

Maiestas Serena: Roman Court Cameos and Early Imperial Poetry and Panegyric*

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ABSTRACT

This article offers an account of Roman imperial cameos as an archaeological category, and argues that the production of large high-quality cameos was more restricted in time than currently allowed; that the controversial dates and subjects of individual cameos need to be set in the wider sequence of the main examples; and that early imperial praise poetry sits in relationship to court cameos in a way that can be usefully investigated around their shared concern to understand the particular character of imperial divinity. An Appendix gives details of forty-one examples illustrated and discussed.

Keywords: cameos; divine attributes; emperors; gems; portraits; praise poetry; panegyric

Early imperial cameos constitute the most sumptuous figured artefacts that survive from antiquity. The best were emphatically court objects, that is, high-end luxury objects with imperial subjects — Palatine cameos, one might say. They share a number of features with the poetry of their period, such as limited circulation and audience, technically brilliant and allusive elaboration, and vaulting panegyric of the ruler, unconcerned by traditional political sentiment or principate-speak. Among other things to do with chronology and identification, I would like to show that the poetry can be made to help more than it has previously in understanding these complex, highly-wrought objects. I will argue that both the cameos and the praise poetry were working to define aspects of the emperor's divinity. The emperor was a god — but what *kind* of god?

After he had been invited to dinner by the emperor (Domitian) in his new palace on the Palatine hill, one poet wrote an effusive verse thank-you letter (*eucharisticon*), praising both the emperor's grand new residence and, in the part quoted here, the person and divine character of the emperor (Statius, *Silvae* 4.2.38–45, trans. Coleman 1988):

Sed mihi non epulas Indisque innixa columnis
robora Maurorum famulasque ex ordine turmas,
40 ipsum, ipsum cupido tantum spectare vacavit

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tranquillum vultus et maiestate serena
 mulcentem radios summittentemque modeste
 fortunae vexilla suae; tamen ore nitebat
 dissimulatus honos. talem quoque barbarus hostis
 45 posset et ignotae conspectum agnoscere gentes.

But not on the feast, not on Moorish wood propped on Indian supports, not on fleets of servants in serried ranks: on him, on him alone had I leisure avidly to gaze, tranquil in his expression, with serene majesty tempering his radiance, and modestly dipping the standards of his eminence; yet the splendour that he tried to hide shone in his countenance. Such a man even a foreign foe and strange tribes could have recognized if they had seen him.

After admiring the architecture and the furniture, the poet is able to get close and observe the ruler's mien, his particular imperial habitus. Caesar's appearance and bearing are recognisable, even to foreigners. The imperial face is calm, radiant, restrained, its natural effulgence tempered by serene majesty (*maiestate serena*). Its concealed splendour (*dissimulatus honos*), however, still shines forth. Other poets, we will see, also dwell on the placid calm and tranquillity of the emperor's face. The visual description and definition of this special kind of *maiestas serena* were also the business of imperial cameos. Such placidity is not something we should have expected: it does not come out of the Hellenistic tradition to which the cameos might otherwise seem to owe so much.

Another poem adds a further element that was also important to the cameo-designers (Statius, *Silvae* 4.1.1–10, trans. Coleman 1988):

Laeta bis octonis accedit purpura fastis
 Caesaris insignemque aperit Germanicus annum,
 atque oritur cum sole novo, cum grandibus astris
 clarius ipse nitens et primo maior Eoo.
 5 exsultent leges Latiae, gaudete, curules,
 et septemgemino iactantior aethera pulset
 Roma iugo, plusque ante alias Evandrius arces
 collis ovet: subiere novi Palatia fasces
 et rediit bis saeptus honos precibusque receptis
 10 curia Caesareum gaudet vicisse pudorem.

Joyously the purple accrues to Caesar's twice eight consulships and Germanicus opens an illustrious year and rises with the new sun and with the great constellations, shining more brightly himself and mightier than the early morning star. Let the laws of Latium exult, rejoice ye curule seats, and let Rome with rising pride beat on the heavens with her sevenfold summits, and more than the other heights let Evander's hill rejoice: anew the fasces have entered the Palace, and our doubly-guarded privilege has returned, and the senate-house, its supplications accepted, rejoices to have prevailed over the modesty of Caesar.

The emperor's entry into his seventeenth consulship is celebrated: Caesar rises with the new day's sun and with the stars; he is greater than Dawn and outshines the stars. Yet he works with the laws of the land, with curule office-holders and with the correct number of fasces of high Roman office. He even displays traditional Augustan reluctance to take office that is overcome only by senatorial prayer. Although for the poets the emperor was a soaring divinity, they also attributed to him distinct Roman constitutional ideas and forms. This, too, we will see later, was an important part of early imperial cameo compositions — to make the combination of Olympian and office-holding aspects of the emperor's role seem natural.

After looking at the archaeology, chronology and identifications of the main series, my aim is to show how cameos, like the poetry, were engaged in a penetrating and unpredictable project to describe the particularities of the emperor's divine character, probably for a similar audience, namely the court, the Palatine and those who aspired to be close to it.¹ The poets and artists had superb full-blown Hellenistic literary and visual models before them, and we might have expected them to use those models. They took some components but largely chose other paths. The cameos also sit in interesting counterpoint to other imperial art, with their own premises, ideas, materials and styles. They combine their own 'majestic' classical manner with Hellenistic divinising paraphernalia and with Roman elements that anchor their contemporary meanings in the here-and-now. Universalising iconography, we will see, can refer to single precise situations.

The four sections of the article discuss the following: (I) general characteristics and the earlier study of imperial cameos; (II) the chronological shape of cameo production, with focus on its beginning and end, both of which were more sharply limited, it will be suggested, than traditional views allow; (III) the subjects, dates and sequence of the main surviving early imperial cameos, in which discussion is intended to resolve individual identifications and points of controversy around pieces that have mostly been looked at in isolation; and finally (IV) the relationship of court cameos to contemporary literary accounts of the emperor preserved in early imperial poetry. Details of the cameos discussed and illustrated are given in an Appendix that takes the form of a short catalogue whose running numbers (printed in bold, 1–41) are referred to throughout and where references to the essential studies of each item may be found, together with further arguments for dates and identifications when controversial. Included are most of the important early imperial cameos: all those with multi-figure compositions, nearly all those with two or more portraits, and a good sample of high-quality single-portrait cameos.

I IMPERIAL CAMEOS: AN INTRODUCTION

First, some general characteristics. Intaglios made from semi-precious stones, 'engraved gems' in modern archaeological parlance, have devices or figures cut *into* the stone, countersunk to produce a relief image when used as a seal in clay, plaster, or wax. Cameos had no such practical function — they were always essentially display pieces. They are two- or more-layered semi-precious stones, often sardonyx (a form of banded agate), with the image cut *in relief*, using the horizontal coloured bands or layers of the stone to create striking polychrome compositions. There are often, for example, three layers, with white portraits on a dark or black background and elements such as wreaths and clothes in an upper brown layer. Most or some of the layered raw stones for the cameos came, as ancient sources report, from India (Plin., *HN* 37.86–91). They were exported through trading centres on the west coast, such as Barygaza in Gujarat in the north and Muziris in Kerala in the south, and imported to the empire via the Red Sea ports such as Berenike, where agate, onyx and sardonyx cameo blanks have been excavated.² Gerhard Schmidt has recently sounded a note of caution, however, observing that although Roman buyers liked to think their stones came from far-remote

¹ On the early imperial court, Wallace-Hadrill 1996: 283–308 and Winterling 1999 are essential. See also Wallace-Hadrill 2011; 2018: 43–63; Patterson 2007; Sumi 2011.

² Wendrich *et al.* 2003: 60–1: 'Many pieces of onyx and sardonyx have been found at Berenike, and most of these are cut into flat, oval disks for cameos'; see also Sidebotham 2011: 236–8, on onyx and sardonyx blanks from Barygaza (without illustrations). Muziris is mentioned in Plin., *HN* 6.104, and the route is described in *Peripl. M. Rubr.* 53–7. Arabia, said by Pliny (*HN* 37.86–9) to be a source, was probably only a staging post for stones from India. Onyx and agate(?) sources in India: Casson 1989: 16–17, 206. Good discussion and further references in Platz-Horster 2012: 29–30 with nn. 128–30.

lands (India), banded agates of the kind required for large early imperial cameos have not actually been found in India, and that other sources mentioned by Pliny (such as Armenia) and others found in modern times (in Bulgaria/Thrace) should also be taken seriously.³ Glass cameos made from plain or artificially layered glass blanks formed in imitation of the sardonyx stones are usually of inferior quality, but a few were as brilliantly executed as those in semi-precious stones.⁴

While cameos came to carry a wide range of divine and mythological subjects, the group of exceptionally high-quality cameos with imperial subjects — that is, with portrait figures of the emperor and members of his family — stand apart as a distinct group in scale, technical refinement, and iconographical complexity. There are many single-portrait busts, usually in profile, often with divinising paraphernalia, a number of double portraits and a few quadruple portraits with two couples. There are also multi-figure and (pseudo)-action compositions with elaborate allegorical scenography that constitute a special part of the production.

We have little useful information, beyond the objects themselves, about their precise use and deployment.⁵ They were probably made as gifts and a medium of exchange and demonstration of dynastic loyalty within the imperial set — family, high courtiers, inner circle. While smaller, single-portrait cameos might have been mounted in gold rings and worn,⁶ the largest, grandest cameos probably started life as gifts for particular events and then came to function as display pieces at imperial occasions, such as the emperor's dinners.⁷

At the start of his long and interesting account of banded sardonyx (*HN* 37.85–91), Pliny the Elder reports that Claudius liked to *wear* sardonyx: 'velut cum Claudius Caesar smaragdus induebat vel sardonyches', 'as when Claudius Caesar took to wearing emeralds or sardonyxes' (*HN* 37.85). Since the author's focus is on the character and provenance of different stones, he has nothing to say on the subjects, imperial or otherwise, carved into the banded stones whose properties he describes so fully. A Greek epigram of the first century A.D. is explicit evidence for the function of such semi-precious stones as gifts at the court of Claudius and Nero, and is worth quoting (Leonidas of Alexandria, *Anth. Pal.* 6.329):

ἄλλος μὲν κρύσταλλον, ὁ δ' ἄργυρον, οἱ δὲ τοπάζους
πέμψουσιν, πλούτου δῶρα γενεθλίδια·
ἀλλ' ἴδ' Ἀγρειπίνη δύο δίστιχα μούνον ἰσώσας,
ἄρκουμαι δῶροις, ἃ φθόνος οὐ δαμάσει.

One will send a crystal, another silver, and others topazes — birthday gifts of the rich. But look, for Agrippina I made only two couplets equal;⁸ enough for me gifts that envy cannot harm.

The poet makes the familiar claim that his verses are more valuable than expensive artefacts, whether statues or monuments, as in Pindar and Horace, or, as here, gifts of silver and semi-precious stones (*krystallon*, rock-crystal, and *topazous*, topaz or peridot).⁹ It is obvious, and the literary conceit requires it, that the silver and semi-precious stones are not raw materials but elaborated artefacts. The poem does not

³ Schmidt in Giuliani 2010: 90–6. Armenia: Plin., *HN* 37.89.

⁴ Glass cameos: Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 326–9; Platz-Horster 2012: 33–5.

⁵ The excellent collection of ancient sources in Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 14–20 concerns gems, seals and rings. On the functions of the cameos, Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 146–7.

⁶ Platz-Horster 2012: 37–45.

⁷ 'Pure display pieces': Giuliani 2010: 41.

⁸ That is, like others of his poems in the *Palatine Anthology*, the couplets are isopsephic. The numerical value of all the letters (in the Greek letter-number numeral system) that make up the lines is the same in each of the two couplets. Cooley 2011: 190, J21C.

⁹ Pind., *Nem.* 5.1; Hor., *Carm.* 3.30. On this Leonidas, R. L. Hunter, *OCD*³ s.v. Leonidas of Alexandria. Topaz or peridot: Casson 1989: 94.

specify, but the stones would presumably be understood to include cameos as well as intaglios and ring-stones. This is useful evidence for the function in court circles of carved semi-precious stones as ‘sumptuous birthday gifts’, *πλούτου δῶρα γενεθλίδια*, as the poem’s resonant phrase has it.

Some famous sets of gems and rings (*dactyliothecae*) were dedicated in temples in the middle and late first century B.C., by Cn. Pompeius Magnus on the Capitol, by C. Julius Caesar in the temple of Venus Genetrix and by C. Claudius Marcellus, Augustus’ son-in-law, in the temple of Apollo Palatinus, but they were probably all pre-existing collections acquired as booty, as explicitly in the case of Pompeius’ dedication, formerly the property of Mithradates VI (Plin., *HN* 37.11). The cameos with imperial subjects investigated here cannot have been dedicated in temples or displayed in any permanent public setting for the simple reason that we still have them: in such public contexts they would have been dispersed at the end of antiquity. That is, the most important surviving imperial cameos have never been under the ground. They had a continued Palatine life in later antiquity when some were re-carved into contemporary imperial portraits, while others were doubtless re-purposed and re-named without any further working of the stone. The cameos (or some of them) passed from the palace in Rome to Constantinople in the fourth century, and from there back to Europe as Byzantine gifts and crusader booty in 1204. They then entered church collections (where a few remain), and from there most came eventually to modern museum collections, notably in Paris, Vienna and St Petersburg. Details of the long, well-documented lives of cameos, from Constantinople to the present, have been the subject of excellent research.¹⁰ Indeed, cameos as an ancient artefact-category have been superbly catalogued and presented in well-illustrated collections of the material.¹¹ There is, however, more to be said in terms of their chronological trajectory, individual identifications and visual rhetoric.

II BEGINNING AND END

It is well known that cameos were popular under the early empire, and cameo scholarship has long seen that there was a high point of production in the Julio-Claudian period.¹² I would like to show that they were, however, much more period-specific than currently thought. Both the start and the end of high-level cameo carving are controversial.

Beginning

Most experts in this field believe that large, high-quality cameos began in the Hellenistic period, specifically in early Ptolemaic Alexandria.¹³ There are three main exhibits for

¹⁰ See especially the detailed account of this aspect in Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 237–47 and 258–79.

¹¹ Outstanding museum and collection catalogues: Babelon 1897; Eichler and Kris 1927; Vollenweider and Avisseau-Broustet 2003; Platz-Horster 2012; and Henig and Molesworth 2018. Richter 1971 attempted an overview. Megow 1987 is the best single chronological account of the imperial cameos, from the first to the third centuries, but with not a few disputed dates and identifications and a strong model of stylistic development that is sometimes difficult to sustain. Meyer 2000 considers imperial cameos in case studies with other forms of early imperial art, but assessments are sometimes idiosyncratic. The single best volume on the whole subject is Zwierlein-Diehl 2007. The best illustrations are in Zwierlein-Diehl 2008. Essential for late antique cameos: Spier 2007. Much of value in Entwistle and Adams 2011. Recent large collection of material: Gołyźniak 2020.

¹² For example, Furtwängler 1900: III, 314–28; Megow 1987: I.

¹³ From Furtwängler 1900: III, 325, ‘Die ganze Klasse der an die Ptolemäerkunst anknüpfenden idealisierenden Porträtkameen ...’, to Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 59, ‘Kameen aus mehrschichtigen Lagensteinen wurden im ptolemäischen Alexandria des 3. Jahrhunderts v. Chr. erfunden’. Plantzos 1996b has been a near-solitary voice against this traditional consensus, which he argued is ill-supported by surviving evidence.

this view, but neither they nor this idea stand up well to scrutiny. The famous Gonzaga cameo in St Petersburg (19) has long been thought to be early Ptolemaic, and to represent Alexander and Olympias or Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II. It is a fabulous, thick, heavy-relief, four-layered stone (H: 15.7 cm), with a double portrait that breathes Olympian majesty. The male bust wears a seething snaky aegis and a helmet decorated with laurel and a snake. Although its early imperial date was demonstrated by Helmut Kyrieleis in 1971,¹⁴ many still consider it to be Ptolemaic or (late) Hellenistic.¹⁵ The woman however has a Julio-Claudian fashion hairstyle, and the man, in spite of his elaborate *anastolē* and long hair, has an Augustan profile. Since the portraits are unusual in not incorporating a precise recognisable ‘typological’ identity, they cannot be named with certainty, but this is hardly enough to outweigh the woman’s tightly-curled early imperial hairstyle and the man’s early imperial profile (tall, ageless, impassive — as, for example, in the coin illustrated beneath 20). We will return to this cameo later, in its probable context, in the Tiberian period.

The so-called ‘Cameo of the Ptolemies’ (‘Ptolemäer-Kameo’) in Vienna (20) has to go with the Gonzaga cameo. Kyrieleis, who first correctly demonstrated the early imperial character of the Gonzaga, continued to insist that the Vienna cameo is early Ptolemaic,¹⁶ and its Hellenistic date remains widely accepted today, as well as the identification of the couple as Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II.¹⁷ But it, too, from its technique and tall Augustan profiles, belongs most easily in the early imperial period. There is certainly nothing else like it in the third century B.C.¹⁸

The third exhibit is the famous Tazza Farnese now in Naples.¹⁹ Since all seven of its figures are divinities, it is not datable by portrait identification. It has moved around in scholarship from the early Ptolemaic period to the reign of Cleopatra VII and later. It is a brilliant allegorical Hellenistic-style vision of the Nile valley’s prosperity: Triptolemos strides across the centre, Nile watches with a huge horn of plenty and Isis reclines below on a sphinx flanked by reclining seasons, while ‘blowing’ winds fly across the sky above. The visual ideas may be Ptolemaic, but from its technique the cameo dish might as easily — in fact, more likely — have been carved in the early imperial period. The allegorical ideas would be as welcome then as under the Ptolemies.²⁰ The sumptuous object would celebrate the richness and fertile abundance of Egypt as part of the emperor’s very own personal domain.

The cameo technique *was* indeed known in the Hellenistic period, but with these three exceptional exhibits set aside, the only certainly datable Hellenistic cameos are of a very different character. They are a series of small glass cameo portraits of the second and first centuries B.C., representing late Ptolemaic kings (1–3).²¹ They may have imitated higher-quality stone cameos produced for the Ptolemaic court, but they are modest in scale, technique and aspiration and were probably intended for wide distribution. There are a few sardonyx portrait cameos of some ambition that have been placed in the later

¹⁴ Kyrieleis 1971.

¹⁵ Recently, for example, Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II: Arsenyeva 2013: 127–34; Galbois 2018: 190–1. Late Hellenistic: Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 62–5, fig. 221.

¹⁶ Kyrieleis 1975: 19 and 81.

¹⁷ Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 60, with tabulation of previous scholarly opinion. Most recently, for example, Schollmeyer 2017: 8–12 and Galbois 2018: 190–1, identify the couple as Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II, without hesitation. See Appendix 20 for this and other scholarly views.

¹⁸ The large stucco cast (W: 15 cm) of a diademed early Ptolemaic royal pair in Alexandria need hardly be of a cameo. It is as likely, or more likely, to have been moulded from a silver *emblema*; so Plantzos 1996b: 122–3. Further literature: Kyrieleis 1975: 6–7, pl. 6.3; Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 371, under fig. 219.

¹⁹ Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 66–7, 372–3, figs. 231–2, ‘um 100 v. Chr.’.

²⁰ Recent scholarship favours a later date: La Rocca 1984 (first century B.C.); Pollini 1992 (Augustan); Fischer 2017 (Augustan).

²¹ Plantzos 1996a.

second and first century B.C., but their dates depend on optimistic identifications with particular Hellenistic rulers that are without foundation — all are likely to be considerably later.²²

There are two further powerful arguments for a late start of high-quality cameo production that are entirely independent of each other. Firstly, Dimitris Plantzos investigated the evidence of dated and published Hellenistic tomb finds in search of cameos dated to the Hellenistic period and could not find any before the later second century B.C.²³ That is, there are no surviving cameos of any kind among the (often rich) grave goods from a large number of datable early and middle-Hellenistic tombs. A second argument seems not to have been considered before. Among the imposing production of high-quality late republican portrait intaglios, which survive in abundance and were collected in a remarkable two-volume study by Marie-Louise Vollenweider,²⁴ there are no identified and dated surviving late republican cameo portraits. We have, for example, identifiable and datable intaglio gem-portraits of good quality that represent Cn. Pompeius, C. Julius Caesar, Marcus Brutus, Sextus Pompeius and Marcus Antonius, which can be recognised by their use of portrait types known also from late republican coins.²⁵ There are, however, no surviving cameo portraits of these figures that can be agreed on verifiable criteria (except for one, of the 30s B.C., to be discussed shortly). These are two strong independent arguments: no cameos among Hellenistic grave-goods, and no cameo portraits among the abundant glyptic production for the great *imperatores* of the last generation of the Roman Republic.

There is one modest and perhaps revealing exception that serves the traditional narrative less well than has been thought. A cameo, now lost but preserved in a cast, shows a profile portrait head almost certainly of Marcus Antonius wearing the ram's horn(s) of Ammon.²⁶ It has been taken as an Alexandrian missing link between a grand Ptolemaic cameo production and Augustan cameos. The portrait is, however, small (H: 1.00 cm) and of pedestrian quality and imprecise detail. In these respects it sits well within the tradition of late Ptolemaic royal portraits in the glass cameos mentioned above, which continue down to the mid-first century B.C. This solitary Antonius cameo does not perform well as a forerunner of Augustan cameo production of whose scale and technical brilliance it contains no signs.

There are some unidentified portrait cameos that have been dated stylistically to the late republican period, but none can be confidently identified by their portraits or dated more precisely than the late first century B.C. or early first century A.D.²⁷ There are many impressive *non-portrait* cameos often considered to belong before the Augustan period,

²² For a good conspectus of such supposedly late Hellenistic cameos, Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 65–6, 371–2, figs. 224–30. Their proposed identifications can only be tentative when the basic category of subject (king/queen or god/hero) is in several instances unclear.

²³ Plantzos 1996b: 121–2 and 128–30.

²⁴ Vollenweider 1972–74.

²⁵ Their intaglio portraits are well studied and illustrated together with the related coin portrait types by Vollenweider 1972–74: 106–90, pls. 71 and 73 (Cn. Pompeius), 75 and 78–86 (Caesar), 93–8 (Brutus), 111, 112.4, 116, 121 (Sextus Pompeius) and 132–7 (Antonius). Enough of the gem identifications are sufficiently certain to make this point.

²⁶ Vollenweider 1972–74: 187–8: pl. 136.4; Megow 1987: 2. The identifications of Marcus Antonius in two other diverse portrait cameos are, alas, fragile — that is, they lack a verifiable typological connection to Antonius' portrait type on coins: (1) Megow 1985: 456–88, figs. 3–7 (Berlin); (2) Henig 2015–16: 22–3, fig. 1 (Stockholm). On the Berlin cameo, see the next note.

²⁷ Some examples: (1) Double portrait of prince with eagle-helmet and wife in Berlin, Platz-Horster 2012: 67–8, no. 31 ('Ptolemais, Mitte 1. Jh. v. Chr.; Überarbeitung: Römisch, nach 30 v. Chr.');

(2) Older balding male portrait head in Cabinet des Médailles, Paris: Vollenweider and Avisseau-Broustet 2003: 28–9, no. 18 (60–30 B.C.); (3–5) Three cameos of the same youth with sideburns in Cabinet des Médailles, Paris (Vollenweider and Avisseau-Broustet 2003: 45–8, nos. 47–9 (44–30 B.C.)), mis-identified as Octavian, is better a mid-Augustan prince in a type that almost certainly represents Gaius Caesar (Boschung 1993a: 53–4); (6) High-quality cameo

in the second and first centuries B.C. Some are of very high quality, and some are signed by their makers — for example, Athenion, Protarchos, Sostratos and Tryphon. The beginning of their sequence has been placed by Vollenweider (and others) in Rome and, purely on stylistic grounds, back in the early first century B.C.²⁸ Some of these cameos could indeed have been this early, but it is difficult to demonstrate and does not affect the argument made here about portrait and ‘historiated’ cameos.²⁹ High quality and strong Hellenistic style are insufficient evidence from which to deduce a Hellenistic date: some of the carvers of such strongly Hellenistic-looking non-portrait cameos were certainly of the early imperial period — most obviously those of the Augustan Dioskourides and his sons working in the Tiberian period.³⁰ Neither style nor identifications as Hellenistic kings (n. 22) are reliable evidence for the early dates, sometimes as early as the third century B.C., proposed for many high-quality cameos.³¹

The broad implications are clear: the cameo technique was known in the Hellenistic period, from the later second century B.C., but it was little developed and was not widely taken up for large, high-quality portraits until the Augustan period. The date at which cameos with mythological and divine subjects began should remain for the moment *sub iudice*.

Middle and End

What, then, of the middle and the end of imperial cameo production? These also may not be quite what they seem. After the Julio-Claudian material, the first great modern expert on ancient gems, Adolf Furtwängler, found ‘not a single outstanding cameo to mention’. ‘The whole category [sc. of high-quality portrait cameos]’, he continued, ‘was peculiar to the Julio-Claudian dynasty and died out with it.’³² Later, some scholars dated a series of cameos to the period around A.D. 200 and posited a ‘Severan renaissance’.³³ Wolf-Rüdiger Megow’s great monograph of 1987 noted the Julio-Claudian flourish of cameo production, but in place of a century’s gap before production picked up again under the Severans, he described a long stylistic development of imperial cameos, from Augustus to the Severans (after which there was, all agree, a long gap). Following a short but influential monograph by Gerda Bruns in 1948, several scholars have dated major examples in the early fourth century and later.³⁴ There are interesting questions here, both in the middle and at the end of cameo production and use.

portrait bust of older ‘republican-looking’ male in Alnwick Castle: Vollenweider 1966: 78–9, 123, pl. 91.3–4 (Tiberian, based on an old portrait of the early or middle first century B.C.).

