

*C*ASSIUS DIO (53.27.2–3), THE PANTHEON AND THE ‘FORMER CAESAR’ (Ο ΠΡΟΤΕΡΟΣ ΚΑΙΣΑΡ)

Abstract:

Agrippa's Pantheon remains the subject of lively debates. A much-discussed passage is found in Cassius Dio's *Roman History* (53.27.2–3), which is most often treated as a stand-alone, self-explanatory whole. However, in order to be comprehensible, each text needs a broader range of reference points in order for meaning to be extracted. In this paper, I analyze part of that contextual spectrum (including Dio's attitude to the so-called imperial cult and the roles played in his narrative by the cults of both Augustus and Caesar), and I argue that we should view his account of the Pantheon with considerable caution. That account contains three different narrative threads: one based on the annalist tradition, but also one which drew on the author's own experiences, and one that constituted a literary and rhetorical overlay aimed at realizing the general objectives of the *Roman History*. In this account, the ‘former Caesar’ has been placed in between twice over: between the author's historical knowledge and his present circumstances, and between the realms of gods and humans. That imprecise nature of this expression was no accident. I believe the expression was not so much a reference to a specific statue as a figure of speech emphasizing the difference, fundamental from Dio's perspective, between the incumbent emperor and his deceased predecessor.

Keywords:

Roman religion, imperial cult, Augustus, Pantheon, Cassius Dio

Agrippa's Pantheon continues to be hotly debated.¹ A great deal has been said about it,² despite the fact all we have is a few textual sources from much later dates,³ the mutually contradictory interpretations of two excavation campaigns (1892–1893⁴ and 1996–1997⁵), a part of perhaps the original building from Augustus' times,⁶ and an inscription whose text is regarded as Agrippa's original one.⁷ Scrupulously reporting the discussions surrounding those three categories of sources would require much more than a single paper. In this article, I shall only focus on interpreting one passage from Cassius Dio's *Roman History* (53.27.2–3), one that is crucial for this debate and that is mired in controversy, but which is too often seen as an independent and self-evident whole. However, simply taking a few sentences out of context in order to submit them to philological torture cannot possibly lead to the truth being extracted from them; certainly not truth regarding the status of the statues described there, among which there was that of the 'former Caesar' (ὁ πρότερος Καῖσαρ).⁸

The orthodox view is that Agrippa's Pantheon was a temple to all the gods, where the statues of Mars, Venus and *divus Iulius* occupied a special place.⁹ This position is firmly entrenched in the research, but has been under attack for years from successive arguments wheeled out by Adam Ziolkowski, in whose opinion the original structure was a temple of Mars *in campo*, which, with the *aedes Neptuni*, commemorated the victory at Actium.¹⁰ One such important argument is the belief that exactly this state of affairs can be read in Dio's *Roman History* (53.27.2–3), which was written over two hundred years later. However, in order to extract that sense from the passage in question, it is first necessary to emendate it and discern the semantic force of the vocabulary used in it:

τό τε Πάνθειον ὠνομασμένον ἐξετέλεσε προσαγορεύεται δὲ οὕτω τάχα μὲν ὅτι πολλῶν θεῶν εἰκόνας ἐν τοῖς ἀγάλμασι, τῷ τε τοῦ Ἄρεως καὶ τῷ τῆς Ἀφροδίτης, ἔλαβεν, ὥς δὲ ἐγὼ νομίζω, ὅτι θολοειδὲς ὄν τῷ οὐρανῷ προσέοικεν. ἡβουλήθη μὲν οὖν ὁ Ἀγρίππας καὶ τὸν Αὔγουστον ἐνταῦθα ἰδρῦσαι, τὴν τε τοῦ ἔργου ἐπὶ κλησιν αὐτῷ δοῦναι· μὴ

¹ This paper was inspired by my discussions of the Pantheon with Adam Ziolkowski. I am also grateful to Anna Baziór for her linguistic insight.

² For the most extensive discussion of the Pantheon, see La Rocca 2015a; La Rocca 2015b is a summary in English.

³ For a list of major literary and epigraphic sources, see Licht 1968: 180–184.

⁴ Beltrami 1898; Laniani 1897: 479–481; see Licht 1968: 172–179.

⁵ Virgili, Battistelli 1999; Virgili 2009; cf. Ziolkowski 2009: 29–34.

⁶ Gruben, Gruben 1997.

⁷ Boatwright 2013; cf. Ziolkowski 2007: 465–468.

⁸ Koortbojian 2013: 134.

⁹ Thomas 2017.

¹⁰ Ziolkowski 1994; Ziolkowski 1999; Ziolkowski 2007; Ziolkowski 2009.

δεξαμένου δὲ αὐτοῦ μηδέτερον ἐκεῖ μὲν τοῦ προτέρου Καίσαρος, ἐν δὲ τῷ προνάῳ τοῦ τε Αὐγούστου καὶ ἑαυτοῦ ἀνδριάντας ἔστησε.¹¹

In the widely accepted Loeb translation, the key part of the passage runs as follows: ‘It has this name, perhaps because it received among the images which decorated it the statues of many gods, including Mars and Venus...’ In Ziolkowski’s opinion, Earnest Cary conveyed the place inaccurately, against the sense of the original.¹² Depending on how we understand ἐν τοῖς ἀγάλμασι (‘in the statues’ or ‘among the statues’), the translation might go: ‘It has this name perhaps because in the statues it received, that of Mars and that of Venus, there are representations of many gods’, or ‘It has this name perhaps because among the statues it received, that of Mars and that of Venus, there are representations of many gods’. Since neither is acceptable, the text of the original must be emended, and the ἐν replaced by an ἐπί, σύν or πρός. Then the translation could run, ‘It has this name perhaps because together with / besides the cult statues, that of Mars and that of Venus, it received representations of many gods.’¹³

