

McCarter, S. (2023) “Messalina’s Gilded Nipples?”, *Arethusa* 56, 117-40.

This article questions the long-held assumption that the empress Messalina, as described by Juvenal at Satires 6.122-23, is donning gold foil pasties on her nipples as she performs sex work in a Roman brothel. Tracing this idea from Gifford’s 1802 translation to the present day, the article shows how the “pasties” interpretation arose in the 19th century under the influence of Orientalism. It argues that *papilla* is better understood as referring to the full breast and that we should think of Messalina’s adornment in Roman terms rather than project modern sexual stereotypes and taboos onto the past.