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Introduction: Genealogies reconfigured

Stéphane Jettot (Sorbonne University)

Il m'a répondu avec une morgue superbe, que depuis plus de huit cent ans les plannellys se contentent de vivre de leurs rentes, et qu'il se proposait bien de suivre le noble exemple de ses ancêtres (...) aussy mr de Planlly fait-il trophée de son inutilité sociale; et c'est ce qui me prouve de plus en plus l'ancienneté de sa maison.¹

In an impertinent and ironic letter written in 1772 to his uncle, Laurent Planelli de Vallette, a young noble from Dauphiné, derided the genealogical pride of a highly hypothetical cousin met in Spain. From the analysis of the Planelli correspondence, Anne Bérroujon provides a striking case study in which enlightened values and genealogical practices came to be symmetrically opposed. The nephew had been sent on a mission by his uncle to establish a connection with the more prestigious Plannelly from Spain and Naples. The young man was convinced of the absurdity of his errand, being aware that his uncle came from the Pianello, modest merchants in Verona. He also objected to the utility of being linked to a family of lazy Spaniards who were proudly living off his allowance. Laurent Planelli was referring to the widely shared bias around Spanish laziness and misplaced pride that could also be observed in literary and scientific publications of the time. And finally, he was also dismissive of the antiquarian passion of his uncle and his choice to live in his rural property, far from the much more exciting metropolitan life of Paris. Similarly, up north, in his 1773 tour of the Western Islands of Scotland, another dark corner of Europe, Samuel Johnson

¹ Quoted by Anne Bérroujon, 'La satire de la passion généalogique. A propos d'une lettre de 1772', in *L'incorporation des ancêtres. Généalogie, construction du présent*, ed. Isabelle Luciani and Valérie Piétri (Aix-en-Provence, 2016), p.145.

observed among the local elite, the declining interest in the ‘history of the race’ which had for too long depended on hereditary poets. He celebrated the dawn of an age founded on ‘written learning (...) a fixed luminary, which after the cloud that had hidden it has past away, is again in its proper station.’² England was presented as a beacon of modernity when compared to the Scottish northerners and the Catholic southerners.³

In the rich narratives around the idea of the Enlightenment, there are countless examples of letters, tracts, novels and paintings aimed at ridiculing genealogical practices⁴. It would be beyond our reach to try and provide an exhaustive account of these many criticisms and parodies. Nor would it be possible to do justice to the considerable amount of scholarship devoted to this theme. In a most arbitrary manner, one could pick and choose some insightful comments from well acclaimed authorities. It has been argued that Emmanuel Kant understood the Enlightenment as an attitude, an injunction to act heroically in the present time.⁵ He was then exhorting humankind, through a historical and rational process, to become adult, to reject irrational sources of authority, traditions and false determinations. Defined as a philosophy of rupture, the Enlightenment was at odds with the celebration of the founding ancestors just as hopes for progress and improvement collided with the backward-looking injunctions provided by genealogists. They dictated certain feelings (whether atonement or pride) that served as a reminder of our limits, as opposed to the

² Arthur Murphy, *Works of Samuel Johnson*, 3rd edition (New York, 1845), vol. 2, p.651.

³ Some historians argued that the less fetishist approach to genealogy in Britain would have resulted in a more pragmatic and consensual Enlightenment. Roy Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the creation of the modern world* (London, 2001), p.14.

⁴ This publication drew its origins from a conference at the Maison Française d’Oxford entitled ‘Genealogy and Social Status in the Enlightenment’, organised by Stéphane Jettot and Jean-Paul Zúñiga in January 2017.

⁵ Michel Foucault, ‘What is Enlightenment?’, in *The Foucault reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York, 1984), p.32-50.

promises of a reformed world. Fundamentally, the genealogical mind-set and enlightened values both related to a different understanding of time and memory.

Genealogies reconfigured

However, this publication invites to consider a more nuanced picture of this well-established antagonism. As we have seen previously, Michel Foucault discussed in Kant's ideas the opposition between the Enlightenment and genealogies, while he also used the latter to deconstruct the metaphysical origins of the former. Since then, the Enlightenment has been exposed to much criticism and in a more constructive manner, to alternative definitions. The one provided by Dan Edelstein, seems particularly helpful: 'The Enlightenment was never just the sum of its parts: instead of an aggregate of ideas, actions and events, it provided a matrix in which ideas, actions, and events acquired new meaning.'⁶ As a powerful matrix, it is our view that Enlightenment has been instrumental in providing new meanings and new forms to cultural and social practices. Such a definition relates to a process of reconfiguration⁷. The latter could also be found in the reflection by Mark Salber Phillips on the difference between history and antiquarianism: 'Though new doctrines may be formulated, the more substantial change lies in the reconfiguration of existing elements in relation to the whole'⁸. Eighteenth century historians, setting new standards in scholarship, may have led to the undermining of the dubious 'genealogical science'⁹. But, several

⁶ Dan Edelstein, *The Enlightenment: A genealogy* (Chicago Press, 2010), p.13.

⁷ Initialement originated from Norbert Elias, the term has been later used in the history of knowledge as well as in social history. On the notion of reconfiguration as an alternative to the 'Scientific Revolution', see Roger Chartier, 'Sciences et savoirs', *Annales HSS* 71:2 (2016), p.451-464.

