



**Family and the Law in Eighteenth-Century
Fiction: The Public Conscience in the Private
Sphere (Cambridge Studies in Eighteenth-Century
English Literature and Thought)**

John P. Zomchick

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Family and the Law in Eighteenth-Century Fiction offers challenging interpretations of the public and private faces of individualism in the eighteenth-century English novel. John P. Zomchick begins by surveying the social, historical and ideological functions of law and the family in England's developing market economy. He goes on to examine in detail their part in the fortunes and misfortunes of the protagonists in Defoe's *Roxana*, Richardson's *Clarissa*, Smollett's *Roderick Random*, Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* and Godwin's *Caleb Williams*. Zomchick reveals in these novels an attempt to produce a 'juridical subject': a representation of the individual identified with the principles and aims of the law, and motivated by an inherent need for affection and community fulfilled by the family. Their ambivalence towards that formulation indicates a nostalgia for less competitive social relations, and an emergent liberal critique of the law's operation in the service of society's elites.

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