

Naomi Tadmor. *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship, and Patronage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. 322pp. UK45;US\$70. ISBN 0-52177-147-1.

In this study of household, family, and kinship, Naomi Tadmor begins by reviewing debates in the historiography of the family—debates centred on whether the family in England changed in a marked and dramatic way from a traditional and formal structure to an affective, nuclear structure (Lawrence Stone, Randolph Trumbach, and others) or was characterized by a remarkable degree of continuity (Peter Laslett, Keith Wrightson, and others). She comments on the consensus in the field gained by the “continuity” historians, and then suggests that both sides have been insufficiently attentive to the terms and categories most in evidence in contemporary usage. This early discussion alone would make this book worth knowing about, but of course her project is far more ambitious. She provides a way of getting beyond the continuity/change models by outlining and practising a methodology characterized by “systematic analysis of historical linguistic usage.” Her study will change the way that readers historicize familial relations in eighteenth-century texts.

Tadmor’s principal evidence comes from five mid-century texts that she sees as part of the same linguistic field: a diary by Thomas Turner, two novels (Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela* and Eliza Haywood’s *Betsy Thoughtless*), and two conduct books (Richardson’s *The Apprentice’s Vade Mecum* and Haywood’s *A Present for a Serving Maid*). Through a close analysis of usage patterns, she reveals the complexity and variability of conceptions of family and demonstrates the immense importance of several different “familial” groups—co-resident living groups, circles of kin, natal families, lineage families, and networks of both kin and non-kin groups. She thus shows that an opposition such as “nuclear vs. extended” creates a serious hindrance to the historian trying to get at the conceptual and practical issues of family history in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England. She further shows the problematic nature of such oppositions as “affective and instrumental” and “sentimental and contractual”; in the family formations that she examines, these characteristics frequently coincide.

Tadmor’s central categories are the “household” family, the “lineage” family, “kinship,” and “friends.” Her first two chapters deal with the “household” or co-resident family, structured by a “head of family” (statistically, more households were headed by men, but a significant number were headed by women) and by dependents, among whom could be a housekeeper, children, servants, apprentices, and others. Although the household family could and often did include members related to each other by kinship and marriage, it was not defined by these relations and was in fact

a recognizable family structure without them. With the exception of biological children, the relations within the household were understood contractually, but these contractual relations were not opposed to affective or sentimental bonds. The household family was defined by its functions—by domestic organization and by the relation of authority between the head of household and dependents. One of its most important structural features was its capacity to absorb change over time and over the course of a life, without being fundamentally altered as a structure. It was, as Tadmor explains, both “flexible and permeable.” It was a cultural construction that provided continuity but accommodated change. Thomas Turner called this family “the family at home.” We might call it the “family on the ground.” Tadmor shows that this family of daily experience coexisted with and was often closely linked to networks of patronage and kinship.

Tadmor next moves to the lineage family—the conception of family farthest from the household family and the concept of family that Thomas Turner actively uses least, though as Tadmor demonstrates, the language of lineage provides a framework for him to understand “his nation and its history.” Tadmor also reads the conduct books and novels for their use of the concept of the lineage family (in *Pamela*, for example, such a family is centralized and placed in opposition to virtue). This section, although interesting and engaging, is less innovative than the other parts of the book. The lineage society is a widely used analytic term, and lineage family conflicts are familiar to readers of fiction and instructional manuals.

The next central category is the language of kinship, and once again, Tadmor starts with historiography. A review cannot give adequate space to her careful tracking of the arguments and evidence here, but her own analysis begins with the claim that the language of the family, though relatively narrow and unchanging, is deployed with great subtlety. Her four key categories or “organizing principles” are *recognition and opacity* (terms such as “relation,” “kin,” “friend,” and “connection” were widely recognizable and yet vague, highlighting kinship but giving no information about the degree of relation claimed; they thus subordinated the nuclear family to wider kinship relations); *incorporation and differentiation* (the patterns through which in-laws were included in kinship patterns—son-in-law becomes son—with the possibility but not the necessity of differentiating them from blood relations; such usage reinforces social relationships and duties); *plurality* (terms such as “nephew” and “cousin” are shown to have changed in application and moved towards greater precision, possibly suggesting a greater emphasis on biological kin); and *diffusion* (the language of kinship was used to name various non-kin relations). After reading Tadmor, readers will bring to eighteenth-century texts a remarkably increased sense of resonance for all the terms of kinship.

The last three chapters discuss “friends” and the language of friendship. Although readers will find this basic usage familiar, Tadmor’s detailed analyses in diary, novels, and the political landscape require her readers to think through the complex implications of this relational term. The sense of obligation that underlies the “friend” relation is similar across a wide range of usages: business transactions cannot be understood without reference to the concept of “friends”; social networks depend on such a concept; and political processes were dependent on an almost formulaic invocation of a circle of “friends.” Tadmor’s treatment of “friends” across familial, business, and political lines is thought-provoking and invites further exploration.

This study’s analysis of the household family—with its basic independence from conjugality and blood ties—is its most important contribution. It invites a new look at, and analysis of, not only the kinds of families Tadmor describes but also all other co-resident groups—from those in philanthropic organizations to those in women’s separatist societies. The concept of the household family provided a usable social structure for fiction writers, projectors, and many others. And Tadmor’s study will highlight this structure in a completely new and compelling way even for those readers already familiar with, for example, Pepys’s references to his “family” (including servants) and with Johnson’s definition of *family* as “those who live in the same house.” The political, economic, and ideological significance of the lineage family has long been recognized—it persists over time, supplying a major cultural fiction about continuity (based on blood) even as individuals change. But the household family, defined by organization and governance, also creates a sense of structural continuity that absorbs change, including contractual change. This concept therefore adds not only to our understanding of family structure but also to our understanding of continuity as myth and ground of transaction in English society.

In eighteenth-century terms, Tadmor’s style might be said to be characterized by judgment rather than wit, but in a number of respects the style suits her purposes: she is interested in creating careful analytic distinctions in order to reconstitute the historical complexity of family and kinship—and readers should be prepared to deal with and benefit from copious evidence. Although she concentrates on only five key texts, the range of material from which she draws corroborating evidence is genuinely impressive. Her notes are a treasure house; her bibliography is exemplary. Her rigorous study will be important to anyone thinking about the family or family and fiction in the eighteenth century.

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