Portraits of Children on Roman Funerary Monuments

Drawing on hundreds of tombstones from Rome, Italy and the western provinces, this study assesses how parents visualised childhood. By considering the most popular funerary themes and iconographic models, it emphasises both the emotional and the social investment placed in children, bringing to the fore many little-known examples. From Britannia to Dacia, Aquitania to Pannonia, it highlights the rich artistic diversity of the provinces and shows that not all trends were borrowed from the capital. With a wide range of social groups in evidence, including freedmen, soldiers and peregrini, it also considers the varying reasons which underlay child commemoration and demonstrates the importance of studying the material in context. Amply supported by a catalogue of examples and over a hundred images, it will be essential reading for anyone working on Roman childhood or family studies.

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PORTRAITS of CHILDREN
ON
ROMAN FUNERARY MONUMENTS

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Worcester College, Oxford
Dedicated to the memory of my father,
John Mander (1939–2012)
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PREFACE

During the hundred or so museum visits undertaken for the purposes of this book, there was one question I encountered more frequently than any other: why was I going to such effort to catalogue these tombstones, especially when – as was more often the case than not – they were poorly preserved, they had attracted relatively little previous interest and, as so many of my hosts were keen to stress, the museums had much better pieces of sculpture on general display. All too soon it became clear that the tombstones seemed to ‘lose out’ in most comparisons: they were for children not adults; they were ‘private’ pieces rather than ‘public’; they were often fragmentary or extremely weathered; and, almost universally, they lacked any archaeological context. And so the great majority of the monuments included in this catalogue were to be found either in out-of-town deposits or at the back of museum storerooms; in a handful of cases, they had been mislaid altogether or, perhaps worse still, had suffered significant (and utterly avoidable) damage since their last publication. At times, the tombstones were in fact to be found lying face-down on the ground or else covered by standing water, bird excrement and/or moss.

There were, of course, many exceptions to this situation: some better-preserved or more well-known examples had come to enjoy pride of place in (albeit largely regional) collections while several curators were pleased that the monuments were finally receiving some attention. But, in general, the requests I made to examine Roman tombstones bearing child portraits were met with a blend of surprise, intrigue and, at times, realisation that pieces of sculpture not seen in a handful of cases, they had been mislaid altogether or, perhaps worse still, had suffered significant (and utterly avoidable) damage since their last publication. At times, the tombstones were in fact to be found lying face-down on the ground or else covered by standing water, bird excrement and/or moss.

For all of the recent advances made in the subject – and since the 1990s in particular they have been considerable – works on visual material are still vastly outnumbered by those concerned with legal, epigraphic and literary sources. Provincial examples have been particularly neglected. Practicalities no doubt play a large role in this: organising the appointments and permits needed to conduct first-hand examination can be time consuming and bureaucratically complex; just reaching the various regional museums in which the stones are held is not always easy, quite apart from the expense it involves. But in part, iconographic studies on this particular genre may also remain relatively few in number because making cross-cultural comparisons about such an emotive subject – and attempting to reconstruct motivations in a society where child death was so frequent – can be extremely difficult (a topic to which we shall return in the Introduction).

In response to this, I have attempted to adopt a cautious but open outlook about what the material shows us in relation to emotion. Inferences are noted, suggestions are made but, compared to some previous studies, I have placed a stronger emphasis on the role of tombstones as items of social advertisement (not that affection and promotion have to be opposed: the two concepts can and do work in tandem). As part of this, the first and second chapters concern themselves with the many conceptual and methodological issues which surround the study of Roman children, especially in terms of definition and identification. In Chapter 3 the stones themselves take centre stage, the most popular themes and models being discussed to give some understanding of how adults viewed their children, at least in the sepulchral sphere. The focus of Chapter 4 shifts to the relatives and other adults who regularly appear alongside children, asking whether commemorative patterns reflect demographic reality. By placing a spotlight on the nuclear family, it also considers why certain social groups may have felt a particular need to purchase these tombstones. Chapter 5 looks beyond the immediate family to examine surrogate and extended relationships, ones which – in light of the grim mortality rates – probably had far greater importance than commemoration patterns would suggest. The final chapter attempts to reconstruct something of the archaeological context in which the tombstones were set up as well as what commissioners hoped to achieve through the use of a portrait; this is of crucial importance even if the lack of evidence is more than a little frustrating.
My aim has been to root the discussions in first-hand analysis of the monuments themselves. When an example is mentioned in the main text, it is identified by a unique code which corresponds to its entry in the catalogue (where more complete details can be found). The great number of pieces under consideration – nearly 900 – means that data tables are also employed to help assess wider trends. I have provided as many photographs as possible under very tight constraints of copyright and expense; I hope the selection includes several which have rarely been seen before and which I am extremely grateful to the very many museums which offered assistance – especially where fees were lowered or even waived altogether. For those not pictured in this book, the catalogue includes references to other publications in which illustrations can be located (hundreds of images are also available online, particularly on the Ubi Erat Lupa Datenbank).

