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V. Dasen (Hrsg.): *Children, Memory, and Family Identity in Roman Culture*

Two distinguished scholars of the Roman family both teaching in Switzerland, Veronique Dasen, professor of classical archaeology at the University of Fribourg, and Thomas Späth, professor of ancient cultures and constructions of antiquity at the University of Bern, follow with this volume in the footsteps of the late Beryl Rawson and continue her quest for a better understanding of the history of the Roman family. Dasen and Späth want to reveal a highly diversified, multifaceted picture of the Roman family and confront the ideal-typical family with the various family forms existing in actual practice (p. 15). The volume focuses on the role of children in Roman society for the transmission of social memory and is based on a selection of papers given at the 5th international *Roman Family Conference* which took place under the theme *Secret Families, Family Secrets* at the University of Fribourg in June 2007. It was the first Roman Family Conference taking place in Europe with mainly continental European scholars, a fact that might explain its distinctive scope and focus which differs slightly from the previous ones.

The essays are categorized into two sections. The first essays sort through family identities and traditions, and especially the role of children in their transmission. The second group of essays deals with children on the margins of society, the *vernae* and Junia Latins, the *deliciae*, *expositi*, the sick and illegitimate children. Catherine Baroin opens the collection with several case studies demonstrating how a son was supposed to be the living image of his father remembering the latter by imitating his *exemplum*. She argues that the imitation of his conduct, qualities, career and the identity of names of father and son and physical resemblance ideally resulted in a fusion of the two individuals by society. Ann-Cathrin Harders deals with the common loss of one’s father to death or divorce and shows how in the absence of the father the socially expected *imitatio patris* was replaced by the *imitatio surrogate*. We find here a conflict between traditional Roman beliefs and actual social practice. Harders discusses three exemplary cases of fatherless young men who were raised by father surrogates, the Gracchi, Cato the younger, and Brutus.

Francesca Prescendi talks about the presence of children at religious ceremonies and the way and meth-
The usual difficulty with the edition of a collection of essays is coherence of papers. This issue, however, has been expertly solved here. Many of the contributions overlap thematically, occasionally even serve as foils for the next one and cite each other with frequent cross-references. The past four volumes of previous *Roman Family Conference* proceedings Beryl Rawson (ed.), The Family in Ancient Rome. New Perspectives, London 1986; Beryl Rawson (ed.), Marriage, Divorce, and Children in Ancient Rome, Oxford 1991; Beryl Rawson / Paul Weaver (eds), The Roman Family in Italy. Status, Sentiment, Space, Canberra 1997; Michele George (ed.), The Roman Family in the Empire. Rome, Italy, and Beyond, Oxford 2005. expanded, however, each time the bound-
aries of topics on the Roman family methodologically, chronologically as well as geographically. Especially the preceding 4th Roman Family volume, the first one not edited by Beryl Rawson but Michele George, extended its scope far beyond Italy in order to investigate regional diversity stretching the entire Roman Empire from Spain in the West to Egypt in the East, and from Gaul in the North to Roman Africa in the South. George (ed.), Roman Family in the Empire. This present volume, however, restricts itself again almost exclusively on the elite and sub-elite family of the city of Rome in late republican and early imperial times, reminding us of the beginning of family studies in the 1980s and the first Roman Family Conference held in Canberra in 1981. Rawson (ed.), Family in Ancient Rome. There are only few attempts to grasp the family of the lower social strata that is not the small group of prosperous Roman freedmen, but the peasant farmers, small traders and craftsmen of the Roman empire who made up for around 95 percent of any ancient population. The contributions by Judith Evans Grubbs, a cross-cultural approach to the exposure of unwanted children, and the one by Ville Vuolanto on the yet insufficiently studied topic of family life in late antiquity, constitute here the highly welcome exceptions.

Moreover, many of the contributions, such as the essays on slave children or Gourevitch’s chapter on sick children, would have benefited from taking approaches and results from population studies of the ancient Mediterranean into consideration. Historical demography focusing on fertility and mortality rates, average life expectancy, overlap of generations, household size and the life cycle of households on the one hand, and ecological factors, climatic stresses and disease environments on the other, factors that all had a decisive influence on the composition of the family and the strategies it employed for its survival, has been one of the most progressive and lively debated fields in ancient family studies in recent years at least in the Anglophone world. See e.g. Walter Scheidel (ed.), Debating Roman Demography, Leiden 2001; Robert Sallares, Malaria and Rome. A History of Malaria in Ancient Italy, New York 2002; Sabine R. Huebner / David M. Ratzan (eds.), Growing up Fatherless in Antiquity, Cambridge 2009; Claire Holleran / April Pudsey (eds.), Demography and the Graeco-Roman World. New Insights and Approaches, Cambridge 2011.

Other chapters, such as Prescendi’s contribution on children and the transmission of religious knowledge and Moreau’s essay on the children of incest would have greatly profited by including some cross-cultural comparison with other regions of the Roman world, such as the obvious case of apparently prolific incestuous marriages in Roman Egypt. This volume more than the preceding ones reflects a distinctive pattern of current research on the Roman family that sets a structural perspective against an emphasis on pragmatic mechanisms of everyday actions and behaviors while focusing on conceptual tools such as cultural memory and the construction of social identity, a stream of research that especially German and French scholars have engaged in recent years.

Overall, however, the editors have produced a beautiful, rich and complex volume accessible to a broad readership, and its contributions add numerous intrinsic details to our knowledge of children’s lives in Roman society. This worthwhile contribution to the field recommends itself as a useful addition to any university classics library.

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