1. Introduction

When Etruscan jewelry is found, it is already displaced from its intended purpose. In a tomb, the typical archaeological context that yields gold, silver, ivory, or amber, the ornaments are arranged in a deliberate deposit intended for eternity. They represent neither daily nor special occasion costume, but rather are pieces selected and placed in ways that those who prepared the body, likely women, believed was significant for personal or ritual reasons. Indeed, there is no guarantee that the jewelry found on a body ever belonged to the dead. For an element of dress that the living regularly adapted to convey different looks, such permanence is entirely artificial. Today, museums house jewelry in special cases within galleries, further separating the material from its original display on the body. Simply moving beyond these simulations requires no little effort of imagination on the part of researchers who seek to understand how Etruscans used these most personal artifacts.

The approach adopted in this chapter draws on anthropological methods, especially those studies that highlight the changing self-identity and public presentation necessary at different stages of life. As demonstrated by contemporary examples, young adults can pierce various body parts, couples exchange rings at weddings, politicians adorn their lapels with flags, and military veterans pin on medals for a parade. The wearer can add or remove all of these accessories depending on how he or she moves through different political, personal, economic, social, or religious settings. Cultural anthropologists who apply this theoretical framework have access to many details of life-stage and object-use that are lost to us. Many answers about Etruscan jewelry will remain elusive because our interpretations rely on fragmentary, incomplete, and unrepresentative evidence. However, the scenarios prompted by these theories can move us beyond generic interpretations of jewelry as expressions of wealth, gender, or ethnicity categorized apart from other artifacts of the past. For example, the application of a life-stage model means that the first question asked about a piece of jewelry is not how or when it was made, but rather when might a man or woman have worn it. Scholars can use that prompt to interrogate further: how might the meanings differ if a child wore a ring versus if an adult male slipped one on his finger? Etruscan women wore jewelry more flamboyantly than many of their Mediterranean neighbors, so what jewelry might a married
woman wear? Did she mark certain achievements – her status as mother, widow, religious participant, mother-in-law, or grandmother – with different ornaments? Ancient cultures leave us with little direct testimony to answer these questions, but by raising them it is possible to consider the general parameters of costume and the ways Etruscan men and women could have used jewelry to highlight certain aspects of their public or social identity. Jewelry in precious materials certainly embodies elements of economic and social status, but what other signals could a wearer convey?

In this chapter, I will first survey the primary and secondary evidence for Etruscan jewelry, and then explore three aspects in greater depth: the evidence for life-stage use, the materiality and production of these ornaments, and the nineteenth-century discovery of jewelry and its role in the modern study of the Etruscan. Jewelry was never merely a decorative accessory in Etruria. Instead, its materials, manufacture, and manner of use communicated hints of the wearer’s familial and social position that changed throughout his or her life.

2. Evidence for Etruscan Jewelry: Objects and Images

What jewelry survives? Where is it found? Most ancient jewelry known today is gold. Although gold was a precious metal in antiquity, the Etruscans occasionally decided to remove it from circulation and deposit it in a tomb. Early excavations in Etruscan centers such as Tarquinia and Caere (Cerveteri) revealed much of the gold and amber jewelry known today. Indeed, excitement about the skill of Etruscan goldsmiths helped to fuel further investigation of the ancient inhabitants of the region. Well-known examples of jewelry come from the seventh-century Regolini-Galassi tomb, uncovered in 1836. Precise details of the location of the gold ornaments are lacking but it is possible to determine that certain pieces of jewelry, such as the large, ornately decorated “fibula” now in the Vatican Museums (Cristofani and Martelli 2000: fig. 32), had solely a funerary use.

Funerary jewelry is best identified from the different techniques used to manufacture the pieces: usually, thin sheet gold was decorated mainly in relief rather than with added filigree and granulation, since those decorative procedures normally required hardier construction. These ornaments would not stand up to significant use in life because of their flimsy nature, and so formed a costume for the dead, one that would communicate with the ancestors and underworld deities rather than the living (it has been proposed, for example, that the Regolini-Galassi “fibula” may have been set on the face of the deceased rather than on her body; if so, it would have served as a gold mask, drawing light to the face (Etruscanning 2013)).

The qualities of gold that make it distinctive in life – its gleam, durability, and permanence – were also essential for the grave, but for various reasons, the living might retain actual objects the dead had worn in life. Jewelry may have had value as an heirloom, connecting and legitimizing one generation after another. When a line died out, the last family member may have taken a talisman to the grave, making it anachronistic to modern archaeologists. Other jewelry, like amulets, could have had significance in ritual or magical associations that were not appropriate for the grave. Pure economic motivations – a family might not want to remove valuable goods permanently – could also have caused the substitution of less costly pieces, although the reverence for the dead and the afterlife may have made this rationale less common than modern observers might think. Alternatively, some ornaments may have been so closely linked with the wearer that there was no question that they would accompany the individual into the afterlife. Some jewelry may have been gifts from survivors and never worn by the deceased (Brück 2004). These, and likely many more reasons, could influence the choices about what types of jewelry to bury with the dead.

Most Etruscans did not decorate their dead with costly prestige objects like a gold necklace or a pair of bracelets, of course. Both the ancient deposition of jewelry and its discovery offer
only random samples of actual use. As with any question concerning ancient demography, it is impossible to get a real sense of how representative of elite groups are burials with gold jewelry. Certain periods and regions may have favored elaborate funeral rituals that included jewelry, but they would always be tied to broader social and ritual beliefs rather than pure economic or social reasons. A visitor to the jewelry collection at the Villa Giulia may think that they are seeing the full range of Etruscan personal ornaments, but it is impossible to be sure how representative the excavated material is of past practice.

The lack of full context for the majority of Etruscan jewelry constitutes a significant loss of information for archaeologists (see further, Chapter 30). Although funerary costume is artificial, study of the placement of jewelry, connection to males or females, understanding of age stages, and other aspects of the funerary ritual could offer a richer understanding of the significance of jewelry in the afterlife. We can hope that future discoveries will be able to supplement some of these lost data.

