CHAPTER 1

Introduction
Popular Culture and the Study of (Late) Ancient History

> The most penetrating imagination, with the fullest learning, could never wake to life that dim, sunken mass who dragged out their lives in indigence, with no hope, and probably no desire, of any change.
>
> Samuel Dill, *Roman Society in Gaul in the Merovingian Age* (London, 1926), p. 235

How can we understand the transformations that took place in late antiquity? How did the complex processes of social, economic, cultural and religious change interrelate? Can we understand these processes as activated from the bottom up, as well as top down, and how did these divergent forces interact? This book sets out to examine these questions, focusing on one specific geographical area, southern Gaul, in particular the city of Arles and its late antique ecclesiastical *territorium*, the area associated with Roman Narbonensis, hence largely but not exclusively modern Provence (see Maps 1 and 2). It covers a period of roughly 150 years, from c. 400–550, one of striking political, religious, social and economic change. Although the original impetus for the project came from reading the striking sermons of Caesarius, bishop of Arles from 502 to 542, the main focus is not Caesarius himself: my aim is to look at the period through the lens of popular culture, undergoing its own transformation in late antiquity.[1]

Why popular culture? First because although popular culture has been studied by historians of other periods and cultures, ancient and late ancient historians have been slow off the mark and there is thus a whole fascinating area of study open for new research and analysis. Secondly, as I shall show, during late antiquity popular culture was problematized and targeted by the church as never before and thus we have at our disposal a number of sources from which we can examine both popular culture and its

[1] I was led to Caesarius by Horsfall 2003: 14–17; my debt to Klingshirn 1994 is also clearly visible in what follows.

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transformation. Finally, because the study of popular culture, its definition and development in late antiquity, provides an important means of examining the interrelated processes of social, economic, cultural and religious change in late antiquity. As I shall go on to demonstrate, 'popular culture' provides both a substantive area of study (under the rubric of 'popular culture' I shall examine such areas as singing, dancing, festivals, ritual behaviour, lived religion and social relations) and a heuristic model, which enables a properly 'thick' description of late antique culture, in all its richness. Popular culture in this way provides a framework for looking at the cultural, social and economic changes of late antiquity.

The challenge posed by the book is to look at late antique culture both from the outside and from its multiple 'insides'. We shall attempt to look at the practices and views not just of bishops like Caesarius and his colleagues, or even of the landowners who formed the primary audience for clerical discourse, but also of a much broader range of individuals and groups who lived in southern Gaul. We shall investigate the lived culture of urbanites, hilltop villagers, small-scale viticulturists and salt-panners. These people were church-goers, church-refusers, ritual practitioners of various types, sceptics, party-givers and party-goers. They were peasants, landowners, small-scale entrepreneurs, artisans, shepherds and indeed slaves. We shall attempt to reach them not only by reading, often 'against the grain', the religious texts of the period – sermons, conciliar acts, hagiography – but also by examining the material culture of the non-elite.

The present study will build on the work of many other scholars: the detailed studies of experts on the religious history of the period but also the rich harvest of archaeological work carried out in the region at the end of the last century, and published in the first decade of this one. This is the first work of history of the region to make use of this material in its analysis of social and cultural change in late antiquity. This is also an account of (late) ancient history that is engaged in theoretical and methodological issues as well as with those related to the intricacies of the literary and archaeological records. It is a study of social, cultural and religious history that deals with questions of class, gender and power. To return to the quote from Samuel Dill with which this chapter began,[2] it is an important aim of my book to restore visibility and agency to the individuals, societies and communities who made up the congregations (or indeed, did not) of Caesarius and his colleagues.

[2] Dill 1926: 235.

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In this first, introductory chapter I shall begin by outlining what I (and others) mean by popular culture, then turn to look at ancient and late ancient evidence up close. Next the attention goes to late antique southern Gaul itself, with an outline account of the historical context. Finally, key sources, methods and themes are introduced.

What Is Popular Culture?

The definition of 'popular culture' that I shall use in this book is broad enough to be workable but does require some methodological and theoretical scaffolding. 'Popular culture', after all, is a heuristic *construct* rather than a clear objective *reality*, and as such it requires full methodological interrogation. I am guided by a seminal article by Stuart Hall, 'Notes on Deconstructing the "Popular"', which clearly stresses the *embeddedness* of popular culture. As Hall made clear: 'there is *no* whole, authentic, autonomous "popular culture" which lies outside the field of force of the relations of cultural power and domination'.[3] To begin with, then, popular culture does not exist as a free-floating substantive culture that belongs to any single group of people – in the case of late antique southern Gaul we cannot say, for instance, that we can identify unproblematically a 'peasant popular culture' The notion of embeddedness has further implications too: I share with Hall the conviction that any reading of popular culture must be *political*, even if not in the terms of crudely Marxist 'class relations'.

Next, popular culture, like cultural relations in general, must be understood as dynamic, never as static: 'what is essential to the definition of popular culture is the relations which define "popular culture" in a continuing tension (relationship, influence and antagonism) to the dominant culture. It is a conception of culture which is polarized around this cultural dialectic'.[4] That is, popular culture constitutes the meeting point between dominant and subaltern fields: it is indeed 'made' at *precisely* this intersection. It does not exist in isolation. Firstly, it is deeply embedded in social and economic relations – which are therefore one important focus of the book. Secondly, it is embedded in broader fields of culture and ideology – thus the dialectic between popular culture and the ideology of the expanding church constitutes another major focus.

Clearly, Hall's approach is just one of many theoretical takes on popular culture in existence. I shall briefly here consider just a few complementary

[3] Hall 1981: 232. [4] Hall 1981: 235.

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approaches.[5] Michel de Certeau is much cited for his work exploring the *réemploi* (re-use) of popular culture by ordinary people. De Certeau's approach allows a focus on the creativity and inventiveness of these ordinary people rather than drawing a model of popular culture as a passive, consumer culture.[6] In a similar vein, we can learn from the post-structuralist approaches which approach popular culture as *bricolage*, as formulated by Claude Lévi-Strauss.[7] We can also note the growing interest in contemporary cultural studies in the seemingly straightforward concept of 'Everyday Life', including the study of 'things'.[8] It has indeed been suggested that when focusing on popular culture we should move our focus away from people to the 'Social Life of Things'.[9] Pierre Bourdieu's hugely influential concept of *cultural capital* is fundamental here,[10] with Holt Parker suggesting that popular culture can be defined as that which is produced for and consumed by those *lacking* cultural capital. Most crucially, Parker suggests that popular culture can best be understood as 'unauthorized culture'[11] – with the advantage that this definition bears no inherent political or aesthetic status, and implies no value judgement. As we shall see, this notion of popular culture as *unauthorized* works very well indeed when analysing late antique ecclesiastical discourse, which sought to demonize much of popular culture as 'unauthorized', using a range of tactics, which I shall unpick in the chapters to come.

So what, then, is the definition of popular culture used here? The model of popular culture that I use in this book is multifaceted. I am talking about substantive activities – a non-exclusive list would include festive behaviour, singing, dancing, eating and drinking, and insubordination, as well as tactics of memorization and knowledge transfer among the non-literate. But popular culture also, crucially, comprises strategies and techniques for interacting with structures of power. These activities – and others – are carried out by diverse non-elite individuals and communities. The category 'non-elite' is obviously wide and in the

[5] There are many useful readers and textbooks available to introduce the body of theoretical work; see, for instance, Bigsby 1976; Guins and Zaragoza Cruz 2005; Storey 2018, 2021; Strinati 2004. See now too Grig 2017a and especially Grig 2017b.

[6] An 'art of doing things': de Certeau 1984, especially xi–xxiii and 15–41.

[7] See Lévi-Strauss 1966, especially 16–23; for its application to the study of popular culture, see, for example, Hebdige 1979.

[8] See Highmore 2002; for the material culture aspect of this in particular, focusing on the study of 'things', see Attfield 2000.

[9] See Parker 2011: 159; the term derives from Appadurai 1998: 45, itself building on Baudrillard's essay 'The System of Objects': Baudrillard 1988: 16–17.

[10] An extended definition is elusive, but see Bourdieu 1977: especially 159–97; Parker 2011: 160, n. 69.

[11] Parker 2011: especially 165.

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course of the following chapters we will look in some detail at a number of different groups, sometimes overlapping. They include small landowners, peasants, artisans (both urban and rural), *coloni*, slaves and beggars. During this analysis, therefore, we shall consider different types and degrees of subalternity. However, maintaining a broad spectrum is deliberate: many of the activities considered under the rubric of 'popular culture' were in fact carried out by people of all types. Indeed, in a running theme, our episcopal discourses persistently accuse even members of the lay elites of participating in what, for bishops, was unauthorized culture. Ultimately, popular culture is a heuristic concept which allows us to look at a cultural history that is fully embedded in structures of power, domination and inequality. It is also an approach that invites us to explore cultural change as coming from below as well as from above.

In this book I discuss late antiquity in part as an 'after': I explicitly set out to offer a study of the transformation of popular culture in this period, during the transition from the classical to the medieval world. This being the case, it is of course necessary to establish what type of popular culture existed *before* late antiquity in order to be transformed at this time; even if for reasons of space and focus, this will be a necessarily whistle-stop tour. Here it is worth pointing out once more that a major advantage of working on popular culture in the *late* ancient period is the huge advantage in terms of available source material. For instance, we have simply no relevant literary sources at all for southern Gaul during the republican and imperial periods – nothing that discusses the cultural and social life of the non-elite in any sustained way. However, we *are* able to compare what the archaeological evidence tells us about the relative lifestyles and material culture of earlier and later periods, and I shall do so at relevant junctures.

Looking at Ancient Popular Culture

The study of ancient popular culture itself has been neglected in comparison to other periods of pre-modern history until very recently; in the last few years we have seen an upsurge of interest in the history of subaltern cultures and in approaches to history from below among ancient historians.[12] More generally, however, classicists and ancient historians alike have been slow to respond to the important body of work from scholars of early modern popular culture, such as that of Peter Burke and Natalie Zemon Davis in the Anglo-American tradition, and of Robert

[12] For fuller discussion, see Grig 2017b: 9–21 and Courrier and Magalhães de Oliveira 2022.

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Mandrou and Roger Chartier (inter alia) in French scholarship.[13] The work of early modern historians constitutes a discernible influence, as we shall see: so much so that perhaps historians (myself included!) need to be careful lest the study of popular culture becomes overly prone to what we might see as popular culture clichés, brilliant and persuasive as these influential interpretations are.

