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Jeannine Diddle Uzzi
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1 INTRODUCTION

There has always been a symbiosis between
the will to power and monumental display
Jas Elsner[1]

On the Arch of Septimius Severus at Lepcis Magna a non-Roman child is dragged through the streets by a Roman soldier (see Fig. 45). A frontal figure in non-Roman costume, he flails across the triumphal scene with arms spread, disrupting the movement of the procession and attracting the eye of the viewer. A solitary figure, he has no explicit connection to non-Roman adults who might serve as his *familia*. He is the victim of violence and humiliation, apparently powerless at the hands of the Roman soldier, and his pathetic situation is emphasized by his gesture and position in the scene.

This image contrasts starkly with images of Roman children from similar public monuments. The Arch of Trajan at Beneventum, for instance, presents children in Roman costume among Roman family members in an orderly and peaceful scene of imperial largesse (see Fig. 9). The contrast, briefly illustrated here, between the official artistic contexts in which Roman and non-Roman children appear opens up a narrative of Roman identity in which Roman children act as the future Roman citizenry, and non-Roman children appear as captive or submissive figures.

In official imperial art, Roman children are regularly shown in depictions of public gatherings before the emperor. Non-Roman children, on the other hand, appear in scenes of submission, triumph, or violent military activity. All children have a certain potential in Roman art as symbols of the future. Non-Roman children represent the future of their particular ethnos, territory, or province just as Roman children are the *futurus populus* of Rome.[2] It is in the nature of this potential and the way in which the Roman state manipulates it that we may identify fundamental aspects of a Roman imperial ideology, an idea of *Romanitas*.

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Renan's historic nineteenth-century essay, "What Is a Nation?"[3] denies that Rome was a nation in the modern sense of the word. "Nations," according to Renan, "are something fairly new in history. Antiquity was unfamiliar with them" (Eley and Suny 1996, 43). Renan identifies the Roman Empire as "a huge association, and a synonym for order, peace, and civilization," but he claims that "an empire twelve times larger than present-day France cannot be said to be a state in the modern sense of the term" (ibid.).

Renan defines a nation rather as "a soul, a spiritual principle" composed of two basic elements: a past, a "rich legacy of memories," and a present, a desire to live together (p. 52). Renan's definition of nation is grounded in the concepts of remembrance and forgetting. For an entity to be called "nation," its constituents must both remember a common past and forget enough of that past to retain their desire to live together. As "unity is always effected by means of brutality . . . forgetting . . . is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation" (p. 45).

Anderson (1991) builds on and problematizes Renan's definition of nation in *Imagined Communities*. He defines a nation as "an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (p. 6). In Anderson's view, the "nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship . . . [a] fraternity that makes it possible for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings" (p. 7). Although he does not reject the significance of Renan's remembrance and forgetting, Anderson rejects the simplicity with which Renan employs those terms. Anderson believes that for most citizens, remembrance and forgetting occur in the same conceptual space, and he provides an instructive example: "A vast pedagogical industry works ceaselessly to oblige young Americans to remember/forget the hostilities of 1861–65 as a great 'civil' war between 'brothers' rather than between – as they briefly were – two sovereign nation-states" (p. 201).

Anderson likens the formation of nations to puberty: "After experiencing the physiological and emotional changes produced by puberty, it is impossible to 'remember' the consciousness of childhood. . . . Out of this estrangement comes a conception of personhood, *identity* . . . which, because it can not be 'remembered,' must be narrated" (p. 204). With nations, "awareness of being imbedded in secular, serial time, with all its implications of continuity, yet of 'forgetting' the experience of this continuity – product of the ruptures of the late eighteenth century – engenders the need for a narrative of 'identity'"

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(p. 205).[4] Like Renan, Anderson identifies the concept of the nation as modern, a phenomenon of the past two centuries.