All that remains is for me to offer thanks to the many individuals who have enriched this book considerably. With the material and ideas on which it is based stemming ultimately from my Oxford PhD, I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my supervisor Janet DeLaine; her patience and guidance were of immense help. So too was the encouragement offered by my examiners Peter Stewart and Josephine Quinn; the questions they raised and avenues they suggested for further exploration have developed this research immeasurably. More recently, Michael Sharp and his wonderful team at Cambridge University Press have been ever ready to help. Further thanks are due to my undergraduate tutor Andrew Lintott for providing the original inspiration; to Bert Smith for assuming the role of co-supervisor; to Susan Walker and Simon Price for their useful comments on transfer papers; to the anonymous reviewers whose advice and suggested improvements were invaluable; and to Martin Henig for his continued enthusiasm towards my work. There are many others besides with whom I have discussed ideas, from whom I have sought information or who have very kindly supplied copies of their work; I thank all of them, especially Christian Laes, Janet Huskinson, Beryl Rawson, Ursula Rothe, Alison Cooley and Diana Klein. For advice on various inscriptions, Peter Dover has given his time and expertise with considerable kindness. Daniel Hogg and Glenn Lacki also deserve credit in this regard, as do Jenni Eatough, Claudio CastelNovo, Julietta Steinhauser and Claire Wright for translating letters into a variety of languages. It goes without saying that all views, and any mistakes, remain my own.

Several sources of financial assistance have been crucial over the course of this project. First and foremost, I am grateful to Worcester College for electing me to a Junior Research Fellowship. Various trips were made possible by grants from the Craven Committee, the Justinian Bracegirdle Foundation, the Meyerstein Foundation, the Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation and the Oxford Italian Association. Above all, a scholarship from the British School at Rome facilitated a wonderful stay in Italy where the assistance of Maria Pia Malvezzi in securing permits was most welcome. To finance illustrations, the Craven Committee once again very kindly provided funds, as did the Jowett Copyright Trust.

Countless members of museum and institute staff across Europe and America have been immensely helpful, responding to no doubt time-consuming requests and in some cases going to great efforts to supply information. I thank in particular all those who drove me to remote deposits, opened closed sections of museums, provided bibliographic and photographic material or granted special permits. Most must unfortunately remain anonymous here but I offer special gratitude to Philippe Amourette (Auxerre), Roberta Bernabei (Rome), Alfred Bernhard-Walcher (Vienna), Józef Beszédes (Budapest), Monique de Cargouët (Sens), Fiorenzo Catali (Soprintendenza, Rome), Ash Cooke (Liverpool), Dóra Csordás (Budapest), Olivier Gábor (Pécs), Laura Gadbery (Boston), Andreas Geißler (Arachne Datenbank), Raimund Kastler and Wilfried Kovacevics (Salzburg), Michael Klein (Mainz), Daria Lanzuolo (DAI), Jackie Logan (York), Jean Lepage (Narbonne), Cristina Mîtar (Deva), Luciana Morresi (Capri), Zsolt Mráv (Budapest), Friederieke Naumann-Steckner (Cologne), Irina Nemet (Cluj-Napoca), Tim Padley (Carlisle), Barbara Porod (Graz), Antonella Romualdi (Florence), Heribert Schutzbier (Mannersdorf), Alexandru Sonoc (Sibiu), Giandomenico Spinola (Vatican), Arnaud Vaillant (Langres), Daniela Velegostino (Musei Capitolini), Christian Vernou (Dijon), Rosanna Vigiani (Ancona) and Anne Ziégélé (Bordeaux). Ortolf Harl, who is responsible for the truly wonderful Ubi Erat Lupa Datenbank, has also been generous in supplying images. I hope his website soon receives the acknowledgement it deserves.