⁸ Mark Salber Phillips, 'Reconsiderations on history and antiquarianism: Arnaldo Momigliano and the historiography of eighteenth-century Britain', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 57:2 (1996), p.305

⁹ Chantal Grell, *L'histoire entre érudition et philosophie. Etude sur la connaissance historique au siècle des Lumières* (Paris, 1993).

enlightened historians kept composing some ambitious genealogical works. From 1698 onwards, Leibniz had been carrying out some detailed research on the House of Guelph in order to document the Hanoverian rights to the British throne. An accomplishment which had far reaching implications ‘regarding history, imperial law and interest-driven politics.’¹⁰ It has also been recently pointed out that Voltaire, who aimed to write a universal history of mankind in his *Essai sur les Mœurs*, could not deny the Eurocentric and genealogical perspective of his project. Genealogy is defined by Antoine Lilti as as being guided by a ‘presentist’ relation to which Voltaire and his readership had with their own history.¹¹

Similarly, Judith Pollmann argued that one needs not to think in terms of ‘paradigm shifts’ but in a cumulative manner by pointing out that ‘new ways of engaging with the past have emerged side by side with older ones and coexist, or even interact, with them, so that pre-modern and modern ways of practicing memory can exist side by side.’¹² Among social historians, the impact of Enlightenment on social interactions has been also much discussed. Laurent Planelli and Samuel Johnston’s testimonies referred to the existence of privileged enlightened places, such as Paris and London, from which travellers would depart to explore the dark corners of Spain or Scotland. The paradigm of the Habermasian public sphere supported such premises. Those metropolitan public spaces have been depicted as privileged environments for the nurturing and the circulation of new ideas. Politeness in the cultural space of urban sociability was opposed to the vain, bookish,

¹⁰ Friedrich Beiderbeck, ‘Leibniz’s Political Vision for Europe’, in *The Oxford handbook of Leibniz*, ed. Maria Rosa Antognazza (Oxford, 2018), p.678.

¹¹ ‘La civilisation est-elle européenne ? Ecrire l’histoire de l’Europe au XVIIIe siècle’, in *Penser l’Europe au XVIIIe*, ed. Antoine Lilti (Oxford, Voltaire Foundation, 2014), p.155.

¹² Judith Pollman, *Memory in early modern Europe. 1500-1800* (Oxford, 2017), p.72.

provincial culture.¹³ He insisted on the creation of new communicative practices in the central locale of London. Similarly, in Paris, ‘the ideology of the salons rested on this substitution of behaviour for birth’ and enabled polite conversation despite recognized rank and status.¹⁴ This clear-cut image has been recently blurred. The Parisian salons appeared to be mainly constructed around courtly values and ‘were mostly organized as little courts, revolving around the hostess, and ruled by the ideals of *politesse*, witty conversation, social distinction and *galanterie*.¹⁵ In the emblematic case of the London coffee houses, Brian Cowan warned us against the temptation to link polite sociability with an exclusive and rational modernity, considering that ‘the coffeehouse was not only instrumental in the promotion of new forms of knowledge, such as natural philosophy and rational debate, but also in the reconfiguration of old interests.’¹⁶

Used by various authors from different fields of history, this very notion of reconfiguration is helpful as it enables us to think beyond well entrenched oppositions. It relates to the ways values as well as knowledge are understood and mobilised by individuals and communities in a practical manner. It leaves much space to creativity, improvisation and ‘making do’ to use Michel de Certeau’s emblematic expression to account for the ways and means practitioners manipulated knowledge and symbolisms they have not produced¹⁷. It does not refute the significance of deep

¹³ L. E. Klein: ‘Localism and provincialism were kinds of narrowness. They were thus incompatible with politeness, which was allied with the metropolitan and cosmopolitan and the pursuit of a general culture’. ‘Politeness and the interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century’, *Historical Journal* 45: 4 (2002), p.876.

¹⁴ Carolyn Lougee, *Le paradis des femmes. Women, salons, and social stratification in seventeenth-century* (Princeton, 1976), p.52.

¹⁵ Antoine. Lilti, ‘The kingdom of *politesse*: salons and the Republic of Letters in Eighteenth-Century Paris’, *Republics of Letters: A Journal for the Study of Knowledge, Politics, and the Arts* 1 (2009), p.10-11.

¹⁶ Brian Cowan, ‘Public Spaces, Knowledge and Sociability’, in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Consumption*, ed. Franck Trentmann (Oxford, 2012), p.251-66.

¹⁷ Michel de Certeau, *The practice of everyday life* (Berkeley, 1984), p.32.

social and cultural changes but take issues with the idea of paradigmatic shifts. We would argue that it applies to genealogical practices which should not be defined by a set of intangible norms. Though they aimed to establish a permanent social stratification they could be best defined as an ‘never-ending process of creating, affirming, adapting, and revisiting context-related versions of a family’s lineage.’¹⁸ Throughout centuries, they remained characterized by a weak epistemic status which aroused much suspicion but also afforded much flexibility. Genealogies are made of hybrid discourses with an underlying tension between the need to expand the ancestor’s origins further down in history and the need to promote a horizontal perspective in order to include as many kin and alliances as possible. They are highly adaptable to changing norms and expectations while preserving much of their appeal by establishing a sense of natural causality.

As such, they could be seen as a way of reasoning: that men succeed to each other does create a clear sense of obvious causality derived from common sense. And so as a matrix, the genealogical rationale pervades our way of thinking about history as well as nature. To use, Genealogy should be seen as a metaphor which enabled according to Sir Herbert ‘the expression of a complex idea, not by analysis, nor by direct statement, but by sudden perception of an objective relation.’¹⁹ It was, and still is, difficult to conjure its effect.

The question therefore is not to consider whether a genealogical mindset survived despite the Enlightenment. The aim of the current volume is not simply to document the resilience of genealogical practices in 18th century societies. Admittedly, they did survive despite a hostile environment, a statement with which most historians would agree. The need to provide roots and ancestral depth to new elites was still felt in most societies. In Ancien Régime France, in Spain as in ‘Modern’ Britain there was, as Antonio Dominguez Ortiz put it, ‘the universal eagerness for

¹⁸ Markus Friedrich, ‘Genealogy and the History of Knowledge’, in *Genealogical knowledge in the making. Tools, practices, and evidence in early modern Europe*, ed. Jost Eickmeyer, Markus Friedrich and Volker Bauer (Oldenbourg, 2019), p.5.

