

Urban Contexts for Popular Culture in an Age of Transformation

We shall begin with a miracle that once took place in the city of Arles in the late 420s.¹ It was early in the morning of the feast day of the martyr Genesius. A huge crowd of devotees, made up not just of city dwellers but also many others, who had flocked into the city from its surroundings, was travelling across the river Rhône, on the famous bridge of ships, towards the shrine on the western bank that commemorated the place of the saint's martyrdom. It was then that disaster struck: the sheer weight of the pressing crowds caused the bridge to break apart – a frequent occurrence, our anonymous narrator claims, rather nonchalantly. The same narrator picks out certain characters and vignettes from the procession and paints a highly decorous picture: the well-to-do had come not only decked out in their finery but also accompanied by key accoutrements and symbols of their status. They were accompanied by horses in livery; virgins had come in fine jewellery with smart hairstyles; servants not only carried heavy drinking cups for their elegant mistresses but also carried these same mistresses in litters so they did not have to walk themselves. Happily, disaster was averted when thanks to the aid of Saint Genesius (very much achieved through the prayers of the presiding bishops, Honoratus),² all the devotees were brought to safety unharmed (if wet) and were able to continue their procession to the shrine. By contrast, we will turn next to an episode in the *Life* of Honoratus' successor, Hilary (bishop from 429/30 to 449), which replaces decorous urban harmony with urban conflict. This is a tale in

¹ *Sermo seu narratio de miraculo sancti Genesii martyris Arelatensis*; see further for text, translation and discussion: David Lambert, *Cult of Saints*, E05724 – <http://clsia.history.ox.ac.uk/record.php?recid=E05724>. The story is retold in a later and briefer account by Gregory of Tours (*Glor. mart.* 68) and elsewhere, in more detail, in a slightly later *Passio s. Genesii* (CSEL 29: 426–8).

² Although Gregory of Tours does not mention even the presence of the bishop, and gives all the credit to the martyr: Greg. Tur. *Glor. mart.* 68.

which an angry crowd confronts the bishop and receives divine punishment in recompense:

For since a crowd of people had been vainly roused to come to him, ill-advised and misguided [*inaniter excitata popularum turba et inconsueta deceptaque venisset*], and had disturbed his mind [*eiusque animum concitasset*], the greater part of the city was later consumed by a terrible fire, sent from on high. Those very people who suffered no small losses cried out in their own voices that the fire had come to avenge him, afterwards falling mournfully onto their knees and begging for mercy.³

The first story presents a very much idealized vision of the city of Arles, a neatly sanctified version of what Ausonius addressed as ‘*duplex* [double] *Arelas*’.⁴ It depicts the annual procession across the city, and across the river, from the site of Genesius’ tomb in the large cemetery at Alyscamps to the actual site of the martyrdom, in the more industrial and commercial area of Trinquetaille (see Map 3). And yet this story about late antique Arles is incongruous in several ways. Our literary record does not generally have very much to say about the cult of martyrs in Arles – indeed, the great miracle attributed here to Honoratus does not even appear in the sermon celebrating his life, which was composed by Hilary, his successor.⁵ Meanwhile, the archaeological evidence has not yet revealed the kind of lavish *domus* that would have housed the litter-travelling *matronae*. The archaeological record indeed suggests that a number of the areas traversed by the procession would likely have been in a state of disrepair or even abandonment at this time. The second story likewise raises a number of questions – and we shall return to it later in the chapter – but it does certainly suggest a much more conflictual picture of life in Arles than that given by the first, and one where the people of the city were far from being united behind their bishop. The satisfaction the author of Hilary’s *Vita* takes in the fire that destroyed a large part of the city strikes a rather odd and unpleasant note. The archaeological record does in fact bear witness to a number of instances of destruction by fire at various times that cannot be firmly linked with any known episodes in the historical record. The city of Arles, along with the other cities of southern Gaul, was undergoing substantial change in this period, and we will come across a number of puzzles and contradictions in our attempts to understand our urban landscapes as locations for popular culture.

³ *V. Hil.* 18. ⁴ As pointed out by Bailey 2016: 81, citing *Eus. Gall.* 56.6.

⁵ The so-called *Sermo sancti Hilarii de vita sancti Honorati*; see Bailey 2003 and Krüger 2002 on the wider importance of local saints in the region.

In what follows I shall focus in large part on Arles: a city of great importance in late antiquity, as we have already seen, the home of Caesarius as well as Honoratus and Hilary, and the city for which we have the best opportunity to combine textual and archaeological evidence to build up a more comprehensive picture. I shall also look at Marseille, for which recent archaeological work provides a good sense of the economic transformations of the period. The cities of Aix, Nîmes and Narbonne in turn also provide instructive examples of changes in topography and infrastructure. However, I shall also explore urban life as it appears through the prism of the literary and ecclesiastical texts. In this way in this chapter we can build as full a picture as possible of the lived culture and environment of urban dwellers as well as of the broader developments of this period.

There are already a good number of excellent syntheses dealing with the 'transformation' of the cities of southern Gaul in late antiquity, many of which focus largely on topographical changes, and specifically the 'christianization' of the urban landscape.⁶ I shall seek to go beyond this well-trodden approach in order to make an inquiry into the cultural and social transformations of the period that considers more than changes in architecture and even infrastructure, and looks beyond the perspective of classical urbanism. In particular, I will seek to examine the cities of south-eastern Gaul as far as possible from the perspective of the non-elite urban dweller, challenging as this is. Ultimately, what I aiming to do here, in line with my approach which understands popular culture as fundamentally embedded, is to establish the spaces in which popular culture was constructed and examine the social and economic relations in which it took its form, as well as the dominant ideological structure. As this was a period of fundamental change, I shall look to see how far these various transformations impacted the broader framework itself.

In what follows I shall first introduce the general built and urban environment, before turning to look in more detail at the inhabitants of the city in terms of occupation, status and identity. Next I shall turn to the impact of the church upon the city, social as much as topographical; urban social relations will come to the fore, forming the basis for the final discussion of performance, leisure and the transformation of urban culture more generally. In the previous chapter I highlighted some key features of popular culture, as revealed in the evidence from Pompeii and Aphrodisias, and we shall see elements of both continuity and change in what follows.

⁶ For example, Beaujard 2006; Guyon 2006, 2013; Loseby 2006.

The Urban Environment

At the start of our period, at the turn of the fifth century, Arles was enjoying its greatest period of glory. The city's importance as an imperial residence had been established under Constantine and his family, while its prestige grew further still at the turn of the century with the transfer of the Prefecture of the Gauls from Trier, as we saw in the previous chapter. The city's ecclesiastical status likewise rose to a new pre-eminence at this time with the granting of metropolitan status in place of Vienne.⁷ Nonetheless, this stability would not last: the city was besieged in 425, 430 and 458 by the Visigoths, who captured it again in 473, and consolidated their control in 475/6. These recurrent sieges nonetheless demonstrate the continuing importance of the city. The first half of the sixth century also saw turbulent and traumatic periods: Arles was besieged by the Franks in 507–8, eventually coming under Ostrogothic control, under which a period of calm ensured, but this situation was not to last: the city was taken by the Franks in 536/7. While these events cannot be traced as such in the archaeological record, it is unsurprising that the urban fabric underwent some substantial changes during this period. Thanks to detailed and nuanced archaeological attention – if not extensive excavation – the broad lines of its urbanistic trajectory in our period have become progressively clearer in recent years.⁸

What was the built environment of Arles like in late antiquity (see Maps 3 and 4)? In common with other cities in the region, its urban fabric had suffered during the third century, with particular damage to suburban areas.⁹ The fourth century, however, had been a time of investment in public building under the patronage of both visiting and resident emperors. The northern 'Constantinian' baths and a new gallery at the forum, but also a civic basilica and quite possibly too a triumphal arch and obelisk, all date from this time.¹⁰ Presumably a number of new administrative, residential and ceremonial buildings were also constructed during the same period, such as the so-called Palais de la Trouille.¹¹ Ecclesiastical building probably also began in the course of the fourth century, although there is no surviving archaeological evidence of fourth-century churches.

⁷ Although this was by no means a smooth or uncontested development.

⁸ See Février 1978a; Heijmans 2004; Rothé and Heijmans 2008; Loseby 1996, 2007.

⁹ For instance, excavation has revealed substantial fire damage in the commercial and artisanal district of Trinquetaille; see on the third century Heijmans 2004: 23–34.

¹⁰ See Heijmans 2004: 132–242 on the late antique public building programmes. Note that Loseby 2007 argues that Heijmans underestimates the Constantinian impact on Arles.

¹¹ See Heijmans 1998.

The marvellous collection of sarcophagi on display in the archaeological museum in Arles testifies to the prosperity of the city's elites at this time.¹²

In the course of the fifth century, however, we can see a clear change in urbanistic focus. It was probably at this time (though conclusive archaeological evidence is still lacking) that a new reduced wall circuit was built, which was maintained until at least the end of the sixth century.¹³ Meanwhile, archaeological evidence clearly indicates the spoliation of traditional prestige public monuments: the forum, theatre and amphitheatre. (As we shall see later, the circus remained in use.) Puzzles regarding this development or indeed degradation of public monumental areas at this time remain, notably in the case of the forum. Archaeological evidence shows that the forum paving was already beginning to be dismantled in the first half of the fifth century,¹⁴ and that the space was being taken over in part by new types of construction, including shops. The walls of these new constructions re-used *spolia* from the portico of the forum, while at the same time galleries of the forum cryptoporticus were being re-used as dumps and depots, but also likely as cellars and even housing.¹⁵ Even so, we cannot entirely rule out the possibility that the forum was still in use in some form as a public civic space. In an intriguing letter, Sidonius Apollinaris describes a visit to the forum of Arles in spring 461, where nervous individuals hid behind the statues and columns in order to avoid him.¹⁶ This passage has long puzzled scholars and presents several different options, none conclusive. One is that this passage refers to an *alternative* forum, most likely constructed as part of the Constantinian building programme.¹⁷ If not, Sidonius' account could suggest that even if the forum and its associated buildings look 'different' to us, they could still be used as part of everyday civic life by the inhabitants of late antique Arles, who did not necessarily have an awareness of themselves as living in a 'late antique' city. There is of course another option altogether: that the whole

¹² On which see Février 1978b.

¹³ See Heijmans 2004: 95–6; Rothé and Heijmans 2008: 252–5. The dating of this wall circuit has been much debated; see, for example, Février 1983: 32; see Heijmans 2020 on the current state of research and debate on the construction of city walls in southern Gaul in late antiquity.

¹⁴ Dismantling of the forum paving began while new shops were built using architectural elements from the forum portico and the galleries were occupied by cellars or habitations: see Sintès 1994: 151–2; Heijmans 2004: 367–70; as well as Rothé and Heijmans 2008: 359–60.

¹⁵ See Rothé and Heijmans 2008: 67* = pp. 459–70.

¹⁶ *in forum ex more descendo. quod ubi visum est, ilico expavit, ut ait ille, nil fortiter ausa seditio, alii tamen mihi plus quam deceret ad genua provolvi; alii, ne salutarer, fugere post statuas, oculi post columnas; alii tristes vultuosique iunctis mihi lateribus incedere*, Sid. Apoll. Ep. 1.11.7; see Heijmans 2004: 79–80.

¹⁷ As suggested by Loseby 1996: 55, imagining this new forum as built to the south of the Constantinian baths.

episode is largely fictional, one of a number of classically inspired vignettes that make Sidonius a lively read but a highly problematic witness to the social and cultural history of late antique Gaul. The passage does nonetheless clearly indicate the strength of the traditional ideological associations of the 'forum' for aristocrats like Sidonius. This is indicative of a period where ideas and ideals of the city were in transition, alongside new patterns of use and spoliation; ecclesiastical building, meanwhile, continued apace, as we shall see.

Turning from public to private, excavation has so far failed to uncover the quantity of luxurious city housing one might expect, given the other evidence for the prosperity of the fourth-century city in particular. Over the last thirty years, however, excavations have uncovered traces of late antique housing, including the *domus* type but also what is often (often not very helpfully) described as 'parasitical' construction.¹⁸ This latter type includes the substantial dwellings built into the structures of the circus, beginning in the first decade of the fifth century, and abandoned along with the circus itself in the middle of the sixth.¹⁹ Marc Heijmans has suggested that some of this accommodation was in fact arranged by the authorities in order to ease pressure on housing; given the systematic nature of the construction, this seems the most likely scenario.²⁰ Describing such constructions as 'parasitical', or this occupation as 'squatting', would therefore clearly be wrong; the persistence of such terms in scholarship is evidence of the continued top-down and indeed elitist assumptions of traditional approaches to late antique urbanism. Overall, our knowledge of the nature of housing in late antique Arles remains, sadly, hazy at best. In future, scholars could perhaps deploy existing archaeological evidence to consider living conditions more systematically, given the will. For instance, examination of the faunal remains found in domestic sites, including the build-up of seashells, illustrates how stench, vermin and small carnivores would have abounded in areas which were being cleaned less and less often, as part of a degradation of the urban environment.²¹ We can be sure that urban living conditions in sixth-century Arles would have been different from those in the city's Constantinian heyday, for all members of society, but we need more clarity about the specific nature of the changes rather

¹⁸ See Heijmans 2004: 345–87. ¹⁹ See Rothé and Heijmans 2008: 427–9; Sintès 1994: 184–92.