²⁸ Vollenweider 1966: 23–46; Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 68–70, with material gathered on pls. 60–1, figs. 234–42, 442 (the last, the cameo by Tryphon in Boston, is dated there ‘mid-first century B.C.’); Platz-Horster 2012: 51–64, no. 1 (Medusa head in three-quarter view, from Petescia find, ‘late second century B.C.’) and nos. 19–27 (cameos with various mythological subjects, dated from the second to later first century B.C.).

²⁹ Note the carefully constructed Hellenistic chronology based on the changing (but un-dated) forms of gold finger-rings, together with the useful discussion of the chronological implications of the Petescia group from Umbria and the group from the ‘Girl’s Tomb’ from the environs of Rome, both from hoards closed in the early first century A.D., both now in Berlin: Platz-Horster 2012: 37–59.

³⁰ Dioskourides and sons (Eutyches, Herophilos and Hyllos): Vollenweider 1966: 56–73; Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 114–22, figs. 462 (Herakles cameo by Dioskourides) and 475 (satyr cameo by Hyllos). Both the signed Herakles and satyr cameos are in strong Hellenistic styles that evidently continued in this medium into the first century A.D. Dioskourides and Hyllos were among the most prolific signing gem-carvers: each signed seven or eight varied intaglio gems and one (mythological) cameo — the workshop was clearly diversified. Helpful list of signed gems and cameos in Vollenweider 1966: 139–41. The Herophilos cameo (18) is the only surviving imperial cameo that was signed.

³¹ For example, Babelon 1897: nos. 111 (Hermes, ‘third century B.C.’) and 222 (Alexander-Ammon), ‘c. 325 B.C.’, repeated on their display labels in the Cabinet des Médailles in Paris until its recent closure for renovation; Neverov 1971: nos. 4 (Medusa head) and 5 (Zeus head), both said to be of the third century B.C.

³² Furtwängler 1900: III, 325.

³³ Especially Möbius 1948/49; 1968.

³⁴ Bruns 1948; Zadoks 1958; 1966; Megow 2011; Halbertsma 2015; 2017.

Two simple charts may bring some perspective. Crude numbers by reign show that most surviving portrait cameos belong in the first century A.D. (Chart 1). Annualised numbers, that is, surviving cameos per year of each reign, show an even larger proportion in the same period (Chart 2). (The start date is put arbitrarily at *c.* 20 B.C.; none are precisely datable within the Augustan period until the Gemma Augustea (11) of A.D. 12–14.) Production slows sharply after Nero. There are a few good-quality cameos for Domitian, Trajan and Hadrian, but the larger pieces and the sheer court-quality are mostly gone.³⁵ The most ambitious second-century piece (W: 21.5 cm), now in Berlin, shows a short-bearded emperor (Hadrian?), carrying a palladion in a chariot drawn by two eagles and being crowned by a goddess, but it is badly damaged and difficult to read. Its date has swung between the first and third centuries: most likely it was a mid-first-century cameo re-carved in the second century.³⁶ The charts show some continued activity, but it was a pale shadow of Julio-Claudian production. There are some pieces in the Antonine-Severan period, and although one or two are of high quality they hardly constitute a renaissance.³⁷ Others were clearly re-worked from probably much earlier stones, most notably the large cameo in Kassel of Julia Domna as Victoria.³⁸ In the short reign of Caracalla, the chart (Chart 2) shows a short spike of some twelve cameos in six years for the pugnacious Hercules-styled image of this emperor, but they are mostly modest items for wider circulation rather than court-cabinet pieces (and at their low craft level it is difficult to be sure if they are all certainly Caracallas).³⁹ This is, of course, an interesting phenomenon — wider distribution of medium- and low-grade imperial cameos — but something quite different from the one under investigation. The charts, if anything, underplay the time-specific nature of high-level imperial cameo production. They make the basic point that imperial cameos from Augustus to Nero were *more* than at any other time. What they do not show is that they were also much *better* — that is, of a much higher technical sophistication.

The end of imperial cameo production is controversial. Only a brief sketch is needed here. Numbers clearly declined drastically after the A.D. 230s, but old cameos continued to be prized in the later third and fourth centuries. They were conserved in the Palatine collections, and their elevated portraits and open-ended scenography, we may imagine, could be re-configured and re-interpreted without any intervention on the stones. Some cameos were re-cut, whether to repair damage or to make new subjects.⁴⁰ Two clear examples may be mentioned to show the careful, tentative, modest interventions that were undertaken to update portrait subjects: (1) on a cameo in the Hermitage (16), in which Livia and Augustus faced each other in profile with a floating bust of the ‘young’ Tiberius between them, Livia’s hairstyle has been re-carved into that of a third-century empress. The Augustus and Tiberius, we should assume, were simply re-named verbally,

³⁵ Domitian in Minden, re-worked from a portrait of Nero: Megow 1987: 218–20, A 107, pl. 36.4. Trajan in Paris: Megow 1987: 229–30, A 126, pl. 41.7. Hadrian, next note.

³⁶ Hadrian in Berlin: Megow 1987: 230–2, A 128, pl. 42.11–12 and 43.1; Platz-Horster 2012: 80–2, no. 57, mid-first century, re-worked A.D. 117–138.

³⁷ One medium-sized high-quality, newly carved Severan cameo is a three-layered sardonyx in the Cabinet des Médailles in Paris (W: 11.2 cm): Megow 1987: 128, 239–40, A 143, pl. 48.11; Vollenweider and Avisseau-Broustet 2003: 175–6, no. 223. It shows a family group of Septimius and Julia Domna facing Caracalla and Geta, after A.D. 197/8 when Caracalla was promoted to Augustus, because his bust wears the aegis (Septimius wears the cuirass).

³⁸ Kassel Victoria, sardonyx of several layers (H: 16.3 cm): Megow 1987: 116–22, 270–1, B 52, pls. 46.8, 47.2, and 48.12 (re-worked from Faustina the Younger); Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 202, 454, fig. 753; Alexandridis 2004: 205–6, no. 233, pl. 60 (as likely re-worked from a plain Victoria as an earlier portrait).

³⁹ For these dozen smaller cameo portraits of Caracalla: Megow 1987: 241–6, A 146–51, 157–62, pls. 49–50.

⁴⁰ Good general discussions of re-working: Megow 1987: 122–4; 2011: 221–3. Re-cutting is more prevalent among surviving imperial cameos than currently allowed. See examples here, nn. 35, 36, 38, 47, 61, 89 and 90.

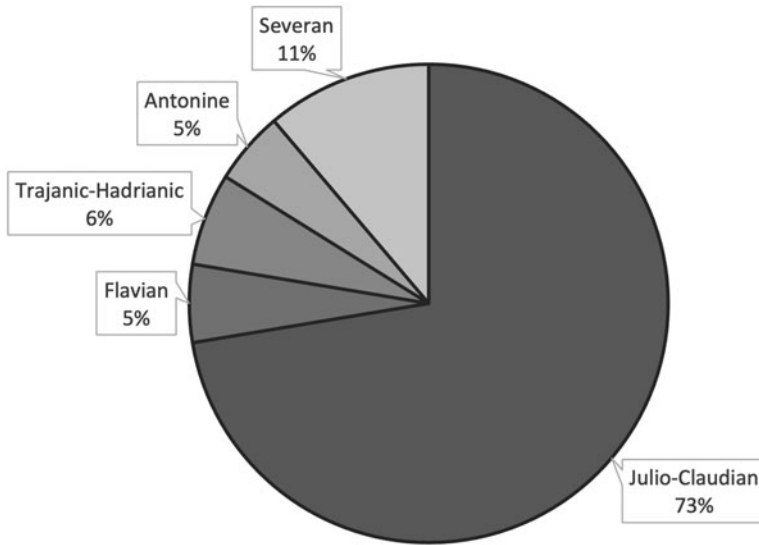


CHART 1. Surviving imperial portrait cameos by dynasty (to the third century).

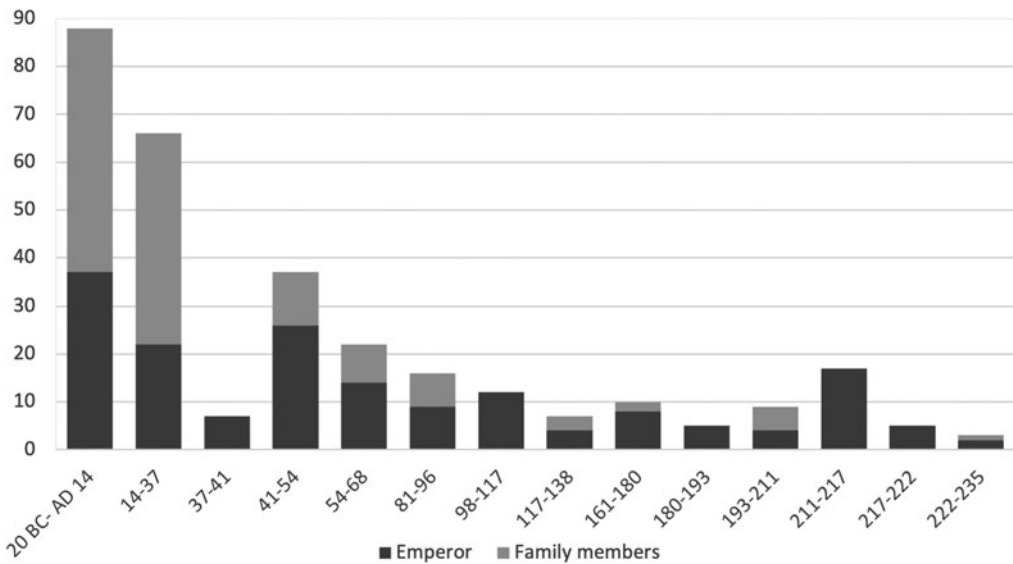


CHART 2. Surviving imperial portrait cameos per year of each reign (to the third century).

without physical adjustment. And (2) on the Grand Camée in Paris (21), the enthroned Tiberius in the centre and the standing princess in front of him have re-cut hairstyles. These were slight, cautious interventions on the greatest showpiece in the imperial cabinet, probably to re-configure the scene to a contemporary third- or early fourth-century situation.⁴¹

⁴¹ Giuliani 2010: 17–19, n. 18; and Schmidt in Giuliani 2010: 97–100.

But do we have surviving *newly carved* fourth-century pieces of scale and quality? Examples have been widely found and believed. There are four or five main pieces to consider: (1) the Belgrade Cameo, a large cameo fragment with part of a battle scene;⁴² (2) the ‘Triumph of Licinius’ cameo in Paris;⁴³ (3) the Rothschild Cameo, often said to be of Honorius;⁴⁴ (4) the Ada Cameo in Trier (or ‘Eagle Cameo with family of Constantine’) (34); and (5) the Great Cameo of the Hague formerly in Utrecht, now in Leiden (32), widely interpreted as representing the family of Constantine. The Belgrade fragment, with a royal warrior riding down scattered barbarians, may be late, but it has no portrait, is not precisely datable, and probably comes from a different category of artefact from those under discussion.⁴⁵ The ‘Licinius’ cameo in Paris is also most likely late antique: it has an emperor in a frontal chariot riding over crushed barbarians rendered in a curious ‘rubbery’ figure-style, and the emperor seems to wear a fourth-century imperial diadem (so post-324).⁴⁶ The Rothschild Cameo has a frontal imperial pair whose emperor has a christogram plaque centred in his laurel wreath. It was therefore late antique in its current form, but there are clear signs that it has been cut down from a cameo of the mid-first century A.D.⁴⁷

In style, the cameos with imperial family groups in Leiden (32) and Trier (34) seem to stand outside the main Julio-Claudian production. They are indeed different in technical allure, but does that mean they are late antique? Both have family configurations perhaps suitable, or at least possible, for Constantine’s family, but both cameo groups are in fact equally or better suited to Julio-Claudian family constellations. They also have a few strong diagnostic features of the earlier period. The Trier and Leiden cameos will be discussed later in the contexts in which they might better be placed.

There are, then, remarkably few surviving large cameos that were certainly newly carved in the fourth century — few indeed after Nero. Taken with the earlier arguments about the beginning of production, we might say that high-quality cameos with imperial subjects, even more than has been realised, were essentially an Augustan and Julio-Claudian phenomenon.⁴⁸

III SEQUENCE: AUGUSTUS TO NERO

The main figures on surviving imperial cameos from Augustus to Nero can for the most part be identified and so broadly dated in a clear sequence by their use of certainly

⁴² Belgrade cameo: Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 205, 455, fig. 757; Megow 2011: 187–91, no. 3, figs. 16–17.

⁴³ ‘Licinius’ cameo: Vollenweider and Avisseau-Broustet 2003: 207–8, no. 267.

⁴⁴ Rothschild cameo: Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 204, 455, fig. 756.

⁴⁵ A. Krug, in Entwistle and Adams 2011: 186–92, shows from its scale that the Belgrade fragment probably belonged to some kind of large show-piece platter. We may note that the diademed rider has long, Alexander-like hair and can hardly be a fourth-century emperor.

⁴⁶ Fullest recent study of the ‘Licinius’ cameo: Megow 2011: 192–6, no. 5, fig. 19 (late Constantinian).

⁴⁷ Re-cutting of Rothschild Cameo from first-century piece: Alexandridis 2004: 155, no. 96, pl. 56, who sees Caligula and a sister under the late antique portraits; Megow 2011: 213–17, no. 9, fig. 36, also sees the cameo ‘rather in the time of Caligula than in that of Claudius’ (p. 217). More can be said. The female figure once had a tightly waved Claudian hairstyle (similar but not identical to that of 31) that has been clumsily re-cut with a late antique crown-braid, and the face seems reduced in size. The emperor has large ears, a long straight nose and a low, centre-parted fringe that look as if the portrait has been cut down from a fuller portrait of Nero’s second type (here n. 82). The reduction is obvious in the lower face where the cheeks and especially the chin have been diminished to near-absurdity. Without autopsy, this re-cutting is difficult to assess precisely, but a preliminary suggestion would be that these fourth-century portraits have been re-cut from a cameo of the mid-first century A.D. showing Nero, probably with his mother Agrippina in the period A.D. 54–59.

⁴⁸ A recent study of Roman cameo-glass products shows a similar tight chronological range in the early imperial period: Roberts 2010: 9 and 23, where seventy of the eighty-two pieces in the British Museum are dated in the last two decades of the first century B.C. and first decades of the first century A.D.

identifiable portrait models or types known from coins and series of portraits in the round.⁴⁹ Larger multi-figure cameos can sometimes also be dated with great precision by the configuration of family members present. Identifications and dates then require balancing of cameo norms, likely historical configurations, and imperial portrait typology.

Formats and Attributes

Some large, special cameos have multi-figure compositions, usually static ensembles that merely imply a narrative (10, 11, 21, 24, 32, 34–5 and 39–41). Their emphasis is for the most part on the ruler in majesty, configured in different ways. The majority of cameos have a single imperial bust, and several have double portraits of the emperor with his wife (or an heir) (12, 13 and 19–20). The Gemma Claudia in Vienna is a rare quadruple portrait (33). In both the bust portraits and the full-figure compositions, the emperor may carry one or more of a range of elevating attributes. The imperial office had no royal insignia, so its unique powers were often described in divine terms. Most commonly the emperor has the snake-edged aegis of Jupiter, sometimes with a thunderbolt or eagle (30, 33 and 39), to represent his supreme god-like power in Olympian terms.⁵⁰ Never or very rarely an attribute of Jupiter himself, the aegis came to represent, in cameo-speak, ‘reigning emperor’ among other princes.⁵¹ Formally it can be worn over one shoulder and hung from a strap over the other shoulder (5 and 6), or more usually it is worn in the manner of a cloak fastened around the neck, as it had been worn by Ptolemaic kings from the third century B.C., assimilated to the royal chlamys (19, 26–9, 33, 35, 38–9 and 41). In this latter form it becomes the Jovian imperial symbol par excellence. It was never, however, a necessary emblem of office: depending on the context, cameo busts of the emperor may omit it (for example, 4, 10–13, 16 and 23–4).

Beside such metaphorical attributes of divine power, we also find contemporary real-life components: *lituus*, cuirass, toga, laurel wreath and oak wreath. The *lituus* or augur’s crook (11, 21 and 35) belongs to the emperor’s priestly role.⁵² The emperor’s civilian and senatorial role represented by the toga is rare (10), while the cuirass can mark out any imperial male (11, 17, 23, 27, 29, 32 and 40). The imperial laurel and oak were standard. The oak wreath or *corona civica* was as close to an imperial crown as the empire came, and carried the extended significance of a commander who has saved all his subjects’ lives (7, 14, 16, 28 and 33).⁵³ Other well-tested Hellenistic attributes were deployed in various ways, as needed: the cornucopia of fertile abundance (24, 31, 33, 35, 39 and 41); the sceptre of royal-divine rule (21, 24, 30 and 39); the *aphlaston* (stern ornament of a captured ship) representing sea-power (39); the radiate crown for the new status of *divus* (6, 15 and 16); and the rayed sun-disk of solar power (39). With the partial exception of the aegis for the reigning emperor and the radiate crown for *divi* before Nero, these attributes were deployed as a flexible range of possibilities, singly or in combinations.⁵⁴ The sliding scale of precise meanings, without automatic one-to-one points of reference, gave them added force.

⁴⁹ On the workings and fundamental importance of imperial portrait typology, Smith 1996.

⁵⁰ On the whole phenomenon of divinising attributes worn by imperial figures, see especially M. Bergmann 1998: 91–290 and Hallett 2005: 223–70, esp. 230–7. More recently, Koortbojian 2013; Borg 2019: 191–239, esp. 206–14.

⁵¹ On the aegis, M. Bergmann 1998: 174–5; Hallett 2005: 197 and Appendix H.

⁵² On the *lituus*, Koortbojian 2013: 56–77. On augury: Driediger-Murphy 2019.

⁵³ *Corona civica*: B. Bergmann 2010: 135–83.

⁵⁴ Radiate crown: M. Bergmann 1998: *passim*. Flexibility: Hallett 2005: 237.

Augustus

Augustus is represented in a wide variety of single-portrait cameos of high quality and godlike aspiration, well into the mid-first century A.D. The earliest is a profile shoulder bust in Aachen (4) wearing cloak and laurel, holding an eagle-headed sceptre. The Blacas cameo in London (5) of around or soon after A.D. 14 has the tall, neo-classical profile portrait known best on coins of DIVUS AUGUSTUS in the A.D. 20s.⁵⁵ The Arundel cameo in New York (6) is a more animated version of the same design. Both are shoulder busts posed in the dynamic Hellenistic back-three-quarter view, with an elaborate aegis slung loosely over the near shoulder and held by a baldric-like strap over the far shoulder. The Paris and Cologne portraits (7–8) have highly articulated versions of the same tall Divus Augustus profile. The unusual wreath of oak and olive leaves worn on the Paris cameo (7) is remarkable for the crisp precision of its carving.⁵⁶

Among Augustan narrative compositions, two pieces celebrating Actium, now in Boston and Vienna, show well the different modes available to court buyers at the start of the imperial sequence (9–10). An intaglio gem of red carnelian in Boston (9) is carved in a dynamic Hellenistic-mythological style and shows Octavian-Augustus as Poseidon-Neptune driving an excitable chariot team of sea-horses across the ocean in ‘narrative’ profile. Only the ruler’s portrait inserted into the mythological frame anchors the stone to contemporary history. This potentially open-ended aspect of the intaglio is something that is not continued in the cameo sequence. That is, when cameos show full figures they generally include plenty of other features that make it clear the subject is imperial, not mythological.

The Actium cameo in Vienna (10) also celebrates the ‘founding’ sea-battle, with the emperor in a sea-chariot again drawn by mythological figures, this time Tritons. In conception and effect, however, it could not be more different. The chariot is frontal, heraldic, and static, and the scene is filled with ‘gestural’ attributes: two orbs held up by the outer Tritons, one with a capricorn-supported shield edged with laurel, the other with a winged Victory offering a wreath. Within this extravagant mythological frame, the imperial victor by contrast wears a contemporary Roman toga and holds a laurel branch (his Christ-like head is a restoration). Here at the beginning of the imperial sequence is a perfect cameo combination: divine elevation with a contemporary Roman accent. The result is in its own terms somewhat awkward: a toga is not good sea-wear.

Beside big universal ideas of imperial victory, peace and prosperity, and Olympian majesty, a major concern of court cameo-buyers was marking out and promoting imperial successors. The Augustan and Tiberian candidates for the succession kept dying or being disappeared — Marcellus, Agrippa, Drusus, Gaius, Lucius, Germanicus, Drusus the Younger, and Nero Caesar and Drusus Caesar (the sons of Germanicus), to name some. The grandest cameos configure particular dynastic constellations in a universal framework of divinely sanctioned war and peace. Such is the Gemma Augustea.

All agree rightly that the Gemma Augustea (11) shows the Augustan order of things after A.D. 4. The three imperial figures in the upper register are (left to right): Tiberius in the chariot, Germanicus in armour and Augustus on the double throne with Roma. Tiberius is Augustus’ heir, and Germanicus will be Tiberius’ heir. The chariot and its driver, a figure of Victory, probably refer to the triumph of A.D. 12, and the cameo is thus situated in a tight window of A.D. 12 to 14. Best might be in or after A.D. 13, when Germanicus was appointed overall commander in Germany, and Tiberius was given new

⁵⁵ Kent and Hirmer 1978: no. 150, pl. 42. See the example shown here, below 20.

⁵⁶ For other Octavian and Augustus single-portrait cameos in glass and stone, of various dates and provenances, see Megow 1987: 153–75, cat. A 1–8, 14, 16–17, 19–21, 24–7, 30 and 37, omitting semi-precious heads and busts in the round, of different function; Boschung 1993b: 90, n. 433; 131–2, no. 48, pl. 48; 170, no. 150, pl. 201; 178–9, no. 170, pl. 93 and 149; and 195, no. 215, pl. 205.

powers, an over-arching *imperium proconsulare* (Suet., *Tib.* 21; Vell. Pat. 2.121). The composition has a pseudo-narrative of Tiberius arriving to greet Augustus: Tiberius with toga and sceptre is now a civilian ruler stepping down from his chariot to aid the god-like Augustus. Germanicus in the cuirass will be the new commander in the field. The three costumes identify their three roles and ranks: (1) senior Olympian costume with eagle and sceptre for Augustus; (2) civilian toga of *triumphator* and sceptre for Tiberius; (3) sashed cuirass and sword in hand (in the 'reverse' grip) for Germanicus. Where we might expect a thunderbolt in the hand of the supreme leader we find surprisingly a *lituus*, an indelibly Roman piece of sacred equipment: all that will be done will be under his auspices (*auspiciis meis*: RG 4.2). The *lituus* here takes on a higher and broader meaning, but it also places Augustus' supreme power sharply into a Roman context. The *lituus* is at the very centre of the composition.

Peace and prosperity are represented on the cameo in the other divinities present: Earth, Ocean, and Oikoumene are clustered behind the throne. Below, in the lower register, hard conquest (*debellare superbos*) is complete, and a trophy is being raised in the centre to mark battle-field victories over world-wide barbarians, supervised (again surprisingly) by what seem to be two further gods (Diana and Mercury?) to the right of centre. This is the highest quality of all the cameos, a flawless realisation of Augustus in majesty. It is a monument of the potential crisis years of A.D. 13–14. The represented ages of the protagonists are relative. Tiberius' and Germanicus' portraits have to start from that of Augustus, the oldest of the three, and he was eternally youthful. In A.D. 14, Augustus was seventy-seven, Tiberius fifty-six and Germanicus twenty-nine. Real ages did not matter, provided the internal logic of the composition was respected and preserved.

Tiberius

With Augustus dead, the subjects sought by cameo-buyers shifted. There was new emphasis on Tiberius, Livia, Germanicus and other successor princes, and of course on Divus Augustus, alone and in varied combinations (12–18). Some of the best surviving single-portrait Augustus cameos belong in this period (7–8). There are also many plain single-bust cameo portraits of Tiberius⁵⁷ and of Livia,⁵⁸ elegant but without further divine elaboration. There are strong double portraits of Tiberius and Livia in Florence with a heavy physiognomical specification of both emperor and dowager Augusta (12), and of Tiberius with a boy prince in Paris (13). Livia is represented in two distinct cameos in Boston and Vienna holding a small bust of Divus Augustus in her hand (14–15). They are both of high court-quality but conceived and styled in such different ways that they suggest the theme and idea found a number of buyers. Divus Augustus and Livia (re-worked in the third century) appear facing each other on a cameo in the Hermitage with a small bust of a very youthful-looking Tiberius between them (16).

Several other large and impressive cameos also belong here, in the early-to-middle Tiberian period, but they are of such grand aspiration that the precise identities of their subjects and their dates remain uncertain. When cameo-carvers move away from easily recognised imperial portrait types, strong verifiable criteria for identification are lacking. Such cameos defy scholarly agreement.

