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The harbour of Venus? Sub-elite identities, multi-sensorial adornment, and Pompeian bars

Abstract

From the bars and inns (thermopolia, cauponae, and hospitiae) of Roman Pompeii, destroyed in the eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79, a variety of different types of jewellery has been found. The bars have been excavated both inside the perimeter of the ancient city and in its harbour suburb. In particular, the complete gold parure found in a river-side caupona at Moregine (building B), featuring body-chains, bracelets, and anklets, gives rise to the hypothesis that this kind of outfit of abundant gold jewellery, plausibly worn on the nude body, may have been less typically owned by elite matrons and more distinctive of sub-elite women working in bars, perhaps even connected with sex work. This hypothesis is tested by questioning the multiple multi-sensorial ways in which jewellery could attract attention to the wearer’s body and signal non-elite status. Among the more ephemeral and rarely considered features are the visibility of the jewellery, based on its dimensions, material, placement on intimate areas of the body, its mobility, and perhaps also the tinkling sounds produced by its movement. As a conclusion, there seems to be a connection between the abundant use of jewellery of high visual impact, acoustic qualities referring to dance and the hospitality business in the inns of Pompeii.

Introduction

The main goal of this paper is to examine the multiple ways in which Roman jewellery could signal different sub-elite identities. My basic assumption is that non-elite jewellery was not only a poorer version of the jewellery worn by the ruling classes, imitating it in cheaper materials (glass paste, bronze, iron, leather), but that it also had a proper code of values and aspirations different from elite ideals, expressing different scales of social statuses.

I argue that gold could be part of sub-elite apparel, contesting the assumption that it only signalled elite status. One example of this traditional view, in the case of Pompeian jewellery, is Matteo della Corte’s interpretation of a parure of gold jewellery found along the route be-

I would like to thank Courtney Ward and the Norwegian Institute in Rome for the opportunity to participate in the conference “Adornment as expression of everyday identity in ancient and medieval life” and elaborate my ideas on this theme. I also wish to express my gratitude to the anonymous peer-reviewers for their precious comments and suggestions.
between Pompeii and Stabiae that he automatically attributes to “a girl of noble birth” and “a lady at the pinnacle of the society.” Similarly, Concetta Barini took it as self-evident that Roman gold jewellery belonged to high-born matrons, while their servants and freedwomen would have used bronze jewellery. The view that, for example, relatively well-to-do freedwomen may also have used gold jewellery can be supported not only by literary evidence but also by the fact that much of Pompeian gold jewellery is of low-quality workmanship, fabricated in thin gold plate; this phenomenon has recently been analysed by Courtney Ward. Furthermore, according to Antonio D’Ambrosio’s statistics, silver, bronze, and iron pieces are actually much rarer than gold among the Vesuvian jewellery finds: evidently, they cannot be interpreted as jewellery “for the masses” but were quite particular signs of some specific subaltern status. This fact also reveals that the situation cannot be described by simply contrasting an elite’s expensive gold items with a wider population’s imitations in less precious materials; the situation is much more complex.

The specific questions asked in this article are: How did the material, volume, placement on the body, and factors like movement and sound fine-tune the status value of Roman jewellery? How can such data, relative to status and identity, be connected with the place of discovery and its social context?

Evidence for the use of jewellery in Pompeian bars

In Pompeian bars and inns (so-called thermopolia and cauponae) that can with relative certainty be recognised as non-elite contexts, several jewellery sets have been found that included gold items. In the river port of Pompeii, below the temple of Venus, important concentrations of inns, tabernae, and restaurants were situated along the streets leading out from the city and the waterfront; inside the town, bars were concentrated in areas of high mobility, in particular near the city gates and along the main thoroughfares.

The material evidence from the bars excavated inside the perimeter of the urban walls is plentiful, but the state of publication of their finds is fragmentary and does not yet allow for a capillary statistic approach to the theme. However, even considering the cases of published finds’ contexts from thermopolia, cauponae, and hospitia, they show that jewellery worn by their inhabitants/workers must have been quite varied and related to several different social statuses. Often, the richer assemblages have been explained away with the presumption that they could not belong to such establishments and may represent individuals, perhaps plunderers, casually seeking refuge in their spaces. However, there is no valid reason for considering a priori that they would all represent last-minute chaos and disorder during the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 AD. The sets of golden jewellery could also represent the outcome of the flourishing business activity of the bar keepers.

