ Julian mentions a work presumably called the *Kronia*, that is, *Saturnalia*, indicating that this has been written earlier and suggesting that it has also been dedicated to his friend (4.157c). He has just explained that the Heliæa, or festival in honor of Helios, falls between the Saturnalia in December and the beginning of the new year (156c), that is, it comes not long after the winter solstice, when Helios has just left the sign of Capricorn and has begun to move back from the farthest point in his journey southward (156A). The natural assumption, therefore, is that the *Caesars* was written for the Saturnalia and *Oration 4* not long afterward for the Heliæa of the same year.⁴

² On the need for commentaries on the text of Julian, see Geffcken, as quoted in note 6 below. G. Mau, in his study *Die Religionsphilosophie Kaiser Julians in seinen Reden auf König Helios und die Göttermutter* (Leipzig u. Berlin, 1907), did much toward elucidating the difficult and involved fourth and fifth orations, but he referred only casually to the *Caesars* and made no attempt to correlate it with the other discourses. The notes in the translation by Baron Spanheim (*Les Césars de l'empereur Julien traduits du grec* [Amsterdam, 1728]) are still worth consulting in spite of their prolixity and frequent irrelevance. Cauer's commentary on the *Caesars*, mentioned by Geffcken (*KJ* 149) as having formed a part of a "Breslauer Schulprogramm" for 1856, has been inaccessible. On *Or. 5*, see further H. Bogner, "Kaiser Julians 5. Rede," *Philologus* 79 (1923) 258-97.

³ Here we face a difficult prosopographical problem. O. Seeck, *RE* s. v. "Sallustius" (25), identified the "Saloustios" of *Or. 4* with the well known *praefectus praetorio Orientis*, Saturninius Salustius (or Salutius) Secundus, and the relation between *Or. 4* and the *Caesars*, as developed here, might seem to indicate that the abundant biographical material collected by Seeck might be properly studied in connection with the *Caesars*; but this is unnecessary for present purposes, apart from the evident risk involved. See also J. Bidez, *L'Empereur Julien: Oeuvres complètes*, 1 (Paris, 1932) 184-88.

K. Präechter, *RE* s. v. "Sallustius" (37), discussed rather noncommittally Zeller's suggestion that Julian's friend is to be further identified with the author of the extant Neoplatonic treatise, *Περὶ θεῶν καὶ κόσμου*. Since the work of Professors Franz Cumont ("Salluste le philosophe," *RPh* 16 [1892] 49-56) and A. D. Nock (*Sallustius Concerning the Gods and the Universe* [Cambridge, 1926]; see especially the "Prolegomena," ci-civ) has greatly strengthened the probability of this second identification, several relevant passages of the treatise are cited below.

⁴ E. von Borries, *RE* s. v. "Iulianos (Apostata)," 71-73, assigns them to the corresponding festivals of A.D. 362, during the winter which Julian spent in Antioch; this is

In Julian's mind there was apparently a connection of some sort between the winter solstice and the ascent or the exaltation of the soul, though he brings it out only by remote implication when he says (5.172A-C) that the spring equinox in Aries is preferred to the autumn equinox in Scorpio because at that time of year, as the days are growing longer and as the sun moves nearer to the earth, Helios' rays exert an increasing upward attraction upon the souls which are striving for release from earthly existence.⁵ A German commentator has compared this notion with the statement of Porphyry that Cancer and Capricorn, the signs of the summer and winter solstices, are the gates of the sun, serving for the descent and ascent, respectively, of souls, and though it is not clear by what line of reasoning the two ideas could be brought into complete harmony, they both resulted, beyond a doubt, from the same sort of speculation.⁶ In possible and in fact orthodox, but it evidently rests in part upon the assumption that "Saloustios" was the prefect (see note 3 above).

When he wrote the discourse on Helios, Julian probably realized that he was glorifying a deity whose festival fell on the day to which the church in Rome had not long before assigned the birth of Christ, if indeed it was not his deliberate policy to restore Helios to his former position. E. Norden, *Die Geburt des Kindes* (Studien der Bibliothek Warburg, 3 [Leipzig, 1924]) 24 ff., provides most of the materials basic to this problem, which lies beyond the range of the present notes. The startling appearance of Christ in limbo (*Caes.* 336A-B) may have some bearing upon the subject.