The most influential work in the study of early modern popular culture is undoubtedly Mikhail Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World*, first (somewhat belatedly) published in English in 1968. Bakhtin argued for the symbolic centrality of the festival of Carnival to early modern culture. Both in Bakhtin's work and elsewhere, 'carnival' and the 'carnivalesque' are crucial concepts for understanding the key features of popular (Bakhtin himself called it 'folk') culture. According to Bakhtin, carnival offers a site for inversion, liberation and renewal. Comedy, the grotesque and the 'lower bodily stratum' all play roles in structuring a 'second world and a second life',[14] with potential for opposition and rebellion.[15] As neatly expressed by Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, the carnivalesque is 'a potent populist, crucial inversion of all official worlds and hierarchies in a way that has implications far beyond the specific realm of Rabelais studies'.[16] This is not to say that the concept has not undergone critique,[17] but it remains impossible to overestimate the influence of Bakhtin, including on recent studies of ancient popular culture that I shall discuss in what follows. I shall discuss the utility of carnival for understanding late antique popular culture in general, and the festival of the Kalends of January specifically, in Chapter 6.

In the case of ancient history itself, meanwhile, the first ancient historian to attempt a full-length study of ancient popular culture was Pedro Paulo Funari in 1989.[18] At the heart of this work is an innovative study of Pompeian graffiti; Funari argued eloquently for the need for scholars to confront and elucidate 'another antiquity': 'An antiquity in which popular groups possessed a relative autonomy, as much in aesthetic terms as in its values and conceptions.'[19] It is regrettable that the impact of Funari's work has been somewhat limited, no doubt because it was originally published in

[13] For instance, Davis 1975; Burke 2009; Mandrou 1964; Chartier 1988. [14] Bakhtin 1968: 6.
[15] On carnival and resistance, see in particular Le Roy Laudurie 1979.
[16] Stallybrass and White 1986: 7. [17] Most importantly, Stallybrass and White 1986.
[18] Funari 1989, 1991.
[19] 'Una antigüedad en la que los grupos populares poseían una autonomía relativa, tanto en términos estéticos como en sus valores y concepiones', Funari 1991: 101.

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Portuguese and has thus far been translated only into Spanish.[20] The first dedicated study of ancient popular culture written in English came, rather surprisingly, from a philologist best known for his work on Virgil: Nicolas Horsfall's *The Culture of the Roman Plebs*, published in 2003.[21] Horsfall's fascinating short book describes the 'culture of the plebs' as

> a 'parallel' culture, in its own way rich, varied and robustly vigorous: it has little enough to do with those literary texts which have bequeathed to us such a magnificent set of cultural and social blinkers, but rests rather on theatre, games in various senses, music, songs, dance, memory and has amply demonstrated its ability to survive almost unaltered at least into late antiquity.[22]

Here in place of Funari's 'relative autonomy' we have a '"parallel" culture'. Song and memory are key planks of Horsfall's analysis, which focuses almost entirely on literary texts, which he mines for evidence of an oral culture, neglected by generations of scholars. Horsfall takes a synchronic rather than a diachronic approach, tending to see his plebeian culture as rather more timeless than most historians would.[23] This does, however, enable him to adduce Caesarius as a key witness for the persistence of song in popular culture – an important move, as we shall see later in this book.

The culture of the Roman plebs has been investigated more recently still, with a more historical approach, by Cyril Courrier.[24] Courrier depicts the Roman plebs not as an oppressed mass, a starving mob or a *Lumpenproletariat*, but as a stable community, able to develop a culture of their own. The Roman plebs as depicted by Courrier have a sense of self-esteem based on professional, work-based pride. Moreover, their political interests went far beyond 'bread and circuses': this is a picture of a highly politicized *plebs*, even though the advent of the imperial system clearly entailed a new type of political life. Nonetheless, as a caveat we should note that much of Courrier's analysis deals, often explicitly as such, with what we might call a plebeian elite – as ever, the easiest tranche of popular culture to access.

Focusing more widely than the plebs as narrowly defined, Jerry Toner's social-historical study *Popular Culture in Ancient Rome* takes a straightforward approach to 'the culture of the non-elite'.[25] Nonetheless, he makes the sensible qualification that '[t]he non-elite were too great a hotchpotch of differing

[20] Although Funari recapitulated and summarized his graffiti study in English as Funari 1993.
[21] This is in fact an English version of an Italian original: Horsfall 1996. [22] Horsfall 2003: 66–7.
[23] Horsfall 2003: 23–5. [24] Courrier 2014; see too, more briefly, Courrier 2017.
[25] Toner 2009: 1.

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groups to be united by a single, monolithic culture. They inhabited a complex world of different geographies, wealth and status levels that meant that no uniform way of life could ever exist.'[26] For Toner, popular culture can be understood not least as a series of coping strategies through which the non-elite faced the difficult world in which they lived. There is a fascinating sensory component to this picture of popular culture – smell, touch and noise feature vividly, showing how the senses distinguish popular from elite culture.[27] The carnivalesque makes an appearance, headlined by the Roman festival of Saturnalia.[28]

In general, there has been very little study of the popular culture of ancient Greece, for several reasons. Firstly, the lack of *evidence* is of course crucial, most notably for any polity outside Athens, but even for Athens the body of source material is tiny in comparison with the Roman, let alone the late ancient period. Moreover, Mirko Canevaro has recently argued that the very notion of popular culture is problematic for classical Athens, in that the dominant, official culture was indeed by many definitions 'popular'.[29] Finally, we should acknowledge that different degrees of subalternity – that is, the different levels of inequality between classical Greece and later Rome[30] – also have an impact on the nature of popular culture in Greece and Rome, respectively. Nonetheless, the popular culture of classical Greece has made an appearance in scholarship in recent years. Leslie Kurke, even while stating that popular culture is 'probably . . . a misnomer' for the ancient world,[31] provides an intriguing study of the figure of Aesop. She argues that Aesop, or rather the texts of the Aesopic tradition, enable(s) us to trace a dialogue, or dialectic, between 'high' and 'low'.[32] Meanwhile, in the highly ambitious *Slaves Tell Tales* Sara Forsdyke sought to uncover the dynamics and politics of popular culture in archaic and classical Greece.[33] Forsdyke's book very clearly shows the challenges of writing a history of popular culture for a period where the sources are highly fragmentary. Concerted use is made throughout of theoretical and comparative literature: Forsdyke is indeed explicit about the need to interpret ancient popular culture through the use of models taken from scholarship

[26] Toner 2009: 2. [27] Toner 2009: especially 123–61 (ch. 4: 'Common Scents, Common Senses').
[28] Toner 2009: ch. 3: 'The World Turned Bottom Up' (pp. 92–122); also ch. 5: 'Popular Resistance' (pp. 162–84).
[29] Canevaro 2017.
[30] Current scholarship stresses that levels of inequality in the classical Greek world were very low in comparison to other pre-modern and even modern states: for example, Ober 2015: especially 71–100.
[31] Kurke 2011: 7.
[32] For example, on the *Life of Aesop* as 'the layered bricolage of multiple acts and agents': Kurke 2011: 25.
[33] Forsdyke 2012.

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outside the classical world.[34] For instance, she interprets Plutarch's anti-democratic account of riots in sixth-century BCE Megara with both Bakhtin's carnival and E. P. Thompson's 'moral economy' in mind.[35] I shall return to these themes in Chapter 6, with a much wider range of (late) ancient source material at hand.

Having discussed popular culture rather in the abstract, it is time to move to much more concrete examples. So we shall make a detour to look at some striking comparative ancient evidence, from Pompeii in Italy, and from Aphrodisias in Caria, in modern Turkey, in order to consider a popular culture approach.[36] Both sites offer exceptional material evidence, including rich bodies of inscribed texts of various kinds, which provide unrivalled insights into non-elite urban life in the ancient world and into late antiquity.[37] In this way I shall introduce some of the key themes and contexts of ancient popular culture – and how we can study them.

First we need to imagine an urban popular culture that was lived in public and shared spaces. In Pompeii the Via dell'Abbondanza gives a vivid impression of ancient street life: it stretches east from the forum all the way to the Sarno Gate, with a lively mixture of bars, shops, workshops and residential properties.[38] Businesses opened out into the street and open-air shrines marked crossroads, while the ubiquitous graffiti and other painted signs and images provide further evidence of the time people spent in the urban outdoors, such as a *dipinto* asking loiterers to move on, or bantering graffiti contests between love rivals.[39] In Aphrodisias the recently excavated 'urban park', known as the 'Place of Palms',[40] newly restored in late antiquity, likewise gives a suggestive glimpse of what we might call a landscape of popular culture. Graffiti enables us to see that this was a space that combined a range of functions, including commercial,

[34] Forsdyke 2012: 49. [35] Forsdyke 2012: 117–43; see Thompson 1971; see pp. 209–10.

[36] The collection of graffiti from Pompeii amounts to over 10,000 entries in *CIL*, volume 4; locations and buildings/rooms are given using the conventional numbering system devised by Fiorelli. On the late antique inscriptions of Aphrodisias, see Roueché 2004 ('ALA'); I shall also draw on the recent publication of the 'Place of Palms' (Wilson and Russell in press).

[37] It is urban life that I shall consider here, but as will be discussed later on for the case of Arles, the interdependence of city and hinterland remains a key feature in late antiquity.

[38] See Wallace-Hadrill 1990 on the lack of social zoning; compare Nicholas Purcell on the centrality of the *taberna* to urban life in antiquity: Purcell 1994: 659–62.

[39] No loitering here: VII.11.12: *CIL* 4.813: *otiosis locus hic non est, discede morator*. Rival lovers spar on a bar frontage: I.10.2–3 = *CIL* 4.8258–9; see Kellum 1999: especially 285 and 287 and Hartnett 2017: 105–6. Street furniture facilitated 'loitering' by design: see Hartnett 2017: 195–223 on the role of benches in ancient streetscapes; more than 100 have been identified in Pompeii alone.

[40] Previously known as the 'South Agora'.

