Elke Stein-Hölkeskamp, *Das römische Gastmahl: Eine Kulturgeschichte*, Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2005. 364 pp. ISBN-13: 978-3-406-52890-3.

This elegant and lucid book by Stein-Hölkeskamp (S-H) is a welcome contribution to the recently burgeoning field of Roman dining.[1] It is a broad survey, executed in chapters of varying length and eclectic content. The prose is lively, full of wordplay, and a pleasure to read; all notes are at the end; the book contains much basic information about Roman history and society in general; there is no untranslated Greek or Latin in the text; it is beautifully produced and edited — in short, the book is aimed at that fabled audience of educated, interested non-specialists (a readership I hope actually exists in Germanophone countries, as it does not in Anglophone countries). Yet, as befits a synthetic study by a prominent senior scholar, it also has considerable scholarly ambitions.[2] As the subtitle indicates, the author seeks to illuminate this field from a specifically 'cultural' angle, i.e., to examine those symbolic dimensions of Roman dining that bear important social meanings for the diners, and to consider how these meanings relate to those produced in other arenas of Roman social life.

In the introduction ('Medien und Methoden'), S-H delimits the scope of her study: chronologically, it focuses on the period from Cicero to Pliny; it is based mostly on literary texts; and — following from the textual focus — deals mostly with elites, the primary producers and consumers of such texts. Here S-H also stresses a theoretical point central to the 'cultural' approach: that these texts give us *representations* of Roman dining, representations aimed more at affirming or challenging various social ideals and values, and at positioning the (represented) diners in various social and ethical relations to one another and to society at large, than at accurately depicting actual dining events. The difficulty, of course — as S-H discusses in the brief first chapter, 'Alltag und Festtag: die Allgegenwart des Gastmahls' — is that, in order to comprehend the symbolic, ideological position-takings that the texts foreground and thematize, one needs to know *something* about normal social practice; yet this information too must come from these same representations. To address this problem, she describes a method (25-26), adapted from Homeric studies, of seeking actual practice in the 'unemphasized background representations', as opposed to the foregrounded, thematized elements that are ideologically and socially loaded: in the background one can find the assumptions about social practices and values that are presupposed so that the thematized elements can carry their intended point. While this method is familiar and even instinctive to scholars who work on (what have traditionally been called) 'daily life' topics, S-H's explicit theorizing of the method is welcome — even if she herself does not apply it rigorously on every occasion when it might be adduced.

Chapter two, 'Die Einladungen', describes briefly (5 pages) the social dynamics and pragmatics of inviting guests to dinner — who invites whom, what sort of obligation and social positionality the guest assumes by accepting, and how and under what circumstances the guest reciprocates the invitation. Chapter three, 'Die Teilnehmer', examines more expansively an array

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1 Pertinent recent studies include A. Zaccaria Ruggiu, *Regio More Vivere: il banchetto aristocratico e la casa romana di età arcaica* (Rome 2003); J. Donahue (ed.), *Roman Dining* (Baltimore 2003, = *AJP* 124.3); K. Dunbabin, *The Roman Banquet: Images of Conviviality* (Cambridge 2003); J. Donahue, *The Roman Community at Table during the Principate* (Ann Arbor 2004); A. Bettenworth, *Gastmahlszenen in der antiken Epik von Homer bis Claudian* (Göttingen 2004); K. Vössing, *Das Bankett beim hellenistischen König und beim römischen Kaiser* (Munich 2004); M. Roller, *Dining Posture in Ancient Rome: Bodies, Values, and Status* (Princeton 2006). For recent scholarship on (Graeco-) Roman food and gastronomy in the narrower sense — another burgeoning field — see S. Weingarten's review article, 'Food for Thought: Some Recent Books on Ancient Greek and Roman Food', *SCI* 26 (2007), 205-10.

2 Certain arguments found in this book were presented by S-H in articles from the early 2000s (full references in this book's bibliography), though book and articles by no means duplicate one another.

of questions about participation in an aristocratic *convivium:* the number of participants, the dynamics of having the emperor present, how poets represent these events and their own participation therein, the presence and role of women, age differentials, status differentials and status-graded positions on the couches. Some overarching themes link these eclectic topics: the different forms in which the norm of reciprocity is manifested (e.g., emperors and aristocrats may counter-invite, while socio-economically inferior poets and other clients offer their aristocratic hosts other products and services in exchange for an invitation); the educative or acculturative functions of the *convivium*, especially for children and adolescents; and the broader tension between social familiarity and social reserve among participants who may be separated by age, sex, and status. S-H despairs (85-86) of recovering actualities of women's commensality from our male-authored texts; here, however, is a case where carefully applying the 'foreground/background' method, and including visual representations, may allow for more progress than she foresees.[3]

