

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

To the Spirits of the Departed. For Augustania Cassia Marcia, incomparable wife, who lived for 34 years, 11 months and 13 days, for whom, by fulfilling the last requirement of her fate, life has ended, although she hoped for better for herself. And for M. Antonius Augustianus Philetus, most blameless son, who lived for 3 years, 8 months and 10 days, from whom the wicked gods have taken away life, against the hopes of his parents. M. Antonius Basilides, *frumentarius* in *legio X Gemina*, (did this) for his most devoted wife and son.

The losses suffered by soldier M. Antonius Basilides are recorded on a third-century limestone stela from Carnuntum in the province of Pannonia Superior (#591). Measuring nearly two metres in height, the lengthy and in places unevenly cut inscription is surmounted by a large family scene in which father, mother and son stare out towards the viewer from inside a simple and stylised boat which battles its way through the waves below. Nearly two thousand years on, Basilides' grief is still apparent through the way he chose to describe his lost wife and child, his hopes for a happy reunion exemplified by the image of his family making its final journey as a united group.¹ There are, however, many other things about this soldier's desperate situation which we cannot now determine – including the length of time which elapsed between the deaths of his wife and son; whether he had other children in whom he might have found some consolation. One thing is though certain: he would not have been alone in his plight. Against a background of high mortality rates, the vast majority of those bearing children in the Roman period could have expected to lose at least one of them; the very unluckiest were left childless.

Although specific statistics continue to be debated, most estimates agree that between a quarter and a third of children died before the end of their first year, a figure which climbed to half by the age of ten.² Some contextualisation for this is provided by recent data from the United Nations: at the start of the new millennium, Britain had a national average of just 5.2 infant deaths per 1,000 live births, rising

to 6.4 per 1,000 for under-five mortality; in Sierra Leone, the country with the very worst rates, the corresponding totals were 165.6 and 289.9 per 1,000.³ The latter are still somewhat short of the numbers in the Roman era when, to use Keith Bradley's words, 'the level of child mortality was massive'.⁴ Like Basilides, tens of thousands of parents, siblings, extended relatives and owners were thus confronted by the *mors immatura* of a child, many of them choosing to mark their untimely loss by setting up a tombstone bearing a portrait – the earliest coming from the end of the republic and the latest from the first half of the fourth century.⁵ Within this extended period there are significant peaks and troughs both within particular provinces and between regions. Rome and parts of Italy produce most of the earliest pieces, building to a flourish in the late first and second centuries. In contrast, although a small number of provincial tombstones were erected in the first half of first century AD, far more substantial numbers appear only from the

³ Figures published for the period 2000–5 (*World Population Prospects: The 2006 Revision*, Tables A.18 and A.19). The worldwide averages were 53.9 deaths/1,000 live births for infant mortality and 80.3 deaths/1,000 live births for under-five mortality.

⁴ Bradley 1994: 143–4.

⁵ A number of issues complicate the dating of the stones. In particular, only rarely does one find an epigraphic reference specific enough to allow a precise attribution. Instead, one normally has to rely on epigraphic and iconographic style, with hairstyles assuming a role of particular importance. For adults this is relatively unproblematic, even if it does presuppose a quick and uncomplicated transmission from the capital; for children the situation is considerably more complex, especially as many boys and girls have simple, almost generic, haircuts which appear to reflect typical juvenile styles rather than imperial models. As such coiffures bear more than a passing resemblance to Trajan's favoured cut, there may be an additional explanation for the great peak of examples from Rome which are dated to the early second century. See Goette 1989: 454–9 and Coulon 1994: 116–18 for the difficulties of dating child hairstyles, as well as Backe-Dahmen 2008: 46 on the popularity of Trajan's style.

¹ Huskinson 1996: 116–17 for discussion of marine motifs on sarcophagi.

² For recent estimates, Bradley 2005: 68–9, Lucy 2005: 50, Backe-Dahmen 2006: 75 and D'Ambra 2007a: 66; for comparable figures from classical Greece, Oakley 2003: 163. On mortality rates in other cultures, Woods 2006: 35–55. On the causes and prevalence of Roman infant mortality, as well as the methodology surrounding its measurement, Scheidel 2001: 21–5, Rawson 2003a: 103–4 and Carroll 2006: 168–75. For up-to-date articles on Roman mortality and demography, see Walter Scheidel's *Princeton/Stanford Working Papers in Classics* listed in the Bibliography.

second century onwards. Towards the middle of the third century, a notable decline begins across the whole of the western empire; Rome, Italy, Britain and Pannonia provide occasional examples into the fourth century but, in general, this form of commemoration had become largely redundant. The reasons for this are still being debated.⁶

Throughout the period in question, other types of funerary display were of course available and some, it must be remembered, may have lacked either the desire, cultural awareness or financial capability to record their loss in this or any other way (see below); but right across the western empire – from Rome to Britannia, Lusitania to Dacia – archaeologists have been left with these permanent and highly visual memorials. The recipients represented thereon stand alongside those shown on comparable sepulchral monuments from the eastern empire and in painted funerary portraits from Egypt (the Fayum region especially⁷) to take their place within an iconographic tradition with roots in the classical Greek period (children having appeared on *stelai*, *naoskoi*, *lekythoi* and *loutrophoroi* from Athens, Thessaly, the Aegean islands and parts of eastern Greece at various points between 530 and 300 BC).⁸ The extent to which these Greek stones may have influenced later Roman pieces has incited no little controversy but it is clear that, compared to their later Roman counterparts, Greek children appeared in a rather more limited and private range of artistic contexts (most notably on painted vases and, in particular, on Attic *choes* – small jugs given to children as part of the celebrations surrounding the *Anthesteria* festival, held annually in honour of Dionysus).⁹ At least in public settings, representations of children were not the force they came to be in Roman times.

