



CHILDHOOD, CLASS  
AND KIN IN THE  
ROMAN WORLD

EDITED BY SUZANNE DIXON

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*Edited by Suzanne Dixon*



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*Suzanne Dixon*  
*University of Queensland, Australia*

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Keith Bradley** is Professor and Chair in the Department of Greek and Roman Studies, University of Victoria, a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and of the Royal Society of Canada. His principal interests lie in the social and cultural history of Rome. His publications include *Discovering the Roman Family* (1991), *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire* (1987), *Slavery and Rebellion in the Roman World, 140 BC – 70 BC* (1998), and *Slavery and Society at Rome* (1994). The essay in this book was written during his tenure of a Canada Council Killam research fellowship.

**Mireille Corbier**, a trained epigrapher, is a graduate of l'École Normale Supérieure and a long-standing member of l'École Française de Rome. She is *directeur de recherche* at the Centre national de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) in Paris and *directeur* of *L'Année épigraphique*. Her prolific publications cover public finances, euergetism, kinship, food and literacy in the Roman Empire. She has organised cross-disciplinary conferences on issues concerning the history of childhood and is the author of *L'aerarium Saturni et l'aerarium militare* (Rome, 1974), *Indulgentia Principis* (Brussels, forthcoming), and editor of *Adoption et 'Fosterage'* (Paris, 1999). She is presently at work on a collection of articles, *Pouvoir, parenté, patrimoine*.

**Fiona Crowe** is a graduate of the Australian National University and the University of Western Australia and is currently a doctoral candidate at Cambridge University.

**Suzanne Dixon** is a Reader in Classics and Ancient History at the University of Queensland. She has published extensively on Roman law and society, and has a particular interest in issues of

gender, kinship, work and exchange. Her publications include *The Roman Mother* (1988), *The Roman Family* (1992) and *Reading Roman Women* (2000). She co-edited *Pre-Industrial Women* (1984) and *Stereotypes of Women in Power* (1992), both of which emanated from conferences she had organised.

**Jane Gardner** is Emeritus Professor of Ancient History, University of Reading, and currently also Special Professor in the Department of Classics, University of Nottingham. She has published extensively on Roman legal and social history, and is specially interested in ex-slaves and their families, limitations on legal rights, and the development of Roman family law. Her publications include *Women in Roman Law and Society* (1986), *Being a Roman Citizen* (1993), *Family and Familia in Roman Law and Life*, and, with Thomas Wiedemann, *The Roman Household* (1991).

**Michele George** is an associate professor in the Classics Department at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, where she teaches Roman art and archaeology. She has published on Roman domestic architecture and the iconography of Roman slavery.

**Hugh Lindsay** is a Senior Lecturer and Head of the Department of Classics and Ancient History at the University of Newcastle, NSW. He has research interests in Roman social history and ancient biography. His publications include commentaries on Suetonius' *Lives* of Caligula (1993) and Tiberius (1995).

**Janette McWilliam** is a doctoral candidate in the Faculty of Classics at the University of Cambridge (Corpus Christi College) and an Associate Lecturer for the Open University in England. Her main fields of interest are in Roman social and cultural history. The article in this book is based on her MA thesis, completed in 1994 at the Australian National University.

**Hanne Sigismund Nielsen** is an assistant professor in the Institute of Classical Archaeology, University of Aarhus, Denmark. She has published on Roman family history, children and the private mores of the Romans.

**Tim Parkin** is Professor of Classics at the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand. He completed a D.Phil. at Oxford University in 1992, and has published on various aspects of Roman social history, including *Demography and Roman Society* (1992). He has a book on Roman old age forthcoming, and is

## CONTRIBUTORS

currently working on a sourcebook for Roman social history, and on a study of methodological approaches to ancient social history.

**Beryl Rawson** is Professor Emerita and Visiting Fellow in History (Faculty of Arts) at the Australian National University. Her research interests are in the social and political history of Rome and in iconography. Her first book was *The Politics of Friendship: Pompey and Cicero* (1978). She has since edited three volumes (1986, 1991, 1997) on the Roman family, resulting from international conferences which she convened in Canberra, Australia.