A fragment of a large, probably once multi-figure cameo in Vienna represents a cuirassed portrait figure with light moustache wearing cloak and aegis (17). The profile has a tall 'Tiberian' brow, and since the aegis most likely indicates a reigning emperor,

⁵⁷ For example, Alsdorf and Hunt cameos in Chicago: Platz-Horster 2008b; 2012: 76–7, no. 52, pl. 10. All Tiberius cameo portraits: Megow 1987: 174–84, A 38–59; Hertel 2013: 202–9, pls. 127–30, collecting more than twenty single-portrait Tiberius cameos in stone and glass.

⁵⁸ For example, Hague and ex-Wyndham Cook cameos: Megow 1987: 251–2, B 9–10, pl. 2.7–8. Full range in Megow 1987: 249–59, B 1–24; Alexandridis 2004: 135–7, nos. 45–51, pls. 54–5.

the intended subject was probably Tiberius. A remarkable blue-glass cameo in Vienna certainly belongs here, because it is signed by Herophilos, son of Dioskourides, Augustus' famed court gem-engraver (18). Its subject has been identified variously as Divus Augustus, Tiberius, or one of the later Tiberian princes. The cameo presents a brilliant combination of Augustus' and Tiberius' portrait physiognomies but with a short fringe on a 'rectangular' brow that does not fit Augustus' types. Tiberius remains the most likely subject.

Herophilos' broadly datable blue-glass cameo takes with it, as Megow saw, the powerful Gonzaga cameo (19), but it need not represent the same subject. The similarity lies in the thick heavy relief and in the superb, precise, but lively carving. The Gonzaga presents a Roman *imperator* wearing helmet, cuirass and heavy aegis, together with his wife, who has an early imperial fashion hairstyle. Neither her hairstyle nor her physiognomy are known in identified types. The aegis suggests the male figure is a 'full-powered' Jovian emperor rather than a prince. The male portrait combines a Divus Augustus profile and an Achilles/Alexander hairstyle. An *anastolē* is swept up over the front of the helmet in long, lashing locks, and long hair flows out from under the helmet's neck-guard on the nape of the neck. The profile is that of Divus Augustus, and probably only the first emperor would suit such a radical departure from early imperial portrait norms. A rare parallel for such a heroic-divine conception of the first *princeps* can be found in a (much-restored) colossal marble head of Augustus in the Vatican.⁵⁹

The *imperator* on the Vienna 'Cameo of the Ptolemies' (20) also wears long hair and a similar, highly decorated helmet, and has a tall Divus Augustus profile. Instead of forming an *anastolē*, the hair falls centre-parted on the brow in long strands and again flows out long from under the helmet's neck-guard. The cameo surely represents the same emperor as the Gonzaga, and as an artefact, it has the same breath-taking quality. Its style and technique, however, are markedly different. The Gonzaga has four layers and thick relief, with the emperor's profile eye in deep shadow. The Vienna stone has low-relief figures carved in not fewer than eleven thin layers managed with extraordinary subtlety. The imperial eye is barely set under the brow, and without the engraved iris and pupil it would look almost like a late-archaic frontal-profile eye. It is perhaps closest in its technical mastery, low-relief style and cool, majestic effect to the Gemma Augustea. This difference of technique and style might suggest a difference of date — the Vienna stone late Augustan, and the Gonzaga, so close to the work of Herophilos, Tiberian. It might also suggest, however, that the market for the largest, highest-quality cameos in the early first century was able to support competing workshops. These two cameos, in spite of their technical differences, should represent the same emperor and could be close in date. The female figures in both cameos are also different: the laureate Gonzaga woman has a fashion hairstyle and a fuller-faced, Hellenistic-style divine physiognomy, whereas the veiled Vienna female has an unusual 'crown' and purely classical Phidian divine features. Both should be the wife of the emperor, so most likely Livia, or rather Julia Augusta (as Livia was from A.D. 14).

Both the Gonzaga and Vienna cameos are so far beyond imperial norms that precise identifications will remain uncertain and controversial. It may be enough to agree on the following steps: both are early imperial in date; both represent the same *imperator*, a 'full' aegis-wearing emperor; and all cameo parallels suggest the female figure should be the *imperator's* wife. One would like to know how the open-ended portrait iconography of these prize pieces in the Palatine cabinet came to be interpreted in (say) the later first and then the fourth century.

⁵⁹ Vatican, Cortile della Pigna, Augustus in 'Alcudia-Actium' type: Boschung 1993b: 119–20, no. 25, pl. 30 (the date 'frühaugusteisch oder früher' is perhaps optimistic). For further discussion of the contested identity of the Gonzaga's subjects, see Appendix 19.

After the deaths of Germanicus in A.D. 19 and Drusus the Younger in A.D. 23, the succession was again open, between Tiberius' natural grandson (Tiberius Gemellus, born A.D. 19/20) and the teenage sons of Germanicus (Nero Caesar, aged seventeen in A.D. 23, and Drusus Caesar, aged fifteen to sixteen).

This is exactly the dynastic situation represented on *Le Grand Camée de France*, the largest and most ambitious multi-figure cameo to survive from antiquity (H: 31 cm), now in the Cabinet des Médailles in Paris (21). The precise date and identifications of its main participants have long been clear and should by now be agreed, on grounds partly of portrait typology and partly of the internal logic of the family group present. In the top register, Divus Augustus, radiate, togate, and *capite velato*, is in heaven, flying across the sky, flanked by Drusus the Younger (left) and Germanicus on a winged horse (right), both cuirassed (all three are identified with certainty by their 'typological' portraits). The moment of the drama is therefore after A.D. 23 when Drusus died. In the eight-figure terrestrial frieze in the centre, Tiberius is supreme Olympian-style ruler with aegis, sceptre and Roman *lituus*, accompanied by the dowager empress, Julia Augusta (Livia), who died in A.D. 29. So we are certainly between A.D. 23 and 29. Closer to 23 would be better, when the succession plan presented by the cameo was more natural and inevitable than it became as the long 20s wore on.⁶⁰ The three 'executive' princes in the middle register all wear the cuirass. They are the sons of Germanicus, from left to right: (1) the boy Gaius (Caligula) moving to the left, carrying a round shield; (2) Nero Caesar standing before Tiberius, also with a round shield; and (3) Drusus Caesar, the younger brother, gesturing upwards and holding a trophy.

Two narrative 'events' are represented here: (a) the ascent of Germanicus and Drusus the Younger to join Divus Augustus in heaven in the upper register, signalled below on the right by Drusus Caesar's powerful 'witnessing' gesture; and (b) a departure to war from the imperial house in the middle register. In front of Tiberius, Nero Caesar, aided by his wife (Julia), adjusts his helmet ready for the campaign. The scene channels a long iconographic tradition of departures to war, from Hector and Andromache on. The boy Gaius rushes out left, fully armed, ready for battle. The imperial order again rests on a crushed bed of barbarians in the narrow bottom register, defeated beyond hope. This is the imperial cosmos seen from the Palatine: heaven above with Divus Augustus and great deceased princes; the earthly court with the emperor, his mother and family adjutants in the middle; and, beneath, the subjugated barbarian enemy, confined to the eastern and northern frontiers.

We see here the most grandiose universalising dramaturgy, but set within one precise historical situation, soon after A.D. 23. The cameos are, of course, blithely unconcerned with literal facts and pedestrian reality. Drusus the Younger and Germanicus were never deified, and Nero Caesar never did leave Rome to command Rome's armies (he was banished in 29 and died in island exile in 31). The cameo remained a treasured Palatine wonder, regardless of its passing context. It was later damaged and repaired, and three of its leading figures were lightly re-worked to make new subjects in the third or fourth century A.D. (another story).⁶¹

Caligula

Tiberius withdrew to Capri in 27, and no court cameos survive that certainly belong between then and 37. Under Caligula, there are a few single-portrait cameos of the

⁶⁰ Giuliani 2010: 44–5 sees the cameo's succession plans as provocative and potentially irritating at the court of so notoriously touchy a *princeps* as Tiberius.

⁶¹ Re-working: Giuliani 2010: 17, 19, 23–6, and 103 nn. 18–20; Schmidt in Giuliani 2010: 69–71. See Appendix 21, under figures 6, 9, and 10.

emperor, with profile and frontal compositions (22–3),⁶² and probably of his beloved sisters (Agrippina, Drusilla, Julia Livilla), not all clearly or individually identifiable.⁶³ There is also a large fragment of a Gemma-Augustea-style cameo in Vienna (H: 11 cm) (24) on which Caligula is seated with Roma on a double throne supported by a stylish sphinx-formed monopod. The emperor wears Olympian costume and holds a sceptre, and some Ptolemaic derivation is suggested by the imposing double cornucopia which the emperor cradles against his body with his right arm. It is full with Hellenistic-style grapes and fruits and is topped by two pointed *pyramidion*-cakes. The double cornucopia or *dikeras* had been the well-known personal symbol of the Ptolemaic queen Arsinoe II and here alludes more generally to Egypt, bread-basket of Rome and personal possession of the emperor.

Claudius

Surviving cameos of Claudius and Nero are more abundant and more diverse. Of Claudius there is a long series of some twelve single-portrait court cameos,⁶⁴ and among these are four large and powerful stones of the emperor wearing the Jovian aegis with or without a commander's cuirass, in Dresden, Paris and Windsor (26–29). The Claudius physiognomies are always clearly recognisable, but their character, compositions and styles vary considerably. This variety is a sure sign of different workshops and a once considerable production. The range at the top level can be seen, for example, in the distance between the pronounced physiognomy of the Claudius portrait fragment in London (25) and the majestic divinity of the Claudius on a huge, single-portrait stone in Dresden, a three-layered sardonyx (H: 13 cm) (26). Both were drawing on Claudius' main portrait type (the Erbach-Copenhagen type), but have quite different effects.⁶⁵ The strong London portrait has heavy, dynamic, 'Hellenistic'-style features (25), while the lower-relief Dresden portrait is skilfully modulated to give it a calmer, more Augustus-like profile (26). A cameo in Chicago representing a nude single-figure image of Claudius(?) in full Jovian 'regalia', with aegis, eagle, thunderbolt and sceptre, is more unusual (30). It is modelled closely on swaggering imperial statues in the 'Jupiter costume'.⁶⁶ Such full figures, unless at a large scale, lack the force of readily identifiable imperial portrait busts — that is, their imperial-divine aspect, as opposed to simply a divine aspect, is not sufficiently clear. In terms of Jovian visual power, the full figure in Chicago (30) is less effective and does not express anything further than the majestic bust in Dresden (26). We see here the purpose and force of using imperial portrait types. Whatever the divinising paraphernalia of the cameos or their glistening style and technical sheen, the portrait types pin the subjects to one reign and one emperor. They are a vital here-and-now Roman-imperial component that separates the emperors from other gods and from mythology.

There are also several large multi-figure cameos of the Claudian period, in Leiden, Paris, Trier and Vienna (31–5), that are concerned with new dynastic marriages and changing succession plans. Within an established craft tradition, more than one workshop seems to have been supplying a specialised market. The identities and dates of some of these

⁶² These and four other single-portrait Caligula cameos: Megow 1987: 185–8, A 61–6; Boschung 1989: 115–18, nos. 32–6 and 41, pls. 29–30 and 35.3.

⁶³ Caligula's sisters: Megow 1987: 301–6, D 33–45; Alexandridis 2004: 153–5, no. 90, pl. 55.8; no. 91, pl. 56.4; no. 92, pl. 55.6; no. 93, pl. 55.7; and no. 95, pl. 56.6. Without corresponding portrait coins, identifications remain unsure.

⁶⁴ Megow 1987: 188–211, A 67–78 (A 78, a near-frontal re-cut bust in Vienna, was broken from a much larger cameo composition; the preserved Claudius was re-cut from a portrait of Caligula).

⁶⁵ Claudius had three portrait types that were used through his reign: (1) the Kassel type; (2) the main Erbach-Copenhagen type; and (3) the Turin type. Fittschen 1977: 55–8, no. 17; Boschung 1993a: 70–1.

⁶⁶ Jupiter costume: Hallett 2005: 163–72, 256–8, and Appendix H.

cameos are clear, while those of others have elicited acute differences of scholarly opinion. The first two are controversial in different ways, but both probably belong in the earlier part of Claudius' rule.

The large high-quality cameo in Paris of an imperial woman with two children (31), one emerging from a cornucopia, is broken on the left and came from a larger composition. It is recognised by all as belonging in the mid-first century A.D. However, since the carefully defined portrait and hairstyle, which are known as a clear imperial type in other cameos and portraits in the round,⁶⁷ cannot be identified by any corresponding named version on coins or in other media, the field is open, within narrow limits, for an identification based on the family configuration. Claudius' third wife Messalina with her children has been a favourite, with other proposals for Agrippina, Claudius' fourth wife, or a wife of Caligula (Milonia Caesonia, his fourth wife), or Caligula's most beloved sister Drusilla.⁶⁸ Assessment of the two small figures is crucial. Since neither Drusilla nor Milonia Caesonia had imperial children, the easiest configuration would be Agrippina with Nero and Britannicus, or Messalina with Octavia and Britannicus. Agrippina has four well-studied and identified portrait types (below, n. 71), so this type might rather be Messalina, but that is hardly a strong argument.

Messalina might also suit the (admittedly difficult) gender archaeology of the two small figures. The slightly smaller of the two, on the left, wearing a helmet and carrying a shield, would be better as an imperial child than a divinity such as Roma,⁶⁹ and given the weaponry, probably better a boy than a girl. The figure would be similar to the boy in the chariot on the big Leiden cameo (32) to be discussed shortly. The slightly larger figure on the right emerging from the cornucopia wears clothing that is not gender-specified. The short-cropped boy's head currently on the bust (it has come, gone and returned over the years) is a restoration. If this figure was originally male, then the presence of two boys would favour Agrippina with Nero and Britannicus between 48 and 55. However, when an engraving was made of the cameo in the seventeenth century, after a Rubens(?) drawing of one of three cameos that he owned, this head seems to have been preserved and is shown as female.⁷⁰ If Rubens' gender assignment of this figure was correct, it would favour the family constellation of Octavia (born 39/40) and Britannicus (born 41) with their mother Messalina, in (say) the mid-40s, and sometime before her execution in 48. Since little of this can be considered robust, it might be worth emphasising the common ground between all competing interpretations. In everyone's view the cameo belongs in a relatively narrow time-span, between A.D. 37 (accession of Caligula) and A.D. 59 (death of Agrippina).

The Great Cameo of the Hague, now in Leiden (32), shows an imperial family group of four figures in a centaur-drawn chariot riding over two fallen barbarians, while a Victory flies in from above to crown the emperor. There is a *krater* on the ground, and one of the centaurs carries a shield and a trophy with a cuirass on it. The theme is therefore both family dynasty and military conquest. The emperor wears civilian clothes and sandals and wields a thunderbolt. He sits in an awkward posture with his wife inside the chariot, and they embrace each other. The date is disputed between the mid-first century and the early fourth century A.D. In the early fourth century, the cameo might, without any adjustment, have been taken (as many today would take it) as representing Constantine in the A.D. 310s with his young wife Fausta and son Crispus. This theory is obliged to take the young female figure behind the emperor, rather wilfully, either as

⁶⁷ Known as the Adolphseck-Formia type: Trillmich 1983: 21–34, pls. 2–7 (Agrippina); Boschung 1993a: 71–3, 'Type Wa' (Messalina); Alexandridis 2004: 154, nos. 94, pl. 21.1 (sister of Caligula). Cameos: Megow 1987: 301–4, D 33–8, pls. 16–20 (Drusilla).

⁶⁸ Milonia Caesonia: Fuchs 1990: 107–10. Drusilla: Megow 1987: 303–4, D 39, pl. 18, 1.

⁶⁹ Roma: proposed by Fuchs 1990.

⁷⁰ Though with a hairstyle that is hardly Roman; so too Megow 1987: 303–4.

Constantine's mother or his grandmother; but in the visual system of Roman cameos and imperial art more generally, its smaller scale and subordinate position would normally indicate a child, here a daughter, of the imperial couple. The clean-shaven emperor with fringe might pass for a Constantinian portrait (Constantine's image was modelled closely on that of Augustus), but the veiled imperial wife on the cameo wears an indelibly Claudian fashion hairstyle, with her hair in two tiers of tight curls below her *stephanē*.⁷¹ This hairstyle was *not* among those picked up by imperial women later, in the fourth century.⁷² This argument may seem slight, but it is not easily gone around on stylistic or technical grounds.⁷³ There are other good arguments, but on the grounds of the empress's hairstyle alone, one would have to say this cameo was designed and carved in the mid-first century A.D.

Although the execution and several awkward passages in the composition are different from the best Palatine work of the first century, they do not necessarily prove a late antique date. Awkward composition and poor execution were available at any time, and can merely indicate a different workshop and a lower price. Among first-century emperors, the plain fringe and relatively tall brow of the seated ruler suit Claudius best, while the empress's hairstyle would well suit one of Claudius' wives. The dynastic configuration then makes best sense as follows: Claudius and Messalina in the chariot embracing each other, with Octavia behind (born A.D. 39/40) and Britannicus in front (born A.D. 41).⁷⁴ The dramatic context should then be after Claudius' British triumph in A.D. 43 and the accompanying advancement of Britannicus as heir (now Ti. Claudius Caesar Britannicus). The cameo's subject should probably be taken as a grandiloquent Dionysian triumph over the *reges Britannorum*. It belongs, then, between A.D. 43 and Messalina's fall in A.D. 48, and presents a typical combination of a precise Julio-Claudian dynastic ensemble and a grand, generalising mythological frame. Much of its purpose was probably the celebration of Britannicus as young heir and successor. Octavia's curious pointing right hand, appearing from behind Claudius' waist, marks him out and 'witnesses' his elevation.

Since Claudius was propelled to the supreme imperial office unexpectedly, cameos that celebrated his rightful succession came after his accession to power. One such cameo can be dated with precision — the large and sumptuous Gemma Claudia in Vienna (33), a sardonyx of several irregular layers (W: 15 cm). After disappointment with Messalina, the uxorious Claudius was soon married again, early in A.D. 49, this time to the thirty-four-year-old Agrippina the Younger, his niece, daughter of his brother, the great Germanicus, and a powerful figure at court in the period 49–59. The cameo sits in the context of this imperial union and was probably a gift celebrating it. It represents Claudius paired with his new wife Agrippina the Younger on the left, facing Germanicus paired with his wife Agrippina the Elder on the right. The newly married imperial

⁷¹ Claudian hairstyle, best attested, for example, for Messalina and Agrippina the Younger: Messalina on provincial coins, *RPC I* 2033–4 (Nicaea), 2074 (Nicomedia) and 2130 (Sinope); Agrippina the Younger on imperial coins and in four portrait types known in a range of marbles: Boschung 1993a: 73–4, Xa–d; Alexandridis 2004: 156–66, cat. 99–123, pls. 22–27 and 61.3. Most recently, Pangerl 2019/20. The daughter's hairstyle is also well attested in the early empire, best for Antonia Minor, on coins and in marbles: Alexandridis 2004: 138–43, cat. 54–63, pls. 11–13 and 61.2 and 5.

⁷² Retrospective female hairstyles of the early fourth century, best seen on coins, are altogether different: Kent and Hirmer 1978: nos. 626 and 642 (Fausta, wife of Constantine), 638 (Helena, mother of Constantine); Schade 2003, 53–7, pls. 2.3–7 (Fausta) and 3.1–9 (Helena).

⁷³ Henig 2017: 17–18, argues that the 'pebble' finish of the back of the stone 'confirms its [sc. fourth-century] dating'. Such a broad and undatable criterion carries, in my opinion, less weight than the cultural and chronological specificity of imperial hairstyles.

⁷⁴ Of the two wives of Claudius with known portraits (above, n. 71), the empress on the cameo better suits Messalina with two rows of curls on the temples (best seen at Sinope, *RPC I* 2130) than Agrippina the Younger with *three* rows of curls in this position (Boschung 1993a: 73–4 Xb–d, and as here 33).

couple were probably the recipients. The other two subjects, the bride's parents, were long dead.

All four figures have pin-sharp identifiable portraits based on their well-known metropolitan models. They sit anchored in the period A.D. 49–54, framed in a brilliant luxuriance of Palatine allegory and Hellenistic paraphernalia. The four busts emerge from two conjoined double cornucopias. Between them stands Jupiter's eagle, turned to look at Claudius, the reigning emperor, who alone wears the aegis. Below are carefully articulated spoils from enemies east and west. The combination of real and allegorical attributes is seamless. Claudius wears the aegis of absolute sole rule; the others wear real clothes. Claudius and Germanicus both wear oak wreaths, the real *corona civica*, and Agrippina the Younger wears a wheat-wreath and mural crown (she is like Ceres and the Tyche-Fortuna of a city), while Agrippina the Elder (on the right) has more unusual attributes. She wears a crested helmet and laurel wreath: she is like Virtus, and her attributes perhaps refer to her famed role with her husband and the army on the Rhine. This cameo is one of the most effective visualisations of universal imperial power and dynastic specificity: Roman identity and Hellenistic-style majesty are indissolubly merged.

There is another, less well-known cameo that belongs to the same momentous dynastic re-alignments of early A.D. 49, but like the Leiden cameo, it has a rougher execution which in current scholarship has consigned it to Late Antiquity. The Ada Cameo (34) decorates the cover of the Ada Gospels in Trier and represents an imperial family group of five: a ruling pair and three children of different, carefully specified relative ages. The three children are, left to right, a girl or young woman (on the left), a small boy (centre) and a slightly older boy or adolescent (on the right). The five are presented in civilian costume *en face*, with head and shoulders appearing above the front panel of an aerial chariot drawn by two heraldic eagles. In 1900 Furtwängler placed the cameo, without hesitation, in the Claudian period,⁷⁵ but subsequent scholarship has considered it early fourth century (or later) and that it represents some constellation of Constantine's family.⁷⁶ The cameo surface is unfortunately too worn to see details of the (usually strongly diagnostic) female hairstyles, but the laureate head of the emperor has a portrait physiognomy and a fringe of comma-shaped locks that are found among portraits of Claudius and with a similar relation of hair to brow.⁷⁷ As we saw in the single-portrait cameos, Claudius' features can range widely according to local context, from strongly physiognomical to youthful and Augustan. Although the portrait might have been re-branded as Constantine at the fourth-century court without any adjustment, it does not have either Constantine's long narrow face or, more importantly, the necessary axial-symmetrical hair-fringe.⁷⁸ Finding a suitable time and constellation in Constantine's troubled family history (in the 310s or 320s, or later, in the 380s) also causes difficulties.

Both a date and family configuration in the Claudian period, by contrast, come easily. From their relative ages, the three children are most easily taken as Octavia, Britannicus and Nero, and the imperial pair as Claudius and his new wife Agrippina the Younger. The group can then be taken to celebrate the new dynastic situation brought about by the marriage of Claudius and Agrippina in early 49, a situation that endured until the death of Britannicus in early 55. The cameo specifies the forward succession in the central position of the boy Britannicus and in the outer, flanking figures of the young Octavia and Nero, who were betrothed in 49 and married in 53. Since the young

⁷⁵ Furtwängler 1900: III, 323–4, fig. 167.

⁷⁶ Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 202–5, with helpful tabulation of all different interpretations.

⁷⁷ Boschung 1993a: 70–7, Type Vc, fig. 58, Turin type.

⁷⁸ Constantine's portraits: L'Orange 1984: 118–28, pls. 32–41; Fittschen and Zanker 1985: 149–51, no. 122, with list of thirteen versions; La Rocca and Zanker 2007.

Octavia figure is veiled, we may deduce that she is now a married woman and that the date of the cameo should be narrowed to between this date in 53 and February 55 when Britannicus died. We may remind ourselves of the respective parents and the respective ages of the three figures from the younger generation in A.D. 53 which suit their represented relative age differences on the cameo: Octavia (aged thirteen to fourteen) and Britannicus (aged twelve) were Claudius' children by Messalina, and Nero (aged fifteen) was Agrippina's son (by Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus). The Gemma Claudia (33) celebrates Claudius, Agrippina and their grand imperial antecedents, while the Ada Cameo celebrates their agreed succession strategy and the marriage of Nero and Octavia. The 'interwoven' family arrangement of the five figures seeks to 'balance' the inherent dynastic tension between the blood-line of Claudius and that of Agrippina. Like the succession strategy laid out in detail in the Grand Camée de France (21), this dynastic plan turned out to be a failure, but the case underlines how, in spite of their often grandiose metaphorical framework, such imperial cameos had precise, context-specific points of first reference.

On a final multi-figure Claudian cameo in Paris (35), a large high-quality Palatine sardonyx (W: 13 cm), the bare-headed emperor is shown seated on the back of a flying heraldic eagle. Claudius wears the aegis as a cloak and holds up a Roman *lituus* in one hand and a Hellenistic-style *dikeras* or double cornucopia in the other. The eagle carries a palm in its talons, and Victory flies in to crown the emperor with a laurel wreath. The *lituus*, the augur's crook, marks the special priestly negotiation of the supreme citizen with the heavens. Some of the refined detail (for example, of the imperial portrait and the eagle's feathers) can be seen better in a plaster cast (35). Claudius was consecrated as *divus* in A.D. 54, and Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* (5–11) makes great play with his arrival in heaven met by Divus Augustus, who is disgusted at Claudius' lack of qualifications for life in the Olympian conclave. It is tempting to see such a cameo as a positive court version of Claudius' *consecratio* made after 54, and indeed it has at first glance the obvious appearance of an apotheosis. Its meaning should, however, be located elsewhere — where it also has greater force.