During the republican period, such images were however relatively infrequent; as Beryl Rawson commented, art at this time ‘reflected public life rather than private and focused on individual adult male Roman citizens.’¹⁰ Only with first-century BC funerary reliefs of Italian freedmen did individual children start to find a regular role in Roman iconography, their images soon gracing both private

tombstones and public contexts alike. Perhaps understandably, it is the latter which have most occupied the attention of scholarship, with children (whether specific individuals from the imperial household or symbolic figures designed to represent children more generally) appearing on some of the Roman world’s most famed monuments, including the *Ara Pacis*, the *Sebasteion* at Aphrodisias, Trajan’s Column, the arch of Trajan at Beneventum, the *Tropaeum Traiani* at Adamklissi, the *Anaglypha Traiani/Hadriani*, the Column of Marcus Aurelius, the Arch of Septimius Severus in Lepcis Magna and the Arch of Constantine. So too do they make appearances in reliefs from the Arco di Portogallo and an arch of Marcus Aurelius. In addition, several junior members of the imperial household earned their own portrait types – their images thus adorning public spaces across the empire – while many made frequent appearances in numismatic iconography. Among the numerous examples which could be cited, we find Tiberius advertising for dynastic purposes the twin sons of Drusus on a sestertius minted between 22 and 23, the two boys’ confronted busts emerging from cornucopiae; Vitellius, perhaps in an attempt to stabilise his rule, presenting his two children on an aureus produced in 69; Domitian marking the death of his infant son, shown sitting on a globe and surrounded by stars, on an aureus from 82–84; Marcus Aurelius emphasising the fertility of his wife Faustina, showing her surrounded by their six children on a sestertius minted in 161 (just after she had produced twins); and Septimius Severus, also for dynastic ends, presenting confronted busts of his sons Caracalla and Geta on a gold aureus from 201–202.¹¹

To be clear, children were by no means constant components of imperial art and, certainly in relation to relief sculpture, representations tended to come in sporadic flurries as and when it suited the needs and ideology of the current ruler (with Augustus and Trajan being especially active).¹² Nevertheless, as we will see in Chapter 4, the scenes in question could, at times, exert a direct impact on the funerary iconography favoured by private commissioners while, at a more general level, the hairstyles and physical appearances of emperors and their wives were very frequently imitated by inhabitants right across the empire – with countless posthumous funerary portraits being cast very much in an imperial mould. The scenes assembled within this catalogue were, then, hardly set up in isolation; rather, they were part of a

⁶ For discussion of the possible reasons, including the rise of Christianity and a shift in adult self-representation, see Huskinson 2005: 98–103 (now supplemented by Kampen 2009: 127–9).

⁷ On the Fayum portraits, see the four catalogues compiled by Parlasca (1969, 1977, 1980 and 2003) as well as: Doxiadis 1995, Borg 1996 and 1997, Bagnall 1997, Bierbrier 1997a and 1997b, Montserrat 1997, Walker 1997a and 1997b.

⁸ For discussion of the areas producing examples, Oakley 2003: 180–2. For an overview of the Greek monuments, Hirsch-Dyczek 1983, Rühfel 1984 and Neils and Oakley 2003.

⁹ For summaries of child images in the Greek and Hellenistic canons, Rawson 2003a: 22–5 and Uzzi 2005: 12–13.

¹⁰ Rawson 2003a: 25.

¹¹ For details and images of the coins, see Kent 1978: 280 no. 156 (Tiberius), 288 no. 218 (Vitellius), 290 no. 242 (Domitian), 299 no. 339 (Marcus Aurelius) and 304 no. 383 (Septimius Severus). For children in numismatic largesse scenes, Uzzi 2005: 35–41.

¹² On the uneven appearance of children in imperial iconography, Uzzi 2005: 169–70.

much richer visual culture where images of children could assume a variety of symbolic functions and where many of those living in Rome and the provinces must have become accustomed to seeing images of children in various public settings. What unites these various iconographic strands is that the representations in question were commissioned, crafted and set up by adults – these are children as seen through the eyes of their parents, rulers and owners, something which raises fundamental questions about how the concept of childhood should be understood.

DEFINING CHILDHOOD

When Claudius adopted Nero in AD 50, the future emperor was a young boy yet to assume his *toga virilis* (the toga of adulthood worn by free men: see below). Although the ceremony occurred just a year later when Nero was thirteen, the fifth ruler of the empire was, at the time when plans for his succession were first formalised, still a child. The dichotomy of his situation seems to be captured by a full-figure portrait now in Paris which – since it shows Nero with a *bulla*, the amulet worn by freeborn boys yet to come of age – must have been made before 51. The statue presents the young boy in a heavy toga which clings to the contours of his body to expose an under-developed frame lacking any sense of adult musculature. His small and round face is similarly juvenile: Nero has a boyish hairstyle, formed of strands which are combed over his forehead but parted in the centre, as well as large ears, a fleshy nose, soft eyes and a narrow chin. Future ruler he may be, but the statue and others like it give the impression of a young boy thrust into a very adult context.

Nero was not of course the only emperor marked out for succession and in receipt of official portrait types while still a child. Among others, Caracalla too entered the visual record at a tender age – his Type 1 portrait thought to have been commissioned in 198 when father Septimius Severus elevated him to the rank of Augustus (and when he was a child of just ten years of age). Arguably the most famous among his earliest portraits is the piece now in the Musei Capitolini which shows a seated boy holding snakes in both of his hands; his small frame contains layers of infantile ‘puppy fat’ while his shock of curls, round face and button nose further confirm his youthful years. In the first half of the third century, meanwhile, Elagabalus and Alexander Severus (both of whom claimed descendancy from Caracalla) came to power in their mid teens – their portraits thus wrestling with how images of males who were but adolescents could convey a sense of imperial might.¹³

¹³ For discussion of the emperors’ portraits, see Kleiner 1992: 136, 322 and 362–3.

The public portraits of these youthful emperors (or emperors-to-be) are for our purposes particularly striking on two accounts: firstly, that appearance was subject to considerable artistic licence, with accuracy often giving way to symbolism (a topic we will revisit in Chapter 2); secondly, for the fluidity they demonstrate in relation to the very concept of childhood and, certainly in relation to Nero and Caracalla, for the transformations their images underwent as they rose to power and attempted to establish their rules. They thus raise questions about whether an individual already marked out to rule the empire can really be considered as a ‘child’ and whether age alone was the sole foundation around which notions of childhood were constructed. Indeed, in a society where children (albeit, in the imperial context, rather exceptional ones) could be exposed to such adult roles from young ages, defining the term ‘Roman child’ is a process fraught with difficulty – both words having the potential to become somewhat slippery. In relation to the former it may be problematic to assume that those from all parts of the empire were considered ‘Roman’ as such, an issue to which we will return; but it is the latter – ‘child’ – which gives the greater headache.