¹⁹ Quoted by Robert Nesbit, ‘Genealogy, Growth, and Other Metaphors’, *New Literary History* 1:3 (1970), p.351.

nobility.²⁰ The present work is therefore less a story of decline and irrelevance than of adaptation and creativity. The authors in this publication have sought to expand the scope of genealogies beyond the mere quest to establish aristocratic lineages. In the following chapters, we have considered three characteristic tenets of the Enlightenment project: locations, families and knowledge. For each of these themes, the authors have tried to connect them with the changing patterns of genealogical practices in the eighteenth century.

Enlightened locations and genealogical awareness

Genealogies did not simply survive in the remote corners of Europe where an old-fashioned nobility would have subsisted. Urban communities, even when nobles were none to be seen, took much interest in ancestry. 18th century Switzerland, notably in the patrician regime in Fribourg, provides a vibrant example of the production of both scholarly and encyclopedic knowledge in ancestry.²¹ As far as Paris was concerned, the Jansenist bourgeoisie, rightly described as instrumental in the criticism of the absolute monarchy, were also actively engaged in pedigrees making. Matthieu Marraud and Nicolas Lyon-Caen, from the studies of certain genealogical rolls made between 1760 and 1780 now in the Archives Nationales, suggest a stimulating interpretation of this phenomenon. The latter could not simply be described as a leisured and mundane interest that would have little significance outside the family circle. Many middling-sort families saw their past as being relevant in the public sphere. What was at play was not the quest for prominent ancestors but rather the display of their close alliances and strength of their local standing. For

²⁰ Dominguez Ortiz, *Las clases privilegiadas en el Antiguo Régimen*, Madrid, ISTMO, 1973, p.35.

²¹ Leonardo Broillet and Claire Gantet, 'A Ridiculous Science ? Genealogical practices and techniques in a society without its own nobility in the Seventeenth and eighteenth centuries', in *Genealogical Knowledge*, ed. Jost Eickmeyer, Markus Friedrich and Volker Bauer, p.23-43.

those invested in these inquiries, the horizontal bonds established between neighbouring families were indeed more significant than the antiquity of their lineages. The most illustrious branches were placed on equal footing with some of their modest kin. Instead of seeking to defend a social status, such practices fit into a Jansenist mind-set which saw ‘family as a community of faith and salvation’ during the time of the Maupeou reforms. Genealogies were used to defend a “corporate Catholicism” as opposed to a Tridentine Catholicism which relied on the individual and the notion of free will. Far from being restricted to the illustration of ancient lineages, they were mobilized to convey both middling sort and religious expectations.

These families should not be seen as simply the survivors of a circumscribed civic identity. They were engaged in the enlightened cause without sharing the courtly outlook of the aristocratic salons. The case of the Jansenist families in Paris provides a good example of the heterogeneous and competing nature of the enlightened spaces.²²

The image of a provincial France lagging behind the enlightened Parisian centre has also been opened to debate. Stephane Van Damme argued that the idea of peripheries was acceptable only if peripheries were acknowledged as alternative centres that served as competing arenas where tensions, disputes and hesitations were instrumental in the creation of new ideas.²³ In her chapter,

²² See also the helpful comments by Laurence Croq : ‘Le temps des Lumières est un temps d’affrontement intense où les élites sont partagées entre des idéologies différentes, sans qu’on puisse déterminer laquelle est dominante’, ‘La noblesse de robe, le Marais et la modernité dans le Paris des Lumières’, in *Épreuves de noblesse. Les expériences nobiliaires de la haute robe parisienne (XVI^e-XVIII^e siècle)*, ed. Robert Descimon and Élie Haddad (Paris, 2010, p.275).

²³ ‘La problématique des périphéries ne semble acceptable que si lesdites périphéries peuvent être tenues pour des centres. C’est aussi en montrant à l’œuvre les tensions les hésitations, les disputes, les concurrences entre différents centres, que le travail philosophique des penseurs écossais apparaît innovant, et non simplement par la force

Valérie Pietri focuses on a few jurists in Provence and their various attempts to define the founding principles of nobility.²⁴ In an attempt to ‘provincialize’ the subject, away from the *juges d’arme du roi*, Valérie Pietri studied the way three jurists from Provence concurred in defining true nobility and ultimately failed in reaching an agreement. Belleguise or Barçilon de Mauvans did not abide by the definition imposed by the State. While the former insisted on the role of the sovereign, the latter provided a dissenting interpretation by insisting on the importance of history and the existence of natural liberty. A third author of a provincial *nobiliaire*, Artefeuil, also added in 1757 the notion of natural equality, thus testifying to the influence of the enlightened debate on the origins of the French nation, its constitutions and liberal values.

There were still competing definitions of nobility that borrowed heavily on 18th century debates on history and natural rights. Their contributions were not different from that of Henry de Boulainvillier who has been long described as an impoverished reactionary aristocrat.²⁵ In her account, Valérie Pietri alluded to the inspirational role of Gilles André La Roque and his *Traité de Noblesse* (1678). It has been too often assumed that the State, through its famous *enquêtes de noblesse* managed to impose a unilateral and legal definition of nobility, thus compromising the ancient use

intrinsèque de ses arguments’, in *A toutes voiles vers la vérité : une autre histoire de la philosophie au temps des Lumières*, ed. Stéphane Van Damme (Paris, 2014), p.195.

²⁴ Germain Butaud and Valérie Piétri, *Les Enjeux de la généalogie (XII^e-XVIII^e siècle). Pouvoir et identité* (Paris, 2006). La Provence has been described by Monique Cubells as a privileged area to explore the intricate relations between the ‘noblesse d’épée et de robe’. *La Provence des Lumières. Les Parlementaires d’Aix au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris, 1984).