⁵ The allusion is of course to the mystic experiences at the rites of Cybele and Attis, and those at the Hilaria. Cf. Julian, *Or.* 5.168C-D; Sallustius, 4 (page 8, lines 26 ff., ed. Nock). On the Hilaria at the vernal equinox, cf. Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.21.10.

⁶ Porphyry, *Antr.* 22, 28; for a discussion, see Mau, *op. cit.* (see note 2) 106 f. *Antr.* 23 may be more directly in point: the Romans celebrate the Saturnalia at the time when Helios is in Capricorn, the "house" of Kronos (Saturn), and the momentary freedom enjoyed by slaves during the festival is a kind of rebirth. Probably we are to think of a process that began at the winter solstice and culminated at the spring equinox. The mock decree in Lucian, *Deor. concil.* 15, summons the gods at the winter solstice, but of course no philosophical interpretation is given.

For Cancer and Capricorn, cf. further Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.17.63 and *Somn.* 1.12.1-3, the latter supposedly dependent upon Porphyry (K. Mras, *SPAW* [1933] 254-56, 281), Julian's source for *Or.* 4 was of course Iamblichus (cf. 146A; 150D; 157D), probably the treatise *περί θεῶν* (G. Wissowa, *De Macrobi Saturnaliorum fontibus capita tria* [Diss.. Breslau, 1880] 38-40); and we need not go much beyond that fact. Cf. Geffcken, *KJ* 160: "Auch müsste noch (i.e., even after the publication of the Cumont-Bidez edition) manches kommentiert werden, wenn schon es kaum möglich sein wird, in diese verwirren iamblichen Ideen Klarheit zu bringen — auch kaum nötig ist." This much might be added, however, that, of the three "Platonic" cosmologies outlined by Macrobius, *Somn.* 1.11.4-12, none corresponds in all details with that of Julian, though the first includes a lunar paradise; all three of these were thought by Mras (*loc. cit.*) to have stemmed directly from various writings of Porphyry rather than from Iamblichus (contrast the findings of Wissowa, *loc. cit.*). Julian's admission (5.161c), that he had only a limited acquaintance with Porphyry's writings, serves finally to remind us that we are dealing here with doctrines which were for some exponents central and for others peripheral to their Neoplatonism.

any case, the general theme recurs in both the *Caesars* and *Oration 4*: Julian's prayer for the eventual ascent of his soul to Helios (4.158B) has its counterpart in the conclusion of the *Caesars* (336C), where he commits his soul to Mithras; and we shall find that the sublunar region, where, most appropriately, the dead emperors are assembled in the *Caesars*, appears in his philosophy as a way-station for the migration of souls. At first blush it might seem a little out of order to emphasize comparisons of this sort, because the two compositions differ so greatly in spirit, at least superficially. And yet, although the proemium to the *Caesars*, in which Sallustius evidently appears as Julian's interlocutor, is admittedly sophisticated in style, this is no reason for refusing to take the writer at his word when he asserts that his taste does not normally run to jesting; rather, one can well believe that the austere emperor had no real enthusiasm for Saturnalian fooleries,⁷ but that, while certain ideas or motives appropriate to the Saturnalia were thrust upon him, so to speak, by the occasion, he still retained in this piece something of the spirit as well as the external framework of a *μῦθος*.⁸ And in view of these considerations, it seems reasonable enough to refer the crucial passage in the discourse on Helios (157C) to the extant *Caesars* rather than to a lost *Kronia* possibly but not indisputably evidenced by Suidas.⁹

⁷ Geffcken's remarks on this point seem felicitous: "Der Witz dieses Schriftstückes ist freilich ausserordentlich gering. Der Verfasser selbst wusste, dass er die Gabe des Humors nicht besass, und bekennt dies in einem den Eingang bildenden Gespräche mit so niederschlagender Offenheit, dass wir uns schon auf das Ärgste gefasst machen" (*KJ* 81); "Auch empfindet Julian, ungewöhnlich bescheiden über sich selbst urteilend, dass dergleichen Saturnalienscherze nicht seine Stärke seien" (*NJA* 27 [1911] 478). No doubt the *Misopogon* shows considerable ability at invective, but it should be remembered that the people of Antioch had provoked Julian to the writing of it.