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professional and leisure activities – from meetings of associations to shopping to idling with board games.[41]

Next, several factors combined to make the lower classes especially visible outdoors, and in public spaces: the nature of lower-class housing obviously made sociability in spaces such as taverns more likely, while under-employment was a common feature in the lives of the poor. The propensity of the lower classes to 'hang about' in the urban open air was noted with suspicion and indeed scorn by elite commentators, including during late antiquity. Ammianus Marcellinus was only the latest in a long line of critics of lower-class leisure,[42] combining several key topoi common to disapproving elite views of popular culture:

> But of the multitude of lowest condition and greatest poverty some spend the entire night in wineshops, some lurk in the shade of the awnings of the theatres ... or they quarrel with one another in their dice games, making a disgusting sound by drawing back their breath into their resounding nostrils, or, which is the favourite among all amusements, from sunrise until evening, in sunshine and rain, they stand open-mouthed, examining minutely the good points or the defects of charioteers and their horses.[43]

And likewise: 'These spend all their life with wine and dice, in low haunts, pleasures, and the games. Their temple, their dwelling, their assembly, and the height of all their hopes is the Circus Maximus.'[44]

Locations particularly frequented by the non-elite came under frequent attack, not just from moralists but also from imperial legislation. As is well known, taverns (variously, but not always distinctly or consistently, identified as *popinae* and *cauponae*)[45] were frequently targeted by legislation, for instance banning the sale of food in taverns in order to limit their

[41] Over 500 items of informal writing, drawing and carving have been recorded.

[42] See Toner 1995: especially 63–88; Laurence 1994: 80–1.

[43] *Ex turba vero imae sortis et paupertinae, in tabernis aliqui pernoctant vinariis, non nulli sub velabris umbraculorum theatralium latent ... aut pugnaciter aleis certant, turpi sono fragosis naribus introrsum reducto spiritu concrepantes; aut quod est studiorum omnium maximum ab ortu lucis ad vesperam sole fatiscunt vel pluviis, per minutias aurigarum equorumque praecipua vel delicta scrutantes*. Amm. Marc. 14.6.25; trans. Rolfe.

[44] *Hi omne quod vivunt vino et tesseris impendunt et lustris, et voluptatibus et spectaculis: eisque templum et habitaculum et contio et cupitorum spes omnis Circus est maximus*. Amm. Marc. 28.4.29.

[45] *Caupona* generally designated a tavern which also offered accommodation, while a *popina* could be a very small establishment; both generally offered food as well as drink; *thermopolium* is also used of establishments serving food and drink.

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attraction.[46] While early imperial efforts in this area are best known, they continued into late antiquity: Ammianus writes disapprovingly of how the Urban Prefect Ampelius failed in his attempts to limit the sale of wine and hot food in Rome in 368.[47] Indeed, it seems likely that such endeavours were generally unsuccessful: in Pompeii *popinae*/*thermopolia* are ubiquitous and instantly recognizable, distributed evenly throughout the town, especially at intersections. Wine could be sold at very low prices[48] and was accompanied by a substantial array of food.[49] The low quality of food and drink in taverns was proverbial for ancient elite writers and it is interesting to see Sidonius Apollinaris, in fifth-century Gaul, still complaining about damp taverns, polluted with unpleasant cooking fumes.[50] Taverns were also stereotyped in literary texts as locales for various types of unauthorized behaviour, and it is intriguing to see these depictions being embraced in the surviving decoration in the taverns of Pompeii.[51] Gaming and gambling are ubiquitously associated with tavern life and the frescoes decorating the inn on Via di Mercurio include an oft-reproduced depiction of men playing dice.[52] Meanwhile, a famous painting from the Tavern of Salvius depicts several scenes of tavern life which actually seem to play up to the negative stereotypes: the scenes show suggestive dialogue, gambling and a fight over a game, broken up, in the final scene, by the proprietor.

Such depictions lead us to ask: were taverns sites of a popular culture that was only for men, or at least for male consumers? Literary and legal sources alike consistently assert that taverns were no place for *respectable* women and assume an identification between bar/inn work and

[46] Generally without success: known early imperial examples include Tiberius' banning of the selling of all food at *popinae* and *ganae* (Suet. *Tib.* 34) and the closure of taverns and attacks on sales of hot water and meat under Claudius (Cass. Dio 60.6.7). See further Toner 1995: 65–88.

[47] Amm. Marc. 28.4.3–5.

[48] One graffito at Pompeii suggests that the cheapest wine cost one *as*, better wine two, and high-quality Falernian four. *CIL* 4.1679 (VII.2.44: Taberna Hedones).

[49] Equipment found includes stoves, lamps and vessels; the price list in one bar includes bread, cheese, sausage, porridge and whitebait. *CIL* 4.5380. One of the frescoes from the inn on the Via di Mercurio depicts sausages and onions among the foodstuffs hanging above people sat at a table: at VI.10.1/19.

[50] Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 8.11.41–8.

[51] Caupona of Salvius: VI.14.35/36; the paintings are now in the National Archaeological Museum of Naples, inv. 111482; for the inscriptions, see *CIL* 4.3494.

[52] VI.10.1/19. The image is reproduced, for instance, on the cover of Toner 2009. Although the association of gaming with taverns is persistent in the ancient literary evidence, gaming counters have been found all over Pompeii, including in the most lavish houses. Indeed, the evidence shows that games were played all over the ancient urban landscape; see Purcell 1985 on the role of *alea* in Roman urban life.

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prostitution.[53] It has been suggested that the urban popular culture that is visible to us is predominantly a *male* culture. The excavators of the Place of the Palms in Aphrodisias observe that it was 'a clearly "gendered" space', heavily dominated by men in its day-to-day activities, with very few women indeed appearing among the graffiti. However, they do note the possible presence of women as shop-keepers, as suggested in the names of Eutychia and Eudoxia on columns of the North Stoa.[54] In Pompeii, meanwhile, graffiti brings to life Asellina, a proprietor of a thermopolium, as well as several of her female employees, Maria, Aegle and Zmyrina, whose names appear supporting a particular political candidate. Their nomenclature suggests immigrant, servile or ex-servile status and yet despite this, and despite their association with bar work, they are asserted here as persons of some significance when it came to political endorsement.[55] In this way, looking at graffiti can sometimes allow a glimpse beyond the views of lower-class women found in other sources. Nonetheless, overall the popular culture that is visible in Pompeian material and textual culture certainly does seem to privilege and promote an aggressive and sexually dominant masculinity.[56] This was certainly not a thing of the past in late antiquity: an inscription claiming 'Eusebios buggers/buggered Doulkitios' was designed to insult a prominent local official and benefactor in traditional fashion by associating him with passive sexual activity.[57] I shall return to the issue of gender and sexuality in popular culture, and its critiques, and how both developed in late antiquity in Chapter 4.

Public entertainments are often associated with ancient popular culture, and the end of the traditional spectacles constituted a major shift in late

[53] 'We would say that a woman openly practises prostitution not just where she does so in brothels but also where she is used to showing she has no shame in *cauponae* and other places', *Dig.*23.2.43.pr; see now Strong 2016: 111–16 warning against accepting this relationship as a 'general correlation'. Graffiti and other visual evidence depict women in the taverns in the role of barmaids, for example *CIL* 4.8258–9 purporting to be written by rivals contending for the favours of a barmaid called Iris.

[54] Wilson and Russell in press: chapter 4: Εὐτυχία (NS7), Εὐδοξία (NS18) are incised on columns. Elsewhere Chaniotis observes that unlike graffiti on wall plaster, which was also the work of women and children, 'most graffiti on stone seem to reflect the thoughts and emotions of men': Chaniotis 2011: 193.

[55] Thermopolium of Asellina: IX.11.2; Graffiti: *CIL* 4.7863 (Asellina's girls (?), not without Zmyrina); 4.7864 (Zmyrina); 4.7862 (Aegle); 4.8766 (Maria). Hartnett 2017: 105–6 comments on how Zmyrina's name was seemingly whitewashed, then repainted, with added emphasis ('nec sine Zmyrina').

[56] On the intersection between aggressive obscenity of graffiti and epigram, see Richlin 1983. Many sexual graffiti purport to have been written by men, while in other cases male authorship is assumed, but note *CIL* 4.10231: 'At(i)metus got me pregnant'!

[57] Wilson and Russell in press: 110.

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antiquity. In Pompeii the entertainment buildings are famously conspicuous, including the amphitheatre which could accommodate around 20,000 spectators (a notable number given the estimated population of the town of c. 10–12,000). The social and cultural importance of the gladiatorial spectacles in the life of Pompeii is visible across the town,[58] such as in the ubiquitous graffiti, including a large number of drawings of gladiators and graffiti made by the gladiators themselves.[59] Likewise, in Aphrodisias there are a number of graffiti, both verbal and pictorial, related to the *ludi*, including depictions of victorious athletes and/or gladiators and (probably) animals associated with the *venationes* as well as graffiti relating to the circus factions.[60] The popularity of the theatre is similarly prominent in the visual culture of Pompeii,[61] with graffiti allowing us to trace the popularity of particular performers[62] and to see how fans of these performers would identify themselves as such, even in electoral endorsements.[63] The mime actor Gaius Norbanus Sorex, 'player of second parts', was honoured with a bronze portrait in Pompeii,[64] a striking honour shown to a mime actor when mime was generally despised by elite Romans as a lowly and disreputable form, and would continue to be viewed as such in late antiquity.[65] As we shall see, the *ludi*, broadly defined, would continue to hold ideological potency in our late antique sources, even at the time of Caesarius, and even as it is clear that urban dwellers were required to develop increasingly 'do it yourself' entertainments, as will be shown in the next chapter.

Graffiti in Pompeii and Aphrodisias alike permit us to interrogate several themes that are relevant to our interrogation of ancient popular

[58] See, in general, with plentiful illustrations, Jacobelli 2003. Over seventy painted advertisements survive, while specific games are represented in both domestic paintings, generally in access areas, near the entrance of the house, in the atrium and in tomb decoration, such as the tomb of Aulus Umbricius Scaurus at the Herculaneum Gate, which once contained stucco friezes depicting gladiatorial and beast combats.

[59] We should surely assume it was Celadus himself who boastfully scrawled 'Celadus the Thracian, heart throb of the girls' on the walls of the gladiatorial barracks: *CIL* 4.4397 (*Suspirium puellarum Celadus thraex*).

[60] Wilson and Russell in press: chapter 5; see too Roueché 1993.

[61] The 'entertainment area' of Pompeii included a theatre, seating 5,000, as well as a smaller roofed 'odeon', seating around 2,000.

[62] Such as the leading pantomime artist Actius Anicetus and his troupe: see Franklin 1987.

[63] The fans of the actor Paris – the so-called Paridiani – proclaimed their support for one Cuspius Pansa. *CIL* 4.719.