²⁵ ‘It is regrettable, therefore that historians tended to ignore genealogical histories, devoting to them only a few likely but contradictory remarks including, inevitably, Devyver’s contention that they were merely additional vehicles for the noble proletariat’s race consciousness’. Ellis Harold A., ‘Genealogy, history, and aristocratic reaction in early eighteenth-century France: The case of Henri de Boulainvilliers’, *The Journal of Modern History* 58:2 (1986), p.425.

of locally-produced proof. As it turned out, La Roque had been involved in the *enquêtes* under Colbert and contributed to this shift toward a state-sponsored enquiry. However, one should not see the State as the unique and uncontested social alchemist. There were actors outside the official circles who continued to discuss the nature of nobility and its conflicting values. The importance on birth and blood on which French authority insisted on was still counterbalanced by a continuous debate on merit.²⁶ La Roque was also strongly engaged in local inquiries within the Academie de Caen. In the scope of this Norman academy, La Roque did not simply act as a royal genealogist. His many contributions and late composition of his *Traité de Noblesse* exposed the fictions and negotiations that took place during his enquiries. By doing so, he was unwittingly undermining the legitimacy of the State to define nobility.²⁷

Whether in favour of ‘immemorial nobility’ or ‘noblesse de service’, jurists, historians and antiquaries in provincial France or Paris were actively engaged in creative and critical genealogical debates.

Among other more remote peripheries lie the European colonies. In the 1990’s, when the need to ‘provincialize’ the European Enlightenment (to use the famous expression by Dipesh Chakrabarty) was felt throughout academia, priorities were given to the circulation of knowledge beyond the continent. The Spanish colonies were no longer described as being immune to the secularization process and to the political modernity that took place in Europe. However, among other historians, François Xavier Guerra departed from this Eurocentric model of development by

²⁶ Jay M. Smith, *The French nobility in the eighteenth-century: reassessments and new approaches* (University Park, 2006).

²⁷ On La Roque, see, Ribard Dinah, ‘Livres, pouvoir et théorie. Comptabilité et noblesse en France à la fin du XVIIe siècle’, *Revue de synthèse*, 128 :1-2 (2007), p. 97-122.

insisting on the diversity of the political configurations adopted in the Spanish colonies²⁸. In the account of the political events in the second half of the 18th century and first half of the 19th, he argued for the existence of an alternative modernity relying both on revolution and Catholicism. Enlightenment practices in the Spanish colonies should be seen as fundamentally different from those applied in the metropolis. A fourth chapter by Arnaud Exbalin squarely aims at exploring the ways in which an enlightened colonial administration under the reign of Charles III (1759-1788) dealt with the policing of Mexico. Both merit and blood were recognized as key factors in the recruitment of the local magistrates. The central government was keen to implement a modernized version of urban policy that would include people of colour (mixed-race). The reformed administrators were indeed more eager than their predecessors to embrace the values of merit, civic consciousness and professional skills. However, such a policy required the consent of the ancient families in the urban elite and in order to be applied successfully could not entirely dismiss the founding principles of birth and skin colour. In a colonial society that was not a 'society of orders', colour remained a key criterion in the social hierarchies.

In these three examples from France and the Spanish colonies, genealogies did not merely survive despite an adversarial context. They actually were actively discussed and redefined in order to meet the demands of the social actors in the metropolitan centres as well as in the peripheries.

²⁸ François-Xavier Guerra, Annick Lempérière (coord.), *Los espacios públicos en Iberoamérica. Ambigüedades y problemas. Siglos XVIII-XIX* (México, 1998). On the birth of a distinctive genealogical culture in the French and British colonies, see François-Joseph Ruggiu, 'Extraction, wealth and industry: The ideas of noblesse and of gentility in the English and French Atlantics (17th–18th centuries)', *History of European Ideas* 34:4 (2008), p.444-455.

Rethinking individual and family memories

Another master narrative in the Enlightenment relates to process of individualization, the waning constraints of extended kinship and the shift from concepts of patriarchy to those of “affective families” and sexual equality.²⁹ A current theme that runs throughout the 18th century revolves around the conflict between the individual right to happiness and the constraints imposed by the family order. The period has been often defined as a watershed in the emergence of individual and personal identities, at the expense of a collective identity defined by blood and privilege. Violence and disobedience often took place whenever youngsters were confronted with a patriarchal order.³⁰ The French *Lettres de Cachets* and the 1753 British Marriage Act were aimed at curbing this growing threat of personal aspirations. Another illustration may be found in the *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville*, where Diderot described the lives of the Tahitians within a ‘sexual community’ oblivious to any form of patriarchy.³¹

There is, however, an increasing suspicion among historians about a straightforward birth of an individualist and secularist society.³² Admittedly, diaries from the early modern period onwards may have been used as an intimate tool to know oneself better, to elevate one’s soul, and understood as sign of a modern individualism. But they were also a key resource in the interactions between individuals and their social sphere within and outside their families. The quest for ancestry

²⁹ Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (London, 1977) ; Randolph Trumbach, *The rise of the egalitarian family : aristocratic kinship and domestic relations in eighteenth-century England* (London, 1979).

³⁰ Michel Nassiet, *La violence, une histoire sociale (France, XVI^e-XVIII^e siècle)* (Seysssel, 2011), p.337.

³¹ François Noudelmann, *Pour en finir avec la généalogie* (Paris, 2004), p.33.