²⁰ Heijmans 2004: 379.

²¹ This point is made by Démians d'Archimbaud 1994: 195 with reference to seashells on the floors at Saint-Blaise, citing further the work of Jourdan on the area of the Bourse in Marseille (Jourdan 1976: 302–3 *non vidi*).

than relying on vague notions of either ‘decline’ or, more positively, ‘transformation’.

Turning to the economic trajectory of Arles in late antiquity, its importance during the fourth and (at least the first half of the) fifth centuries is suggested by our textual sources, all of which focus on the importance of the city as a river port (with access to the sea via Fos) (see Map 2). The anonymous *Expositio totius mundi et gentium* (c. 360) describes ‘Arles, which takes in goods from the whole world and supplies them to [Trier]’.²² Ausonius’ famous and flattering description of ‘*duplex Arelas*’ in his *Ordo urbium nobilium*, written in the 380s, describes the well-known bridge of boats across the Rhône, but the only other feature of the city he describes, in a similar vein to the *Expositio*, is its role in importing merchandise from across the Roman world and distributing it across Gaul.²³ The continuing prominence of the port and the scale of its commercial activity into the fifth century is highlighted by Honorius’ constitution of 418²⁴ but it is difficult to match the archaeological evidence with these accounts.²⁵ As we shall see, we can only speculate, for instance, regarding the role of small-scale productive activity in the urban landscape of the kind that has been identified in the towns of North Africa at this time,²⁶ and which clearly provided an important context for popular culture.

An interesting contrast is provided by the case of Marseille, a city that actually experienced economic growth in our period, enjoying the longest ‘late antiquity’ of any city in Gaul.²⁷ Indeed, Marseille is a city whose history is much better understood for late antiquity and the early middle ages than during the earlier Roman period.²⁸ Intramural occupation continued in the fifth and sixth centuries, while there was also development outside the walls. The substantial modern excavations of the city, notably in the port area, have shown the importance of Marseille as both a centre for manufacturing (notably of ceramics, discussed further later) and as an

²² *similiter autem habet alteram civitatem in omnibus ei adiuvantem, quae est super mare, quam dicunt Arelatum; quae ab omni mundo negotia accipiens praedictae civitati emittit, Expositio totius mundi et gentium* 58 (ed. and trans. J. Rougé, Paris, 1966).

²³ *duplex Arelate*, Auson. *Ord. nob. urb.* 10.1.

²⁴ *Tanta enim loci opportunitas, tanta est copia commerciorum, tanta illic frequentia comeantium, ut quidquid usquam nascitur, illic commodius distrahatur . . . quidquid enim dives Oriens, quidquid odoratus Arabs, quidquid delicatus Assyrius, quod Africa fertilis, quod speciosa Hispania, quod fortes Gallia potest habere praeclarum, ita illic adfatim exuberat, quasi ibi nascantur omnia, quae ubique constat esse magnifica, MGH Ep.* 3: 14.

²⁵ See here Loseby 1996: 46–9. ²⁶ See here Wilson 2002 and Leone 2003.

²⁷ Loseby 1992: 170; see in general Rothé and Tréziny 2005.

²⁸ As pointed out by Jean Guyon: Rothé and Tréziny 2005: 225.

emporium for exchange. Marseille benefited from its location and enjoyed a privileged position in a continuing Mediterranean-wide network exchange until at least the end of the sixth century.²⁹ Like Arles, Marseille for a long time got off relatively lightly among the political and military upheavals of the period, and became something of a hub for refugee intellectuals – though the construction of a new ‘*avant-mur*’ around 470 does show (unsurprising) concerns for security at this time.³⁰ The prosperity of the city in the fifth century is further demonstrated through a substantial programme of church building, as will be discussed later.

What about elsewhere in the region (see Map 2)? The city of Narbonne had already undergone a substantial contraction of its intramural territory during the third century.³¹ Nîmes saw ‘profound’ transformations in its urban topography during the fifth century; large areas were abandoned and public buildings destroyed. Much of its late antique urban fabric still remains obscure, however, including the early cathedral and suburban churches.³² In the case of Aix, it is clear that some areas had suffered from decline and abandonment in the third century, while recent work is beginning to give a clearer picture of the late antique period. The theatre, as with entertainment buildings elsewhere, was reoccupied and despoiled.³³ Around 500 a big new episcopal complex was built in the main monumental centre on the site of a large public building.³⁴ As for smaller urban agglomerations in Provence (see Map 5), several of them are now best known for their surviving ecclesiastical buildings, such as Riez and Fréjus,³⁵ but elsewhere we know little in terms of urbanism.

²⁹ Marseille was able to maintain its position through dual engagement with the late antique Mediterranean world, on the one hand, and the more markedly ‘medieval’ system of Frankish Gaul on the other. The fall of the western Roman empire led directly to its becoming an important economic centre; contraction becomes clear in the seventh century, with obscurity descending at the advent of the eighth century; see Loseby 1992, 1998, 2000, 2005.

³⁰ Again, Rothé and Tréziny 2005: 225.

³¹ See Riess 2013: 123–4; the only surviving ecclesiastical remains from Narbonne are from the suburbs: the funerary basilica of Clos-de-la-Lombarde and the apsidal building to the south: Duval and Guyon 1995: 32–8 and 39–42; see too *TCG* 7 (Février and Barral I Altet 1989: 15–23) and its update in *TCG* 16: 158–9, 193–202. However, the epigraphic record tells us that the bishop Rusticius built a new cathedral church during the years 441–5 with the substantial support of the praetorian prefect (*CIL* 12.5336), as well as another church in 456 (*AE* 1928, 95); for Rusticius, see Marrou 1970.

³² See Fiches and Veyrac 1996: especially 161. A suburban funerary church has recently been discovered, dating to the start of the fifth century: www.inrap.fr/decouverte-de-l-eglise-la-plus-ancienne-de-nimes-11341.

³³ Mocchi and Nin 2006: 179–80; Nin 2006: 43–5.

³⁴ Mocchi and Nin 2006: 359–63* = pp. 419–25; Duval and Guyon 1995: 109–17.

³⁵ Duval and Guyon 1995: 85–93 (Riez), 155–63 (Fréjus).

The overall picture, therefore, while not straightforwardly uniform, is one of widespread and substantial change. As part of this change we can see clear shifts in the relative status and prosperity of cities. We have already seen both the rising fame of Arles and the 'late' economic boom of Marseille. However, we can also observe smaller urban areas rising to prosperity and visibility in late antiquity, such as Agde in eastern Languedoc, first mentioned as a bishopric only at the start of the sixth century. A variety of factors are at work here: while political changes and currents are crucial, economic developments (albeit often closely inter-related with political currents) were also of great importance.³⁶ These changes would of course have impacted upon the living conditions of the inhabitants of these urban centres.

All too often discussions of late antique urbanism, especially when relating to topographical change, and questions of transformation/decline can seem rather too abstract when it comes to the question of the lives and identities of the actual inhabitants of these cities, particularly in the case of the non-elite.³⁷ I shall now therefore turn to look at the city dwellers themselves.

Who Lived in the City? Occupations and Identities

Even the elite can be hard to find when we look at the late antique city – including the relatively well-known case of Arles. We met the urban elite at the start of the chapter, laden with jewellery, accompanied by their families, slaves, retainers and horses, engaging in a conspicuous display of wealth and status.³⁸ The city was certainly a magnet for the powerful, including both civilian and military elites, due to its prominent position across various regimes in our period, as well as the local landholding elites. We get the best glimpses of the elites of the city of Arles in our literary sources: the courtiers and bigwigs attached to the court of Majorian during his stay there,³⁹ Hilary's well-resourced supporters and his 'proud' opponents,⁴⁰ the well-connected aristocrats Firminius and Gregoria who Caesarius called upon when he arrived in the city, and the famous teacher

³⁶ Christophe Pellecuer ascribes the rise in importance of Agde and its neighbour Maguelone to the thriving economy of coastal Languedoc in the Visigothic period: Lugand, Bermond and Ambert 2001: 102.

³⁷ See for further discussion Grig 2013a.

³⁸ Klingshirn 1994: 60 comments: '[n]otable among the participants were the city's wealthiest citizens, who feared the loss of their expensive possessions as much as their lives'; Simon Loseby (pers. comm.) suggests we can imagine them parading as an *ordo*.

³⁹ As in Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 1.11. ⁴⁰ *V. Hil.* 9, 12.

Pomerius.⁴¹ The Arlesian elite of the fourth century are well represented in the material record in the form of the wonderful collection of sarcophagi in the Musée de l'Arles Antique. However, as we saw, tracking their traces in the urban fabric is trickier, especially when it comes to housing. The decline of the epigraphic habit in late antiquity, meanwhile, also takes its toll on the visibility of the well-to-do and important – let alone their social inferiors. Meanwhile, while we know that our cities retained their town councils, filled by *curiales*, we know very little more than this.⁴² Nonetheless, I shall try to sketch out a picture of our urban inhabitants, urban identities and sub-cultures, giving as rich and non-homogeneous a portrait as possible, in order to build up a context for the popular culture under examination. I shall look at our evidence for the different industries and professions, turning to what little we know of the organization of labour before considering the different statuses and sub-cultures we find in our cities. The commercial cities of southern Gaul, notably Arles, Marseille and Narbonne, certainly housed diverse populations, both as visitors and permanent residents, including all kinds of traders and travellers such as river boatmen and sailors, as well as resident slaves and freed people. Finally, as we shall see, Jews made up an acknowledged part of the civic community throughout antiquity.

But firstly, what about the 'poor', who have been the focus of much scholarship in recent years?⁴³ John Chrysostom once told his congregation that they should imagine their city as made up of one tenth rich, one tenth 'the poor who have nothing at all', with the rest as middling.⁴⁴ Peter Brown pointed out that such a figure does not in fact sit too oddly against what we know (or estimate) of late medieval or early modern cities.⁴⁵ Caesarius defined a *pauper* as one in need of food and clothing, and paired him with a *mendicus*. However, his teacher, Pomerius, had stressed that the church should support only the weak and infirm, leaving the able-bodied poor to earn their living through their labour.⁴⁶ The Council of Orléans in 511

⁴¹ *V. Caes.* 1.8–10. ⁴² See p. 23.

⁴³ The bibliography on the poor in late antiquity is large, starting with Patlagean 1977, with influential contributions made by Peter Brown including Brown 2002: see now for recent discussion Carlà-Uhink, Cecchet and Machado 2022.

⁴⁴ John Chrys. *Homily 66 on Matthew 3* (PG 48.630).

⁴⁵ Brown 2002: 14; see too Magalhães de Oliveira 2022: 283.

⁴⁶ *Caes. Serm.* 139.4: *Pauper intelligitur, qui a nobis victum et vestitum requirit*; Pomerius, *De vita contemplativa* 2.10.1: *Ipsi quoque pauperes, si se possunt suis artificiis aut laboribus expedire, non praesumant quod debet debilis aut infirmus accipere, ne forte ecclesia, quae potest omni solatio destitutis necessaria ministrare, si omnes etiam nihil indigentes accipiant, gravata, illis quibus debet, subvenire non valeat*, (PL 50.454B–C).

likewise specified that the bishop should only help the poor or ill, those incapable of manual labour.⁴⁷ Our texts from Arles do not explicitly mention a *matricula*, a register of the poor, supported by the church, familiar from other Gallic sources.⁴⁸ However, the physical presence of the indigent and infirm outside the church, as well as the bishop's residence, was indeed a regular feature in late antiquity.⁴⁹ The poor are not nearly as prominent as recipients of episcopal charity in the *Life* of Caesarius as are captives, and yet we still learn of their regular appearance outside the bishop's doors.⁵⁰ They were, however, clearly greatly outnumbered by those able to make their own living.

How then did people make a living in the cities of late antique southern Gaul and how does this work provide a context for our understanding of popular culture? Our cities, sited on major trade axes, included some of the most vibrant commercial and indeed artisanal urban centres of the ancient world. Inscriptions from earlier centuries testify to an impressive diversity of occupations: a study of funerary inscriptions from Narbonne found a total of fifty-one professions across eighty-one individuals, representing a high level of division of labour. These jobs ranged from metalwork to hairdressing, including a number of textile-related jobs, as well as culinary, medical and other professions.⁵¹ The epigraphy of second- and third-century CE Arles includes many examples relating to marine and river trade stemming from the professional organizations of ship-builders, carpenters, boatmen and so on.⁵² Historians of late antiquity have far fewer inscriptions to work with, although legal evidence points to the continuing importance of *naviculari*, *nautae* and their organizations.⁵³ Moreover, a variety of literary and archaeological evidence can be used to learn more about the world of urban work in late antiquity.