A number of Pompeian bars and inns have produced complete parures, including multiple pieces of gold jewellery. For example, in the thermopolium V 1, 13, five pairs of golden ear-

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2 Della Corte 1933, 106-107.
3 Barini 1958, 69. See also Stout 2001.
5 D’Ambrosio 2003, 54.
6 On Pompeian bars, see Ellis 2004.
7 For an overview of the materials and wider discussion, see Berg 2019.
rings (Fig. 1), eleven gold rings, two silver rings, a silver *lunula* pendant, a signet ring in bronze, and eight gemstones were found.\(^8\) In her analysis of the find context, Giovanna Bonifacio suggested that the amount and value of the jewellery is incompatible with the status of the establishment, and that they had been plundered from elsewhere.\(^9\) In the *caupona* of Salvius (VI 14, 35.36), 75 faience beads were found near the bar counter, and in the first floor, two skeletons and a set of jewellery came to light, including a long gold chain with a *lunula*-amulet, anklet/bracelets composed of gold half-spheres, *crotalia*-earrings with pendant pearls, and nine rings. These form quite a complete parure, and Mariarosaria Borriello has suggested they could plausibly have been the property of the owners of the bar.\(^10\) In the *cau-pona* of Masculus (I 7, 14), a long golden body chain was probably found together with two gold rings.\(^11\)

Other Pompeian bars contained simpler jewellery. In the *caupona* of Hermes, only a long chain of faience beads was found. A small collection of jewellery was found behind the selling counter of the partly excavated *caupona* III 8, 8 called “all’insegna dell’Africa.” Here, a bead in white and blue glass paste, two green ribbed faience beads, and fragments of textile in gold thread came to light.\(^12\) In the large *caupona-hospitium*, possibly also *lupanar*, of Aurunculeius Secundio (VI 16, 32.33) a band woven in gold filigree, 27-cm long and ending in two small rings, perhaps a headband, was found along with four silver bracelets, and a string of faience beads (Fig. 2).\(^13\)

In their study of the distribution of jewellery in the Vesuvian area, D’Ambrosio and De Carolis have observed that more jewels were found in the periphery than in the centre: whereas in the urban areas of Herculaneum and Pompeii the individuals wearing jewellery comprised 9% of the victims found, more jewellery was worn in the suburban areas outside of Pompeii, 13.9%.\(^14\) Many of these finds actually cluster in the commercial areas of the maritime *pagi* of Pompeii (Fig. 3).

In the *pagus maritimus* (harbour suburb) of Bottaro, the private “Fondo Matrone” excavations were undertaken in the final years of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. Unfortunately, the early date and unofficial nature of these excavations hinder a closer analysis of the connection between these structures and the finds. In the area situated along the sea coast west of Pompeii between Porta Marina and the sea, 58 skeletons and abundant jewellery, now lost, were found.\(^15\) The architectural remains consisted of a row of *tabernae* of which at least one was a *thermopolium* near which 22 individuals had sought refuge. Three gold necklaces, four bracelets, six pairs of earrings, and nine rings were found on them. Some of the victims were most probably inhabitants of the *tabernae*, and some were casual fugitives trying to escape Pompeii.

The second *pagus maritimus* was situated in Moregine, some 600 m south of the walls of Pompeii outside the Stabian gate, on the northern bank of the river Sarno. The first excavated

\(^{1}\) Bonifacio 2003, 263-267.
\(^{2}\) Bonifacio 2003, 263.
\(^{10}\) Borriello 2003, 268-269.
\(^{11}\) D’Ambrosio, De Carolis 1997.
\(^{12}\) Berg 2019, 225-228.
\(^{13}\) Berg 2017, 17-21.
\(^{15}\) See Sogliano 1901; Mastroroberto 2003a, 438.
area there, Fondo Valiante, was unearthed by private land-owners already in the 1880s, with very scarce documentation. This is a site consisting of rows of commercial *tabernae* and storage spaces, some with two storeys, around which 41 skeletons were found. Many had with them rich jewellery, now at the Museum of Naples, and small coin hoards.\(^\text{16}\)