While amending the interpretation of that pivotal sentence, Ziolkowski elaborates on the argument of Duncan Fishwick, who claimed that Julius Caesar’s statue in the Pantheon ‘was purely honorific like statues of Agrippa and Augustus in the *pronaos*’.¹⁴ In fact, Ziolkowski goes one step further and argues that in the original temple the only cult statues (ἀγάλματα) were those of Mars and Venus, next to which there stood non-cult images (εἰκόνας) of other gods and a statue (ἀνδριάς) of the ‘former Caesar’, which ‘was in the best of cases one of the *cultuslosen πολλῶν θεῶν εἰκόνας*’.¹⁵ However, in trying to rest his argument on the semantic difference between ἄγαλμα and εἰκών, be it real or supposed, he ignores the fact that Dio tellingly considers the statue of Caesar on the same level as the statues of Augustus and Agrippa, and thus not on the same level as the images of the other gods in the *cella*. I do not believe that, as yet, this antinomy has been convincingly explained.

Edmund Thomas rightly notes that treating the images of the many gods (πολλῶν θεῶν εἰκόνας) as merely complementary to the cult statues of Mars and

¹¹ Cited according to the Loeb edition (emphasis added). In Cary’s translation: ‘Also he [sc. Agrippa] completed the building called the Pantheon. It has this name, perhaps because it received among the images which decorated it the statues of many gods, including Mars and Venus; but my own opinion of the name is that, because of its vaulted roof, it resembles the heavens. Agrippa, for his part, wished to place a statue of Augustus there also and to bestow upon him the honour of having the structure named after him; but when the emperor would not accept either honour, he placed in the temple itself a statue of the former Caesar and in the ante-room statues of Augustus and himself.’

¹² Ziolkowski 2007: 469.

¹³ Ziolkowski 2009: 36.

¹⁴ Fishwick 1992: 331.

¹⁵ Ziolkowski 2007: 470.

Venus is a neat solution, but not an unproblematic one.¹⁶ First, the emendation is unjustified, as the manuscripts all agree on the text of the passage here. Second, it would make the name of the temple, formed from such less significant statues, quite incomprehensible. The whole passage *would* make perfect sense if Dio meant cult statues of many gods, among whom there were images of Mars and Venus: 'It is known by this name perhaps because it received images of many gods among the (cult?) statues, that of Mars and that of Venus.' However, all this manages to do is restart the problem, having only provided us with some semantic observations.

Ancient Greek and Latin both had many terms to refer to a variety of statues. The words used by the Romans included *statua*, *simulacrum*, *signum*, *colossus*, *imago*, *effigies*, and *species*, with images of gods usually called *simulacra* or *signa*. Ἀγάλματα are regarded as their Greek equivalent,¹⁷ ἀνδριάντες being the equivalent of *statuae* (meaning statues of human beings).¹⁸ However, those general principles should be constantly updated in the context of a given genre, specific text, an author's vocabulary, and many others, but particularly in the context of usage. Even a cursory semantic analysis of Dio's descriptions of statues of Caesar will demonstrate his usage was much less consistent than the authors of commentaries assume.

In 45 BCE, after the Battle of Munda, the senate granted Caesar multiple honours emphasizing his superhuman status. Those included an ivory statue of him (ἀνδριάντα αὐτοῦ ἐλεφάντιον), which was to be carried in the procession of statues of deities preceding all games at the circus (the *pompa circensis*).¹⁹ In January of 42 BCE it was decided the statue would be accompanied in the *pompa* by an image of Venus.²⁰ Cassius Dio refers to it as an ἄγαλμα – the word used most often for cult statues, even though earlier he calls it an ἀνδριάς, which would point to its honorific nature if the general principles were applied.

Another ivory image of Caesar, this one called an εἰκὼν by Dio, was placed in the temple to Quirinus, and it bore an inscription which read Θεῷ ἀνικῆτῳ (*deo invicto*).²¹ Suetonius even mentions statues in the plural,²² but, more importantly, the word he uses is *simulacra*, a Latin equivalent of the Greek ἀγάλματα, which fits the inscription well and, assuming the two terms are not in fact even partly synonymous, contradicts Dio's version.

¹⁶ Thomas 2017: 148–149.

¹⁷ Price 1984: 178: 'An *agalma* was an object, particularly in a temple, which was designed to glorify (*agallo*), and to translate it as "cult statue" misleadingly implies that all and only *agalmata* received cult.' E.g., the ἀγάλματα put up in Augustus' lifetime some place in Macedonia (in Kalamoto), in the 'most conspicuous' part of the agora was devoid of religious context; see Koonce 1988.

¹⁸ Stewart 2003: 20–28, 184–195.

¹⁹ Cass. Dio 43.45.2–3; see Cic. *Att.* 13.28; see Olszewski 2016: 166.

²⁰ Cass. Dio 47.18.3–4.

²¹ Cass. Dio 43.45.3; see Olszewski 2016: 167.

²² Suet. *Iul.* 76: *simulacra iuxta deos*; see App. *B Civ.* 2.106.

Midway through October of 44 BCE, Cicero addressed Mark Antony, to claim Caesar had been given not just a cult name (*divus Iulius*), a priest (*flamen*), a temple, and a sacred couch (*pulvinar*), but also a cult statue, which he called a *simulacrum*.²³ Now, what statue could he have meant? Considering Dio’s text, the only possibility is the ivory statue carried in the *pompa circensis* mentioned above, as that is the only image of Caesar the *Roman History* refers to as an ἄγαλμα. But such a conclusion cannot withstand comparison with other sources. Cult images of Caesar included the statue atop the column erected in the Forum Romanum on the spot where his corpse had been cremated,²⁴ as well as the statue set up by Augustus after the *ludi Victoriae Caesaris* and the appearance of a comet in the sky.²⁵ Dio simply claims Caesar had a bronze statue (χαλκῶν) in the temple of Venus Genetrix, which of course in no way precludes a cult function, and that Augustus adorned it with a star.²⁶ However, Suetonius and Pliny the Elder, who claims to draw on Augustus’ autobiography, both refer to the statue as a *simulacrum*,²⁷ that is, as a cult image.

