

Cette lacune théorique se répercute à plusieurs niveaux. J'en donnerai deux exemples. Ainsi, l'auteur est souvent amené à aligner les événements démographiques en de longues séries historiques qu'il découpe par la suite selon l'évolution démographique elle-même, par exemple dans tout le chapitre II de la troisième partie. Que signifie ce découpage à base démographique? Il serait plus instructif de périodiser l'histoire économique en elle-même, bref, de procéder à un découpage historique basé sur l'évolution économique et caractériser chaque période en fonction de la structure de production en vigueur. Par la suite, on peut voir comment évolue chaque phénomène démographique, période par période. Autrement, le risque est grand — presque inévitable — de tomber dans l'empirisme.

Deuxième exemple: sans théorie explicite, l'auteur est amené à avancer des hypothèses parfois contradictoires. Ainsi, pour la natalité, il oscille entre une explication par les mentalités (pp. 92 et 404) et une explication en terme de rationalité économique inscrite dans une stratégie familiale (p. 399).

Sur le plan descriptif, cette œuvre est magistrale. De plus, elle nous montre la démographie dans ses dimensions essentielles, c'est-à-dire sociales et économiques. Les conclusions de cette recherche présentent une contribution considérable à l'avancement de nos connaissances dans le domaine de la démographie urbaine historique. Il reste à souhaiter que le Tome II aille beaucoup plus loin dans l'explication d'un cadre théorique cohérent qui nous sorte de l'empirisme naïf auquel nous a trop souvent habitués la démographie historique.

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JAMES F. TRAER. — *Marriage and the Family in Eighteenth-Century France*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1980. Pp. 208.

The family was the fundamental social institution of eighteenth-century France: it was the primary unit of economic production and consumption, the key agent and locus of socialization, education and welfare, and virtually the sole means of property transmission over time. It is scarcely surprising, given their importance, that marriage and the family should have been prominent among the institutions scrutinized by eighteenth-century social critics, and that the legislators of the French Revolution should have paid it close attention when they set about building their new society. In the early years of the Revolution, family law was transformed: marriage was secularized, the responsibility for keeping records of vital events was transferred from Church to State, new family courts were established, adoption and divorce legalized, and equality of succession was made mandatory. Such legislation, and the family ideology of the Revolution, represented a rejection of the notion of a corporate family unit ruled by a *paterfamilias* (the kind of family which *ancien régime* law permitted) by removing many of the legal supports of inequality, oppression, and arbitrary domestic government. Thus *lettres de cachet*, the indissolubility of marriage, parental control over children until they were 25 or 30, primogeniture and other unequal rules of inheritance, sexual inequality in matrimonial property rights, all were swept away between 1789 and 1792 as the Revolution made its mark on family law.

In this study, Dr Traer describes this legal revolution, and documents its background in the centuries-long tension between State and Church over jurisdiction in family matters, and in the rise of criticism during the French Enlightenment. The debates on, and substance of, the Revolutionary family legislation are examined, and the study also briefly discusses the family law provisions of the Civil Code, which were in many respects a synthesis of *ancien régime* and Revolutionary legislation. As a description of the terms of the social criticism and of the legal changes affecting marriage and the family, this is a sound and very useful work, but there are serious shortcomings in terms of analysis, and extravagant claims are made on behalf of the material presented.

In the first place, Traer seems to argue (it is never clearly expressed) that ideological change produced transformations in social practices. He writes, for example, that "the modern marriage and family developed out of the literature and criticism of the French Enlightenment, transformed into new laws and social realities during a massive political upheaval" (p. 16). This view seems to place Traer in the *arrière-garde* of "most enlightened men of the eighteenth century [who] viewed the law as an instrument capable of producing fundamental social change" (p. 19). One cannot, of course, overlook the potential of legal provisions for producing social changes: the nineteenth-century decline in the French birth rate is often attributed to changes in inheritance laws, parents practising family limitation in order to prevent excessive division of land at each generation. But the blanket formulation of this work ignores the changes in family-related *mentalités* and practices which historians have found in the eighteenth century. It is astounding that the work of historians such as Gouesse, Vovelle, Lottin and Lebrun are not cited at all here. One can only assume, charitably, that they were deliberately omitted so as to restrict the scope of the study.