**Andrew Wallace-Hadrill** is Professor of Classics at the University of Reading, but is currently on secondment in Rome, where he is serving his third term as Director of the British School at Rome. He has published extensively in Roman social history and has been pre-eminent in forging links between archaeologists and text-based historians of Roman society. His publications include *Suetonius: the Scholar and his Caesars* (1983), *Augustan Rome* (1993) and *Houses and Society in Pompeii and Herculaneum* (1994). He has also edited and co-edited collections on patronage (1989) and city and country (1991) in the ancient world.

**Paul Weaver** is Emeritus Professor of the University of Tasmania and at present Visiting Fellow in Classics at the Australian National University in Canberra. He is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities. His principal interests lie in the social and administrative history of Rome. His publications include *Familia Caesaris* (1972) and, with Beryl Rawson, editing *The Roman Family in Italy: Status, Sentiment, Space* (1997).

## ABBREVIATIONS

Classical scholars use a standard set of abbreviations in referring to ancient works, for example ‘Plin. *Pan.*’ (Pliny the Younger’s *Panegyric* of the emperor Trajan), to journals and to commonly used reference manuals (which typically have very long titles). To assist the reader, many of the modern works and journal titles, normally reduced to code among classical insiders, have been spelt out in the entries below.

Contributors were asked to explain some ancient references and to translate the names of key texts at first citation in their individual chapters, but since as usual in scholarly works a number of ancient texts only required one mention it proved too cumbersome to do this comprehensively and consistently. Generally speaking, if a work was referred to frequently in a particular chapter, the standard abbreviation was used after initial explanation. The ‘Index of ancient sources’ at the back of the book therefore gives the standard abbreviation after the name of the author, for example ‘(St) Augustine, *Civitas Dei*, *Civ.Dei*’. The list of abbreviations below is primarily a guide to collections of coins, inscriptions and so forth, but also includes the less obvious ancient works, as in *CJ* for *Codex Iustinianus*, a compilation of responses by emperors to petitions from their subjects.

Standard journal abbreviations are listed in *l’Année philologique* and online at <http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/amphoras/revues.txt>. Readers may wish to refer to the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (any edition) for additional guidance.

ABBREVIATIONS

- AAVV (*Autori vari*) *Antiche Stanze* (1996). *Un quartiere di Roma imperiale nella zona di Termini. Museo Nazionale Romano Terme Diocleziano, Roma, dicembre 1996–giugno 1997*, ed. M. Barbera and R. Paris, Giorgio Mondadori, Rome.
- AE *L'Année épigraphique* (first published 1888), an annual listing of inscriptions.
- ANRW *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* (1972) eds H. Temporini and W. Haase, Berlin: de Gruyter.
- BMC *Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum* vol. 3 (1966), London.
- C. Cohen, H. *Description historique des monnaies frappées sous l'Empire romain* (1880), Paris.
- CIL *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, a standard edition of Latin inscriptions (first published 1876), Berlin.
- CJ *Codex Iustinianus*.
- CTh. *Codex Theodosianus*.
- Dig. *Digesta Iustiniani* (1877) ed. T Mommsen; parallel translation in *The Digest of Justinian* 4 vols (1985) ed. A. Watson, Philadelphia.
- FIRA<sup>2</sup> *Fontes iuris Romani Anteiusiniani* 3 vols, 2nd edn (1968–9), ed. S. Riccobono *et al.*, Florence.
- ICUR *Inscriptiones Christianae urbis Romae* vols 3–4 (1956–1964), eds A. Silvagni and A. Ferrua.
- IG *Inscriptiones Graecae*.
- ILS *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* (1962) ed. H. Dessau, Berlin.
- IPO *Inscriptions du Port d'Ostie* vol. 2 (1951–2) H. Thylander, Rome.
- LTUR *Lexicon topographicum urbis Romae* vol. 2, D–G, ed. E. M. Steinby (1995) Rome: Edizioni Quasar.
- NS *Nuove scavi*. Series.
- OCD *Oxford Classical Dictionary* 3rd edn (1996) ed. S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- RE *Realencyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft* (first published 1894).
- RG *Res Gestae*: the achievements of Augustus.

## ABBREVIATIONS

- RIC*     *The Roman Imperial Coinage* (1923–1994), ed. H. Mattingly and E. A. Sydenham, London: Spink.
- SHA*     *Scriptores of the Historia Augusta* (literally, ‘Writers of the Augustan History’, also known simply as ‘[the] *Historia Augusta*’): a pastiche of lives of later emperors. Authorship of many lives is dubious and still controversial.
- Strack*   Strack, P. *Untersuchungen zur römischen Reichsprägung des zweiten Jahrhunderts* vols 1 and 2 (1931, 1933), Stuttgart.
- TLL*     *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*.