The examples adduced above demonstrate Cassius Dio’s use of various terms referring to statues was by no means consistent; more importantly, if one were to arbitrarily assume the words did have a strictly defined religious significance (or, alternatively, lacked it), then the testimony of the *Roman History* would be contradicted by other, more reliable sources. That conclusion is also supported by examples from outside Dio’s text, which prove that calling a statue an εἰκών hardly ruled out it having a role in a cult.²⁸ In Pergamon, there were two cult images of Attalus III, referred to as εἰκών and ἄγαλμα,²⁹ with the different terms pointing, not to their religious standing, but rather to their location: one of the two stood in a square, and the other in a temple.³⁰

Unfortunately, we do not have at our disposal a comprehensive study analysing the terminology used to refer to various statues of emperors;³¹ we do

²³ Cic. *Phil.* 2.43.110; 2.43.111; Cass. Dio 44.6.4.

²⁴ Suet. *Iul.* 85: *postea solidam columnam prope viginti pedum lapidis Numidici in foro statuit [sc. plebs] inscriptisque ‘Parenti patriae’. apud eam longo tempore sacrificare, vota suscipere, controversias quasdam interposito per Caesarem iure iurando distrahere perseveravit*; cf. Cass. Dio 44.51.1 (an altar).

²⁵ Suet. *Iul.* 88; Verg. *Ecl.* 9.47; Sen. *QNat.* 7.17.2; *Obsequens* 68.

²⁶ Cass. Dio 45.7.1.

²⁷ Suet. *Iul.* 88; Plin. *HN* 2.94 (Aug. *Commentarii de vita sua* fr. 6 Malcovati); Serv. *Aen.* 8.681; *Aen.* 1.287; 6.790; *Ecl.* 9.47 (the Capitoline); see Olszewski 2016: 170–171.

²⁸ See Robert 1960.

²⁹ *OGIS* 332; *Syll.*³ 998.

³⁰ Price 1984: 178. The images of *divus Augustus*, Tiberius, and Livia which received cult in Gythium were referred to as εἰκόνας; see Oliver 1989: 58–65.

³¹ See the introductory remarks in Price 1984: 176–179; Pekáry 1985: 116–129. On the Latin terms, see Estienne 2010.

know, however, that antiquity had no concept of a *cult statue*,³² and our modern contrast between a *cult statue* and a *votive offering* is methodologically problematic,³³ since ultimately it was social practice that decided whether something was deemed a cult object, not its origin, location, form or attributes.³⁴ It also follows that religious standing of this kind need not have been permanent; rather, some statues, such as that of Caesar mentioned above, set up where his body had been cremated,³⁵ may only have received cult status for a while. Greek cult statues, which often continued to fulfil that role (as in the temple to Apollo on the Palatine Hill³⁶), tended to become mere objects of aesthetic contemplation. Finally, the relationship between the statues of emperors and images of gods in temples, often expressed through their separation in space, need not have been one of asymmetry, as oftentimes the deities merely accompanied the emperors as a visual guarantee of their standing being equal to that of gods.³⁷

Under those circumstances, arguments based on semantics are not as strong as it might seem; and they are certainly not conclusive. In order to find the *actual* 'exact significance' of the passage in question, we must return to Dio's text and embed it in its proper context. In the research published so far, the description of Agrippa's Pantheon has been treated as an integral whole, comprehensible on its own; yet, like any text, it actually needs a broader set of references for meaning to be extracted, and for it to be made clear. I do not intend to call on the whole range of possible contexts here, wishing instead to focus on three interrelated issues: on Dio's attitude to the so-called imperial cult,³⁸ on the role played in his narrative by Augustus, and on the cult of Caesar.

In Dio's eyes (at the time he was a senator and an important representative of the imperial administration³⁹) the Roman political system was in crisis. Successive emperors had shown no respect to the senate, whose members had not only lost their privileged standing, but had also been intimidated, unjustly accused, even killed. When combined with subverting Roman religious tradition and claims to superhuman status, those actions meant Dio had a low opinion of the Empire

³² Boschung 2007; Linant de Bellefonds et al. 2004; Bettinetti 2001: 25–63; Scheer 2000: 8–34; Donohue 1997. Mylonopoulos 2010: 4–6: 'The ambiguous modern terminology and the lack of clear-cut ancient definitions for religious statuary continue to create scholarly phantoms... An emic approach to defining cult images in both Greek and Roman cultural context, one based on the semantics of ancient terminology, seems practically impossible.'

³³ Mylonopoulos 2010.

³⁴ Hölscher 2005: 52; Romano 1980: 2.

³⁵ See n. 24 above.

³⁶ Lefèvre 1989.

³⁷ Steuernagel 2010; cf. Price 1984: 146–156; Nock 1930.

³⁸ On the concept of 'imperial cult', see Olszewski 2010.