But their, and others', works indicate important social changes predating the Revolution by several decades, making the Revolutionary changes less important as innovations in a legal sense (though they were that), but more significant as institutionalizations of increasingly common social practices and attitudes. Indeed, although the work under review claims to be, in part, a contribution to the social history of eighteenth-century France, the social context is all but entirely absent. Social criticism and legislation seem to take place in an environment cleansed of social and economic considerations. There is virtually no awareness of urban and rural differences or of the material context of the family, while the question of the class basis of the Revolutionary legislation is reduced to a superficial syllogism (pp. 184-85) which does the author no credit.

There are, too, problems of substance, such as a complete failure to distinguish between *tribunaux de famille* and *assemblées de famille*, institutions which were superficially similar, but which had quite distinct functions. They are indiscriminately referred to in this study as "courts", "assemblies" and "councils", and the confusion must render Traer's statistical study at least questionable: did his records document the deliberations of only the *tribunaux de famille*, or of both them and the *assemblées de famille*? (My article in the *Revue historique de droit français et étranger*, 58, shows the important differences between these two institutions.)

But overall, this book is disappointing more because of its omissions and thematic limitation, than because of errors of commission. The 1970 dissertation, of which this is the revised version, was a good one. But the ten years which have elapsed between them have seen a great deal of research published on the general subject of the family in eighteenth-century France, and there is little evidence that Traer has attempted seriously to incorporate it into his work. Indeed, there is the

suggestion that he is not even aware of information on subjects he deals with. He writes, for example, that there is no statistical evidence on the use of the various grounds for divorce during the Revolution (p. 128, n. 88). It is true that there are no (and probably never will be) national statistics available, but by 1976 statistics for Metz, Rouen, Nancy and Toulouse were in print, and these might surely have been cited as exemplary. There are other problems of a less serious, but still irritating, nature. The author's syntax fails badly at times, and translations out of French are sometimes very awkward: for example, "le Sieur Lhomme" becomes "the gentleman Lhomme", and "la Dame Sardin" is rendered as "the lady Sardin" (p. 151).

But these are relatively minor criticisms. The fundamental weakness of the book is its failure to link its intellectual and legal history with the social development of eighteenth-century France. This failure leaves the study, which is generally very sound in its limited scope, profoundly unsatisfactory in explanatory and analytical terms.

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M. HENKEL and R. TAUBERT. — *Maschinenstürmer: Ein Kapitel aus der Sozialgeschichte des technischen Fortschritts*. Frankfurt a/M.: Syndikat, 1979. Pp. 263.

A critical attack on others working in the same academic area is justified only if the critic has a new perspective or novel information or if he can demonstrate that the previous authors have not done their work well. Henkel and Taubert provide a very critical attack upon their fellow historians and they seem to have a solid basis for their claims. They note how historians of labour movements have written about events and workers so as to fit them into some schematic approach.

Henkel and Taubert make it their task to illustrate how many labour historians have misread or even falsified labour history and workers' motives in their concern to fit information with their preconceptions on the purpose and nature of labour organizations and ideology. They take the German machine breaking in Eupen of 1821 and Solingen of 1826 as cases in point to illustrate that both East German Marxist and West German authors operate with an eschatological outlook which forces them to mould events to their perspectives.

With the reconstruction of a piece of the everyday we want to denounce that historical writing which demotes the worker by a metaphysical construction of the so-called labour movement; an historical writing which praises or attacks workers to the degree in which they meet the demands which historians impose upon them. (p. 9) (All translations are by the reviewer.)

This declaration of war is carried out in an irreverent but highly relevant study.

Henkel and Taubert begin their astute and insightful dissection with a clear analysis of representative Marxist and Social Democratic authors who have their eye trained to look for the emergence of an organized labour movement in the 1830s. They illustrate that the Marxists' assumptions about technological progress made them see the machine breakers as misguided and still partly uninformed hand-