As a culturally specific concept, no two societies are likely to have definitions of the word ‘child’ which show exact correspondence.¹⁴ In most westernised contexts childhood is normally viewed as an extended and coherent period; more specific terms for those at certain points within it do not detract from the legal and general applicability of ‘child’. In contrast, understandings in the Roman period varied, with a great swathe of vocabulary contextualising children by age or their relation to adults without providing a word for ‘child’ as we would qualify it.¹⁵ Above all, social class mattered. Biologically, a seven-year-old slave was still a child and many modern observers might find it difficult to conceive of him/

¹⁴ On childhood as a social construct, Huskinson 1996: 2, Chamberlain 2000: 207, Lillehammer 2000: 20–1, Sofaer Derevenski 2000: 8, Gowland 2001: 152–3, Minten 2002: 121–2, Baxter 2005: 1–4, Lucy 2005: 43 and Crawford and Shepherd 2007: 2.

¹⁵ Képartová 1984: 192–3 for the lack of an equivalent to the German *Kind* and the various other terms employed at Pompeii and in *CIL* VI and X. The list of age concepts comprises: *infans*, *bullatus*, *femella*, *impubes*, *puer*, *parvus*, *parvulus*, *pullus*, *pupus*, *pupillus*, *pusus*, *pusio*, *pusillus*, *puella*, *virgo*, as well as related small forms and variations. The second list, comprising terms of relation, has: *filius*, *fetus*, (*g*)*natus*, *nepos*, *progenies*, *proles*, *liberi*, *propago*, *posteritas*, *suboles*, *stirps*, *alumnus*, *discipulus*, *discens*, *verna*. See also Eyben 1973a and Manson 1983: 150–3. The lack of clarity is discussed by Boswell 1988: 26–9, Dixon 1992: 104, Huskinson 1997: 234, Strubbe 1998: 45–6 and Norman 2002: 315. For a general survey of age definitions, Rawson 2003a: 134–45. On Greek terminology, Golden 2003: 14–15 and Kleijwegt and Amedick 2004: 866–7.

her in any other way. Yet to the master the same slave was a legal possession imbued with economic worth from the age of five and so very likely put to work; the ‘childhood’ of the slave, if it is right to term it as such, had long since ended.¹⁶ At the other end of the social spectrum, the arrival of adulthood was governed largely by important social ceremonies. In most cases it seems that parents were able to influence the ages at which they occurred and so, technically, those who did not experience their coming-of-age events until relatively late remained ‘children’ far beyond the standard biological and cultural norms.

Faced with such difficulties, attempting to create an all-encompassing definition relevant to those from all social groups and all parts of the empire can seem little more than a quest for a chimera. Still, in a book of this nature it is necessary to arrive at working definitions, imperfect though they may be.¹⁷ This process is simpler, though not entirely without complication, in the lower age groups where infants and toddlers are viewed as ‘children’ by most societies. Even so, several have noted that there is no Roman term for ‘baby’ and that *infans* is a social construct with differing application. Various employed to mean ‘an ineloquent adult, an uneducated child and ... the baby who does not speak at all’, it can encompass a broad range of people, some far beyond their first years.¹⁸ In this catalogue it appears on tombstones for Vacia (#396), a three-year-old girl from Britain whose portrait depicts a child of considerably more advanced years; for Primulus (#370, Figure 32), a young slave from Belgica with infantile proportions who was shown playing with toys; for a boy from Germania Inferior (#418) whose full-faced portrait is suggestive of a young child but whose name and age are regrettably lost; and most interestingly for Vitalinius Gromatius (#455), a boy from Mogontiacum (Mainz) whose small and damaged portrait may yield few visual clues about his age but who the accompanying inscription records as having been ten years old. For Gromatius at least, none of the standard definitions of *infans* sit particularly comfortably and so it becomes vital to consider the point at which a newborn in the Roman world was first recognised as an individual (noting in the process that our evidence is rather Rome- and elite-centric).

¹⁶ On slave valuation from the age of five, Ulp. *Dig.* 7.7.6.1 and Rawson 2003a: 74.

¹⁷ For a similar process, see Uzzi 2005: 23–32.

¹⁸ Norman 2002: 315 for the meanings of *infans*, as well as Keparťová 1984: 193–4 and Coulon 1994: 7–10 on the difficulty of defining the term. Scott 1999: 1–2 on infancy as a construct. For the absence of ‘baby’, Manson 1983: 151, Wiedemann 1989: 16–17, Kleijwegt and Amedick 2004: 879–81, Laes 2006: 69 and 2011 (all references to Laes 2011 are without page numbers – see below, n.44).

Immediately after birth, the *paterfamilias* had to decide whether a baby was worth rearing, probably with some input from other family members (not least the mother of the child). Acceptance was marked by the *tollere liberos*, for a long time understood as the physical act by which the father lifted the baby from the ground. Recent consensus has moved away from this, suggesting instead that it was a symbolic gesture signalling agreement to raise the child.¹⁹ Afterwards the baby remained in a position of limbo for several days, its ‘social birth’ – as many have termed it – occurring only on the *dies lustricus* (a ceremony on the eighth day after birth for a girl, the ninth for a boy). It was at this point that the child gained its name and became a recognised member of the household. The reasons for this short delay very likely have their origins in pragmatism: the first week was crucial to survival and it has been suggested that the different lengths specified for boys and girls reflect the greater mortality rates of male infants.²⁰ In light of this short initial period of ‘non-status’, it may be telling that there are no monuments in this catalogue dedicated explicitly to babies in their first week. There are, however, a handful of scenes which show mothers holding very young babies in their arms (see Chapter 4); if some such images reflect deaths in childbirth (of mother *and* baby), they represent infants who were not recognised as ‘children’ as such.