³⁹ Swan 2004: 3–8; Millar 1964: 5–27.

in the late second and early third centuries CE.⁴⁰ Even so, in his *Roman History*, he also expounded on the principles of good government, exemplified, in his opinion, by the reign of Augustus. While not perfect, the first princeps emerges from Dio’s account as a model ruler, as one who put an end to civil war and laid the foundations for the growth of imperial Rome.⁴¹

The narrative of those books of the *Roman History* which dealt with Augustus’ life and work was subordinated to the author’s vision of Rome’s political history. It rested both on the annalist tradition and on Dio’s own experience and reflections, which for the most part were contained in fictional speeches.⁴² Those dealing with governance are to be found in the dialogue between Maecenas and Agrippa (52.2–40), assigned to 29 BCE.⁴³ In it, Agrippa had supposedly tried to convince Augustus to restore republican government,⁴⁴ while Maecenas (52.14–40) spoke in favour of monarchy, pointing out the emperor must co-operate with the senate. A good ruler was to exhibit moderation, which should stop him from looking down on the political elite and make him distance himself from the worship accorded him (52.35).⁴⁵ Thus he ought not to allow anyone, particularly the senate, to honour him excessively, be it by setting up gold or silver statues (εἰκόνες) or consecrating temples, since glory followed from good deeds and, being equated with the gods, from virtue. To a good ruler, the whole world became a precinct, with cities as his temples and people as statues (ἄνθρωποι ἀγάλματα).⁴⁶

Cassius Dio’s sceptical approach to expressions of imperial cult was probably due to the fact that towards the end of the second and at the beginning of the third century CE emperors repeatedly attempted to cross the boundary between their human nature and the divine realm, even in Rome itself.⁴⁷ Thus his definite disapproval of a cult in which Roman citizens worshipped the incumbent emperor and his belief that by accepting and promoting his own divinity such an emperor proved himself a megalomaniac and a tyrant. Pretensions to divine status, at times even from young and inexperienced emperors,⁴⁸ meant not just exalting them above the senators, but also the end of the illusion that the emperor ruled as the first citizen of Rome.

⁴⁰ Rontala 2016; Kemezis 2016: 90–149; Scott 2015.

⁴¹ Swan 2004: 17–36; Rich 1989.

⁴² De Blois 1999; Swan 1987.

⁴³ Markov 2013; Adler 2012; Kuhlmann 2010; Reinhold 1988: 165–210; Espinosa Ruiz 1982; Manuwald 1979: 21–26; Millar 1964: 102–118.

⁴⁴ McKechnie 1981.

⁴⁵ Fishwick 1990; Patkowski 1984.

⁴⁶ Cf. Tac. *Ann.* 4.38.1–2.

⁴⁷ Turcan 1978.

⁴⁸ E.g., Cass. Dio 73.15–16 (Commodus); see Speidel 1993; Beaujeu 1955: 400–409; Cass. Dio 80.11–12.2 (Elagabalus); see Turcan 1989: 174–180.

Dio's experience had a decisive influence on how he portrayed Augustus' attitude to his own cult and that of his late father: they were not only to function elsewhere, but also to involve people of a different standing. As Dio would have it, Augustus drew the fundamental distinction between the cults worshipped by Romans and non-Romans in the winter of 29 BCE, when he met envoys sent by the Asia province and Bithynia on his way back from Alexandria (51.20.6–7):

Καῖσαρ δὲ ἐν τούτῳ τὰ τε ἄλλα ἐχρημάτιζε, καὶ τεμένη τῇ τε Ῥώμῃ καὶ τῷ πατρὶ τῷ Καίσαρι, ἥρωα αὐτὸν Ἰούλιον ὀνομάσας, ἐν τε Ἐφέσῳ καὶ ἐν Νικαίᾳ γενέσθαι ἐφήκεν· αὐταὶ γὰρ τότε αἱ πόλεις ἐν τε τῇ Ἀσίᾳ καὶ ἐν τῇ Βιθυνίᾳ προετείμηντο. καὶ τούτους μὲν τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις τοῖς παρ' αὐτοῖς ἐποικοῦσι τιμὰν προσέταξε· τοῖς δὲ δὴ ξένοις, Ἑλληνὰς σφας ἐπικαλέσας, ἑαυτῷ τινα, τοῖς μὲν Ἀσιανοῖς ἐν Περγάμῳ τοῖς δὲ Βιθυνοῖς ἐν Νικομηδεῖᾳ, τεμενίσαι ἐπέτρεψε. καὶ τοῦτ' ἐκείθεν ἀρξάμενον καὶ ἐπ' ἄλλων αὐτοκρατόρων οὐ μόνον ἐν τοῖς Ἑλληνικοῖς ἔθνεσιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις ὅσα τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἀκούει, ἐγένετο.⁴⁹

In other words, Romans were to take part in the cult of the deceased Caesar, while all others (here called *Hellenes*) would directly worship the incumbent Roman emperor with the goddess Roma.⁵⁰ Augustus had special solutions in mind for the inhabitants of Italy and Rome itself (51.20.8):

ἐν γάρ τοι τῷ ἅστει αὐτῷ τῇ τε ἄλλῃ Ἰταλίᾳ οὐκ ἔστιν ὅστις τῶν καὶ ἐφ' ὅποσονοῦν λόγου τινὸς ἀξίων ἐτόλμησε τοῦτο ποιῆσαι· μεταλλάξαι μέντοι κἀνταῦθα τοῖς ὀρθῶς αὐταρχήσασιν ἄλλαι τε ἰσόθελι τιμαὶ δίδονται καὶ δὴ καὶ ἡρῶα ποιεῖται.⁵¹

Neither in Rome nor in Italy could the emperor be worshipped as a god in his lifetime. Temples (ἡρῶα) and divine honours (ἰσόθελι τιμαί) could only be accorded to those whose reign had been found good after their death.

Cassius Dio clearly wished to convince his third-century readers that Augustus never wanted Romans to see him as a god and that neither did he intend to establish his own cult.⁵² Forced into a compromise by the insistence of the 'Hellenes', he did consent to a joint cult with Roma, but only for non-Romans. Dio

⁴⁹ 'Caesar meanwhile conducted his other business and he let sanctuaries come into being, to [Thea] Roma and to his father Caesar, calling him Divus Iulius, in Ephesus and in Nicaea; for these were then the most prominent cities in Asia and in Bithynia respectively. These [sc. Roma and Caesar] he assigned to the Romans who lived among these people to pay honour to. But, as you would expect, he entrusted the foreigners, for whom he used the name Hellenes, with establishing some sanctuaries for himself, the Asians in Pergamum and the Bithynians in Nicomedia. From this point onward this happened also in the case of other rulers, not only among the Greek peoples but also among all other peoples who listen to the Romans' (transl. J.M. Madsen).