⁸ Cf. the model myth in *Or.* 7.227C ff. Sallustius likewise defended the use of myths, and gave a classification of them (see Nock, *op. cit.* [in note 3] xliii-lv).

⁹ Suidas, s. v. Ἐμπεδοτῖμος: περὶ οὗ λέγει ὁ Παραβάτης ἐν τοῖς ἐπιγραφομένοις Κρονίοις· ἡμεῖς δὲ Ἐμπεδοτῖμω καὶ Πυθαγόρᾳ πιστεύοντες, οἷς τε ἐκείθεν λαβὼν Ἡρακλείδης ὁ Ποντικός ἔφη, καὶ μικρῷ πρότερον καὶ ὁ κλεινὸς ἡμῖν ἔδειξε καὶ ἱεροφάντωρ Ἰάμβλιχος (printed by Hertlein as Julian, Fragment 6, and by Bidez-Cumont [Paris, 1922] as Fragment 161); Suidas, s. v. Ἰουλιανός: . . . ἔγραψε τοὺς καλουμένους Καίσαρας· περιέχει δὲ τοὺς ἀπὸ Αὐγούστου Ῥωμαίων βασιλεῖς· καὶ τὰ καλούμενα Κρόνια· . . .

Asmus (in an inaccessible study) and Geffcken (*KJ* 59, 140) assumed from these texts that another *Kronia* was written and has not survived (cf. the similar view of Bidez-Cumont in their note *ad loc.*, and Mrs. W. C. Wright's remark in her Loeb edition, p. 343: ". . . Sallust, to whom Julian had sent his lost work the *Kronia*"); but this assumption was rejected by Von Borries (*op. cit.* [see note 4] 65 f.). The possibilities are apparently as follows: (1) that Suidas made a false ascription as to both author and work: but comparison of his excerpt with Iamblichus *wp.* Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 1.41.39 (378, lines 11-13, ed. Wachsmuth) and with Proclus, *In Platonis rem publicam*

II

Let us next consider the setting of the satire in relation to the cosmology developed in *Orations* 4 and 5. This, for the sake of brevity, may be presented in the form of an outline, though the system is such that it cannot be set forth in wholly visual or spatial terms:

- I. The conceptual world (ὁ νοητὸς κόσμος), abode of οἱ νοητοὶ θεοί, ruled by ὁ πάντων βασιλεύς.¹⁰
- II. The thinking world (ὁ νοερός κόσμος), abode of οἱ νοεροὶ θεοί, ruled by the invisible Helios.
- III. The visible world (ὁ αἰσθητὸς κόσμος):
 - A. the *eighth* sphere (146c), or sphere of the fixed stars;
 - B. the sphere of the visible Helios, in the midst of the *seven* spheres of the visible gods or planets, of which Selene, the moon, is nearest to the earth;
 - C. our world, the *ninth* sphere (146c), with its *four* elements: fire, air, water, earth, in that order.
 (The aether, or *fifth* element [τὸ πέμπτον σῶμα],¹¹ extends downward as far as the moon.)

The place of Helios in the universe is described as a *μεσότης*, which has three phases: (1) the invisible Helios is *μέσος* among the thinking gods (4.138c–d; cf. 142A, 156c); (2) he is intermediate between the conceptual gods and the visible gods (4.138d, 141b); and (3) astronomically, the visible Helios occupies the central position among the seven planets — Kronos, Zeus, Ares, Helios, Aphrodite, Hermes, and Selene, in a descending series.¹²