Information regarding the professions and industries of late antique Arles is fleeting and incidental in the sermons of Caesarius, who we can view as sharing with his fellow bishops a general disinterest in the details of

⁴⁷ Conc. Aurel. a. 511 can. 16. Such an approach goes back to earlier church rulings, such as the *Apostolic Constitutions*; see Finn 2006: 34–89 for an overview.

⁴⁸ See here Jones 2010: 226–8.

⁴⁹ As in Augustine's *Serm.* 61, in which the bishop presents himself as the ambassador of the poor, outside the basilica, to the congregation inside.

⁵⁰ *V. Caes.* 1.20; compare 1.37 on Caesarius' acts of charity in Ravenna, funded by the sale of a large silver plate gifted him by Theoderic. There is no mention at all of the poor in the *Life* of Hilary, though he is praised for his care for orphans: *V. Hil.* II, 28; his epitaph praises his love of poverty nonetheless: *Antistes domini qui paupertatis amorem / praeponens auro*, *CIL* 12. 949b.

⁵¹ Dating from the first century BCE to the first century CE: Bonsangue 2002: 201–32, comparing this figure with 160 different trades mentioned for the ancient city of Rome.

⁵² See Tran 2016. ⁵³ See Klingshirn 1994: 56.

the working lives of his urban congregation.⁵⁴ In a sermon on tithing Caesarius summarizes the trades of his congregation as comprising artisanship/manufacture, commerce and military service.⁵⁵ In another sermon he specifies the work of goldsmiths (*aurifices*) and carpenters (*fabri*) as forms of artisanship.⁵⁶ Textiles are mentioned on several occasions in connection with women: firstly in a repeated attack on the ‘superstition’ that supposedly prevented women from performing their weaving work on Thursdays, in honour of Jupiter,⁵⁷ although the most detailed discussion of female textual production comes in the *Regula ad virgines*.⁵⁸ There are a number of references to commerce: *negotiatores*, merchants or businessmen, are in fact the most frequently mentioned profession in the city, alongside several mentions of trade in general.⁵⁹ It is surely not a coincidence that this is likely to be an occupation held by the richer, more socially elevated members of the urban congregation.

We need to look at the archaeological evidence in order to get a more detailed sense of the world of work of our late antique urban dwellers. The city of Arles itself is not very helpful. An ‘artisanal quarter’ developed across the Rhône in Trinquetaille around the turn of the first century CE, with evidence showing a range of different types of activity, including metallurgy, marquetry and pottery; however, there is no evidence of this production continuing into late antiquity.⁶⁰ The evidence for urban and suburban artisanal activity elsewhere in the region is also rather patchy. For instance, metallurgical work was carried out in the area of the disused baths in Aix,⁶¹ while at Nîmes there seems to have been a concentration of potters’ workshops in the south-west of the city, within the walls, at least at one time.⁶² However, excavations at the ‘ZAC’ des Halles at Nîmes in 1999 showed that this urban area was given over to agricultural activity during the fifth century and would not be ‘re-urbanized’ until the later middle ages.⁶³

⁵⁴ For an account of Caesarius’ sermons as testimony for professions, and other socio-economic realities at Arles, see Filippov 2010, to which the following section is indebted; Filippov notes rightly that Caesarius is far from interested in ‘questions sociales’ (p. 183).

⁵⁵ Alongside agriculture: *Serm.* 33.1.

⁵⁶ Mentioned as early risers, alongside *artifices* in general and travelling salesmen (*institores*): *Serm.* 72.1.

⁵⁷ *Serm.* 13.5, 52.2; see too 139 where spinning by women is referred to. Textile production of various kinds by nuns is discussed in some detail in Caesarius’ *Regula virginum*, which insisted that the sisters should make all the clothes for their substantial community (of c. 200 nuns!): see Miola 2017.

⁵⁸ See Miola 2017 and Tilley 2017.

⁵⁹ On merchants and commerce, see *Serm.* 6.2, 7.1, 8.1, 43.7, as well as 72.1; see further Filippov 2010: 185–6.

⁶⁰ Rothé and Heijmans 2008: 632–3; Heijmans 2004: 355–7. ⁶¹ Mocci and Nin 2006: 428.

⁶² Fiches and Veyrac 1996: 158. ⁶³ Fiches and Veyrac 1996: 378.

Late antique Marseille offers a different and much fuller picture. Suburban areas such as that excavated around the Bourse provide evidence of ‘teeming urbanism’, comprising a whole range of activities, including work in ivory, bone, leather and wood.⁶⁴ The most significant ‘industry’ by far in Marseille, however, was clearly that of ceramics; indeed, since its foundation Marseille had been an important centre of ceramic production. In late antiquity it seems that amphorae, an important category of earlier production, were no longer in production but instead large quantities of both the so-called DSP (‘*dérivées des sigillées paléochrétiennes*’), a red slip fine ware which imitated African red slip, and common grey ware were produced.⁶⁵ Marseille was in fact one of the major centres of DSP production (along with Bordeaux and Narbonne) and as a centre of production is notable for both the quality and wide diffusion of its products, as well as for the large variety of forms.⁶⁶ The production of DSP in Marseille reached its height in the middle or late fifth century (most likely due to a decline in overseas imports at this time).⁶⁷ In the course of the sixth century there was change, with a decline in the number of forms produced, and a reduction in the amount of decoration, but production nevertheless continued, without much further alteration, though on a smaller scale, until the end of the seventh century.⁶⁸ There is little direct evidence of workshops or production (no urban kilns have been identified to date), but it must be assumed that ceramic production took place in locations within the city, outside the walls, but within the territory of Marseille.⁶⁹ But how was urban artisanship organized and how might it have functioned as a context for popular culture? We know nothing about the organization of the ceramics industry in Marseille, although we can look at better-understood cases elsewhere for comparison. For instance, the suburban

⁶⁴ Influentially, if somewhat problematically, compared to a souk by Michel Bonifay, for example: ‘les traces d’un urbanisme foisonnant associé, peut-être à l’image des souks orientaux’: Rothé and Tréziny 2005: 261; full publication: Bonifay, Carre and Rigoir 1998.

⁶⁵ The publication here is voluminous: see, for an introduction and bibliography, Bonifay, Raynaud et al. 2007: especially 151–61; on the ceramic evidence from the Bourse, Bonifay and Pelletier 1983, updated by T. Mukai and Y. Rigoir in Rothé and Tréziny 2005: 261–7. There were a number of centres of production of DSP (including in the countryside, as shown in Chapter 3) and ‘Atlantic’, ‘Provençal’ and ‘Languedocien’ varieties have all been identified; see further Rigoir 2001: 86–9.

⁶⁶ DSP from Marseille has been found in Spain, southern Italy and even Tunisia; out of seventy-two forms of Provençal DSP identified, fifty-seven can be associated with Marseille production: Rothé and Tréziny 2005: 261–2.

⁶⁷ Bonifay, Raynaud et al. 2007: 105. ⁶⁸ Bonifay, Raynaud et al. 2007: 161.

⁶⁹ See Rothé and Tréziny 2005: 261. For discussion of a late antique DSP workshop discovered in the countryside of the Hérault, see p. 101.

pottery quarter of Sagalassos in Turkey was still in use up to the second half of the sixth century CE. Here a number of small individual workshops have been identified, containing around ninety kilns in total, although their shared use of the same raw material suggests some kind of integration of production, albeit loose.⁷⁰

What we know for sure is that the urban world of work was highly stratified. Nicolas Tran has aptly commented on Arles in an earlier period: '[t]he harbour society of Arles was no homogeneous ensemble, and the occupations and associations that emerged from it were unequal in dignity and prestige'.⁷¹ Likewise, while the wide range of occupational inscriptions from Narbonne testifies to the dynamic state of the local economy in the early empire, it also demonstrates economic and social competition among Narbonne artisans and traders.⁷² As discussed in Chapter 1, recent scholarship has illuminated 'plebeian', 'artisan' or indeed 'middle-class' culture in the towns and cities of the Roman empire, including Miko Flohr's case study of the *fullo*.⁷³ Epigraphic evidence has proved of particular use for probing this social history, while analysis of visual images, especially in funerary contexts, has demonstrated the importance of occupational identity for the non-elite.⁷⁴ In Pompeii we saw how inscriptions and graffiti can illustrate the political capacity of occupational groups.⁷⁵ Meanwhile, for southern Gaul, including Arles, the organization and roles of the various type of *collegia* and professional organization have been well studied.⁷⁶ However, this material does inevitably lead us to the upper echelons of the urban artisanal and mercantile community. The epigraphic evidence will never take us to the poorer, more socially marginal workers at Arles or indeed elsewhere; it is, nonetheless, suggestive of sub-elite values as well as structures of economic and social organization. One striking example is the metrical epitaph of the Arlesian cabinet maker Quintus Candidus Benignus, dating to the second or third century CE: it describes his trade in the unexpected terms of *doctrina* and *ars*.⁷⁷ Andrew Wallace-Hadrill sees this as an example of the aping of elite culture by the sub-elite, keen to differentiate themselves from the workers: an instance of 'reproduction' rather than inversion.⁷⁸ However, we can surely interpret this differently:

⁷⁰ Poblome 2016: especially 389–90; see Wilson 2002: 236 on small-scale urban production units in North Africa.

⁷¹ Tran 2016: 257. ⁷² Bonsangue 2002: 208.

⁷³ Flohr 2013; see also Mayer 2012; Tran 2013; Verboven and Laes 2017.

⁷⁴ See still Joshel 1993 and Kampen 1991. ⁷⁵ See pp. xx. ⁷⁶ For example, Tran 2016.

⁷⁷ *CIL* 12.722: in a metrical inscription discussed by Tran 2013: 177–8.

⁷⁸ Wallace-Hadrill 2014: 586.

talking about carpentry in terms of *doctrina* and *ars*, even if not subversive as such, is surely clear evidence of non-elite self-confidence and pride in non-elite work, and an assertion of its value in a competitive marketplace.⁷⁹

Alas, epigraphic evidence of this kind simply does not exist for the late antique period because of well-known changes in the epigraphic habit. Therefore, unfortunately, we hear no more about even the most important associations, such as that of the *naviculari* of Arles, after the start of the third century.⁸⁰ Modern scholarship rejects earlier depictions of late Roman *collegia* as the coercive instruments of a statist planned economy⁸¹ but the fact remains that we simply know very little about the organization of professional associations and their broader social, cultural and economic role in southern Gaul. Nonetheless, examples from the Greek east in particular would suggest that such associations continued to play a key role in the cities.⁸² The importance of Arles as a river port in at least the first part of our period surely implies the continuance of a substantial support infrastructure⁸³ – but we remain pretty much in the dark when it comes to understanding the organization of labour in our cities in the period. In an important article on late antique Rome, Nicholas Purcell stresses the continuing significance of ‘a structure of dependence which united the vast majority of the inhabitants’,⁸⁴ but others are beginning to present a world with more space allowed for *horizontal* organization.⁸⁵ We are of course even less able to reconstruct these kinds of structures of dependency in the cases of Arles or Marseille than for Rome, but in order to provide a context for understanding popular culture, it is important to try to understand the social relations in which this culture developed.

Our lack of knowledge when it comes to the operation of wage labour extends likewise to slave labour. On one occasion Caesarius makes an unusually direct reference to wages paid to slaves for their work (*pro opere suo mercedem suam*);⁸⁶ this specificity is unusual, and we wish we knew more. What is clear is that slaves were part of the urban community

⁷⁹ As discussed by Courier 2017: especially 117–20. ⁸⁰ Christol 1971.

⁸¹ See Carrié 2002b: 209–10.

⁸² Carrié 2002b: especially 324–5, 330–2; see also useful discussion in Magalhães de Oliveira 2012: 33–5, citing a suggestive passage from Augustine (*Ep.* 22*) on the ubiquity of membership of *collegia* among the urban plebs in North Africa.

⁸³ As suggested by Simon Loseby (pers. comm.). ⁸⁴ Purcell 1999: 151.

⁸⁵ Magalhães de Oliveira 2012: especially 43–84.