⁵⁰ Suet. *Aug.* 52; see Wardle 2012.

⁵¹ 'For note that in the city itself and the rest of Italy not a single person, no matter how great a reputation he might deserve, has dared to do this. Yet even there heroia are made for those who have ruled correctly once they have passed among other honours on a par with gods which are given them' (transl. J.M. Madsen).

⁵² Madsen 2016b.

also argued that Augustus had originally intended for Romans to worship those dead emperors that had been elevated to divine status by the senators. However, as Jesper Majbom Madsen rightly noted,⁵³ such reasoning is doubtful not only as regards the cult of *divus Iulius* in Asia Minor, but also with regard to that of Augustus in Italy and Rome itself.

We have many sources attesting to the cult of Augustus and Roma in Pergamon and Nicomedia,⁵⁴ but other than the passage just quoted there are none which confirm any cult of *divus Iulius* and Roma established by Augustus.⁵⁵ No trace remains of a temple in Nicaea.⁵⁶ We do know there had been an independent cult of Roma in Ephesus before then (most likely since the end of the second century BCE), which was even combined with a cult of P. Servilius Isauricus,⁵⁷ and a cult of Caesar. In fact, in 48 BCE a statue was put up for him as a θεός ἐπιφανής,⁵⁸ and in the late 40s or early 30s of the first century BCE he had a priest there, and a feast was held in honour of *divus Iulius*,⁵⁹ but no sources indicate they had a joint cult after 29 BCE.⁶⁰ Still, there was certainly a temple to Augustus in Ephesus.⁶¹ Coins dated to 19/18 BCE show a hexastyle with an inscription reading ‘ROM(ae) et AUGUST(o)’ and the legend ‘COM(mune) ASIAE’.⁶² In 5 BCE the first princeps authorized the construction of a wall around the temple of Artemis and the *Augusteum*.⁶³ While there may have been some temples to *divus Iulius* in the East (e.g. in Sparta⁶⁴ or in Corinth⁶⁵), and his cult existed in a few other places, it never became widespread.⁶⁶

That is puzzling, since cities, especially in the Eastern part of the Empire, not only competed in the cults of Roman emperors,⁶⁷ but also took pride in them. All their outward signs, such as temples, altars, feast days, re-organizing the calendar, were boasted of in special edicts recorded in inscriptions or on coins. Since Cassius Dio was born in Nicaea, the credibility of his account is defended by arguing that

⁵³ Madsen 2016a.

⁵⁴ Burrell 2004: 17–22, 147–152; Friesen 2001: 25–32; Hänlein-Schäfer 1985: 164–168; Mellor 1975: 13–16.

⁵⁵ Already Whittaker (1993: 95–96) doubted they existed.

⁵⁶ Hänlein-Schäfer 1985: 264; Mellor 1975: 142; see Price 1984: 266. For the cult of emperors (Hadrian and Septimius Severus, among others), see Burrell 2004: 163–165.

⁵⁷ Mellor 1975: 56–59, 217–218.

⁵⁸ *Syll.* 760.

⁵⁹ *I.Ephesos* 7.2, 4324; see Weinstock 1971: 402–404 (41 BCE) with North 1975: 176 (40–39 BCE); cf. Price 1984: 76–77.

⁶⁰ Hänlein-Schäfer 1985: 264–265.

⁶¹ Hänlein-Schäfer 1985: 168–172; cf. Price 1984: 140, 254; Burrell 2004: 59–60, 306.

⁶² BMC I Augustus 705–706, pl. 17.13.

⁶³ *CIL* III 7118 = *ILS* 97: *Dianae fanum et Augusteum muro*.

⁶⁴ Paus. 3.11.4.

⁶⁵ Hoskins Walbank 1996.

⁶⁶ Weinstock 1971: 403–410; cf. Fishwick 1987: 130; Hänlein-Schäfer 1985: 255–265.

⁶⁷ Tac. *Ann.* 4.55–56; see Price 1984: 126–131.

the cult of *divus Iulius* was presumably introduced in those cities, but soon disappeared,⁶⁸ which, however, seems unlikely. Maintaining the cult of emperors was the responsibility of both the Roman senate⁶⁹ and the inhabitants of the Empire. For example, Tiberius deprived Cyzicus of its free status for neglecting the cult of Augustus by not completing the construction of a temple to him,⁷⁰ and when it was decided that a temple to Tiberius, Livia and the senate would be built in Smyrna, the senate chose Valerius Naso by lot to be the legate in charge of its construction.⁷¹

The fact that this decision of Augustus was not implemented is disconcerting as well, because it was at his behest because it was at his behest that P. Vedius Pollio was active in the Eastern provinces at roughly that time (in the years 27–25 BCE). His task was to put in order the finances in the East, also regarding temples. It has even been suggested he may have supported or authorized initiatives to do with the cult of Augustus.⁷² After his return to Italy, Pollio himself commissioned with his own funds the temple *Caesari Augusto et coloniae Beneventanae* in his home town of Beneventum.⁷³ Vedius Pollio's actual mission is open to discussion, but his decisions concerning the temple personnel in Ephesus and festivals in the emperor's honour (*Caesarea*) were authorized by the first princeps.⁷⁴ Coins bearing Pollio's image (minted in Tralles) indicate he was a person of considerable importance.⁷⁵ Regardless of whether he had procuratorial rank or carried out specific *mandata* issued by the emperor, if a cult of *divus Iulius* and Roma had been being organized in Ephesus then, Pollio would have participated in those efforts.