The second excavation area in Moregine was studied in 2000-2001. It had two separate building complexes, the so-called building A (of the *triclinia*) and building B, a more informal cluster of smaller *cauponae* of different types and shapes, lining the riverfront and serving transiting travellers. The function of the latter is proven by several *triclinium* bed installations. From this area comes the most important and best documented case of gold jewellery in Pompeian harbour inns. Unit D had in room 10 a water-logged wooden *triclinium*, while in room 8, skeletons were found, including a woman of about thirty, with twelve pieces of gold jewellery.\(^\text{17}\) Among these, the best-known and most debated item is the snake bracelet bearing on its inside the inscribed text: *domnus ancillae suae*, “master to his servant girl.”\(^\text{18}\) The victims, two women and three children, had remained under a falling roof in the first phase of the eruption and were therefore very likely inhabitants of this establishment, not external fugitives. Several interpretations of the relationship between the persons mentioned in the inscription have been proposed: the *dominus* may perhaps have been an ex-patron or a pimp and the female individual perhaps the beloved slave of a *dominus*, a prostitute, *copa* or *lena*, or a freedwoman courtesan.\(^\text{19}\) In our present context, the exact status of the woman is not of crucial importance, whereas the finding of gold jewellery in a commercial, sub-elite context, certainly a food and drink outlet, is very significant.

The costly appearance and the large collection of the woman’s golden jewellery is impressive. At the time of the eruption, the woman was wearing some of her jewellery and had the rest in a small bag. It included a long chain probably worn across the chest, a fragmentary element made of four rings (maybe a part of a headband or a clasp for the veil) and three finger-rings.\(^\text{20}\) The set was completed by two pairs of bracelets, maybe to be worn both at the upper arms and at the wrists, and a pair of *armillae* consisting of a series of twin hemispherical elements (Fig. 4).\(^\text{21}\) The latter could be interpreted as anklets, in particular because of their large diameter and the opening mechanism with a clasp.\(^\text{22}\) If we accept this last identification, all the jewellery could be worn as a single outfit. Even if such a set cannot be taken as an adornment typically worn in *cauponae*, in this case a complete gold parure was certainly associated with a harbour inn.

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16 Stefani 2003; Pirozzi 2003a and b.
20 D’Ambrosio 2001; Mastroroberto 2003b; Costabile 2003. For the jewellery finds of Moregine, see also Nelson in this volume.
Topography of the adorned body

Although the complete golden parure scarcely has any parallels among the material finds from Pompeii, similar jewellery sets, featuring body chains and bracelets/armlets/anklets, can be seen in several Pompeian paintings. These are most often worn by the goddess Venus or Cupids, always on the nude body, thus lending an erotic interpretation (FIG. 5).23

Such a costume, in fact, focuses on the more intimate areas of the body, the ankles, upper arms and breasts, which are normally covered by clothing. Arguably, jewellery not only directs the eyes of onlookers onto itself and its intrinsic qualities (colour, material, workmanship) but importantly also brings attention to the body parts which it adorns. Attention and gaze may also lead to touch—in Roman literature, this is evinced by the *topos* of seduction by touching the hand with the excuse of admiring the finger-rings.24 In the words of Tibullus: “Often, as if I were examining her jewel or seal, I recall that I touched her hand under that pretext.”25 In Plautus’ *Asinaria*, this seduction strategy is allegedly forbidden to a courtesan-on-contract: “she must not give her finger-ring to be looked at by any man, nor ask to look at the ring of any man.”26 On this analogy, other jewellery worn on more intimate parts of the body—anklets, armlets, and body chains—could have been considered even more perilous for morals than the jewellery worn in publicly exposed areas of the body—the head, hands, fingers, and wrists. Apuleius (c. AD 125 – 180) seems to refer to this kind of moral ranking of body parts and consequently of the jewels adorning them: “hair is the most noble part of the body so placed by nature that it first meets the gaze.”27 Also, Tertullian (c. AD 160 – 220) speaks positively about the care of hair and other parts of the body that first “draw the eyes:” “*quaes oculos trahunt*” (i.e. the head), judging more negatively other types of *ornatus*, in particular the use of golden jewellery and gems as “*immundus muliebris*,” “filthy fineries” that provoke the “vice of prostitution.”28 In sum, various pieces of jewellery may have received very different moral evaluations according to the zone of the body with which they were associated. Furthermore, it must be remembered that the Romans generally associated being on public display with prostitution.29