When attention turns to those in their teenage years, child classifications enter a minefield of uncertainty. In literature one finds mention of *pueritia* until the age of fifteen, to be replaced by *adulescentia*; in the context of historical military service, Aulus Gellius specifies that all males under seventeen were *pueri*; an inscription from Tarracina gives the age limits of *alimenta* assistance (the process whereby interest on mortgage loans provided to farmers was distributed to children)

¹⁹ On the *ius vitae necisque* (the right of life and death) and the general role of the *paterfamilias*, see Dixon 1992: 122, Hanson 1999: 26–31, Nathan 2000: 24–8, Corbier 2001: 58–60, Severy 2003: 10, Bakke 2005: 38–40, Cantarella 2005: 25–6 and Backe-Dahmen 2006: 10. For the role of the Greek *kyrios*, Golden 1990a: 23. For standard accounts of the *tollere liberos*, Garnsey 1991: 54–6, Dixon 1992: 101 and Backe-Dahmen 2008: 20. On the revised understanding, Corbier 1999: 1262–3 and 2001: 53–5; Dasen 2003c: 155; Hänninen 2005: 56–7; Laes 2006: 57 and 2011.

²⁰ On the child’s ‘social birth’, Corbier 2001: 55–8, Bakke 2005: 29–30, Hänninen 2005: 57, Laes 2006: 57–9, 2007a: 28 and 2011. For general discussion of the *dies lustricus* see also Harlow and Laurence 2002: 39–40, Norman 2002: 316, Rawson 2003a: 110–11 and Backe-Dahmen 2008: 19–20. On the similar processes in Greek society, where a child entered the house on the *Amphidromia* (the fifth or seventh day after birth) and was then named on the *dekate* (tenth), Golden 2003: 15 and Neils 2003: 144. On the delay between birth and acceptance, Wiedemann 1989: 17, Garnsey 1991: 53, Laes 2006: 58 n.42 and 2011.

as sixteen for boys, fourteen for girls.²¹ In most Roman family studies, though, it is legal evidence which has been given precedence, with childhood fixed as the period between birth and puberty – twelve years for girls, fourteen for boys – and associated with the end of *impubes* status (Gai. *Inst.* 1.196). Nevertheless, Beryl Rawson noted that the upper limit was formalised only at a late stage in antiquity; it may have done little except solidify unofficial and widely recognised concepts but to project it backwards onto far earlier commemorations is potentially problematic. One might also question the applicability of a legal definition based on the onset of puberty, a process which children experience at different ages, particularly when from contrasting socio-economic backgrounds.²² As a result, it seems sensible to look instead at the ceremonies which shaped childhood.²³

For boys, or at least for those who were from families which gave credence to cultural rites of passage, it was the assumption of the *toga virilis* which marked the transition from child to adult, usually between the ages of fourteen and sixteen.²⁴ This event, the timing of which seems to have been determined by the father, could occur in private; families of substance may have participated in the public ceremony which took place on the *Liberalia* (17 March, although other dates for the rite were possible too). Having laid aside the *bullae* and *toga praetexta* (a toga with a purple border, worn among others by boys yet to come of age), the child progressed from his house to the Capitol where sacrifices were conducted at the Temple of Jupiter and the boy's name was perhaps inscribed on the citizenship list. Soon afterwards he might shave his first beard (but this was not a prerequisite and in some cases happened much later).²⁵ The applicability of this rite of passage for those in the lower classes, or

indeed those outside of Rome, is clearly questionable and yet it remains significant that the age at which it could occur was fluid. It was the capability and maturity of the child which determined his progression to adulthood – at least in social terms – not necessarily his age.

Compared to those for boys, the sources reveal little about female ceremonies to signal coming of age – although Dixon and Olson have suggested that this could reflect their relative unimportance in the eyes of male authors.²⁶ As the transition to womanhood was marked first and foremost by marriage, girls tended to become 'adults' earlier than their male counterparts. The legal and therefore *minimum* point at which this could happen was dictated by the perceived onset of puberty at twelve years. The ages at which marriage *actually* occurred have long perplexed scholars but it does seem safe to assume that elite girls were some of the earliest to wed (betrothals being possible from ten onwards or even from as early as infancy in exceptional cases).²⁷ It is further clear that marriage ages varied dramatically, with some girls remaining unwed into their late teens or beyond; as with the male ceremonies, there was a degree of flexibility.

Unsurprisingly, scholarly definitions of what constitutes a 'child' have varied. To give just some of the more recent suggestions, Janette McWilliam and Christian Laes both proposed those under fifteen as children; Mary Harlow and Ray Laurence took it as the onset of puberty, opting (with caution) for twelve and fourteen; Cornelia Horn fixed the period of transition between twelve and seventeen years; Jeannine Uzzi classified pre-pubescents as children, including those up to (approximately) fourteen; Annika Backe-Dahmen accepted twelve and fourteen but included commemorations for older children in her catalogue; Geoff Adams and Rebecca Tobler set the limit at seventeen; Kelly Olson grouped young women and girls together as those who were under nineteen and unmarried.²⁸

Such competing designations indicate that privileging experience over age might be the sensible way forward, with

²¹ Censorinus, *DN* 14.2; Gell. *NA* 10.28; *CIL* x 6328 (see Petermandl 1997: 115–16). On age divisions see also Hor. *Ars P.* 156–78, Eyben 1973a: 150–79, Rawson 2003a: 136, Laes 2006: 75–83 and 2011.

²² On the legal evidence, see Gardner 1998: 146–7, Harlow and Laurence 2002: 35–6 and Norman 2002: 315. On the late formalisation by Arcadius Charisius, Rawson 1997b: 85–90, 2003a: 74 and 142; on the fourteen-year limit being upheld by Justinian, Frier and McGinn 2004: 23. See also Amudsen and Diers 1969 on the differing ages of menarche in various cultures; Harlow and Laurence 2002: 13–15 and Lucy 2005: 52–3 on socio-economic influences.

²³ For recent discussion, Laes 2006: 251–6 and 2011. See also Flower 1996: 200–1 for the household as the setting for such ceremonies. For Greek rites of passage, Golden 1990a: 38–50, Beaumont 2000: 44–7, Foley 2003 and Neils 2003: 143–56.

²⁴ See Wiedemann 1989: 114–17; Rawson 1991: 27–8 and 2003a: 142–4; Bradley 1998c: 46; Dolansky 2008. Kleijwegt and Amedick (2004: 880–1) have recently suggested ages around sixteen for the republican period, dropping to fourteen in the empire.

