

Children in the Visual Arts of Imperial Rome. By JEANNINE DIDDLE UZZI. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Pp. xiii + 252. Cloth, \$80.00. ISBN 0-521-82026-X.

Jeannine Diddle Uzzi (U.) is right that it is time for visual materials to be taken more seriously in studies of the Roman family and Roman expressions of imperialism. Unfortunately, her own analysis is inconsistent and denies the complexity of both the iconography and questions of culture and politics. Even so, this well-produced monograph with over 70 useful black-and-white photographs, *Children in the Visual Arts of Imperial Rome*, makes a contribution to studies of Rome by drawing attention to valuable evidence and presenting it in careful detail.

The book presents images of children in official Roman art largely from the reigns of Augustus through Septimius Severus. Definitions for her terms are set forth in the second chapter, "Primary Sources." U. focuses on anonymous, mortal children and explicitly excludes those from an imperial family, mythology, those shown serving as religious attendants and slaves. In explaining these choices, she discusses problems in identifying Roman concepts of youth and childhood, including use of the term "child" to indicate anyone deprived of knowledge or power, such as a slave, and how in art the size of human figures may similarly be used to indicate social hierarchy rather than age. U. then delineates her subject matter (p. 30):

For the purposes of this study ... a child may be Roman or non-Roman as assessed by costume and hairstyle. A child may be either male or female or of indeterminate gender. Finally, I consider as children those who are approximately one-half to two-thirds the size of adults of the same gender (if known), with round faces and bodies (again, if possible to determine), and without secondary sex characteristics or other indications of marriageability.

Art, for U., is "official" based on the patron being the emperor or a member of the ruling elite, a wide public audience and the "message or function of the work" (p. 17). The result is a corpus of images of approximately 140 children from 13 monuments, 9 sarcophagi and 11 coin types. Gathering these scenes and analyzing costumes, gestures, composition and artistic contexts adds significantly to the study of children in the Roman empire.

Although U.'s review of earlier scholarship focuses on studies of the Roman family and her desire to fill a gap in "the details of child life and the significance of children in their own right" (p. 10), in her introduction she situates her analysis within modern debates about the status of Rome as a "nation" and the nature of Roman imperialism. The book is organized around the primary thesis that the "contrast ... 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 of Roman citizenry, and non-Roman children appear as captive or submissive figures" (p. 1). After the methodological chapter discussed above, Chapters Three and Four present synchronically the contexts in which Roman children are depicted, including portrayals of imperial largesse, address (*adlocutio*), sacrifice, games and processions. Chapters Six, Seven and Eight discuss representations of non-Roman children, scenes of submission, triumphs and violent military activity, respectively. U. also addresses anecdotal issues of interpretation associated with particular monuments, most importantly the Anaglypha Traiani/Hadriani in Chapter Five and Ara Pacis Augustae in Chapter Nine.

U.'s larger conclusions are convincing. The contrast between the depiction of Roman children and their non-Roman counterparts is stark, and as a collective the images certainly work to create that distinction. U.'s insistence on her primary argument, however, at times obscures finer shades of analysis. For example, the method of separating the study of Roman and non-Roman children hides the manner in which a particular monument might work to construct such contrasts. Trajan's column alone provides all the images of Roman children attending sacrifices, a good proportion of those at games and processions and by far the majority of scenes of non-Roman children in the midst of battlefield violence. Moreover, since none of the relevant scenes on the column takes place in Rome, who are these "Roman" children? The artists who crafted this monument must be presenting a more complex message about provincial membership in empire and the possibilities for those living on its frontier than U. allows.

U.'s insistence on the differences between "Roman" and "non-Roman" also leads her to dismiss similarities between depictions of the emperor interacting with the children in these groups (p. 159). Since she paints the Roman father as an absolute patriarch with the power of life and death over his children, she discusses the paternalism of the emperor only in the context of scenes of non-Roman children (p. 107). But there must be a reason why "Roman children ... with a few notable exceptions ... always appear in public gatherings *before the emperor*" (p. 33, emphasis mine). As many scholars have shown in recent years,¹ the Roman father was a more complex cultural figure than this, and his roles included mastery over household slaves in addition to a more benign and beloved ideal relationship with his freeborn children. The Roman *familia* encompassed a number of groups that would have allowed artists to articulate the role of

¹ Especially R.P. Saller, *Patriarchy, Property and Death in the Roman Family* (Cambridge, 1994).

emperor as a father (*Pater Patriae*) while recognizing status distinctions among his charges or subjects. Recall U.'s observation that a Roman definition of childhood is difficult to perceive because associated terms and images were used analogously to identify those at the lower end of other status-hierarchies (p. 25). The notion that images of children both Roman and non-Roman were used to construct the emperor's authority would have gone a long way toward explaining why such images arise in the imperial period, a question with which U. otherwise struggles (pp. 74–5).

Finally, U.'s aim of revising current theories of imperialism and Romanization fall short in the end, in this case due to overly simplistic readings of secondary sources. She complains that Ann Kuttner "presents a surprisingly positive view of Roman imperialism in which the emperor cherishes non-Romans" (p. 160).² But Kuttner here is not describing the facts of life under the Romans; she is interpreting the message an ancient image was crafted to convey. As Kuttner herself writes two pages later (p. 89),

...this formulation is all from the point of view of the rulers and not of the ruled. Images of submissive and grieving subject peoples are probably nearer the case as far as the feelings of the subjects themselves go. What we are interested in here, however, is the interpretation that the rulers put on their own rule.

U. too often misses this distinction.

The author draws attention to the fact that this book derives from her 1998 dissertation (pp. 9, 32, 170). Better guidance in this act of transformation could have brought out more the potential of her evidence. As a final example, it is disappointing that the analysis of images of imperial children included in the dissertation was left out of the book, since U.'s own argument that children tend to serve in official art as symbols of the future seems to derive from this study (pp. 169–70, esp. n. 16). This material appears much more relevant to her arguments than the comparanda which are included, an appendix of images of children in private and funerary art, which clearly serve purposes different from those under primary investigation. In sum, U. argues that the "narrative of Roman visual imagery ... is a relatively simple one" (p. 161). I disagree. Fortunately, in this book we have a useful collection of evidence through which to continue the debate.

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² Ann L. Kuttner, *Dynasty and Empire in the Age of Augustus: The Case of the Boscoreale Cups* (Berkeley, 1995) pp. 86–7.