Similar disavowals of Rome's unity as a nation or state can be found in classical scholarship. In a thoughtful chapter on "Romanization," Woolf argues against the validity of the term as Haverfield and Mommsen used it. "[T]here was no standard Roman civilization against which provincial cultures might be measured. The city of Rome was a cultural melting pot. . . . Nor did Romanization culminate in cultural uniformity throughout the empire" (1998, 7). Moreover, according to Woolf, "Roman culture was not static and its composition was never a matter of consensus. Over the centuries in which the identity 'Roman' was felt to be important, ways of eating, ways of dealing with the dead, styles of education and so forth underwent many transformations. . . . Becoming Roman was not a matter of acquiring a ready-made cultural package, then, so much as joining the 'insiders'' debate about what that package did or ought to consist of at that particular time" (p. 11). For Woolf, "Romanization has no explanatory potential because it was not an active force" (p. 7).

Hingley makes a similar assessment: "Although local folk memory can be long-lived, the concept of what was Roman and what was native will have varied throughout society at the time of the conquest" (1996, 43). "The dominant approaches [to studies of Romanization] . . . create a reification of the concept 'Roman.' They suggest that the idea of 'Rome' (and those of Roman material culture and Romanization) have some actual objective existence" (p. 42).[5]

What have the claims of Woolf and Hingley, let alone those of theorists like Renan and Anderson, to do with art, children, and Roman imperial ideology? In denying the possibility that "the idea of 'Rome' ha[d] some actual objective existence," that there was any "standard Roman civilization," or that Rome might be understood as a nation or an empire in the modern sense of the terms, scholars of both classics and political theory have limited the ways in which we in the modern world can approach the Romans and their empire. How did Romans understand themselves if not as a nation or state? If nothing can be identified clearly as "Roman," how are we to talk about the empire? If Rome was not a nation, not a "soul, a spiritual principle" with a commonly understood and accepted past and present, not a limited and sovereign community in which members felt a fraternity for which they were willing to kill and, more importantly, die, how can we talk about a sense of Roman identity?

Woolf and Hingley, in particular, are responding to a very specific type of arrogance in nineteenth-century scholarship on Romanization, but their

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conclusions are at times too relativistic to be useful for the study of the effects of Roman expansion on either Romans or non-Romans. Is any political entity ever culturally static? Does any nation possess what Woolf terms "cultural uniformity"? Is there any nation, ancient or modern, whose cultural composition has not been, at some time, a matter of debate? Any nation whose traditions do not change over time? The fact that Rome was a "melting pot," influenced culturally by those it conquered militarily, does not negate the possibility of a Roman identity. Nor does the fact that provinces uniquely experienced Roman conquest and influence negate the possibility (or, in fact, the likelihood) that an "idea of 'Rome'" existed.

Žižek (1993) addresses the issue of nationalism elegantly in *Tarrying with the Negative*. He describes national identity as a "mode of being proper to ideological causes" in which a nation "'is' only insofar as subjects believe (in the other's belief) in its existence" (p. 202). "[T]he normal order of causality is here inverted, since it is the Cause itself which is produced by its effects" (ibid.):

> National identification is by definition sustained by a relationship toward the Nation qua Thing. This Nation-Thing is determined by a series of contradictory properties. It appears to us as "our Thing" (perhaps we could say *cosa nostra*), as something accessible only to us, as something "they," the others, cannot grasp; nonetheless it is something constantly menaced by "them". . . . It would, however, be erroneous simply to reduce the national Thing to the features of a specific "way of life." The Thing is not directly a collection of these features; there is "something more" in it, something that *is present* in these features, that *appears* through them. Members of a community who partake in a given "way of life" *believe in their Thing*, where this belief has a reflexive structure proper to the intersubjective space: "I believe in the (national) Thing" equals "I believe that others (members of my community) believe in the Thing." The tautological character of the Thing to "It is the real Thing," etc. – is founded precisely in this paradoxical reflexive structure. The national Thing exists as long as members of the community believe in it; it is literally an effect of this belief in itself. (201–2)

Žižek's definition of nationhood is surprisingly close to those of Renan and Anderson – a nation exists only in as much as it is imagined to exist – but Žižek does not limit his definition temporally, nor does his definition fall into relativism. "To emphasize in a 'deconstructionist' mode that Nation is not a biological or transhistorical fact but a contingent discursive construction, an overdetermined result of textual practices, is thus misleading; such