The body-chain was, *par excellence*, jewellery designed to bring attention directly to the nude breast, to the point where it crossed and was decorated with a gem or amulet. The oft-cited passage of Juvenal, describing the attire of Messalina during her nightly incursions to the *lupanar*, plausibly describes her naked but for the golden body chain, directly assimilating the jewel to the body part it touches, which thus become her famous “gilded nipples” (*nuda ... papillis auratis*).30 Another passage of Juvenal probably refers to the same piece of jewellery, describing a Plebeian prostitute in the *Circus Maximus* area who shows her long gold (chain) on the nude neck.31 In the Greek world, such a chain could be called κεστός *hiμάς*, the

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23 On the iconography of the crossed body chains, see D’Ambrosio et al. 2008; Costabile 2005.
25 Tib. 1.6.25-26. For this *topos* and the courtesans’ use of gold, see Berg 2018, 206-212.
26 Plaut. *Asin.* 778.
28 Tert. *De cultu feminarum* 1.4.1-2.
30 Juvi. 6.122; Olson 2008, 50.
31 Juvi. 6.589: *nudis longum ostendit cervicibus aurum.*
elaborate and magical girdle of seduction that Aphrodite wears on her breasts and “on which had been wrought all charms: love, desire and the whispered endearments that steal away good sense.”\textsuperscript{32} The word cestus or cestos is also used by several Roman authors to indicate the girdle of Venus, used to enhance sexual desire. Martial adds to the description of this ornament the sensation of bodily heat: the chain is “warmed up” by the bosom of Venus, cestos de Veneris sinu calentem (Mart. 14.206).\textsuperscript{33} Interestingly, the church father Clement of Alexandria (c. AD 150 – 215) describes such pieces, comparing them to slaves’ chains: “For is not the golden necklace a collar, and do not the necklets which they call catheters (κάθημα / κάθημα) occupy the place of chains?”\textsuperscript{34} As for the iconographic representations, among the erotic scenes in the apodyterium of the Suburban Baths in Pompeii, the body-chain is significantly worn by a woman in a ‘cunnilingus’ scene, showing that it was not only the ideal dress of Venus but also a realistic outfit suited to erotic encounters.\textsuperscript{35}

Besides the body-chain, anklets are a piece of jewellery to which quite ambivalent moral significance has been assigned. While bracelets and armlets were undoubtedly worn by women of all classes and social statuses – brides, materfamilias, and women of the demi-monde – the evidence is more difficult to interpret in the case of anklets, since they are not visible in depictions of women in long robes.\textsuperscript{36} In fact, the invisibility of the area around the feet and ankles was, in the matronly outfit, ensured and underlined by a specific decorative band reaching to the ground and stitched to the hem, the limbus or instita.\textsuperscript{37} Anklets (periselides) are also mentioned extremely rarely in Roman literature.\textsuperscript{38} Curiously, anklets are almost nonexistent among archaeological finds too, and it has been presumed that they were fabricated

\textsuperscript{32} Iliad 14.217-16. For the identification the Greek kestôs himás, see Bélyácz, Nagy 2021; Faraone 1999, 97-100.

\textsuperscript{33} See TLL s.v. cestus. Explained by Servius (Aen. 5.69) as balteum Veneris; Schol. Stat. Theb. 2.283: Ceston est vinculum ornamenti, quo circundatur Venus, omnibus illicebris nuptiarumque cupiditatisbus elaborato.

\textsuperscript{34} Clem. Alex. Paed. 13.

\textsuperscript{35} On the image, see Jacobelli 1995, 44 n. 51, who also notes that the term used for such jewellery in Dig. 34.2.32 is ornatum mammillarum. For the use and find contexts of the crossed body-chains, see Berg 2018, discussing, in particular, the use of gold jewellery by Roman courtesans, as well as the context of one fragmentary chain found in the Pompeian thermopolium of Masculus. In this volume, Meredith Nelson interestingly discusses the body-chains in relation to the identity of Roman women, backing the view of their use by all social categories, including both prostitutes and married, ‘emancipated’ elite matrons. However, the greatest obstacle for such a reading is the lack of iconographic depictions of such crossed chains worn on top of matronly clothing. To cover this “lacuna” of matronal images with body-chains, Gesa Schenke (2003, 61) cited Etruscan sarcophagus portraits of elite women with crossed chains on top of their clothes. Such evidence, however, is too early and dates to the third to second centuries BC. Consequently, assuming that such jewellery was worn on the nude upper body, one must either presume that Roman matrons exhibited such expensive jewellery only in the privacy of their bedchambers, or that they might have presented themselves even in semi-public occasions, like banquets, in topless clothing. Both instances seem to me quite unlikely, at least on a larger scale. Occasionally, this may have happened, in particular, as a specific bridal parure (cestus, see n. 33) for the wedding night. The most iconic user of the body-chains would, in my view, have been the idealised independent courtesan, a cultural icon frequently portrayed both in elegiac literature and imperial period wall-painting. For a discussion of sub-elite use of gold jewellery and cosmetics, see Berg 2017, 2019, and 2020.