Firstly, the cameo does not follow the norms for an imperial ascent to heaven. In imperial art when consecrated imperial figures ascend, whether on eagles, peacocks (for *divae* from mid-second century), or on the backs of human-form divinities, they are properly dressed (toga for emperors), and their only attribute, where preserved, is a sceptre. The Grand Camée (21) has a good, early example in the figure of Divus Augustus, and the same costume and attributes are found consistently on later monuments and the imperial coinage.⁷⁹ In 35 Claudius receives a wreath from a Victory flying beside him and holds attributes that have an emphatically terrestrial frame of reference (*lituus* and cornucopia). These features are not attested for other imperial apotheoses in art. And unlike Augustus on 21, Claudius lacks the radiate crown, which at this period was still the attribute of a *divus*. In spite of first appearances, then, this cameo is not concerned with apotheosis, *consecratio*, or the status of a *divus*. It is a representation of the reigning emperor's supreme Olympian powers and position, all the more extravagant for describing not a real posthumous *consecratio* but the living

⁷⁹ Ascent of *divi* and *divae* in monumental reliefs: (1) Arch of Titus, Pfanner 1983: 76–9, pls. 68–9; (2) Capitoline relief with Sabina, La Rocca 1986: 24–32, pls. 7–14; (3) Column base of Antoninus Pius, Vogel 1973: 32–55, pls. 3–8. The ascent on imperial coins: *RIC* II.3² Hadrian 2603, 2611; *RIC* III Antoninus Pius 1132–3, Marcus Aurelius 1700, 1702, Commodus 659–60; *RIC* IV Caracalla 609, Severus Alexander 378, Caecilia Paulina 2–3; *RIC* V Mariniana 6 and 8; Kent and Hirmer 1978: nos. 321 (Faustina I), 481 (Mariniana). The main evidence is well discussed by Beard and Henderson 1998. The point at stake here is not what was or could be worn by *divi* in general, but only what was the normal costume worn for their ascent to heaven. On costume(s) of *divi*, M. Bergmann 1998: 110–12; Hallett 2005: 224–30; Borg 2019: 209–14. On the *consecratio* ritual, esp. Price 1987.

emperor.⁸⁰ This interpretation will become clear in relation to a closely related cameo of Nero, to be discussed shortly.

Nero

We have a highly varied series of some ten or eleven single-portrait cameos of Nero that again suggest wide production and use.⁸¹ There is one high-quality portrait in Nero's pre-accession boy portrait (Type 1) in the collection of Derek Content (36); several varied cameos from his 'good' early period in his accession portrait (Type 2), in use between A.D. 54 and 59, of which two, one in Bonn (37) and one in Paris (38) are of Palatine quality; and two only of the emperor's distinctive later portraits, both small and of modest technique.⁸² Early youthful Nero portraits were liable for re-naming without any physical adjustment. The highly recognisable *sui generis* heavy-faced later Nero types (Types 3 and 4, from the 60s) were liable to be re-worked or discarded.

In addition, there are large multi-figure 'narrative' cameos featuring Nero in Cologne, Paris and Nancy (39–41), all again from the earlier part of his rule. The Cologne cameo (39), a three-layered sardonyx (H: 8 cm), part of the composite medieval shrine of the Three Kings, is, given its scale and iconographic ambition, of surprisingly plain workmanship. It has a clear Nero Type 2 portrait, and his mother Agrippina is present in a striking role as emperor-maker. The narrative acts out in divinising allegory what never happened at Rome — the formal coronation of a prince as emperor. Agrippina in the form of Tyche/Fortuna with cornucopia is in the act of crowning her son with an imperial laurel wreath. The god-like powers of the young prince Nero are described here in the greatest accumulation of Hellenistic power symbols on any imperial cameo: sceptre in right hand, eagle under the throne, aegis around shoulders, *aphlaston* in left hand and laurel wreath and spoked sun-disc on the head.⁸³ Since Nero already wears a laurel wreath, the second wreath his mother is giving him over-specifies, over-determines the crowning aspect. The civilian award of a wreath has here been upgraded to mean accession to power of a new world-ruler, a new Sun-god. The same idea, the 'coronation' of the handsome young emperor, was represented independently at Aphrodisias in a relief in which Agrippina-Tyche crowns the standing figure of Nero, who wears the cuirass of an *imperator*.⁸⁴ The accession of Nero in concert with his mother had a wide and deep impact in the empire.

Another cameo from precisely the same context has been wrongly placed elsewhere. A high-quality Palatine-style sardonyx in Paris (40) shows Agrippina the Younger as Demeter-Ceres, recognisable by her carefully reproduced fashion hairstyle, with a cuirassed emperor in the serpent-drawn chariot of Triptolemos. The emperor's head is not identifiable: it is too small for a good likeness and seems to have been (poorly) re-worked. It has usually been said to represent Agrippina's husband, Claudius. This is unlikely. In the logic of the mythological allegory, the emperor should be a boy-hero; better, then, young Nero as Triptolemos, with his mother as Demeter-Ceres.⁸⁵ The cameo attempts an unusual narrative directionality, with the chariot passing before us in

⁸⁰ So rightly Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 168, 'Die Jupiteranlehnung geht damit bedeutend weiter als bei dem Typus des Thronenden, umso mehr als nicht der vergöttlichte, sondern der lebende Kaiser dargestellt ist.'

⁸¹ Nero's cameo portraits: Megow 1987: 211–16, A 93–102; M. Bergmann 2008: 20–1, figs. 16a–m and 17–18; D'Ottonne Rambach *et al.* 2020.

⁸² Two late Nero cameos: (1) sardonyx in Berlin: Megow 1987: 215, A 100, pl. 35.4; Platz-Horster 2012: 79–80, no. 56; (2) poorly cast glass cameo in Geneva: Megow 1987: 215, A 102, pl. 35.5. Both, M. Bergmann 2008: 20–1, figs. 17–18. On Nero's four portrait types: M. Bergmann and Zanker 1981: 321–2; Fittschen and Zanker 1985: 17–18, no. 17; M. Bergmann 1998: 147–9.

⁸³ Best interpretation of this extraordinary cameo: M. Bergmann 1998: 151–7; 2008: 15–16.

⁸⁴ Nero and Agrippina, Sebasteion relief: Smith 2013: 74–8, A 1, pls. 20–1.

⁸⁵ As seen only by Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 169, fig. 640.

three-quarter view to the right. The young Nero-Triptolemos, recognisable as emperor by his mythologically incongruous cuirass, throws out grain seed for mankind from his cloak while his mother drives the chariot.

One feels here, and in the cameo in Cologne (39), a search for new and telling mythological and allegorical celebrations of the ruler — as well as the dominant presence of Agrippina. Her role is a large part of the point, and was widely mediated on coins and in the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias.⁸⁶ It is also unusual for a court cameo that the composition is framed in a dynamic mythological narrative that has as much or more force than its contemporary reference. Only the hairstyle of Agrippina and the imperial cuirass of Nero anchor it to the here-and-now of the later A.D. 50s. A Triptolemos cameo in the Hermitage with essentially the same composition, but without any contemporary components, shows the kind of vigorous mythological model the Paris cameo was drawing on and from which it derived its effect.⁸⁷

The last datable multi-figure Julio-Claudian cameo is a large three-layered sardonyx (H: 7 cm) in Nancy (41). It celebrates Nero in the same figure-scheme as that of the Claudius-on-eagle cameo in Paris (35). The young emperor, wearing a long aegis fluttering behind like a cloak, sits on the back of a heraldic flying eagle that clutches a thunderbolt in its talons. He holds a lavishly relief-decorated cornucopia in one hand and in the other a flying Victory who is about to crown him with a wreath (although he is already wearing one). Nero never received state *consecratio*, and at a basic level this cameo is therefore unlikely to represent a posthumous ascent to heaven. The portrait, formerly thought by some to represent Hadrian or Caracalla,⁸⁸ draws again on Nero's second authorised portrait, which was in circulation between A.D. 54 and 59. Portrait typology, then, can show that this cameo was not a posthumous commission of die-hard loyalists eager to represent Nero's unfulfilled *consecratio*. It represents the living emperor who soars on an eagle like Jupiter over his wide realm: he has absolute Jovian power and is master of war and peace. The Victory marks successful war, the cornucopia represents peace and prosperity.

There were certainly high-quality cameos that presented the distinctive swollen majesty of Nero's later portrait types (Types 3 and 4, of the A.D. 60s). They survive, however, only in a reduced glass version in Geneva, a three-layered sardonyx fragment in Berlin⁸⁹ and in a number of cameos that were re-worked from late Neros — most clearly two large and impressive sardonyx cameos, one of Galba(?) in the Cabinet des Médailles in Paris and one of Domitian in Minden.⁹⁰

After Nero

As discussed earlier, new cameos of Palatine quality after Nero are remarkably few. There are some good single-portrait cameos of Domitian, Domitia, and Trajan, but little of scale and ambition.⁹¹ The large, badly preserved Berlin cameo of Hadrian(?) and a goddess in a

⁸⁶ Nero and Agrippina together in various configurations on coins: *RIC* P Nero 1–3, 6–7 (Rome), 607–12 (Caesarea in Cappadocia). Sebasteion, above, n. 84.

⁸⁷ Hermitage Triptolemos: Neverov 1971: 86, no. 55. Triptolemos also appears in the poets: Stat., *Silv.* 4.2.35–6: 'aetherii felix sic orbita fluxit / Triptolemi' ('With such bounty slid the tracks of air-boring Triptolemus'), with Coleman 1988, on lines 34–6.

⁸⁸ Hadrian: Bernoulli 1891: 118. Caracalla: Bruns 1948: 27–8; Bianchi Bandinelli 1970: 23.

⁸⁹ Geneva and Berlin late Nero cameo portraits, above, n. 82.

⁹⁰ Nero cameo re-worked for Galba(?), in Paris: Megow 1987: 216–18, A 106, pl. 36.3; Vollenweider and Avisseau-Broustet 2003: 124–5, no. 139. Nero cameo re-worked for Domitian, in Minden: Megow 1987: 218–20, A 107, pl. 36.4. Nero (with Agrippina) may well have been the original subject of the re-worked Rothschild Cameo, above, n. 47. Note that the cameo portrait wearing a lionskin in Vienna, accepted as Nero by Megow 1987: 216, A 105, pl. 35.7, cannot be the emperor.

⁹¹ Domitian: Megow 1987: 224, A 114 (Louvre), pl. 37.3. Domitia: Megow 1987: 263–4, B 31 (Stuttgart), pl. 38.1. Trajan: Megow 1987: 225–7, A 116–18 (Carthage, Berlin, London), pl. 41.4–6. A large cameo portrait

frontal chariot drawn by eagles was never an accomplished work and was most likely made from a re-carved earlier stone (above, n. 36). The impressive Kassel cameo of a full-figure Julia Domna as Victoria seated on a pile of weapons has a clearly re-cut portrait head (above, n. 38). After strong production under Claudius and Nero, new imperial cameos never recovered their place as high-level gifts and display pieces at the imperial court. Possibly other kinds of valuable figured artefacts, such as gold and silver plate, took over the function the cameos had — artefacts of a kind that would have fallen victim in the palace to later needs for hard cash (unlike cameos, intrinsically near-worthless).⁹² Some old cameos were re-cut to make new imperial subjects (for example, 16, 21, 40), and others were no doubt re-cycled as they were, with new subjects overlaid on them merely by verbal re-interpretation.⁹³ Sumptuous Palatine cameo production seems more or less to have ceased after A.D. 68, but under Domitian we find instead the emergence of new forms of panegyric expression, in the literary realm. At some points, they and earlier forms of poetic eulogy intersect in interesting ways with the cameos.

IV IMPERIAL CAMEOS AND LITERARY PANEGYRIC

Literary texts written for contexts and functions similar to those that produced the cameos may help to sharpen our understanding, our feel for the cameos' distinctive style and vocabulary. I mean the panegyrics which were brought into various poetic genres in the early empire. Like the cameos, such poems were hardly public monuments, but nor were they wholly private. They were given and performed at recitations and Palatine occasions for a restricted audience and, unlike the cameos, all or most of the poems were 'published' for a wider reading public afterwards.⁹⁴

The first main point to make is that the cameos speak in verse, in the visual equivalent of poetry.⁹⁵ That is, they share the grandeur, divinising apparatus and elevated allusive style of verse, as well as an extraordinary technical polish and balanced elaboration. The cameos are quite different in their visual system from the monumental imperial reliefs in marble, such as those that decorated altars, arches, bases and columns, in which the emperor acts out real public roles of his office, as consul, priest, or general. Those reliefs and their narratives were public and rooted in what could be, and their literary cognates were in prose of the kind preserved for us in Pliny the Younger's *Panegyric* of Trajan, a text pervaded by the ideology of the *civilis princeps*.⁹⁶ Although they are, of course, not

of Trajan in the Cabinet des Médailles in Paris is unusual in quality and scale (H: 8 cm): Megow 1987: 229–30, A 126, pl. 41.7; Vollenweider and Avisseau-Broustet 2003: 137, no. 157.

⁹² Tacitus may cast a sidelight on this issue. He attributes a supposed termination of luxury in A.D. 69 to the *domestica parsimonia* of municipal new men, especially Vespasian himself (*Ann.* 3.55). Although there was no general end of luxury in the Flavian period, imperial cameos were a part of cultural production over which the emperor could have a direct effect, and they might have been a rare casualty of such a new moral regimen (discussed briefly in this context by M. Bergmann and W. Eck in a panel discussion reported in Stročka 1994: 266).

⁹³ Re-working, see above, nn. 35–6, 38, 40, 47, 61, 64 and 90. Small-scale heads and busts in the round in semi-precious stones, objects of a different function, continued in the Flavian-Trajanic period: Megow 1987: 228–9, A 120–5, pls. 39–41, with M. Bergmann 2008: 19 (mainly Domitians re-cut as Trajans).

⁹⁴ On audiences, recitations, and circulation of poems, Friedländer 1907–13: III, 35–43; Starr 1987; Nauta 2002: chs. 2, 5 and 8; R. Mayer in Harrison 2005, 60–1; Gibson 2020, 112; Hejduk 2020, 34: “publication” generally meant the increasing circulation of hand-copied texts already read out at dinner parties and shared in draft among friends’.

⁹⁵ The panegyric character of the cameos has often been noted, but has not been worked through the poetic texts in detail. See, for example, Kyrieleis 1971: 185–6; M. Bergmann 1998: 134–46 (on Nero and the Sun-god), 218–20; Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 146; and M. Bergmann 2008: 13–14 (a stimulating short essay on the *Bildsprache* of Nero's cameos).

⁹⁶ *Civilis princeps* and principate-speak: Wallace-Hadrill 1982. Pliny's *Panegyricus*: Rees 2001.

precise historical records, modern focus on their ‘propaganda’ has obscured a central feature of such marble reliefs, namely that, like Pliny’s *Panegyric*, they rarely represent the emperor doing something he did not do in real life.⁹⁷ The cameos worked in another system, one concerned with the higher truth of framing the magnificent powers of world rulers in vaulting language without regard to physical realities.

At least since Theocritus’ glittering *Idyll* 17 for Ptolemy II,⁹⁸ verse panegyrics in and for themselves tended to have an explicit sole-ruler aspect, and did not find favour under the empire until the Flavians. We have instead an interesting range of encomiastic verse inside other poetic forms in which early imperial poets occasionally take flight in the most extravagant, often impossible, conceits.⁹⁹ The praise of their rulers is sometimes so high-pitched that it remains controversial how far they were being ironical.¹⁰⁰ The poets, unlike cameo-makers, often had personal relations with the subjects of their praise of a kind that would allow and might even encourage flexible levels of near-subversive exaggeration.¹⁰¹ While complex attitudes on the part of individual poets were in play, it is legitimate from a historical perspective to take the texts at some level as effective encomium. Before we come to the aspects shared with the cameos, it may be worth giving some idea of the range of relevant poetic evidence.

The series begins with Virgil. Near the start of the *Georgics* (1.24–42), the poet offers a lofty salutation to Augustus as a deity, a new star in the heavens, ‘auctorem frugum, tempestatumque potentem / ... an deus immensi venias maris’ (‘bringer of crops, lord of the seasons, ... or if you come as god of the boundless sea’: *G.* 1.24–29). The third book of the *Georgics* builds a fantastic marble temple to Augustus in verse in a mere twenty lines, with full festival games and sacrifices to go with it (3.8–39): ‘et viridi in campo templum de marmore ponam / ... in medio mihi Caesar erit templumque tenebit’ (‘and on the green plain [sc. of Mantua] I will set up a temple in marble ... In the midst I will have Caesar, and he shall possess the shrine’: *G.* 3.13 and 16). The *Aeneid*, the eventual monument spoken of in the *Georgics*, contains famous panegyric passages on the regime — for example, on the golden age founded by Augustus and his future world-wide conquests (6.788–805), and on the Actium victory (8.675–728). Propertius, too, has an Actium poem in which Apollo addresses Augustus as ‘saviour of the world’ (*mundi servitor*, 4.6.37). Horace’s third book of *Odes* opens with a famous sequence of ‘Roman’ poems in which Augustus is already to be considered *divus* for his far-flung additions to empire east and west (‘praesens divus habebitur / Augustus’, ‘Augustus will be held as a manifest deity’, that is, as a deity who is present, not one *in caelo*, in heaven, like Jupiter: *Carm.* 3.5.1–3), and his fourth book of *Odes*, published in 13 B.C., contains several poems (*Carm.* 4.2, 4, 5, 14, and 15) in high praise both of Augustan princes warring on the frontiers and of Augustus himself: things go better and the sun is brighter when the returning emperor’s face shines on his people (*Carm.* 4.5.5–8). There

⁹⁷ The Great Trajanic Frieze (re-used on the Arch of Constantine), with the emperor leading a cavalry charge in battle himself, is a rare example of a clearly ‘unreal’ monumental narrative: Touati 1987. On such public narratives of imperial action, Fittschen 1972; Hölscher 2003; 2019: ch. 4.

⁹⁸ Theocritus 17, Hunter 2003. There was of course praise poetry for autocrats before Theocritus (for example, in Pindar), and there are occasional examples of ‘non-ruler’ verse panegyric in the early empire — for example, the *Laus Pisonis*: Duff and Duff 2014, 289–315.

⁹⁹ ‘The Roman eulogist was clearly perfectly prepared to say ten impossible things before breakfast’: Dewar 1994: 285.

¹⁰⁰ For example, Hinds 1987: 23–9 sees irony; Dewar 1994, in response, argues for serious engagement. These poetic texts and this controversy have a large scholarly bibliography. Important contributions on writing for rulers: Ahl 1984a; 1984b. On panegyric themes in early imperial poetry, in addition to those mentioned, I have found the following useful: on Augustan poets, especially Horace, Griffin 1984; Putnam 1986; Thomas 2011; Heyworth 2016. On Lucan and Nero, Hunink 1993. On Statius, Martial, and Domitian, Coleman 1988; 1998; Garthwaite 1993; Geysen 1996; Leberl 2004; Seager 2009.

¹⁰¹ I thank an anonymous reviewer for this point.

follow often extravagant eulogies in Crinagoras, Ovid and Manilius. The Greek epigrams of Crinagoras praise Germanicus' lightning campaigns in the north and west, approved by Enyo and Ares (*Anth. Pal.* 9.283), and the victories in furthest east and west achieved by Tiberius: Helios sees subjugated Armenia in the morning and conquered Germany in the afternoon; Araxes and Rhine are now both drunk by slave *ethnē* — slaves, that is, to the empire (*Anth. Pal.* 16.61).¹⁰² Ovid ends his long poem of *Metamorphoses* with a sustained historical paean to Julius Caesar and Augustus (15.745–870); and Manilius addresses the god Augustus, describing the long line of Greek and Roman heroes who are in the stars, culminating with Julius Caesar — Augustus has come from heaven and one day will go back (*Astronomica* 1.7–9 and 798–803).

Under Nero, Seneca has some extravagant lines on the new ruler's solar epiphany (*Apocol.* 4); Calpurnius Siculus eulogises a young god-emperor from the perspective of beautifully spoken Virgilian peasants (*Ecl.* 1 and 7);¹⁰³ and Lucan delivers a magnificent burst of over-the-top homage to Nero's (future) divine position in the firmament (*Bell. Civ.* 1.33–66). Lucan begins this passage with the arresting idea that, as the gods had to fight the giants to establish Olympian rule, so it was worth the slaughter of the civil wars to reach the rule of Nero: 'multum Roma tamen debet civilibus armis, / quod tibi res acta est' ('yet Rome owes much to civil war, because it was for you that all was done, Caesar': *Bell. Civ.* 1.33–45).¹⁰⁴

These are some of the relevant Augustan and Julio-Claudian texts. They are relatively brief poetic flights about the emperor mostly inserted into much larger works that were far in form and content from panegyric. The cameos are different in that they have such encomium and ruler representation as their sole subject matter. Only at the end of the first century do we have full set-piece eulogies of the emperor (Domitian) inserted by Statius into his *Silvae* (4.1–3): 4.1 is for the emperor's seventeenth consulship; 4.2 is an impassioned poetic thank-you letter for dinner at the new Flavian palace; and 4.3, on the Via Domitiana, ends with a long purple passage in which Domitian, like Hercules and Bacchus, will go beyond the stars and the flaming sun (4.3.155–6).¹⁰⁵ There is much compressed eulogy of Domitian, too, in Martial's epigrams, especially Book 9.¹⁰⁶ These texts, from Virgil to Martial, give us poetic, no-holds-barred homage paid by subjects to god-rulers, of a kind that also animates the cameos. Both the poems and the cameos were untrammelled by senatorial niceties, and they stand close in allegory, poetic style and conceptual framework.

That cameo production does not overlap in time with the later poets should not be a concern here: the texts can be taken together as a richly varied set of representations of early imperial majesty. The differences between them seem less to do with chronology, more with individual author and with literary genre. High-quality cameos may for the most part stop after Nero but not, as Flavian-period poets show well, because the character of the Roman god-emperor had changed. Statius and Martial were writing in a more explicit and sustained way about the emperor's personal *habitus*, but enough panegyric material is preserved in the earlier poets to show that the ideas were not new in the Flavian period. Further, we should not think of the cameos and texts as

¹⁰² Edition of Crinagoras' poems: Ypsilanti 2018. Note also *Anth. Pal.* 9.419 (Caesar's fame extends from Germany to Morocco, from Libya to the Pyrenees) and 9.562 (birds greet the god Caesar).

¹⁰³ Since Champlin 1978, opinion remains divided on his date, in the first or the third century A.D.; see now Ruurd Nauta's paper in the present volume of *JRS*.

¹⁰⁴ On the interpretation of the seemingly outlandish ideas in this encomium, Hinds 1987; Hunink 1993; Dewar 1994; Roche 2009, 8; Konstan 2018, 347–9, 'a separable set piece ... detachable ... isolable, a foreign body'; Karakasis 2018, 368–9 and n. 63, hints at 'inter-textual subversion of various narrative "voices"'.
¹⁰⁵ On Stat., *Silv.* 4, see Coleman 1988.

¹⁰⁶ Martial on Domitian: Scott 1936: 133–9; Sullivan 1991; Garthwaite 1993; Coleman 1998; Nauta 2002; Seager 2009; Henriksen 2012: xvi–xxxii.

directly influencing, illustrating, or referring to each other. They surely inhabited separate zones of the contemporary cultural landscape. They have obvious differences. For example, the cameos never do irony, and their subjects do not map directly onto the poetry in terms of narrative theme. The two media, however, share intersecting ideas in and around aspects of the emperor's person, powers and style. Some points of contact may be explored.

The cosmic topography of the cameos finds echoes in the texts: there is the *orbis* of the earth, the *mundus* above it where some gods live, and above that is *caelum*, sky, heavens, and beyond that the stars. The emperor rules the world, land and sea.¹⁰⁷ The god-emperor is both like Jupiter and rules on earth on his behalf, in the manner of Augustus on the Gemma Augustea (11). 'En! hic est deus, hunc iubet beatis / pro se Iuppiter imperare terris' ('See! He is a god; him Jupiter commands to rule the happy earth in his stead': Stat., *Silv.* 4.3.128–9). This was a common idea, found for example in explicit form in Pliny's *Panegyric* (80.5). The poets simply give it exalted expression: 'Iuppiter arces / temperat aetherias et mundi regna triformis, / terra sub Augusto est' ('Jupiter controls the heights of heaven and the kingdoms of the triformed universe; but the earth is under Augustus' sway': Ov., *Met.* 15.859–60).¹⁰⁸ When his work is over, the emperor, like Augustus on the Grand Camée (21), will rise to heaven: he will return there to rule with Jupiter (Manilius, *Astronomica* 1.799–803). 'When your watch on earth is over and you seek the stars at last, the celestial palace you have chosen will welcome you' ('te, cum statione peracta / astra petes serus, praelati regia caeli / excipiet': Luc., *Bell. Civ.* 1.45–7).