Chapter four, 'Von der Tür zur Tafel: das Gastmahl in Zeit und Raum', takes up various topics relating to the times, spaces, and accoutrements of Roman dining. S-H begins by discussing the spaces for dining, especially in villas; then she considers the types of dining furniture and drinking vessels used in aristocratic *convivia,* and the materials from which such equipment could be made. Here too, several overarching themes unify seemingly disparate material: the nature of 'luxury' and the forms it takes in convivial settings; the social function of the distinctions among various materials, and of the conoisseurship that accompanied the use of rarer, costlier materials. Chapter five, 'Ein kulinarischer Kosmos', pursues the same themes through a survey of foodstuffs proper. This chapter opens by discussing several major figures in Roman food history (as recognized by their own contemporaries), clustering in the late Republic: Sergius Orata and Licinius Murena of fish fame; also Licinius Lucullus, successful general turned gourmand, who singlehandedly legitimated dining practices as a valid arena of aristocratic competition in the Ciceronian era. S-H then turns to the actual foodstuffs and wines served in Roman *convivia.* She propounds a simple but consequential principle for understanding the hierarchies of food: the harder a delicacy is to procure, the greater the distance from which it must be brought to Rome, and the more elaborately it is prepared, the greater the social value attached to it. Wines are a noteworthy exception, where Italian varieties like Caecuban, Setian, and Falernian are in this period as highly prized as long-celebrated Greek varieties like Chian; here extra social value is conferred by age (an index of rarity) and special characteristics of particular wines. The social hierarchies based on culinary practices of course provide rich fodder for satiric and philosophical writers, who can present the pursuit of such distinction as inverting nature and as destroying the ideal of the 'equal meal', hence as manifesting a breakdown in social relations.

Chapter six, 'Gelehrte Gespräche, Flirts und andere Frivolitäten: Was treiben die Römer bei Tisch?', tackles the hoary matter of conversation topics at Roman *convivia,* the character of the entertainments on offer (including displays of aristocratic cultural capital, e.g., the recitation of the host's poetry or historiographical writing), and, in general, the relationship between the civic and dining spheres. The *otium-negotium* distinction is important here, as different writers and participants express differing views regarding to what extent, if at all, the affairs of the forum should be excluded from the dining room. This chapter follows a chronological trajectory, from Cicero to Augustus to the Flavians to Pliny, with an ample discussion of convivial literature — literary productions recited in *convivia*, as well as those that take conviviality as their subject — enclosed in the middle.

A very short chapter on the end of the *convivium* ('Heimkehr beim ersten Hahnenschrei'), where the particular times and modes of returning home from a *convivium* are shown to be morally coded, and an equally brief, summary conclusion ('Zwischen Moden und Metaphern: das

3 So I argue at greater length in chapter 2 of my *Dining Posture* (n. 1 above).

Gastmahl in der römischen Kultur'), round out the main text. In addition to bibliography and notes, the back matter contains four maps, a glossary of Latin terms, and an index of important persons discussed in the text (to assist the interested non-specialist reader).

As an ambitious overview, S-H's book probably bears closest comparison to Katherine Dunbabin's synthetic overview from 2003 (n. 1 above). Though Dunbabin takes visual representations as her primary form of evidence, while S-H's sources are almost exclusively literary, and while these authors' scholarly approaches are very different, the books in the end are strikingly complementary: each reminds the other (and the reader) that the truly great synthetic analysis of Roman dining — one that finds a way to integrate textual, visual, and archaeological evidence within a single analytic framework — remains to be written. Until then, these two studies stand as the landmark modern overviews, while the more focused studies listed in n. 1 above offer deeper discussion of narrower topics within the field of Roman commensality.

S-H's lucid, lively prose should make this book accessible to scholars with other mother-tongues, who might be inclined to shy away from long books in academic German. Moreover, its modular structure — discussions of particular matters seldom exceed 15 pages, and are often much shorter — makes it rewarding simply to 'dip in' and read a bit here or there. A feast in its own right, this book is, however, more *tapas* or *dim sum* than *convivium,* and can be approached with enjoyment and profit in this paratactic, piecemeal manner.

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Nicholas Horsfall, *Virgil, Aeneid 3: A Commentary* (Mnemosyne Supplement 273), Leiden: Brill, 2006. LIV + 513 pp. ISBN-10: 90-04-14828-0.

After *Aeneid* 7 (2000) and 11 (2003), Nicholas Horsfall (=H.) has turned to *Aeneid* 3, producing yet another monumental commentary. Like the previous volumes, the present work consists of an introduction, a Latin text (without critical apparatus), an English translation, and an immensely learned, original and stimulating commentary.

Unlike its most recent English predecessor, i.e. Williams' commentary on *Aeneid* 3 of 1962, H.'s work is clearly written not for students but for advanced Vergilian scholars. This becomes most obvious in the introduction, which does not 'introduce' the reader to *Aeneid* 3, but often resembles a collection of notes (frequently introduced by 'Note ...', or 'Note also ...') or critical replies to other scholars' work. Throughout, H. provides extensive and up-to-date bibliography and makes many acute comments, but the contextualization of the individual points is sometimes poor and it is often up to the reader to connect the details and form a coherent picture. This is particularly true of the first two sections of the introduction, which are devoted to the book's structure and its place in the general framework of the *Aeneid* (helpful only for those who already know the *Aeneid* intimately). Section 3 on 'language, grammar, syntax, style, metre' is little more than a collection of nautical and religious expressions and a list of passages where (according to H.) Vergil imitates Homer, Ennius, Roman tragedy, Lucretius, Catullus or Cicero. H.'s claim that there is 'Lucretian idiom and thought on a formidable scale' (xvi) results from a rather odd way of classifying Latin expressions (see below), and generally the material presented here ought to be consulted with caution. More reliable and helpful is the short treatment of Vergil's sources (section 4), in which H. rightly accentuates Vergil's indebtedness to the traditions of *periploi* and colonization narratives. Sections 5 and 6 of the introduction are devoted to a detailed and extensive discussion of the 'growth' of the epic: H. convincingly argues that book three may have been one of the first books of the *Aeneid* that Vergil composed, and he persuasively suggests that the 'striking variations of tone and manner' in this book may reflect the poet's experimenting in the new medium of heroic epic. On the whole, one gets the impression that the introduction was