\textsuperscript{36} Guzzo, Scarano Ussani 2000; Lee 2015, 150. Mirelle Lee notes that in the Greek world, bracelets and armlets are relatively rare among archaeological finds and are often amuletic, but “not as important for the construction of identity as other jewels.”

\textsuperscript{37} Olson 2008, 30, with further bibliographical references.

\textsuperscript{38} The Latin passages mentioning periselides include Petr. 67 and Hor. ep. 1.17.55-56, which associates them with a meretrix. Plin. (nat. 33.40) connects “gold on the feet” and “chains on the flanks” with a “middle class” of women.

\textsuperscript{39} CIL VI 1527, 30-31.
in perishable materials like leather and textile strings.\textsuperscript{39} Various answers have been given to the question of the relation between anklets and social status, from prostitution to universal adornments fit for all social classes.\textsuperscript{40} Recently, Pietro Giovanni Guzzo and Vincenzo Scarano Ussani thoroughly examined the available sources, coming to the conclusion that even if anklets were not exclusively worn by prostitutes, they were strongly associated with meretrician lifestyles.\textsuperscript{41} Gesa Schenke, in her study of Vesuvian jewellery and their depictions, has likewise reconfirmed this connection.\textsuperscript{42}

In reading the adorned body, not only the locus of jewellery but also its dimensions and the amount of gold used in its fabrication were important signals. Roman literary sources consistently refer to Roman elite matrons’ ideal of minimising the use of jewellery. Significantly, in the so-called laudatio Turiae, the funerary eulogy of the matron Turia, her jewellery is described with the expression ornatus non conspiciendi (“not showy,” “not notable”).\textsuperscript{43} Again, the jewellery is referred to as something attracting attention and gaze to one’s body, and therefore to be strictly limited in the case of chaste matrons. However, the types, amounts, and materials of women’s jewellery were not regulated by precise laws after the Republican limit of half an uncia of gold in the Lex Oppia of 215 BC.\textsuperscript{44} Plautus, living and writing in the same period as the Lex Oppia, described a courtesan receiving, as a gift, the bracelet of a wife and immediately ordering it to be taken to the jeweller, who was to add one ounce of gold to it. In Plautus’ imagination, at least, a courtesan would be prone to wearing heavier and showier gold jewellery than a matron.\textsuperscript{45} In comparison, Mireille Lee notes that several Greek city states stipulated that only prostitutes could wear gold in public, noting that married women could probably wear their jewellery in special, controlled events like weddings.\textsuperscript{46}

In the Roman mindset, then, abundant jewellery worn on the more intimate areas of the body strongly constructed an erotic identity better adapted, if not to prostitutes, then to well-to-do courtesans, rather than matrons. Heavy golden anklets, armlets, and body chains might also have more easily have been opted for by wealthy freedwomen. This is perfectly exemplified by Petronius’ Fortunata and Scintilla (to whom Petronius provides epithets like ambubaia, flute-girl, and lupatria, prostitute).\textsuperscript{47} It is not impossible that such ornaments would have been used by more liberated elite matrons, but the matronae may have thus exposed themselves to social criticism. The choice of jewellery may thus have been a question constantly open to debate, a daily act of identity creation and negotiation.