²⁵ Harlow and Laurence 2002: 72–3. For complaints about boys who died before they could complete this action, Lattimore 1962: 197–8.

²⁶ Dixon 1992: 101 and Olson 2008: 142. See also Harlow and Laurence 2002: 56–64, Alberici and Harlow 2007: 193–9 and D'Ambra 2007a: 65–6.

²⁷ On marriage ages, Shaw 1987: 31–9, Saller 2001: 102, Scheidel 2001: 33–4 and 2007a, Laes 2006: 24–5 and 2011, Alberici and Harlow 2007: 201. On betrothals, Rawson 1986a: 21–2 and Harlow and Laurence 2002: 58–60.

²⁸ McWilliam 2001: 74, esp. n.2, Laes 2004b: 45, 2006: 263–4, 2007a: 26 and 2011, Harlow and Laurence 2002: 35–6, Horn 2005: 97, Uzzi 2005: 25–6, Backe-Dahmen 2006: 9 n.1, Adams and Tobler 2007: 15, Olson 2008: 140. Similar problems surround definitions for Greek childhood, where the transition ceremonies are usually taken as entry to a *deme* for boys (at around 17/18) and marriage for girls (in their mid to late teens); see Golden 1990a: 4 and 2003: 14. On the importance of roles not age, Baxter 2005: 23–4 and 36–7 as well as Lucy 2005: 54–8. For a similar suggestion in Greek childhood studies, Beaumont 2003: 59–60.



FIGURE 1 Altar of Minucia Suavis. Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano, inv. 30.

the ability to function in a particular role being of the greatest importance. Still, for reasons of practicality it is helpful to have an upper limit and – whichever age one chooses – there needs to be consistency in terms of how it is applied to tombstones. Here objection might be made in relation to two monuments sometimes said to show children. The first is the well-preserved marble altar of Minucia Suavis, from Rome and now in the Museo Nazionale Romano (Figure 1).²⁹ The bust portrait, which appears inside a shallow, semi-circular niche, presents an adolescent female in a tunic and mantle whose broad face is rendered softly and delicately; she has large, almond-shaped eyes set far apart, slim and deeply arched brows which follow the contours of her eyelids, a narrow (and now damaged) nose, full lips, prominent ears (behind which the waves of her hair are drawn) and a rounded chin. Set up in the first century by her father Ti. Claudius Suavis, the altar's carefully cut and spaced text records that she was fourteen years old. With the combination of a youthful portrait and an inscription which contains a junior age, we might certainly expect to

record Minucia Suavis as a 'child' (age indications being particularly common on, though certainly not exclusive to, tombstones of children: see Chapter 2). But the epitaph also reveals that this young girl was or had been married to one P. Sextilius Campanus, the monument thus recording her role as a daughter *and* a wife. Certainly, it must be important that the father's name is cut in far larger letters than that of her husband Campanus. Yet by occupying the next line and appearing in the genitive, it is the husband's name which – at least in epigraphic terms – is the more closely associated with Minucia Suavis. It was clearly a conscious choice by her father to record details of her marriage and thereby demonstrate that she had achieved the feat of greatest importance for young girls: becoming someone's wife.

The reason why it is her father who acts as the commemorator remains unclear; it has been assumed quite reasonably that husband Campanus was already deceased or else lacked the finances to afford this relatively expensive piece, arguably less so that 'the wedding was so recent that Minucia Suavis still seemed closer to her own family' (greater intimacy between father and daughter might well have existed but, as an explanation for the performance of commemorative duties, it must be considered somewhat speculative; it would have been Campanus' social *duty* to honour Minucia upon her death).³⁰ Whatever the truth – and for me at least, ideas influenced by the beauty of the portrait or the shared *cognomen* seem rather unconvincing – if we take marriage to be the threshold which separates child from adulthood then Minucia Suavis cannot be classified as a 'child' as such. That would be to risk imposing modern attitudes onto an ancient situation and to privilege age over experience. Having been married, she had – in *Roman* eyes – entered womanhood. If her husband had died, the father was not acting as the commemorator because Minucia had regressed in social terms to become a 'child' once again; rather, he would have been one of the most obvious people to perform the rites. Alternatively, if Campanus were still alive at the time of her death and the father acted in his place for a now unknown reason (or else chose to erect a secondary and additional tombstone), then we see a man commemorating his married daughter and emphasising her adult role as a wife. Again, this hardly qualifies her as a 'child' as such – and it may be telling that Minucia's altar lacks certain commemorative features often employed for children in Rome at this period, including epithets like *dulcis* (sweet) and references to mythical or divine figures; none of these was an essential component on a child's tombstone but their absence here must give

²⁹ Terme di Diocleziano, inv. 30, *CIL* VI 22560. See Kleiner 1987b: 117 no. 14 and Backe-Dahmen 2006: 147 no. A4.

³⁰ D'Ambra 2007a: 69, although she does also consider the financial explanation.

further likelihood that Minucia was not being honoured first and foremost as a ‘child’.

Similar concerns surround the large marble altar for Ti. Claudius Liberalis from Tibur and now in the Musei Vaticani.³¹ Set up for the sixteen-year-old, the well-cut inscription – which occupies the whole of the front side – records that he had gained membership of the Lupercal brotherhood and been admitted to the equestrian order, attaining the position of *praefectus fabrum* (commander of the engineers). These achievements are represented in the two side scenes, one showing the *Lupercalia* (a festival held on 15 February which involved initiates conducting rites at the *Lupercal*, a cave at the foot of the Palatine), the other the *transvectio equitum* (an annual procession on 15 July involving males of equestrian rank).³² Despite the altar being dedicated by his parents, it is surely optimistic to label Liberalis as a child when he had already accomplished so much in the adult world; it seems highly likely that his *toga virilis* ceremony would have happened before his death.

The crucial factor here is not that the ages of Minucia Suavis and Ti. Claudius Liberalis preclude them from being viewed as children, rather that their experiences do. Conversely, there are countless commemorations for boys and girls of comparable ages where the recognition seems much more appropriate, as with a sizeable limestone stela from Budapest which is adorned with a finely cut half-figure female portrait (#690, Figure 2). Dedicated by parents M. Ulpius Sabinus and Claudia Pusinna, most likely in the early to mid second century, the stone is for their fourteen-year-old daughter Sabina. Her portrait presents a mature-looking female: she has a long and slightly rectangular face with angular features; deep-set eyes and brows; narrow lips which taper downwards at each end; and centrally parted hair which is drawn tightly behind her head. Yet in her large and rather schematically represented hands she clasps a bird and a pomegranate (or possibly apple) – attributes held by young children right across Pannonia.