³² Enric Porqueres i Gené, *Individu, personne et parenté en Europe* (Paris, 2015).

indeed fulfilled many emotional and cultural needs and was part of an inclusive family culture that was also preserved by the writing of diaries, memoirs and accounting books.³³

More specifically, in family writings, several studies pointed to a shift toward a shorter time span and this trend applied to both the gentry as to the middling sort. With the notion of ‘family remembered’, Henry French argued that ‘familial identity was invoked outside the sphere of formal, heraldic lineages and concerted documentary research’. This could be due to the moral value attributed to the recent worthies of the families at the expense of the remote founding ancestors. Edward Gibbons may have mentioned in his autobiography that in his childhood, ‘Genealogy was never a topic of conversation’; even if his curiosity about his past was real, it was limited to just a few ancestors. This practice was aimed at building a family’s self-consciousness rather than praising one’s lineage³⁴. Several studies alluded to the fact that there were different conceptions of kinship that coexisted side by side. The paradigm of individuation did not exclude the persistence of lineage concerns. Various languages of kinship were used in a joint manner and Naomi Tadmor ‘highlights the importance of enmeshed patterns of kinship and connectedness.’³⁵

Reflecting on the place of individuals and families in German court directories, Volker Bauer adds a new element to this delicate balance between changes and continuity. In his chapter on the ‘changing scope of genealogical writing’, he deals with the circulation of administrative directories in the German courts of the Holy Roman Empire. After 1700, he identified a significant

³³ Giovanni Ciappelli (ed.), *Memoria, famiglia, identità tra Italia ed Europa nell'età moderna* (Bologne, 2009); Adam Smyth, *Autobiography in early modern England* (Cambridge, 2011); François-Joseph Ruggiu (ed.), *The uses of first person writings on the “longue durée” (Africa, America, Asia, Europe)* (Bern, 2013).

³⁴ Henry R. French, ‘The “Remembered Family” and Dynastic Senses of Identity Among the English Gentry c. 1600-1800’, *Historical Research* 92:257 (2019), p.229-246.

³⁵ Naomi Tadmor, ‘Early modern English kinship in the long run: Reflections on continuity and change’, *Continuity and Change* 25 (2010), p.15-48.

shift from the *Special Genealogien* dealing with the territorial ruling houses to the spread of *Staatskalenders* which provided an annual list of officeholders. The birth of a more bureaucratic state required a functional and meritocratic elite. Ancient lineages were no longer the prime reason as to why officers and administrators would appear in these directories. Administrative directories ended up ‘registering tens of thousands of courtiers, councillors, secretaries, caretakers, pastors, professors’ but they ‘did not completely do away with genealogical information’ and were still partly presented as bloodstock catalogues. Family dynasties continued to be instrumental in most principalities and basic genealogical information was much sought to obtain patronage or engage in social interactions.

Similar directories of the political elite started to circulate in Venice as well as in France, Switzerland and Britain. In London, the tomes of *Peerages and Baronetages* were sold by the same prominent London booksellers who also distributed numerous almanacs, court and city registers.³⁶ As such, family directories and ephemeral prints were to be used together. For those in search of patronage, they made accessible detailed family accounts of the ruling elite. As for the country gentry, they were portable gateways into the London social spheres by providing up-to-date accounts of marriages and issues.³⁷ As it coincided with a multiplication of honours and offices, the Seven Years’ War had a strong impact on these publications. A comparison between Arthur

³⁶ See for example Matthew Wotton who published both the Chamberlayne’s *Magnae Britanniae Notitia* in 1710 and the compilation of ‘English Baronets’ in 1727 and 1741. Stéphane Jettot, ‘Family input in the making of London genealogical directories in the 18th century’, in *Genealogical Knowledge in the Making*, p.169-198.

³⁷ Dorit Raines, ‘Les généalogies vénitiennes (XVI^e-XVIII^e siècles) : instrument politique, outil juridique’, in *The Genealogical Enterprise*, p.89-112 ; Stéphane Jettot and François-Joseph Ruggiu, ‘Cultures et pratiques généalogiques des élites anglaises (XVI^e-XIX^e siècle)’, in *L’opération généalogique*, p.243-270.

Collins's *Peerage* in 1756 and Nathaniel Salmon's *Short View of the Peerage* in 1761 is quite significant.³⁸

Salmon stressed in the title that his dictionary gave an account of 'the Peers' marriages, issue, and immediate ancestors; the Posts of Honour and Profit they hold in government'. In his publications, the ascending order – the ancestors up to the living heir - still used in Collins's *Peerages* was replaced by a descending presentation. Politicians and famous statesmen were given a biographical treatment along with a description of their close kin and some of their most prominent ancestors. At the European level, the *Almanach de Gotha Contenant Connaissances Diverses et Utiles* was created in 1763 by Emmanuel Christopher Klupfel and contained the genealogies of sovereigns in Europe as well as 'les généalogies des personnes illustres vivant en Europe'.³⁹

Hence with the growth of ephemeral publications such as gazettes and almanacs, these directories were also linked to the multiplication of biographical dictionaries. In 1761, when Salmon was publishing his *Short View*, a new edition of John Campbell's *Lives of the Admirals, and other Eminent British Seamen* was also circulated. Its narrative relied as much on memoirs and chronicles as on genealogies. The latter came to form the pedestal on which the biographical genre could expand. The merits of the individuals were rarely appreciated without their family background.

This last comment raises the issue of the different origins of reputation and fame. Some historians have argued for the succession of different categories of reputation in a plurisecular

³⁸ Arthur Collins, *The Peerage of England; containing a genealogical and historical account of all the peers of England*, 3rd edition (London, W. Strahan, 1756); Thomas Salmon, *A short view of the families of the present English nobility; their marriages, issue, and immediate ancestors; the Posts of Honour and Profit* (London, W. Owen, 1761).