commentarius (volume 2, 119, lines 18–22, ed. Kroll) strengthens one's impression that it is at least Julianic and derived from Iamblichus (see E. Rohde, *RhM* 32 [1877] 331, note 1, and Geffcken, *loc. cit.*); (2) that since Suidas' citation does not occur in the extant *Kronia* or *Caesars*, he made a false ascription as to work only: in this case we should deny that a second *Kronia* distinct from the *Caesars* was ever written; (3) that the citation once formed a part of the *Caesars*, but has dropped out of the text: this is highly improbable; (4) that since Suidas distinguishes between the *Caesars* and the *Kronia*, the citation comes from the latter, and either (a) the alternate title of the *Caesars* in the manuscripts is erroneous or (b) both Suidas and the manuscripts are correct and Julian wrote two *Kronia*. Such is the state of the problem: those who favor 4.b have not yet proved their case.

¹⁰ Cf. *Or.* 4.132c–d, 133b–c; Mau, *op. cit.* (see note 2) 30–33.

¹¹ Cf. *Or.* 4.143c, 5.170c, 167d, 165c; Mau, *op. cit.* (see note 2) 21–25.

¹² *Or.* 4.134b, 135c, 146c. The third phase has the greatest historical importance, for in the earlier Greek astronomy and as late as Chrysippus the sphere of the sun was placed just above that of the moon (see F. Cumont, *MAI* 12 [1913] 447–79). The

The terminal position of Selene in the alignment of the planets is of course in keeping both with the doctrine that the aether begins only at the moon¹³ and with the idea that the moon serves as a kind of intermediary between the world of the *νοητά* above and that of mutable matter below,¹⁴ or, more specifically, in the migration of souls between Helios and the earth (4.154d). Four classes of superior beings (*κρείττονα γένη*)¹⁵ are distinguished, namely, solar angels,¹⁶ daemons, heroes, and disembodied souls (145c; 151c). Though Julian is a little vague on this point, the daemons and heroes should probably be assigned to the sublunar region, somewhat as in Plutarch,¹⁷ while the souls, whose abode is not specified but is no doubt the *κόσμος νοητός*, are naturally due to be sent down to the earth by Helios or his solar angels, and at their physical death will leave their bodies and reascend.

How much of this doctrine is anticipated in the satire? At the feast to which Romulus has invited both the gods and the deceased emperors, the former recline on couches¹⁸ arranged for them on Olympus, at the very height or zenith of the firmament or celestial sphere (*κατ' αὐτὸ . . . οὐρανοῦ τὸ μετέωρον*), while the caesars are to

Stoics, Diogenes of Babylon and Panaetius, were evidently the earliest philosophers who adopted the *μεσότης* of Helios among the planets (cf. Cic. *Div.* 2.42.88, 43.91, 47.97; Hultsch, *RE* s. v. "Astronomie" 1856 f.; Boll, *RE* s. v. "Hebdomas" 2567; Cumont, *op. cit.* 471). Cumont (*op. cit.* 473-75) held that it was Posidonius who first constructed the solar theology in detail, but this thesis, as argued chiefly by Reinhardt, was vigorously refuted by R. M. Jones, *CPh* 27 (1932) 113-35. On the order of the planets, with special reference to Macrobius, see further W. H. Stahl, *TAPhA* 73 (1942) 236 f.

¹³ Cf. *Or.* 5.167d, 4.149d; Mau, *op. cit.* (see note 2) 25 and 85, note 4. An unorthodox view, that the galaxy, not the moon, is the boundary between the two worlds of Being and Becoming, is also found in Julian, *Or.* 5.165c, 171A, as in Sallustius, 4 (page 8, lines 6 f., ed. Nock), but Julian returns to the common notion in 165d. See Bogner, *op. cit.* (see note 2) 274 f., and Nock, *op. cit.* (see note 3) liii and note 63.

¹⁴ Cf. *Or.* 4.149d-150A; cf. 154d, where Selene is termed *ἡ τῶν περιγείων δημιουργός*. Cf. Synesius, *Calv.* 1185A (*MPG* 66): *ὁ δὲ ὑπὸ σελήνην τόπος, αὐτὰ τὰ μεθόρια τῆς γενέσεως, κτλ.*

¹⁵ Cf. *Or.* 4.145B-c, 151c; Mau, *op. cit.* (see note 2) 68-76.