From Rome, a smaller marble altar commissioned towards the middle of the second century for fifteen-year-old M. Ulpius Maternus by his *infelicissimi* (unhappiest) parents shows much the same phenomenon (#147). Surmounting the inscription – cut in differently sized letters which meander ever so slightly across the stone – is Maternus. His large bust-length portrait, realised with much more confidence



FIGURE 2 Stela of Sabina. Budapest, Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum, inv. R D 127.

than the text, presents an adolescent boy with a thick neck, full cheeks and a small mouth which all nevertheless retain an element of infantile prepubescence; he also has underdeveloped pectoral muscles, slender arms which hang limply at his sides and boyish hair which covers most of his forehead. More, he wears a quiver behind his right shoulder as an allusion to Apollo – a type of visual reference used in Rome at this time principally for women and children (see Chapter 3).

Given the fluid nature of the transition to adulthood it would seem churlish to exclude from the catalogue pieces such as these solely because the recipients were older than the usual upper age limits of twelve and fourteen years. Consequently, this research includes children of sixteen years and under unless, as with Suavis and Liberalis, there is some indication that it might be inappropriate to do so. Certainly, the infelicities of the approach are clear: some children will have been perceived by their parents as adults long before this watershed, others not until afterwards, and one could imagine more than a few Romans being aghast to discover infants included in the same category as adolescents.

³¹ Galleria Lapidaria, inv. 9312, *CIL* VI 3512. For details see Kleiner 1987b: 216 no. 84 and Backe-Dahmen 2006: 157 no. A26 (with description of Liberalis as ‘junge Mann’).

³² On the *transvectio equitum*, Kleiner 1987b: 70–1, Huskinson 1996: 92, Rawson 2003a: 323, Laes 2006: 153–4 and 2011; on the *Lupercalia*, Harlow and Laurence 2002: 74–5.

Nevertheless, recognisably childlike portraits do appear up to this limit and, even though a modern imposition, such boundaries do respect the likely ages at which some *toga virilis* ceremonies occurred. It also seems far more pragmatic and flexible than the twelve/fourteen boundaries, allowing one to consider the many children we find represented in funerary art who did not instantly transform into adults just because they had reached the minimum legal age at which it was possible to do so.

EXTRACTING EMOTION

However one chooses to define childhood, one theme remains constant among the tombstones of those commemorated here: the complaint of unjust and unnatural loss, with adults protesting that the usual order had been reversed and that, as Basilides lamented in the Pannonian tombstone discussed above, fate had robbed them of their hopes and expectations.³³ Unfortunate though it may be, the sheer frequency of child death in the Roman era means that I, in line with others, prefer to term the loss ‘untimely’ rather than ‘premature’ – it was to be expected even if feared and reviled.³⁴

The frequency with which *mors immatura* is referenced does however raise questions about the motives which underlay this particular form of commemoration. In turn, this brings to the fore a subject which long cast a shadow over Roman childhood studies: the parental indifference hypothesis of Philippe Ariès. At the risk of grossly over-simplifying his views, Ariès argued (among other things) that the idea of childhood was unimportant or even non-existent before its ‘discovery’ in the seventeenth century; that premature death was not worthy of commemoration; that adults would not become attached to young children because mortality rates were too severe.³⁵ His theories have influenced – or, to put it more accurately, provoked a strong reaction in – a significant amount of subsequent scholarship; the role and valuation of children in Roman society has become a central theme, with many studies seeking to challenge and disprove Ariès by using an array of evidence types. Thankfully, of course, the andocentric biases which once prevailed in Roman childhood studies are now very much a thing of the past: no longer are funerary monuments devoted solely to children under-studied or dismissed as curiosities; no more do

iconographic discussions of family groups concentrate very much on the males, with husbands preceding wives, sons taking precedence over daughters and descriptions of children being limited to the barest of details without elaboration about their age, dress or attributes.³⁶ Indeed, children have for some time now enjoyed a position of real importance in archaeology, long since the focus of study in their own right rather than a secondary consideration.

Yet although many of the points raised by Ariès have now been sufficiently rebuffed, two profound problems remain a frustration. Firstly, very little evidence is left by children themselves; scholarship may increasingly talk of children as ‘social actors’ but we lack any of their scripts.³⁷ Adult perspectives and preoccupations dominate our sources, leaving children marginalised and/or trivialised. As Gérard Coulon remarked, ‘L’enfant est le grand oublié de l’Histoire.’³⁸ Secondly, much of the surviving material is extremely ambiguous. Nowhere is this more apparent than with literary sources, the first weapon which many used to attack the foundations of the Ariès school of thought. In addition to the usual caveat that the texts were written almost exclusively by (elite) men, the views expressed in them are patchy. To quote Mary Harlow and Ray Laurence, ‘a single author can show both detachment and sentimentality towards children in their work.’³⁹ As just one among many examples, one might cite a letter of Cicero in which he declares that children give pleasure and that affection towards them is natural, only to be confronted with another in which – noting the loss of a child born prematurely to his daughter Tullia in 49 BC – he is often accused of being rather detached or callous for remarking simply that ‘what was born was too feeble to survive’ (*quod quidem est natum perimbecillum est*).⁴⁰

Elsewhere, literary anecdotes relating to a specific child may be largely positive but several authors use children more

³³ For discussion, Lattimore 1962: 178–84, Huskinson 1996: 117–18, Sigismund Nielsen 1997: 202, Martin-Kilcher 2000: 63, Laes 2004b: 48–54 and Carroll 2006: 168.

³⁴ Bradley 1998c: 45–6 and 1999: 184, Laes 2004a: 169.

³⁵ Ariès 1960. For analysis of his views as well as some of the subsequent reactions, see Woods 2006: 8–32 and Crawford and Shepherd 2007: 1–2.

³⁶ See, for instance, Schober 1923: 107 in relation to a Pannonian tombstone (#636).