# THE 'OTHER' ROMANS AND THEIR FAMILY VALUES

*Suzanne Dixon*

## **Women and children last?**

This collection of articles is a contribution to ongoing scholarly debates about Roman social history. We hope that it will also appeal to intelligent lay readers without talking down to them or compromising professional standards of caution and precision.

Domestic topics are now firmly on the historical agenda, and their general appeal is not in doubt. Family, marriage and childhood are universal features of human society, and the public appetite for tabloid, documentary and pop-sociology treatments suggests that all such features are perennially of interest. Academe should be able to cater to that interest. It has something special to offer – popular treatments, in emphasising moral decline from an idyllic past and the sameness of ‘human nature’, often distort the great dynamism of social institutions. To say that something – the family, for instance – is universal does not mean that it is uniform. Or static. Childhood and the family have been variously interpreted at different times and in different places. If we are prepared to learn from them, experts can put this variability into perspective and enable us better to assess the prospect of change in our own societies.

In the ancient world, childhood, class and kin interacted with each other as they do in the modern. For good or ill, class still pervades many aspects of life today. Its impact on modern childhood has been amply demonstrated by the BBC TV series *7 Up*, which has struck a chord worldwide. Many governments, treating the notional egalitarianism of some twentieth-century societies as an amusing historical aberration, are trying to urge us all into a ‘global’ era in which we once more take for granted the economic extremes and social

divisions of earlier epochs. In this book we explore some of the ways in which class – and status – affected ideas and realities of kinship and childhood in the highly stratified Roman world.

There should be no need to justify to any of our potential audiences the inclusion of Roman children, slaves, the free lower classes, élites and families all in the same volume. But we are all profoundly influenced by labelling, and the reality is that long-standing academic distinctions between public and private, however inappropriate to classical antiquity, continue to dominate our stock classification of topics and therefore to divide our audiences. Academe has now generally moved on from older notions of what constitutes history, one consequence being that Roman political history has long since faded (relatively speaking) into the scholarly background; yet both publishers' catalogues and lay readers continue to equate 'history' with personalities, warfare and politics, which means that anything else becomes a marked category requiring an explanatory epithet – art history, social history, legal history, economic history. The process is not, of course, logical or consistent. The Struggle of the Orders, Gracchan land and debt reforms, slave revolts and Augustus' 'pro-family' legislation were always incorporated in the traditional *Boys' Own Annual* narrative of Roman history that otherwise blithely excluded the servile and lower classes, women and children.

Even within academe, 'history of the family' is seen as the proper repository for matters concerning women and children, while Roman class and status are assumed to be about adult men. Ramsay MacMullen explicitly excluded family and marriage from his 1974 book *Roman Social Relations*, although it was designed to fill in many of the existing gaps; to treat rural and provincial areas, and those social groups whose perspective had been neglected in most historical works on the Roman Empire. The last half-century has seen an explosion of publications on slavery, the free lower classes, life-stages (especially childhood), women and gender relations in the Roman world. But it has not united potential audiences. Perhaps people are discouraged by the long trips they would have to make to different parts of a university library to find books on these apparently discrete topics. Yet (to state the obvious) slaves and free people alike could be male or female, children or adults, all with parents, children and siblings of their own. Roman family studies originated with 'prosopographical' reconstructions of senatorial careers and marriages. As products of 'mixed' marriages between slave and free

parents, children named in epitaphs can furnish historians with a key to the implications of status categories (Weaver 1986).

The sources historians use can also become territorial dividers, separating epigraphers (who specialise in inscriptions) from legal historians reliant on the selective Christian compilations of earlier Roman law, such as Justinian's *Digest*. The fact that the historians of classical antiquity themselves wrote about Gracchan land reforms and Augustan legislation promoting marriage and parenthood explains the inclusion of such matters in the traditional curriculum. Indeed, the training of ancient historians continues to privilege such texts. But confining oneself to any given source or genre both limits and skews the reader's perspective on the 'evidence'. Each type of source has its own problems of interpretation and, at best, throws light on only a minute part of any topic. Examining ideologies of gender, or determining whether Romans had a concept of childhood, for example, soon sends the text-based historian to art. In this volume we see repeatedly how the evidence of different sources tells different stories. Janette McWilliam (Chapter 5) contrasts literary statements about mourning the deaths of babies with the evidence of epitaphs; Paul Weaver (Chapter 6) contrasts the rules of the law on which slaves could be freed and how status transmitted to children with those revealed by sepulchral inscriptions.