The emperor's powers are derived from and are most like those of Jupiter, something also constantly thematised in the cameos, with the aegis, sceptre, thunderbolt and eagle. We saw how the two cameos with Claudius (35) and Nero (41) riding on eagles represent the *ne plus ultra* of living imperial supremacy, like that of Jupiter in heaven. Such attributes appear in the poets too: the Curetes guarded Jupiter's birth with banging of spear and shield, 'but the father of the gods himself guarded you, Caesar, and instead of spear and shield there was thunderbolt and aegis' ('pro iaculo et parma fulmen et aegis erat': Mart. 9.20.7–10.) For the poets, the emperor is a man who will soon become a god in heaven, and there is constant looking forward — 'may it be distant' — to his future role among the gods, as if his full divinity will come only posthumously.¹⁰⁹ At the same time, however, the reigning emperor is simply a god not further qualified: *deus, iuvenis deus, divus, numen*. He is a god and one 'better and mightier than nature' ('natura melior potentiorque': Stat., *Silv.* 4.3.135).¹¹⁰ Such apparent contradictions between present and future divinity did not worry the poets. The cameos negotiate such difficulties by creating distinctive imperial-divine figures appropriate for now and for later.

Sometimes the poets dare to turn around the idea of imperial assimilation to the divine. Writing about a statue of Hercules with the features of the emperor (Domitian), a poet comments that Caesar deigns to descend on the features of Hercules (Mart. 9.64), and Hercules is said to 'bear the fair features of our god Caesar' ('pulchra dei Caesaris ora geris': Mart. 9.65).¹¹¹ Something similar occurs on a striking cameo of Minerva in Paris which has long hair, a helmet and an aegis, but what are clearly Domitian's facial features.¹¹² The poet's idea is that the emperor does not borrow power-costumes from

¹⁰⁷ On rulers of land and sea in late Hellenistic perspective, see Schuler 2007.

¹⁰⁸ On this passage and the poet's subversive use of Jupiter, Hejduk 2020: 244–5.

¹⁰⁹ For this frequent theme, Verg., *G.* 1.24–5; Ov., *Met.* 15.868 ('tarda sit illa dies', 'may that day be far off'); Manilius, *Astronomica* 1.799–800; Luc., *Bell. Civ.* 1.45–7 (both quoted above); and Calp., *Ecl.* 4.4.140–1 ('let him be a god and yet loath to exchange his palace for the sky').

¹¹⁰ On the punctuation of this passage and imperial superiority over nature, Coleman 1988, on 4.134–6.

¹¹¹ Familiar earlier in Hellenistic epigrams on royal-divine images: *Anth. Pal.* 16.68 (Aphrodite-Berenike) and 16.100 (Herakles-Lysimachos), with Gutzwiller 2002, 93–4.

¹¹² Megow 1987: 221–2, A 110, pl. 37.1 (Domitian); Vollenweider and Avisseau-Broustet 2003: 117–18, no. 132 (late Nero). The aegis is worn over Minerva's chest in the manner of a plated brassière, as never worn by emperors.

the gods; instead the gods employ the forms and features of the emperor. The conceit was made possible by a century of the kind of images we find on the cameos, in which imperial and divine bodies and costumes are fused in striking representations of god-emperors — such as the Augustus on the Gemma Augustea (11) or the Nero on the cameo in Nancy (41). In the poets, ‘Jupiter’ can sometimes be understood, without further specification, to mean the emperor (for example, *Mart.* 5.6).¹¹³

Both cameos and poetic texts seem to have been looking for ways to answer the pressing contemporary question: the emperor is a god, but what *kind* of god is he? In different ways, much space is given in the texts to the emperor’s appearance, his precise mien, the specific character of his god-like habitus. Already in the 30s B.C., Virgil’s peasants are talking of the distant imperial divinity with such a question in mind (*Ecl.* 1.6–7 and 18):

Tityrus: *O Meliboee, deus nobis haec otia fecit.
namque erit ille mihi semper deus.*

...

Meliboeus: *sed tamen, iste deus qui sit, da, Tityre, nobis.*

Tityrus: O Meliboeus, a god gave us this peace.
For he will always be a god to me. ...

Meliboeus: but still tell me, Tityrus, who may this god be?

Lucan declares to Nero that he will have the choice ‘what god you want to be and where to establish your universal throne’ (*‘quis deus esse velis, ubi regnum ponere mundi’*: *Bell. Civ.* 1.52). In Calpurnius Siculus, a peasant wonders aloud ‘whether Caesar is Jupiter himself on earth in altered guise, or one other of the powers above concealed under an assumed mortal semblance’ (*Ecl.* 4.142–4), and in a striking phrase the same peasant later calls the emperor ‘a Palatine Apollo’ (*‘nam tibi fas est / sacra Palatini penetralia visere Phoebi’*, ‘for you have the right to visit the holy inner shrine of the Palatine Phoebus’: *Ecl.* 4.158–9).

Another peasant (Corydon), returning from seeing the games at Rome, is questioned about the emperor’s appearance by his friend Lycotas (*Calp.*, *Ecl.* 7.76–8):

nunc, tibi si propius venerandum cernere numen
fors dedit et praesens vultumque habitumque notasti,
dic age dic, Corydon, quae sit mihi forma deorum.

Now, if you had the chance to see the venerable divinity more closely and observed in person his face and his comportment (*habitus*), tell, come on, tell (me), Corydon, what the appearance of the gods may be to me.

Since his friend has seen the emperor with his own eyes, Lycotas wants to know how he should imagine the gods to look. Corydon explains he was a long way off and replies ambivalently that ‘unless my sight played me a trick, I thought in that one face the looks of Mars and of Apollo were combined’ (*‘nisi me visus decepit, in uno / et Martis vultus et Apollinis esse putavi’*: *Calp.*, *Ecl.* 7.76–9). When Statius has dinner on the Palatine, he gets closer and is able to take a better look at the ruler’s appearance: the emperor is calm, serene, radiant (*Silv.* 4.2.41: ‘on him alone had I leisure avidly to gaze, tranquil in his expression’). Statius concludes in an open-ended way that this is how the supreme god looks when he surveys the limits of Ocean.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Stimulating treatment of emperor/Jupiter relations: Hejduk 2020.

¹¹⁴ A calm and serene personal style was also a leading characteristic of Augustan gods in Verg., *Aen.* 1.127 and

The serenity, tranquillity, and calm of the emperor's appearance, often combined with his bright radiance, recur in different poems in some quantity. Such texts are significant in the context of the cameos because they are strong poetic formulations of what is perhaps the leading stylistic and dramaturgical effect of the cameo compositions, namely their still, calm majesty and their gleaming technical effect. Indeed, the poets give us a fuller way to understand precisely what the much-discussed 'classicism' of early imperial style had come to mean in contemporary terms in the first century A.D.

The radiation of light was a key characteristic of the Olympian gods shared by the emperor.¹¹⁵ Already Horace praises the light that shines from the emperor's face on his people when Augustus returns to Rome: 'more pleasing runs the day and brighter shines the sun' (*Odes* 4.5.5–8). In Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis*, Apollo announces the return of a golden age in which the emperor (young Nero) appears like the sun (*Apocol.* 4, trans. Champlin 2003b, 112):

Talis Caesar adest, talem iam Roma Neronem
aspiciet. Flagrat nitidus fulgore remisso
vultus, et adfuso cervix formosa capillo.

Such a Caesar is at hand, such a Nero shall Rome now gaze upon. His radiant face blazes with gentle brilliance and his shapely neck with flowing hair.

The people see the effulgence of the emperor's face for themselves. The unusual mention of the hair on his neck corresponds indeed to a special aspect of Nero's public portrait image that we see already, for example, on the Nancy cameo (41).¹¹⁶ Two passages of Statius quoted earlier combine the tranquillity of the emperor's appearance with its shining splendour: 'tranquillum vultus et maiestate serena / mulcentem radios' ('tranquil in his expression, with serene majesty tempering his radiance': *Silv.* 4.2.42–3), and 'clarius ipse nitens et primo maior Eoo' ('shining more brightly himself and mightier than the early morning star': *Silv.* 4.1.4). There is much serenity and effulgence in the face of Martial's emperor too: 'nosti tempora tu Iovis sereni / cum fulget placido suoque vultu' ('you know the times when Jove [Domitian] is serene, when he shines with his own gentle countenance': 5.6.9). So much light is said to pour from the face of Martial's Caesar that the emperor brings illumination to the people even at night-time (8.21.11–12). Imperial radiance streams from his face: 'hic stetit Arctoi formosus pulvere belli / purpureum fundens Caesar ab ore iubar' ('here stood Caesar, beauteous with the dust of northern war, pouring brilliant radiance from his countenance': 8.65). *Purpureum* refers to the imperial colour (purple) as well as the brightness of the light emitted by the emperor.

An epigram of Martial that is devoted to a bust of the emperor worshipped by the poet's addressee (Carus) has multiple points of interest in this context (9.24, trans. D. Shackleton-Bailey, Loeb):

Quis Palatinos imitatus imagine vultus
Phidiacum Latio marmore vicit ebur?
Haec mundi facies, haec sunt Iovis ora sereni:
Sic tonat ille deus cum sine nube tonat.
Non solam tribuit Pallas tibi, Care, coronam;
Effigiem domini, quam colis, illa dedit.

148–53 (*placidum caput* of Neptune who calms things, as a good leader calms a seditious mob) and 1.255 (Jupiter's face calms storms, *tempestatesque serenat*).

¹¹⁵ Divine light emanating from Olympians, for example, *Hym. Hom. Cer.* 189 and 276–80.

¹¹⁶ This hair on the nape of the neck was part of Nero's second portrait type, in use between 54 and 59, and is not in itself a good argument for thinking this passage was inserted later, after 59 (contra Champlin 2003a: 280).

Who surpassed Phidias' ivory in Latin marble with this bust portraying the Palatine countenance? This is the face of the firmament, this is the aspect of unclouded Jove. So the god thunders when he thunders from a clear sky. It was not merely a wreath, Carus, that Pallas accorded you; she gave you the Lord's effigy, which you worship.

Domitian is Jove, his face is calm, unruffled, the face of the heavens, like a cloudless sky, but he can still thunder.¹¹⁷ The bust of the emperor is of Italian marble but it aspires both to the material (ivory) and to the style (high classical impassivity) of a divine statue by Phidias. The cameo-carvers achieved precisely what the poet speaks of — an elevated Phidian majesty in banded sardonyx, with gleaming, ivory-like imperial portrait images.¹¹⁸

As on the cameos, the style of classical calm extends to those around the emperor: 'so gentle are their tempers ... so unruffled is their calm ...' ('tam placidae mentes ... / tam pacata quies') '... no servant of Caesar displays his own *mores* but only those of his lord-ruler' (Mart. 9.79.5–8). The tranquil style of the emperor is the style of his court.

The imperial cameos are Hellenistic in conception and extravagant divine language. They might also have been Hellenistic in style — energetic, dynamic, emotional, vigorous in pose and action. There were cameos available in this style, both multi-figure scenes and single busts — for example, the dynamic, foaming-haired portrait of Jupiter on a cameo in the Hermitage, or the cameo in Naples (signed by its maker Athenion) of a powerful figure of Jupiter in a wild, careering four-horse chariot riding down two heavily muscled Pergamene-style snake-legged giants who writhe in contorted postures.¹¹⁹ These examples show a clear and open path that was *not* taken by the imperial cameos. Their concern is instead with a calm, static majesty and imperial divinity that assures peace and prosperity. The serene tranquillity of the emperor on first-century cameos is the style of world conquest already achieved, of beneficent rule by a god who no longer needs to struggle and fight. Classical style had become in the Hellenistic period the style of the gods, of their supra-human beauty, their icy impassive majesty (*semnotēs, maiestas*). The early imperial cameos combine this 'classical' divinity with imperial portrait types to craft effective images of new-style god-emperors — 'pulchra dei Caesaris ora' ('the beautiful face of the god Caesar': Mart. 9.64). The still impassivity becomes a sustained visual metaphor for peace, a constant theme in the poets.¹²⁰

The tranquil person of the emperor was also an important part of his presentation on other first-century monuments. Even when there is action around him, represented by figures such as soldiers, attendants and divinities, the figure of the emperor himself is usually notably calm and impassive.¹²¹ Under the Flavians, and especially Trajan, imperial warfare and the ideology of the emperor as the necessary commander in the field made a strong comeback. Among other places, this major ideological shift was announced in the Arch of Titus and most loudly in two great Trajanic war monuments, the frieze of Trajan's column and the colossal thundering Hellenistic-style battle frieze

¹¹⁷ 'Haec mundi facies' ('this is the face of the firmament'): Shackleton-Bailey (on Mart. 9.24, Loeb) remarks that Martial here 'goes one better than Ovid, *Tristia* 2.8.19–21: "When I look at this portrait I seem to see Rome; for he (Augustus) bears the face of his fatherland"'. See also Henriksen 2012, on Mart. 9.24.3.

¹¹⁸ We may contrast the prose description of an emperor's appearance — strong, tall, dignified, with greying hair, a sign of premature ageing — in Plin., *Pan.* 4.7.

¹¹⁹ Hermitage Jupiter: Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 373, fig. 234. Naples Gigantomachy by Athenion: Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 374, fig. 240.

¹²⁰ Peace-prosperity theme, for example, Verg., *Ecl.* 1.6; Hor., *Carm. saec.* 59–60 (blessed *Copia* with full horn); Calp., *Ecl.* 1.42–68 and 4.8 and 85; Luc., *Bell. Civ.* 1.61.

¹²¹ Some examples: (1) Augustus on Boscoreale Cup A: Kuttner 1995: 13–17, 94–8, pls. 2 and 3; (2) Titus in triumphal chariot on Arch of Titus: Pfanner 1983: 44–71, pls. 45–53; (3) Domitian-Nerva in both *profectio* and *adventus* in Frieze A and B from Palazzo della Cancelleria: Langer and Pfanner in Fless *et al.* 2018: 18–90, pls. 6–57.

known today as the Great Trajanic Frieze.¹²² Here perhaps is another reason why ‘tranquil’ cameos of imperial peace fell out of favour.

Imperial war and conquest when they appear on the cameos are represented as absolute: imperial enemies are outsider barbarians to be crushed, and war is confined to the hopelessly defeated who cower under the imperial stage in the Gemma Augustea (11) and the Grand Camée (21) and under the imperial centaur chariot in the Leiden cameo (32). The poets give more space to imperial conquest and have more complex attitudes to it, some fully positive. For example, the defeat of the vile Egyptian queen is celebrated with a famous call to drink (Hor., *Carm.* 1.37: ‘nunc est bibendum’), and Augustan princes receive fulsome praise for tough northern victories (Hor., *Carm.* 4.4 and 14). There are plenty of recent conquests, but also conquests waiting to be finished soon.¹²³ Victory is total and assured. For texts and cameos, victory and conquest are the security bedrock on which rest the peace and ordered plenty assured by the emperor.

A telling aspect shared by texts and cameos is the insertion of Roman elements, in addition to the emperor’s portrait identity, that anchor soaring compositions to the here-and-now and distinguish imperial subjects from Olympian ones. The poets combine the perfect emperor’s god-like absolutism with his respect for Roman laws. For Manilius, the emperor is a straightforward god, *deus*, but he is also addressed with constitutional-sounding titles and phrases, ‘patriae princepsque paterque’ (‘you who rule the world, obedient to your August laws’: *Astronomica* 1.7–9). Ovid’s account of the superiority of Augustus’ rule to that of Julius Caesar presents a skilful mixture of traditional Roman and (future) heavenly status (*Met.* 15.832–4, trans. F. J. Miller, Loeb):

Pace data terris animum ad civilia vertet
iura suum legesque feret iustissimus auctor
exemploque suo mores reget ...

When peace has been bestowed on all lands he shall turn his mind to the rights of citizens, and as a most righteous jurist promote the laws; by his own example shall he direct the ways of men

...

In Calpurnius’ fourth *Eclogue*, Corydon thinks to sing of *aurea saecula*, ‘to praise even that god who is sovereign over nations, cities, and toga-clad peace (*pacemque togatam*)’ (*Ecl.* 4.5). *Pax togata* captures the idea of peace as both civilian and Roman: it is a Roman-citizen peace. A toga is used in a striking and analogous way both for Augustus on the Actium cameo in Vienna (10) and for Tiberius on the Gemma Augustea (11). On the Actium cameo, the emperor wears a bulky toga, incongruous in a Triton-drawn sea-chariot: art conceals this mixed metaphor. The toga here is perhaps the dress of a *triumphator*, suited to a victory that secures *pax togata*, peace for Roman citizens. In Virgil’s *Georgics*, Caesar’s marble temple that the poet will build is to be at Mantua and will have Roman victories depicted in relief on its doors (*G.* 3.24–33). The return of the Golden Age announced in Calpurnius Siculus’ first *Eclogue* will be a return to the laws of peace-loving Numa: Numa quells the violence of the legions and consular (‘constitutional’) government returns (*Ecl.* 1.33–88, at 65–8). Roman laws are a key ingredient of the new empire. The young god-ruler (Nero), like Apollo, ‘will bring prosperous times to the weary and break the silence of the laws’ (‘felicia lassis / saecula praestabit legumque silentia rumpet’: Sen., *Apocol.* 4). That is, the rule of law, which had broken down, for example, in the execution of senators under Claudius, will be

¹²² Arch: Pfanner 1983. Column: Settis 1988. Great Trajanic Frieze: Touati 1987.

¹²³ A few examples. Conquests past: Verg., *Aen.* 8.720–8. Conquests to come: Prop. 3.4 and 3.10; Verg., *Aen.* 6.796–805; Stat., *Silv.* 4.1.40–2, Bactria, Babylon, India, Arabia, China. Conquests already achieved in north, conquests to come in east, west, and south: Stat., *Silv.* 4.3.153–7, with Coleman 1988. Flavian war becomes prominent too in Martial, Henriksen 2012: xx–xxiv.

restored. Lighter in tone, Martial declares he prefers dinner with Domitian to dinner with Jupiter: ‘it’s *my* Jupiter, see, that keeps me on earth’ (‘*me meus in terris Iuppiter ecce tenet*’: Mart. 9.91.6). Lucan even brings a pointed Roman aspect into the traditional claim to divine inspiration for his epic poem: if he has Nero as his divine inspiration (‘*sed mihi iam numen*’, ‘but to me you are already a divinity’), he has no need of Apollo or Bacchus: ‘you alone are sufficient to give force to a Roman poem’ (‘*tu satis ad vires Romana in carmina dandas*’: Luc., *Bell. Civ.* 1.63–6).

Statius, too has good examples. Domitian rises with the sun and the stars, brighter than them, but he also deploys the laws of Latium, curule chairs, and the fasces of high Roman office (*Silv.* 4.1.3–10, quoted above). This may be natural in a poem celebrating the emperor’s entry into a consulship, but such an occasion for a poem of this kind was itself a choice, allowing a desirable merging of absolute and constitutional rule.

We have seen that the cameos, too, like to insert real and telling Roman components: laurel wreaths, oak wreaths, the toga, the commander’s cuirass and the augur’s *lituus*. The oak wreath, *corona civica*, awarded originally for the saving of citizen’s lives in battle, *ob cives servatos*, took on under the empire a wider metaphorical significance, the saving of all citizens’ lives (7, 14, 16, 28 and 33). In a similar way, the *lituus*, the augur’s staff for marking out parts of the sky for divination, also took on a wider metaphorical meaning, a tool for the supreme augur to mark out the propitious *templum* above his global empire (11, 21 and 35).

V CONCLUSION

Like the poets, the cameos offered their own detailed answer to a nagging question of the time: what kind of god is the emperor? On the one hand, the cameos do not show actual fighting, sacrificial ritual, or traditional imperial roles such as arrivals, departures, speeches to troops, or cash handouts that were the staple subjects of public imperial media (coins and monumental reliefs). They had other, higher concerns — with absolute power, victory, peace, abundance, key family members and designated successors. Nor, on the other hand, do the cameos insert the emperors into ready-made mythological costumes and narratives, in the manner of the Actium gem in Boston (9) or some of the imperial reliefs in the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias.¹²⁴ They turn their back, too, on the full-throated Hellenistic-style dynamism of such monuments and images. The cameos present static, situational tableaux that frame carefully elaborated answers to questions about the character of imperial rule that intersect in interesting and unpredictable ways with those of the poems. They seek in a sustained and effective way to define a distinctively Roman imperial majesty. We see absolute god-rulers of a world-empire at peace, frozen in staged allegories and still moments of classical tranquillity, but they are also distinctively *Roman* god-rulers, recognisable by their sharply defined portraits, their attributes and their cool aloof style — their *maiestas serena*.

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¹²⁴ For example, Claudius with Britannia and Nero with Armenia are each represented as a Hellenistic Achilles with his own defeated Amazon-style queen: Smith 2013: 140–7, C 8 and C 10, pls. 58–9 and 61–2.

APPENDIX: CAMEOS DISCUSSED

Details of the main cameos discussed are given here, sometimes with further discussion of their dates, contexts and identifications. Included are forty-one items, of which one is an intaglio (9) and three are Ptolemaic glass cameos (1–3). The others are high-quality ‘Palatine’-style imperial cameos with imperial subjects, from Augustus to Nero. Excluded are cameos of this period that were re-worked in antiquity and now present as objects of the period of their re-cutting (some of the most important examples are discussed briefly or referred to in nn. 35–6, 38, 40, 47, 61, 64 and 90). Also excluded are small portraits in the round made from semi-precious stones similar to those of the cameos; they are objects of a different category and probably function. Traditional identifying names are retained for some well-known cameos, such as the ‘Gemma Augustea’ or ‘Gemma Claudia’. Precise names and dates are given when they have verifiable evidence. Identifications given with a question mark(?) indicate little more than 50 per cent likelihood, and other possibilities should be left open. The emperor Gaius is called Caligula to avoid confusion. The bibliographical notes cite main publications and differences of opinion.

L A T E P T O L E M A I C G L A S S C A M E O S

1. Late Ptolemy (Geneva)

Geneva, Musée d’Art et d’Histoire, inv. 70/20886. Glass, three layers. H: 2.0 cm.

Bust of king, facing right, wearing chlamys and broad diadem, full-faced with pronounced aquiline nose. Late second or first century B.C.

Vollenweider 1979: 69–70, cat. 65; Plantzos 1996a: 41, 43, cat. A 3, fig.3 (Ptolemy VIII Physkon).

2. Late Ptolemy (Geneva)

Geneva, Musée d’Art et d’Histoire, inv. 64. Glass, three layers. H: 2.3 cm. Hair and brow much damaged.

Head of king, facing left, wearing diadem. The maker cut deeply through the upper brown layer to reach the middle white layer so that the diadem can be the correct colour (white). Second–first century B.C.

Vollenweider 1979: 68–9, cat. 64; Plantzos 1996a: 41–3, cat. A 6, fig.6 (Ptolemy V or VI).

3. Late Ptolemy (London)

London, British Museum, inv. 1923,0401.1074. Glass, three layers. H: 2.5 cm.

Ptolemaic king wearing diademed *kausia*, cuirass and chlamys. Late second or early first century B.C. The same portrait type in *kausia* and cuirass appears at the same scale on a glass cameo, less well preserved, found at Herculaneum in 1936 (Plantzos 1996a, 41–2, fig. 5) and shows these glass cameos were made in series for distribution.

Walters 1926: no. 3824, fig. 4; Plantzos 1996a: 41, A 4, fig. 4; Galbois 2018: 219, V 3, fig. 71.

A U G U S T U S

4. Augustus with eagle-sceptre (Aachen)

Aachen, Cathedral (part of Lothair Cross). Sardonyx, three layers. H: 8.0 cm. Cracked horizontally through middle; chips from edge and left upper arm.

Bust of Augustus, facing left, wears laurel, cloak and armour, holds up sceptre with eagle in raised right hand. Some have seen the attribute as a ‘triumphal’ sceptre or military standard and so as

one of those retrieved from the Parthians in 20 B.C., but it does not much resemble a military standard. It is better taken as a creative adaptation of the sceptre with the addition of Jupiter's eagle.

Identification agreed. Furtwängler 1906 ('Triumphator'); Vollenweider 1966, 68; Zadoks 1966: 98 (style and 'lifeless arm' indicate Constantinian date); Möbius 1985: 42–3 (triumphal sceptre, Parthian connection, c. 20 B.C.); Simon 1986a: 155 (sceptre is Parthian standard, c. 20 B.C.); Megow 1987: 155, cat. A 9, pl. 2.5 (style and late dates of other Augustan cameos suggest c. 5 B.C.–A.D. 5 at earliest; no connection with Parthia/standards); Hausmann 1990: esp. 388–9, n. 24 (follows Simon 1986a; armour shows reference is not to a triumphator); Hallett 2005: 164–5, pl. 94 ('sceptre of triumphator'); Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 148, fig. 608 (follows Simon 1986a; 'sceptre' is an *aquila*, and portrait is of Prima Porta type, c. 20 B.C.).

5. Augustus with aegis and spear (Blacas Cameo, London)

London, British Museum, inv. 1867.0507.484. Strozzi-Blacas Cameo. Sardonyx, four layers. H: 12.8 cm. Elaborate metal diadem is medieval addition in place of original wreath (Kyrieleis 1971, 169 n. 25).