If there is cause for doubt regarding Cassius Dio's depiction of Caesar's cult in Asia, sources on Augustus' cult in Italy clearly indicate Dio's account might not be entirely true.⁷⁶ Supported by Suetonius' authority,⁷⁷ his opinion seemed unquestionable. In order to prevent the account being contradicted by other sources, Lily Ross Taylor went so far as to propose it was not Augustus that was worshipped in Italian cities, but rather his *genius*.⁷⁸ Ittai Gradel finally disposed of this unconvincing theory by demonstrating that of the several known temples to Augustus built in Italy, seven were certainly constructed in his lifetime, with

⁶⁸ Price 1984: 77; Gradel 2002: 74.

⁶⁹ Várhelyi 2010: 72–77, 215–218.

⁷⁰ Tac. *Ann.* 4.36; Cass. Dio 57.24.6; cf. Aur. Victor, *Caes.* 1.6.

⁷¹ Tac. *Ann.* 4.56.

⁷² Scheerer 1989; cf. Price 1984: 69.

⁷³ *ILS* 109: P. Vedius P. Pollio / *Caesareum imp(eratori) Caesari Augusto / et coloniae Beneventanae*.

⁷⁴ *CIL* III 7124; *IEphesos* 1a, 18b; see *Monumentum Ephesenum* 96–98.

⁷⁵ Berdowski 2017–2018: 101–104.

⁷⁶ Only a few historians have rejected that claim based on epigraphical sources, among them Habicht 1973: 49–50; Hänlein-Schäfer 1985: 17–18.

⁷⁷ Suet. *Aug* 52: *Templa, quamvis sciret etiam proconsulibus decerni solere, in nulla tamen provincia nisi communi suo Romaeque nomine recepit. Nam in urbe quidem pertinacissime abstinuit hoc honore...*; see Wardle 2012.

⁷⁸ Taylor 1920; Taylor 1931 216–218.

only one or – at most – two certainly posthumous, while at least one in three of Augustus’ priests held his office during the first emperor’s life.⁷⁹ Gradel further argued that Dio’s account had been misunderstood, since he had only meant the state cult, which had in fact never been introduced either in Rome or in Italy, and not the civic cults.⁸⁰ Even then, Gradel added with candour, ‘Alternatively, Dio is simply wrong.’

Cassius Dio’s distinction between Romans and non-Romans was actually quite meaningless in the context of worshipping current and deceased emperors. Roman religion was local in character and it was the legal status of a place (that is, whether it was a *colonia*, a *municipium*, or a city with no defined Roman status) that shaped its religious life, even if it did not determine it wholly. The adoption and adaptation of Roman cults by local communities depended on the particular interests of the province, on the local perception of cultural and religious identity, and on the benefits expected.⁸¹ Within those communities, persons with Roman citizenship were supposed to simply acknowledge Roman deities, among which the cult of the reigning emperor was highly esteemed.⁸² Provincial assemblies (*consilia* and *κοινά*), which combined political functions with responsibility for that cult (which Dio classified as a cult for non-Romans) were presided over by *cives Romani*. If exceptions occurred, then it was only in poorly Romanized areas and only early in the existence of that cult.⁸³ The *lex Narbonensis* indicates each candidate to that high-prestige function was required to be a Roman citizen.⁸⁴ Thus the organization of the imperial cult under Augustus was nothing like what Dio described.

Distinguishing between a cult in which Roman citizens worshipped a dead emperor and a cult in which foreigners worshipped the ruling emperor was merely a literary device meant to persuade the reader that the first princeps never intended for Roman citizens to worship him as a god in his lifetime,⁸⁵ but then the consequences of Caracalla’s edict of 212 CE (the *constitutio Antoniniana*), which gave

⁷⁹ On the temples, see Hänlein-Schäfer 1985: 128–152 and Gradel 2002: 80–84; on the priests, Gradel 2002: 87, 376.

⁸⁰ Gradel 2002: 74–77. On private imperial cult in Rome, see e.g., Tac. *Ann.* 1.72 (*cultores Augusti*); *CIL* VI 905 (*Ti(berio) Augusto / Iuliae Augustae sacrum*); *CIL* VI 307 (*cultores Larum et imaginum Augusti*); see also Gradel 2002: 223–224; cf. Wojciechowski 2014: 156–161.

⁸¹ Beard, North, Price 1998: 314–318. Roman and non-Roman: Fishwick 2002a: 229–238.

⁸² See e.g., *ILS* 9495: *Augusto deo cives Romani qui Thinissunt negotiantur, curator L. Fabricio*. Gradel 2002: 339: ‘People cared little about their emperors once they left this world; and even when they did, the main, if indirect, target of their worship was usually the living emperor.’ In cult practice, sacrifices to the *genius* of the ruling emperor were more important than those to *divi*; e.g., Scheid 1998: 65–69 (no. 27), lines 11–12: [...] *Genio ipsius [sc. Neronis] taurum, divo Aug(usto) b(ovem) marem, divae Aug(ustae) vaccam, divo Claudio b(ovem) marem*; see Scheid 1999.

⁸³ See e.g., the tables in Friesen 1993: 172–208.

⁸⁴ *CIL* XII 6038 = *ILS* 6087; see Fishwick 2002b: 10–11.

⁸⁵ Madsen 2016a: 296–297.

citizenship to all the free inhabitants of the empire, would have meant Dio believed the ruling emperor ought not to be worshipped at all. It was for this reason that he argued, contradicting the facts, that Augustus had introduced a fundamental division of the imperial cult, and that no cult of his had existed in Italy in his lifetime.