[64] This herm portrait was found in the portico of the temple of Isis (VIII.7.28) and can now be seen in the National Archaeological Museum of Naples, inv. 4991; the inscription is *CIL* 10.814.

[65] See on the Roman mime Fantham 1989 and Panayotakis 2005 and, on late antiquity in particular, Webb 2008.

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culture. One is a question as to how far we can see popular culture as structured by *horizontal* as opposed to *vertical* relations and organizations. In Pompeii it is electoral graffiti that offers a striking glimpse into the occupation-based horizontal groupings that helped structure popular culture. A number of different professions declare their support, as a collective, for certain candidates; the professions appearing in these election advertisements and graffiti range from muleteers to goldsmiths, barbers to grape-pickers.[66] These occupational acclamations might suggest, but can do no more, a more formal role for *collegia*, or professional associations. In the Place of Palms in Aphrodisias there is indeed a graffiti acclamation for the professional association of chair-bearers or litter-carriers.[67] Work was of course an important part of popular culture, with many businesses and workshops located right in the heart of urban life, often opening right out onto the street.[68] In Aphrodisias archaeologists and epigraphers use *topos* (place) inscriptions to try to locate the perhaps equally important *temporary* commercial structures which once filled public spaces such as the North Stoa in the Place of Palms, which enabled proprietors, workers and customers alike to benefit from its shade and shelter.[69] Meanwhile, occupational identity formed a substantial element of non-elite identity and culture.[70] For instance, Miko Flohr's reappraisal of the *fullo* (fuller), traditionally assumed to be a low-grade, despised job, is suggestive for a study of popular culture, showing that fullers could not only be successful economically but could also gain and assert social and cultural capital, as evidenced through their individual and collective self-representations.[71]

On the façade of the fullery of Fabius Ululitremulus is found one of the most famous graffiti in Pompeii, which reads *Fullones ululamque cano, non arma virumq(ue)* ('I sing of fullers and the owl, not arms and the man'), thus combining wit, Virgil and fulling in somewhat unique

[66] For example, *CIL* 4.97 (muleteers); 4.710 (goldsmiths); 4.743 (barbers); 4.6672 (grape-pickers). Sometimes the wording takes particular care to stress that the nomination is a collective action, for instance using *universi*, such as *CIL* 4.202 (all the fruit-sellers); 4.960 (carpenters). See further Cooley and Cooley 2004: 173–5.

[67] Wilson and Russell in press: P106.

[68] See here Flohr 2013: 311 on how urban workers 'felt the rhythm of urban life throughout the day and were an integrated part of the social landscape of the city'.

[69] Wilson and Russell in press: chapter 5.

[70] See Courrier 2017: 117–20; see Kampen 1991 for occupational identity as expressed in funerary commemoration.

[71] See Flohr 2013; the epigraphic evidence also suggests the ubiquity of professional associations for *fullones*: pp. 333–7; see too Tran 2013 and discussion later, in Chapter 2. See further on 'disreputable' professions Bond 2016.

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fashion.[72] This irresistible combination of occupational pride and wit makes a neat demonstration of the interpenetration of high and low in ancient popular culture. The interactive nature of much graffiti indeed suggests that we need not let even pessimistic estimates of Roman literacy rates exclude the likelihood that large numbers of the population could participate in graffiti culture.[73] Of course, not all graffiti had to be verbal, or at least fully verbal, but often involved symbols and drawings. Pedro Paulo Funari looked at Pompeian 'graphic caricature' as a case study for the analysis of popular culture. He stressed its wit and inventiveness and argued that the images display criticism of the powerful and expressed self-esteem, as well as popular interests and passions. However, for Funari Pompeian graffiti ultimately served to reinforce 'social exploitation and distinction'.[74]

Can the graffiti and related evidence make broader suggestions about social tensions in the ancient and late ancient city? As already mentioned, graffiti were used in open spaces at Aphrodisias to mark out and reserve space, while, as noted by Angelos Chaniotis, evidence for the *erasure* of such graffiti can be understood 'in the context of competition and conflict'.[75] Indeed, a wider sense of competition between various entities, including cities, professions, religious groups, the elite and the people of the city, can perhaps be identified in the graffiti of Aphrodisias. Acclamations are a distinctive and well-known feature of late antique cities in the Greek east and while those found at Aphrodisias include repeated references to unanimity, there are also notable allusions to its very opposite: to violence, envy and ill feeling and ingratitude, as, for instance, in the injunction: 'your enemies to the river'.[76] The expressions of negative feelings and interpersonal rivalries alike are common features of inscribed objects such as defixiones, as found buried in the Fondo Azzolini

[72] *CIL* 4.9131 (IX.13.5). The pun on the first line of the *Aeneid* not only plays on the name of the fuller ('Owlfearer') but also references owls, who were the symbols of fullers. Compare the sketches of owls from the house of the *fullo* Lucius Quintilius Cresces (V, 2, 4) and fullonica paintings depicting owls (VI.8.20–1; VI.14.21–2): see here Flohr 2013: 341–2.

[73] On literacy and popular culture, see Grig 2017b: 28–30; Kellum's discussion of the interactive nature of Pompeian graffiti, including visual additions and puns, is very suggestive and her argument for the appreciation and participation even of those 'who were not functionally literate' is persuasive (Kellum 1999: esp. 287). See further on graffiti, literacy and literary culture Milnor 2014: especially 22–5 and Baird and Taylor 2011a.

[74] Funari 1993: especially 146. [75] Chaniotis 2011: 201.

[76] *ALA* 83 xi: 'The entire city says this: "your enemies to the river!" May the great god grant us this!'; see Chaniotis in Wilson and Russell in press.

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necropolis, in Pompeii,[77] but of course common across and beyond the Mediterranean.[78]

What if we are looking for evidence of more serious or even organized discord as part of popular culture? One of the most intriguing testimonies from Pompeii is a painting that appears to commemorate the amphitheatre riot of 59 CE, a violent clash with the inhabitants of nearby Nuceria. This event was considered so serious that it resulted in a number of substantial punishments instituted by the imperial administration in Rome, including the exile of the games-giver and his associates, a ten-year ban on games and the dissolution of all 'illegal associations'.[79] Were local associations involved in planning the riot? It is hard to know: *collegia* and their like were frequently seen as a danger to public order and were periodically banned,[80] so we can only speculate as to whether there was a connection in this particular case.[81] Perhaps most interesting of all is the very fact that the riot was commemorated with a large and richly detailed painting, in the peristyle garden of a private home.[82] Maybe it commemorated the re-opening of the amphitheatre after the ban but maybe it was painted to celebrate the Pompeian citizens' triumph in the bust-up with the Nucerians. A graffito found on the façade of another house certainly seems to do so: it depicts a gladiator brandishing the palm branch of victory, with a text reading: 'Campanians, in our victory you perished with the Nucerians'.[83] Taken together, this evidence does certainly suggest an intriguingly subversive element of popular culture – and yet its very uniqueness makes it hard to draw from on a more general level. Urban riots, meanwhile, are almost a cliché of the historiographical picture of late antiquity, and we shall look in detail at questions of social conflict in the city in later chapters.

[77] *CIL* 4.925 appears to threaten various body parts of an enemy; the text is pierced with two nails, then bound with a lead strip.

[78] See Gager 1992.

[79] *collegia . . . quae contra leges instituerant*, Tacit. *Ann.* 14.17. The ban on games seems to have been revoked early.

[80] For example, in the early empire by Julius Caesar (Suet. *Caes.* 42) and Augustus (Suet. *Aug.* 32).

[81] See Jongman 1988: 300, positing a link between the riot and the neighbourhood associations of Pompeii.

[82] The so-called House of Actius Anicetus (I.3.23); the painting is now in the National Archaeological Museum in Naples: inv. 112222. Its details include the awnings that were advertised on several announcements of the *ludi*, and one can even read acclamations of Decimus Lucretius, Satrius Valens and the emperor Nero inscribed on the walls of the *palaestra*: *CIL* 4.2993 x, y.

[83] *CIL* 4.1293. Other graffiti in Pompeii also suggest hostilities with the Nucerians: *CIL* 4.2183 from the brothel and 4.1329 (via di Mercurio, regio VI).

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Finally, we should think about the place of religion in popular culture. The sphere of 'religion' itself is of course very difficult to detach, such was its entanglement in the spheres of culture, economy, society and ideology. Religion and religious activity were fundamentally embedded in all aspects of life in Pompeii, as across the Roman world, probably most visible in the prominence of neighbourhood shrines in the streetscape,[84] as well as of *lararia*, found in both houses and businesses alike.[85] The household was a crucial locus for religious practice and protection, and the finds from Pompeii demonstrate both variety and personalization in religious practice.[86] The religious landscape of the Roman world would undergo substantial transformation in late antiquity, as we shall explore in the chapters to come. In Aphrodisias the carving of religious symbols, especially menorahs and crosses, is a notable feature of the graffiti and has been analysed in terms of religious identity and community relations in the period. The presence of an etched erect phallus in a cluster of carvings on a seat on the north side of the pool in the Place of Palms, along with three game boards and a menorah, according to the excavators was 'intended as an aggressive comment against the Jews, an act of humiliation'.[87] This is certainly suggestive when it comes to thinking about anti-Jewish tensions in the city, which we shall discuss in Chapter 2.

This discussion of some of the unique evidence from Pompeii and Aphrodisias has been designed to provide an insight into a whole range of subjects and questions that we can keep in mind as we look at the popular culture of late antique southern Gaul, and how it changed in late antiquity. Streets and other public spaces provided vital loci for social interaction and for individual and collective expression. Taverns provided an important locus for male sociability, although the presence of women should not be underestimated. Work was a central part of popular culture and identity. Entertainment, both official and 'do it yourself', was important to popular culture: not just the *ludi* put on by local elites but street performances as well. Meanwhile, social tensions can be glimpsed across

[84] These shrines marked many crossroads: over thirty have been identified; see here van Andringa 2000.

[85] See Giacobello 2008; Giacobello divides *lararia* into 'authentic' (found in/near the kitchen) and 'secondary' (e.g. as found in atria and peristyles as well as shops, etc.), but we need not necessarily accept this division.

[86] See here Bodel 2008; for instance, household practice seem even to have included animal sacrifice: excavations at the House and Bar of Amarantus found pits containing sheep and cockerel bones, charred figs and pine nuts: see Fulford and Wallace-Hadrill 1998: 97; concentration on small finds, as in, for example, Allison 2004 and 2006, is crucial.

