

Accessorizing the Ancient Roman Woman on Screen

As scholars of fashion and dress studies have long demonstrated, jewelry and other accessories can act as significant markers of status and identity for the wearer. Yet despite this significance, in many other scholarly fields, jewelry, with its diminutive size, too often is easily overlooked. Scholarship on jewelry in antiquity exists (e.g. Higgins 1980; Olson 2008: 54-5; Stout 2001) but there is little work on the topic in studies of the ancient Romans on screen (notable exceptions are Maurice 2017:124-7 and Toscano 2008). Given the visual nature of this field of study, it is appropriate and fruitful to consider how jewelry augments and sometimes even drives narratives. This presentation will address the role of jewelry in onscreen depictions of ancient Rome, in particular showing how it contributes to the fashioning of women in terms of aesthetic style and character development. Furthermore, it will show that for a production set in ancient Rome, jewelry, while seemingly a small detail in a large production, can be a key element in not only the creation of particular characters, but the more general attempt to create an authentic setting (but not necessarily an accurate one).

The goals of this presentation will be twofold: the first goal is to address issues of design and authenticity, while the second goal will be to try to understand how these pieces are designed to fit in with larger pop culture and fashion movements. The first part of the presentation will survey the “ancient” jewelry presented on screen. It will discuss the work done by costume designers, prop makers, and jewelry designers in their creation of ancient Rome, covering the types of jewelry made, including armlets, bracelets, diadems, earrings, necklaces, rings, and hair ornaments. It will examine the creations of principal designers of onscreen productions from 2000 forward. I will focus on the work of the following designers: Martin Adams, jewelry designer for the film *Gladiator* (2000); April Ferry, costume designer, and Luca Giampaoli,

metalworker, both of HBO-BBC's TV series *Rome* (2005-7); Barbara Darragh, costume designer for the TV series STARZ *Spartacus*; and Wendy Partridge, costume designer for the film *Pompeii* (2014). Drawing on the work of Classical reception, fashion studies, and costume design as a foundation, I will question to what extent these cinematic artisans use their creation of sartorial accessories to construct an "authentic" Roman experience for the viewer.

The second part of the presentation will consider the effect of the onscreen representations of ancient jewelry beyond the issue of authenticity, examining the narrative efficacy of the creations. Using HBO-BBC's *Rome* and STARZ *Spartacus* as case studies, I will show that the depictions of jewelry are reflective of a modern consumerist culture and works of popular culture from the time periods of production. In these series, women are represented not just as wearers of fashion, but as consumers who choose, purchase, exchange, and gift their own jewelry. *Rome* and *Spartacus* will be placed alongside cinematic works such as *Sex and the City* and *The Devil Wears Prada*.

Bibliography

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