Both topic- and source-based divisions are wholly artificial, no more than a convenient device for scholars wanting to focus on areas of their own expertise and for cataloguers subject to practical constraints. They should not be allowed to harden into ways of thinking that blind us to obvious connections and questions that might widen our understanding of the Roman world. The reader perusing the Contents page of this book should bear in mind the arbitrariness of the editorial decision to consign to 'Kin' rather than to 'Class' a mother-daughter sculptural group expressing the aspirations of prosperous freed slaves (Michele George, Chapter 11).

The conventional divisions are not just habit. Experts have a healthy respect for genuine problems. There are plenty of traps for the unwary. Combining topics and sources is a complex business. There is, in the last analysis, no substitute for thorough training in reading ancient sources in the original language, then using linguistic and analytic expertise to assess their value as evidence. The Roman social historian needs not only a traditional classical training but also an informed and critical understanding of social institutions and issues.

The fact that a historian – even a historian with the necessary (if

insufficient) technical skills in reading Latin and Greek – may have children and a family does not automatically make him or her an expert on family matters, particularly in a foreign culture. The traditional practice of compiling references on a given topic is an important starting-point, a potential database, but it is indecent to expose such collections in public in their raw, or nude, state. They should not appear in print until they have been dressed with appropriate critical analysis. There can be no excuse for treating epitaphs from the ancient world as simple sources *per se* for Roman demography or residential groupings, or for presenting as self-explanatory *evidence* references to (what is only possibly) the same institution from the Italian stage of the early second century BCE and from Christian papyri from Roman Egypt five centuries later. A word-search is not finished scholarship. The authors in this volume go well beyond such preliminaries, analysing the impact of social institutions with the help of sophisticated source criticism which allows for the bias, genre-emphasis and exclusions of the evidence examined. But we are not wholly pessimistic and over-cautious. Some chapters offer innovative ideas about how far we might press the sometimes terse or enigmatic yield of inscriptions or buildings. Others explore literary works in a novel way, to throw light on the incidental testimony and assumptions of dreams, for example, or on changing ideas about the proper age for parenting and the suitability of sex in old age.

Most of the contributors to this volume were trained in an empiricist tradition of attention to detail. Over the years, they have learnt to address larger questions, to approach more types of evidence and to rethink their approaches to familiar sources. The perceived tension between the ‘big picture’ approach and scholarly caution never quite disappears. As with the eternal compromise between accuracy and fluency in translation, each scholar weighs up the competing requirements and makes a subjective decision. In the last analysis, judgements about the success of individual efforts will vary and controversy will continue (Martin 1996). Novelty will inevitably draw criticism, often tinged with territorial defensiveness. Non-classicists – even those of the stature of Foucault or Goody – collect broadsides when they include classical Greco-Roman culture in broad histories of European kinship, marriage and sexualities, but brilliant ‘outsiders’ can often shake up our ideas to good effect, sometimes opening up whole new areas of scholarship.

It *is* possible to combine scrupulous care and brilliance, to cross-pollinate disciplines by moving judiciously between genres, regions and historical periods, without oversimplifying the issues or ‘dumbing

down'. The proof lies in landmark studies, some of them bearing directly on the topics of this book: Hopkins' monumental 1978 treatment of slavery and the transformation of the Roman economy; Saller and Shaw's groundbreaking 1984 computer simulations of Roman demography based on epitaphs; Evans Grubbs' 1995 analysis of the impact (or non-impact) of Christian doctrine on inherited Roman law and on social expectations of marriage. We all benefit when the broad sweep is well done.

The specialist scholars who drew on their current researches to contribute to this volume were not expected to cover all three areas, childhood, class and kin, but they have shown a readiness to transcend their designated categories. They were asked to consider common questions of reading, representation and perspective and, in particular, to open up their own specific observations to more general concepts of life-stage, status and kinship. Their approaches vary: legal positivism, comparative sociology, active reading and thick description all feature. Issues of exclusion, skewing and representation have emerged naturally from attempts to compare and combine diverse types of source. From the expert reconstruction of specifics, the authors all contribute to the 'big picture' not only of Roman social mores but of wider issues of kinship, class and the life-stages.