⁸⁶ As an analogy in a sermon about the duty of almsgiving: *Rogo vos, fratres, numquam aliquis nostrum vult ut servus suus sic illi pro opere suo mercedem suam reddat, ut tamen inimicis suis tugiter serviat, et numquam de illorum societate discedat?* (‘I ask you, brethren, would one of us like his slave to repay the wages he receives for his labours by continually serving their enemies, and never leaving their company?’), Caes. *Serm.* 33.2.

in late antiquity, an expected part of the general picture of daily life. For instance, we have already seen household slaves appear in procession in Arles on the feast day of St Genesius as part of the prestige apparatus of elite households.⁸⁷ Domestic slaves are explicitly referred to (and bequeathed) in the will of Caesarius: two slaves are mentioned by name, one of whom, Agritia, is sent to serve at his sister Caesaria's monastery, while the rest of the domestic slaves are passed on to Caesarius' successor and co-heir, Auxanius.⁸⁸ Slaves appear in Caesarius' sermons as examples of negative behaviour: guilty of theft, neglect of property and drunkenness.⁸⁹ Broader anxieties about household slaves are also expressed in the anonymous fifth-century Gallo-Roman play, *Querolus*, where the clever slave Pantomalus evokes a topsy-turvy nocturnal 'counter-world' of the slaves, based on sensual pleasure, including the use of the household baths at night.⁹⁰ While fascinating as an elite view of the potentially subversive thoughts and activities of slaves, such 'evidence' inevitably does not get us any closer to accessing the subjectivity of enslaved people.

Moving on, while servile origin is often associated with the use of the Greek language in the cities of the west, this is just one aspect of its long history in southern Gaul. Marseille was originally founded by Greek settlers and enjoyed continued Greek influence, with the later arrival of Greek-speaking traders, as well as slaves and ex-slaves.⁹¹ The epigraphy of Marseille indeed shows a number of names of Greek origin, and we should not assume them to be necessarily derived from an ex-servile population. Indeed, a number of professions seem to be associated with Greek names, even when there is no sign of servile origin.⁹² While a sizable proportion of Marseille's inscriptions from the early imperial period are in Greek, there are so few late antique inscriptions *in toto* that it is not feasible to draw any statistically valid comparisons.⁹³ We know that Greek continued to be used in church in Arles thanks to the detail in the *Vita* of Caesarius that the bishop taught his congregation to sing hymns in both Greek and Latin.⁹⁴

⁸⁷ *Sermo seu narratio de miraculo s. Genesii martyris Arelatensis*.

⁸⁸ *Caes. Test.*, Morin II: 289 ll. 8–11. ⁸⁹ For example, *Serm.* 15.2, 44.2, 47.3.

⁹⁰ *Querolus* 72; although the *Querolus* is a close adaptation of Plautus' *Aulularia*, this speech is new. See for discussion Harper 2011: 250–2 and Grey 2011: 41.

⁹¹ See Mullen 2013: 265–73 on the development of 'Roman Greek'.

⁹² See Mullen 2013: 270 on the association of Greek names (and language) with certain professions, including doctors and performers.

⁹³ See Decourt, Gascoü and Guyon in Rothé and Tréziny 2005: 160–216 with an essay and catalogue of 201 inscriptions (of which fifty-two are in Greek, two of which are late antique).

⁹⁴ *Adiecit etiam atque compulsi, ut laicorum popularitas psalmos et hymnos pararet, atque et modulata voce instar clericorum, alii graece, alii latine prosas antiphonasque cantarent*, *V. Caes.* 1.19. Le Blant 1865 has a single Greek inscription from Arles: no. 521, discussed further later.

That our cities possessed a substantial element of ethnic diversity is evident, and this bears discussion, given our interest in subaltern cultures. Late antiquity saw a continuation of the elite rhetorical tradition that inveighed against easterners, most visibly in the frequent mention of 'eastern' merchants, often designated as 'Syrian'.⁹⁵ Salvian provides the most striking example in a passage that is clearly indebted to the satirical tradition. After considering the poor reputation of a number of barbarian groups, he comes to Syrian merchants:

So that I will not speak of any other race of men, let us consider only the crowds of Syrian merchants [*Syrorum omnium turbas*], who have occupied the great part of nearly all cities. Let us consider whether their life is anything other than plotting artifice and wearing falsehood thin. They think their words are wasted, so to speak, if they are not profitable to those who speak them. So great among them is the honour of God, who prohibits oath taking, that they think all perjury is a particular gain for them.⁹⁶

Even late antique legal texts employed highly coloured and indeed xenophobic rhetorical language referring to the 'Oriens';⁹⁷ an orientalizing tone is still to be found, meanwhile, in some twentieth-century scholarship.⁹⁸ More neutral in tone, interestingly, is a canon from the Council of Narbonne in 589 which refers to a population 'both slave and free' made up of 'Goths, Romans, Syrians, Greeks and Jews' (all of whom are to refrain from work on Sundays where possible).⁹⁹ While this is clearly intended to be deliberately comprehensive, the specifications are nonetheless of interest. Epigraphic evidence for 'Syrians', meanwhile, is generally very limited or indeed inconclusive, although scholars have been oddly keen to identify 'Syrians' from among the few late antique Greek inscriptions from late antiquity.¹⁰⁰ Attempts to identify Syrian influence, and the

⁹⁵ See Pieri 2002 and Lambrechts 1937; Handley 2011: 17–18 comments on the inaccurate catch-all tendency of the 'Syrian' label.

⁹⁶ Salvian, *De gub. Dei* 4.14, trans. O'Sullivan; compare Juv. 3, especially 60–5, and note too Jer., *usque autem hodie permanet in Syris ingenitus negotiationis ardor, qui per totum mundum lucri cupiditate discurrunt*, *Comment. Ezech* (PL 22.255).

⁹⁷ See Lambrechts 1937: 41 on Honorius' edict of 418, discussed earlier (*MGH. Ep.* 3: 14).

⁹⁸ For example, Baldwin Smith 1918: 192: 'These large communities of Orientals, which kept together in the towns and often continued to speak their own language, became very powerful.'

⁹⁹ Conc. Narb. a.589 can. 4.

¹⁰⁰ Two striking inscriptions from Lyon, probably dating to the third century, commemorate successful Syrian traders, one from Canatha, the other from Laodicea: see Jones 1978; *IG XIV* 2532. Otherwise the evidence is tenuous, for example a non-extant inscription from Arles commemorating one Iôsès, argued by Le Blant to be Syrian: Le Blant 1865: no. 521; *IG IX* 2476. A fascinating Greek/Latin bilingual inscription from Narbonne, commemorating a Dometius, uses

presence of Syrian craftsmen in the art of southern Gaul, are not conclusive.¹⁰¹ Overall, it seems we should be wary of ‘Syrian’ clichés as outmoded at best.

What about ‘Goths’, as we saw specified as a category in the council held in Visigothic Narbonne in 589? Or indeed Franks? There has been a huge amount of debate and discussion on the issues of the nature of barbarian settlement, ethnic identity and ethnogenesis, but most of it is simply not really relevant when it comes to thinking about our urban populations.¹⁰² As previously discussed, it seems most likely that the new regimes relied on the local Gallo-Roman elites to run the cities. Clearly, we must imagine the presence of billeted troops, but the ‘Roman’ armies had been ‘barbarized’ for many generations. An anecdote in Caesarius’ *Life* refers to *comites civitatis et reliqui militantes* as throwing their weight around, demanding hunting rights on the estate of the suburban monastery, but this clearly regards the Gothic elite.¹⁰³ In theory the Visigoths were Arian ‘heretics’, but we hear very little about their presence as such – and Klingshirn is surely right to suggest that Arianism ‘was confined to Gothic soldiers and officials, whose religious influence on the local population would have been minimal’.¹⁰⁴ We do get mention of ‘Arians’, however, at times of crisis, such as when they were rhetorically paired with Jews as supposed enemies of Caesarius.¹⁰⁵

More can be said about the Jews of southern France. It is clear that they made up a recognizable part of the urban community in our period; indeed, it is in late antiquity that a Jewish presence becomes evident again in southern Gaul after a long lacuna in the evidence.¹⁰⁶ However, even more so than in the case of ‘Syrians’, the literary ‘sources’ prove to be ideologically and rhetorically loaded in the extreme, and must be read with great care. Jews appear in late antique ecclesiastical texts in order to serve varying ideological purposes but often, as Avril Keely has put it, as ‘agents

the same toponymic formula as in Iôssès’ inscription (ἀπό κό(μης): *CIL* 12 5340, dated 527. A Greek inscription from Narbonne commemorates a woman called Irene from 441 and has another possible – but tenuous – Syrian connection: Le Blant 1865: no. 415, dated 441.

¹⁰¹ For example, compare earlier interpretations of ‘Syrian’ motifs in sculpture, such as Baldwin Smith 1918: 198–201, at 198, with the approach of Narasawa 2015. Comparisons between motifs on the early fifth-century mosaics from the villa at Loupian in Languedoc and those in the Near East might nonetheless suggest connections with the Near East, not least the presences of craftsmen from Antioch: see Lavagne, Rouquette, Prudhomme 1981: especially 203; Pellecuer 2002; Balmelle 2001: 241.

¹⁰² See Halsall 2007: 422–54 for a clear summary. ¹⁰³ *V. Caes.* 1.48. See pp. 219–20.

¹⁰⁴ Klingshirn 1994: 178.

¹⁰⁵ *V. Caes.* 1.29. However, it is worth pointing out that Caesarius defended his ransoming of Arians among other prisoners: *V. Caes.* 1.32–3.

¹⁰⁶ See Blumenkranz 1969; a more sceptical view is taken by Toch 2013: 65–102, 299–310.

of differentiation'.¹⁰⁷ At the same time, these texts clearly do reflect, in the words of Paula Fredriksen and Oded Irshai, 'a social world wherein Jews – distinctive, different, singled out – still remained integrated within the lingering urban framework'.¹⁰⁸

Our evidence from southern Gaul does not feature the grim stories of forced conversions found elsewhere, such as in Minorca (in 418), or, closer to home, in Clermont, where the synagogue was burned in 576.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, Gregory writes that although more than 500 Jews were baptised in Clermont, the rest of the community left for Marseille.¹¹⁰ Nonetheless, we can clearly see the presence of contradictions and tensions in the material from Provence. At times it suited the rhetorical and ideological purposes of Christian writers to include Jews within the bounds of the imagined urban community: it was more or less a hagiographical cliché that Jews were present in the funerary processions of bishops, as indeed claimed by the *Vitae* of both Hilary and Caesarius.¹¹¹ (More interesting is the specific claim that the Jews at Hilary's funeral sang in Hebrew, to which we shall return.)¹¹² At other times our texts seek very much to 'other' – and worse – Jews, and the *Life of Caesarius* is a useful case in point, especially the depiction of the actions of the Jews of Arles during the Burgundian siege in 507/8.¹¹³ According to the *Vita*, a young clerical relative of Caesarius handed himself over to the enemy troops. Once this became known, Caesarius himself came under attack from a 'mob', including 'a crowd of Jews' (*popularium seditione, certe et Iudaorum turba*), accusing the bishop himself of sending his relation to betray Arles to the enemy.¹¹⁴ The authors stress that 'especially the Jews' but also 'heretics' (a common coupling) made the accusation.¹¹⁵ As a result of these charges (unfounded, of course, according to the *Vita*), the bishop was placed under armed guard.¹¹⁶ The *Life* further alleges treachery by Jews

¹⁰⁷ As discussed by Keely 1997: 109–15, again with reference to Gregory of Tours.

¹⁰⁸ Fredriksen and Irshai 2008: 1022.

¹⁰⁹ Severus of Minorca, *Epistola ad omnem ecclesiam* (ed. and trans. S. Bradbury, Oxford, 1996); Greg. Tur. *Hist.* 5.11.

¹¹⁰ *ab illa urbe, Massiliae redditi sunt*, Greg. Tur. *Hist.* 5.11. ¹¹¹ *V. Hil.* 29 and *V. Caes.* 2.49.

¹¹² *Hebraeam concinentium linguam in esequiis honorandis audisse me recolo*, *V. Hil.* 29; discussed by Noy 2013: 175.

¹¹³ *V. Caes.* 1.29; see here Klingshirn 1994: 107–8.

¹¹⁴ *inuunt in sanctum virum, popularium seditione, certe et Iudaorum turba inmoderatus perstrepente atque clamante, quod in traditionem civitatis adversariis personam compatrioticam noctu destinasset antistes*, *V. Caes.* 1.29.

¹¹⁵ *V. Caes.* 1.29.

