qualifying the oral/literate dichotomy out of existence, and with it, original, immediately understandable song. In between, Henrichs, Gagarin, and Cohen are sound (though Cohen muddles Isaios 4.2–8) and complementary; each specifies crucial functions for orality in the context of literate practices. Thomas is excellent on *epideixis*, offering a new perspective on a turning-point in Hellenic culture. Lloyd's description of Euclidean proof as 'the ultimate weapon in Greek battles of persuasion' (p. 137) is a bombshell which contrasts with Thomas's notion of an epideictic style—first-person, agonistic, and demonstrative—while resonating with Yunis's 'hidden author'.

Such correspondences and echoes, however, do not unify the volume or its approaches. Yunis proposes this volume as a scaled-down, evidence-based alternative to E. A. Havelock's use of literacy as an explanation for global shifts in consciousness, culture, and social organization. But the formula—to gauge the effect of writing on cultural practices—is not powerful enough to constitute the new direction the volume promises. Ford, Gagarin, and Thomas, whose cases for the effect of writing on the reception of poetry, law, and the legal process and the publication of intellectual activity are plausible, constitute the argumentative core of the book. Their pieces are extracts and elaborations of work they have done over the years. Cohen's piece is spot-on, but synchronic. Henrichs's and Kahn's contributions seem to have been assigned to them for the conference and/or volume. Kahn labors heroically against the gradient of too little evidence to sustain a convincing argument; Henrichs against too much. Lloyd's contribution is in the *mentalités* tradition and does not treat the effects of written practices. Hunter's piece is brilliant; but it is an essay in rhetorical theory. The editor intends the volume to 'strike the reader as a seamless, integrated, multifaceted inquiry into the subject' (p. vii), but the seams are too apparent and the facets too many to have the intended effect.

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ROMAN POPULAR CULTURE

N. HORSFALL: *The Culture of the Roman Plebs*. Pp. 176. London: Duckworth, 2003. Paper, £12.99. ISBN: 0-7156-3238-8.

It can scarcely be doubted that any civilization, if true to that definition, Roman or otherwise, lacked a culture. However, the culture of the whole community is rarely of much interest to historians more concerned about constitutions, public and political life, warfare and military events. It was Moses Finley who coined the title 'The Silent Women of Rome' (in *Aspects of Antiquity* [London, 1968], pp. 124–36) largely because they themselves did not write a great deal. They were never silent, of course, simply softly spoken or seldom spoken about. It was much the same with the Roman plebs. Aristocratic writers have rarely had any interest in the populace as a whole. Working class studies are a feature of the twentieth century and later. As a whole, the Romans remain silent for us because of the chance survival of sources, and the gulf between antiquity and the present is just too vast for oral tradition or transmission to play any rôle in our understanding of these people.

This volume comprises eight short chapters ('Song and Memory', 'Rules of Evidence', 'Music Returns to Rome', 'Culture without Education, Education without School', 'Fun for All', 'To Help Pass the Time', 'Hypocrisy and Evidence: The Case of

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Cicero', 'Implications') and two appendices (the previously published 'The Legionary as his Own Historian', and 'Some Inscriptions'). Endnotes, a short bibliography, and index complete the work. In it, H. is concerned about identifying, from as diverse sources as possible (pp. 20–30), the culture or, more appropriately, 'popular culture' (p. 20) of the 'Roman plebs', with plebs defined (pp. 26–7) as the general population or 'the man in the Roman street', and their culture the 'culture of the common people' (p. 57). Evidently life 'in the Subura was not a haze (not *just* a haze, perhaps) of sour wine, diceboxes and cast-aside garments' (p. 30). In sum, the objective is 'to reconstruct what the average Roman talked about in the bar or on the multi-seated latrine' (back cover).

H. progresses from definitions to sounds, for the 'Romans did in fact have an active oral culture' and 'as a people they were intensely musical' (p. 31). Indeed, there is much evidence to show that, far from being 'meek, taciturn and orderly', a 'tornado of noise' echoed from 'Subura to Palatine', but that it was not a 'confused racket' but rather the product of complex oral transmission and memorization (p. 37). If Rome was a noisy place the origins of that cacophony therefore lay in a popular culture. Not so very different from today, even if media have evolved, though some, no doubt, would argue for a decline.

Having established that Rome was probably not the sort of place where one went to find the peace and seclusion of the cloisters, H. proceeds to examine how a Roman popular culture was acquired, and 'the various activities' and influences that caused it to emerge: Greek influences (pp. 48–52), Etruscan and Oscan (pp. 53–5), philosophers, poets, pastry cooks, popular tastes (p. 59) and a reasonable level of 'seriousness' at times (p. 60). However, the lack of specific texts does lead inevitably to some repetition (see pp. 64–5), yet the view, surely correct, that the plebs enjoyed a rich cultural environment is convincing.