\textsuperscript{39} Guzzo, Scarano Ussani 2000, 56.
\textsuperscript{40} For the traditional view connecting anklets with prostitution, see Barini 1958, 105-106; refuting the interpretation of anklets as “vulgar,” Thompson 1993, 262-263.
\textsuperscript{41} Guzzo, Scarano Ussani 2000, Appendix 1, 54-55. Of crucial importance is the reference by Sextus Empiricus (c. 160 – 210 CE) about Egyptian prostitutes using anklets as distinctive signs, Sext. Emp. PH 3, 201.
\textsuperscript{42} Schenke 2003, 50-51.
\textsuperscript{43} CIL VI 1527, 30-31.
\textsuperscript{44} Liv. 34, 6, 10: ne qua mulier plus semunciam auri haberet.
\textsuperscript{45} Plaut. Men., 526: addas auri pondo unciam. For courtesans and gold, see also Berg 2018.
\textsuperscript{46} Lee 2015, 140-141, n. 101. For the Roman world, cf. Olson 2008, 50. For example, Xen. Ephesiaca 5.7; Diod. 12.21; Athenaeus 12.521b. There are numerous associations of jewellery with prostitution in the Bible; see for example Jer 4.30, Hos 2.2, 2.13.
\textsuperscript{47} Gloyn 2012.
I have earlier sketched two broad groupings or mindsets of Roman jewellery: 1) the Venerean jewellery set may be identified purely on the basis of its placement on the body: the bust and upper arms and legs, underlining complete or partial nudity. This could be contrasted (though not with any strict written rule or clear definition) with a more 2) “Junonian” or matronly jewellery set, placed around the areas not covered by long sleeved tunics and pallamantles: around the face, neck, and the wrists and hands, consisting mainly of diadems, earrings, necklaces, and finger-rings (even when the head was covered and the long instita hem covered the feet). In short, while accepting that not all gold jewellery signalled elite status, anklets and body-chains are the most probable examples of specific pieces of adornment that tended to be associated with the wealthier sub-elite, and specifically with women working in the hospitality business.

**Jewellery as multi-sensorial performance: movement and sound**

Jewellery can also draw attention to itself and to the body through other non-visual effects like movement and sound. Mireille Lee notes that in the Greek world, metal bracelets may have been worn in pairs and therefore produced a clinking sound that added an aural dimension that would have provided them with a whole different level of communicative power, suggesting that they possibly could be heard when not seen under the clothes, reinforcing their messages by way of a double sensory experience. The tinkling sound of anklets as an important way to attract attention to the wearer of jewellery has been dubbed a prostitute’s quality since biblical times.

Body-chains and other long necklaces would have been quite freely flowing and swinging ornaments, possibly even producing rustling sounds while they moved. Also, the armilla/anklet composed of hemispherical elements joined by rings could be a sound-producing piece, especially if the hollow hemispheres contained rattling components, or the metallic elements themselves may have clattered with the movement of the feet.

However, the best-known case in this respect are the *crotalia* earrings, so designed that two or three pearls suspended from a horizontal bar were in constant, dangling motion. The famous words of Pliny underline that the sound was an important quality of such jewellery: they were named “castanets” because women delighted to hear them clashing and clacking together while they moved (sono quique gaudeant et collisu ipso margaritarum). According to Pliny, elongated pearls were called *crotalia*; rounded pearls were called by another musical name, *tympana*, or tambourines. In Latin literature, it is in fact the iconic wealthy freedwoman Scintilla, who is described by Petronius as owning such *crotalia* earrings.

*Crotalia* and *tympana* were typical instruments of the Bacchic maenads, and using these names may, at least on some level, have associated the user of the pieces with Dionysian music and dances (FIG. 6). The reference to *crotalia* may also contain a cross-reference to

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49 Lee 2015, 151.
50 Isaiah 3.16, “Because the daughters of Zion are haughty and walk with outstretched necks, glancing wantonly with their eyes, mincing along as they go, tinkling the bangles on their feet…”
51 Plin. nat. 9.56.114.
52 Petr. 67.
the fact that the musical instruments of that name normally accompanied various exotic dances based on rotating and vibrating movements performed by the so-called *puellae Caditanae*, often paralleled to the modern “oriental dancing,” where the dancers held in their hands small bronze castanets.\(^{54}\) Although no explicit literary mention connects dance and jewellery in the Roman world, such a connection might plausibly be suspected.\(^{55}\) A passage connecting such a dance, bars, and gilded vestments can be found in Apuleius’s *Metamorphoses*, where the barmaid Photis, wearing a tunic with golden edging, is described as stirring a cooking pot, dancing in round and sliding movements, and shaking her hips.\(^{56}\) The passage has a parallel in the Pseudo-Virgilian poem *Copa*, where the hostess of a *caupona* invites passers-by to enter her locale through verbal advertisement, alluring dance, and clacking of the *crotalia*. The Syrian hostess here wears a decorated *mitra* headdress, but no jewellery is mentioned.\(^{57}\)