The concept of imperial cult introduced in the *Roman History* was subordinate to the picture of history and the empire its author wanted to paint and wished to become real. Under those circumstances, do we have any grounds to trust him regarding Augustus' reaction to the offer of cult in Rome, the architectural form of Agrippa's temple, or the status of the statue of Caesar? The logic of his narrative makes him unreliable on the matter: how should we understand the request made by Agrippa, who had earlier tried to persuade Augustus into restoring the republic, to be granted permission to establish a temple to him in Rome? Owing to the extant replies of successors of Augustus and members of the imperial family to such requests – actual replies rather than their literary renderings – we know what a reply like that was expected to have contained: it required the person being honoured to limit the scope of the request considerably. Martin Percival Charlesworth somewhat infelicitously called it 'an Augustean formula' of refusal,⁸⁶ since he believed it was Augustus who provided the model on which such replies to requests to authorize cult were later based. Now, in my opinion, an analysis of the correspondence exchanged between Germanicus, Tiberius, Claudius, Caligula and some others with people who wished to honour them with cult, makes it only possible to claim they all expressed a concern to be placed correctly in the hierarchic world of gods and humans,⁸⁷ with Tiberius ranked below Augustus,⁸⁸ while Germanicus remained behind Tiberius and Livia.⁸⁹ Augustus should have responded analogously to Agrippa's request, suggesting in place of a statue and temple to himself, ones to Caesar – meaning, of course, a cult statue. Had it not been a cult statue of Augustus that Agrippa had meant to set up, would he have even asked permission?⁹⁰

The answer Dio would have Augustus give Agrippa not only displays a lack of narrative logic but also fails to tie in with what we know of the 'system of exchange' between the emperor and the institutions or the persons wishing to honour him.⁹¹ The architecture of Agrippa's Pantheon described in the *Roman History* is suspicious as well. Even without making any sweeping claims about its original shape,⁹² we can be certain the structure could not have been built

⁸⁶ Charlesworth 1939.

⁸⁷ Olszewski 2011.

⁸⁸ Oliver 1989: 61, no. 15, col. II, ll. 17–20.

⁸⁹ Oliver 1989: 66, no. 17, 34–39.

⁹⁰ Thomas 2017: 152–153.

⁹¹ Price 1984: 65–77.

⁹² Jones 2013: 30–31; cf. Ziolkowski 2009: 34–36.

in Augustus’ time for technical reasons—not in a form similar to the one it has today.⁹³ Architectural nuance was hardly crucial for either Cassius Dio or his readers. Unlike Livy or Tacitus, for whom places and buildings were an occasion to include allusions and historical references,⁹⁴ he exhibited no emotional attitude to the spaces of Rome. Even though he preferred Capua to the capital, he cannot be accused of unfamiliarity with the topography of either Italy⁹⁵ or Rome, and he did live in the city of Rome for over twenty years.⁹⁶ Still, in the *Roman History* he was more interested in people’s deeds and thoughts than in their settings, and the growth of Republican Rome as a city escaped his attention altogether. Accounts of architecture only begin to appear more often when the narrative enters the imperial period, but even then he focuses mostly on buildings which stayed intact to his day or which left behind visible remains.⁹⁷ It is hard to resist the feeling that his digression about the Pantheon (ὥς δὲ ἐγὼ νομίζω...) is simply a remark on a building he knew from autopsy: ‘but my own opinion of the name is that, because of its vaulted roof, it resembles the heavens’.⁹⁸ It fits in well with his lack of interest in architecture itself, which he thought less important than expressing his own feelings, as proven by comparing the famous description of Constantine II entering Rome in 337 CE⁹⁹ with Dio’s description of Septimius Severus doing just that in 193 CE.¹⁰⁰ More than a hundred years ago today, Duane Stuart wrote he was mostly interested in, and made use of, inscriptions Dio could read himself.¹⁰¹

If Dio’s version of Augustus’ reaction to the request to establish a temple to him in Rome, and the architecture of the Pantheon itself raise doubts, should we doubt the account of the statue of Caesar as well? By all means. Cassius Dio’s attitude to the matter was complex; after all, Caesar was a dictator who wanted to be equated with the gods¹⁰² and most likely was, already in his lifetime.¹⁰³ However,

⁹³ Grüner 2009.

⁹⁴ Spencer 2007; Ash 2007.

⁹⁵ Freyburger-Galland 1995.

⁹⁶ Gowing 2016.

⁹⁷ See e.g., Cass. Dio 37.27–28 (the Janiculum); 39.38 (the Theatre of Pompey); 51.22.3 (the temple of Venus); 53.27.2 (the Pantheon); 54.25.2 (the Theatre of Balbus); 55.8.4 (the *diribitorium*); 55.10.7 (the remains of a *naumachia* the Saepta).

⁹⁸ Cass. Dio 53.27.2 (transl. E. Cary). Dio was mostly likely present in Rome while the Pantheon was being renovated under Septimius Severus, although he does not mention that; he certainly was shortly after a new inscription (*CIL* VI 896) was emplaced, since in 204 CE he took part, as a member of Severus’ *consilium*, in the trial of Recius Constans, the governor of Sardinia (Cass. Dio 75.16.2–4; see 76.17.1), see Swan 2004: 2.

⁹⁹ Amm. Marc. 16.10.13–15.

¹⁰⁰ Cass. Dio [Xiph] 75[74].1.3–5; see Lusnia 2014: 29–30.

¹⁰¹ Stuart 1904.

¹⁰² Weinstock 1971; Gesche 1968; Dobesch 1966.

¹⁰³ Olszewski 2008.

Dio certainly does not emphasize Caesar's determination to achieve that status,¹⁰⁴ even noting he refused some of the honours offered him.¹⁰⁵ Even so, in the end he does imply that those honours could be seen by Caesar's contemporaries as evidence for pretensions to royalty.¹⁰⁶ Due to the controversy surrounding the evaluation of Caesar's actions, the decision to elevate him to divine status was only taken at the beginning of 42 BCE, when the triumvirs and the senate authorized all of his decrees and resolved to build him a temple.¹⁰⁷ It was then voted on and adopted by the *comitia*,¹⁰⁸ which ran counter to Dio's opinion that only the senate should decide on divine status of emperors.¹⁰⁹ Perhaps it is to situations such as this one that the remark in Maecenas' speech refers, namely that 'no man ever become a god by popular vote'.¹¹⁰ While Cassius Dio considered any judgment of the living Caesar difficult, the cult of the *divus Iulius* only played an instrumental role in the *Roman History*, its purpose being to highlight Augustus' model attitude to imperial cult.