Sanctuaries provide another context in which archaeologists discover jewelry. Etruscan religion, like that of other ancient cultures, demanded regular offerings that sometimes included jewelry. Jewelry is found less commonly in votive deposits at Etruscan cult sites than in other Mediterranean religious settings (on votives see Chapter 18). Greek sanctuaries regularly produce a whole range of bronze and iron personal ornaments along with an occasional discovery of gold or silver pieces, but Etruscan ritual spaces include only a few types of jewelry, such as bullae, discussed below, or clothing ornaments, such as pins. Other forms, like earrings, are represented less frequently and recovered in miscellaneous groups of votives or as stray finds in sanctuaries. The pins may have been fastened to a textile offering rather than dedicated as a personal ornament. Other categories of goods, such as mirrors, were apparently excluded from the range of acceptable offerings, and jewelry, objects worn on the body, or worn through a pierced ear (such as earrings), may not have been deemed appropriate. Some exceptions may have existed for certain rituals. For example, pins that were used to fasten garments, and thus did not touch the body, could be dedicated as part of the textile offering. For these reasons, a small hoard of Hellenistic gold jewelry discovered in 2003 in a ritual context at Poggio Colla was an exceptional find (Castor 2009). A pair of horseshoe earrings and five hoops, along with small necklace pendants, inlays of semi-precious stone, a lead bulla, and other objects comprised the hoard, which was probably originally collected in a small bag or box to keep the items together. The combination of multiple jewelry types and the pairs of earrings, rarely found together outside of a grave, suggest that this was a single deposit, although the pieces may have been collected from different women. It is impossible to know what motivated the decision to dedicate this jewelry when it was not a regular practice, but – as I have demonstrated elsewhere – some strong personal or even civic crisis may have played a role in the unusual offering.

To date, only one Etruscan domestic context has yielded jewelry. At Poggio Civitate (Murlo), a few broken and intact pieces of gold and silver jewelry were discovered in the debris layer of a building destroyed by fire around 600 BCE (De Puma 1981). Fragments of gold flowers and seeds originally belonged to an ornament that cannot be completely reconstructed, a segment of a gold diadem and two miniature silver fibulae. The context was sealed by the construction of the large Archaic monumental complex above it. Jewelry found in homes or as stray finds in settlements is usually understood to be lost or left behind by accident. It is difficult to draw secure conclusions from such archaeological contexts.

The primary evidence of jewelry, then, mainly derives from a funerary context and occasionally from a religious setting. Its retrieval is random and likely unrepresentative of real use, and, unfortunately, early excavations have robbed us of much contextual data. Other testimony, particularly secondary evidence for ornaments found in Etruscan art, does give some insight into jewelry use. As noted above, representations suggest that Etruscan men and women wore more jewelry than their neighbors. How accurately was jewelry portrayed in
these representations? Larissa Bonfante (2003: 2) raised similar questions in her study of Etruscan dress. Some examples are easy: when images show jewelry that survives in contemporary contexts, they clearly indicate an artist’s awareness of the forms. The horseshoe earring type provides an example of this. The fifth- and fourth-century earring with a large arched shield combined with a group of spheres is well-represented by actual examples and in images. Terracotta votive busts show the greatest fidelity to the type, and museums regularly display a horseshoe earring next to a female figure wearing it (Nagy 1988). Similar attention to the details of necklaces with bullae or relief pendants can be found on contemporary sculpture, suggesting that the fourth century was a period during which artists and consumers were interested in highly accurate images of jewelry (Castor 2010).

Other depictions quickly become more complicated by the general stylistic conventions of the time. Etruscan art responds to the imagery of Greek, eastern Mediterranean, and Egyptian art in myriad ways, and the details of jewelry — its designs and manufacturing techniques — show this variety. Etruscan women shown in tomb paintings from the Archaic period (c.650–500) strongly resemble the ladies of Asia Minor and Greece with their disk earrings and bead chokers. While the Etruscans wore disk earrings in the sixth century, the painted versions are simple blue or red circles, the typical colors found in the art of Asia Minor and Greece, rather than gold. There is no hint of the intricate filigree and granulation found on surviving Etruscan disk earrings in the painted versions. An exception to the normal use of generic types in sixth-century tomb painting is found in the Tomb of Hunting and Fishing from Tarquinia (Figure 19.1) (Steingräber 1985: no. 50). Here a female banqueter wears familiar, rather common, pieces — disk earrings and a choker — but her bracelets have animal-head terminals. Animal-head bracelets were indeed used by Etruscans but were also common in Asia Minor. So even though the type is more detailed than normal, it does not necessarily

Figure 19.1 Banqueters and servants in the pediment of the Tomb of Hunting and Fishing, c.530–520 BCE. Fresco. From Tarquinia. Photo: SEF/Art Resource, NY.
indicate an Etruscan form (Cristofani and Martelli 2000: fig. 174). Her male companion, however, sports a distinctive Etruscan-style necklace of ram’s-head pendants. The jewelry is rendered in outline against his brown flesh, suggesting it was probably intended to represent either gold or amber pendants. Here there is no doubt that the artist is imitating a culturally specific jewelry type.

Occasionally in the Archaic period, different media showed more attention to jewelry than is typically seen in painting. Terracotta sculpture, such as the seated male and female figures from the Tomb of the Five Chairs at Caere, included distinctively Etruscan comb fibulae, as well as large hoop earrings on the women and bracelets for both men and women (Bonfante 2003: figs. 14–16). Archaic jewelry itself offers images of some decked-out women. Small gold pendants from Caere showing kore figures with crowns and necklaces and amber pendants include a similar attention to jewelry (Cristofani and Martelli 2000: figs. 192–194). In general, however, the jewelry seen in Etruscan art from this period is neither plentiful nor does it regularly prioritize regional types.

A century later, jewelry becomes a key element of dress depicted in Late Classical art and the trend continues into the Hellenistic period. This is the era in which the votive busts with horseshoe earrings and bulla necklaces described above were produced, and when other examples of Etruscan or Etrusco-Italic ornaments appear in contemporary art. A range of jewelry and artistic styles blend together in art at this time and examples of these will be discussed below.