Finally, the sympathetic clustering of literary associations between bars, alluring dancing, non-matronly outfits, and harbours appears in a passage of Suetonius, who writes that every time the emperor Nero sailed along the Italian coast and the Bay of Naples, he would have temporary inns constructed along the route and position in them matrons dressed as barmaid instructed to invite passers-by into their establishments by their gestures and calls:

> “Whenever he drifted down the Tiber to Ostia, or sailed about the Gulf of Baiae, booths were set up at intervals along the banks and shores, fitted out for debauchery, while bartering matrons played the part of inn-keepers and from every hand solicited him to come ashore” (Suet. Nero 27).

This passage creates an image of a normality that Nero mockingly imitated: bars and restaurants lining maritime routes and harbours, with female greeters dressed as barmaid dressed in their distinctive visual apparatus (even though no jewellery is mentioned), appealing to potential clients who were approaching with their boats.\(^{58}\)

Many pieces of evidence trace the connection of sonorous jewellery with dancing back to the East, Syria, and Egypt. In Egypt, in particular, there is abundant evidence of dancers provided with symmetrical anklets and beaded hip belts designed to make a rattling noise,\(^{59}\) and numerous examples of hip belts, anklets, and bracelets made of sea shells, with a strongly amuletic significance, designed to make a sound while moving or dancing.\(^{60}\) Similarly, the so-called *menat*-necklace, made of strings of faience beads, produced a jangling noise, as did the *sistrum*: both used in rituals in honour of the goddess Hathor.\(^{61}\)

In general, clattering sounds were believed to have apotropaic functions in many Mediterranean cultures, and this added amuletic proprieties to the jewellery. However, only a few

\(^{54}\) Fear 1991.

\(^{55}\) On this, see below n. 57. See also, Gouy this volume, for a discussion of jewellery and dance in the Etruscan period.

\(^{56}\) Apul. met 2.7: *In orbis flexibus crebra succutiens et simul membra sua leniter inlibrancis.*

\(^{57}\) In the *Corpus Priapeum*, a woman named Quintia is “well-known in the area of the Circus,” 27.1-4: *vibrata docta movere nates, cymbala cum crotalis.* Cf. Iuv. 6.019: *clunem atque latus discunt vibrare.*

\(^{58}\) The scene may even have had a sacral-exotic origin in the Egyptian feast of Boubastia, during which banquets were held on boats sailing on the Nile, and women greeted them on the shore stripped of their vestments, as described in Herod. 2.60. On Boubastia feasts, see Meyboom, Versluys 2007, 184-185.

\(^{59}\) Meyer-Dietrich 2009, figs. 1, 4; Golani 2014.

\(^{60}\) For bell bracelets found in Roman London, Villing 2002, 291, fig. 467 a and b. For a set of jewellery with bracelets and belts designed to produce sound, see for example Stünkel 2015, cat. 116-119, Cats. 56 and 57 A-E.

\(^{61}\) Kolotourou 2007, 83.
examples of bell-shaped pendants hanging from necklaces and bracelets are known in the Graeco-Roman world. In Roman times, bells seem to have been worn by officiators of the cult of Bacchus. From the Etruscan era, Mario Iozzo has presented a unique example of a hollow bronze bracelet, with loose bronze pieces in its interior that made noise when it was moved.

In imperial Rome and the Vesuvian area, the examples of sonorous jewellery are not numerous. In this context, the discovery of a bracelet, into which small mobile ringlets were inserted, in the Fondo Valiante excavation in the Moregine area becomes quite intriguing and significant (Fig. 7). This is a snake-shaped silver bracelet with thirteen smaller rings appended to it that must have been designed to produce a clattering sound. Two published parallels are known from the Vesuvian area, one in bronze from the servile quarters of the house of the Menander and one in silver from near the fugitives in fornix 11 at Herculaneum found together with a pair of silver snake bracelets. No examples in gold are known. This too is a form of jewellery not well suited to a matron or a rich freedwoman but rather more adapted to a dancer or performer of lower status, possibly a slave. Finally, bearing in mind the auditory dimension of jewellery discussed in this paper, the strings of faience beads of Egyptian origin could have been tied so as to emit jangling sounds. In the context of cauponae, gestures in dance or of allure could plausibly have been accentuated by the swinging movement and sound of such jewellery.