[87] Wilson and Russell in press: ch. 5.

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a range of examples. While late antique southern Gaul offers the historian neither graffiti nor frescoes, the literary sources offer new insights of their own, allowing us to consider such ephemeral but central elements of popular culture as dancing and gossiping, albeit through the distorting lens of episcopal writings. They also enable us to explore the issue of social conflict in more substantive fashion, as well as enabling us to look at both town *and* country, and the interaction between the two, an interaction that would take on new dimensions in late antiquity.

It is now time to turn to look at late antique southern Gaul in detail. In the next section I shall briefly introduce the historical context in which the action of this book takes place, sketching the outline of the main contours of the broader political and structural changes of the period. This account also provides some essential contextualization with which to understand the activities of Caesarius and the church of Provence.

Southern Gaul c. 400–550: Understanding Change at the End of Antiquity

In 400, Provence was part of the Roman empire, under the rule of Honorius and Arcadius – no matter how ineffectively Honorius actually 'ruled' the west (Map 1). The century and a half that followed provides the basis for a rich and complex *histoire événementielle*: by 550, after a whole panoply of military and political conflict, the Franks were firmly established across the region, as across the rest of Gaul – with the exception of Septimania, modern Languedoc-Roussillon, which remained part of the Visigothic kingdom until well into the eighth century. At the same time as this transferral of political power, shifts in patterns of landholding, settlement and indeed social organization and social relations were underway. Far-reaching cultural transformations also took place in our period with the transition, described in broad strokes, as from a classical to a new 'medieval' culture, including the consolidation of processes of what is often called 'christianization'. None of these processes of transformation was fully completed during the period covered by this book, and the nature and mechanisms of these changes continue to be debated, while the *interrelationship* of these different processes of transformations is also in need of further interrogation. The period was one of often dramatic political and military change for southern Gaul against the backdrop of wider shifting configurations of power across the west of the Roman empire, caused, not least, by structural weaknesses of the Roman imperial

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system itself.[88] Nonetheless, it has also been shown how deep and underlying features of the late Roman state and society perdured into the early medieval period. In particular, the work of Chris Wickham has shown not just the continuing significance of traditional tax-raising powers to the Roman state but also how successors – including the Gothic rulers in southern Gaul – were able to harness these powers and hence continue the outlines of this system well into the sixth century.[89]

The Augustan province of Gallia Narbonensis had stretched almost from Toulouse to Geneva but there would be many different versions of geo-political configurations over the centuries that followed. Under the Tetrarchy the southern diocese of Vienne was established, while under Constantine this was managed by the prefect of the Gauls. The reign of Constantine brought new prestige to Arles: the mint moved there in 313, the city hosted an ecclesiastical council a year later in 314 and the emperor himself visited in 315. A regional prefecture (based in Trier) was established in Gaul in the 340s, supporting the development of a well-connected and powerful Gallic ruling elite. The prestige of fourth-century Arles itself is revealed above all by the scale of the public buildings and the impressive collection of sarcophagi in the Archaeological Museum in Arles.

The fifth century would be a tumultuous one for much of the western empire, even if the experience of the south of Gaul would be distinct from that of the north. The events of New Year 406/7, when large groups of Vandals, Alans and Sueves crossed the Rhine and began a prolonged period of plunder of Germany and northern Gaul, would actually lead to positive political and economic consequences for Provence. The Prefecture of the Gauls transferred to Arles from Trier (although whether this took place in the aftermath of this major upheaval (c. 408) or in fact earlier (c. 390) is debated), and an annual council was set up.[90] The usurper Constantine III chose Arles as his seat in 407 but was defeated only a few years later, in 411, by Honorius' commander Flavius Constantius, who besieged the city. For several years after that political turmoil and bloodletting among the Gallic aristocracy followed the failed usurpation of Jovinus in the Rhineland. The politics of the western empire over the following years are full of turmoil, and southern Gaul was not to be spared further military and political upheaval.

[88] See for different approaches and perspectives Delaplace 2017; Halsall 2007; Heather 1991, 2005; Kulikowski 2019; Ward-Perkins 2005.
[89] Wickham 2005: especially 56–102.
[90] On the dates, see Heijmans 2004: 59–62; for the annual council, *MGH Ep.* 3: 14.

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A group of Goths led by Athaulf arrived in Gaul in 412; they were able to take Narbonne, Toulouse and Bordeaux before being driven back into Spain. However, just a few years later they were established as federates in Aquitaine, across a swathe of land extending from Bordeaux to Toulouse, in 418/19, led first by their leader Theoderic and then his sons.[91] Arles continued to be politically important: a revived council of the 'seven provinces' (of Gaul beneath the Loire) was set up at this time to meet annually. The ensuing years saw renewed military activity in the region, including the besieging of Arles by the eastern Goths in 425/6 and the campaigns led by Aëtius. Nonetheless, the council at Arles was still going strong at the time of Sidonius,[92] and would confirm its support for his father-in-law, the Gallic aristocrat Eparchius Avitus, who, after acclamation as *Augustus* at Arles, headed to Rome in 455,[93] although like many of the emperors of this period Avitus would not last long. The new emperor Majorian (proclaimed in 457) travelled to Gaul (including a stay at Arles in 461 which we shall consider in the next chapter) and recruited senior Gallic aristocrats into his regime, but was himself murdered upon his return to Italy later in 461; what followed is aptly described by Michael Kulikowski as 'a war of all against all'.[94]

Gothic armies attacked Arles several times over these decades,[95] along with other sites in the region, such as Narbonne, which they besieged in 436 and gained fully in 461. With hindsight it has seemed that with the accession of Euric in Toulouse in 466 Visigothic ambitions grew further, with their armies seeking to extend territory across Provence as well as Aquitaine.[96] Meanwhile, the Burgundians, who had been settled in Sapudia by Aëtius sometime after 443, increasingly looked to expand southwards, eventually reaching the Durance river. In 471 the Visigoths defeated an army sent by Anthemius, most likely in the defence of Arles. In 476, despite a treaty agreed a year earlier with the emperor Julius Nepos (which ceded the Auvergne), the Visigoths seized Arles among other remaining land in Provence, and it became the court of a Gothic count. Henceforth there was no longer to be Roman imperial rule in southern Gaul, a transfer of power long experienced elsewhere in the west.

[91] First Thorismund, murdered by his brothers, then Theoderic II. Delaplace 2017 has persuasively argued that the Visigoths did not establish a 'kingdom' as such in 418.
[92] Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 1.3.3. [93] See Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 7. [94] Kulikowski 2020: 209.
[95] Halsall 2007: 237 astutely observes that 'the Goths tended to threaten Arles, seat of Roman government in Gaul, in order to obtain some sort of concession'.
[96] However, Gillett 1999 persuasively argued that this was a retrospective construction, based on Jordanes' tendentious account.

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From the 490s onwards the Franks, growing in power in the north, had their eyes on Gothic territory further south, and at the Battle of Vouillé in 507 they defeated Alaric II and the Visigoths. The Franks and Burgundians alike saw Arles and Narbonne as valuable targets. Arles suffered a prolonged siege by Burgundian forces in 508 but was finally relieved by armies sent by the Ostrogothic government in Ravenna, who took control of Provence. Theoderic, king of the Ostrogoths, re-established the Prefecture of the Gauls, and its vicarate, with its seat once more at Arles. There then ensued a period of relative political stability under Ostrogothic rule, a rule which Theoderic himself presented in a letter to the Gauls as a restitution of 'Roman customs'.[97] However, war between the eastern Roman empire and the Ostrogothic kingdom resulted in the ceding of Gothic holdings in Gaul in return for Frankish support against Justinian – and the Franks took control of Provence in 536/7, even marking their rule by holding circus races in Arles, according to Procopius.[98]

Our ecclesiastical sources in fact give us helpful insights into these political vicissitudes, with the careers of the bishops of Arles offering some intriguing snapshots of some of the ups and downs southern Gaul experienced. Several fifth- and sixth-century bishops had at times suffered from their very closeness to power in politically sensitive Arles: Heros, installed as bishop in 408 with the support of the usurper Constantine III, was removed after his fall in 411 and Heros' successor, Patroclus, who had been supported by Constantius, was assassinated in 426.[99] Hilary, bishop from 429/30 to 449, certainly enjoyed ups and downs in his relations with the local elites and both the secular and the ecclesiastical authorities, as we shall consider in some detail in Chapter 2. Bishops could be called upon to play a political role at sensitive times: the bishops of Aix, Arles, Marseilles and Riez were sent to Toulouse to negotiate with Euric as the emissaries of Julius Nepos in 475.[100] As for Caesarius, his election to the episcopacy in 502 was secured with the say-so of the Visigothic *comes* and his colleagues – described somewhat tactfully in his *Vita* (written under the Frankish regime) as *ipsos dominos rerum*.[101] His own origins in Burgundian territory would certainly prove significant: only a few years after his election he was accused of pro-Burgundian treason and sent before Alaric II and then into

[97] *Libenter parendum est Romanae consuetudini, cui estis post longa tempora restituti*, Cassiod. *Var*. 3.17.
[98] Procop. *Goth.* 7.33.4–5.
[99] Heros: *Chron.* 1247 s.a. 412; Patroclus: according to *Chron*. 1292 s.a. 425, Patroclus was murdered by 'a certain tribune' called Barnabus at the 'secret' order of the *magister militum* Felix; see further Heinzelmann 1992.
[100] Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 7.6–7. [101] *V. Caes.* 1.13; see Delaplace 2012: 312.