¹¹⁶ This was not, of course, the first (or last) time that Caesarius was accused of treason. Charges of pro-Burgundian treachery had been first brought against him in 504/5 by the notary Licinianus (also *V. Caes.* 1.21), whose attempted murder will be discussed later. Caesarius would also be summoned to answer charges before Theoderic in Ravenna in 513: *V. Caes.* 1.36–8; see Klingshirn 1994: 124–5.

themselves during the siege: a member of the Jewish troops *within* the city (apparently a defined group with their own section of wall to guard)¹¹⁷ supposedly offered (by means of a letter tied to a stone) to help Jewish troops *outside* the walls enter the city, on the understanding that no fellow Jewish resident should suffer. This subterfuge was allegedly swiftly uncovered and punished¹¹⁸ but provokes comments from the authors of the *Vita* about the destruction of the ‘hateful’ cruelty of the Jews.¹¹⁹

These accounts raise a number of questions but demonstrate clear social tensions that existed across the social spectrum, both clerical and lay, in Arles.¹²⁰ The reported ‘perfidy’ of the Jews can be understood as part of broader social conflict and competition which would have existed at various levels in the urban society of Arles, and would of course be exacerbated at times of crisis. Nonetheless, at other times in Arles, just as elsewhere in the late antique world, we can see the efforts of churchmen to set boundaries to their Christian communities, at times deliberately excluding both Jews and ‘Jewish’ practices.¹²¹ Gallic church councils attempted to stop first the clergy, and then the entirety of the Christian community, from attending *Judaeorum convivium*.¹²² Should we here imagine particular sorts of meals held by/in the Jewish community, for instance in accordance with specific festivals or rituals? Or was this just another attempt to stop Christians from joining in the general convivial culture of the broader community? (In later chapters we shall see Caesarius’ attempts to restrict his congregation’s participation in wider social life.) Again, we cannot know. Overall, our evidence shows the existence of some tensions, of scapegoating and of anti-Jewish clerical discourse. On the other hand, it also shows the evident involvement of Jews in the social world of the urban community.

Caesarius was not the only bishop accused of treason in late antique Gaul: a similar charge had been made against two bishops of Tours, regarding the Franks: see, for instance, Greg. Tur. *Hist.* 2.26, 10.31.8; see Klingshirn 1994: 93–4.

¹¹⁷ *unus ex caterva Iudaica de loco, ubi in mura vigilandi curam forte susceperant, V. Caes.* 1.31.

¹¹⁸ *V. Caes.* 1.31. ¹¹⁹ *V. Caes.* 1.31.

¹²⁰ For example, Klingshirn points to the lingering unhappiness felt by various members of both clergy and laity in Arles as regards both the appointment of Caesarius and the nature of his ascetic-tinged reforms: Klingshirn 1994: 94, and further 108–10.

¹²¹ Klingshirn 1994 178–80; on Caesarius and the Jews, see Correau 1970 and Mikat 1996, although both accounts are rather too exculpatory in their analysis: see Bailey 2018: 58–60. Thirteen Gallic councils enacted canons concerning Jews between the fifth and seventh centuries. We should be cautious about the significance of these, however, bearing in mind that while the Irish *Collectio Canonum Hibernensis* contained a number of anti-Jewish canons, it is unlikely there were actually any Jews in early medieval Ireland: Handley 2000: 241–2.

¹²² Conc. Ven. a.461/491 can. 12 prescribed that members of the clergy should not dine with Jews; the Council of Agde (Conc. Agath. a. 506 can. 40) widened this prohibition to laity as well; on boundary setting through legislation and clerical discourse, see Effros 2002: 17–18.

What our Christian and indeed legal sources cannot, of course, provide any insight into is how the Jews *themselves* envisioned their place in the culture and community of their cities. How culturally distinctive were the Jews of southern Gaul in the first place? In terms of material culture, there are only a very few examples of distinctively Jewish artefacts in use, and even here we would want to express caution about too simple an identification between 'Jewish' material culture and Jewish users.¹²³ Linguistic evidence might seem to lead us to firmer ground. We noted the rare claim that the Jews at Hilary's funeral sang in Hebrew. In general there is very little evidence for the use of Hebrew at this time, though Gregory of Tours claims that the Jews in Orléans praised King Guntram in their own language (and Syrians likewise!).¹²⁴ The only two identifiably Jewish inscriptions we have from southern France in our period are in Latin and share the same linguistic formulae as their Christian counterparts.¹²⁵ Indeed, David Noy has argued that the increasing use of Hebrew *later*, in the early middle ages, is a sign of reaction to the increasing hostility of the authorities towards the Jews and a growing desire to express a shared identity.¹²⁶ In our own, late antique sources we can see attempts to define a Jewish community at least *from the outside* and we certainly have evidence for a diverse and at times divided wider urban community. It was in this community, in which different degrees of subalternity, as it were, existed, that popular culture was constructed and experienced. One notable aspect of this, unfortunately, was the focus on and scapegoating of minorities and other outgroups, a theme to which we will return in Chapter 6.

The Church in the City and its Impact on the Built and Social Landscape

While we have been considering the wider city in large part *through* ecclesiastical sources, it is now time to focus on the particular impact of

¹²³ Rather surprisingly, two lamps decorated with menorahs were found in rural settings: see p. 86. A bronze seal in the Musée Calvet in Avignon depicts a menorah, two ethrogs and the letters I A/ N V. Frey and Noy (Frey 1975: no. 667; Noy 1993: no. 190) interpreted these letters as signifying the name Ianu(arius) but Bernard Blumenkranz, somewhat ingeniously, suggested instead that if reading the letters backwards, as in Hebrew (and up and down), the resulting AVIN could have functioned as a seal for the Jewish community of Avennio: Blumenkranz 1969: 167, according to whom the seal is no later than the fourth century.

¹²⁴ *Et hinc lingua Syrorum, hinc Latinorum, hinc etiam ipsorum Iudaeorum in diversis laudibus variae concrepabat*, Greg. Tur. *Hist.* 8.1.

¹²⁵ Handley 2000: 252. There are four later epitaphs in Hebrew from Arles but dating from the eighth to ninth centuries: Noy 1993: 281–2.

¹²⁶ Noy 2013: 175–7.

the church itself as a key factor in the transformation of not just the built environment but also the social and political structures of the city. In what follows we shall look at the development of both as key themes for our understanding of late antique urbanism as a context for popular culture.

The emergence of a Christian topography in the cities of southern Gaul has been much discussed.¹²⁷ This process was part and parcel of the development of a Christian infrastructure which accompanied the growth in power and prominence of the bishop in the city. These developments are well known, even if accounts tend to take a rather ‘top-down’ view of the process. My concerns are somewhat different and therefore I shall just briefly sketch the key features of the religious landscapes, including the ecclesiastical topography, of our cities. When it comes to *non-Christian* topographies, there is in fact rather little to be said, at least with our current state of knowledge. The classical urbanistic layout had included a number of temples and Narbonensis was particularly rich in Greco-Roman-style classical temples. That ‘pagan’ temples were no longer being maintained in the cities in our period is clear; their actual physical condition at this time, however, is not.¹²⁸ As we shall see in Chapters 4 and 5, the continued existence and indeed use of various types of ‘pagan’ shrines and sites in the countryside was a source of annoyance for Caesarius, among others, but none of our ecclesiastical sources complain of a similar alternate sacred landscape in the city, which is telling in itself. There are no archaeological traces of cult buildings used by Jews in the cities of Gaul in antiquity.

A broadly understood model for the development of Christian urban topography in southern Gaul is as follows: a church was built in the fourth century in a somewhat marginal topographical position, often up against the city ramparts, with a move into the monumental centre coming sometime later (normally at some point in the fifth century) as Christianity became more established locally. Indeed, a number of cathedral churches have been identified, often as part of a full ‘episcopal group’, comprising, at minimum, a church, baptistery and episcopal residence. The evidence does not always present so clear-cut a picture, however.

¹²⁷ See the landmark publication of the *Topographie chrétienne des cités de la Gaule (TCG)* series, edited by Gauthier and Picard (volumes II, III and VII are the relevant ones here, recently updated by volume XVI.1–2); the most recent volume contains a useful summary essay: Gauthier 2014; see too Guyon 2006, 2013 for recent summaries focused entirely on the south.

¹²⁸ Two of the most iconic Roman temples to survive to the present day are in southern France, in Vienne and Nîmes; Penelope Goodman suggests that it may well have been that their status as temples to imperial cult gave them a particular political prestige and thus helped ensure their preservation: Goodman 2011: 174. The temple of Gaius and Lucius Caesar in Nîmes enjoyed a succession of different uses in its afterlife, but its status in our period is unknown.

In Aix, for instance, a cathedral was built, probably at the very end of the fifth century, in the heart of the monumental centre. This cannot have been the first ‘episcopal’ church of Aix, as there had been a bishop of Aix for more than a century by this point and the ‘original’ church has not been definitively located.¹²⁹ In Marseille the remains of a very large baptistery, built in the fifth century in the north-west of the ancient city, are the most visible remnants of the ‘episcopal group’, including an accompanying cathedral, itself lost due to construction works in the nineteenth century.¹³⁰ As for Arles (see Maps 3 and 4), the chronology of church building remains unclear. Only one church is mentioned in the *Vita* of Honoratus (bishop from 426 to 429), written by his successor, Hilary, in c. 430.¹³¹ The *Vita* of Hilary himself, however, mentions three distinct Christian cult buildings, including a cathedral church associated with St Stephen.¹³² For a long time it was assumed that this lay under the present cathedral, in the ancient monumental centre, thus fitting the standard pattern described above. However, this assumption has been challenged by the more recent discovery of the very large church built by Caesarius in the ‘enclos Saint Césaire’, in the south-east of the city, against the rampart, showing that even in the sixth century the major church of the city was ex-centred, albeit within the walls.¹³³ This does give a rather different slant to our understanding of the topography of the city and its ‘centre’ in our period.

Perhaps the concentration on ‘cathedral’ churches has been too dominant, however. It is clear that other types of church buildings also made up the ecclesiastical landscapes of our cities. In Marseille the extra-mural funerary church under the Abbaye de Saint Victor, which developed around a necropolis in the fifth century, has been known for a very long time;¹³⁴ more recently, a funerary church with a substantial *memoria* was unearthed during the construction of a car park on the Rue Malaval.¹³⁵ That more finds of this nature are likely is suggested by the recent discovery

¹²⁹ Duval and Guyon 1995: 107–17; Guyon 2000a; Mocci and Nin 2006: 359*–63 = pp. 419–25; see *TCG* 16: 22–5, 414–15. It is most probable that an earlier cathedral church lay on the site of the church of Notre Dame de la Seds, on the edge of the ancient city.

¹³⁰ See Rothé and Tréziny 2005: 453–60 = 84*; Paone and Bourion 1999 [2001].

¹³¹ *V. Hon.* 29, 34; see Heijmans 2004: 259–60. ¹³² See Heijmans 2004: 260–3.

¹³³ See the excellent summary, with plans, of the state of knowledge of Christian topography in Arles, including the case of the ‘enclos Saint Césaire’, by Marc Heijmans in Delage 2010: 311–22 with Heijmans 2006b, 2009, 2010, 2014; plus *TCG* 16: 27–45, 430–2.

¹³⁴ See Rothé and Tréziny 2005: 187* = pp. 610–56; Fixot and Pelletier 2009a, 2009b.

¹³⁵ Rothé and Tréziny 2005: 138* = pp. 566–71. The remains of the tombs can now be seen as an impressive installation in the Musée d’Histoire de Marseille; they are well illustrated in Guyon and Heijmans 2013: 120–5; see too Moliner 2006.

of a suburban funerary church dating to the fifth century in Nîmes.¹³⁶ As we have seen, the exact nature of the Christian topography of Arles in late antiquity remains unclear, despite various mentions of different churches in our texts¹³⁷ (see Maps 3 and 4). By the middle of the fifth century there were two sites associated with the Arlesian martyr, St Genesius: his tomb in the cemetery at Alyscamps and the supposed site of his execution on the other side of the Rhône at Trinquetaille. The medieval church of St Honorat still stands in the Alyscamps cemetery, presumably on the site of the earlier church to St Genesius – but no substantial remains of the early church or the martyr's tomb have been found.¹³⁸ In Trinquetaille, likewise, there are no traces of the early Christian chapel we know stood there, despite the later 'Chapelle Saint-Geneste'.¹³⁹ Finally, monasteries formed another, rather different, element of the urban Christian topography: as discussed in the previous chapter, Caesarius became abbot of a suburban monastery prior to his election to the bishopric. The original female monastery begun by Caesarius as bishop, destroyed in the siege of 507/8, was built outside the walls (most likely in the area of the Alyscamps);¹⁴⁰ he built its replacement within the walls, close to his own cathedral church.¹⁴¹ Right at the end of our period, Aurelianus (bishop from 546 to 551) built two large monasteries within the city walls.¹⁴²

The scholarly concentration on the development of the cathedral church is linked to a broader focus on the growing institutional prominence of the church and the expansion of the role of the bishop as civic leader, major themes in the historiography of late antiquity.¹⁴³ Public construction is indeed one arena in which we can clearly see the bishop acting very much as a traditional member of the ruling elite of the city. The development of the building complex often described as the 'episcopal group' makes the

¹³⁶ See www.inrap.fr/decouverte-d-une-eglise-funeraire-paleochretienne-nimes-12336.