Roman 'popular culture', if it is considered at all, is usually regarded as consisting of contests (Colosseum), races (Circus Maximus), and pantomimes (Theatre of Marcellus and so on), but while such venues held huge numbers, not all the plebs went all the time; and, as H. shows, there was a reservoir of non-mass entertainment, from ball to board games to story-telling (pp. 75–82), to occupy their leisure hours.

More specifically, 'we must face up to' (p. 83) the evidence of Cicero, in sheer quantity far surpassing all other commentators, for culture, or lack of it, in his time (pp. 83–95). He never 'denies the *plebs* their love for *ludi* and banquets; on the other hand . . . the *plebs* have lost even their function as intelligent hearers, and since they are altogether extraneous to the topic in hand (the *de Oratore*) his pen seems to instil intellectual contempt' (p. 86), though his expressions when in public were rather more cautious, yet not lacking an appeal to some learning, if not precisely erudition.

But is popular culture so very different today? The 'formally literate' (p. 61) arguably do not read as much as they did a generation or so ago—with the notable exception perhaps of the advent of each new Harry Potter book—although, because of other and more visual media, most often associated with the computer, they are not necessarily less knowledgeable. Hence, in many respects, modern mass culture could be described as 'postmodern', as opposed to the 'pre-modern' of the Romans (p. 61). It is also a comparison worth exploiting in this context.

The index is a little erratic. Volteius Mena appears much more often in the text than is indicated (p. 176), some modern scholars warrant a place, others do not (see pp. 77 and 176), while neither M. Pupius Piso Frugi (p. 84) nor Thucydides (p. 85) will be found indexed.

'This book was not written to solve a problem or close a discussion: it has suggested

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some new evidence, some new authors to consider, and a new "line" ' (p. 96). A new and fertile line of investigation is certainly indicated here. Furthermore, one does not need to be a Roman historian (p. 8) to write a history of Rome, as H. has shown us well enough in the past, and will probably do so again in the future. Oral history and the largely oral transmission of a *corpus* of a nation 'carry a unique attraction'. The argument here is for a 'rich popular culture', yet with the caveat that the concrete evidence to support what must surely be a correct contention is lacking. Finally, the political chiefs of a state are seldom also its intellectual leaders; therefore, after all, the popular culture of the Roman plebs really was the culture of the *populus Romanus*.

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ART FOR THE MASSES

J. R. Clarke: *Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans. Visual Representation and Non-Elite Viewers in Italy, 100 B.C.–A.D. 315*. Pp. xii + 383, ills, colour pls. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2003. Cased, US$65, £42.95. ISBN: 0-520-21976-7.

The study of Roman art has traditionally focused upon the visual culture of the aristocratic élite. We teach the history of Roman sculpture through key imperial monuments, from the *Ara Pacis* to the Arch of Constantine; we date objects according to their imperially defined period—an 'Augustan' cameo, a 'Trajanic' portrait. In doing so, we marginalize a mass of artworks produced by and for a far broader cross-section of Roman society, including freeborn workers, freedmen, slaves, and foreigners. When the subject-matter and stylistic features of non-élite art have been addressed in earlier scholarship, individual details and contexts have been subordinated to grand theories of stylistic change, or subjected to a simplistic 'trickle-down' model. When studied in any detail, the art of the non-élite has been categorized in the hold-all category of 'freedman' art: too often the paintings in the House of the Vettii in Pompeii, or the funerary reliefs of 'ordinary' Romans, have been dismissed as the products of vulgar Trimalchios, trumpeting their wealth and status via an aristocratic visual language which they do not properly understand.

However, just as we might actually view Petronius' Trimalchio as a sophisticated master of illusion, so John Clarke, in this lively and stimulating book, seeks to demonstrate the originality and sophistication of a vast and varied group of objects, which are 'fresh, improvised, and anything but standard' (p. 94). Writing for a broad audience, C. places his chosen case studies firmly within their physical and social contexts, in order to explore the ways in which the non-élite constructed and communicated their identities through the commission, display, and consumption of works of art. In doing so, he provides an important corrective to 'the only viewer that modern scholarly literature has given us: an upper-class male who knows everything' (p. 12). Ancient modes of viewing were, he argues, inherently pluralistic; his use of the terms 'ordinary' and 'non-elite' is shorthand for a diverse, dynamic set of social groups who 'tend to esteem activities that the élites of the upper strata do not and . . . express this difference in their art' (p. 7).

In Part One, C. addresses the ways in which four major imperial monuments in the

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