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short-lived exile in Bordeaux. When Arles was besieged by the Burgundians and Franks in 597/8, Caesarius' loyalty again came under suspicion but ultimately he would prosper under Ostrogothic rule. Indeed, he healed the resident praetorian prefect of the Gauls, the patrician Liberius, when he was wounded in a Visigothic ambush outside Arles.[102] However, commenting on the new Frankish regime, established at Arles in 536/7, Caesarius' biographers once more felt the need to defend him from possible charges that he had betrayed the city.[103] On his deathbed in 542 Caesarius specifically commended his female monastery to 'the prefect, the counts and the citizens', as well as to the clergy.[104] Bringing our timescale to an end, Aurelianus, bishop from 546 to 551, seems in his turn to have been a recipient of Frankish royal favour, shown not least by the patronage he received for two new monasteries at Arles, very much in the Caesarian tradition.[105]

While our ecclesiastical sources can offer rich insights into the fluctuating political structures of the period, they are, inevitably, somewhat less helpful on broader questions relating to the economic basis of these structures; that is, on the development of taxation, finance, land tenure and related issues. Descriptions of excessive and unfair taxation, and the depredations caused by its burden, are, however, notable presences in these sources.[106] Constantius of Lyon describes the journey made by St Germanus in 435/7 to ask for a remission of taxes for the citizens of Auxerre, who are described as like fatherless orphans, crushed by extraordinary exactions.[107] Valentinian III himself referred to the difficulty of collecting taxes from the 'exhausted taxpayer' in 444.[108] Both Salvian of Marseille and Sidonius Apollinaris testify to the continuity of taxation processes from the 440s through to the 470s. Salvian's descriptions are particularly well known and dramatic, describing how the harsh and corrupt taxation system drove people into highly dubious patronage

[102] Petrus Marcellinus Felix Liberius, praetorian prefect from 510 to 534: Liberius 3, PLRE II: 677–81; his metrical funerary inscription recalls his tenure: *currentibus annis / successu parili Gallica iura tenens* (*CIL* 11.382); on his healing: *Vita Caesarii*. 2.10–12. Liberius' wife, Agretia, was herself cured through contact with an item of the bishop's clothing: *V. Caes.* 2.13–15. Liberius also acted as a local patron of the church and built a basilica at Orange; he led the delegation of laymen attending the ecclesiastical Council of 529 at which it was dedicated: Conc. Araus. a. 529.

[103] *V. Caes.* 2.45.

[104] *praefecturae vel comitibus seu civibus per epistolas suas commendat*, *V. Caes.* 2.47; see Klingshirn 1994: 257.

[105] See Klingshirn 1994: 262–4.

[106] See Jones 1964: 450–69; Wickham 2005: 62–80.

[107] Const. *V. Germani* 19–24.

[108] *ab exhaustis aegerrime conferentur*; Val. III, *Nov.* xv pr., 444. Valentinian was, however, imposing a purchase tax (the *siliquaticum*) while seeming to sympathize with the landowners: Jones 1959.

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relations and servitude and even caused them to join the Bagaudae.[109] Salvian's account can certainly not be taken as accurate reportage, but this does not mean that taxation was not both high and oppressive.[110] Even in the 460s and 470s taxation appears frequently and incidentally in the letters of Sidonius;[111] he also gives a highly coloured account of the activities of a certain Seronatus, a tax collector who allegedly collected tax in a harsh and improper fashion for both the Gothic and Roman authorities in southern Gaul.[112] In the activities of Seronatus we indeed get a glimpse of how at least at first the post-Roman successor polities maintained the tax-collecting structures and practices of the later Roman state. The *curiales* continued to be responsible for tax collection, under the Gothic regimes: the *Breviarium* of Alaric II both preserves laws on decurions and adds full interpretations, while Cassiodorus' *Variae* show the same pattern under the Ostrogothic kingdom.[113] It also seems most likely that, at least to begin with, the Franks continued this form of tax collection.[114]

This points to broader structural continuities in the shift from Roman to post-Roman power. While the Visigothic rulers of Gaul did away with the office of the praetorian prefect, there was still a provincial governor, while at the civic level the towns and cities retained *curiae*, or town councils, filled by *curiales* or decurions, whose duty it remained to collect taxes, as we have seen. Under Ostrogothic rule Arles became the home of the praetorian prefecture once more. Even once the Franks had taken Provence, in 536/7, we can still see some notable continuity of political structures, if not personnel: the praetorian prefect was now a *praefectus* or *rector Provinciae* and it seems most likely the local council continued to function.[115] Obviously there were some changes in both structures and personnel, nonetheless. One significant new feature in the power structure of Gothic Provence that we have already seen was the role of the *comes civitatis*, the representative of the *rex* in the cities, a role that would be maintained by the Franks, under whose role Provence would become part of a new type of polity.

The fragmentation of a massive Mediterranean-centred polity into diverse regions and localities is a fundamental aspect of the history of this period.[116] Southern Gaul would have a distinctive trajectory in comparison

[109] Salvian, *De gubernatione Dei* 5.17–45, especially 21–6 on the Bacaudae; see pp. 73–4.
[110] As observed by Wickham 2005: 64. [111] For example, Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 5.7.3; 7.12.3.
[112] Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 2.1.1, 5.13.1–2; Seronatus, PLRE II: 995–6. [113] See Jones 1964: 761.
[114] See, for example, Wood 1994: 62–3; Wickham 2005: 105–15; Loseby 2006: 84–93 on the decline of traditional tax-collecting mechanisms and institutions in the Frankish cities.
[115] Liebeschuetz 2001: 124–36 for continuity in municipal government in the west.
[116] A major consequence of this, in turn, as has been very clear in this account, was the increasing incidence of interregional warfare.

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with much of the 'west', experiencing what has been somewhat elegiacally described as 'a long autumn of Romanity'.[117] An important argument of Chris Wickham's *Framing the Early Middle Ages* is that the breakdown of traditional Roman landowning and legal structures with the fall of Roman rule in the west led to a weakening of landlord power and thus a relative détente in landlord/peasant relations.[118] But how far can we see this breakdown of structures in our own region and in this period? It is in fact the case that traditional landowning and indeed tax-collecting structures perdured much longer in Provence than in much of Gaul. Landowners themselves will be a not infrequent presence in our sources and discussions, as I shall explore in more detail in Chapter 3. Nonetheless, we will examine some striking regional and micro-regional patterns of change which at times might help to contextualize both the changing *content of* and *conflict over* popular culture in the light of social and economic as well as cultural and religious change. Following the framework established by Stuart Hall, my model of popular culture understands it as embedded in both ideological and economic and social structures. While the ideological programme of the late antique church is a crucial factor in my analysis, it would certainly be overly reductive to seek to interpret this dialectic purely in terms of 'class struggle'. That is, we cannot and should not assume that the interests of the church and those of secular power will coincide: I shall seek to avoid crudely reductionist interpretations.

In this final part of this contextual section I shall provide an outline of the development of the church in Provence, in its turn just as distinctive as other aspects of the region's history in late antiquity, including an account of the career of Caesarius as a main actor in this book. Indeed, Caesarius' career once more provides a neat way in: as an aristocrat and an ascetic he was rather typical of the Provençal church, not atypical even in being an outsider to the region.[119] Born to an aristocratic family with ecclesiastical

[117] Guyon and Heijmans 2013: 17 ('Ce longue automne da la romanité n'a nullement été affecté par la déposition du dernier empereur de l'Occident en 476').

[118] Wickham 2005: see especially 519–35, for example p. 525: 'Here, then, is one aspect in which the fall of the western empire did indeed directly affect peasants: in the desuetude of laws that tied the legally freed to the land and to the remit of specific landowners, in the interests of a (now receding) tax system; and in the weakening of effectively coercive judicial institutions that might enforce such laws, as states slowly lost structural complexity'; see too at p. 534: 'for some peasants, for a few centuries the framework in which they lived their lives was transformed'. For a detailed response, see Banaji 2015: 143–77; see further the dedicated special issue of the *Journal of Agrarian Change* 9.1 (2009), including Sarris 2009 and an earlier version of Banaji 2015.

[119] Mathisen in his 1989 study highlights the prominence of bishops from the 'north' – mostly Lugdunensis – in the ecclesiastical cliques of southern Gaul.

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connections, Caesarius entered the clergy of Chalons at the age of seventeen[120] but two years later, around 488/9, he journeyed south, following in the footsteps of other northern aristocrats, to enter the famous island monastery of Lérins (Lerinum), situated off the coast of Cannes.[121] Lérins had been founded c. 400–10 by Honoratus, future bishop of Arles. The prestige and intellectual influence of Lérins grew swiftly in the years that followed, as neatly encapsulated in Prinz's description of the monastery as the 'nursery' of the episcopacy of southern Gaul.[122] Honoratus' own relative Hilary spent some years at Lérins before succeeding Honoratus as bishop of Arles, demonstrating the same close ties between the city and monastery that are illustrated by the career of Caesarius. However, Lérins was not the only monastic centre in Provence:[123] Marseille was also an important monastic centre. Although the chronology is not entirely clear, it seems that John Cassian arrived in Marseille c. 415 as a refugee from the theological turmoil of the east. With the support of the city's bishop, Proculus, Cassian founded two monasteries, one for men and one for women.[124] The dedicatees of the various volumes of Cassian's works of the 420s, the *Institutes* and the *Conferences*, give a sense of a developed and closely connected local ascetic network.[125]

The epitaph of bishop Hilary of Arles (d. 449) is a nice indication of the elite ascetic paradigm: he is praised in classical hexameter for his love of poverty in preference to riches and his enthusiasm for menial duties.[126] The ascetic enthusiasms of the southern Gallic church became more widely known in the course of the first half of the fifth century. In 428 Pope Celestine wrote to the bishops of Viennensis and Narbonensis expressing concerns as regards the dubious nature of some recent episcopal appointments. He worried that these were based on overvalued ascetic connections rather than more appropriate qualifications. Celestine also objected to what he saw as the inappropriate choice of ascetic dress by other bishops.[127]

[120] A substantial town on the Saône, with its own council, magistrate and bishop, then under the control of the Burgundians: *V. Caes.* 1.3. See Klingshirn 1994 for an excellent account of Caesarius' biography and career, to which my own summary is indebted.

[121] *V. Caes.* 1.4–5; what follows owes much to Leyser 2000: especially 33–43; see too Brown 2012: 411–33.

[122] Prinz 1988: 47–87.

[123] As well as the various island monasteries beside it, on the Stoaechades, today's Îles d'Hyères, where Helladius/Eladius, bishop of Arles before Honoratus, lived as a solitary ascetic.

[124] Gennadius, *De vir. ill.* 62.

[125] Cassian dedicated the *Institutes* to Castor, bishop of Apt (and founder of a monastery at Monanque), and the first set of the *Conferences* to Castor's brother, Leontius, bishop of Fréjus, as well as the monk Helladius, soon to be a bishop. The dedicatees of the second set of *Conferences* included Honoratus, as well as Eucherius, then at Lérins, later bishop of Lyon.

[126] *CIL* 12.949b/*CLE* 688. [127] Celestine, *Ep.* 4 (*PL* 50.430–1).