Secondary evidence, therefore, requires its own contextual analysis and rarely can it simply serve as a stand-in for the gaps in primary evidence. Etruscan artists, and customers, generally paid more attention to details of dress and costume than Greeks and many nearby cultures, but even so the data remain highly lacunose. Scholars must take these two types of evidence, primary and secondary, which only occasionally complement each other, and analyze them both in their specific contexts in any investigation of how the Etruscans used jewelry.

3. The Bulla: A Case Study for Life-Stage Use

A familiar Etrusco-Latial ornament, the bulla, serves as a useful example with which to explore changing jewelry use over the life course. Life began with jewelry. Parents sought to protect their infants from illness or bodily harm by covering them with magical amulets; a string of circular bulla pendants worn across the chest is a common sight in representations of children. The practice was widespread throughout the Mediterranean and continued well beyond the ancient period; Italian Renaissance artists, for example, painted the infant Jesus wearing coral amulets to help ward off evil (Dasen 2003; Musacchio 1999: 131–133). Roman authors credit the Etruscans with using gold bullae and they adopted the ornament for their elite male children (Pliny the Elder *Natural History* 3.4; Juvenal *Satires* 5.163; Plutarch *Life of Sertorius* 14.3). Not all bullae, however, are gold. Amber, bronze, and lead examples are represented in the archaeological record of Etruria from the eighth century on, found in children’s tombs or in sanctuaries. Late sources refer to leather bulla pendants, and it is possible to imagine that cloth, clay, or carved wood – essentially any material that could create a hollow, lentoid pendant – could have been used. A cavity of some sort would have been necessary to incorporate some potion or other substance. Traces of labdanum, a pitch-like substance, for example, have been found in bullae now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (De Puma 2013: 259, no. 7.15) and the Walters Art Museum (Walters Art Gallery 1980: 67 no. 209). Perfume was also inserted into the hollow spheres of horseshoe earrings in the Vatican, suggesting that the Etruscans may have thought of jewelry as a scent container (Scarpignato 1981: 14).
While the material used to make the ornament could indicate the family’s economic or social status, the chief goal of this jewelry was to protect the young wearer from harm. Special rituals, incantations, and blessings were undoubtedly spoken over the piece before the family set it on their child’s body. A bulla was therefore simply the physical manifestation—a relic—of a powerful ritual ceremony. Its presence on a child would signal to other community members that the family had undertaken the proper protection and integrated their child into Etruscan social practices and supernatural beliefs.

Representations of bullae generally show male babies, and a few females, with a single neck bulla, along with wrist and ankle bands. The visual emphasis on boys likely has more to do with their role in the particular scene (e.g., Eros figures, the baby Hercules, etc.) rather than indicating that they were a device intended solely for baby boys. The distinguishing feature of childhood bullae in Etruria was that youngsters wore a single pendant around the neck (e.g., the bronze votive recovered from near Lake Trasimene, now in the Vatican, and the swaddled babies from Veii; Haynes 2000: figs. 284–85) or, less often, a long strap of amulets across the body (e.g., the child represented in the exergue of a fourth-century mirror now in the British Museum (de Grummond 2006: fig. 7.15)), a style that is also typical of Athenian and Cypriot infant depictions (Dasen 2003: 278–283, figs. 1 and 5) It is impossible to know how long an Etruscan child wore his or her amulet. In Greece, the amulets were connected with the earliest life stage, infancy to about three years old, and then they disappear from the visual repertoire (Beaumont 2013: 24–42). Perhaps Etruscan boys or girls dedicated their bulla to thank the gods for their safety, passed it on to a younger generation, or re-used it in a new charm for a later life stage.

Adult men and women also wore bullae—often in groups of three—as armbands, necklaces, or both. Some surviving examples have decorative scenes in relief, like those in the tomb group from Vulci, now in the Vatican (Cristofani and Martelli 2000: fig. 260), while others are plain; the popular combination of three pendants could have had some significance that is now lost. When decorated, the bullae normally show a trio of gods and goddesses, again alluding to a numerological meaning.

The ornaments belong to the dress of mythical and heroic figures as well as mortals. The bulla seems to have carried no inherent gender markers. Since bullae were obviously laden with magical potential, as demonstrated by their use for child protection, certain spells and materials used in the preparation of the pendant could have appealed to different wearers. Love charms to attract and keep mates, talismans to protect hunters and warriors on their campaigns, or the promise of good health or fertility all could have spurred individuals to wear a bulla amulet.

In addition, bulla pendants embellished with religious iconography could very well have been part of a costume adopted by a priest/priestess or other ritual participant. I have suggested elsewhere that a certain set of jewelry prevalent in the fourth century marked female ritual dress in Etruria and Latium (Castor 2010). Priestesses or ritual actors may have adopted the distinctive high crowns, horseshoe earrings, and bulla necklaces found as tomb sets and in terracotta sculpture during their service. For example, an early fourth-century sarcophagus from Caere, now in the Museo Etrusco Gregoriano at the Vatican, shows a bearded male prone on a funeral couch; he wears a necklace with bullae and amphora-shaped pendants, and a band with the same arrangement of pendants on his left arm (Cristofani and Martelli 2000: pl. VIII). The flat leaf wreath on his head and the floral garland over his chest further elaborate his costume. Scholars interpret him as an official or magistrate because of his costume and the other scenes on the sarcophagus. Here, the bullae on his neck and arm may have served as emblems of office.

Not all figures wearing bullae convey high status or position. A nude youth wearing a gold armband with bullae is painted in the Tomb of Orcus II; he stands next to a cabinet
filled with metal vessels (Cristofani and Martelli 2000: pl. XVIII). Both his position and nudity suggest that he is a servant or slave, albeit one adorned with gold. The funerary banquet scene includes mythical figures and therefore takes us out of the realm of the ordinary, but the use of the armband adds a distinctive element to this figure. Given the flexibility in the function of bullae – pendants that represented magical powers, included divine imagery and may have signaled civic and religious office – they could serve children, men, and women. A strap of ten bronze bullae discovered fastened to the skull of a horse buried in the Podere San Cerberone at Populonia (Warden 1983: 70), moreover, indicates that even animals wore bullae in Etruria, presumably so that they, too, would receive protection from disease and injury.

