

Augustus and the Family at the Birth of the Roman Empire. By Beth Severy. New York and London: Routledge, 2003. Pp. xiv + 280, 40 figs. \$104.95 US cloth.

Beth Severy's book, *Augustus and the Family at the Birth of the Roman Empire*, provides new and valuable insights into the effects that the transition from republic to imperial monarchy had on the aristocratic family unit. This work builds on the scholarship of Susan Dixon in *The Roman Family*⁵ which was the foundational study of the functioning of the Roman family, from the law to marriage and children. Severy demonstrates how the Emperor Augustus' new imperial regime blurred the line between the public political sphere and the private domestic sphere in terms of the family's role in Roman society. In studying the Augustan age many scholars understandably have made Augustus their primary focus as the brilliant statesman who brought Rome into the new imperial era, but they have often failed to consider how the family was a critical socio-political factor in the development of the new imperial state. The aim of Severy's work, which focuses primarily on Augustus' family, is to address the change from republic to empire, "...from a sociopolitical system of competing aristocratic families to the constant supremacy of one family," as well as "...the question of how one family became a public institution." (3)

The chapters of the book follow a roughly chronological organization from the late republic (30s BC) to the reign of the emperor Tiberius (AD 14-37) with each chapter subdivided into thematic units. The first chapter provides the reader with a foundation for the remainder of the book by discussing the elite Roman family as it existed in the late republic. Severy examines the socially constructed gender roles of men and women in the *res publica* (state), drawing on important works of gender theory such as Joan W. Scott's *Gender and the Politics of History*.⁶ The following two chapters deal primarily with the first half of Augustus' rule (30-12 BC) when the emperor was busy "restoring" the Republic by enacting laws that reconstructed the Roman family which had suffered moral decay as a result of civil conflict. Severy argues that Augustus' laws on marriage and family that were imposed upon aristocratic men and women equated their once private familial roles with civic duty and the success of the state. For example, the families of the empire now became the collective Roman family with Augustus as its *pater familias* (male head of the family). Severy shows how, by 13 BC, Augustus' family or *domus* was developing into a symbol of the state through their public commemoration in coins and sculpture. Chapter 4 deals with the military and its rôle in consolidating Augustus' position as emperor and "father" of the Roman empire by placing male members of his family, such as his stepsons Drusus and Tiberius, in key military positions which earlier had been the

⁵ Susan Dixon, *The Roman Family*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

⁶ Joan W. Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, rev. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

domain of men from dominant aristocratic families. The next chapter explores the last half of Augustus' reign (12 BC – AD 14) and shows how private family worship of household divinities, including the father's *genius* (protective spirit), was used as the model upon which to base the public cult of the imperial family. The overlap between public and private is further emphasized in Chapter 6 which discusses the *familia* of Augustus as including not only members of his own family as administrators of imperial authority, but also his extended household of slave and freed staff. These people managed the treasury, public facilities within Rome, and even those Roman provinces under the emperor's direct control. The final three chapters of the book explain how the new Julio-Claudian *domus* was firmly established as the head of state with the emperor as the father under the succession and reign of Tiberius.

The concept of gender as constituting the ideological boundaries between private and public, family and state, is predominant throughout the book. One of the strengths of Severy's argument is that she draws attention to the fact that under the late Republic and even more so under the Augustan principate the apparent fine line between public and private, and thus male and female gender roles was blurred. The role of the woman had ideally and traditionally been confined to the private familial household, while men's roles seem to have been played out primarily in the public sphere of the Roman state. Past scholars have largely accepted such distinction, however recent scholarship such as Susan Dixon's *Reading Roman Women: Sources, Genres, and Real Life*, (London: Duckworth, 2001) and Anthony A. Barrett's *Livia: First Lady of Imperial Rome*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002) has questioned traditional gender roles and shown that women had a public role as well. Severy illustrates that the private sphere of the family was moving towards the public by emphasizing Augustus' Julian and Papian-Poppaeian laws, which made marriage and child-bearing a civic duty. Furthermore, Severy appropriately acknowledges Livia's status as *mater familias* (53) and powerful matron of the family of state (148), a female who was powerful in her own right (236-7), thereby reinforcing her argument regarding the complication of gender roles in the Augustan and Tiberian principates.

In terms of male gender roles in the imperial family, Severy challenges the widely accepted view amongst scholars that male members of the imperial family were groomed primarily for dynastic succession. She argues that males such as Augustus' nephew Marcellus and grandsons Gaius and Lucius were not initially and explicitly singled out and promoted as successors to the imperial throne (69-9, 71 & 111). Instead, Severy states that male family members were employed in matters of state to reinforce and consolidate Augustus' newly developing position as *princeps*. Moreover, Severy indicates rather convincingly that Augustus' adoption of Gaius and Lucius in 17 BC was not necessarily intended to mark out successors, but to show that he too had fulfilled the childbearing requirements of his recently instituted laws concerning the Roman family.

While Severy provides ample food for thought and promising new perspectives concerning the tension that existed between the public and private roles of men and women in the imperial family, her careless treatment of some primary source material is cause for concern. For example, Severy makes several errors in her analysis of coinage, particularly her claim that coins depicting Livia's portrait were issued at the state mint of Lugdunum under Tiberius, when no such coins were issued there (234). Also, Severy states that the *carpentum* sestertii issued in Rome to commemorate Livia in AD 22-23 bear the obverse portrait of Tiberius, which is incorrect since the *carpentum* itself in fact graces the obverse. The reverse contains only Tiberius' name and titles around the legend S C. "senatus consulto" (240). Concerning literary sources, Severy provides text and translation for the Latin sources, but never gives the text for Greek sources. Such an inclusion would not only provide consistency but would also benefit readers who appreciate the immediate availability of the original text.

One drawback of the book is that the role and status of the aristocratic family under the developing principate is overshadowed by the emphasis which is placed on the Augustan family. Severy only briefly touches on the matter of the Roman elite in her discussion of Augustus' marriage and childbearing laws in Chapter 2, as well as in the concluding final chapter where there is a section "Public and Private Among the Non-Imperial Elite," which highlights the relationship of members of aristocratic families with the imperial family.

Although Severy's book is directed primarily towards an academic audience familiar with the Augustan age, she does make the material accessible to a wider audience by providing translations of Latin and Greek texts, illustrating her points with specimens of Roman art and coinage, and offering frequent summaries of key points. With this book, Severy has made a significant contribution to the understanding of the transition of the aristocratic family, in particular the Augustan family, from a private to a public institution in the early years of the Roman Empire. It is an important read for anyone studying family or gender roles in Roman society.

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The Place of Enchantment - British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern. By Alex Owen. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004. Pp. 257. \$37.50.

Owen's excellent book adds substantially to the recent scholarship into the links between the occultism of the *fin de siècle* and prominent forces active in the birth of modernism, which more and more seem to be deeply interpenetrating