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A number of bishops in southern Gaul were indeed former monks, integrated into a broader ascetic as well as aristocratic network. Ties of kinship also clearly united a number of these bishops, although sometimes we can only make guesses as to their kinship.[128] Nancy Gauthier is surely right to stress that the *auctoritas* of most Gallic bishops was predicated as much upon their status as aristocrats as on their official institutional power,[129] even if the bishops of southern Gaul did not necessarily hail from the highest echelons of the aristocracy.[130] This is something I shall explore in the chapters to come.

As for Caesarius, his own time at Lérins was cut short by illness, and his *Vita* tells us that he was ordered by his abbot to leave for Arles to make his recovery.[131] He arrived in the city with the substantial advantage that the bishop Aeonius was a relative (we probably need not believe the *Vita* that he was previously unaware of this fact). He swiftly made further useful aristocratic connections in the city as well as coming under the influence of the ascetic writer, grammarian and rhetor Julianus Pomerius.[132] Soon after, Aeonius ordained his young relative into the clergy of Arles, first as a deacon, then as a priest.[133] Around 498/9 Caesarius was appointed as abbot of a suburban monastery,[134] then shortly before his own death Aeonius presented Caesarius as his preferred candidate for the episcopal seat in 402.[135] The actual process of election seems to have been contested: the promotion by the current bishop of a youthful, non-local candidate without wealth who was also a relative to boot was clearly controversial. Caesarius' *Vita* clearly tries to smooth over the account, while also seeking to maintain the traditional motif that the new bishop was humbly unwilling to take on the role,[136] but in any case, Caesarius became bishop while in

[128] Such as whether we should imagine that Honoratus, bishop of Arles, was a relative of Honoratus, bishop of Marseille.

[129] Gauthier 2000: especially 195–9.

[130] Hilary tells us that his own relative Honoratus came from a consular family: Hil. Arl. *Sermo de Vita Sancti Honorati* 4.2, and Gennadius describes Hilary himself as *genere clarus: De vir ill.* 70. Brown 2012: 421–3 advises caution with regard to taking our laudatory sources at their word when they praise the 'nobility' of their ascetic and episcopal subjects.

[131] The *Vita* tells us that within a few years of his arrival he had made himself ill through strict ascetic practices; that is, following a regime that went beyond the monastery's traditions: *V. Caes.* 1.7.

[132] *V. Caes.* 1.8–10; on Pomerius, see Leyser 2000: 65–80.

[133] *V. Caes.* 1.11, which also required the releasing of Caesarius from his obligations to Lérins.

[134] The monastery is described as *in suburbana insula civitatis* (*V. Caes.* 1.12), possibly to be linked with 'L'île de Cappe' outside Arles; its date and founder are unknown: see discussion by M. Heijmans in Delage 2010: 314–15.

[135] *V. Caes.* 1.12–13.

[136] The existence of an intermediary bishop, Johannes, between Aeonius and Caesarius, as in the earliest copy of the ecclesiastical *fasti* of Arles, has been doubted but there was a rather lengthy gap of

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his early thirties with the support of the Visigothic administration, as we have seen.[137]

Caesarius took on the by now familiar mantle of a monk-bishop, organizing a number of the clergy of the cathedral of Arles in an ascetic community, while he founded a female monastery a few years later.[138] Like his predecessors before him, he sought to assert the precedence of Arles over local churches, even in the face of often robust opposition.[139] We have already seen his political difficulties in the years 504/5 and 507/8. And again in the aftermath of the military attacks on Arles controversy arose when Caesarius took the decision to use church property in order to ransom captives.[140] Unhappiness over his use of funds raised from the property of the church to protect his female monastery most likely lay behind another arrest, which led to his being sent to Ravenna in 513,[141] although he was set free by Theoderic. Caesarius then travelled to Rome where Pope Symmachus awarded him the title of papal *vicarius* of Gaul;[142] he thus returned to Arles with a greatly strengthened position.

We continue to see how the fluctuating political circumstances of the region affected Caesarius' own position, as well as the broader power structures of the regional church. The extension of Ostrogothic tendency after 523 had the effect of consolidating and unifying the area under Caesarius' jurisdiction, while reduction of the same territory after the death of Theoderic in 526 likewise involved a shrinkage of his province. At perhaps the high point of his regional influence Caesarius presided over a succession of councils: at Arles (524), Carpentras (527), Orange (529) and Vaison (also 529), councils which passed a series of ecclesiastical reforms as well as making important theological decisions. However, Caesarius' authority seems to have been waning in the 530s, as most visibly revealed when decisions made in 535 by Pope Agapitus conspicuously failed to go his way.[143] The Frankish takeover in 536/7 constituted a further blow to Caesarius' position in that he was just now one of

four months between the death of Aeonius and Caesarius' consecration: see the useful discussion with references in Delage 2010: 50–2.

[137] *V. Caes.* 1.14; see Klingshirn 1994: 82–7.

[138] *V. Caes.* 1.15, 1.28; the female monastery officially opened in 512; see Klingshirn 1994: 88–93, 104–6.

[139] This is one of the key themes of Mathisen 1989.

[140] *V. Caes.* 1.32–3, as many other bishops had done before him; the most famous example Caesarius was able to call upon was that of Ambrose, as in *De officiis ministrorum* 2.136–43; an account of Ambrose's actions is given by Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 4.25.

[141] *V. Caes.* 1.36. [142] *V. Caes.* 1.42; Caes. *Ep.* 7b.

[143] The pope not only allowed an appeal by the well-connected Bishop Contumeliosus of Riez against the sentence of penance given by Caesarius and his colleagues at Marseille in 533 but also decreed that Caesarius could not alienate church property on behalf of the 'poor': Caes. *Epp.* 15–16.

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a number of metropolitan bishops within the Frankish church. He did not attend the Frankish Council of Orléans in 541, although most of the bishops from Provence did, but was certainly increasingly frail by this time and died a year later in 542.[144]

When Caesarius died at the age of seventy-two, he was buried in the basilica of the women's monastery he had founded and which he had fought so hard to protect. His sanctity was swiftly promoted by the preservation of his belongings as relics at the monastery and the composition of a *Vita* by his former colleagues.[145] As has been shown, Caesarius' trajectory fits the broader pattern of the most prominent bishops of Arles before him: a pugnacious aristocrat of a strongly ascetic bent who was determined to assert the primacy of the church of Arles over the region. He remains distinctive, perhaps, in the number of governing regimes with which he had to come to terms. He certainly remains distinctive in terms of his corpus of sermons, exceptional in both nature and extent, as we shall see.[146] The fundamentally ascetic vision he held of his pastoral role cannot be underestimated as a defining framework for his preaching and his agenda,[147] as well as for the broader theme of 'christianization'. This framework is all-important for how we read our historical sources, and it is to questions of methodology that I shall now turn.

Sources and Methods

This book focuses on southern Gaul in large part due to the richness of the evidence available. Firstly, this includes the evidence from material culture: detailed archaeological studies enable us to see an unusually granular picture of the region and of the late antique countryside in particular.[148] Chapter 2 focuses on cities in detail (especially the best known and most important, Arles and Marseille), while Chapter 3 looks at the countryside. These chapters together provide the all-important context that is required in order to write an account of a popular culture that is properly *embedded* in the late antique society and economy. Making use of accounts of

[144] *V. Caes.* 2.46.

[145] *V. Caes.* 1. Prol; again Caesarius' case follows that of his predecessors, as his *Vita* follows those of Honoratus and Hilary.

[146] He was not, of course, the only bishop whose sermons were collected, as will discussed in Chapter 4, but note the collections of Faustus of Riez (*Epistulae et sermones*, edited by A. Engelbrecht, *CSEL* 21) and Valerian of Cimiez (*Homiliae PL* 52.691C–756D).

[147] A point made very strongly by Leyser 2000: 81–100.

[148] A full Bibliography appears at the end of the book, but the multi-volume *Carte archéologique de la Gaule* is the essential starting-point for detailed research.

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archaeological survey, excavation and synthesis, these chapters provide as full an analysis as possible of these contexts. In the cities, where the archaeological picture is often challenging, I shall make use of the more extensive literary and (limited) epigraphic material to help build up a picture of developments in the economy, in occupational organization, in social relations and in urban topography, including the religious landscape. In the countryside I shall consider changes in settlement patterns, social organization, occupations and religious landscape, as well as the changing environment more generally.

Nonetheless, it is the literary evidence that lies at the heart of much of the analysis. There is a rich textual dossier for southern Gaul in late antiquity. An important caveat immediately arises: this material represents, almost exclusively, the literary production of the late antique church. The texts include conciliar documents, hagiography and letters, but above all sermons. Using this material raises substantial methodological challenges. A range of largely interrelated problems arise, including particular problems relating to the corpus of sermons of Caesarius of Arles, which will be dealt with in Chapter 4. The question of authorship is part of a broader problem regarding the large array of late antique and (especially) early medieval ecclesiastical texts from Gaul, where mutual interdependence is sharply apparent. Whether prescriptive, proscriptive or purportedly descriptive, this material, as is well known, cannot in any way be regarded as giving a *transparent* view of the activities and beliefs of our objects of study.

So how far can we extrapolate actual practices and beliefs from ecclesiastical texts? Scholarly opinion here is predictably divided as to how far this repetitive material constitutes any kind of reliable representation of lay religion and culture. For instance, on the basis of careful source criticism, Dieter Harmening influentially argued that repeated citations of topoi across multiple ecclesiastical 'sources' demonstrate not continuity of 'pagan' practices but instead continuity in clerical constructions of 'paganism'.[149] Clerical texts, according to this reading, are therefore pretty much worthless for actually telling us anything about 'real' practices or beliefs – and thereby much of popular culture. While many scholars find this approach simply too pessimistic,[150] we do need to have methodological clarity, including a firm basis for deciding which

[149] Harmening 1979.

[150] For example, Gurevich 1988 is much more optimistic; Filotas 2005 is cautiously optimistic and provides a useful summary of the debate at 2–7, 45–51; Hen 1995: 154–206 is cautious.