Naked bust of Augustus, facing left in back-three-quarter view, wearing an aegis slung over his left (forward) shoulder held by strap over his right shoulder. The outer side of the aegis carries a Medusa head; the inner side, seen on the far side of the left shoulder, has a bearded male deity (perhaps Phobos, as in H., *Il.* 11.36, on Agamemnon's shield). The emperor held a spear as if in his right hand and once wore a wreath; its lightly fluttering ends are preserved at the back, tied in a bow.

Identification agreed. Kyrieleis 1971: 168–9 n. 25, 180, fig. 5 (bearded head on aegis, also on New York and Gonzaga cameos [here 6 and 19] is Phobos, possibly based on *Iliad*); Richter 1971: 99–100, cat. 474; Möbius 1985: 56; Megow 1987: 166, cat. A 18, pl. 8.6 (posthumous, early Tiberian); Maderna-Lauter 1988: 473, cat. 279 (Tiberian); Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 158, fig. 621 (Tiberian, Phobos on aegis represents emperor's possession of powers of Jupiter and Mars).

6. Augustus with aegis and spear (New York)

Arundel-Marlborough-Evans Cameo. New York, Metropolitan Museum, inv. 42.11.30. Sardonyx, two layers. H: 3.7 cm. Minor damage at tip of nose and end of spear.

Same format as Strozzi-Blacas cameo (5): naked bust of laureate Augustus, facing left in back-three-quarter view, with aegis over left shoulder. The aegis has a Medusa head on its outer side, a head of bearded Phobos(?) on its inner side. A spear is held as if in the emperor's right hand.

Identification as Augustus agreed by all (except Möbius), though with differences of date of manufacture. Kyrieleis 1971: 168–70; Richter 1971: 100, cat. 477 (bearded figure may be a wind god); Megow 1987: 170–1, cat. A 29, pl. 28.3 (Claudian period); Möbius 1964: 22 (Tiberius?); Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 158, fig. 622; Boardman 2009: 54, no. 52.

7. Augustus with wreath of oak and olive (Paris)

Paris, Cabinet des Médailles, 234. Sardonyx, two layers. H: 4.9 cm. Known since 1534, in treasury of St Denis until French Revolution. Once attached to reliquary bust of St Hilarius (1634). Crack at lower left.

Naked bust of Augustus, facing right, wearing sharply articulated wreath made of thin interwoven branches of olive and oak. The one has thin leaves and olives, the other acorns and oak leaves.

Identification agreed. Richter 1971: 100, cat. 475; Megow 1987: 170, cat. A 28, pl. 28.4 (Claudian); Vollenweider and Avisseau-Broustet 2003: 49–51, cat. 52 (25–20 B.C.).

8. Divus Augustus with radiate crown (Cologne)

Cologne, Römisch-Germanisches Museum, inv. 70.3. Sardonyx, two-layered. H: 6.7 cm.

Head of Divus Augustus, facing right, wearing radiate crown.

Identification agreed. Zwierlein-Diehl 1980 (full publication); Jucker 1982b: 100–1; Möbius 1985: 43–4; Boschung 1993b: 7 n. 65, 90 n. 433; M. Bergmann 1998: 108, 112, pl. 22.2; Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 155–7, fig. 614a–b (soon after A.D. 14); Boardman 2009: 239, no. 543.

9. Augustus-Neptune with team of hippocamps (Boston)

Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, inv. 27.733. Said to have been found at Hadrumetum in Tunisia. Formerly Tyszkiewicz and Bartlett Collections. Red-orange carnelian intaglio. W: 2.1 cm.

Octavian-Augustus with trident, naked with short cloak behind, in striding posture, driving a fiery chariot team of four fish-bodied hippocamps through turbulent seas. The head and chest of a male swimmer appears in waves beneath hippocamps' front hooves — either a defeated opponent or perhaps more likely a youthful marine deity. The emperor is recognised by his short 'portrait' hair and distinctive profile. Inscription in Greek in field above: ΠΟΠΙΛ(ΙΟΥ) ΑΛΒΑΝ(ΟΥ), 'Of Popilius Albanus', probably the gem's owner.

Identification agreed. Vollenweider 1966: 51; Richter 1971: 101, cat. 483; Laubscher 1974: 248–50 (sees Marcus Antonius in swimmer under hippocamps hooves); Hölscher 1985: 97 (refers to Actium, Marcus Antonius in water); Simon 1986a: 114; Maderna-Lauter 1988: 467, cat. 247 (50–25 B.C.); Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 128, fig. 505 (refers to Actium, Marcus Antonius in water); Hölscher 2019: 264–5, fig. 102 (after 31 B.C., Marcus Antonius in water).

10. Augustus in triton-drawn sea-chariot (Vienna)

Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum 5 (inv. IX a 56). Sardonyx, two layers. W: 6.6 cm. Heads of all five figures are modern restorations. Left arm and sceptre of emperor broken off. Traces of gilding on left capricorn held up by Triton at left.

Octavian-Augustus, wearing toga, holding laurel branch in right hand, once with sceptre in raised left hand, standing frontally in chariot drawn by tritons. The front of the chariot box is framed with oak leaves, and the tip of the chariot pole is decorated with a sea-shell. The tritons may be named A to D, left to right. B and C pull the chariot with shoulder straps and raise their 'inner' hands heraldically to salute the emperor. B holds a sea-horn in his right hand, and C holds a dolphin in his left hand. A and D are accompanying outriders. A's left hand holds a sea-horn, and his raised right hand holds an oak-leaf-framed shield with heraldic capricorns to either side. D's left hand holds a steering oar, while his right hand holds up an orb on which winged Victory has landed, holding out a wreath to the emperor.

Identification agreed. Eichler and Kris 1927: 50–1, cat. 5 (immediately after 27 B.C.); Hölscher 1967: 9 (celebrates Actium); Laubscher 1974: 250–1 (late Augustan); Hölscher 1985: 97–8 (late Augustan); Oberleitner 1985: 35, fig. 17 (soon after 27 B.C.); Megow 1987: 164, cat. A 11, pl. 7.19 (late Augustan); Maderna-Lauter 1988: 466–7, cat. 246 (late Augustan); Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 147, fig. 603 and 2008: 92–7, 259–62, no. 5 (late Augustan, restorations sixteenth century).

11. Gemma Augustea: Tiberius, Germanicus, and Augustus, A.D. 12–14 (Vienna)

Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, inv. IX a 79. Sardonyx, two layers. W: 23.0 cm. Known since 1246 (in Toulouse). Missing togate figure at left edge in upper register. Right side uneven. Already had this form in Toulouse, so trimming of broken edges was probably ancient, probably late antique(?).

In the upper register, the identifications are mostly sure and agreed, from left to right: (1) a missing *togatus* broken off at the left the folds of whose toga can be seen between the spokes of the chariot (Drusus Younger?); (2) Tiberius togate with sceptre takes the hand of the missing *togatus* and steps from a chariot (probably a quadriga) driven by (3) Victory; (4) a cuirassed prince, Germanicus; (5)

armed Roma seated on a double throne with (6) Augustus who is half-naked and holds a *lituus* and a sceptre. Behind Augustus, at the right, there are three divinities whose names are not fully agreed: (7) a goddess, veiled and wearing a city-wall crown, holding a wreath over the head of Augustus (Oikoumene, alternatively and less likely Tyche, Magna Mater, Kybele, or Rhea-Kybele); (8) a bearded male god, naked to the waist, holding a (missing) attribute in his left hand(?) (Oceanus, alternatively and less likely Kronos/Saturn, Neptune, or Aion); and (9) a goddess seated low down, leaning on Augustus' throne, accompanied by two small children and holding a cornucopia (Ge-Tellus, or less likely Italia). Further elements in the upper register include a sun (or moon) disc or nimbus, with Capricorn floating in front of it, in the field above Roma and Augustus; and a plain Attic-style helmet and large spear-head beneath Tiberius' chariot; and a heroic, Corinthian-style helmet, two shields and an eagle beneath the double throne. One of the shields is a rectangular and curved *scutum*, the other is a large, round hoplite-style shield.

The lower register includes the following, from left to right: two armoured soldiers (unlikely to be divinities such as Mars and Quirinus/Romulus, as some see them) and two assistants in loin cloths (probably not, as some see them, Dioscuri) who raise a trophy from which dangles a *pelta* engraved with a scorpion motif. A defeated barbarian woman and man sit on the ground under the trophy pole, she with her head in her hands, he bearded and with his hands bound behind his back. At the right, there are two figures, one female seen from behind, wearing a leather cuirass and leather boots, and holding two throwing spears (Diana, Luna, an Amazon, Bendis, and Hispania have been proposed), and one male wearing an *exomis* with sword/dagger and petasos-like or *kausia*-like helmet (Mercury, a Macedonian soldier, a Thracian, and Neoptolemos have been proposed). They manhandle a further defeated barbarian woman and man, one standing, one kneeling in supplication.

Identifications of the imperial protagonists are now mostly agreed. Kähler 1968: 17–39 (with earlier literature); Richter 1971: 104, cat. 501; Bastet 1979; Simon 1986a: 156–61; 1986b; Megow 1987: 155–63, cat. A 10; Zanker 1987: 232–4; Hölscher 1988: 371–3, cat. 204; Scherrer 1988; Pollini 1993; Jeppesen 1994; Galinsky 1996: 121; Prückner 1997; Meyer 2000: 63–80 (Claudian date); Boschung 2002: 15, 188, 196; Hallett 2005: 164–5, pl. 93; Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 149–54, fig. 610; 2008: 98–123, 263–82, no. 6 (with useful tabulation of all interpretations); Schmidt 2008; Koortbojian 2013: 151–4, fig. VI.14; Neudecker 2014; Scherrer 2016; Scherberich 2017: 14; Borg 2019: 208, fig. 4.8; Hejduk 2020, 30–2, fig. I.8.

TIBERIUS, LIVIA, AND PRINCES, A. D. 14–37

12. Tiberius and Livia (Florence)

Florence, Museo Archeologico, inv. 177. Onyx set on modern chalcedony background. H: 4.8 cm. Break in front part of Livia's bust repaired.

Busts of Tiberius and Livia facing right, both with pronounced physiognomical Tiberian portraits. Tiberius' bust is naked and laureate. Livia wears tunic and pallium rising to cover the (concealed) back of her head, as well as a *stephanē* and a wreath of poppy and ear(s) of corn, attributes of Ceres.

Identifications agreed. Megow 1987: 174, cat. A 49, pl. 10.10 (early Tiberian, possibly c. A.D. 22, Livia's illness); Scholz 1992: 69; Alexandridis 2004: 134, cat. 43, pl. 55.4; Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 158–9, fig. 624 (A.D. 14–22/23); Hertel 2013: 203, cat. 131, pl. 129.2 (A.D. 14–25/29).

13. Tiberius and prince (Paris)

Paris, Louvre, inv. 1845. Sardonyx, three layers. H: 3.1 cm. Stone is drilled vertically, and part is broken off at upper end of drill hole. Brow, nose, and mouth of prince broken off and re-attached.

Busts of Tiberius and young prince, both looking upwards, facing right. Tiberius is laureate and wears tunic and aegis (visible, but only indistinctly, on his far, left shoulder). The bust of the prince is nude and without attributes. Tiberius' portrait is clearly recognisable, but the prince

cannot be identified. Suggestions, on varying historical criteria, include: Drusus the Elder, Germanicus, Tiberius Gemellus, and Caligula.

Identification of Tiberius agreed. Möbius 1985: 58 (Tiberius and Germanicus); Megow 1987: 150–1, cat. A 50, pl. 10.11 (Tiberius and Drusus Elder, early Tiberian, aegis not observed); Boschung 1989: 68–9 (Tiberius and Caligula; Drusus the Younger, Tiberius Gemellus, and Nero Germanicus should all be excluded as they had marked aquiline noses, leaving Caligula); Boschung 1991: 258 (Tiberius and a son of Germanicus); Giuliani 2010: 37–8 (Tiberius and Tiberius Gemellus or Caligula); Hertel 2013: 206, cat. 149, pl. 127.1 (Tiberius and Caligula, A.D. 31–37).

14. Livia with bust of Augustus (Boston)

Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, inv. 99.109. Formerly Marlborough Collection. Turquoise, high relief. W: 3.9 cm. Reassembled from many fragments, lower part missing.

Livia facing left in high relief holds a bust of Augustus (in missing right hand). She wears a laurel wreath and a thin chiton that has slipped off her left shoulder in the manner of images of Aphrodite-Venus. The bust of Augustus wears an oak-wreath (*corona civica*) and indistinct clothing. The older identification of the bust as Tiberius is incorrect. There is no sense in calling *both* figures ‘busts’. Livia is a ‘real’ figure, as in the Vienna cameo (15) that represents the same subject, holding a bust of her deceased husband.

Identification of Livia agreed. Vollenweider 1966: 75–6 n. 62; Richter 1971: 105, cat. 503 (Livia and young Tiberius); Winkes 1982 (Livia and Augustus); Megow 1987: 256–7, cat. B 19, pl. 10.5 (Livia with young Tiberius, c. A.D. 14); Boschung 1991: 259 (typology of Augustus); 1993b: 194, cat. 212, pl. 204.1–2 (Livia and bust of Augustus in Prima Porta type); Alexandridis 2004: 133, cat. 41, pl. 54.7 (Livia and Augustus); Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 157–8, fig. 620 (Livia and Augustus); Boardman 2009: 170, no. 373 (Livia and Augustus).

15. Livia as Great Mother with bust of Divus Augustus (Vienna)

Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, inv. IX a 95. Sardonyx, two layers. H. 9.0 cm. Broken horizontally through middle. Small triangular fragment missing at right edge.

A half-figure of Livia sits on a throne, facing left and holding a bust of Divus Augustus on her flat raised right hand. The bust of Augustus is *capite velato* and wears a radiate crown, like the figure of Augustus in heaven on 21. Livia wears a chiton with buttoned sleeve slipping off her shoulder, a mantle veiled over the back of her head, and a *stephanē* with mural crown. Her left hand leans on a *tympanon* and holds two poppy stalks and three ears of grain. The bare shoulder alludes to Venus, the poppy and grain to Ceres, and the mural crown and *tympanon* to the Great Mother Cybele.

Identifications agreed. Eichler and Kris 1927: 57–8, cat. 9 (lion on *tympanon* possibly added in 1600s); Richter 1971: 101–2, cat. 486; Winkes 1982; Oberleitner 1985: 48; Megow 1987: 254, cat. B 15, pl. 9.1–3; Boschung 1993b: 7 n. 65, 90 n. 433; M. Bergmann 1998: 109–10, 118, pl. 21.5 and 22.1 (Livia as priestess of Divus Augustus; Augustus’ bust wears zig-zag Greek mantle of Kronos-Saturn); Bartman 1999: 193, cat. 110; Meyer 2000: 110–12; Alexandridis 2004: 137, cat. 50, pl. 55.2 (late Tiberian or early Claudian); Borg 2019: 206–9, fig. 4.9; Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 157, fig. 619; 2008: 126–33, 283–8, no. 8 (Augustus’ bust has Saturnian head veil).

16. Divus Augustus and Livia (re-worked) with bust of Tiberius (St Petersburg)

St Petersburg, Hermitage 104, inv. Ž 149. Sardonyx, three layers. H: 8.3 cm. Broken in several places. Drilled through middle. Damage to hands of main figures and right shoulder of small bust.

Divus Augustus and Livia face each other in profile with gesturing and open right hands. They are represented as truncated figures (not busts), with a small naked bust of a laureate Tiberius in the upper field between them. Augustus is togate, *capite velato*, wearing oak wreath and radiate

crown. Livia wears a chiton and a mantle that veils her head and a wreath of combined poppy stalks and grain ears. Livia's hairstyle (but not her features) was later re-worked into that of Julia Mamaea or another, later third-century empress.

Identifications of Augustus and Livia agreed. Neverov 1971: 48, cat. 104 (Augustus, Livia, Nero); Jucker 1976: 227 (boy's bust is Nero); Zwierlein-Diehl 1980: 44 (Claudian date, boy's bust is Nero); Möbius 1985: 60 (after A.D. 42, boy's bust is Nero, Livia's hairstyle later re-cut as that of Salonina); Megow 1987: 167–8, cat. A 22, pl. 10.13 (Augustus, Livia, and Tiberius; early Tiberian; Livia's hairstyle re-cut in third century; Augustus' radiate crown also cut out of earlier hair in same period); M. Bergmann 1998: 108, pl. 22.3 (Augustus, Livia, and prince); Alexandridis 2004: 136–7, cat. 49, pl. 55.1 (Augustus, Livia, and Tiberius).

17. Cuirassed emperor, Tiberius(?) (Vienna)

Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum 13, inv. IX a 61. Sardonyx, three layers. H: 13.8 cm. Known since 1750. Large stone fragment, broken below and at right.

Half-figure of cuirassed prince, frontal body, head in profile facing right to missing second figure or group. The laureate prince wears a *paludamentum*, an aegis and a heavily decorated cuirass. The aegis is worn between the cloak and the armour. The shoulder strap of the cuirass is decorated with a thunderbolt, the body of the cuirass with a series of horizontal engraved and carved patterns (circles, meander, bead-and-reel) — unlike any cuirass attested in busts or statues in the round. The portrait has a tall brow, light moustache and hair-scheme close to those of 18. The aegis should indicate an emperor, so this is probably Tiberius. The tall brow and profile match his mature portrait types well. Other suggestions have included Germanicus and Caligula, neither of which fits well in terms of portrait typology.

Eichler and Kris 1927: 59, cat. 13 (Tiberius); Vollenweider 1966: 65 n.3 (Caligula); Zwierlein-Diehl 1980: 33 (Caligula, with missing Agrippina or Drusilla); Jucker 1982b: 103–4 (Tiberius); Möbius 1985: 60 (Tiberius, with missing Livia); Oberleitner 1985: 50, fig. 33 (Tiberius with missing Livia); Megow 1987: 279–80, cat. C 20, pl. 2.2–3 (Germanicus with missing Drusus Minor or Agrippina the Elder, c. A.D. 20); Zwierlein-Diehl 2008: 148–53, 300–4, no. 11 (Caligula with features of Augustus); Hertel 2013: 206, cat. 157, pl. 127.9 (Tiberius, c. A.D. 14).

18. Tiberius(?) by Herophilos (Vienna)

Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, inv. IX a 30. Turquoise-coloured glass with traces of gilding. H: 5.8 cm. Known since 1694. Cracked horizontally; ear and outer edge damaged.

Short bust of prince facing right, with carefully articulated laurel wreath and light moustache and sideburns. Signed at lower right: ΗΡΟΦΙΛΟΣ ΔΙΟΣΚΟΥΡΙΔ(ΟΥ), 'Herophilos son of Dioskourides (made it)'. The portrait has been confidently identified as Augustus, Drusus the Elder, Tiberius, and Germanicus. The date of Herophilos in the generation after the Augustan Dioskourides favours a Tiberian date, and the closeness to the aegis-wearing 17 argues for an emperor, rather than a prince, so perhaps best for Tiberius.

Eichler and Kris 1927: 58–9, cat. 12 (Tiberius); Vollenweider 1966: 65 (Augustus); Richter 1971: 144, cat. 675 (Tiberius); Jucker 1982b: 105 (Germanicus); Oberleitner 1985: 49 (Tiberius); Megow 1987: 278–9, cat. C 19, pl. 11. 1 (Germanicus, early Tiberian); Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 120, fig. 471; 2008: 134–41, 289–94, no. 9 (Drusus the Elder with campaign beard, posthumous, c. A.D. 20).

DIVUS AUGUSTUS

19. Gonzaga cameo: probably Divus Augustus and Livia (St Petersburg)

St Petersburg, Hermitage, inv. Ž 291. Sardonyx, four layers (white, brown, white, dark brown). H: 15.7 cm. Known since 1542. Considerable damage. Restored: background behind and in front of heads, gold neck

bands, and 'arc' of brown drapery on neck of prince. Outer edge trimmed. Some damage to and retouching of helmet, crest and hair. Chin of woman slightly recut.

Busts of prince and wife facing left. The woman wears a chiton and mantle; her head is veiled; she wears a bulla-like amulet and a laurel wreath; and her hair is styled in two or three rows of tight curls. The prince wears a cuirass, aegis and heavily decorated helmet. The aegis is folded over on itself, has nine snakes, a winged gorgoneion and a bearded, long-haired and winged male divinity (Phobos?) like that seen also on 5 and 6. The helmet is decorated with a laurel wreath, winged snake, relief tendrils, and a palmette on the neck guard. The portrait has a light moustache, sideburns and thick, long hair that appears beneath the helmet at the nape of the neck and curls up and over the helmet on the brow in a pronounced Alexander-style *anastolē*.

The subjects have been identified variously as a Hellenistic king and queen or an imperial prince and his wife. The matter should not be in doubt. The woman wears a bulla-like amulet and her tightly curled hairstyle demonstrates a date in the early imperial period (Kyrieleis 1971, 170–4), and the aegis suggests an emperor. Beyond that there can be no certainty, because the portraits go beyond attested imperial portrait norms. There are for us what appear to be contradictory indications, best attested perhaps by the wide range of dates and names proposed (see below). The precise formulation of the woman's hairstyle does not connect directly with that of any imperial portrait type, and the character of her entirely ideal/divine physiognomy would be possible for most early imperial female figures. The long flowing hair and *anastolē* of the emperor is a most extraordinary and extravagant addition to an imperial portrait. There is, however, one part that is connected to known portrait typology. The particular form of the tall, vertical, cool, long-nosed profile of the emperor's portrait clearly knows the defining image of Divus Augustus. Such a profile is 'worn' by no other early imperial figure. Since no other part of the cameo is diagnostic, this profile is the best evidence for a particular identification.

The cameo is situated some distance beyond early imperial norms, and seems to deploy the distinctive profile of the portrait type designed for Divus Augustus, in combination with other components (helmet, aegis and long hairstyle) that express in one towering image the ideas of Achilles, warrior, and *imperator*. No doubt opinions will continue to differ on his precise identity.

More than twelve different interpretations, proposed from 1542 to 1999, are conveniently tabulated in Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 62–3. In the chronological order of the protagonists suggested, they are: Alexander and Olympias, Ptolemy I and Eurydike, Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II, Ptolemy III and Berenike II, Alexander Balas and Cleopatra Thea, Ptolemy X and wife/mother, Pharnakes II and wife, Augustus and Livia, Germanicus and Agrippina, Drusus Minor and Livilla, Nero and Agrippina, and Hadrian and Sabina. Of these suggestions, Alexander and Olympias, Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II, Augustus and Livia, and Germanicus and Agrippina have multiple proponents; the others only one proponent each. The following references give some main recent studies. Neverov 1971: 29–30, cat. 1 (Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II); Kyrieleis 1971 (Augustus and Livia); Möbius 1985: 56–8 (Ptolemy III and Berenike II); Pollitt 1986: 24 (Roman date); Megow 1987: 281–4, cat. C 26 (Germanicus and Agrippina Elder); Smith 1988: 12 n. 42 (Augustus and Livia); Laubscher 1995: 387–405 (Ptolemy X); Plantzos 1996b: 123–6 (Roman date); Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 62–5, fig. 221 (Pharnakes II); Arsenyeva 2008 (Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II); 2013: cat. 10 (Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II).

20. 'Cameo of Ptolemies': probably Divus Augustus and Livia (Vienna)

Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, inv. 1750, 13, Nr.68. Sardonyx, seventeen thin layers alternating brown and white, eleven used for relief. H: 11.5 cm. Lower part broken off through upper neck of figures, restored in black enamelled stone. First recorded in Three Kings shrine in Cologne in mid-thirteenth century.

Known as the Ptolemäerkameo or 'Cameo of the Ptolemies'. Two profile heads of a helmeted prince and his wife, facing left. The woman wears a veil over her head and an unusual heavy headband or crown decorated with lightly engraved lotus buds above which, emerging from under the front edge of the veil, there is an (open-work?) lotus flower with a spiral tendril to left. A matching right-hand spiral, and perhaps further units of the same kind(?), are concealed by the veil. Her head is lowered

and looks down in relation to that of the prince. The features have a strong 'Phidian'-style ideal divinity.

The helmet of the prince has an elaborate crest and is richly decorated in relief: the side has a bearded snake, a winged thunderbolt on the cheek-piece, and a profile head (or mask) of a horned Zeus-Ammon on the neck-guard. The thunderbolt alludes to Jovian powers, while the snake and Zeus-Ammon have associations of Alexander and Egypt. The prince wears long hair that falls in long wavy locks on the brow and 'pours' from under the neck-guard onto the nape of the neck in a wavy light-brown cascade of hair.

The cameo is still dated by most experts in the Hellenistic period and usually identified as Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II. It should be said plainly, however, that no Ptolemy has a portrait profile of this kind. The profile of the prince (again, as that in 19), clearly (at least to this author) knows the distinctive tall, vertical, long-nosed portrait type of Divus Augustus. The prince is surely the same as in 19 and probably Augustus. It is not possible to tell from its appearance or its attributes whether the female figure is Livia or a divinity. Other double-bust cameos (12, 16, 19, and 33) would, however, lead us to expect the emperor's wife.

The technique is unattested in the third century B.C., well attested in the first century A.D., where the portrait of the prince also most easily belongs. In technical sophistication, elegance, and nuance, the cameo is close to the Gemma Augustea (11).

Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 60, tabulates four main interpretations, from 1586 to 1996: Alexander and Olympias; Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II (most frequent); Ptolemy III and Berenike II; unspecified subject of Roman date. Eichler and Kris 1927: 47–8, cat. 3 (Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II); Kyrieleis 1971: 169 (Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II); Megow 1985: 473–82 (Alexander and Olympias, Roman in date, c. 30 B.C., with a missing couple, Augustus and Livia, restored opposite); Oberleitner 1985: 32–5 (Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II); Smith 1988, 12 n. 42 (Augustus and Livia); Hertel 1989 (Alexander and Olympias, Roman in date); Plantzos 1996b: 123–6 (first century A.D.); Platz-Horster 1997: 55–68 (early third century B.C.); Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 59–62, fig. 219; 2008: 56–73, 238–47, no. 1 (Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II, probably 278 B.C.); Gennaioli 2008 (Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II); Schollmeyer 2017 (Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II); Galbois 2018, 190–1, G 10 bis (Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II).

21. Le Grand Camée de France, A.D. 23–29 (Paris)

Paris, Cabinet des Médailles, inv. 264. Sardonyx, five layers. H: 31.0 cm. Known since 1341 (then in Sainte-Chapelle, Paris). Good condition. Some chips (head of barbarian at lower right, crown of Livia, foot of Drusus Younger, radiate crown of Augustus) and some late antique re-working (heads of Tiberius, wife of Nero Caesar, and scroll-bearer at left).

The largest of all imperial cameos. The three registers contain some twenty-four different figures. Above, Divus Augustus and two princes are in heaven. In the middle, Tiberius and Livia are enthroned among six family members. Below sit conquered barbarians. Some imperial figures can be recognised with certainty by portrait type (Drusus Younger, Augustus, Germanicus, Tiberius, and Livia), others by historical context (Caligula, Nero Caesar, his wife Julia, and Drusus Caesar), and a few remain disputable. Since Drusus the Younger is in the heavens (d. A.D. 23) and Livia is still living (d. A.D. 29), the cameo belongs between these dates. The middle register presents the three sons of Germanicus as the military executive and heirs to the supreme Jovian ruler Tiberius.

Upper register: (1) cuirassed Drusus Younger with shield, (2) togate Augustus *capite velato* with radiate crown and sceptre, riding on back of (3) unidentified young male divinity with eastern cap and trousers, holding orb, (4) Eros-Amor, (5) cuirassed Germanicus on winged horse.

Middle register: (6) seated female figure (Livilla, wife of Drusus Younger above her, so Giuliani 2010: 23–5), later re-worked into seated male divinity with scroll and wearing cloak, (7) cuirassed Caligula with cloak, shield and greaves, standing on a cuirass on the ground, (8) helmeted cuirassed Nero Caesar with shield and greaves, (9) his wife Julia, laureate, with hairstyle later re-cut for a third- or fourth-century figure, (10) half-naked laureate Tiberius with sceptre and *lituus*, wearing aegis and sandals (his hair cut short in later re-working), seated on double throne

with (11) laureate Livia wearing button-sleeved chiton and mantle, holding two poppy stalks, (12) barbarian captive or personification with eastern-style cap seated on shield (Amazon's *pelta*?), (13) helmeted and cuirassed Drusus Caesar looking and gesturing upwards to the figures in the upper register with his right hand, holding a trophy with his left, (14) Agrippina the Elder as wife of Germanicus or Agrippina the Younger as daughter of Germanicus, who is immediately above — she is seated on a sphinx-legged stool, hand to chin, wearing a button-sleeved chiton and mantle.

Lower register: (15)–(24) ten captive barbarian men, women, and a baby, with empty cuirass, three *pelta* shields, and a bow, quiver, and spear. Three of the captive men wear eastern headdress; the *pelta* shields also refer to the east.

Main imperial identifications now have a near-consensus. Jeppesen 1974; 1993 (figure before Tiberius is Sejanus, A.D. 28–29); Jucker 1976, with table showing earlier identifications; Megow 1987: 202–7, cat. A 85 (made c. A.D. 50, with allusions to A.D. 17); M. Bergmann 1998, 108–10, pl. 21.3–4; Giard 1998 (with some unorthodox identifications); Meyer 2000: 11–28 (also with some unorthodox identifications); Vollenweider and Avisseau-Broustet 2003: 219–20, cat. 275; Alexandridis 2004: 172–4, cat. 144–5; Hallett 2005: 170–1, pl. 97; Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 160–6, fig. 633; Giuliani 2010 (late A.D. 23 to early 24); Heinlein 2011 (non vidi); Koortbojian 2013: 151–4, fig. VI.15; Wolters 2016; Scherberich 2017; Hölscher 2019: 271–2 (emphasises aspects of *eastern* conquest).

CALIGULA, A. D. 37–41

22. Caligula (Switzerland)

Private collection, Switzerland. Sardonyx, two layers. H: 2.0 cm. Known since 1982.

Bust of laureate Caligula in profile to right. The crude heavy beard-stippling on the face is unlikely to be of the mid-first century A.D., more likely a later addition to update the portrait for a new subject in the third century A.D., and so likely to prove the authenticity of the piece (doubted by Megow).

Identification agreed. Jucker 1982a (A.D. 38/39, beard indicates mourning for Drusilla); Megow 1987: 186, cat. A 61, pl. 15.2 (modern?); Boschung 1989, 117–18, cat. 41, pl. 35.3 (ancient).

23. Caligula (New York)

New York, Metropolitan Museum 651, inv. 11.195.7. Onyx, two layers. H: 4.3 cm. Background broken on both sides, damage to nose. Known since 1911.

Bust of cuirassed and laureate Caligula *en face*, looking slightly to his proper left, with thunderbolts on the shoulder straps of the cuirass (*epomides*) and a gorgoneion on the front of aegis-textured cuirass.

Identification agreed. Richter 1971: 107, cat. 514; Möbius 1985: 53 ('eines der besten Bildnisse des geisteskranken jungen Kaiser'); Megow 1987: 186, cat. A 62, pl. 15.1; Boschung 1989: 115, cat. 32, pl. 29.1–2; von den Hoff 2009: 255.

24. Caligula and Roma (Vienna)

Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, inv. IX a 59. Sardonyx, two layers. H: 11.0 cm. Part of larger cameo broken and trimmed all round. Traces of gilding in hair and on index finger of Roma. Known since at least 1724.

Full figures of Caligula and Roma seated on sphinx-legged double throne (but with individual footstools), with bodies facing to the (viewer's) right. The emperor has a lightly stippled beard (secondary?) and moustache growth. He leans back and looks in profile at Roma who looks back at him in three-quarter view. There are remains of a third draped figure at the right edge. Roma wears a triple-crested helmet, sandals, a thin chiton belted under the breasts and a mantle lying over her legs. She holds up a round shield, supported on her lap and seen slightly in perspective,

and points upwards with her left index finger. Caligula is half-naked with bare feet and a mantle thrown over his left shoulder and round his lower body. He holds a long sceptre in his left hand and with his raised right hand supports a huge *dikeras* or double cornucopia on the sphinx's wing. There is an apple, grape bunch and *pyramidion* cake in the mouth of each cornucopia. The *dikeras* has an elaborate metal-work lower finial with a leaf calyx from which the two horns grow.

Identification of Roma always agreed, of Caligula now agreed. Eichler and Kris 1927: 51, cat. 6 (Augustus and Roma); Kyrieleis 1970 (identification of Caligula); Oberleitner 1985: 46–8 (Divus Augustus and Roma); Megow 1987: 185, cat. A 60, pl. 15.3 (Caligula and Roma); Boschung 1989: 116, cat. 34, pl. 30.1–2 (Caligula); Meyer 2000: 81 (Caligula); Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 166, fig. 634; 2008: 142–7, 295–300, no. 10 (Caligula with ‘mourning’ beard); M. Fuchs 2009: 7–14 (Roma points to divine sphere and Drusilla’s apotheosis through a shield oracle).

CLAUDIUS, A. D. 41–54

25. Claudius with laurel wreath (London)

London, British Museum, inv. 1939,0607.1. From collection of B. Oppenheimer. Sardonyx, three layers. H: 6.2 cm. Fragment broken all round, bust part missing, surviving part perfectly preserved with almost no damage.

Head of Claudius in right profile wearing laurel wreath. Both the identifying portrait physiognomy and the details of the laurel and the hairstyle are superbly carved. The fragment was once part of a much larger cameo of the highest quality. At the minimum, the surviving head would most likely have had a bust wearing a cuirass, aegis, or both. The portrait and the hair on the forehead are sufficiently articulated to see that it knows and has borrowed from the main authorised portrait of Claudius (above, n. 65).

Haynes 1939: pl. 33b (Claudius, probably broken from originally very large cameo, late in reign); Zwierlein-Diehl 1980: 14, 27 (Claudius); Trillmich 1983: 25–6, pl. 4.5 (Claudius); Möbius 1985: 47 (Claudius, late in reign); Megow 1987: 194, cat. A 75, pl. 24.6–7 (Claudius, not late, before A.D. 49/50, bust should be restored with armour and/or aegis); Verdi 2003: 127, cat. 58 (Claudius, probably early in reign); Köster and Puhle 2012, 117–18, cat. I.27 (non vidi).

26. Claudius with aegis (Dresden)

Dresden, Grünes Gewölbe, inv. V 1. Sardonyx, three layers. H: 13.0 cm. Several cracks from major breakage and re-assembly. Large piece missing at right arm of bust. Five stars and zodiac symbols (capricorn and dolphin) in field around head are modern additions of the baroque period.

Unusually large stone for a single portrait, with a bust of Claudius in right profile, wearing laurel wreath, tunic and aegis with gorgoneion seen in profile at the ‘front’ of the bust.

Identification agreed. Möbius 1985: 47; Megow 1987: 191–3, cat. A 70, pl. 23.1; M. Bergmann 1998: 221, pl. 23.5.

27. Claudius with cuirass and aegis (Paris)

Paris, Cabinet des Médailles, 270. Sardonyx, three layers. H. 8.2 cm. Known since 1664.

Bust of laureate Claudius looking to right. The emperor wears a cuirass with an aegis over his right shoulder, its gorgon head seen in profile. A vestigial thunderbolt is carved on the thin (proper) left shoulder strap. The laurel wreath is carved in a heavy and emphatic manner, and the hair is articulated in a strong ‘black-and-white’ technical style that lacks the variety and sophistication of the Claudius cameos in London (25) and Dresden (26).

Identification agreed. Babelon 1897: 142–3, cat. 270; Richter 1971: 108, cat. 518; Megow 1987: 194, cat. A 73, pl. 24.4 (middle of A.D. 40s); Vollenweider and Avisseau-Broustet 2003: 93–4, cat. 100.

28. Claudius with aegis and oak wreath (Paris)

Paris, Cabinet des Médailles 269. Sardonyx, three layers. H: 7.7 cm.

Bust of Claudius in left profile, wearing an oak wreath (*corona civica*) and an aegis slung around his shoulders like a cloak and fastened on his (proper) left shoulder.

Identification agreed. Babelon 1897: 142, cat. 269, fig. 269; Richter 1971: 108, cat. 519 (sees a 'cuirass'); Megow 1987: 194, cat. A 74, pl. 24.3 (middle of A.D. 40s); Vollenweider and Avisseau-Broustet 2003: 94, cat. 101.

29. Claudius with cuirass and aegis (Windsor)

Windsor Castle. Sardonyx, three layers. H: 20.5 cm. Broken in several pieces in modern era, but re-assembled without loss.

Unusually large stone, with single laureate portrait bust of Claudius in left profile, wearing tunic, cuirass, aegis, and a cloak in a small bunch on his left shoulder, armed with a sword and spear. The cuirass has animated leather arm-straps and a commander's *cingulum*. An ultra-thin thunderbolt is carved in the top white layer of the stone on each side of the aegis. The sword in its scabbard with eagle-head hilt appears from under the left arm. The wreath has long thin fluttering ties behind. The tall 'vertical' passage of hair on the back of the neck looks (at least to the present writer) more like that of Caligula or late Nero portraits and may suggest that the Claudius portrait was re-cut from a Caligula (less likely a Nero) cameo.

Identification agreed. Vollenweider 1966: 79 n. 78; Möbius 1985: 47; Megow 1987: 194–5, cat. A 76, pl. 25.

30. Standing Emperor (Claudius?) with aegis, eagle, and thunderbolt (Chicago)

The Art Institute of Chicago, inv. 1991.375. Formerly in Arundel, Marlborough, and Alsdorf collections. Sardonyx, three layers. H: 5.0 cm.

The 'classically' naked figure of a wreathed emperor stands frontally in dynamic posture, one leg trailing, with his head turned in profile to the left. He holds a thunderbolt in one hand and a thin sceptre in the other. A large aegis is wrapped around his hips and left lower arm, and hangs below in a big swag. An eagle stands on the ground line in profile to the left but with its head turning back to look up at his Jovian master. The portrait is too small and indistinct for a sure typological identification, but the overall shape of the head, the clear receding chin, and the represented age are most likely those of Claudius.

Furtwängler 1900: II, 302, pl. 65.48 (Claudius); Möbius 1985: 62 (Claudius-Jupiter); Megow 1987: 202, A 84 (statue of Claudius as Jupiter); Platz-Horster 2008b: 24–8, figs. 5–8 (Claudius, re-worked from Caligula?); Boardman 2009: 35, no. 2 (Claudius).

31. Messalina with Octavia and Britannicus(?), A.D. 40–48 (Paris)

Paris, Cabinet des Médailles 277. Sardonyx, three layers. H: 6.7 cm. Edges broken above, on left, and below, restored in brown-enamelled gold. Light damage on top of empress's head, on laurel leaves, on grapes. Head of boy on bust in cornucopia seems not to belong and to be a modern restoration.

Bust of a Julio-Claudian empress with cornucopia and two children, facing left in profile, supported below by the richly decorated cornucopia from which a bunch of grapes and a child's bust emerge. The empress wears a laurel wreath and a tunic and *palla* with a heart-shaped bulla-like amulet hanging from a torque or necklace. She has a tightly waved hairstyle from which tiny curls descend onto the brow and which is tied up in a braided loop behind. She has an elegant and pronounced portrait profile. It is disputed whether there are remains of a second cornucopia curving to the left and from which the small figure on the left emerges. Part of a thunderbolt seen by Vollenweider and Avisseau-Broustet (2003: 96), forming a continuation of the

end of the cornucopia but broken off in the area of damage at the lower edge of the stone, is difficult to see.

The small figures are probably children of the imperial woman. The left-hand figure wears a helmet low on the brow and carries a round shield over the left shoulder. The precise character of the figure's clothing (belted dress?) is difficult to ascertain. The right-hand figure emerging from the cornucopia also wears a garment(s) which seems not to be gender specific. A seventeenth-century engraving of the cameo, made apparently before the head was broken off, suggests that the figure was female (van der Meulen 1994).

The portrait and hairstyle of the main subject clearly belong in the mid-first century A.D., and are known in other portraits on cameos and in marble portraits in the round (Boschung 1993a: 71–2, Type Wa), but not on coins. The imperial woman on the cameo has often been identified as Messalina on the grounds that she fits best an empress of this period who has two young children (Octavia and Britannicus). The widely varied provincial coin portraits of Messalina are no help (*RPC* I, *s.v.* Messalina, at Cnossos, Gortyn, Nicaea, Nicomedia, Sinope, Aegae, Hypaepa, Ephesus, Tralles, Miletus, Cappadocian Caesarea, Alexandria); they are either purely ideal-divine, or too close to Agrippina to distinguish. Others have proposed Drusilla, Caligula's sister, or Milonia Caesonia, one of Caligula's wives, or Agrippina the Younger, with other identifications for the accompanying small figures, but with no firmer evidence than that provided by the configuration of the three figures — an empress with a son (left) and probably a daughter (right). If Messalina, the cameo would date between the mid-40s and her execution in A.D. 48. If Drusilla, Milonia Caesonia, or Agrippina (none of whom fits the archaeology of the two children easily), then the cameo's outside dates would be A.D. 37 to 59, that is, between the accession of Caligula and the murder of Agrippina.

Precise identity of main subject cannot be known for sure. Babelon 1897: 145–6, cat. 277 (Messalina, Octavia, Britannicus); Zadoks 1958: 37–8 (Messalina); Vollenweider 1966: 12 n. 5 (brief reference); Kyrieleis 1971: 171–2 (Messalina, her bulla is a divine fertility symbol related to Tellus, Ceres, and Venus); Möbius 1985: 46 (empress, Britannicus, Octavia); Trillmich 1983: 22–6 and 31–4 (short-cropped head of boy possibly belongs, definitely not two cornucopias; Agrippina the Younger, with Roma on left, Nero on right); Megow 1987: 303–4, cat. D 39, pl. 18.1 (Drusilla, with her two sisters; Rubens' drawing suggests girl on cornucopia, but hairstyle clearly not antique); M. Fuchs 1990: 107–10 (Milonia Caesonia, with Roma on left and her young daughter Julia Drusilla, born A.D. 40, murdered 41, at right; current head on right not original — was a girl); Wood 1992: 230–1 (Agrippina Younger, one cornucopia); Boschung 1993a: 71–3 (Messalina); van der Meulen 1994: II, 192–6, cat. 169, fig. 330 (anonymous engraving presumably after drawing by Rubens of three cameos that he owned; Messalina, Britannicus, Octavia; in drawing both children emerge from connected cornucopias; figure on right is girl in Rubens' drawing, also in Peiresc's description of cameo); Wood 1999: 305–6 (Agrippina the Younger, Minerva on left, Nero on right; Claudius and Britannicus to be restored in missing left part of cameo; only one cornucopia); Meyer 2000: 95 (follows M. Fuchs 1990, Milonia Caesonia and daughter); Vollenweider and Avisseau-Broustet 2003: 96–8, cat. 104 (thunderbolt below cornucopia; boy's head may belong; Messalina in *c.* A.D. 40–42, with helmeted Octavia on left, Britannicus on right); Alexandridis 2004: 166, cat. 126, pl. 57.5 (period of Caligula and Claudius).

32. Cameo of The Hague, A.D. 43–48 (Leiden)

Leiden, National Museum of Antiquities, since 2013. Sardonyx or blue-white agate, two layers. W: 29.7 cm. Minor cracks in surface. Formerly owned by Peter Paul Rubens, then by Royal Coin Cabinet in Hague, then by Money Museum in Utrecht.

The cameo is of similar dimensions to the Grand Camée de France, but has fewer figures carved at a much larger scale. They are the largest-scale figures of any ancient cameo. The dynamic Hellenistic-style composition with a mythological frame of reference is also unusual. Only the Nero as Triptolemos (40) is comparable in this respect.

The composition represents a narrative scene of an imperial group in a centaur-drawn chariot running down barbarians. The nine figures may be numbered left to right, as follows. An emperor

(2) and his wife (4) ride with two children (1 and 3) in the chariot pulled by two bearded centaurs (5–6) who trample two cowering barbarians below (8–9), while Victory (7) flies in above to crown the emperor. A wine krater has been knocked over and lies under the chariot car. Both the krater and the centaurs transpose military victory into a Dionysian cavalcade.

The laureate emperor (2) holds a large thunderbolt in his raised right hand, wears chiton, himation and sandals, and sits with his body facing left and his head turned back in profile to the right to face and embrace his wife. The empress (4) wears a chiton belted under the breasts and a mantle veiled over the back of her head, a *stephanē*, and a clearly articulated fashion hairstyle; she also holds ears of grain and a poppy head in her left hand. The female figure at the extreme left behind the emperor (1) is unveiled and significantly smaller than the imperial pair, and for both these reasons should be a young unmarried girl, probably in this tight family group, a daughter. She has an interesting hairstyle composed of two plaits circling her head, a bun behind, and one lock escaping onto the neck in front. Her right hand appears from behind, under the emperor's raised arm, to point significantly at the boy. This boy-prince (3) standing *en face* in the chariot in front of the imperial pair wears a crested helmet and a cuirass with gorgoneion and cingulum. He holds a sword in its scabbard in his left hand, while his raised right hand plucks at a cloak(?) behind his shoulder — probably a gesture signifying readiness for war. In the logic of this group, independent of controversial dates and individual identifications, it should be clear that the emperor is with his wife (not his mother, whom emperors, at least on cameos, did not embrace), a young daughter behind (hardly the emperor's wife), and a young son in front, who is designated as successor by his position and executive military-commander costume — like the figure of Germanicus on the Gemma Augustea (11).

Victory is winged and wears a long dress. She flies horizontally, and the laurel wreath she holds has thick long ties trailing under her arms. The barbarians are young, beardless and long-haired, and wear short tunics and boots. One holds a shield against the lower right corner of the cameo stone. Both centaurs are bearded and in dynamic rearing postures. The left-hand centaur even springs clear off the ground, as if having jumped over the overturned krater. He also holds his right hand on his hip in a stylish swagger pose. The right-hand centaur carries a trophy in his left hand made up of a scale cuirass with baldric and scabbard on a pole; and he holds a round shield on his back, seen in perspective, supported by his raised right hand. The other centaur raises his left hand to support the shield too.

The style and technique of this large cameo is bold and robust, with hard, engraved detail and some gaucheries of composition and execution (the emperor's left shoulder, for example, has gone seriously awry), very different from the smooth elegance of other big Palatine cameos such as the Gemma Augustea (11), Grand Camée (21), or the Gemma Claudia (33). For many scholars, this means the cameo cannot be first-century and must be late antique. It could also mean that cameo consumption and production was sufficiently large in the first century to support different workshops employing different styles and techniques. Although its earliest authoritative commentator (Furtwängler 1900) and again a great expert in the mid-twentieth century (Vollenweider 1964) saw here a Claudian composition, modern opinion (following Bruns 1948) is now uniformly that the cameo is of the early fourth century. Various names have been proposed based on likely or plausible historical configurations of who in the fraught Constantinian household might be present. For example: Richter (1971) sees Constantine and his mother Helena, with second wife Fausta behind, young Crispus in front (Crispus was born to Constantine's first wife Minervina in c. A.D. 300 and was executed in 326); Henig (2006) sees Constantine and wife Fausta, with son Crispus in front, but grandmother Claudia behind. Halbertsma (2015 and 2017) prefers Constantine and mother Helena again, with second wife Fausta behind and Crispus in front. There is much against these identifications, even on their own terms. As already mentioned, the woman embraced by the emperor should be his wife, not his mother, and the small young female figure behind the emperor can hardly be either his wife or his grandmother. The position is wrong for an emperor's wife (they were always equal partners), and the represented age is wrong for a grandmother. These points are of some importance, because in a fourth-century context, as in a first-century context, identifications need to follow imperial norms and cameo logic. Even

without re-cutting, the cameo could probably have done service for a new imperial dynasty in Late Antiquity.

There is little in the cameo that is precisely diagnostic for its date. The children have non-specific portrait formulations that need only represent ‘girl, daughter’ and ‘young boy, son’. The emperor’s portrait — youthful, clean-shaven, with a simple fringe — is crude and could on its own be taken as either first- or fourth-century. Many aspects of Constantinian male portraits were modelled on Julio-Claudian portraits. There is, however, one striking and decisive detail: the emperor’s wife wears a fashion hairstyle composed of two rows of tight curls below the *stephanē*, and this is clearly a fashion hairstyle of the mid-first century A.D., and one that is unattested later in any fourth-century revival. It may seem slender, but this detail strongly suggests an early date. It is difficult to go around it. In any contest of evidence, it is much stronger than fluid assessments of style and technique. The cameo is therefore most likely Claudian.

The historical constellation of imperial figures represented should then be as follows: the emperor Claudius with Messalina (they married in A.D. 39/40), and their children Octavia (born A.D. 40) and Britannicus (born A.D. 41). The cameo should belong after the British conquest in A.D. 43 and before the execution of Messalina in A.D. 48. From A.D. 43, Britannicus was Ti. Claudius Caesar Britannicus. In the fourth century, the unchanged cameo could well have been interpreted as representing a Constantinian constellation of the kind seen by proponents of a fourth-century origin for the cameo.

Date and identifications disputed. Furtwängler 1900: II, 304–5, pl. 66.1 (Claudius and Messalina, Octavia behind, Britannicus in front); Bruns 1948: 8–16 (late antique, Constantine and wife); Vollenweider 1964: 7 (Claudius’ British triumph); Zadoks 1966: 91–7 (Constantinian, emperor and wife, celebrates *decennalia* in A.D. 315); Möbius 1948/49: 107–10 (post-antique); Bastet 1968: 5, 18–22 (early fourth century, Constantine and Fausta, with Crispus in front and Livia behind, as part of an ideological assimilation and validation of dynasty); Richter 1971: 122–3, cat. 600 (Constantine and Helena, with wife Fausta behind, Crispus in front); Megow 1987: 84–6 (post-antique); Spier 1993: 44–5 (date open); Henig 2006: 71 (Constantine and Fausta, with Crispus in front and grandmother Claudia behind); Spier 2007: 129–31 (Julio-Claudian); Megow 2011: 169–80, cat. A 1, fig. 1 (c. A.D. 306–312, Constantine and wife, with mother behind and son in front); Halbertsma 2015: 221–32 (Constantine and Helena, with wife Fausta behind and Crispus in front, for *decennalia*, alludes to victory over Maxentius); Stephenson 2015 (in response to Halbertsma 2015, date is A.D. 324, and boy-prince is Constantine II); Halbertsma 2017 (date is A.D. 312–315, but cameo was reworked in c. A.D. 324/5, for *vicennalia*).