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an emphasis overlooks the remainder of some *real*, nondiscursive kernel of enjoyment which must be present for a Nation qua discursive entity-effect to achieve its ontological consistency" (p. 202).[6]

This is not to argue for Roman nation- or statehood or to refute any of the theories presented here per se. This is to argue that modern definitions of nation and state can be helpful for understanding the phenomenon that was Rome, particularly in light of Žižek's assessment of nationhood. In fact, latent in modern denials of Rome's political and cultural unity, consistency, and knowability are invaluable tools, concepts, and terminology that, although purportedly off-limits to students of the Roman Empire, are indeed useful for excavating a Roman identity. This is also to argue that the frequent omission of such things as art, architecture, and numismatics from the studies just discussed has left us with an incomplete, and perhaps skewed, view of Roman identity.[7] Perhaps we *can* uncover a narrative of Roman identity, a narrative that might explain why ethnic non-Romans were willing to kill and, more importantly, die for the entity that was Rome.

Let us return to Žižek. "The national Thing," writes Žižek, "exists as long as members of the community believe in it; it is literally an effect of this belief in itself" (p. 202). The question, therefore, is not whether the 'Roman' exists, but how we can locate it and understand it given its inherent contradictions and "paradoxical reflexive structure" (ibid.). Roman historians have uncovered evidence consistent with Žižek's assessment of nationhood. Braund notes that, beginning in the second century B.C., foreign kings sent their sons to Rome to be educated, and this education was much more than academic.[8] Livy's account of the education of King Ariarathes' son at Rome provides the Roman perspective: "The message of the envoys was that the king sent his son to be educated at Rome so that he might, from very boyhood, become accustomed to Roman people and Roman culture (*mores*); the king asked that they might receive him not only as a guest under the supervision of private citizens but also as a charge and student of the state."[9] Princes sent to Rome were to be immersed in public and private Roman life and instructed in Roman mores. As Braund points out, although the education of princes in countries other than their own was not unusual in this period, "Athens' dominance [as an educational center] was purely cultural: a better precedent for the education gained by kings-to-be at Rome is the education of Massinissa at Carthage, for it too had a major political aspect . . . there was an intimate connection between education at Rome and succession at home" (p. 11).

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Similarly, although Woolf problematizes the term *Romanization*, he also notes that for the Gauls, "learning to be Roman . . . meant learning the virtues and mores appropriate to their place in the empire of cities and the empire of friends" (1998, 104). He invites us to imagine Roman influence in Gaul "as the expansion of Roman society through the recruitment of Gauls to various roles and positions in the social order. That society reproduced itself through rituals and customs, the traces of many of which are to be found in Latin inscriptions" (p. 105). "In Gaul men literally came down from the hills, shaved their beards, and learned to bathe themselves. Nor did these changes affect only the richest and most prominent. The humblest altars and the cheapest pottery vessels testify to the creation of a new civilization" (pp. ix–x).

Although Rome may not have created "a culture of imperial uniformity" (Woolf 1998, x), it seems to have effected sweeping cultural change based on a generally identifiable set of norms and traditions. Livy's passage, like Braund's and Woolf's analyses of Roman influence on non-Romans, implies not only that one could indeed be educated in Roman culture, mores, and politics – what one might call "Roman identity" – but also that education at Rome may have lent a prince or local official a certain something, Žižek's "something more," that would have given him a political or social advantage (or both). In their use of the untranslated mores, which I understand as something deeper than simply "way of life," Braund and Woolf express themselves in terms of Žižek's intangible "something more"; they reveal their belief in Rome's "National Thing."