### **Roman childhood, class and kin in context**

Status, age, kinship and gender are prime organising principles of any known society. Our title begs the vexed question of the value of 'class' as a key to Roman society, since ties of patronage sometimes linked the different social strata, and inherited rank (though requiring renewal in each generation) could outweigh wealth. Legal status categories, dividing free and slave, provincial and Roman, were not necessarily reflected in wealth and prestige ratings.

Our book has its own exclusions and emphases. Most of us concentrate on Roman Italy and the first two centuries of the common era or CE, which largely coincide with the early Roman imperial period, but some contributors, notably in Chapters 4, 10 and 14, compare pre-Christian and Christian approaches. In the first section, 'Childhood', we see how children were represented in state propaganda, in dreams, in the law and on urban tombstones. For both emperors and dream-interpreters children served as symbols, expressing political and personal hopes for the future. But the historian can make use of such sources for more than their intended

purpose: the public sculpture examined by Beryl Rawson in Chapter 2 and the dream manual of Artemidorus analysed by Keith Bradley in Chapter 3 also yield incidental information as to what constituted childhood in Roman (adult) eyes and on the typical pursuits of children in antiquity. Mireille Corbier (Chapter 4) reviews a range of sources to explore Roman attitudes to babies and to the incorporation of children into society in both Italy and Egypt. She argues that, although the two are often combined by scholars, we need to distinguish between child ‘exposure’, the subject of legal rules, and child ‘abandonment’, a practice treated by literary sources which reveal rather different social norms. *Pace* Boswell (1988), she points to significant differences – and some interesting similarities – between the abandonment of children in antiquity and its equivalents in later western Europe, where Christian precepts held sway.

It is not only archaeologists who use mortuary commemorations for an insight into attitudes to different social groups. Like childhood and gender, death is a physical given which gains its social meaning from cultural elaboration. Corbier points out that the Roman child who had not formally been raised up by the *paterfamilias* could be discarded as a non-person who had not acquired a full social personality. Birth into a group is only the beginning or potential of a person’s admission to that group. In many cultures, the commemoration of dead children is distinguished by special rules. They may not be commemorated at all. Some moderns have read the practice of exposure as an index of a low valuation on infant life in classical antiquity, but Romans of the Italian peninsula were relatively attentive to the memorials of their child dead, particularly in towns. Janette McWilliam (Chapter 5) explores the possible connections between social status, urban location and the commemorations of those who died as children. She finds interesting differences in the approaches of town élites and groups such as freed slaves as to where and how they present the loss of their child dead to the community about them. We are reminded that funerary rituals are for the living as well as for the dead, and that children can represent many things (hopes for future security or social advancement, an assertion of continuing high status) above and beyond their own individual characteristics.

In the second section, ‘Class and Status’, Paul Weaver (Chapter 6) and Suzanne Dixon (Chapter 7) consider how we might reconstruct lower-class families, slave and free, from their memorials, most of them just brief inscriptions. Names are an important guide to status in Roman sources. The names of freeborn Roman citizens

were distinctive, consisting for men of three parts, for women of one (later two). When featured on an inscription, such names frequently included what experts call 'filiation', that is, the formula 'son/daughter' (*filius/filia*) followed by the father's first name or *praenomen*, for example *Marci*, 'of Marcus'. Slaves' names could also furnish further information by giving the owner's *praenomen* ('slave of Marcus'), and freed slaves, *libertini*, would typically take the 'gentile' name of their citizen owner or patron, retain their own name and include a reference to the owner or ('patron', *patrona*, *patronus*). Wherever possible in this volume, Latin terms have been explained and quotations given in English. Because of the importance of names for status discussion, whole Latin inscriptions (with translations) have been incorporated in the text of Chapters 6, 7 and 10. Unfortunately for us, epitaphs were very formulaic and usually brief. We must acknowledge the limitations of names as status indicators, because practice was not consistent. Indeed, some practices raise important questions about the social realities of status and the 'rules' of naming, or nomenclature. Chapters 6 and 7, while not playing down the problems, highlight methodology as a means of 'pressing the evidence' – iconographic, inscriptional and legal – to afford us a glimpse into the lives and links of those most mysterious ancient denizens, the free poor.

