the classical community, continued to flourish in imperial rhetoric and was crucial for the legitimation of imperial rule.

Such discourse had its downside, in its adoption by inappropriate advocates. The poor had always been with us, even if they had not been categorized as such, and not all who celebrated the poverty of others were credible champions of the destitute. What were the Roman poor to make of wealthy aristocrats' patronage of St Laurence the deacon, who had famously informed the greedy persecutor that the poor were the wealth of the Church (Prudentius, *Peristephanon* II)? How many wealthy courtiers in late fourth-century Milan were reformed by Ambrose's generalized strictures on the iniquities of power and oppression? Was the illustrious Sidonius Apollinaris concerned with the opinions of the 'pauperes Christi' when he appointed one of his aristocratic cronies as bishop of Bourges in 4707? In Blair's Britain, 'spin' on social inclusivity and the abolition of poverty is contradicted by the persistence of traditional structures and networks, and the continuing divergence between rich and poor; similar questions may be asked of the advocates of the *pauperes* of late antiquity.

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THE ROMAN LIFE COURSE

M. HARLOW, R. LAURENCE: *Growing Up and Growing Old in Ancient Rome. A Life Course Approach*. Pp. viii + 184, ills, pls. London and New York: Routledge, 2002. Paper, £14.99. ISBN: 0-415-20201-9 (0-415-20200-0 hbk).

How were the stages of life from childhood to old age that together make up the life course understood in Roman antiquity? That is the question this book sets itself. Its answer lies not in the areas of biology or chronology, but in the sphere of social construction: H. & L. occupy themselves with describing Roman perceptions of the stages of human life—an approach, they maintain, made inevitable by the partial nature, in both senses, of the evidence available (literary works composed by mature élite men)—and thus avoid more objective criteria even as they set their descriptions in the context of new advances in Roman demography. After background statements on goals and the Roman household, H. & L. present chapters on infancy and childhood, the transition from childhood to adulthood, marriage and its familial consequences, the participation of mature élite men in politics, old age, and death. They claim not to have written a book of family history, but because they offer for the most part syntheses of works published by various Roman family historians over the last two decades—the product of teaching preparation in the first instance—it is difficult to see what else it is. Their syntheses, however, are far from comprehensive, and the overall results are not encouraging. To illustrate the difficulties that characterize the book as a whole I refer to sundry items from Chapter 3, 'The Beginning of Life: Infancy and Childhood'.

H. & L. maintain (p. 43) that, apart from a few details in the Elder Pliny, there is little evidence to support their (reasonable) view that interest was readily shown in the health of children beyond infancy. This is both unfair to Pliny, who allows much to be learned about children's illnesses from the scores of remedies he prescribes in the

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Natural History, and neglects considerable evidence from authors such as Celsus and Galen, from whom much else can be recovered. The topic is inadequately treated because the relevant sources (and secondary literature) are unknown.

H. & L. claim (p. 43) that until they reached puberty, Roman children were socialized solely within the household, as if young boys and girls were never exposed to influences beyond. Later, however (pp. 51–2), and inconsistently, they recognize the socializing effects on the pre-pubertal of formal education in the (brief) description they provide of Roman schooling. More seriously, however, they again pass over relevant evidence. In Roman art, young boys and girls sometimes appear in public scenes in realistic poses—on their fathers' shoulders, for instance, as in a relief on Trajan's arch at Beneventum celebrating the distribution of the *alimenta*. Whatever the political intent of such material, it assumes that young children appeared in public in circumstances that might well have had an impact on their social development—providing in this case lessons on how to benefit from imperial munificence and to defer to the powerful. Comparably, the scene in the well-known frieze from the *praedia* of Julia Felix at Pompeii showing a boy with three men in the forum reading public notices suggests that the young could easily learn much about local affairs, and about how to learn about local affairs, from informal experiences in the outside world. But nothing of this sort is considered. Another claim is made that little is known about children's lives and activities before the approximate age of seven (p. 46). It is immediately undercut, however, by several pages (pp. 46–8) that give several references to children at play, which by definition convey a great deal about what the very young did (I take it that the references reflect children's real activities no matter what the degree of idealization involved). Here too the full significance of the topic is missed, this time apparently because there is no good modern treatment of children at play on which to draw, and H. & L. have not examined the issue for themselves.

Further, since H. & L. concentrate exclusively on the élite, the picture they give of Roman childhood at large is very limited. They scarcely consider epigraphic and papyrological sources on the non-élite, not to mention (again) art. A relief from Pompeii, now in Naples, shows a boy in a smith's workshop; presumably the relief illustrates the craftsman's son learning the operations of his father's trade. It evokes a world of artisanal children surely worth investigation. In concluding, moreover, that 'Economic and demographic reasons need not determine or exclude emotional attachment to children' (p. 52), H. & L. gloss over two huge problems: how emotional attachment can be demonstrated from the evidence available, and whether a regime of heavy infant and child mortality did (as I believe) or did not influence the quality of Roman parents' emotional attachment to their children. It cannot simply be assumed that parental affect towards children, even solely élite children, is constant and absolute across time and in all historical societies.

Similar items could be listed from throughout the book, and specialists will be very conscious of them. Even the basic point that H. & L. stress, that Roman constructions of the life course have to depend on a careful sifting of sources, exemplifies a methodological principle that ancient historians have always understood. The book contains, finally, such a welter of solecisms that it cannot responsibly be recommended to students coming to the subject for the first time. Altogether, therefore, a work to set quietly aside.

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