¹³⁷ For an overview, see Heijmans 2004: 245–337.

¹³⁸ See Rothé and Heijmans 2008: 198* = pp. 530–4.

¹³⁹ The column that was venerated in late antiquity in association with St Genesius remained in the chapel until 1806, when it was removed by order of Napoleon to adorn the Louvre, but was lost when the whole convoy, laden with antiquities bound for Paris, sank in the Rhône. See Rothé and Heijmans 2008: 321* = p. 699; on the column: Greg. Tur. *Glor. mart.* 67.

¹⁴⁰ *V. Caes.* 1.28.

¹⁴¹ The monastery was previously assumed to be on the site of the 'enclos Saint Césaire', but now that recent excavations have revealed this instead as the location of Caesarius' church, the monastery must have been elsewhere, most likely to the north of the episcopal complex: see Heijmans 2010, 2014.

¹⁴² See Klingshirn 1994: 262–4.

¹⁴³ The bibliography here is huge but see for influential discussions Brown 1992; Rapp 2005; and the articles in Rebillard and Sotinel 1999; and on Gaul in particular, and anticipating many later studies, Heinzlmann 1976.

important civic role of the bishop visible in the fabric of the city, still tangible (to a varying degree) today at Cimiez, Riez, Fréjus, Aix and Marseille.

It is worth now moving just a little further afield, to Narbonne: while it is rare that we have detailed evidence of the chronology and personnel involved, there is a welcome exception when it comes to the case of Rusticius, bishop of Narbonne from 428 to 461. Two dedicatory inscriptions from Narbonne record not just the bishop's own activity but also the nature and extent of the support that Rusticius received from elsewhere, thus demonstrating the interlinking of political, ecclesiastical and aristocratic power in the fifth-century city.¹⁴⁴ We learn that Rusticius rebuilt the cathedral at the urging, and with the substantial financial backing, of Marcellus, praetorian prefect of the Gauls.¹⁴⁵ We also learn that Rusticius' building work was further supported by high-ranking aristocrats, as well as his ecclesiastical colleague and the faithful of the church.¹⁴⁶ Rusticius' ecclesiastical connections were notably impeccable: he was both the son and nephew of bishops and had cemented important relationships among the ascetic network of southern Gaul as a monk in Marseille.¹⁴⁷ His example then is indicative of how tightly connected secular and ecclesiastical elites could be.

The bishops of Arles, a city of particular political importance in our period, were often represented as being close to secular power. Hilary presents Honoratus' deathbed as graced by the most powerful men in Gaul, including the praetorian prefect, and his funeral as packed with those of the highest ranks.¹⁴⁸ Hilary's own accession was secured with the aid of the otherwise unknown 'illustrious' Cassius and his troops.¹⁴⁹ However, relations with local elites and power brokers were not always smooth: Hilary admits that Honoratus' election had been contested and that winning over opposition had been a key priority at the start of his term.¹⁵⁰ Hilary himself publicly rebuked the praetorian prefect

¹⁴⁴ See Marrou 1970; Riess 2013: 80–92; the cathedral lintel inscription is *CIL* 12.5336; see *AE* 1928:95 for the inscription from the no longer extant church of St Felix of Girona, dedicated in 456 and mentioned by Gregory of Tours in *Glor. mart.* 91. A third dedicatory inscription comes not from the city but from the Hérault: *CIL* 12.5337.

¹⁴⁵ Marcellus 2, *PLRE* II.712.

¹⁴⁶ As discussed in detail by Riess 2013: 81–6, noting the varying amounts donated by different parties, including a total of 2,100 *solidi* given by Marcellus for the cathedral and 56 *solidi* donated by the faithful for the basilica of St Felix.

¹⁴⁷ He met with such important allies as the influential Proculus of Marseilles and his fellow bishop Venerius; he was also a correspondent of Jerome who addressed *Ep.* 125 to him in 411/12.

¹⁴⁸ *V. Hon.* 32. ¹⁴⁹ *V. Hil.* 9; see Mathisen 1989: 89. ¹⁵⁰ *V. Hon.* 28.

(seemingly Rusticius' friend Marcellus) in the middle of mass in the Basilica Constantia and expelled him from the building.¹⁵¹ More seriously, while having friends in high places could help secure election, bishops could also pay the price for these connections, as examples from Arles in the early fifth century clearly show in dramatic fashion, as we saw in the previous chapter. Heros was installed as bishop of Arles in 408 (alongside Lazarus at Aix) with the support of their supporter, the usurper Constantine III, but removed after his fall in 411. Heros' successor Patroclus was himself assassinated in 426 by 'a certain tribune' called Barnabus at the 'secret' order of the *magister militum* Felix, according to Propter.¹⁵²

The civic role of the bishop had several more or less political aspects. As we shall see, he was in theory at least appointed through public episcopal election, therefore in the mode of traditional civic life.¹⁵³ In times of crisis bishops could be sent to negotiate treaties, as when the bishops of Aix, Arles, Marseilles and Riez were sent to Toulouse to negotiate with the Visigothic king Euric as the emissaries of the emperor Julius Nepos in 475.¹⁵⁴ In this turbulent period the bishop was also not infrequently called upon to play his role in the ransom of prisoners, seen as one of the most important responsibilities of the bishop by the fifth century.¹⁵⁵ These varying aspects coalesce into the notion of the bishop as the defender of the city, the true *defensor civitatis*; Sidonius lauded the generosity of Bishop Patiens of Lyon, who supplied corn at his private expense as far south as Riez and Arles after the depredations caused by the forces of Euric.¹⁵⁶ Meanwhile, the bishop also had a judicial role, authorized by Constantine, with the establishment of the *episcopalis audientia*.¹⁵⁷ The particular notion of the bishop as the protector of the poor is an important component of the ideology of the episcopal role in the late antique city, as has been influentially argued by Peter Brown.¹⁵⁸ But can we actually see our southern Gallic

¹⁵¹ *V. Hil.* 13; Mathisen 1989: 121 suggests that the prefect was probably Marcellus, in office in the 440s.

¹⁵² *Chron.* 1292 s.a.425; we might also wonder (but can do no more) about the brief, shadowy episcopacy of Helladius/Eladius that followed on from Proculus, shortly thereafter replaced by Honoratus.

¹⁵³ On which see Norton 2007; in the Merovingian kingdoms episcopal ordination required royal assent after the Council of Orléans of 449.

¹⁵⁴ See Sidonius *Ep.* 7.6–7; Sidonius was famously outraged by what he saw as the betrayal of the Auvergne in the ensuing treaty.

¹⁵⁵ Caesarius ransomed prisoners on several occasions, including those from far beyond his own diocese and of other faiths: *V. Caes.* 1.32–3, 1.38, 1.44, 2.8–9, as discussed by Klingshirn 1985: 191–2; see 185 nn. 20–1 for late antique references.

¹⁵⁶ *Sid. Apoll. Ep.* 6.12.5. ¹⁵⁷ See Lamoreaux 1995.

¹⁵⁸ Peter Brown goes so far as to write of 'the general consensus in all regions of the Roman and post-Roman world of the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries, that the primary duty of the bishop was the care of the poor': Brown 2002: 45; see too Brown 2012: especially 509–17.

bishops as consistently acting as this new type of patron, with the ‘poor’ as their *clientela*? The answer would have to be in the negative. While praise for the charitable activities of the bishop is a standard part of episcopal eulogy and hagiography, when it comes to the bishops of Arles the poor play a very minor role. Southern Gallic bishops tend to come much more clearly into view as allies or indeed clients of the powerful. What is very clear is that the growing power of the bishop was an important factor in both social and political relations in the city.

Finally, while scholarship has tended to focus very heavily on bishops – and on aristocratic bishops in particular – they were of course not the only clergy present in the city. Gallic councils, including the Council of Agde as presided over by Caesarius, paid a good deal of attention to regulating the behaviour of clergy, who they intended to be a separate caste, separated by their lifestyle and behaviour (including sexual), their obedience to their bishop and even their clothing.¹⁵⁹ We can thus see the higher clergy in the cities as a distinctive group. While most would never make it that far, an ambitious deacon or presbyter would hope that his ordination would be a first step en route to the episcopacy.¹⁶⁰ However, the status of minor or junior clergy – such as subdeacons, acolytes and exorcists – is harder to parse; Lisa Bailey aptly comments that they ‘occupied something of a grey zone’.¹⁶¹ Unfortunately, we know little about their activities in our cities and can only speculate as to how they might have been involved in some of the contentious episodes we will consider next.

Power and Dependency in the City

As we have already seen, our ecclesiastical sources, including episcopal *Vitae*, offer some important hints as to social tensions within the late antique city insofar as they impacted upon the position of the bishop – especially notably

¹⁵⁹ See Klingshirn 1994: 99–100; on the Gallic councils more broadly, Barcellona 2012; on the clergy as a profession, Underwood 2018.

¹⁶⁰ For example, Caesarius served as deacon and presbyter at Arles before becoming bishop: *V. Caes.* 11 and the *V. Honorati* notes that Honoratus acted like a bishop even while still a presbyter! Meanwhile, it was common for bishops to have ordained their own successors as presbyters, for example Hilary’s successor Ravennius. The ambitious Othia, presbyter under Bishop Rusticius of Narbonne, dedicated a basilica in the countryside, using the date of his presbytership, in defiance of the rules which said that only bishops could dedicate churches: see Riess 2013: 88. The ‘Presbyters in the Late Antique West’ database enables us to see an impressive amount of information collected as regards presbyters specifically, including their careers: <http://presbytersproject.ihuw.pl>.

¹⁶¹ Bailey 2016: 31. The *Statuta ecclesiae antiqua* ranked the lower clerical orders upwards as *acolythi*, *exorcistae*, *lectores*, *ostiarium*, *psalmista* and *cantores*, while *fossore* are known from elsewhere as an even lower rank: *Statuta ecclesiae antiqua*, can. 94–8; see Jones 2010: 233–7.

in the case of such pugnacious and controversial figures as Hilary and Caesarius – but also, as we have seen, as regards their lesser-known predecessors, Heros and Patroclus.¹⁶² Of course, the field of conflict went far beyond the individual cities and extended into broader local and regional rivalries, as well as tensions with Rome, as discussed by Ralph Mathisen.¹⁶³ Hilary is an especially notable figure in this regard. He was accused by Pope Leo of travelling around his (disputed) *territorium* with an armed retinue.¹⁶⁴ Within the city of Arles itself there are subtle hints in Hilary's *Vita* regarding local opposition to the bishop from the 'proud',¹⁶⁵ as well as the far less subtle anecdote about a run-in between Hilary and the praetorian prefect discussed earlier.¹⁶⁶ These accounts – as well as the accusations made against Caesarius discussed earlier – are suggestive of inter-elite competition: what can we infer about a broader web of social relations and social tensions, taking in the subaltern classes of our late antique cities?

It is scarcely surprising that Hilary was all too happy to pick a fight with his social inferiors. Indeed, at the start of this chapter we considered an intriguing passage from the *Vita* in which a heckling crowd was punished by a divinely sent fire. This story is itself introduced in the narrative with an anecdote recalling how Hilary used to shout at people leaving church after the Gospel reading, threatening them with hell. The narrative then proceeds to the account of the confrontation between the crowd and the bishop: 'A crowd of people had been vainly roused to come to him, ill-advised and misguided [*inaniter excitata popularum turba et inconsulta deceptaque venisset*]',¹⁶⁷ which was followed by the burning of 'the greater part of the city' (*civitatis pars maxima*). This certainly suggests a situation of conflict, but what exactly was going on? The *Vita* seems to suggest that the *popularum turba* – who must surely be understood as lower-status residents of the city – had themselves been stirred up by some other element or elements. Are the 'crowd' here being directed by members of the city elite

¹⁶² Heros: 'expelled by the people of the city, innocent and guilty of no charge' (Prosper, *Chron.* 1247 s. a. 412).

¹⁶³ See Mathisen 1989 on fluctuating tensions, rivalries and alliances and their outcomes in fifth-century Gaul.

¹⁶⁴ Leo, *Ep.* 10.6; Hilary's own *Vita* gives a rather different account: *V. Hil.* 21–2. See Heinzelmann 1992 and Mathisen 1989: 155–7, noting that Pope Zosimus had made a similar charge against Proculus of Marseille; that is, that he had associated with 'certain men suited for creating disturbances': *MGH Ep.* 3: 12 and see Mathisen 1989: 59–60. Episcopal bodyguards were seemingly a familiar feature in late antique Gaul: see Kreiner 2011: 341; Hilary had indeed become bishop with the aid of an armed group who had been sent to procure him for ordination at Arles: *V. Hil.* 9.