³⁹ See on the Gotha, Thomas von Fritsch, *Die Gothaischen Taschenbücher, Hofkalender und Almanach*, (Limburg, 1968).

manner⁴⁰. Others have recently argued that the 18th century public space had already enabled the emergence of ‘celebrities’, which did not correspond to the early modern definition of glory.⁴¹ There were indeed different conceptions of fame which could coexist simultaneously. However, we would argue that in the case of most celebrated statesmen, soldiers and politicians, family origins continued to play a significant role. The genealogical background, which had been essential in making early modern reputations, was reconfigured in order to embrace a more biographical approach.

Similarly, the expansion of the novel had been justly linked to a more individualist mindset as novels provided a new script for contemporaries to explore the uniqueness of one’s personality. However, in literary studies as well as in art history, signs of an egalitarian trend within many families have been described as potentially misleading. Shearer West reminded us that ‘the family was not perceived as a self-contained domestic entity, but as a private version of both Church and State, with all the qualities normally attributed to institutional religion and government. (...) The conversation piece thus became a form of family tree, obscuring fractures that are visually unavoidable in true genealogical mapping.’⁴² Hence, novels, family portraits and conversation

⁴⁰ Stefan Collini argued that ‘birth is the 18th-century principle, office the 19th century, achievement the 20th, and celebrity the 21st. However, as with so much else in British history, the earlier stages have not been wholly superseded by the later ones, but have continued to co-exist alongside them’. Chosen people; on the fastest way to become a somebody, *The Guardian*, January 30, 1997, p.37.

⁴¹ ‘Si on veut donner à la notion une efficacité analytique, sur le plan sociologique et historique, il faut la distinguer d’autres formes de notoriété que sont la gloire et la réputation’. **Antoine Lilti**, *Figures publiques. L’invention de la célébrité (1750-1850)* (Paris, 2014), p.4.

⁴² West Shearer, ‘The public nature of private life: the conversation piece and the fragmented family’, *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 18 (1995), p.155.

pieces that had previously been used to prove a restricted and more intimate household were fulfilling a more political and dynastic agenda, especially among Jacobite or Tory families.

Fielding's novels such as *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling* (1749) developed the search for unknown ascendants and 'dramatiz[e] the potential for social change even as traditional roles persisted.'⁴³ Family portraits such as Hone's painting of the Curzons in Kedleston Hall and Richardson's *Clarissa* 'did not preclude the rigidly hierarchical ordering of each member of the family and the dominance of concerns of primogeniture.'⁴⁴ In her chapter, Audrey Faulot retraces the way lineage culture permeated new forms of fictional discourse and remained 'an inexhaustible reservoir of novelistic adventures'. She noticed many French novels' plots were rooted in genealogical concerns even though the family order was subjected to new configurations. In her study of *Doyen de Killerin (1735-1740)*, by Abbé Prévost, she considered the case of an Irish Catholic family living on both sides of the Channel. She argued that the plot shifts from the relations between fathers and sons to those between brothers and sisters. It ceased to revolve only around the problematic origins of individuals and instead embraced the competing rivalries within the sibling group. As a sign of the times, novelists were now inspired by the patriarchal order as well as the horizontal ramification of the family trees. As such, the appetite for a genealogical story line

⁴³ Hilary Teynor, 'A Partridge in the family tree: fixity, mobility, and community in Tom Jones', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 17:3 (2005), p.355; see also Christopher Flint, *Family fictions: narrative and domestic Relations in Britain, 1688-1798* (Stanford, 1998).

⁴⁴ Kate Retford, 'Sensibility and genealogy in the Eighteenth-century family portrait: the collection at Kedleston hall', *The Historical Journal* 46:03 (2003), p.548; Naomi Tadmor, 'Dimensions of inequality among siblings in eighteenth-century English novels: the cases of Clarissa and the history of miss Betsy Thoughtless', *Continuity and Change* 7 (1992), p.303–33.

observed in Gothic novels in the late 18th century should not be seen as a decisive break from many other 18th century novels.⁴⁵

Renewed potentials for librarians, antiquarians and natural scientists

The French revolution led to the irrelevance of a much-criticised office, namely the ‘généalogistes ordres du roi’, presented by William Doyle as “the gatekeeper, not to nobility itself, but to most of the advantages attached to a proven length of pedigree”. Famously, the Abbé Sieyès – the most ‘philosophical of the major political actors in the French Revolution’ – condemned hereditary and even honorific privileges as being contrary to the public interest.⁴⁶ From Louis XIV to 1789, William Doyle described how several families such as the d’Hozier, the Clairambault or the Chérin, managed to make substantial profit by navigating between the expectations of the newcomers and the recriminations of some established families.⁴⁷ The French Revolution would have freed the definition of nobility from many centuries of State control. This chapter pointed to the link between the institutions and the legitimacy of a controversial source of knowledge. Some authors argued that the official genealogists never obtained a monopoly over the certification of lineages. The external pressure brought by the State was considerable and often welcomed by many families eager to obtain an official certification of their status. But the institutionalisation of this

⁴⁵ Sophie Gilmartin, *Ancestry and narrative in nineteenth-Century British literature: blood relations from Edgeworth to Hardy* (Cambridge and New York: 1998); Scott Yoon Sun Lee, ‘A Divided Inheritance: Scott’s Antiquarian Novel and the British Nation’, *ELH* 64 (1997), p.537-67.

⁴⁶ William H. Sewell, *A Rhetoric of Bourgeois Revolution: The Abbé Sieyès and What Is the Third Estate?* (Durham, 1994), p.124.