With such wide use, bullae must have been ubiquitous components of Etruscan dress. Parents could teach their infants and toddlers that the charm warded off malign influences and thus begin to indoctrinate them into their cultural beliefs. Adults worried and prayed for their own health and that of their family, and had other concerns as well: luck or prosperity, religious devotion, or perhaps achievement of a certain role in the community that merited the wearing of a bulla ornament. Those who sported bulla jewelry would have described how this ornament fit into their personal and family history. As their needs changed, men or women could alter their accessories. Pieces chosen for particular moments – pregnancy and childbirth, a military campaign, a new economic venture, religious office, the aches of old age – would become part of the wearer’s identity for that life-stage. While much of the critical evidence for life-stage dress is ephemeral and would have been specific to individuals, attention to who wore a bulla and at what time in their life they are represented helps to move us beyond the bland and facile generalizations concerning wealth and prestige that jewelry typically prompts.

4. **Beyond the Bulla: Children’s Jewelry**

After the first stage of infancy, children rarely appear in the artistic record. In Greek art, mainly on painted vases and votive or funerary stelae, boys and girls are shown acting in important roles at funerals, weddings, and in religious festivals, where they function as generational links between the past and future (Beaumont 2013). In Etruria, it is the young girls who appear in tomb paintings as attendants at adult banquets who sometimes wear gold jewelry. For example, in the fourth century Tomb of the Shields at Tarquinia (Steingräber 1985: no. 109), a blonde girl with short hair attends the feast of Larth Velcha and his wife. She wears a gold earring, a simpler variant of the horseshoe earrings that Velia Seitithi wears, and a gold bead necklace that fits closely around her neck. She holds a fan at the ready to ensure the couple’s comfort. Like the nude servant with the bulla armband in the Tomb of Orcus II, her dress represents the status of the family she serves, rather than her own.

Votive terracotta figures in fifth- and fourth-century sanctuary deposits also may depict girls, who are distinguished from women by their short hair. At Lavinium, an Italic site discussed in more detail below, some of the females wear earrings and necklaces (Cristofani and Martelli 2000: pl. XIV). The types shown do not always have parallels in real jewelry and some may be artistic creations; others, however, represent typical Greek forms, such as the spear-point necklaces popular in the Hellenistic period. The representations of the girls rarely show them wearing native ornament forms like horseshoe earrings and bulla necklaces. While this may be a hint that those accessories belonged to a different age or status, the fact that many different ethnic groups worshipped at the site make understanding such choices far from clear. Further close study of this group of evidence may help to sort out the combination of costume elements and age.
5. Adult Women

Adult women are shown wearing jewelry more often than men or children in Etruscan art. All media – painting, pottery, sculpture, engraved mirrors, and even jewelry itself – illustrate adorned women. The banqueting couple in the Tomb of Hunting and Fishing (see Figure 19.1), for example, depicts the female wearing multiple ornaments: earrings, a choker necklace, and three bracelets on one arm. The triad of bracelets is especially notable, since bracelets were usually worn one on each wrist. Both the high quantity of ornaments and the large size of some of them, such as the disk earring, are notable features of jewelry in Etruscan art.

Most females in Archaic and Classical Etruscan art could be anywhere in age from 15 to 50. More nuanced age-stages were obviously not essential for the Etruscans in their art. Brides or married women with their husbands appear prominently, especially in the funerary art that comprises so much of our evidence. Motherhood is indicated by the presence of children with females, but many other possible familial roles cannot be identified. Where are the sisters, aunts, widows, grandmothers, stepmothers, and mothers-of-the bride (or groom)? Evidence for social roles, like professional identity, is also lacking from the surviving art. Religious roles take a prominent place, likely because the votive evidence retrieved from sanctuaries shows females in a ritual setting. But expertise in other aspects of life such as medicine and healing, cooking, craft specialization, music, and dance, among others, do not merit artistic focus. Finally, mature and elderly women are rarely portrayed until the Hellenistic period, when they show up, still only occasionally, on sarcophagi and funerary cippi (see further, Chapter 22).

Much of the artistic interest in women wearing jewelry is concentrated on brides. Marriage ceremonies would be an important occasion that highlighted personal ornaments and clothing. Gifts of jewelry for the bride were common in many ancient and historical cultures. Some could have been heirlooms or newly made pieces reconfigured from inherited ornaments. Thus, they would contain familial history as the bride joined her husband’s family. Other jewelry could have been a gift from the groom or his relatives as a sign that the new wife was incorporated into the family. Torelli (1984: 31–50), moreover, has argued that some of the richly adorned female terracotta figures from Lavinium represented brides, in large part because their jewelry was such a significant part of their costume. Fourth-century engraved mirrors supply many scenes of bridal preparation, where lavishly dressed females are perfumed or adorned as part of the ceremonial process. Mythical figures such as Thetis and Alcestis, along with a woman inscribed Malavisch, often serve as model brides (Wiman 1992; de Grummond 2006: 159–160). Men are not normally part of the scene, although the purpose of adornment, to attract a mate, pervades the imagery. Given the many connotations associated with jewelry – love and fertility charm, heirloom, perfume container – it is easy to understand the potency of these images to the individual using the mirror.

The adorned woman, usually wearing a set of jewelry consisting of earrings, a necklace, and a pair of bracelets or bulla armlets, often appears in concert with her husband. To the list of images of couples at the banquet discussed above (e.g., in the Tomb of Hunting and Fishing (see Figures 17.2, 19.1) and the Tomb of the Shields) can be added the image of Velia in the Tomb of Orcus I (Steingräber 1985: no. 93), who also wears multiple pieces of gold jewelry. Just as the image of the couple seems to have signified the strength and longevity of the family line in these settings (Bonfante 2013), a woman’s jewelry points to her ability to live in luxury and ease.