¹⁶ Cf. *Or.* 4.141B, 142A, *ad Ath.* 275B (implying the existence of lunar angels as well).

¹⁷ *De facie in orbe lunae* 943A-944E; cf. the analysis by G. Soury, *La démonologie de Plutarque* (Paris, "Les Belles Lettres," 1942) 177-210.

In *Or.* 4.154c, Julian suggests that Quirinus was really a god and not a daemon, because his soul was sent down to earth by Helios himself, though the *δαίμων ἀρχίως* which had intercourse with Rhea Silvia may have contributed to his physical being; cf. *Or.* 5.168A, the case of Attis, who was in one sense a demigod, since he belonged to the galaxy, but was in another sense a true god.

¹⁸ Those of Zeus and Rhea are fittingly placed side by side; cf. *Or.* 5.166B, 170d, 179d, where the Mother of the Gods is *σύνθρονος* or *σύνθωκος Διός*.

dine at the height of the air beneath the moon, that is, at the zenith of the sublunar sphere (ὅπ' αὐτὴν . . . τὴν σελήνην ἐπὶ μετεώρου τοῦ ἀέρος). The gods, whose beauty, it is said, can be apprehended only with the mind,¹⁹ are vaguely imagined as belonging to the κόσμος νοητός, while the caesars, who are rightly designated as heroes (312C, 315D), a lower order of beings, have not ascended beyond the sublunar region²⁰ above which the air borders upon the aether²¹ and where, somewhat like the souls in Plutarch (cf. note 17), they are to be purified, or rather, in comic analogy, to undergo an examination. They appear, then, just where we should look for them in the cosmology borrowed from Iamblichus. Romulus, like Heracles, has achieved divinity,²² and if some of the virtuous emperors long dead have not yet ascended to Olympus, as one might expect, this may be ascribed to dramatic exigencies, since it is necessary to bring them all together for the debate in which they are to participate. In view of the form and occasion of the satire, Kronos has a fairly important role to play, while there is obviously no place for such abstractions as the conceptual gods or the solar angels. Helios himself enters the scene at only one point (314A), where, however, he is called "my lord" (οὐμός δεσπότης) and champions Aurelian, founder of the cult of the Sol Invictus.

¹⁹ 308A: νῶ θεατόν. Geffcken unobtrusively corrected himself on this point. In his article in *NJA* (see note 1 above) 478, he wrote that Julian ". . . in witziger Parodie auf die Stoa die Schönheit der Göttinnen nur νῶ θεατόν nennt," while in *KJ* 149 appears: "Die Schönheit der Götter wird . . . νῶ θεατόν genannt, was keineswegs ein Spott auf die Stoa ist."

²⁰ The playful assertion that the dead emperors in limbo are supported by the περιφορά τῆς σελήνης (307C) may be compared with the reference to the independent motion of the moon in 131A; cf. also Plutarch, *De facie* 923C-D (the motion, κίνησις, περιφορά, of the moon, like that of a stone whirled in a sling, prevents it from falling); *ibid.* 938F-939A (its δίνη is so gentle that its inhabitants are in no danger of slipping or falling off). Περιφορά, it is true, sometimes appears in the sense of "sphere," but it would be fatal to the fun of the passage to insist on that meaning here, and the translators — Spanheim and Mrs. Wright as well as E. Talbot (Paris, 1863) — are agreed on the sense of "revolution."

²¹ Baron Spanheim (*op. cit.* [see note 2] 13 f.) believed that here the simpler distinction between air and aether is given, the intermediate fire being ignored (cf. *Or.* 4.143c, and the outline above), and this must be correct, for otherwise we should have to assign the moon to the zone of fire.

²² Cf. the allusions in other discourses to the ascent and deification of Heracles and Romulus: 4.154c (Πειστέον γὰρ οἶμαι τῇ φήμῃ; cf. *Caes.* 307B: ἡ θεία φήμη), 5.167A, 7.219B, 220A.