Tacitus' *Agricola* reveals a similar understanding of Roman identity. In fact, Tacitus uses the figure of Calcagus, who denies the possibility of Roman military cohesion, to highlight the unity of the Roman troops. Let us examine the claims of Calcagus and the subsequent response of the Roman army to British aggression:

> Or do you all believe that the Romans have as much excellence in war as they have excess in peace? They are famous on account of our dissentions and disagreements; the failings of their enemies turn into the glory of their army, an army which, composed of the most dissimilar peoples, only favorable conditions cement and which will disintegrate when the tide of war turns: unless you think that Gauls and Germans and (it is shameful to admit) many Britons, granted that they serve with their blood an alien despot, although much longer her enemies than her slaves, are held together by trust and good will. Dread and terror are unstable bonds of alliance, bonds which, when removed, will allow those who no longer fear to begin to hate.[10]

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Such sentiments may inform those of Renan as he denies Rome's status as nation. Calcagus claims that Rome is a vast, imperial entity comprising diverse populations, recently conquered, likely to be resentful, and supposedly without common memories, consent, or fraternity. How could such a group of people ever form a cohesive military unit, let alone agree to kill, or more importantly die, for Rome? Calcagus imagines that the rebellious Britons will find help within the Roman army as Gauls, Germans, and Britons fighting for Rome remember their past: "In the very battle-lines of the enemy will we find our strength. The Britons will recognize their own cause; the Gauls will recall their earlier freedom; the rest of the Germans will desert them, just as lately the Usipi left."[11]

The outcome of the battle, however, is not as Calcagus imagines. Tacitus relates that Agricola's troops, his *commilitones*, or comrades-in-arms, as he calls them,[12] are brave and loyal. "Then, when the Batavi began to fire blows and to strike with their shields and to break heads and, having laid low those who defended the flats, to march the battle-line uphill, the other cohorts, striving to emulate them, cut down those nearest to them."[13] And Agricola's troops are not loyal to him alone; his battalions are even reported to have followed one another's examples, in this case, that of the Batavi. Finally, the behavior of the Romans is presented in stark contrast to that of the Britons, who fail to remain in formation and instead beat a hasty and disorganized retreat. "But when they saw our troops composed in orderly lines to strike again, they turned in flight, not in orderly groups, as before, nor looking after one another, but scattered and avoiding one another equally, they sought their remote retreats."[14]

In Tacitus' presentation, the Britons behave exactly as Calcagus thought the Romans should. Despite the diverse ethnic composition of the Roman army, the Roman troops do not break ranks, do not succumb to any mythical resentment or lack of loyalty. Apparently, they have forgotten the violence, the "brutality" by which Roman unity was created, and they act accordingly, willing to kill, and even die, for Rome. Tacitus provides evidence here of something akin to a national narrative, a narrative that recognizes and participates in the presentation of a Roman identity. In the voice of Calcagus, Tacitus acknowledges the charge of disunity within the Roman army. He then refutes that charge in the battle scene that follows, showing that the Roman soldiers (and Tacitus himself) believe in an idea of Rome.

Finally, as Lintott observes, by the second century A.D. Aelius Aristides "perceived Rome as a world state" (p. 186).[15] Oliver's 1953 edition of Aristides

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records that Aristides saw Rome as a "common emporium of the world," a "common town" for the civilized world (p. 889). In fact, Oliver identifies the word "Roman" as "the label, not of membership in a city, but of some common nationality" (ibid.). As Oliver notes, the word *koinon* recurs again and again in Aristides' text with respect to Rome and the Empire (ibid.). According to Oliver's translation, Aristides goes so far as to call the Roman Empire "a World League based on democratic equality with an impartial court of law over and above that of the constituent cities" (p. 890).[16]

That Aristides' view of contemporary Rome existed, or was at least comprehensible to him, is enough to argue that Žižek's "belief" existed for Rome, that Rome had significance as something akin to a modern nation, national identity, narrative, and all. Add to Aristides' assessment the passages of Livy and Tacitus discussed earlier and the analyses of Braund and Woolf, and it becomes clear that an identifiable narrative of *Romanitas* must exist. In fact, prior to his 1998 publication, Woolf (1992, 352) asked the following:

> If the Romans had no unitary policy of Romanisation, and if local experiences were so different, how are we to explain the recognizable common features of Romano-British, Gallo-Roman and Hispano-Roman material culture, or the widespread expansion of urbanism in the west under Roman rule? Most importantly, why did all, or at least most, local elites succumb to the lure of Roman culture? The adoption of the conquerors' culture has been a common but not invariable feature of pre-industrial, as of more recent, empires. It may be that the answer lies in something *particularly Roman* about the Roman Empire, some trait or cluster of traits that will only emerge from studies of what distinguished Romans among ancient conquerors. The specificity of *romanitas* (ideologies, as well as structures, of domination) may be as important in understanding the unity of Romanisation, as the specificity of iron-age societies is crucial if we are to understand its diversity.