Two well-known, Late Classical carved sarcophagi from Vulci, now in Boston, also include bejeweled married couples on their lids (see further, Rowland 2008: figs. 1–2). Ramtha Vishnai, for example, wears a round disk earring, an old-fashioned style at this point in the late fourth or even early third century, while her daughter-in-law, Thanchvil Tarnai, sports a
more up-to-date disk with inverted pyramid pendant earring. Additionally, Ramtha’s son, Larth Tetnies, wears a spiral bracelet. Representations of jewelry become even more elaborate in the Hellenistic period, as exemplified by the colorful terracotta sarcophagus of a Chiusine woman now in Florence (Figure 19.2, Plate Section). As she reclines on a mattress and pillow, Larthia Scianti shows off a pair of inverted pyramid earrings that hang from a small disk, a spear-point necklace, a pendant hanging from a chain, a gold bracelet, and a crown. A braided gold belt knotted in a square (or “Herakles”) knot, a form usually associated with brides (see further, De Puma 2013: 212), is wrapped around her waist. Larthia’s jewelry represents types common in the Hellenistic Mediterranean and points to a more cosmopolitan aesthetic popular in the late Etruscan period.

Another important setting in which adorned women played a public role was in the religious sphere. The dedication of female votive figures could represent either a goddess herself or her female worshippers, and it can difficult to determine the difference. But no matter who the figures are, their jewelry takes on an especially prominent role in many of these representations. Fourth- and third-century votive female busts, for example, emphasize their adornment through elaborate crowns, earrings, and necklaces. The fidelity of this jewelry to the originals, moreover, appears to have been exact: Andrén (1955–56), in particular, has argued that molds taken from actual ornaments were used by the coroplasts. The significance of the jewelry may vary, sometimes indicating a recently married bride, or denoting a specific festival or ritual dress, but it was of utmost importance to get the jewelry right. Some of the images also celebrated regional Etrusco-Italic jewelry types rather than international Mediterranean styles of jewelry as had occurred in the Archaic period and would happen again in the third century. A woman would presumably play many roles in personal and civic religious festivals,

Figure 19.2  Sarcophagus of Larthia Scianti, detail of upper body and head, c.180–170 BCE. Painted terracotta. From the Tomb of the Larcna Family, La Martinella, near Chiusi. Florence, Museo Archeologico Nazionale. Photo: © 2015. Photo Scala, Florence – courtesy of the Ministero Beni e Att. Culturali. (See insert for color representation of the figure.)
each requiring some form of special dress. Adornment, whether in the form of metal jewelry, floral garlands and wreaths, specially braided or knotted bands, or some other accessory, would help to prepare a woman for her activity and announce to viewers that she belonged in this setting.

Women in the later stages of life, who are most often depicted in the funerary art of the Hellenistic period, regularly wore multiple pieces of jewelry. This may represent jewelry a woman accrued during her life or result from the more elaborate dress style common at this time. Women alone or with their husbands wear crowns, necklaces or torques, breast bands that cross their chest, bracelets, and rings (Bonfante 2000: fig. 92). Closer study of the costume, jewelry, and age represented could reveal some patterns about the types of jewelry that older women adopted at this time. Once again, the Etruscans looked outside of their traditional stock of ornaments to incorporate Greek and European forms of jewelry (Castor 2010: 37–40). International styles were again in favor, perhaps as Etruscans explored new opportunities or political alliances that may have included marriage to foreigners, in the face of the expanding Roman presence.

Since the artistic contexts in which Etruscan women appear are largely circumscribed to reinforcing either their marital state or their religious duties, it is not surprising that these are the social identities for which scholars can reconstruct the use of jewelry. As seen above, however, even within these stereotypical categories of female representation it is possible to tease out more specific meanings. In some settings, local jewelry types are highlighted, while others call for Greek styles. Foreign manufacture of an artifact, such as a sarcophagus, could also determine some aspects of dress. Scholars must consider these distinctions together with the genre and style prevalent at the time, but scrutiny to details of dress can and will continue to yield new insights into women’s public roles.

6. Male Etruscan Jewelry

The concept of male jewelry has already been introduced in in the discussion of the bulla above. Etruscan men, like their wives, mothers, and daughters, sport a wider range of ornaments than is present in most ancient Mediterranean art, although it is never a regular part of their costume. Clothing fasteners such as pins, fibulae, and belts served a functional purpose, but their representation suggests that the costume itself was significant to the meaning of the image. Some clothing points to an official capacity, such as the bronze figurine of a haruspex in the Vatican, outfitted in a long mantle fastened at the chest with an arched fibula; his pointed hat helps to identify his position (Bonfante 2000: fig. 138). Thus, the clothing and its ornaments together give clues to the wearer’s identity.

Men also wore body jewelry. The 2013 discovery of an intact Etruscan tomb at Tarquinia was initially identified as belonging to a “warrior” equipped with a spear, and his wife, who wore jewelry. Subsequent notices revealed that, in fact, it was a male who was wearing jewelry and a female with the spear (Pinna 2013; see also the discussion in Chapter 13). This discovery joins a few other examples of males buried with jewelry, such as the earrings found with males in other Tarquinian tombs (Cavagnaro Vanoni 1972, 1977). As with women, normal male costume likely included jewelry much more regularly than the images suggest. An abundance of Etruscan finger rings, for example, survive today in museum collections, often without secure provenance (see further, Hansson 2013). Some examples could belong to men or women; size offers a possible way to assign some rings to a gender, but even that does not guarantee the sex of the wearer, since a man might put a small ring on a necklace or a woman could wear larger ring in the same way. Few images of men wearing rings exist until the Late Classical and Hellenistic periods when, like their female counterparts, males, too,
were embellished with a variety of accessories. Other jewelry types fare better in the visual evidence, particularly the bulla necklace or armband described above. The elegant spiral twisted bracelet that Larth Tetnies wears on the Boston sarcophagus has already been noted above. Because artists depicted men wearing jewelry only occasionally, it is difficult to extract generalizations from this scattered evidence.

Nevertheless, given the elite Etruscans’ interest in luxury goods, it is possible to surmise that males might well have adopted personal ornaments more readily than the surviving evidence suggests. Eastern males, particularly in the Persian heartland, but also in the far western territories of Lydia and Asia Minor, incorporated bracelets, neck pendants, and earrings into their dress, as we see the Persian guards wear at the royal palace of Susa, now in the Louvre, for example. Many of the jewelry types that men in Asia Minor, Persia, and even Egypt, were depicted wearing likely belong to a set of ornaments distributed by the king as a reward for military or civil service (Castor forthcoming). Thus, their presence in the public and private art of these cultures speaks directly to political prestige rather than personal wealth and luxury. Etruscan connections with Asia Minor may have influenced or reinforced the use of jewelry by males in Italy.