This group is also discussed by Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (Chapter 8) but in a different way. He uses architecture and historical analogy to consider the living conditions of the poor and their wealthy patrons in Rome, and the use by an increasingly central government of housing 'reform' to control the urban populace. He and Suzanne Dixon (Chapter 7) both conclude that the distinction between free and slave, one fundamental to legal status, was more blurred under the living and working conditions of the lower classes in the capital, people who shared dwellings and workshops in life and brief memorials in death. But this mixture, typical of the Roman republican period, was modified by the building programmes of successive emperors. Wallace-Hadrill argues that urban beautification tended to reduce Rome's tradition of mixed commercial/residential, noble/poor housing, and that this was no coincidence.

Fiona Crowe (Chapter 9) takes us out of Italy to the limits of the Empire, in a review of burial and status in provincial Roman Britain. She analyses archaeological debates about the principles governing the disposal and commemoration of women and children in burial grounds over a period ranging into the Christian era. She cautions against overdetermining gender as a factor and argues that it needs

to be offset by regional and status issues. Differential burials could be read in many ways, perhaps indicating the importation of male rural workers or the special standing of some particular group quite independently of either age or gender.

Our third section, 'Kin', concentrates on the meaning of that other fundamental cultural construct of kinship and its elaboration in epitaphs, sculpture, legal and social prescriptions and Christian thought. Hanne Sigismund Nielsen (Chapter 10) argues that Roman women were described rather differently by pagan and by Christian husbands, although both employed conventional, idealising epithets. Michele George's expert analysis of a mother-daughter sculpture (Chapter 11) sets this in iconographic context in order to explore representations of femininity, status and childhood. In a wide-ranging review of ancient and modern societies, Hugh Lindsay (Chapter 12) then highlights Roman concepts of kinship and the roles of children – not just young children – in family groups by means of one cultural institution, adoption, and its emphasis on the role of the adult citizen male. He reminds us of the need to set aside the inappropriate associations we ourselves might bring to the study of an ancient 'equivalent' of a modern institution like adoption. The laws governing Roman inheritance tax provide Jane Gardner (Chapter 13) with a means of determining notions of what constituted kinship from the social and state perspective, and what obligations flowed from those concepts. Tim Parkin (Chapter 14) explores attitudes to marriage and its purpose and to prejudices about sex between older couples. He reveals some interesting developments from pre-Christian to Christian times, many of them unexpected.

Roman legal and social constructions of childhood and kinship are explicitly addressed in some chapters (McWilliam, Weaver) and implicitly in others (George, Crowe). Gender is crucial to some chapters (Dixon, Sigismund Nielsen) and embedded in others (Gardner, Lindsay). Corbier, Sigismund Nielsen and Parkin address the varied impact of Christianity on childhood, gender and kinship. Class and status are necessarily invoked at every stage.

It is a cliché that winners conquer the archives. Historians are ultimately dependent on the evidence people leave behind them, and we can only lament how little trace has been left in the historical record by Roman slaves, the free lower classes and women and children of all status groups. In life these groups together greatly outnumbered those élite Roman males who, as we have already noted, left a disproportionate legal and literary imprint and who tended – as is the way

of dominant groups – to be poor observers of their social ‘inferiors’. As authors, most of these men introduced women, children and the lower classes into their narratives only to make a point, usually a moral point, which reduced the group invoked to a rhetorical status such as ‘the youth of today’. They also took it for granted that their presumed gentlemanly audience understood the social context of any references in their letters and essays to their own childhood or family life. They therefore left out a mass of information crucial to foreigners like ourselves, looking back from an altogether different era and culture. That is a standard difficulty, and one faced particularly by social historians as compared with social anthropologists, who can observe the settings of their informants. Many of the scholars represented in this collection, who have already elsewhere explored the more mainstream sources, focus here instead on archaeological evidence and on the epitaphs, imperial responses to petitions (rescripts), contracts and lawsuits preserved in papyri which together cover a much wider social range.