¹⁶⁵ *V. Hil.* 12. ¹⁶⁶ *V. Hil.* 13. ¹⁶⁷ *V. Hil.* 18.

(as the *Vita* perhaps imagines) or were they acting on their own initiative? We shall return to the question of agency and initiative later.

Sidonius Apollinaris' account of his visit to the court of Majorian in Arles in 461 provides a further anecdote that could possibly be suggestive as regards the socio-political activities of the non-elite. Sidonius recounts how the attribution to himself of an anonymous, dangerously satirical text about Majorian's court caused people he met to act strangely. We can assume that these are members of the local elite who feared being implicated – but what about people lower down the social scale? Sidonius claims that the whole(?) city was agog and angry (*inter haec fremere Arelatenses*).¹⁶⁸ In his satirical description of the scenes in the city's forum, he describes the uncomfortable Arlesians as a *turba factosiorum*.¹⁶⁹ At the centre of the account is Sidonius' accuser, one of the targets of the satire in question, the former prefect Paeonius, described as a *persona popularis* and as a classically flavoured demagogue, who stirs the people into a 'sea of sedition' and is later described as a *contionator*.¹⁷⁰ To further add to the republican-era flavour, Sidonius both quotes and alludes to Lucan.¹⁷¹ Sidonius' literary game is all too evident: it is hard to imagine any genuine popular element at work here.¹⁷² As common with elite texts – and perhaps especially visible in the case of Sidonius – our author's literary concerns on the one hand and his concern with uniquely intra-elite politics and relations on the other make him of very limited use as a 'source' for the activities and motivations of non-elites.

Despite the persistent use of cliché, we can nevertheless glimpse in this letter a broader and telling elite concern with the public presence of the non-elite in political or indeed semi-political contexts. Latin texts make persistent reference to *circuli*: informal open-air gatherings of the urban plebs, associated with the kind of urban loitering of which elite writers so disapproved, not only the kind of loitering for which Pompeii provides such clear evidence but also, intrinsically, the idea of popular speech.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁸ *inter haec fremere Arelatenses*, Sid. Apoll. Ep. 1.11.2. ¹⁶⁹ Sid. Apoll. Ep. 1.11.8.

¹⁷⁰ *sic levis turbae facilitatem qua voluit et traxit persona popularis. erat enim ipse Paeonius populi totus, qui tribuniciis flatibus crebro seditionium pelagus impelleret*, Ep. 1.11.4–5; *contionator*, 1.11.15.

¹⁷¹ *ut ait ille, nil fortiter ausa seditio* (= Lucan 5.322–3), Sid. Apoll. Ep. 1.11.7; he also refers to Paeonius as Curio, a tribune and key character in the *Pharsalia*, at 1.11.9.

¹⁷² Sid. Apoll. Ep. 8.6.5–6 recalls when he was present, as a young man at the installation of Asturius as consul in 448, when the orator Nicetius gave a panegyric. There is a nice, if brief, picture of the political theatre: *sportula* are given to those assembled, who call en masse for a speech from Nicetius (*non sensim singulatimque, sed tumultuatim petitus*, Ep. 8.6.5). However, we must surely imagine the 'crowd' present not as representing the populace of Arles but rather the highly elite members of the Assembly of the Gauls: *ab omni Galliae coetu*, Ep. 8.6.6.

¹⁷³ See O'Neill 2003; there is also an association with gossip, with local knowledge: see Hartnett 2017: 48–94; see on a similar theme Rosillo-López 2017: 92–4.

In the case of fourth-century Rome, Ammianus Marcellinus discusses, disparagingly, ‘the many *circuli* gathered together in the fora, at the crossroads, in the streets and other meeting-places in which people were engaged with one another in quarrelsome strife, some (as you’d expect) defending this, some defending that’.¹⁷⁴

In fifth-century North Africa Augustine uses the same word *circulus* to describe (disparagingly) the debates of the uneducated;¹⁷⁵ the term clearly designates unauthorized speech, a theme we will return to in Chapter 4. Back in Arles, Sidonius refers to *circulatores* clustering around Paeonius, and hanging on his words.¹⁷⁶ The *circulator* was a figure closely associated with the *circulus*, a public entertainer or storyteller who made his living from going around the people, a figure whose speech, again, was not sanctioned by the elite.¹⁷⁷ In late antiquity these terms remained widely used to connote popular gatherings in public space, and help us – despite the negative spin – to populate the city with popular culture.

While the day-to-day activities of the non-elite in the city often remain obscure, urban rioting and violence are distinctive features of late antique narratives, such as Ammianus Marcellinus’ accounts of riots in Rome¹⁷⁸ or Libanius’ lively depictions of urban violence in Antioch.¹⁷⁹ In the case of Arles there are only a few instances of urban violence that we know of; Hilary’s confrontation with the insulting crowd should probably be counted as a very minor instance.¹⁸⁰ The image of baying lynch mobs and religious violence remains a cliché of the period, nonetheless.¹⁸¹ We can, however, look to more nuanced assessments, such as those provided by Julio-Cesar Magalhães de Oliveira, who has identified a significant trend of

¹⁷⁴ Amm. Marc. 28.4.29; cited by Hartnett 2017: 48 and Magalhães de Oliveira 2017: 307–8.

¹⁷⁵ *Nonne ista cantant . . . et indocti in circulis, et docti in bibliothecis?*, Aug. *Du duabus animabus* 11.15 (CSEL 25.1); see Magalhães de Oliveira 2017: 307–9.

¹⁷⁶ Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 1.11.4.

¹⁷⁷ It is not surprising that Sidonius uses the term when satirically evoking popular street life in his account of this visit to Arles in 461: *Ep.* 1.11.4–5; see further on *circulatores*, with references, and stressing their link to popular politics, O’Neill 2003: 151–3.

¹⁷⁸ For example, Amm. Marc. 15.7.1–5, 19.10.1–4, 27.3.3–4; on the link between food shortages and riots in late antique Rome, see Kohns 1961.

¹⁷⁹ See pp. 210–1.

¹⁸⁰ While Bishop Patroclus had been murdered in 426, the context was one of elite power politics rather than urban violence, as discussed earlier.

¹⁸¹ Gibbon’s famous line comes to mind: ‘We shall conclude this chapter by a melancholy truth, which obtrudes itself on the reluctant mind; that even admitting, without hesitation or inquiry, all that history has recorded, or devotion has feigned, on the subject of martyrdoms, it must still be acknowledged, that the Christians, in the course of their intestine dissensions, have inflicted far greater severities on each other, than they had experienced from the zeal of infidels’: Gibbon 1992 [1776]: 147; compare MacMullen’s ‘violent tenor of life’: MacMullen 2003: 495.

increasing competition and conflict over public spaces and indeed new forms of ‘popular’ power in the late antique city.¹⁸² We could indeed interpret the account of the altercation between Hilary and the unhappy crowd as an instance where the urban *populus* make their views known to the bishop, and therefore as an episode suggestive of both urban tension and tension resolution (of a kind!).

Far more serious in its violence is the case of the attempted attack on the notary Licinianus, who had brought charges of treason against Caesarius in 504/5. Caesarius’ *Vita* recounts that when the bishop was released and returned to the city in 506, the *populus* responded not just by coming out to welcome him in a formal *adventus* but also by attempting to stone Licinianus, his accuser.¹⁸³ The hagiographers clearly found this coincidence uncomfortable and tried to avoid making a connection between the two outcomes: hence the *Vita* narrates the stoning of Licinianus at a slightly earlier juncture in the narrative and ascribes the punishment to the orders of the Visigothic ruler, Alaric.¹⁸⁴ It also recounts that the stoning was only halted at the last moment by the intercession of Caesarius himself, who requested pardon for his accuser.¹⁸⁵ Modern scholars have cast serious doubts on this framing of the event, pointing out that stoning is not a Roman or Visigothic legal punishment, although it is the biblical punishment for treachery and false witness.¹⁸⁶ So what actually happened? One possibility is that the clerical authorities themselves egged the population on, only to call them off again, as part of a basically staged ritual of reconciliation and episcopal authority.¹⁸⁷ Another possibility gives more agency to the urban community, seeing them as spontaneously acting in this extra-judicial way in support of their bishop.¹⁸⁸ We could thereby see them as involved in a ritual of community participation, exercising what they saw as popular justice, a legitimate power of the people.¹⁸⁹

These episodes are suggestive of the different ways in which the urban non-elite could act as a body. Episcopal elections represent an obvious occasion at which the notion of a *populus Dei* was constituted, even if accounts of these tend towards hagiographical commonplaces on the one hand and historiographical stereotypes on the other.¹⁹⁰ Late antique

¹⁸² See Magalhães de Oliveira 2014, 2019, 2020. ¹⁸³ *V. Caes.* 1.24.

¹⁸⁴ *accusatorem vero eius lapidari rex praecepit, V. Caes.* 1.24.

¹⁸⁵ *Iamque cum lapidibus populi concurrentes, subito ad aures eius iussio regis pervenit; statim festinus adsurgens intercessione sua vir sanctus non tam vindicatae suae accusatorem dari voluit, V. Caes.* 1.24.

¹⁸⁶ For example, Klingshirn, Bona and Delage in their notes on the *Vita* and Klingshirn 1994: 96.

¹⁸⁷ Thanks to Simon Loseby for this suggestion (pers. comm.). ¹⁸⁸ See Klingshirn 1994: 96.

¹⁸⁹ Along the lines of Magalhães de Oliveira’s analysis of the riot at Calama (Magalhães de Oliveira 2012: 261–74).

¹⁹⁰ See Norton 2007.

literary sources often praise unanimous elections: as when Leo the Great wrote in praise of the election of Ravennius to the episcopacy of Arles in 449 by ‘clergy, notables and *plebs*’.¹⁹¹ At the other end of the scale, Sidonius gives typically (and typically suspiciously!) lively accounts of contested elections further north, in which a large population took an interest.¹⁹² Peter Norton, in his study of late antique episcopal elections, stresses that ‘even in a society as undemocratic as late antiquity, the people played an important role in the choice of what was for most of them, the most important local official’.¹⁹³ Magalhães de Oliveira, meanwhile, sees this as just one of the ways in which there was more space for urban non-elites to assert their collective *favor* (or, indeed, its opposite) in late antiquity.¹⁹⁴

The urban plebs, it turns out, *are* visible in our literary sources, appearing as active agents in the public sphere, even if their motivations remain difficult to disentangle. It seems likely that professions and occupations still provided important means for constructing identity and organization. Public spaces, even taking into account the changes in urbanism in our period, still offered a place for the non-elite to gather and exchange views. Developments in late antiquity also offered new opportunities for the exercise of collective action, as with the rise to prominence of the bishop as a new urban patron and focus. And as we shall see in Chapter 6, the late antique city remained an important locus for festive behaviour, where social relations could be both modelled and challenged in different ways.

Performance and Leisure

With festive behaviour in mind, it is time, finally, to turn to what is the traditional place to start looking for popular culture in the ancient city: with the spectacular entertainments and leisure.

After the troubles of the third century, the traditional spectacles were all but dormant in late antique Gaul: even the most generous recent research struggles to find much sign of traditional *ludi* and *munera* after the middle of the fourth century.¹⁹⁵ Although dating remains difficult, archaeological evidence suggests that, in most cases, entertainment buildings were abandoned or incorporated into new city fortifications from the fourth century

¹⁹¹ Leo *Ep.* 40 (*MGH Ep.* 3: 15); compare the sixth-century epistolary *Vita* of Maximus of Riez, which also praises his unanimous election (in 434) by clergy and citizens alike: Dynamius, *Vita S. Maximi* 6 (*PL* 80.035D).

¹⁹² Sid. *Apoll. Ep.* 4.25 (Chalon-sur-Saône), 7.5.1 (Bourges). ¹⁹³ Norton 2007: 6.

¹⁹⁴ Magalhães de Oliveira 2020: especially 23–4.