Study of jewelry use according to life stage helps to enhance understandings of its meanings. In addition to adornment, ornaments can serve as relics of magical rites, depict an age-stage, and point to religious participation or marital status, among other possible functions. Not just inherently precious, rings, necklaces, and other accessories had added symbolic value from the materials used to craft them.

7. The Materials of Jewelry

Archaeologists have long recognized that imported materials can enhance the prestige of a finished product because of their exotic and unfamiliar origin. A recent focus on materiality in the humanities and social sciences has reinvigorated this avenue of research. When we think of jewelry, we first imagine gold objects. Gold, a noble metal, does not degrade, and so we see the artifact today as its last wearer did millennia ago. Apart from physical damage such as tears or dents inflicted by a collapsed burial chamber, gold does not rust, tarnish, or dull over the years. This invulnerability makes gold almost universally admired and used particularly for symbolically valuable goods that require a long existence: religious artifacts, insignia of power, heirlooms, or gifts to accompany the dead into the afterlife. While gold is impermeable to environment and time, owners can readily convert pieces by melting it down to create new objects or use as bullion. Such a combination of permanence and convertibility enhances the value of the metal. Silver, on the other hand, is more vulnerable than gold to its physical surroundings. It tarnishes without regular polishing and can become brittle and corrode depending on the soil chemistry. Relatively little silver Etruscan jewelry is known in comparison to gold pieces, although it may well have had a greater currency than the archaeological record suggests, especially given the region’s proximity to silver sources in Spain. Bronze and other base metals like lead or iron also corrode more heavily, although the basic elements of bracelets, rings, or clothing ornaments like belts and pins remain largely intact.

Faya Causey’s (2011) publication of carved ambers in the J. Paul Getty Museum returns our attention to the layered associations conveyed by a material and its imagery; these two aspects of the ornament, she argues convincingly, cannot be separated in a discussion if scholars hope to grasp its meaning for ancient users. Many Greek and Roman authors fascinated by fossilized resin explored its mythical origin and associations, its efficacy in healing, and its use in transitions to the afterlife. Next to gold, amber is the material that is likened most often to the sun by poets, naturalists, and philosophers. Indeed, when ancient authors
sought to explain amber’s origin, they most often turned to the sun; among the stories associated with this material are that it came from the tears of the Heliades, who wept when Zeus killed their brother Phaethon during his reckless driving of the sun chariot (Causey 2011: 52–61). Thus, amber is closely associated with tears and mourning. The inclusions of insects and other organic materials captured as the resin fossilized offers compellingly visible and permanent memorials of life present in this material as in no other. In addition to the importance of its color, amber also is one of the few jewelry materials to emit an odor (a pleasant pine scent) when rubbed against wool; when burned, Pliny wrote that its scent was “more agreeable even than frankincense” (Causey 2011: 68). Its buoyancy in water also adds to its unique qualities. When Etruscan artisans carved amber to wear around their customer’s necks, arms or waist, they augmented the significance of the material further still.

Amber and semi-precious stones could be incorporated into metal settings or carved and worn on their own. Etruscans made much use of amber for personal ornaments, carving it into pendants or hewing it roughly in chunks to wear around the neck or waist. The luminous, shining quality of amber that likely attracted ancient wearers degrades significantly when the object is buried. Most pieces darken and, depending on the conditions in which they are deposited, may oxidize. More damage can occur in the form of chipping and flaking, which further erodes the surface; few pieces of amber can retain their original appearance unless placed in watery or oxygen-free contexts.

The Etruscans enjoyed colorful combinations in their jewelry, mixing colored stone and metal. A sixth-century necklace from Vulci, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, for example, shows multicolored agate and carnelian pendants in gold settings (De Puma 2013: 253 no. 7.1, fig. 7.1). Semi-precious stones (agate, jasper, carnelian) retain their original appearance as well. Carnelian especially proved to be useful for signet ring inlays because the hardness of the stone stood up well to the inevitable wear and tear of finger ornaments. Striped agate was also popular in finger rings and pendants. Both the colors and the stones used for jewelry likely had symbolic associations that have since been lost, but which would have added significance for the wearer.

In addition to these materials well-represented in museums, the Etruscans must have used a wide range of goods beyond what has survived for their dress and adornment (e.g. see Chapter 16 on textiles). Class and economic status would not prevent men, women and children from accessorizing themselves with floral garlands, lucky shells and stones, brightly woven strips of cloth, grass, grains, or other materials at hand. Many of these ornaments could have had the same purpose as costlier metal and stone objects – that is, to indicate various social affiliations, marital status, amuletic powers, festival dress, etc. – but they simply do not survive in the archaeological record.

A small class of necklace pendants made from animal teeth or stone replicas offers an example of found objects converted into personal ornaments. One of the necklace pendants in the Poggio Colla jewelry cache (see Castor 2009), for example, included a dog’s tooth set in a decorative gold cap, while the fossilized great white shark’s tooth discovered at the site in 2011 – most-likely once part of a pendant – has comparanda at both Etruscan and prehistoric sites in Italy (Trentacoste 2013: 85, 96–97). Parallels of the type also exist in the form of a bear’s tooth pendant now in Berlin, four tooth pendants at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and a basalt pendant carved in the shape of a tooth now housed in the British Museum (De Puma 2013: 260 no. 7.16, figs. 7.16 a–d, with references to additional examples). Signs of rubbing on the gold cap of the basalt pendant now in London indicate that the piece had been in circulation before it was deposited and may well have had more than one owner who touched the pendant for luck or out of habit.

