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does he overreact by claiming complex literary structures for the lives, as has been done e.g. by Croisille. Suetonius must be approached neither as a scrupulous historian nor as a sophisticated verbal artist. Rather, we should accept him for what he is: an author desiring to tell good stories and give interesting facts and explanations about the deeds of famous *principes*.

Kierdorf's balanced view and broad scope make his small commentary a reliable and helpful companion for all readers and students of these interesting lives. On a minor point of criticism, one may regret the absence of a German translation, which would have made the book accessible to an even wider audience.

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SUZANNE DIXON, *The Roman Family*. Baltimore/London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992. 279 p. Pr. \$ 44.50 (pb. \$ 16.00).

The crisis of the family which assumedly is taking place in the Western world, has drawn the historian's attention to this basic unit of social organization. Responding to the present interest, but without yielding to the temptation to take sides in actual discussions in the first chapter Suzanne Dixon defines the subject and surveys the controversies. Chapter 2 considers the legal setting, confronting formal rules to real life. Chapter 3 focuses on the Roman marriage and chapter 4 on the children living inside the cell of a family. Finally chapter 5 treats the way the Roman family adjusted itself to the different stages of its life cycle.

This is a very sensible and pragmatic approach. Pragmatism not only characterizes the organization, but also the reasoning throughout the book. Dixon agrees with the prevalent view that the nuclear family was the rule and that other households—two married brothers having one *domus* as the Aelii Tuberones and the Licinii Crassi—are atypical. The myth of aged parents living with their children is qualified by pointing out that only a small minority survived after their children reached the adult years to enjoy this right or obligation (p. 7).

The Roman family is rightly characterized as 'a flexible and pragmatic institution' (p. 11) and it had to be only because of the demographic conditions which was the cause of many a remarriage,

so that numerous children grew up in blended families. The functions of the Roman family are summarized on p. 30 as social and physical reproduction, the transmission of property, honour, and the family cult, economic subsistence, and material and emotional support between family members.

With laudable cautiousness the problems of *patria potestas* and *manus* are tackled. Stress is put on the distinction between rigid formal rules and the flexibility of real living conditions that were followed by the law at a distance. The slow shift in Roman marriage is towards a situation in which the wife remains a *filia familias* or becomes *sui iuris* after the death of her father. Why the change took place cannot be adequately explained, the author confesses (p. 96). The relative independence married women gained enabled them to promote the interests of their brothers and sons rather than those of their husbands (p. 77).

Discussing the attitudes towards children the author takes a middle course. While undoubtedly the loss of a young child was not taken lightly, as some have asserted, the emphasis was on the relations with the adult child, in contrast with the modern stress on the links between parents and a very young child (119). Perhaps a society in which aged persons were relatively rare could afford to respect the elderly, but the view that ancient Rome was a pensioners' paradise is rightly qualified at the end of chapter 5.

The overall message of Dixon is that the Roman family showed a higher degree of adaptability and flexibility than its modern counterpart. It could expand and take in other persons who would be treated as kin. The book is good reading and practically flawless (on the same page 69 we find Aemilius Paulus and Paulus; the sarcophagus representing the stages of a child's life of plate 24 is not in Trier, but in the Louvre). The plates come out poorly, at least in the paperback edition. But the clear style adds to the quality of the book which is marked by reliability and balance.

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ANTON J.L. VAN HOOFF

FLORENCE DUPONT, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome*, translated by Christopher Woodall. Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1992. XI, 313 p. Pr. £ 20,—.*)

For the analysis of daily life in the Roman imperial period we possess classic works such as Jérôme Carcopino's *Daily Life in*