¹⁹⁵ See Dumasy 2008; Heijmans 2006a; Puk 2014: 114–16, 163–5, 300–6.

onwards. In the fifth and sixth centuries they tended to undergo new forms of occupation, notably artisanal and domestic, as well as suffering from demolition and spoliation. This applies to southern France as much as elsewhere in late antique Gaul. For instance, the theatre at Apt seems to have been abandoned as early as the end of the third century, with re-occupation setting in around the end of the fifth century,¹⁹⁶ which seems to have been a key period for re-occupation.¹⁹⁷

Arles, home to a theatre, amphitheatre and circus, was exceptional. Even the very presence of a circus in Roman Gaul was unusual – the only other known examples are at Lyon, Trier and Vienne. It seems unlikely that the theatrical and amphitheatre games were still ongoing in late antiquity. As elsewhere, conclusive archaeological evidence for the definitive date of the abandonment of the theatre and amphitheatre is lacking (not helped by enthusiastic nineteenth-century restoration), though a date early in the fifth century seems most likely for both, thus fitting the broader regional pattern. For the theatre, the most recent assessment dates its incorporation into the new fortifications of the city during the fifth century.¹⁹⁸ An episode from the *Vita* of Hilary has been influential in this dating. It recounts how Hilary miraculously healed the foot of a deacon who had been injured while supervising the removal of marble from the proscenium of the theatre for re-use in the construction of the bishop's new church (it landed on his foot).¹⁹⁹ It is of course possible that performances were still put on in the theatre after this point, but this seems unlikely. As for the amphitheatre, there is evidence of spoliation for construction material and of 'parasitical' constructions, as well as the presence of mid-fifth-century coins in the subterranean areas, strongly suggesting re-occupation at this point, although this cannot be conclusive.²⁰⁰ The circus, however, presents a rather different picture: the continuity of the circus games in late antiquity was no doubt due to the prestige of Arles as an imperial capital, and, furthermore, down to the occasional presence of the emperor in person.²⁰¹ It benefited from substantial improvements in the early

¹⁹⁶ De Michèle and Doray 2007.

¹⁹⁷ At Aix domestic occupation of the theatre can be seen in the fifth century, but it is clear that even before this period there had already been some dismantling of architectural elements: see Nin 2006. The theatre at Marseille was also reoccupied during the fifth century, as evidenced by the presence of ceramics and several hearths: Rothé and Tréziny 2005: 25^r = pp. 326–31.

¹⁹⁸ Heijmans 2004: 95–6; Rothé and Heijmans 2008: 300–1. The dating of this abandonment is dependent on a dating of the reduced late antique wall circuit, on which see n. 13.

¹⁹⁹ *V. Hil.* 20: unsurprisingly, the *Life* does not miss the opportunity to refer to the theatre as a *locus luxuriae*.

²⁰⁰ Rothé and Heijmans 2008: 283, 286–7; Sintès 1994: 190 is cautious regarding the dating of this re-occupation.

²⁰¹ See Dumasy 2008: 71, 78–9; Puk 2014: 163–5.

fourth century (which might have included the erection of the obelisk that today stands in front of the Hôtel de Ville).²⁰² At the start of the fifth-century, housing was built abutting the exterior of the circus in what seems to have been an official, planned project.²⁰³ However, this did not stop the chariot races, which seem to have continued even up to the middle of the sixth century, after which they seem finally to have been abandoned.²⁰⁴

When it comes to the place of the traditional spectacles in the life and ideology of the late antique city, there is a striking disconnect between the archaeological and literary ‘evidence’. While the archaeological evidence testifies to the cessation of traditional civic spectacle entertainment, ecclesiastical discourse manifests a continuing obsession with the ‘immoral spectacles’.²⁰⁵ The most notorious case is Salvian (writing in the 440s), who devotes a goodly portion of his jeremiad on the state of things to decrying the immorality of the spectacles – before admitting that they had generally already been discontinued in Gaul, for financial reasons.²⁰⁶ Salvian thereby demonstrates just how good the spectacles were to think with – or rather to rail against. By the time he wrote, rhetorical condemnation of the shows – as immoral and polluting, as tainted by their pagan origins – was a firmly established and popular (read, highly clichéd) topic in preaching. The shows, especially the theatrical and gladiatorial games, functioned as a potent symbol of the profane world against which the late antique church sought to define itself, and perhaps too as a historicized form of ‘profane’ culture.²⁰⁷

We see even more seemingly ‘practical’ texts continue to make ideological capital out of the spectacles. The canons of church councils include

²⁰² For the late antique phase of the circus, see the useful summary and bibliography given in Rothé and Heijmans 2008: 425–9; see too Heijmans 2004: 360–5.

²⁰³ These habitations, dated by the finds, were clearly carefully planned by the authorities. See Heijmans 2004: 360–5; Rothé and Heijmans 2008: 426–9.

²⁰⁴ Continuity of use up to 461 is confirmed by Sidonius (*Ep.* 1.11.10) and to the mid-sixth century by Procopius, *Goth.* 7.33.5. Most convincing of all is the archaeological evidence: the main road from city to circus was resurfaced in the fifth century, and abandonment of the circus itself only took place at the end of the sixth century: Sintès 1994. Barbarian kings in the west tended to favour circus races, valuing their symbolism and the role they could play in promoting continuity in an (imperial) Roman cultural identity. This remains the case even if we choose to read Gregory’s mocking account of Chilperic starting to build circuses at Soissons and Paris in the late 570s as a jibe at that leader’s imperial pretensions rather than as a serious account: *apud Sessionas atque Parisius circus aedificare praecipit, eosque populis spectaculum praebens*, *Hist.* 5.17.

²⁰⁵ There is a large bibliography on patristic responses to the spectacles; see, for instance, Jürgens 1972; Weismann 1972; Lugaresi 2008 (on the spectacles in general); and Webb 2008 (on pantomime, mime and dance in particular).

²⁰⁶ Salvian, *De gub. Dei* Book 6 is largely devoted to the spectacles; for example, *non agitur denique in plurimis Galliarum urbibus et Hispaniarum*, 6.39; *calamitas enim fisci et mendicitas iam Romani aerarii non sint et ubique in res nugatorias perditae profundantur expensae*, 6.43.

²⁰⁷ See Markus 1990: 171–4; Webb 2008: 198–201 and *passim*; Puk 2014: especially 21–49.

strictures aimed at both performers and those attending the shows, especially around the mid-fifth century; that is, during the period when other evidence suggests the *ludi* were largely in abeyance. Excommunication was prescribed not just for charioteers and theatrical performers but also for anyone attending the *spectacula* after church.²⁰⁸ It is not surprising then to find Caesarius repeating traditional condemnations of the ‘cruel and shameless’ spectacles on a number of occasions.²⁰⁹ We find him, as so often, in full ‘cut-and-paste’ mode. His vocabulary describing the games is traditional (*cruenta, furiosa, turpia*), including the old chestnut about the shows being the *pompae diaboli*.²¹⁰ His stock attacks tend to be brief and formulaic, and couple together all the traditional types of entertainment, as is also typical elsewhere.²¹¹ The essentially symbolic nature of the critique of the *spectacula* developed by Caesarius is most clearly highlighted in *Serm.* 152, where he develops a metaphorical account of the amphitheatre games at some length. He begins his account, as is common, with Paul’s claim that humans have been made ‘a spectacle to God and the angels’,²¹² and develops the idea of a life as an *arena mundi*. He then goes on to claim that within each of us is a ‘spiritual amphitheatre’ and proceeds to elaborate upon this idea, listing a wide range of animals, representatives of different sins, that we find in our internal amphitheatre; that is, in our consciences.²¹³ The animals listed certainly go far beyond what one might expect to find in the amphitheatre at Arles, including snakes, pigs, elephants, panthers and vultures.²¹⁴ Using Caesarius’ sermons as evidence for the continuation of theatrical and arena games would therefore be unwise.²¹⁵

The cessation of the traditional spectacles was clearly caused by much more than the dislike of bishops and monks. It speaks to some of the fundamental changes in the late ancient city that we have been considering. In the place of classical urbanism, funded by traditional euergetism, we have

²⁰⁸ *De agitatoribus sive theatricis qui fideles sunt, placuit eos, quamdiu agunt, a communione separari*; Conc. Arelat. a. 442–50 can. 20; *Qui die sollempni, praetermisso ecclesiae conventu, ad spectacula vadit, excommunicetur, Statuta ecclesiae antiqua* 33.

²⁰⁹ Caes. *Serm.* 12.4, 31.2, 61.3, 89.5, 134.1, 150.3.

²¹⁰ *Omnia spectacula vel furiosa vel cruenta vel turpia, pompae diaboli sunt*, Caes. *Serm.* 12.4.

²¹¹ For example, *Noveritis nos tristes esse vel anxios, et ideo venite, dissimulemus nos, aut ad circum aut ad theatrum euntes, aut ad tabulam ludentes, aut in aliquibus nos venationibus exercentes* (‘You know we are sad and anxious, so come on, let us deceive ourselves by going to the circus or the theatre, or playing dice at table, or exercising ourselves in some kind of hunting’), Caes. *Serm.* 61.3.

²¹² 1 Cor. 4.9. Compare Augustine, *Serm.* 51.2; *In ps.* 39.9.

²¹³ On animals in the early Christian imaginary, see Cox Miller 2018. ²¹⁴ Caes. *Serm.* 152.3.

²¹⁵ This point is made by Hen 1995: 217–18. Markus 1990: 207–8 is cautious, though he strangely does allow for the possibility that the games could have been re-established at this time.

seen the built environment become in many respects a more utilitarian space, in which the all-too-real threat of military invasion made massive entertainment structures the most attractive as buildings to incorporate into fortifications. As for the funding of the games, it is clear that local elites were clearly either no longer willing or able (or both) to act as traditional public benefactors. The late continuation of the circus games in imperial Arles is an interesting exception that demonstrates the role of contingency and the need for a more nuanced interpretation of the fate of public entertainment. The view of the church was not necessarily the same as that of imperial government (whether that of Rome or the successor states) or indeed that of local elites (whose views remain unfortunately obscure). The idea that civic festivals and their spectacles provided for a *laetitia populi*, that should be preserved by a good emperor,²¹⁶ held a strong ideological pull that the church had considerable difficulty in countermanding.²¹⁷ We will indeed see this kind of triangulation in detail in Chapter 6 in the discussion of celebration of the Kalends of January. In the meantime, we can begin to think about ways in which the transformation of the ancient city facilitated new forms of popular culture.

In our search for popular culture in late antique Arles, as in other cities in southern Gaul, we must look beyond the traditional Roman *spectacula*. The demise of the majority of these left space of various kinds – for the church to exert their claim to social and ideological control but also for others, as individuals or as groups, to develop alternative practices. As part of a study of the transformation of popular culture in late antiquity we will not least have to think in terms of a more ‘bottom-up’ popular culture. Not all types of performance required grand structures or official funding. Some of the later Gallic canons do indeed seem to have had more informal entertainments in mind, for instance, the Council of Vannes in 461 was concerned with dances at social gatherings, and their stricture against clergy attendance at such events was repeated exactly at the Council of Agde, presided over by Caesarius, in 506.²¹⁸ Archaeological evidence unfortunately cannot help us explore these activities, just as it cannot enable us to view other sites of urban popular sociability such as taverns or indeed brothels, as can be done for Pompeii. Nonetheless, we do need to think in terms of a ‘do it yourself’ popular culture, involving such activities

²¹⁶ As in *CTh* 15. 6.1 (April 396), in this case preserving the *Maiuma*.

²¹⁷ See here Puk 2014: 53–155; Belayche 2007; and, for continuity in the barbarian kingdoms, Soler and Thelamon 2008.

²¹⁸ Conc. Venet. a.461–91 can. 11, repeated exactly in Conc. Agath. a.506 can. 13.39: clergy were to avoid gatherings *ubi obsceni motus corporum choris et saltibus efferentur*.

as drinking, gaming, singing and dancing, as well as various types of informal performance, held in the context of informal sociability and conviviality rather than sponsored by the local civic elite. I shall return to this theme in more detail in later chapters, looking more closely both at the practices involved and the ecclesiastical opprobrium they provoked.

Conclusions

Clearly, the evidence from cities like Arles and Marseille cannot provide us with as rich a picture of popular culture as can be gleaned from Pompeii or even Aphrodisias. However, considering both the urban environment on the one hand and key topics such as employment, identity and social relations on the other provides a framework for understanding popular culture as fully embedded in late antique society and culture. Southern Gallic cities were home to a culturally and socially diverse non-elite population who maintained some of the traditional modes of self-expression but also made use of new opportunities, responding to the changing circumstances of the period. We have been able to see, even through and despite the stereotyped depictions given by the elite, the presence of the urban plebs in public space and their capacity to make their voices heard.

A shift of focus from the tired debate of transformation/decline of the classical city is needed in future research in order to think about how the non-elite experienced urban life in late antiquity. There were substantial changes in terms of both public and private space in our period, changes that impacted upon living standards and opportunities for the experience of popular culture alike. Despite the changing use of public spaces, long-standing forms of non-elite communication and self-expression continued. However, changes in civic leadership and ideology – the decline in the prominence of the traditional civic elite and the rise of the figure of the bishop – also provided new opportunities for this expression and communication, which could be taken advantage of by the urban *populus*. The widespread desuetude of the sponsored spectacles entailed the development of more ‘do it yourself’ forms of entertainment, as well as facilitating spaces for ideological takeover by ecclesiastical discourse. Later chapters will probe more deeply into both substantive aspects of popular culture (what did people actually *do*?) and interpretations of this culture, but for now it is time to turn to the countryside, where looking at the material record in particular will again enable us to see the social and economic contexts of this culture more closely.