The use of an animal tooth as body ornament creates a powerful connection between humans and the natural world (see further, Chierici 1999). A bear tooth would undoubtedly
give rise to stories about how a mighty hunter had killed the creature, even if he really had found it after the animal died: the wearer could be the hunter himself or perhaps a grandchild who inherited the piece, with all of its attendant family and perhaps mythical lore attached to the heirloom. The literal defanging of an animal, at some level a blood ritual, transferred its power to the wearer (cf. Warden 2009). If the wearer was a female, this animal potency could be applied to female dress. Such imagery likely underlined the woman’s position in an elite family, or perhaps indicated some skill that she had mastered, although the circumstances in which she would don the jewelry are unfortunately lost to us.

In general, scholarship on the Etruscans has been sensitive to the importance of the materials used to manufacture art. For jewelry, the types of metal, stone, and other material used to decorate the body become a key component of its value.

8. How Did They Do That?

One of the first questions that museum-goers ask when they see masterpieces of Etruscan jewelry is: how did they make such intricate pieces? Their wonder is reasonable, since scholars rightly list the craft of the Etruscan goldsmith among the technological achievements of their society. While every Mediterranean and Near Eastern culture made finely executed jewelry, the accessories of the Etruscans stand apart for their technical virtuosity and craftsmanship (see further, Chapter 24). Just as remarkable is the fact that ancient goldsmiths required relatively few tools to execute these objects and no magnification devices have been identified. Primary evidence, apart from the finished product, rarely survives, but experimental archaeology has helped to explain several aspects of ancient practice.

Jewelry makers normally constructed gold jewelry from multiple component parts. A main motivation for this was to save unnecessary expense on precious materials by avoiding casting pieces solid. For example, the Late Classical horseshoe earring type could vary in size from 3 cm up to 14 cm; a solid piece of gold jewelry at the upper end of this range would be unmanageable to wear in addition to being far more costly than the hollow version. Goldsmiths worked with sheet gold, hammering out the metal thinly so that they could then shape it into molds, over formers with designs in repoussé, or otherwise manipulate the sheet to create an ornament. Beads and pendants are typically made of two halves. Some of the substances set into bullae have already been discussed, so the use of jewelry as a container is a familiar concept, but sometimes craftsmen inserted a material or some other type of core to stabilize the ornament. Finger rings require heavier and more substantial construction and were hammered to size from solid metal. Artisans engraved or chased designs onto metal bezels or attached shaped stones, such as the scarabs, which were popular in the sixth century, or signets with engraved intaglio figures, into the gold ring (see further, Hansson 2013).

Once goldsmiths had cut out and shaped the pieces of an ornament, they could then use a variety of decorative techniques to embellish the surface. It is at this stage that the exceptional skill found on Etruscan jewelry comes to the fore. Granulation, the use of tiny spheres to create patterns and designs, is the hallmark of seventh- and sixth-century pieces. Some examples contain granulation of such small size that it is called “powder granulation” because it resembles a fine mist or powder on the surface. Most modern goldsmiths agree that the real skill in granulation technique comes not in the manufacture of the tiny grains or spheres, but in their application and attachment to the sheet backing without fusing or losing the shape of the grains. The grains were made by cutting small squares or wire, placing them in a crucible filled with carbon or charcoal which separated the pieces of gold, and heating it until the gold pieces rolled into small spheres. This process created grains of different sizes that the goldsmith would then sort and arrange in a decorative pattern. Setting the grains and keeping them in
place was a significant challenge; scholars have proposed different fixatives, ranging from saliva to resins, to set and keep the grains in place until the piece was finished (Gaultier 2013: 915–916). Etruscan goldsmiths achieved the advanced technique of fixing the granules by heat alone and by using a colloidal mixture of copper salts between the grains and the surface. Fusing, using heat alone to attach the grains, was a difficult process because it required the craftsman to monitor the heat closely to make sure that the grains did not melt into a sheet of gold. Various modern experiments also suggest that the ancient goldsmith used different types of colloidal fluxes, including copper, as a solder that would melt into both the grains and the gold sheet, creating a metal bond between them (Formigli 1995: 68–72).

Etruscan granulated jewelry is distinctive in its style as well as in its advanced technique. Geometric patterns were popular, such as the fine meander on the gold hoops from the Regolini-Galassi tomb (Cristofani and Martelli 2000: fig. 36). Figural designs in silhouette are used on some of the masterpieces of seventh-century jewelry: a pin from Vetulonia, now in Florence, for example, shows griffins and other hybrid creatures in silhouette granulation (Cristofani and Martelli 2000: fig. 58). Customers could also choose from a variety of techniques used for jewelry, as is demonstrated by a pair of fibulae in Florence which replicates granulated designs by using sheet gold pressed or dapped into a mold decorated with an animal frieze (Figure 19.3). Although nothing is known about the cost of jewelry in the Etruscan world, presumably pieces that required less expertise would also be cheaper, but still allow the wearer to embellish themselves with stylish ornaments.

A second important decorative technique involved the use of filigree wire. The wires were made from rolled strips of gold, and artisans could create a variety of decorative effects using them: plain, spiral twisted wires were used for herringbone-pattern borders, while beaded and spiral twist wires were thicker and added visual interest to the surface. Etruscan a baule earrings, a native type well-represented in museum collections, show intricate patterns using filigree wire and granulation to create densely embellished hoops. Tiny animals or floral ornaments are often embedded in these ornaments as well, creating rich, complex surfaces unparalleled at the time.

Figure 19.3  Leech-shaped fibulae with stamped decoration (animal friezes), c.630 BCE. Gold. From the Tomb of the Lictor, Vetulonia. Florence, Museo Archeologico Nazionale. Photo: © 2015. Photo Scala, Florence – courtesy of the Ministero Beni e Att. Culturali.
The goldsmiths who produced Etruscan jewelry were masters of their craft. Unfortunately, very little information exists about these individuals. Eastern craftspeople are generally believed to have traveled to Etruria at certain times: during unrest in the East in the eighth and sixth centuries, for example (Gaultier 2013: 915–919). It is not known if they were primarily male or if females also engaged in jewelry production in Etruria. Certainly there is no physical necessity – apart from the myopia of the goldsmiths – that decides the craft in favor of men or women. Women’s smaller hands may have been useful and, for that matter, children could also have played a role in this craft. A jewelry maker did not need a permanent shop and could easily have traveled, or the finished products could have had a wide dispersal beyond the place of manufacture. Some scholars have suggested that the jewelers who made the finest work of the Orientalizing period emigrated from other regions such as Phoenicia, where granulation techniques may have been practiced at advanced levels (Camporeale 2013: 889–891; Gaultier 2013: 915). Whether native or emigrant, goldsmiths certainly became aware that Etruscans were discerning clients who appreciated complex techniques and exquisite finished products.