³⁷ On ‘social actors’, Lillehammer 2000: 19–20, Wilkie 2000: 100–1, Gowland 2001: 153 and Baxter 2005: 11. On the lack of evidence left by children, Dixon 1997b: 82–4 and Backe-Dahmen 2006: 10.

³⁸ Coulon 1994: 5. See also Dixon 1997b, McWilliam 2001: 74 and Baxter 2005: 81–3, as well as Golden 2003: 14 on the Greek picture. On the marginalisation of children in archaeology more generally, Lillehammer 2000: 17–19, Baxter 2005: 15–21 and Lucy 2005: 47.

³⁹ Harlow and Laurence 2002: 34. For similar, Sigismund Nielsen 1997: 199–201 and Backe-Dahmen 2006: 131. On the types of literature available, Corbier 1999: 1259, together with Wiedemann 1989: 84–108 and Backe-Dahmen 2006: 11–47 for references to children. Literary biases are considered by Dixon 1992: 34 and 2001: 8–9, Hanson 1999: 43 and Scheidel 2007b: 2. See also Rawson 1997b: 90–2, McWilliam 2001: 92–3 and Harlow and Laurence 2002: 46–9.

⁴⁰ Cic. *Att.* 7.2.4 and 10.18.1, in conjunction with Wiedemann 1989: 84–9 and Treggiari 2005.

generally to typify negative themes; they lack reason, judgement, self-control. Often, praise abounds only for the child who exhibits adult qualities. Pliny the Younger, for instance, commends young Minicia Marcella – the recently deceased daughter of his friend Fundanus – for possessing ‘the knowledge of an old woman and the dignity of a matron’.⁴¹ In this context it comes as little surprise that some biographers tended to paint their protagonists as having been rather ‘unchildlike’ in their formative years; in essence, they were already adults during childhood.⁴²

Standing alongside literature as bodies of evidence which can be mined for Roman attitudes towards children are inscriptions, papyri, law codes and visual material.⁴³ In recent years Hanne Sigismund Nielsen and Christian Laes in particular have done much to promote the many uses of epigraphy, with the latter’s comprehensive new book ensuring that this will continue.⁴⁴ Yet the difficulties of extracting sentiment from inscriptions have been well-versed by countless scholars: for each seemingly emotional epitaph – like the one with which this book opened – one can find ten others which appear curt and overly formal.⁴⁵ Interpretative problems also hamper the legal codes where Richard Saller has argued that the applicability of certain laws must be questioned, in terms not just of social class but also of geographical scope.⁴⁶ Much legislation may be reactionary and address real needs and concerns, yet how widely it was always known, let alone adhered to, is debatable. Naturally, visual material has its own share of problems but it does provide evidence from a diverse range of contexts.⁴⁷ Here Beryl Rawson led the way, her seminal 2003 book on childhood in Roman Italy including an extended chapter on visual representations. Others have since followed, those of Jeannine Uzzi (2005) and Natalie Kampen (2009) being the most recent and important.⁴⁸

⁴¹ Plin. *Ep.* 5.16. On the praise of adult qualities, Harlow and Laurence 2002: 49. See also Uzzi 2005: 10 on the anecdotal and sentimental nature of literary references and Rawson 2003a: 22 on children exemplifying the defects of immaturity.

⁴² For discussion, Pelling 1990: 213–44, Rawson 1997b: 92 and Bradley 1999: 185–6.

⁴³ On the uses (and difficulties) of literature, inscriptions and papyri, Laes 2006: 267–73 and 2011. See also Dixon 1997b and Hanson 1999: 43–60.

⁴⁴ Laes 2011. As I was fortunate to see a copy of the manuscript in advance of publication, references here are without page numbers.

⁴⁵ On the difficulty of detecting emotion, Dixon 1992: 99–100, King 2000: 132–4, Sigismund Nielsen 2001: 171–2 and D’Ambra 2007b: 339–40.

⁴⁶ Saller 1991: 28–30. On the law codes see Frier and McGinn 2004.

⁴⁷ On the use of visual evidence for tracing attitudes towards the family, Woods 2006: 61–94.

⁴⁸ For a review of the existing bibliography as well as suggested directions for the future, Rawson 2003a: 10–12, 2003c and 2005. Summaries of the scholarship on Roman childhood are also provided by: Binkowski

Of those concerned specifically with the sepulchral sphere, early works on the *libertini* of Rome by Paul Zanker (1975) and Diana Kleiner (1987b) remain much-consulted authorities. They were joined in the late 1980s and the 1990s by several studies devoted to particular genres or geographical regions, among which mention should be made of Friederike Sinn (1987) on urns from Rome; Marion Mattern (1989) on relief tombstones from Britain; Hermann Pflug (1989) on portrait stelae from upper Italy; Valentin Kockel (1993) on reliefs from Rome; Gérard Coulon (1994) on child portraits in Gaul; and Janet Huskinson (1996) on child sarcophagi. But it was the arrival of the 2000s which signalled a particularly vital development, recognition of the need to consider cross-regional trends prompting a flurry of publications.⁴⁹ Notable here are works by Valerie Hope (2001) on the tombstones of Aquileia, Mainz and Nîmes; Michele George (2005) on Italy and Cisalpine Gaul; Mary Boatwright (2005) on Pannonia; and Maureen Carroll (2006) on commemoration trends in western Europe.

The same decade also saw the publication of two major studies devoted to child funerary portraits. The first, by Eva Minten (2002), assembled examples from a range of genres although the results are in places a little hampered by a relatively small sample size. The other, Annika Backe-Dahmen’s 2006 book, integrated legal, literary and visual evidence and featured illustrations exquisite in quality and generous in quantity. However, the section on funerary monuments covered much the same ground as previous studies and the catalogue concentrated on well-published stones of good preservation. Above all, both works were confined to monuments from the city of Rome alone and yet, to do justice to a subject as broad as ‘Roman childhood’, observing and understanding regional trends is surely crucial.⁵⁰

Accordingly, the geographical scope of this book is more extensive and takes in what is, to my knowledge, the largest selection of child portrait tombstones assembled to date. Indeed, one of the main aims here is to examine this particular commemorative practice at a regional level, noting similarities with Rome but looking for localised preferences too. Naturally, though, some practical limits have been imposed; after all, to highlight the importance of regional

and Rawson 1986, Laes 2006: 273–7 and 2011, Harlow, Laurence and Vuolanto 2007: 5–11.