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elements in a given historical description represent actual historical praxes. Rudi Künzel, in a helpful essay, provides a series of criteria for finding such 'authentic' elements among the morass of stereotypes – such as finding a new element in an otherwise stereotyped list, or the use of a 'vulgar' term in the midst of a Latin text, or even the presence of clear precision.[151]

It seems to me that neither of the crudest options – that is, accepting clerical accounts of the 'popular' as basically reliable or stating that these accounts are useless and that we can know nothing of the 'popular' – are tenable. Hence I have every sympathy with the approach taken by Lisa Bailey in her book on the laity in Gaul. Bailey states: 'I am fundamentally optimistic, I argue that we can know something about the laity, and that, given their importance, we should make the most of everything we have.' Bailey is right: there is indeed a need 'to move beyond an awareness of our evidential problems' and to refuse 'to let these reduce us to silence'.[152] Therefore we must do what we can to make the most of our clerical sources. As well as Künzel's suggestions for identifying 'genuine' elements among clerical stereotypes and distortions, there are other options available. These, then, are the guiding principles that I shall employ in my detailed analysis in Chapters 4 to 6 in order to provide the fullest possible interpretation:

i. Analysis of practices, beliefs and 'culture' should be made with social, economic and local contexts in mind.
ii. In order to aid interpretation, comparative material – from different historical periods and locations – should be employed.
iii. Relevant theoretical frameworks can be used to provide helpful interpretative tools.

These methodological principles are not controversial or novel: rather, they represent a version of the standard 'toolkit' of any historian of premodern popular culture. Take, for instance, Peter Burke's hugely influential book, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*. Burke is clear that using an 'oblique' approach – that is, using elite records to write the history of non-elite culture – is not in itself sufficient. Burke therefore, following Marc Bloch, counsels the use of the *regressive method*: reading history *backwards* from later periods.[153] Next he advises the use of the comparative method, and methodologies from other disciplines, especially social

[151] Künzel 1992: especially 1060–1. [152] Bailey 2016: 4.
[153] Burke 2009: 120–30; compare Bloch 1966.

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anthropology. Burke writes: 'Since the popular culture of early modern Europe is so elusive, it has to be approached in a roundabout manner, recovered by indirect means, and interpreted by a series of analogies.'[154] This is even more true for late antiquity.

In the chapters that follow I take it for granted that ecclesiastical texts are, above all, revealing of *ecclesiastical and pastoral* priorities and strategies, at times intersecting with secular needs and trends, as we shall see. These priorities and strategies are of course important in their own right – such as the fundamentally ascetic framework of Caesarius – and in this way ecclesiastical discourse will form the focus of Chapter 4 in particular. However, reading 'against the grain' to uncover the activities of Caesarius' congregations as *they* would have understood them is, of course, a harder task. One way of doing this, as already laid out, is to look at 'religious' and 'cultural' behaviour in its full social and economic context, enabling an understanding of religious and cultural change as part of broader transformations in our period. Making use of theoretical and comparative approaches is another important method when faced with an intransigent source base. For instance, in Chapter 5 I make use of insights from the contemporary study of 'lived religion' to help elucidate various late antique behaviours and beliefs. In Chapter 6 my study of another aspect of popular culture, ritual revelry in the shape of the Kalends of January, is in part shaped through the substantial body of work of historians working in other periods, as well as that of anthropologists and sociologists. (As noted above, however, I shall also take care to avoid giving an account which is too uncritically full of popular culture 'clichés'.)

This book is focused on a specific region and my approach sees local context as absolutely central to its analysis. As I shall show, especially in the next two chapters, not just regionality but *micro*-regionality are key in the writing of the social, economic and cultural history of late antiquity.[155] Nonetheless, my analysis, and indeed interpretation, will not always focus entirely within the strict geographical or even chronological boundaries of the book's title. While a close analysis of the specific contingencies of a situation or of distinctive (for instance) geographical and environmental contexts will be employed as crucial components of interpretation, it would be foolish always to limit the investigation in this

[154] Burke 2009: 130; see, too, influenced by Burke in this way, Forsdyke 2012: especially 4–6.

[155] The importance of micro-regionality as a frame of analysis is central to the highly influential Horden and Purcell 2000; while they see it as a central feature of the Mediterranean, in Wickham 2005 micro-regionality is to be related to the post-Roman world specifically.

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way. My analysis of the popular culture of southern Gaul in late antiquity therefore:

i. understands it as closely grounded within the specific environment, which was undergoing contemporary social and economic as well as political transformations during this period
ii. uses complementary and comparative material to aid its interpretation.

With this in mind, in the final section of this chapter, I shall turn to two key themes that lie at the heart of the interpretation to come.

Key Themes in Cultural Change: 'Christianization' and 'Democratization'

That late antiquity saw massive cultural change in religious terms, once described as 'conversion',[156] now more commonly as 'christianization', is today taken as a given.[157] The extent and nature of these processes of course remain live areas of discussion, as does the way in which we conceptualize 'christianization' itself. In a typically thoughtful discussion, Peter Brown outlines the long tradition of seeing christianization as a 'problem'.[158] He cites a striking description of christianization given by Robin Lane Fox as a 'state which is always receding, like full employment or a garden without weeds'.[159] Indeed, William Klingshirn begins his excellent book on Caesarius thus: 'Christianization in the late Roman and early medieval west was a process of slow, incomplete, inconsistent, and sometimes reversible social and religious change.'

Klingshirn's view of christianization is all-encompassing: 'It required . . . the widespread adoption of a Christian self-identity and a Christian system of values, practices, and beliefs.' Most, importantly, however, Klingshirn argues that we should not understand it as a purely top-down process: 'Unlike baptism or "conversion", which could be imposed from above, the social and religious changes required by christianization could not be put into effect without the consent and participation of local populations. The process of christianization was therefore reciprocal.'[160] Klingshirn's collaborative version of 'christianization' is at first glance highly congenial to the aims of my own project. However, caution is

[156] This term, once so current, has been out of favour for some time: see MacMullen 1984: especially 3–5, where he rejects the approach of A. D. Nock so famously laid out in Nock 1933.
[157] See Ristuccia 2018 for an interesting historiographical critique of 'christianization' models.
[158] Brown 1995. [159] Lane Fox 1986: 21; cited at Brown 1995: 7. [160] Klingshirn 1994: 1.

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required: this christianization remains of course an etic definition and, as Klingshirn notes, the forms of christianization adopted by communities were often quite different from, indeed at odds with, those preferred by the official church.[161] In what follows I shall be considering 'christianization' in various different ways as appropriate: for instance, as a top-down process employed by the church authorities, as a strategy of local landowners and other elites and as a collaborative construction of communities and individuals.[162] As should already be clear, the fact remains that christianization *on its own* is not sufficient as an explanatory force. Here we might make a comparison with another problematic explanatory concept, that of 'romanization': as recent scholarship has clearly demonstrated, top-down, monolithic interpretations of cultural change are insufficient.

Next, a second concept or process of prime importance to this study is that of the 'democratization of culture'. This influential concept was first mooted by Santo Mazzarino as long ago as 1960.[163] Mazzarino's concept of 'democratization' represented a clear alternative to that of decline: 'democratization' was a positive and creative movement, linked to empire-wide trends of decentralization and pluralism, rather than a process of decay. The concept implies political, social and cultural change, and entails an inherently pluralistic understanding of (late antique) culture.[164] Mazzarino located this democratization in the third century but more recently the concept has been deployed some way beyond this period, as a framework for examining cultural change across late antiquity; Jean-Michel Carrié indeed argues that we should move this transformation forward to as late as the sixth to seventh centuries.[165]

The notion of 'democratization of culture' can of course be understood in a number of ways, but at base we can envision two primary forms of the process; that is, moving 'bottom up' and 'top down'. According to the former model, we can envisage a process whereby the cultural forms previously shared by the lower classes moved *upwards*, to be shared by the whole of society and culture – or, to put it in the more dramatic form imagined by Ramsay MacMullen, whereby the cultural ideals of the

[161] Klingshirn 1994: 1.
[162] For a discussion of 'lived religion' and other relevant approaches, see Chapter 5.
[163] Mazzarino 1960.
[164] Compare Bianchi Bandinelli's influential analysis of the development of Roman art: for example, Bianchi Bandinelli 1967, 1970.
[165] A special issue of the journal *Antiquité Tardive* (volume 9) was dedicated to the theme: see above all Carrié 2002a, which discusses and critiques various versions of the paradigm.

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subaltern classes 'triumphed' over elite culture and values.[166] This represents very clearly a schema of 'democratization-catastrophe', as described by Carrié, with its vision of 'a proletarisation of the general level of artistic, intellectual and cultural performance'.[167] An alternative model, by contrast, imagines a *top-down* process, whereby institutions, primarily the church, deliberately produced cultural forms – notably sermons – that were accessible to a wider audience, thereby playing a central role in an attempt to construct a specifically Christian popular culture. We shall look in detail at the preaching of Caesarius of Arles in this light: indeed building on the work of Aron Gurevich, who saw Caesarius' prose as constituting a new stage in the history of culture.[168] Of course, these two options – top down and bottom up – are not, in fact, exclusive: what we will be looking at is in fact the interaction of cultural and social forces and forms in late antiquity, and, as discussed earlier, I share with Stuart Hall the notion that popular culture is constituted at precisely this intersection.

The cultural transformations of late antiquity can be understood as representing both democratization and christianization, with interaction between these two modes being central to my analysis in the chapters that follow. It is clear that the rise of Christianity brought about new forms of contact between different social and cultural levels.[169] What interest, after all, would an aristocrat like Caesarius of Arles have had in the behaviour and wellbeing of the lower classes of Arles and its territory had he lived during the high empire? What need, indeed, would an aristocrat have had to communicate with the lower classes at all, except directly in their capacity as owner of land, property and slaves and landlord of tenants? We shall see Caesarius taking a great interest in popular culture – an interest which was scarcely benign. We shall see him, like many of his colleagues across the Mediterranean world, attempting to produce a new, christianized, version of popular culture – for instance, importing new Christian forms of song to provide alternatives to despised secular versions (Chapter 4). We shall also see the church trying to shut down highly resilient and creative forms of popular culture celebration, most notably in the case of the Kalends of January (Chapter 6). Finally, largely reading against the grain, I shall examine these cultural forms as

[166] MacMullen 2003 responds to the *Antiquité Tardive* volume in rather Gibbonian terms; he writes, for instance, of the appearance of dragons in elite texts as 'a triumph for the traditions of The More Lowly – at which the likes of Pliny would have shaken their heads' (p. 476).

[167] 'une prolétarisation du niveau général de performance artistique, intellectuelle et culturelle': Carrié 2002a: 33.

[168] Gurevich 1988: 13–15. [169] As indeed noted by Carrié 2002a: 43.

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themselves evidence for, variously, collaboration, creativity and resistance. At the same time, we shall see a struggle for both social and cultural control, on behalf of the church, using a range of strategies. In these ways the chapters that follow will provide a cultural history that is grounded in its social and economic context and founded on key theoretical and thematic parameters.

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