Dasen, Véronique; Späth, Thomas (Hrsg.): *Children, Memory, and Family Identity in Roman Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2010. ISBN: 978-0-19-958257-0; XVI, 373 S.

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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 methods of religious instruction. She demonstrates how children learnt by observing adults performing religious rites without explanatory discourse, or by assisting them. Children were considered of cultic purity, a fundamental characteristic that made them desirable as assistant in religious rites or for priest apprenticeship. Moreover, the preference for children whose parents were both still alive for certain rites is interpreted by Prescendi as a desire for perfection; having both parents alive was a symbolic value for integrity and completeness. Michel Fuchs takes a look at children's representation in Augustan landscape paintings, especially in depictions of daily life and domestic cult. He comes to the conclusion that boys were favored over girls in the public political religious sphere while girls accompanied their mothers in rites for rural deities and cared for sacred gardens learning from their mothers through observation and imitation.

Véronique Dasen contributes a study on different ways of honoring and memorizing one's ancestors in elite and non-elite families. She interprets the depiction of children in plaster masks among freedmen's families as their unique way of adopting aristocratic habits. In the absence of *imagines maiorum* of honorable ancestors, she argues, freeborn children of a freedmen couple took over this function of perpetuating family memory and identity. The non-elite people valued their descendants more than their ancestors placing their pride in a future lineage. Yet, she suggests also another explanation for the increasing desire to keep a faithful memory of the facial features of a child, the growing popularity of Egyptian religion in Rome in the early imperial period. Thomas Späth discusses the

gender-specific differences in Cicero's relationship with his son and his daughter and comes to the conclusion that in both cases Cicero rationally exploited his children in his „specifically Roman paternal love" (p. 170) for maintaining family tradition and enhancing the prestige of his *domus* among the Senate aristocracy. Ville Vuolanto examines the evidence for children as carriers of family memory in late antiquity drawing on the writings of ecclesiastical authors of the late fourth and early fifth century. He concludes that despite the new ideal of ascetism and the Church taking over the role of the family in the commemoration of the dead, the importance of children for family memory, perpetuation of the family name and tendance of the tombs remained unshaken.

The second part of the volume deals with children who were deliberately or accidentally excluded from family memory. In the first chapter, Beryl Rawson analyzes the evidence for *vernae*, whom she interprets as slaves born at home, and discusses the flexibility of status in Roman society and the diverse roles of slave and ex-slave children in providing support and continuing family memory. Slave children seems to have been also circulated between households in form of loans, gifts, settlement of debts, or as transfer of property after death or divorce, which once more stresses the fluidity of Roman society and the wide range of family relationships outside the household. Francesca Mencacci cites passages from Seneca illustrating the little surprising differences in the relationships between fathers and their sons on the one hand, and masters and their *vernae* on the other hand. While fathers brought up their sons with strict *disciplina* from a very early age on, they found pleasure and entertainment in their young slaves' *garrulitas* and *lascivia* not permitted to free children. However, as Mencacci notes, these slave children also rarely enjoyed a close emotional bond with their masters and could be easily replaced. Her chapter serves as a foil for the next one by Christian Laes who deals with a similar topic, the so-called *delicia* children. He analyzes the wide-ranging use of the term *deliciae* in four poems of Statius' *Silvae*, from pet or lust object to foster child, and their function as vehicle for their aristocrat owners' display of wealth, luxury and social connections. In the following chapter, Daniele Gourevitch discusses various case histories of sick children, most of them from imperial or senatorial families, and their respective caregivers mentioned in the writings of Galen. One of the most intriguing articles in this volume is Judith Evans Grubbs' chapter on exposure of children, the chances of their survival and later reunion with their natural parents. Philippe Moreau concludes the volume with an essay on the unquestionably rather rare cases of incestuous unions in Rome that resulted in offspring and these children's status in Roman society.

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[1] expanded, however, each time the boundaries 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.[2] 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.[3] There are only few attempts to grasp the family of the lower social strata – that is not the small group of prosper-

[1] 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.

[2] George (ed.), Roman Family in the Empire.

[3] Rawson (ed.), Family in Ancient Rome.

ous 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.[4]

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 proceeding 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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[4] 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.