As I said at the beginning, we hope that this book will reach students of the family and Roman society, scholars and the broader reading public. That is not an easy balance to achieve, and contributors have varied in the extent to which they have been able to make their material accessible. Although references to modern works in foreign languages and quotations in Latin have been kept to a minimum, it has been neither possible nor indeed desirable to exclude them altogether. The authors have naturally wished to offer their findings to fellow specialists and to include the necessary evidence to justify their insights, but they have also tried to open up their treatments to non-experts by minimising (or translating) technical terms and by explaining the issues clearly. The index is specifically designed to help the non-expert reader to check terms. My own thumbnail sketches below of relevant scholarly trends, particularly as reflected in publications in English, are intended to help the lay reader and undergraduate student relate the contributions of this volume to the accumulated body of scholarship and to existing debates. They are not comprehensive. Notes refer the interested reader to other bibliographic guides.<sup>1</sup>

### Childhood<sup>2</sup>

Historians of childhood still need to position themselves on the questions raised by Ariès’ 1962 claim that childhood is a modern invention and that children in past ages were viewed as potential or

mini-adults. Scholarship has moved on since then, exploring the many functions performed by children in families and trying to recover the emotional relations between parents and children of past eras.

One of Ariès' arguments rested on the iconographic representation of children in the past as miniature adults. Although there were such images in the ancient world, it is easy enough to demonstrate accurate Roman depictions of children's bodies and a corresponding enjoyment of childish features and even, in some cases, an interest in children as individuals, not simply as extensions of the family and sources of labour. Ariès' assertions were valuable because – although they have generally been refuted for the Roman case – they forced scholars to consider questions which might not otherwise have occurred to them.

Historians have generally approached Roman parent–child relations via standard literary works, supplementing their yield with inscriptions to dead children. Both sources present particular problems of interpretation. The growth of publications on the iconography of Roman childhood has been one of the most welcome developments in scholarship on this subject. Now even text-based historians can approach the subject of such representations in the confidence that experts have made the material accessible to them. Roman children were depicted not just on grave-markers but also on public monuments – sometimes as patrons and magistrates, whose status was not mitigated by their extreme youth (McWilliam, Chapter 5), sometimes as symbols of imperial largesse and concern for the future of the free poor of Italy (Rawson, Chapter 2).

Childhood is continually being redefined in the modern world, especially in the wealthy West. In antiquity, too, the law and social expectation had a great impact on children's prospects and responsibilities. Literature on education, especially rhetorical education, has served as a guide to ancient expectations of the élite Roman boy (Dixon 1988). Studies of apprenticeship documents from Roman Egypt and occasional iconographic representations of children at work reveal the variety of tasks expected of young children from the mass of society (Bradley 1985b). Documents recording the sale of slaves and inscriptions encoding family histories tell us that – in spite of legal assertions to the contrary – it was common for very young slave children to be separated from their mothers by sale (Rawson 1966; Bradley 1984). Wet-nursing contracts and legal decisions from Roman Egypt reveal the use by poor parents of child exposure as a means of family limitation, but also the fact that some thought it

worthwhile to rescue such children for various purposes: labour, sale or even marriage into the foster-family (Corbier, Chapter 4).

Expectations which parents entertain of their 'children', including those adopted or fostered, are not confined to childhood. Inheritance and adoption procedures reveal some of the functions performed by the younger generation in Roman society, such as continuing the family name and maintaining or improving its status and material goods (Lindsay, Chapter 12; Gardner, Chapter 13).

### Class<sup>3</sup>

The class distinctions of post-industrial Europe had their equivalents in the ancient world, but the legal distinctions between slave and free, Roman and provincial citizen dominated issues of status within the developed Empire.<sup>4</sup> The free were further divided into those who had been born free (*ingenuiae*) and those slaves who had subsequently been freed or 'manumitted' (*libertini* masculine, *libertinae* feminine). The domination of surviving records by the ruling senatorial élite extended beyond literary and legal texts to public inscriptions and statues. For a long time, even those scholars interested in studying the lower classes tended to scour élite authors for their views about artisans, slaves and provincials. It is eternally frustrating to know in principle that peasants and agricultural labourers must have been the most numerous element in the population of the ancient Mediterranean, while recognising in practice the impossibility of retrieving their lives from surviving sources. Italian peasants figure frequently in literary sources as the traditional ideal, while free day-labourers are objects of suspicion, but reliable information on either of these overlapping groups is rare in the extreme. The urban poor – also constructed as a moral category by élite authors – have left more traces; scholars have been able to amass data from inscriptions (especially epitaphs around the city of Rome from the early imperial period), the law, and from grave and shop reliefs in an effort to determine the status and frequency of named occupational groupings.<sup>5</sup>

