the overall argument of the socializing effect of such on children, and there is much conjecture and uncertainly regarding children's reactions.

A third theme permeates the work as a whole: during the second century A.D., in an era of increasing wealth and military stability, there emerges, in R.'s view, a discernible change in representations of and values for children. The theory of an identifiable linear development in Roman social behaviours and attitudes has long been debated by family historians, but one which R. advocates throughout on the basis of greater availability of more family-oriented and individualistic forms of evidence (funerary inscriptions and memorials commemorating private individuals; provision for children's rights, rôles, and age distinctions in legal texts; literary discussions of the particular qualities of children; and open concern and affection for named children in letters). R. also traces a similar change in imperial imagery in the second century and, while acknowledging Augustus as the forerunner in using images of children to reinforce his dynastic and political aspirations, underlines the rôle of Trajan in introducing a broader, cultural representation of children to convey the emperor's generosity and concern for his people, including children of all ages. R.'s approach to assessing the literary and material record and conclusions of progressive attitudinal changes thereon will doubtless continue to provoke counter-arguments that absence of comparative evidence from earlier periods cannot be used a basis for positive, chronological emotional and behavioural developments. Critics of this view will continue to cite second-century evidence to the contrary, such as sculpted funerary monuments, where the portrait features of the individual represented seem to be more recognizably those of an adult rather than the child commemorated in the accompanying inscription.

In spite of some very minor concerns with R.'s argument and focus in places, this does not detract from the fact that overall, the book provides a scholarly, yet accessible, and invaluable contribution to the study of Roman family and social relations. As a work which focuses exclusively on children and childhood in themselves, rather than their relationship to parents, other adults or to society at large, R.'s book will become a key text in this field.

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ROMAN OLD AGE

T. G. PARKIN: *Old Age in the Roman World. A Cultural and Social History*. Pp. xvi + 495. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003. Cased, £40.50. ISBN: 0-8018-7128-X.

As with the poor, it might be said that the elderly will always be with us. Whatever the significance of the diminishing numbers of the poor in post-industrial societies, however, it cannot be doubted that there are more and more of the very old who now live among us. Within the context of this ever-growing social problem, the final aging of the 'baby-boomer' generation seems to have provoked an unusual number of studies about the elderly in antiquity. This has all happened recently in a field that was once moribund, save for the pioneering survey by the ever-curious George Minois, *Histoire de la vieillesse en occident de l'Antiquité à la Renaissance* (Paris, 1987). That this new interest is not an accident true only of classical studies is shown by concurrent moves into the history of old-age in other fields of historical inquiry, most

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relevant for our purposes being those for the ancient Near East and the early medieval West. The current boom in old-age studies for Roman antiquity includes Umberto Mattioli's two-volume collection *Senectus: la vecchiaia nel mondo classico* (Bologna, 1995) and Hartwin Brandt's *Wird auch silbern mein Haar: eine Geschichte des Alters in der Antike* (Munich, 2002). At least two others have appeared more recently: Andreas Gutsfeld and Winfried Schmitz's *Am schlimmen Rand des Lebens? Altersbilder in der Antike* (Cologne, 2003) and Katherine Cokayne's *Experiencing Old Age in Ancient Rome* (London, 2003). They are now joined by Tim Parkin's analysis of old age in the Roman world. Of these new works, only the papers in Mattioli were published in time for P. to take notice of them. All the others were writing independently of him, and of each other. Apart from some additional aspects of the problem broached by Cokayne, however, P.'s study is by far the finest of these new efforts. It must be accepted as the standard for further research.

Some time in gestation since its first appearance as a 1992 Oxford doctoral dissertation directed by Fergus Millar, the intervening years have been well spent. P. has considerably nuanced and developed his original text; he has also taken full advantage of a host of new demographic research on Roman populations published over the last decade. And since P. is himself that author of a standard introduction to demography, *Demography and Roman Society* (Baltimore and London, 1992), he is well positioned to separate fact from fiction, impression from reality in this new area of social history. Two basic facts, perhaps counter-intuitive ones, ground his work. First, that despite the sometimes fearsome toll of mortality in Roman populations, there were still plenty of elderly people in their ranks. Based on model life tables, P. estimates that 6–8% of the whole population of the empire were above 60 years of age—a total of about four to five million (p. 50). Secondly, it is evident that the whole potential of the human life span, a maximum of about 115 years, was still available to people of the time and at least a few of them actually lived it out. Both facts faced Romans with problems of old age, even if they were not the peculiar problem of the very large numbers of medicalized super-aged with which our own society must cope. As Robert Sallares has recently stated forcefully (*Malaria and Rome* [Oxford, 2002]), the life table data on which such estimates are based are very general, and any regional context might reveal substantial variation from their ideal patterns. In the urban setting of the metropolis of Rome, for example, large-scale migration into the city combined with disproportionately heavy mortality among the very young and the very old would have severely reduced the proportion of the elderly. In the highland regions of the Italian peninsula, on the other hand, there is every reason to believe that the proportions of long-lived would have been higher, even much higher than the average.