⁴⁹ As urged by Bradley 1998b: 134–5 and Rawson 2003c: 121 and 132.

⁵⁰ Harlow, Laurence and Vuolanto 2007: 5 on the need for further work on iconography. Curiously, there has been far less hesitation to engage with funerary images from classical Greece, with important studies by Hirsch-Dyckel 1983, Rühfel 1984, Neils and Oakley 2003 and Grossman 2007.

trends it is neither necessary nor feasible to include *every* type of funerary marker from *every* part of the empire. To take advantage of the obvious divide between the eastern and western halves of the empire in terms of both language and iconographic development, examples are thus confined to those carved with Latin originating from the capital and select western provinces.⁵¹ Unlike in the eastern half of the empire, where many tombstones combine recognisably ‘Roman’ elements with those from pre-existing artistic traditions, most western provinces have far fewer iconographic precedents and thus produce their earliest examples only after Roman influence had arrived.⁵² Even in Rome itself there is a relatively clear starting point, with images of individual children being largely absent until the closing stages of the republican period.⁵³

It should of course be recognised that the ‘western empire’ is far from a strictly delineated entity: changes over time mean that areas were added (or lost) while certain provinces were sub-divided or had their borders shifted. The catalogue, then, does not include monuments from every place that at some point fell within its confines, rather it incorporates material from a large and representative selection of its regions. More, in a bid to increase the efficiency of cross-regional comparisons, the material has been divided into several distinct groups based on geographical proximity and broad similarities in character. The tables thus present results from the following areas: Rome and environs (151 monuments); Italia and Narbonensis (104); Tarraconensis and Lusitania (18); Aquitania, Lugdunensis and Belgica (105); Britannia and Germania (92); Alpes Poeninae, Raetia and Noricum (92); Pannonia Superior and Inferior (222); Dacia (97).⁵⁴

In terms of genre, it is reliefs, urns, stelae, altars, and pillar and aedicula monuments which feature in the catalogue; sarcophagi and free-standing sculpture in the round

are excluded.⁵⁵ That these two mediums have already been treated in considerable detail is one reason for this (Janet Huskinson in particular being the authority on child sarcophagi and Annike Backe-Dahmen having examined a large corpus of in-the-round portraits from Rome). Yet artistic and, in a sense, practical differences are relevant too. Whereas a sarcophagus can accommodate extended figured scenes and intricate ornamental decoration across its large front side and lid, the other genres tend to be smaller and allow little more than an inscription, portrait(s) and minor subsidiary decoration. In conjunction with the later emergence of sarcophagi as a favoured type and their continued usage after some of the others had faded, it is exceptionally awkward to make like-for-like comparisons.⁵⁶ Portraits in the round are no less problematic. Very few can be attributed to a funerary context with real certainty (especially as the epigraphic survival rate is strikingly low) and their very nature as independent pieces means that relationships with others supposedly found in close proximity can become confused or even imagined; many may have originally stood in domestic settings.⁵⁷ They too are hardly ideal for the type of cross-genre perspective adopted here. Where appropriate, however, the chapters which follow compare how children are represented on altars, stelae, urns and reliefs with their treatment on sarcophagi and in other artistic contexts (including imperial portraits, public reliefs, wall-paintings and tombstones from the classical period in Greece – so often thought to have been a source of influence on subsequent Roman pieces).⁵⁸

It is important to note too that monuments of *all* conditions are included in this catalogue, the best-preserved thus standing alongside those in truly awful states. This was a very conscious decision designed to counteract what Maureen Carroll has termed the ‘eye candy’ problem and what I call

⁵¹ A small number of bilingual tombstones featuring Greek *and* Latin are, however, included.

⁵² On Roman period commemorations from Asia, Macedonia and the Cycladic islands, see respectively Cremer 1992, Mercky 1994 and Spiliopoulou-Donderer 2002. For examples with clear Roman influence, Spiliopoulou-Donderer 2002: 141–2 no. B 21 and 161 no. B 41 (the former resembles the horizontal reliefs from Rome while the latter recalls the Capuan *libertini* groups).

⁵³ On republican art, Kleiner 1978: 772–3 and 1993 reprint: 44, as well as Rawson 1997a: 207–12. For the absence of pre-Roman portraits from various parts of the western empire, Carroll 2002: 90, Jaeger 2003: 476, Boatwright 2005: 294–5 and Rothe 2009: 19–22.

⁵⁴ Some examples from Germany pre-date the creation of the Inferior and Superior provinces, while certain pieces from Britannia and Dacia post-date their divisions into smaller provinces. For the sake of simplicity, however, all are grouped together under the titles given in the list.

⁵⁵ On reliefs, Zanker 1975, Kleiner 1977 and Backe 2005; on altars, Kleiner 1987b, Dexheimer 1998 and 2000; on sarcophagi, Kampen 1981b, Amedick 1991, Huskinson 1996 and 2007a, Rawson 1997a, Dimas 1998 and George 2000. For studies considering multiple genres, Minten 2002, Backe-Dahmen 2006 and Huskinson 2007b.

⁵⁶ On sarcophagi as a ‘much less cohesive body of material’, Huskinson 1996: 2. For their increased decorative possibilities, Rawson 2003a: 8 and Huskinson 2005: 95. On their date range, Huskinson 2007b: 332–3. She also suggests that they were used by a broader range of customers and displayed in more private settings.

⁵⁷ On their display context, Backe-Dahmen 2006: 96–9. She features 109 portraits in the round as part of her catalogue, although my concerns about their suitability for cross-genre comparison remain unchanged as a result.

⁵⁸ Comparisons are made with: 100 sarcophagi, taken mostly though not exclusively from Huskinson 1996; 100 Greek funerary monuments assembled from Hirsch-Dyckek 1983, Rühfel 1984 and Neils and Oakley 2003; 50 imperial relief scenes, largely from Uzzi 2005; and 75 wall-paintings extracted from the ten volumes by Baldassarre and Pugliese Carratelli (hereafter cited as ‘Baldassarre’).