It is that *particularly Roman* something with which I am concerned here.

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2 PRIMARY SOURCES

The sources in which one might locate a narrative of Roman identity are copious and rich, and there are a number of reasons I have chosen imperial images of children as my body of evidence. This work stems from my 1998 dissertation in which I compiled a corpus of representations of children from the official art of the Roman Empire. The images, many of which come from Rome and its immediate surroundings, span the beginning and height of the empire, from the reign of Augustus through the Severan dynasty.[1] Few children were depicted in Roman republican art, and the political chaos following the Severan period disrupted the development of children as artistic subjects. Although never before examined comprehensively, many images of children appear on works officially sponsored or made public by the central Roman government or its ruling elite. As Gregory (1994) has noted, "scholars in other historical fields have already begun to examine how images as well as other symbols, gestures, spectacles, pageants and ceremonials – in short, the 'theatre' of political life – all interact to support, reinforce, or question political regimes. . . . [S]uch approaches have only lately made themselves felt in the study of ancient political life" (p. 81). By identifying relationships among images of children within the context of the visual language of the empire one may draw conclusions beyond those that apply to a single child, monument, or artistic genre – conclusions that relate to questions of Roman identity and Roman political ideology.

Representations of children in official imperial art are an excellent place from which to approach one of the most fundamental questions of Roman history ("What did it mean to be Roman?"), and children play an important and identifiable role in official art from the reign of Augustus at least through

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the reign of Septimius Severus, yet studies of ancient children have been placed almost exclusively within larger studies of the Roman or Greek family, nearly all of which rely on evidence from literary or written sources. Gardener and Wiedemann's (1991) volume of sources in translation addresses a wide range of domestic topics from the composition of the *familia* to the education and socialization of Roman children. Rawson's *The Family in Ancient Rome: New Perspectives* (1986) and *Marriage, Divorce, and Children in Ancient Rome* (1991) include chapters covering topics from wet-nursing to inheritance. Similar studies have been undertaken by Dixon in *Childhood, Class, and Kin in the Roman World* (2001), Rawson and Weaver in *The Roman Family in Italy: Status, Sentiment, Space* (1997), Saller in *Patriarchy, Property and Death in the Roman Family* (1994), Evans in *War, Women, and Children in Ancient Rome* (1991), and Wiedemann in *Adults and Children in the Roman Empire* (1989). Other studies focus on single aspects of familial relations. Dixon examines the role of the Roman mother in her 1988 volume,[2] and Hallett explores the bond between fathers and daughters in *Fathers and Daughters in Roman Society: Women and the Elite Family* (1984).

Although these scholars and their respective, often pioneering, works have been invaluable to the study of children in the ancient world, there are two major gaps in the field of Roman family history. First, most studies do not focus on children. Rather, they address children either as one element of the family or as one aspect of a specific familial issue such as slavery, inheritance, or marriage and divorce law. The larger picture of the ancient family, while providing a context for children's history, tends to obscure the details of child life and the significance of children in their own right.

This first gap may reflect the bias of ancient literary sources, the primary type of evidence used by social historians. Roman authors occasionally address the topic of children or mention children in passing, but children are not often the focus of their attention. Most references to children in literature either refer to education or are sentimental or anecdotal rather than documentary.[3] That is, Roman authors tend not to document children and childhood consciously, as they might imperial policy or political and military events. Even in descriptions of education, where we might expect children to be the focus, it is usually the process of education rather than the children themselves, either individually or as a group, with which authors are concerned.

One of our most fruitful literary accounts of children in the public sphere comes from Pliny's *Panegyricus*, but even this passage presents children incidentally; one cannot identify children as the focus of the scene:

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