To summarize the discussion so far, it needs to be said that our understanding of Dio's text (53.27.2–3) can profit much less from semantic analysis than from investigating the context or what was, within the methodology of history, commonly known as internal criticism. Even the cursory form of analysis such as I have carried out above indicates the passage in question gives rise to so many doubts that it cannot be regarded as a reliable source for Agrippa's Pantheon. I also believe it to contain three different narrative threads: one based on the annalist tradition, another drawing on the author's experiences, and finally a literary and rhetorical overtone expressing the general idea at the foundations of the *Roman History*. Owing to the annalist tradition, Dio was able to set the construction of the Pantheon in 25 BCE, that is, two years later than indicated by a cursory reading of the inscription on the entablature of the portico.¹¹¹ Knowledge of contemporary Rome, on the other hand, allowed him to list the statues of many gods, which included those of Mars and Venus, and to describe the interior. Then his desire to include Augustus' exemplary attitude to imperial cult made him insert Agrippa's request into the text, historically unlikely as it was. In that case, to which of those three threads ought to be assigned the information on the statue of the 'former Caesar'?

The mention appears in a sentence more rhetorical than its predecessors. Because of the antithetical construction of μὲν... δὲ..., the term ἀνδριάντας refers

¹⁰⁴ E.g., Cass. Dio 44.6.1; 44.6.3.

¹⁰⁵ E.g., Cass. Dio 43.14.7; 46.1; see North 1975: 172.

¹⁰⁶ Cass. Dio 43.15.1; 44.3; cf. Suet. *Iul.* 76.1.

¹⁰⁷ Cass. Dio 47.18.3–6; cf. App. *BC* 2.148, 616–617.

¹⁰⁸ *ILS* 72 (Aesernia): *Genio Deivi Iuli parentis patriae, quem senatus populusque Romanus in deorum numerum rettulit.*

¹⁰⁹ But see *HA, M. Ant. Phil.* 18.3; *Aur. Vict.* 16.15; *Epit. de Caes.* 16.14.

¹¹⁰ Cass. Dio 42.35.5: χειροτονητὸς δ' οὐδείς πώποτε θεὸς ἐγένετο.

¹¹¹ *CIL* VI 896; see Ziolkowski 2007: 465–468.

both to the statues of Augustus and Agrippa in the *pronaos*, and to the ‘former Caesar’. The logic of the narrative would require it to be called at least an εἰκών, as it was placed in the *cella* alongside the other images of deities, but Cassius Dio merely classifies it as an ἀνδριάς and places it not just between the realms of gods and humans, but also in ‘between’ the history recounted and his own present.

Attributing the ‘former Caesar’ with those traits may have resulted both from Dio’s ambivalent assessment of Caesar in the *Roman History*, and from his attitude to Caesar’s cult at the time the book was being written. *Divus Iulius* may have been a god, but he was not listed in official oaths¹¹² or taken into account in the rituals held by the Arval Brothers,¹¹³ and his *dies natalis* was omitted even in Philocalus’ calendar, which succeeded Dio by a century, even though it did list the *dii natales* of Cicero and Virgil.¹¹⁴ All the lists of Roman *divi* open with Augustus’ name¹¹⁵, meaning the cult of *divus Iulius* was at this time not part of the state cult; presumably he was also absent from the Pantheon that Dio knew.¹¹⁶ Thus it is possible that the expression ‘former Caesar’ not so much referred to an actual statue as it was a figure of speech intended to emphasize the difference in status, fundamental to Dio, between the ruling emperor (and his closest associate) on the one hand, and his deceased predecessor on the other.¹¹⁷

Thus from the passage in Cassius Dio (53.27.2–3) we learn that the building which was called the *Pantheon* in Rome in the early third century CE had been established by Agrippa. At the time, it contained the statues of many gods, among them Mars and Venus (and perhaps statues of Augustus and of its funder in the *pronaos*¹¹⁸). Contrary to what the author says, it cannot have originally been meant to serve as a temple to Augustus, and it is unlikely to have contained a statue of Caesar. At any rate, what point would there have been in erecting a ‘purely honorific’ statue of his in a sanctuary in the private gardens of Agrippa if a few years earlier Augustus had consecrated in the very heart of Rome—on the Forum Romanum—the imposing *aedes divi Iulii*, which witnessed the most important events in the life of the imperial family and in the political life of Rome?¹¹⁹

¹¹² Wissowa 1912: 79, 344.

¹¹³ Henzen 1874: 149; Scheid 1998: 379.

¹¹⁴ Saltzman 1990: 131–146.

¹¹⁵ Scheid 1998: 268–269.

¹¹⁶ The only social group to retain memory of him (*dies natalis*) was the Roman army: *Feriale Duranum* II 21; see Fink, Hoey, Snyder 1940: 184–185. The last *flamen divi Iulii* in Rome was D. Iunius M.f. Silanus Torquatus, who died in 64 CE; see Rüpke 2005: 1086 (no. 2137). The inscription from the Antonine period quoted in that context (*CIL* V 1812 = *ILS* 1122) refers to municipal cult; see Weinstock 1971: 407; cf. Rüpke 2005: 1144 (no. 2408). The last trace of the *ludi victoriae divi Caesaris* comes from Trajan’s time: *CIL* VI 37834.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Koortbojian 2013: 134–136.

¹¹⁸ See Cass. Dio 54.1.1 (22 BCE).

¹¹⁹ Sumi 2011; Phillips 2011.

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