Conclusion

This paper proposed to examine jewellery found in the setting of cauponae, inside the city and in the harbour suburb of Pompeii, in order to better understand the ways in which they may have created different sub-elite identities. Moving beyond the simplistic equation between gold and elite, and bronze and sub-elite, it is possible to provide a preliminary sketch of some more elaborate social profiles.

It might be possible that economically successful sub-elite women were freer from dominant aristocratic rules, liberally opting for showier pieces of gold jewellery than the matrons of the municipal elite. Arguably, this freedom might also have led them to choose jewellery to be worn on more intimate areas of the body and pieces that also attracted attention in performative ways, including movement and the sound of jewellery connected with gesticulation and dance.

The topography of placing the jewellery on the body may be one way to map its social connotations. Jewellery concentrated around the head, solid button earrings, short necklaces, and firm bracelets, may have purposefully created a stable, elite, matronly appearance. Showy, voluminous, mobile gold(plate) jewellery distributed on the surface of the entire body may have suggested a lower status, perhaps that of a dancer or performer.

62 For talismanic uses of jewellery with bells and rattling sounds, see Daremberg, Saglio 1875, s.v. “tintinnabulum” especially 342-343; Pease 1904; Belis 1988; Kolotourou 2007. On bells used in the ritual dances of Dionysus, see Villing 2002, 285-289; on their protective functions, ibid. 289-292.
63 Villing 2002, 288, fig. 46.
64 Iozzo 2009, 483.
65 Inv. MANN 114289, diam. 9.5 cm, with 13 snake-shaped ringlets. See Pirozzi 2003 a, 457, cat. V.32.
66 Inv. 5011, diam. 8 cm, fragmentary, with only two ringlets left; from cubiculum 43. See Stefani 2003, 174, cat. F4.
67 Inv. 78580, diam. 9 cm, with three ringlets. See Pagano 2003, 129, cat. I.52.
body, including anklets and crossed body-chains, may have been more plausibly associated with well-to-do non-elite women. Similarly, intriguing questions arise with regard to the sound-producing effects of jewellery. Among the pieces of sonorous jewellery, gold anklets and *crotalia* earrings may have referred to Bacchic and other exotic dances in a relatively veiled way. The rattling bracelets, on the other hand, seem to have been fabricated in silver and bronze and connected with more subaltern, probably slave, status and perhaps directly connected with dance.

In the Imperial period, the double set of contradictory ideals, between unadorned stern female portraiture and the simultaneous literary narratives of lavish jewellery use, have given rise to much discussion and continue to present unresolved questions.\(^6\) One way to explain some of these paradoxes is to distinguish and fine-tune the multiple statuses of the women described, not only elite matrons but also, for example, slaves and wealthy freedwomen working in bars of the harbour of Pompeii within various wealthy houses.

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\(^6\) For example, D’Ambra 1989; Berg 2002.
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Fig. 1 – Gold-and-pearl crotalia-earrings found in the thermopolium V 1, 3. From Bonifacio 2003, 266, cat. IV.64 (inv. MANN 110797).

Fig. 2 – Faience beads found in the caupona-lupanar of Aurunculeius Secundio VI 16, 32.33 (inv. P 55867). Photo: Author.
FIG. 3 – The suburban river-harbour area of *Pompeii*, according to the reconstruction of Stefani, Di Maio 2003, 168, fig. 11.
Fig. 4 – A pair of gold armlets/anklets composed of hemispherical elements, Mo-
regine, building B, room 8, inv. P 81585. From Mastroroberto 2003b, 470, fig. V.66-
67.

Fig. 5 – Venus dressed in golden body-chains, armlets, bracelets, diadem, and pearl
earrings. MANN 9181.
Fig. 6 – Dancing maenad holding a tympanum and a thyrsus, and wearing bracelets and double anklets, which may have produced clashing sounds. Wall-painting from the so-called Villa of Diomedes, drawn by Vincenzo Mollame. From: Niccolini, Niccolini 1862, Villa di Diomede, pl. V.
Fig. 7 – A silver snake bracelet found in the *tabernae* of the Fondo Valiante excavation, Moregine, inv. MANN 114289.