⁴⁷ William Doyle, *Aristocracy and its Enemies in the Age of Revolution* (Oxford, 2009).

activity was never fully achieved.⁴⁸ As in Britain, the French cultural landscape has been transformed by the increasing commodification of knowledge. The activities of the royal genealogists were challenged by parallel commercial undertakings by booksellers and antiquarians. *Le Grand dictionnaire de la noblesse* par Louis Moréri went through eight editions between 1698 and 1725. It played a significant role in ennobling actors and literary authors and functioned as “laboratory” where new social values were put to the test.⁴⁹ As genealogies became part of a commercialised knowledge on an unprecedented scale, the ability of the French “Ancien Régime” to discuss and reinterpret the noble values of birth and lineage should not be underestimated. The *feudistes*, described as ‘freelance archival entrepreneurs’ by Markus Friedrich, belonged to the middling sort who contributed to the reorganization of genealogical knowledge and its publication through manuals such as Le Moine’s *Diplomatique-pratique* (1765) in which they provided guidance in how to better care for family records. There were not the artisans of a ‘feudal reaction’ and the majority of them came through the French Revolution unscathed⁵⁰.

In England, the end of the suppression of the College of Arms visitations after 1688 allegedly led to a decline in the quality of genealogical inquiries as they became “erratic,

⁴⁸ Roberto Bizzocchi, *Généalogies fabuleuses. Inventer et faire croire dans l’Europe moderne* (Paris, 2010) ; Olivier Poncet, ‘Cercles savants et pratique généalogique en France (fin XVI^e-milieu du XVII^e siècle)’, in *L’Opération généalogique*, p.101-136.

⁴⁹ “Le dictionnaire de Moréri a sans doute joué un rôle dans le processus d’ennoblissement des hommes de lettres et artistes et, à l’inverse, dans le déplacement des fondements de la consécration nobiliaire vers des modèles issus du monde des lettres et des arts. De ce fait on peut dire que le dictionnaire apparaît non seulement comme un dépôt, mais comme un laboratoire qui participe aux mutations profondes de la société et de l’absolutisme royal” Jean-Luc Chappey, *Ordres et désordres biographiques. Dictionnaires, listes de noms, réputation des Lumières à Wikipédia* (Seyssel, 2013), p.102.

⁵⁰ ‘The Rise of Archival Consciousness in Provincial France: French Feudal Records and Eighteenth-Century Seigneurial Society’, *Past Present* 230: 11 (2016), p. 49-70.

undisciplined, or shallow.”⁵¹ There would have been a void between the ‘craze’ of the early modern time and the ‘Gothic revival.’⁵² Richard Cust underlined the fact that ‘the great age of material celebrations of lineage had passed and many of its features were not to re-emerge until the gothic revival of the late 18th and early 19th centuries when they were born of a very different set of preoccupations.”⁵³ He rightly stressed the fundamental differences between two different periods. In the early modern Europe, humanists and various institutions tried to establish some rules on how to deal with ancestors and lineage. As for the first nineteenth-century, many studies referred to a nostalgic reaction aimed at restoring a more stable and rooted society. During the American Revolution, on both sides of the Atlantic, there was a ‘contemporary nervousness about the contingency and unreliability of identities’⁵⁴. In France, the naturalisation of social status by promoting several biographical dictionaries, in particular the *Biographie universelle by the brothers Michaud*⁵⁵. In Italy, the compilation of the ‘famous Italian families’ *Famiglie Celebri Italiane* undertaken by the patrician Pompeo Litta Biumi (1781-1851) could be seen as a reaction to the French invasion and the promotion of republican values. In Britain, the publication of William Playfair’s *British Family Antiquity* in 1807 was explicitly directed against the enlightened ethos⁵⁶. How then can we

⁵¹ Daniel Woolf, *The Social circulation of the past* (Oxford, 2003), p.113-115.

⁵² John H. Plumb, *The death of the past* (London, 1969), p.33.

⁵³ Richard Cust, ‘The Material culture of lineage in late Tudor and early Stuart England’, in *The Routledge Handbook of Material Culture in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Catherine Richardson; Tara Hamling, David R. M. Gaimster (London, 2017), p.247–265.

⁵⁴ Dror Wahrman, “The English Problem of Identity in the American Revolution”, *The American Historical Review*, 2001,106/4, p.1259. François Weil, *Family Trees. A History of Genealogy in America* (Cambridge, 2013).

⁵⁵ Jean-Luc Chappey, *Ordres et désordres biographiques*. (Seysssel, 2013).

⁵⁶ J. F. Dunyach, ‘Le British Family Antiquity de William Playfair (1809-1811), une entreprise généalogique’, in *The Genealogical Enterprise*, p.319-339.

map out the subtle transition from the early modern lineage culture to the early nineteenth century compilations of thousands of names?

As in 18th century France, Britain was already engaged in considerable reconfiguration of its genealogical knowledge, in particular through the activities of some prominent antiquarians. It would be misleading to presume that interest in ancestry became a merely a pleasant pastime for amateurs. Several studies have shed a light on the mobilization of some middling sort actors, publishers, lawyers, clergy and surgeons in profitable commercial opportunities. In his chapter, Julian Pooley looks into the genealogical enquiries of John Nichols (1745-1826), the son of an Islington baker, a famous London printer and owner of *Gentlemen Magazine*. As a new means of communication, his printing shop was a 'clearing house for information' and his magazine provided 'a monthly snapshot of the state of the country's elite' as well as recently self-made men. The large but scattered archive of the Nichols press provides important evidence for the transformation of local genealogical knowledge into an extensive nationally-based enquiry. John Nichols was thus relying on a vast network of correspondents who saw their contribution as useful to the public and as being emancipated from the narrow self-interested pride of ancient families. Biographies, anecdotes and pedigrees were combined in a project of an inclusive *History of Leicestershire*, depicted as a 'virtual museum'. The materials crafted by John Nichols substantially changed the construction and representation of genealogical knowledge. It was also visually transformed, enriched with tools such as trees, footnotes, tables and diagrams that were used by the encyclopaedists. Diderot and d'Alembert adapted to their own use some of Nichols' techniques for producing an encyclopaedia, such as including trees of knowledge and providing extensive cross-referencing. Some derived from early-modern humanist practices, others were unprecedented. Nichols' activities fits into the pioneering research carried out by Rosemary Sweet arguing that 18th century antiquarians, though often derided, 'were important actors in that explosion of print and ideas, that thirst for knowledge

and understanding which some have called the British Enlightenment.⁵⁷ But, to survive in a redefined scientific world, genealogical practices had to be deeply reframed to answer renewed epistemological expectations.⁵⁸