There have always been more works written on slaves than on the free poor, again a reflection of ancient source emphasis. Issues explored by different scholars, often in response to the preoccupations of their particular era and society, include the supposed 'nationality' or 'race' of slaves, the mix of slave and free in the ancient workforce, the overuse of slaves for specialist agriculture in Italy, the

apparent concentration of slaves (and freed slaves, *libertini*) in certain occupational groups in Rome itself, and points of contrast or similarity between the slave systems of Rome and those of the Americas and West Indies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (see for example Taylor 1961; Joshel 1986). The 1960s interest in 'majority history', and the influence of Professor M. I. Finley at Cambridge University, both boosted the study of Roman slavery and there was an upsurge in publications on the subject throughout the 1960s and 1970s. These tended to concentrate on its role in the ancient economy, or else on philosophical views about an institution which gains some of its exotic appeal from the erroneous assumption that it does not exist in the modern world (Finley 1960; Vogt 1974). Marxist scholars were interested in the impact of the slave mode of production on class relations (Carandini and Settis 1980). More recent studies of slavery have shifted the emphasis from the institution to the people. Joshel (1992) and Bradley (1994) have attempted the difficult task of deducing slaves' own perceptions of the world and their relation to it. The ways in which freed slaves represented themselves and their family members, particularly through funerary monuments, have also attracted scholarly interest (Zanker 1975; Kleiner 1977).

The academic spotlight has thus ranged across a number of status issues, but, whether treating the free poor, slavery, freed slaves, upper-class investment and land capitalism or mass movements, most scholars have until recently tended to exclude women and children.<sup>6</sup> In this respect they have followed the lead of Ramsay MacMullen's important 1974 study of the rural and provincial masses of the Roman Empire, which explicitly excluded kinship and in effect (perhaps unconsciously) ignored gender and life-stage. The understandable need to limit the area and sources of any study offers a partial explanation as to why women, children and the family continue to be afterthoughts, if indeed they are thought of at all, but scholars seem also to be influenced by conventional demarcations such as economy versus kinship; and perhaps many (not all of them male) quite simply forget about women and children, much as male authors did in antiquity.<sup>7</sup>

But economics and the personal cannot so readily be separated. Ambivalence pervaded slave-free relations in the ancient world. Another reminder of this has emerged from a recent contribution to the ongoing debate over whether Roman owners consciously bred slaves from their existing stock or imported them from outside (via purchases derived ultimately from war and piracy or brigandage). In

contravention of the advice in economically rational manuals, many slave-owners apparently manumitted female slaves who were capable of further child-bearing (Herrmann-Otto 1994: 286, 400). Legally slaves were equated with livestock, but in practice owners, while given to demonising or stereotyping both slaves and freed slaves as a group, often responded to them individually, as human beings. Not all slaves were part of huge elite establishments. Some worked alongside free and freed colleagues (Joshel 1992), some were intimately involved in the care and nurture of free children (Joshel 1986; Bradley 1985a), some were freed to marry their owners. They were, in the last analysis, people – people who could not only interact with their free owners in various capacities but could also themselves become free.

Slave children could gain a special place in the affections of owners and indeed the whole household. Certain Latin terms associated, particularly in epitaphs, with some children and young people, continue to puzzle scholars. Did *uerina* designate a slave born in the household? (Weaver, Chapter 6.) Were all *alumni* foster-children, unwanted babies rescued from exposure? (Rawson 1986b.) Were most of them slaves? (Corbier, Chapter 4.) Were *delicia/deliciae* sex-slaves, or merely household favourites? (Sigismund Nielsen 1990.) Such questions expose the artificiality of hard-and-fast distinctions between childhood, class and kin. Beryl Rawson and Paul Weaver have repeatedly united these three topics in pioneering studies of slave and lower-class family groupings and the implications of such groupings for social mobility in the Roman world.

It is hardly surprising that inscriptional and legal sources have been so important to understanding such issues. Epitaphs occasionally provide miniature family histories through the status indicators in the names of their members, which document their emergence from slavery to freed and even freeborn status (Rawson 1966). Slaves could be freed and provincials could become Roman citizens after they had produced children. Roman legal responses to the (historically unusual) possibility of such mobility and of 'mixed' marriages serve as important sources, reflecting the practice and ideology of kinship and the implications of the formal status categories. Jurists needed to clarify which men enjoyed that uniquely Roman paternal power (*patria potestas*) over their children, for it had important implications for the validity of contracts, wills and even marriages concluded by Roman citizens of all ages who had living (citizen) fathers. Free children recovered from exposure and reared as slaves