33. Gemma Claudia: Claudius, Germanicus, and wives, A.D. 49–54 (Vienna)

Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, inv. IX a 63. Sardonyx, five layers. W: 1.52 cm. Small chips missing, notably from lower lip and chin of Agrippina Younger, lip of Claudius, and upper lip of Agrippina the Elder. Traces of gilding in Germanicus’ crown and between eagle and left-hand *dikeras*.

Two pairs of imperial busts face each other, each supported by a double cornucopia. An eagle stands between, and the composition rests on a crowded assemblage of weapons below (cuirass, greaves, helmets, swords, and various shields — round, oblong, and *pelta*-shaped). Fruits spill from the mouths of the richly tendril-decorated horns: grapes, grain-ears, apples, pomegranates.

Claudius and Agrippina the Younger on the left face Germanicus and Agrippina the Elder on the right. Claudius wears an oak wreath and an aegis in the form of a cloak, Germanicus wears an oak wreath and a cloak (*paludamentum*) fastened on his near shoulder with a round fibula. Mother and daughter both wear tunica and mantle. Agrippina the Younger (on the left) wears a mural crown and a vegetal wreath of poppy and ears of grain. Agrippina the Elder (on the right) wears a crested ‘Attic’-style helmet bound with laurel.

It has been suggested that Claudius’ head has been re-worked from a Caligula portrait (Künzl 1994; von den Hoff 2009; Schmidt in Giuliani 2010; but doubted by Zwierlein-Diehl 2008: 315–16, with careful arguments and observations). Since visible traces of re-working on the stone (under Claudius’ nose and chin) are slight and easily interpreted in other ways and since an

emperor paired in this way with a *sister*, as opposed to a wife, would be unparalleled and would defy cameo logic, this idea seems to the present writer unlikely. Further, the fringe pattern and the relationship of the fringe to the brow are wrong for a Palatine Caligula portrait — Caligula has a tall brow (22–24), Claudius a low brow (25–29). Caligula's tall brow and fringe would have required major surgery in any such re-working into a Claudius — major surgery of which there is no trace in the hair or brow. It would be difficult to explain how the cameo is perfectly correct in this respect for Claudius.

All four portraits are remarkably precise in terms of portrait typology, both in physiognomy and hairstyle. Claudius and Germanicus are immediately recognisable from their 'typological' physiognomies. The Agrippinas also have carefully articulated portrait features and precise renditions of hairstyles known from their main portrait types — even in the severely curtailed view of their hairstyles that the cameo composition allows. Agrippina the Younger on the left has three rows of tight curls that come close to the centre of the brow, while her mother on the right has long wavy locks brushed back from the centre of her brow that turn into light curls on her temple.

Since S. Fuchs 1956, the identifications of all four figures have been agreed. Eichler and Kris 1927: 61–2, cat. 19, pl. 9 (Claudius and Agrippina the Younger on left, with Tiberius and Livia on right); S. Fuchs 1956 (first correct reading, Claudius and Agrippina the Younger facing Germanicus and Agrippina the Elder, c. A.D. 49); Vollenweider 1966: 79 n. 78; Richter 1971: 108, cat. 516 (follows Eichler and Kris 1927); Möbius 1985: 60 (follows S. Fuchs 1956); Oberleitner 1985: 55, figs. 37–8 (follows S. Fuchs 1956, cameo is a wedding present); Megow 1987: 200–1, cat. A 81, pl. 31.1–2 (follows S. Fuchs 1956); Künzl 1994: 293–6 (Claudius is re-cut from Caligula); Alexandridis 2004: 166, cat. 123, 147–8, cat. 74, pl. 58.1–2 (Agrippina the Younger in Ancona Type, c. A.D. 49; Agrippina the Elder assimilated to Minerva or Roma; signs of re-working on Claudius); Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 167, fig. 635; 2008: 158–65, 308–16, no. 13 (follows S. Fuchs 1956 on identifications; strong arguments against hypothesis of re-working); von den Hoff 2009: 256–7 (Claudius re-worked from Caligula, originally paired with Drusilla); Schmidt in Giuliani 2010: 112 n. 5 (Claudius re-worked from Caligula); Scherberich 2017: 18–19 (follows S. Fuchs 1956).

34. Ada Cameo: Claudius and family group, A.D. 53–55 (Trier)

Trier, Stadtbibliothek, Codex 22. Sardonyx, three layers. W: 10.7 cm. Set into 1499 cover binding of Carolingian Ada Gospel.

A family group of five figures, with head and shoulders *en face*, appears above the front of a broad chariot pulled by two near-symmetrical heraldic eagles with outstretched wings. Although the figures are hardly composed realistically in relation to the chariot-box, and although the eagles are not harnessed in any way to it, an eagle-drawn chariot (doubted by Henig 2006) is surely what this allusive, economical cameo composition represents.

For convenient reference, the figures may be numbered 1–5, from left to right. Figure 1 is a veiled younger woman with an uncertain 'brown' attribute in her hair — that is, carved in the top, brown layer of the stone. The large figure 2 is an emperor with a fringe; he is wearing a laurel wreath, tunic and toga(?). Figure 3 is a small boy wearing a tunic and toga(?), and he has a 'brown' star or star-like attribute in his hair over his brow. The large figure 4 is paired with the figure of the emperor and is clearly his wife; she wears a tunic and mantle and a 'jewel' element in her hair over the brow now partly missing. And figure 5 is a youth with a fringe; he wears tunic and toga(?) and again had a central element in the hair over his brow (once 'brown', now worn away).

The hair ornaments of figures 3–5 are interesting and unusual, but they are too indistinct for them to be understood and are not chronologically diagnostic. The attribute of figure 1, seen by some as a fourth-century 'jewel diadem', is too ill-defined to be sure what it is. Its visible components are as, or more, likely to be the leaves of a wreath as jewels of a post-Constantinian diadem. A reading of the group can be, and has been, made to fit Constantine's family in the late 310s or early 320s, and the cameo may indeed have been taken as such in the fourth century, but there is nothing *certainly* late antique in its style, portraits, or attributes. The rather slurred handling of the portrait figures and the

hard, undifferentiated and economical engraving of the eagles' wings and body feathers stand outside the highest court norms of the first century A.D., but that hardly means the cameo was made in the fourth century.

Furtwängler (1900) saw this cameo might well be of the mid-first century A.D. but proposed unsustainable names for the family group represented. Following Bruns (1948), scholarship has settled on a fourth-century date and on a Constantinian family grouping as its subject. It may be worth showing that the basis for this consensus is fragile, and that a better alternative can be proposed.

Although Constantinian male portraits drew on Augustan and Julio-Claudian fringes and youthful clean-shaven faces, none of the three male figures has an obviously Constantinian axially-arranged fringe. On the contrary: two of the male portraits (figures 2 and 5) have probably identifiable hair-schemes: that of the emperor, figure 2, is closest to one of the three authorised portrait types of Claudius, in which the fringe arcs low across the brow in a continuous series of more or less uniform comma locks (Boschung 1993a: 70–7, Type Vc, fig. 58, 'Turin' type). Figure 5, the young prince at the right-hand end of the group, also has a fringe arching low over his brow, but with what seems to be a clear centre-parting from each side of which the comma-locks turn outwards in opposite directions. This low, centre-parted fringe was a well-known and easily recognised element of the young Nero's first and second authorised portrait types (here 36–41). Both the hairstyle and the full-chinned form of the face are closest to his second type, made for his accession to power in A.D. 54 and widely taken up in Rome, Italy, and the provinces (Fittschen and Zanker 1985: no. 17; M. Bergmann 1998: 148).

None of the proposed Constantinian family assemblages are persuasive. Most favoured are the following names, left to right: Helena (mother), Constantine, Constantine II (son, born c. 316), Fausta (wife), and Crispus (son, born c. 300). They might have been adequate names for the re-use and un-worked re-naming of an existing cameo, but they do not carry conviction for a new, carefully designed Constantinian stone with a supposed dramatic date of say c. 320. In terms of their represented ages, which even in this ethereal cameo realm need to have plausible *relative* age-relationships, the older son, supposedly Crispus in his early twenties, is too close in age and scale to the boy in the centre (supposedly Constantine II); and most telling, the mother (Helena), supposedly figure 1 on the left, is much younger (smaller) than the emperor's wife portrayed in figure 4.

Even without the likely typological identifications of figures 2 and 5 described above, they suit Claudius and the young Nero best anyway. A historical constellation of family members that respects their genders and relative represented ages in A.D. 53–54 may be suggested as follows: Claudius (2) and his wife Agrippina the Younger (4) (married in A.D. 49), with three of their children, Octavia (1) and Britannicus (3), aged 13 and 12 respectively in A.D. 53, both Claudius' children by Messalina, and Nero (5), aged 16 in A.D. 53, Agrippina's son (by, not relevant in this context, Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus, consul in 32). The cameo would represent the (briefly) agreed dynastic situation of A.D. 53, after the marriage of Nero and Octavia in that year. Although aged only 13 at the time, figure 1 shows Octavia veiled as appropriate to a married woman. The cameo would then date to, and may have been made for, the occasion of this marriage or soon after. Since Britannicus was removed from the scene, by poison or nature, already in February 55, the cameo was most likely made in A.D. 53–54.

To summarise, the proposed configuration, left to right, would be: (1) Octavia, aged 13, Claudius' daughter and Nero's bride, (2) the emperor Claudius, (3) Britannicus, aged 12, (4) Agrippina the Younger, Claudius' wife, and (5) the young Nero, Agrippina's son, aged 15. Claudius' daughter is next to him on the left, and Agrippina's son next to her on the right.

Date and names disputed. Furtwängler 1900: III, 323–4, fig. 167 (Antonia, Claudius, Britannicus, Messalina, Octavia); Bruns 1948: 29–31 (A.D. 386: personification of Constantinople, Theodosius, Honorius, Aelia Flacilla, Arcadius); Alföldi 1963: 127–8 (before A.D. 324: Helena, Constantine, prince [Constantinus II?], Fausta, prince [Crispus?]); Wegner 1984 (before A.D. 320–323: Helena, Constantine, Constantinus II, Fausta, Crispus); Möbius 1985: 69–70 (Helena, Constantine, Constantinus II, Fausta, Crispus); Spier 1993: 44–5 (date

open, undecided); Henig 2006: 71 (A.D. 318–323: Helena, Constantine, and Fausta, with princes — in theatre/circus box, not chariot); Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 202–4, with useful tabulation of earlier identifications, fig. 755 (Helena, Constantine, prince [Constantinus II?], Fausta, prince [Crispus?]); Megow 2011: 180–7, cat. A 2, fig. 12 (not re-cut, ‘ein künstlerisch einheitliches Werk, das mit frühkaiserzeitlichen Bildungen nichts zu tun hat’: Constantine, wife, mother, and princes); Spier 2007: 129–31 (Julio-Claudian).

35. Claudius on eagle with Victory, A.D. 41–54 (Paris)

Paris, Cabinet des Médailles, 265. Sardonyx, three layers. W: 11.5 cm (with border W: 13.5 cm). Minor chips from surface. Acquired 1684. Some details can be better seen in a plaster cast in Cast Gallery of Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, also illustrated here.

Claudius sits on a heraldic frontal eagle with his upper body facing forwards and his head turned in profile to the left. Victory flies towards the emperor from the left to crown him with a large laurel wreath. The eagle has its wings spread and holds a palm branch in his claws (the stem of the palm branch is broken off between the eagle’s claws). The palm was attached to the proper right leg of the eagle with a ribbon whose ends flutter out from beneath the bird’s right foot. Claudius wears an aegis, a mantle around his lower body, and sandals. He holds a *lituus* in his right hand and a double cornucopia in his left hand. The aegis is worn in the manner of a chlamys: it covers both shoulders and falls behind to re-emerge hanging over the emperor’s lower left arm. The *lituus* is an attribute of the reigning emperor (Zwierlein-Diehl 2008, 172), and, in spite of appearances, this is not an apotheosis but, like 41, an extravagant representation of the living emperor’s Jovian powers (see further discussion, above, at n. 79).

Identification at first disputed between Germanicus and Claudius. Babelon 1897: 137–40, cat. 265 (Germanicus’ apotheosis); Furtwängler 1900: III, 320 (Claudius); Bruns 1948: 27–8 (Germanicus); Richter 1971: 103, cat. 498 (Germanicus); Möbius 1985: 67 (Claudius); Megow 1987: 199–200, cat. A 80, pl. 27.1 (Claudius, double cornucopia, so after A.D. 49); Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 168, fig. 638; 2008, 172, fig. 129 (Claudius, lifetime); Koortbojian 2013: 58–9, fig. III.4 (Claudius).

NERO, A. D. 54–68

36. Boy Nero laureate, A.D. 49–54 (Content)

Collection of Derek Content, 74. Bought from Tiffany, New York, in early twentieth century. Sardonyx, three layers. H: 3.0 cm. Slight chips from edges and top of wreath.

Head of boy Nero facing right wearing laurel wreath. It follows Nero’s first or pre-accession portrait type, in use between A.D. 49 and 54.

M. Bergmann 2008: 20 n. 18 (Nero, before A.D. 54); Henig and Molesworth 2018: 73, cat. 74 (Nero, aged ‘about 17’; re-cut but not much, possibly re-polished).

37. Nero laureate, A.D. 54–59 (Bonn)

Bonn, private collection. Sardonyx, two layers. H: 2.3 cm. Fragment, broken all round except top.

Head of young Nero in profile, facing right and wearing a laurel wreath. Like the young Nero cameo in Paris (38), this fragment follows Nero’s second portrait type (A.D. 54–59), but with a more emphatic representation of individual features, such as the heavy and carefully articulated nose, the large curling lock of hair in front of the ear, and the long overlapping locks of luxuriant hair that extend down the nape of the neck.

Megow 1973 (first publication: Nero); Jucker 1982b: 109; Möbius 1985: 87 (Nero); Megow 1987: 212, cat. A 94, pl. 34.9–10 (Nero); M. Bergmann 2008: 20 n. 18, fig. 16f (Nero).

38. Nero with laurel wreath and aegis, A.D. 54–59 (Paris)

Paris, Cabinet des Médailles, 302. Sardonyx, four layers. H: 4.7 cm. Light damage to tip of nose and tip of wreath.

Bust of young Nero with head in profile to right, wearing laurel and an aegis tied on the right shoulder in the manner of a chlamys. The white Medusa head on the dark aegis is carved in profile at the left shoulder against the dark background. Although other (unsustainable) identifications have been proposed (Tiberius, Geta, Caracalla), the portrait is now agreed to follow Nero's second or accession type, in use between A.D. 54 and 59.

Babelon 1897: 158, cat. 302, fig. 302 (Caracalla); Möbius 1985, 50 (Tiberius); Megow 1987: 211–12, cat. A 93, pl. 34.6 (Nero, A.D. 54–59); M. Bergmann 1998: 150, 220, pl. 29.3 (Nero); Vollenweider and Avisseau-Broustet 2003: 174–5, cat. 222 (Geta); M. Bergmann 2008: 20 n. 18, fig. 16h (Nero); D'Ottone Rambach, Zwierlein-Diehl, and Rambach 2020: 148–51, no. 5, fig. 5.

39. Nero and Agrippina Minor, A.D. 54–59 (Cologne)

Cologne Cathedral, part of Shrine of Three Kings. Sardonyx, three layers. H: 8.0 cm. Cracked and broken vertically through figure of emperor. Some small points of surface damage.

Nero is seated on a backed throne, legs crossed, with feet on a low footstool, looking right, facing his standing mother Agrippina the Younger who prepares to crown him with a laurel wreath. An eagle stands beneath the throne facing left, but looking back and up at his emperor.

Agrippina wears a sleeveless chiton, a mantle and a laurel wreath with three ears of grain springing up from it over the brow. She holds a cornucopia with her left hand and raises the laurel wreath in her right hand for crowning her son. Her features and hairstyle are roughly treated and follow Agrippina's portrait types of the A.D. 50s (Boschung 1993a: 73–4, Type Xb–c) only in highly reduced and approximate form.

Nero wears an aegis in the manner of a cloak, a mantle around his lower body, and sandals. He holds a sceptre in his right hand and in his left hand what seems to be an elaborate stern ornament of a ship (*aphlaston*). On his head, Nero wears a laurel wreath (even though in the logic of the scene he is about to receive another one from his mother), and rising from a thin support behind his laurel wreath a rayed solar disc with nine or ten spokes stands far above his head. The profile head clearly follows Nero's second portrait type that appeared in A.D. 54.

The two imperial figures wear an extraordinary concentration of imperial-divine attributes, and the configuration of Nero in his second type with Agrippina clearly refers to the young emperor's accession to power in A.D. 54, here allegorised, as it was independently in the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias, as a 'coronation' scene of a kind that had no place in real imperial ritual. In an over-determined narrative of honorific crowning, the young prince is validated by his mother in his role as supreme Jovian ruler.

Furtwängler 1900: III, 325 n. 1 (Julio-Claudian); Möbius 1985: 64 (Nero); Megow 1987: 213–14, cat. A 98, pl. 35.1–2 (Nero and Agrippina); M. Bergmann 1994: 6 (Nero and Agrippina); 1998: 151–7, pl. 30.1–2 (A.D. 54, comparison with relief from Sebasteion at Aphrodisias); Alexandridis 2004: 165, cat. 119, pl. 58.4 (ears of corn over Agrippina's forehead are possible allusion to Fortuna-Isis; attribute in Nero's left hand is 'much disputed'); Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 168–9, fig. 639 (soon after A.D. 54); M. Bergmann 2008: 20 n. 18, fig. 16m.

40. Nero as Triptolemos and Agrippina as Ceres, A.D. 54–59 (Paris)

Paris, Cabinet des Médailles, 276. From cabinet of Louis XIV. Sardonyx, three layers. H: 8.3 cm. Original edges trimmed. Irregular outline is taken up in gently undulating line of innermost band of modern mounting of enamelled gold. Part of background behind emperor is restored in onyx. Breaks at missing right arm of emperor and missing ties of his wreath have been worked smooth. Emperor's portrait has been worked over. Elaborate circular mounting is of later seventeenth century.

A richly decorated chariot drawn by two winged snakes flies to the right carrying an imperial Triptolemos and a Ceres figure with the portrait of Agrippina the Younger. The scene has an unusual narrative dynamism derived from the Triptolemos iconography on which it is based.

The spectacular winged dragons move out of the frame in narrative profile to the right, while we see the chariot box they are pulling in three-quarter view. Its upper rail is decorated with circle motifs around a point, and its body is decorated with elegantly designed and superbly executed vegetal patterns. There are scrolling tendrils around the trailing back edge of the box and two tall vertical palmette elements, one on the axis of the box front (only partly seen between the wings and rearing body of the lead dragon) and one at the angle formed by the front and side of the box. The leaves and tendrils of the stem marking this angle are differently treated to each side. Striated fronds curve outwards from the stem to the left, and more traditional plain palmette fronds curve inwards on the right side. (The reading of this palmette and its lowest tendril at the base of the stem as an *aphlaston* and a *lituus*, proposed by Vollenweider and Avisseau-Broustet 2003: 98–9, seems incorrect to me.)

The Triptolemos figure is marked as imperial by the cuirass he wears. It is a plain cuirass, with a skirt of two or three overlapping rows of leather straps. Some of the fringed ends of the upper row are carved. The apparent line around his waist may be the trace of a commander's sash (*cingulum*). The figure holds up his *paludamentum* in his left hand to scatter grain from it with his (missing) right hand. The worked-over portrait is not now identifiable by appearance or portrait type.

The Ceres figure wears a thick sleeveless peplos-like dress belted tight under her breasts and a billowing mantle that descends from left shoulder to right hip. She holds attributes of Ceres in her left hand, ears of grain and a stem of poppy, and an uncertain object in her right hand, perhaps a scroll. The figure adopts a dynamic action posture, accentuated by the swirl of her mantle behind her back and round her hip. She wears a Claudian fashion hairstyle of three rows of tight ringlets in front of the ear(s), with a looped braid behind and a corkscrew lock escaping onto the neck from behind each ear — a hairstyle well attested for Agrippina the Younger. Other imperial women wore a similar hairstyle (for example, Messalina on provincial coinages, above, n. 71), but the action makes clear this should be Agrippina.

The imperial figures are usually identified as Claudius and Messalina or Claudius and Agrippina, but independent of portrait typology such pairings are unlikely here for the simple reason that they defy the logic of the mythological drama on which the composition was modelled. Triptolemos stands to Demeter-Ceres as a youth to a mourning mother, not as a husband to his wife. Triptolemos was a boy and Demeter-Ceres a full-bodied matronly figure, and indeed in the cameo the cuirassed hero-ruler is a smaller, slighter figure in relation to the goddess-empress. Such disparities of scale are unattested and indeed would be unthinkable in any imperial husband-and-wife pair, whether in cameos or other media. They would contradict basic rules of age and power relations. The hero-ruler should rather be the *son* of the empress. Among mid-first-century mother-and-son pairs, Messalina and Britannicus might be possible, but within the norms of imperial representation the cuirassed figure is already much older than seven — Britannicus' age at the time of his mother's execution in 48. The best solution (already seen by Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 169) is that the cameo represents the young Nero at or soon after his accession in A.D. 54 with his mother Agrippina-Ceres.

The identification of the emperor as Nero follows from the mythological logic of the narrative. The head is much too small and seems to have undergone later and not entirely successful re-working. Vollenweider and Avisseau-Broustet (2003: 98–9) have noted that both portraits seem to be carved in a lower layer of the stone than the chariot, and from this observation they suggest that the cameo was re-worked in the early Neronian period from an earlier Julio-Claudian composition. Given the clumsy character of the cuirassed youth's portrait, it might be better to see the re-purposing of the stone in a later context, such as the early fourth century, when such re-working is better attested.

Until Zwierlein-Diehl 2007, all commentators identified Claudius with either Messalina or Agrippina. Babelon 1897: 144–5, cat. 276 (Claudius and Messalina); Furtwängler 1900: III, 320 (Claudius and Messalina); Bruns

1948: 14 (Claudius and Messalina); Simon 1957: 61 (certainly Claudian); Megow 1987: 207, cat. A 86, pl. 27.3 (Claudius and Agrippina); Vollenweider and Avisseau-Broustet 2003: 98–9, cat. 105 (Claudius and Messalina); Alexandridis 2004: 165, cat. 120, pl. 58.3 (Claudius and Agrippina Minor); Hallett 2005: 233, pl. 136 (Claudius and Agrippina); Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 169, fig. 640 (Nero and Agrippina).

41. Nero on eagle with Victory, A.D. 54–59 (Nancy)

Nancy, Bibliothèque Publique. Sardonyx, three layers. H: 7.1 cm. Damage to edge and wreath held by Victory, otherwise well preserved. Known since 1471.

Nero with aegis, laurel, and cornucopia sits facing left on a flying eagle, in the same composition as Claudius in 35. Winged Victoria, taking off from his outstretched right hand, flies in to crown the emperor with a laurel wreath, even though he already wears one. The action may again (as on the cameo in Cologne 39) seem over-determined, but in the logic of cameos, the wreath on Nero's head is part of his imperial persona, while the wreath brought by Victoria is part of the narrative of conferring high honours.

The emperor's large aegis is fastened on his right shoulder like a cloak, and its lower end flutters out to the right of the cornucopia as far as the edge of the stone where it terminates in a curious bow-shaped formation. The Medusa head is simply engraved into the aegis in the same upper layer of the stone. The emperor also wears sandals (parts of both feet can be seen) and a plain cloak around his lower body, visible over the thighs. Its upper edge can also be seen tracing a line below the emperor's left hand. The richly tendril-decorated cornucopia holds grapes, a sharp *pyramidion*, and two round fruits. The lower end of the horn is held elegantly between the first and second fingers of the emperor's left hand. The eagle's wings and legs are spread in a magnificent heraldic power symbol, and it clutches a thunderbolt in its claws. Its head turns up sharply in profile to look at the ruler whose supremacy it embodies.

The emperor's portrait, with the light under-chin beard of a youth, follows Nero's second type, both in its low-fringed hair arrangement and its carefully articulated physiognomy. This authorised portrait was created for his accession in A.D. 54 and remained in wide circulation until A.D. 59. The cameo was therefore made in this period and has nothing to do with a proleptic *consecratio* and the rising to heaven of a *divus*. Its purpose was to describe the living ruler's supreme Jupiter-like power in extravagant panegyric terms.

Identification as Nero now accepted. Old proposals of Hadrian and Caracalla are without foundation. Bernoulli 1891: 118c (Hadrian); Furtwängler 1900: III, 324, fig. 168 (Nero); Bruns 1948: 27–8 (Caracalla, because Nero was not deified); Bianchi Bandinelli 1970: 23, fig. 18 (Caracalla); Möbius 1985: 67 (Nero); Megow 1987: 214–15, cat. A 99, pl. 35.3 (Nero); M. Bergmann 1998: 149–50, 165, 220, pl. 29.1–2 (Nero); Zwierlein-Diehl 2008: 172–3, fig. 130 (Nero); M. Bergmann 2008: 20 n. 18, fig. 16k–l (Nero); Borg 2019: 210, fig. 4.10 (Nero).

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DIVVS AVGVSTVS PATER, bronze dupondius, c. A.D. 22–26, Rome.



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