Thirdly, it has been observed by many that the genealogical rationale also was applied to scientific theories. The importance of the Enlightenment as a matrix in the reconfiguration of ancient ideas such as race, stock or blood constitute in itself a highly polarised subject of enquiry. The expression of ‘clean blood’ which could be found in the Inquisition records as well as in the treaties of nobility has raised several numerous issues. Some cultural historians have assumed that early modern genealogies enabled the transmission of a biological conception of a noble race which was then applied to the whole humankind after 1750.⁵⁹ Arguing against the existence of a modern, biological understanding of race from the early modern period to the 18th century, Colin Kidd contended that theological concerns and a resilient Christian mindset prevented the theorization

⁵⁷ Roey Sweet, *The Discovery of the Past in Eighteenth Century Britain* (Hambledon and London, 2004), p.3.

⁵⁸ ‘Pour redevenir crédible et surtout attractive la vieille idéologie lignagère doit composer avec de nouvelles exigences intellectuelles qui sont partiellement celles de esprits scientifiques.’ André Burguière, ‘La mémoire familiale du bourgeois gentilhomme : généalogies domestiques en France aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles’, *Annales ESC* 46:4 (1991), p.774.

⁵⁹ Among many contributions, see: Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture* (Philadelphia, 2000); Davidson, Jenny. *Breeding: A Partial History of the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 2009) ; Silvia Sebastiani and Jean-Frédéric Schaub, ‘Between Genealogy and Physicality. A Historiographical Perspective on Race in the Ancien Régime’, *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 35 :1–2 (2014), p.23-51; George M. Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton, 2015); Tim McNerney, ‘The Better Sort: Nobility and Human Variety in Eighteenth-Century Great Britain’, *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38.1 (2015), p.47-63.

of human difference as ‘racial.’⁶⁰ As for noble blood, it should be distinguished from a racist ideology as it was conditionally transmitted to the descendants according to legal rules. In his work on the aristocratic experience, Jonathan Dewald argued that nobles considered their personal life as ‘personal creations, the outcomes of personal histories rather than inheritance.’⁶¹ Regarding *limpieza de sangre* which has been understood as a premature form of biological racism, several authors including Jean-Paul Zuniga considered that the notion of race existed alongside other criteria, such as colour and caste⁶². In his chapter, Charles-Olivier Doron also pointed out the legacy of theological and noble meaning of race.⁶³ In the second half of the eighteenth century in Europe and the Atlantic world, many natural scientists such as Antoine Duchesne and the Comte de Buffon struggled with the evasiveness and difficulty of racial conceptions of humanity. The aristocratic lineage would come in handy in order to explain how within a common species, varieties will remain and be transmitted from one generation to another. It provides an efficient tool to explain the internal hierarchies within the natural order. Such ‘displacement’ was justified in particular by the need for monogenists like Buffon to solve the problematic articulation between ‘species’ and

⁶⁰ Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600-2000* (Cambridge, 2006); Christopher H. Johnson, Bernard Jussen, David Warren (dir.), *Blood and kinship. Matter for metaphor from ancien Rome to the present* (Oxford, 2013).

⁶¹ John Dewald, *Aristocratic experience and the Origins of Modern Culture. France, 1570–1715* (Berkeley, 1993), p.71.

⁶² On the notion of ‘castas’ and mixed blood, see in particular Elena Estrada de Gerlero, ‘La reforma borbónica y las pinturas de castas novohispanas’ in *El arte y la vida cotidiana*, ed. Elena Estrada de Gerlero (Mexico, 1995), p.217-52; Magali Carrera, *Imagining Identity in New Spain*, Austin, University Press, 2003, Ilona Katzew, *Casta Painting. Images of race in eighteenth-century Mexico* (New Haven, 2004). Jean-Paul Zúñiga, ‘La voix du sang. Du métis à l'idée de métissage en Amérique espagnole’, *Annales HSS* 54 : 2, (1999), p.425-452, Jean-Paul Zúñiga, ‘Muchos negros, mulatos y otros colores’. Culture visuelle et savoirs coloniaux au XVIIIe siècle’, *Annales HSS* 68 :1 (2013), p.45-76.

⁶³ Claude-Olivier Doron, *L'Homme altéré. Race et Dégénérescence* (Seysssel, 2016).

'varieties'. It is from this understanding of race within a common species that the notion of biological degeneration would then later be translated into a political and social order.

It would be a challenging task to provide a continuous narrative from the Renaissance to the contemporary period from a European or even global perspective.

In a last Chapter,

To conclude, the authors of this work have insisted on the particular strength of the genealogical rationales - as a language, tool, social practice - and their overlaps with other ways of understanding and ordering the social fabric that made them somewhat inescapable. Far from being ahistorical, genealogical practices require a close contextualization as they were deeply shaped by what specific individuals and societies were expecting from them. The idea was not to replace the paradigm of a progressive Enlightenment by a regressive and resilient Ancien Régime but rather to reveal the contradictions and the complexities of a pivotal intellectual movement. Genealogies did not merely survive but, more fundamentally, were transformed and reinvented. Instead of being confined to the resilient dark corners of Europe – Spain or the Highlands – genealogical impulses were to be witnessed in many aspects of the Enlightenment project.