

This is the first book-length study of children in one of the birthplaces of early Christian monasticism, Egypt. Although comprised of men and women who had renounced sex and family, the monasteries of late antiquity raised children, educated them, and expected them to carry on their monastic lineage and legacies into the future. Children within monasteries existed in a liminal space, simultaneously vulnerable to the whims and abuses of adults and also cherished as potential future monastic prodigies. Caroline T. Schroeder examines diverse sources—letters, rules, saints’ lives, art, and documentary evidence—to probe these paradoxes. In doing so, she demonstrates how early Egyptian monasteries provided an intergenerational continuity of social, cultural, and economic capital while also contesting the traditional family’s claims to these forms of social continuity.

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