9. The Afterlife of Etruscan Jewelry

To a significant degree, the study of Etruscan jewelry requires scholars to sort out the authentic objects from the many replicas, pastiches, and forgeries that circulated in the late nineteenth century. One reason for this mixed bag of Etruscan and Etruscan-style jewelry is that the era of early Etruscan excavation coincided with, and indeed, stimulated, a surge of interest in “Archaeological Style” jewelry that replicated ornaments from ancient European cultures. For several decades in the second half of the nineteenth century, the Castellanis, leaders in this type of jewelry, presented newly discovered ancient jewelry side-by-side with their replicas in their workshops. Exhibits at the Louvre in 2004 and at the Bard Graduate Center in 2005 investigated Italian Archaeological Style jewelry in its cultural context; a 2010 show at the British Museum studied Victorian jewelry more broadly, including Archaeological Style ornaments (see Gaultier and Metzger 2005; Weber Soros and Walker 2004; Gere and Rudoe 2010).

This attention to the afterlife of ancient jewelry has had several benefits. First, re-examination and technical analysis of artifacts has revealed forgeries and misattributions of objects that have crept into the scholarly literature (e.g., see Turfa 2009). Second, more recent discoveries in goldsmithing techniques have allowed a reconsideration of Alessandro Castellani’s investigations into Etruscan granulation and filigree. His own interest was stimulated when he was 13 and studied the Regolini-Galassi jewelry with his father, Fortunato Castellani, also a goldsmith. The adult Alessandro played a leading role in promoting the revival of ancient and medieval styles. Indeed, he launched an ambitious project to illustrate the whole history of Italy – freshly unified – through its jewelry at the 1862 Grand Exhibition in London. These pieces included ornaments inspired by Villanovan and other Italic jewelry, Etruscan-era necklaces, earrings, and brooches, styles from Magna Graecia and Roman jewelry. The exhibit continued its chronological march with a substantial collection of medieval-inspired works, including micro-mosaic pendants and brooches. These charming ornaments used a technique that was created in the eighteenth century but gained historicity from the use of ancient and medieval mosaic imagery or Greek and Latin inscriptions. Castellani’s dedication to exploring both the techniques and the forms of ancient goldsmiths helped to promote the notion of the “mysterious” Etruscan craftsmen using skills and knowledge lost to the modern day. This had the effect of raising Castellani’s own profile and prestige and increasing demand for his products. As a leader in Archaeological Style jewelry, Castellani attracted elite visitors from all over the world who traveled to Rome or his
other workshop in Paris. European royalty, famous authors like Harriet Beecher Stowe and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, artists such as Lawrence Alma-Tadema and Fred Leighton (who drew heavily on ancient themes in their work), and politicians and wealthy entrepreneurs all signed the guest book at the Castellani shops. Other goldsmiths in Italy and beyond followed Castellani’s example and in the late nineteenth century, Archaeological Style jewelry was widely available in Europe and America (Weber Soros and Walker 2004; Gere and Rudoe 2010).

The renewed interest in the reception of archaeological jewelry can also stimulate study of how Victorians incorporated it and other artifacts into their own process of self-identification. Just as jewelry and gender identity were issues for the Etruscans, the same concerns applied to the Victorians. It was in this period that males rejected most personal ornaments from their dress. A watch, fob, and cufflinks became the only jewelry types that men used regularly. It is perhaps no coincidence that ancient jewelry began to be relegated to the minor arts in the scholarly literature at this juncture. Moreover, nineteenth-century mechanization played a role in women’s ornaments and dress just as it did in other industries. Now that fine jewelry (or its simulacrum) was available to the lower and middle classes, we can trace a vein of social anxiety about the deceptiveness of appearance. Archaeological jewelry, which could range from the Castellani brothers’ exacting replicas to actual artifacts blended into Victorian ornaments, offered the highly desirable commodity of originality to its wearer, but the cheaper versions also gave middle class women a veneer of education and historical awareness. Authors such as Charles Dickens and George Eliot used jewelry as a vehicle to fashion certain identifiable character types: in Dickens’s Little Dorrit (1855–57), for example, Mrs. Merdle is described simply as “The Bosom,” from which her swindler husband hung diamonds and other accessories to announce his wealth (Arnold 2011). Further investigation of who bought Etruscan-style jewelry and how they incorporated it into their dress during the nineteenth century could illuminate the post-antique journey of Etruscan ornaments in public and private collections.

10. Conclusions

The perspectives surveyed in this chapter share a general approach of rigorous examination of an object within many cultural layers. This method has special resonance for ancient jewelry, accessories created from intrinsically and symbolically valuable materials and intended to be worn on the body. Precious metal jewelry owned and deposited by elite Etruscans survives most often, but it is possible to imagine that anyone could have converted a stone or shell into bodily decoration in antiquity. Ornaments could then have offered supernatural protection or denoted a new stage in life. These meanings would have blended together with others (e.g., ethnic affiliation) to create dense and multiple markers of identity for the Etruscans.

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

Higgins 1980 offers a fundamental introduction to the types of jewelry used in Greece, Etruria and Rome. Cristofani and Martelli 2000 provides an excellent catalog and survey of Etruscan jewelry types and its representation in Etruscan art. Bonfante 2003 is an essential introduction to Etruscan costume in general, with some discussion of jewelry. Causey (2011) offers a detailed investigation of amber and its cultural significance in the ancient world (see accompanying website for photographs and descriptions of the carved amber pendants in the J. Paul Getty collection). Gaultier 2013 surveys the types of Etruscan jewelry chronologically and discusses the import of eastern techniques and artists. Turfa 2009 explores the history of the Etruscan jewelry in the Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology at the University of Pennsylvania, while De Puma 2013 offers a full catalog of the jewelry at the Metropolitan Museum of Art as part of its Etruscan collection.