From the very beginning, P. laments a huge problem facing his query: the simple lack of good evidence. Like slavery, old age was an unspoken evil, and so a subject that attracted relatively few specialized treatises. Cicero's *De Senectute* is one of the few actually to survive (p. 60). From Aristotle to Juncus, writers lamented the debilitating physical and mental ailments that were regarded as characteristic of old age. Yet doctors, like Galen, devoted almost no time at all to the subject—less than 1% of Galen's corpus, P. estimates (pp. 254–55). On the technical side of the evidence, however, P.'s study comes armed with a full panoply of appendices and charts of the existing data, and a copious set of notes (half the length of the text itself). And bodies of evidence are catalogued throughout the text: from a prosopography of the senior *amici principis* (pp. 119–23) to a collection of texts on the popular ritual theme of 60-year-olders being hurled off bridges (pp. 265–70). The division of the main bulk of the subject matter into 'public sphere' versus 'private sphere' materials, however, tends

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artificially to forefront discussions on the maximum and minimum ages for public services and duties. The age of 70 was generally regarded as grounds for seeking release from public liturgical duties, as well as from *munera privata* (the literary texts are confirmed by papyrological data from Egypt). Even some of the materials on the supposed 'private' sphere treatment tend in the same direction. The chapter on 'old age, sexuality and marriage' (Chapter 7), for example, is in fact a study of the upper age limits set for penalties under the Augustan marriage legislation (50 for women, 60 for men). The problem is that these older ages do not necessarily tell us much about 'old age' as such, much less its perception in the 'private sphere', since one is surely considering the officially recognized reproductive lifespan, especially of women. Although the category 'widow' admittedly does not map perfectly with 'old woman', the links between them are surely sufficient to merit more discussion of the body of evidence that exists on the subject. Jens-Uwe Krause's monumental four-volume work on widows and widowhood in Roman society (*Witwen und Waisen im römischen Reich* [Stuttgart, 1994–5]) is noted in the bibliography, but seems hardly to be used in the text itself—as also the useful analysis of its findings by T. A. J. McGinn, 'Widows, Orphans, and Social History' (*JRA* 12 [1999], 617–32). What one has in sum, then, is barely one page that relates specifically to the problems of women and old age (pp. 246–7).

On the side of values, P. makes good sense of the reciprocal function of *pietas* in Roman society, given the precise lack of the kind of specific legal obligations imposed on children to support their parents that was found, for example, in fifth-century Athens. It might well be argued, however, that his final judgement that the elderly were 'liminal' to their society (pp. 241–2) is far better caught by his other argument that their status was one of a severe and permanent marginalization (pp. 244–5). For the rest, P. does not disguise the cold and brutal fact that for most Romans old age was depressing, brutish, and almost unendurable. He might have added to his assessments the common philosophical judgement that old age, along with chronic illness and extreme poverty, was held to be one of the justifiable grounds for taking one's own life. Set in the balance against the poetic vision of respect to be accorded to the elderly as a generally honorable status, there was the more sordid reality of attempting simply to live from one day to the next in the circumstances of loneliness, illness, failing bodily functions, and the general immiseration that accompanied old age. This had to be done in a society where there was no system of social assistance for the elderly or any 'retirement' in our sense. He argues, rightly I think, that the heavy ideological exaltation of elderly males, and the honor and respect that was granted to some older persons, was a counterweight to the much less honorable and less happy circumstances in which most of the real elderly had to complete their lives.

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DIPLOMATIC RHETORIC

L. R. Cresci, F. Gazzano, D. P. Orsi: *La retorica della diplomazia nella Grecia antica e a Bisanzio*. (Rapporti interstatali nell'antichità, 2.) Pp. 167. Rome: 'L'Erma' di Bretschneider, 2002. Cased. ISBN: 88-8265-205-X.

This volume consists of three papers, and is the second in a series exploring

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