Lastly, I thank my friends and family for their support; I am sure they will be relieved to hear that I can finally lay these tombstones to rest.
ABBREVIATIONS

For abbreviations used in the Catalogue, see pp. 156–8.

AA Archäologischer Anzeiger
AAAD Antichità Altoadriatiche
AAPat Atti e Memorie dell'Accademia Patavina
AArchHung Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae
ABull The Art Bulletin
AC L'Antiquité Classique
AClass Acta Classica: Proceedings of the Classical Association of South Africa
AEA Archivo Español de Arqueología
AHB The Ancient History Bulletin
AJ Archaeological Journal
AJA American Journal of Archaeology
AJP American Journal of Philology
AK Antike Kunst
AMN Acta Musei Napocensis
AN Aquileia Nostra: Bollettino dell'Associazione Nazionale per Aquileia
AncSoc Ancient Society
Annales (HSS) Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales
AnnÉpigr L'Année Épigraphique
ArchS Archäologie der Schweiz: Mitteilungsblatt der Schweizerischen Gesellschaft für Ur- und Frühgeschichte
ArD Archeo Datenbank
ARID Analecta Romana Instituti Danici
AW Antike Welt
BAGB Bulletin de l’Association Guillaume Budé
BCAR Bollettino della Commissione Archeologica Comunale di Roma
BJ Bonner Jahrbücher des Rheinischen Landesmuseums in Bonn
BSEAA Boletín del Seminario de Estudios de Arte y Arqueología
Cé-M Classica et Mediaevalia
CAG Carte archéologique de la Gaule
CIL Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum
CPh Classical Philology
CQ Classical Quarterly
CSIR Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani
DAI Deutsches Archäologisches Institut
EDCS Epigraphik-Datenbank Claus-Slaby
EDH Epigraphische Datenbank Heidelberg
EE Ephemeris Epigraphica
EMC Échos du Monde Classique (Classical Views)
FBSM Forschungen und Berichte, hrsg. von den Staatlichen Museen
G&R Greece and Rome
GMusJ J. Paul Getty Museum Journal
HEOD Hispania Epigraphica Online Database
IDR Inscriptiile Daciei Romane
IG Inscriptiones Graecae
ILS Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae
JDAI Jahrhundert des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts
JÖAI Jahresthefte des Österreichischen Archäologischen Instituts
JRA Journal of Roman Archaeology
JRGZ Journal of the Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums
JRS Journal of Roman Studies
KJ Kölner Jahrbuch für Vor- und Frühgeschichte
MDAI(R) Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts (Röm. Abt.)
MEFRM Mélanges de l’École Française de Rome.
MPAA Atti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia
NSA Notizie degli Scavi di Antichità
JR, Romi Regni Sueciae
ORom Opuscula Romana: Acta Inst. Rom. Regni Sueciae
PBSR Papers of the British School at Rome
QIASA Quaderni dell'Istituto di Archeologia e Storia Antica dell'Università di Annunzio, Chieti
RA Revue Archéologique
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>REA</td>
<td>Revue des Études Anciennes</td>
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<td>RhM</td>
<td>Rheinisches Museum für Philologie</td>
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<tr>
<td>RIB</td>
<td>Roman Inscriptions of Britain</td>
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<td>RIU</td>
<td>Die Römischen Inschriften Ungarns</td>
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<tr>
<td>RLAC</td>
<td>Realexikon für Antike und Christentum</td>
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<td>RO</td>
<td>Römisches Österreich: Jahresschrift der Österreichischen Gesellschaft für Archäologie</td>
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<td>RQA</td>
<td>Römische Quartalschrift für Christliche Altertumskunde und für Kirchengeschichte</td>
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<td>ZAnt</td>
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<td>ZPE</td>
<td>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</td>
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