

In the satire called 'Symposion or Kronia' in the manuscripts, more commonly the 'Caesars,' the emperor Julian offers brief sketches of the emperors that preceded him. Although the historical information about each emperor is quite meager, it almost always corresponds closely to the salient characteristics or accomplishments of each emperor as he was remembered according to a broad historical tradition. This correspondence shows that Julian's opinions of his predecessors, far from being idiosyncratic, reflect what might be called "common knowledge" of these emperors.

The 'Caesars' has often been read as a window into the mind of Julian the man. Although Athanassiadi (*Julian and Hellenism*, 1981) and Bowersock (*Julian the Apostate*, 1978; "The Emperor Julian on his predecessors," *YCS* 1982: 159-72) draw sharply distinct portraits of Julian, both use the 'Caesars' to illuminate aspects of Julian's personal psychology, his aspirations and obsessions. Other studies of the dialogue focus on its literary and philosophical models, or on Julian's conception of kingship, as revealed in the speeches in which the five finalists put forth their claims to be voted best emperor by the gods. In contrast, little attention has been given to the brief remarks made about each emperor upon his entrance, even though these contain commentary on nearly every emperor in sequence from Julius Caesar to Magnentius.

These sketches yield a rather different portrait of Julian: instead of seeming intellectually isolated, his judgments are found to correspond with what would have been generally known about earlier Roman emperors. This pattern appears in his treatment of both those emperors who are excluded from the banquet and those who are admitted. Bad emperors do not even gain entrance (e.g. Gaius, Nero, Domitian, Commodus...); these are the emperors whose memory was condemned, and their banishment from the banquet shows that Julian, too, knew which emperors belonged on any list of bad rulers. Those admitted are subjected to abuse by Silenus; in each case, he singles out their one or two best-known characteristics. For example, Silenus mocks Claudius by asking why he is not accompanied by Narcissus, Pallas, and Messalina, reflecting the common memory of Claudius as a ruler dominated by his wives and freedmen. Again, in describing the tetrarchs as holding one another by the hand and singing in a chorus, Julian echoes the tetrarchic regime's ideology of harmony in the imperial college.

The historical traditions informing the imperial portraits in the 'Caesars' are scarcely profound; they are more likely to reflect "common knowledge" (the sources of which will be explored) than wide reading in Greek or Latin historical texts. Julian shows himself to have more in common with his own times than is often acknowledged.