

PALGRAVE STUDIES IN CULTURAL AND INTELLECTUAL HISTORY

Genealogies of Genius

Edited by Joyce E. Chaplin
& Darrin M. McMahon



PALGRAVE STUDIES IN CULTURAL AND INTELLECTUAL HISTORY

Series Editors

Anthony J. La Vopa, North Carolina State University

Suzanne Marchand, Louisiana State University

Javed Majeed, King's College, London

The Palgrave Studies in Cultural and Intellectual History series has three primary aims: to close divides between intellectual and cultural approaches, thus bringing them into mutually enriching interactions; to encourage interdisciplinarity in intellectual and cultural history; and to globalize the field, both in geographical scope and in subjects and methods. This series is open to work on a range of modes of intellectual inquiry, including social theory and the social sciences; the natural sciences; economic thought; literature; religion; gender and sexuality; philosophy; political and legal thought; psychology; and music and the arts. It encompasses not just North America but also Africa, Asia, Eurasia, Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East. It includes both nationally focused studies and studies of intellectual and cultural exchanges between different nations and regions of the world, and encompasses research monographs, synthetic studies, edited collections, and broad works of reinterpretation. Regardless of methodology or geography, all books in the series are historical in the fundamental sense of undertaking rigorous contextual analysis.

Published by Palgrave Macmillan

Indian Mobilities in the West, 1900–1947: Gender, Performance, Embodiment

By Shompa Lahiri

The Shelley-Byron Circle and the Idea of Europe

By Paul Stock

Culture and Hegemony in the Colonial Middle East

By Yaseen Noorani

Recovering Bishop Berkeley: Virtue and Society in the Anglo-Irish Context

By Scott Breuninger

The Reading of Russian Literature in China: A Moral Example and Manual of Practice

By Mark Gamsa

Rammohun Roy and the Making of Victorian Britain

By Lynn Zastoupil

Carl Gustav Jung: Avant-Garde Conservative

By Jay Sherry

Law and Politics in British Colonial Thought: Transpositions of Empire

Edited by Shaunnagh Dorsett and Ian Hunter

Sir John Malcolm and the Creation of British India

By Jack Harrington

The American Bourgeoisie: Distinction and Identity in the Nineteenth Century

Edited by Sven Beckert and Julia B. Rosenbaum

Benjamin Constant and the Birth of French Liberalism

By K. Steven Vincent

The Gospel of Beauty in the Progressive Era: Reforming American Verse and Values

By Lisa Szeffel

Knowledge Production, Pedagogy, and Institutions in Colonial India

Edited by Indra Sengupta and Daud Ali

The Emergence of Russian Liberalism: Alexander Kunitsyn in Context, 1783–1840

By Julia Berest

Religious Transactions in Colonial South India: Language, Translation, and the Making of Protestant Identity

By Hephzibah Israel

Cultural History of the British Census: Envisioning the Multitude in the Nineteenth Century

By Kathrin Levitan

Character, Self, and Sociability in the Scottish Enlightenment

Edited by Thomas Ahnert and Susan Manning

The European Antarctic: Science and Strategy in Scandinavia and the British Empire

By Peder Roberts

The Origins of Modern Historiography in India: Antiquarianism and Philology, 1780–1880

By Rama Sundari Mantena

Isaiah Berlin: The Journey of a Jewish Liberal

By Arie Dubnov

At the Edges of Liberalism: Junctions of European, German, and Jewish History

By Steven E. Aschheim

Making British Indian Fictions: 1772–1823

By Ashok Malhotra

Alfred Weber and the Crisis of Culture, 1890–1933

By Colin Loader

Monism: Science, Philosophy, Religion, and the History of a Worldview

Edited by Todd H. Weir

The French Enlightenment and Its Others: The Mandarin, the Savage, and the Invention of the Human Sciences

By David Allen Harvey

Nature Engaged: Science in Practice from the Renaissance to the Present

Edited by Mario Biagioli and Jessica Riskin

History and Psyche: Culture, Psychoanalysis, and the Past

Edited by Sally Alexander and Barbara Taylor

The Scottish Enlightenment: Race, Gender, and the Limits of Progress

By Silvia Sebastiani

Art and Life in Modernist Prague: Karel Čapek and His Generation, 1911–1938

By Thomas Ort

Music and Empire in Britain and India: Identity, Internationalism, and Cross-Cultural Communication

By Bob van der Linden

Geographies of the Romantic North: Science, Antiquarianism, and Travel, 1790–1830

By Angela Byrne

Fandom, Authenticity, and Opera: Mad Acts and Letter Scenes in Fin-de-Siècle Russia

By Anna Fishzon

Memory and Theory in Eastern Europe

Edited by Uilleam Blacker, Alexander Etkind, and Julie Fedor

The Philosophy of Life and Death: Ludwig Klages and the Rise of a Nazi Biopolitics

By Nitzan Lebovic

The Dream of a Democratic Culture: Mortimer J. Adler and the Great Books Idea

By Tim Lacy

German Freedom and the Greek Ideal: The Cultural Legacy from Goethe to Mann

By William J. McGrath and Edited by Celia Applegate, Stephanie Frontz, and Suzanne Marchand

Beyond Catholicism: Heresy, Mysticism, and Apocalypse in Italian Culture

Edited by Fabrizio De Donno and Simon Gilson

Translations, Histories, Enlightenments: William Robertson in Germany, 1760–1795

By László Kontler

Negotiating Knowledge in Early Modern Empires: A Decentered View

Edited by László Kontler, Antonella Romano, Silvia Sebastiani, and Borbála Zsuzsanna Török

William James and the Quest for an Ethical Republic

By Trygve Throntveit

The Uses of Space in Early Modern History

Edited by Paul Stock

Genealogies of Genius

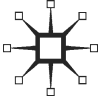
Edited by Joyce E. Chaplin and Darrin M. McMahon

Genealogies of Genius

Edited by

Joyce E. Chaplin and Darrin M. McMahon

palgrave
macmillan



GENEALOGIES OF GENIUS

Selection and editorial content © Joyce E. Chaplin and Darrin M. McMahon 2016
Individual chapters © their respective contributors 2016

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission. No portion of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted save with written permission. In accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, Saffron House, 6-10 Kirby Street, London EC1N 8TS.

Any person who does any unauthorized act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

First published 2016 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

The authors have asserted their rights to be identified as the authors of this work in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

Palgrave Macmillan in the UK is an imprint of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan in the US is a division of Nature America, Inc., One New York Plaza, Suite 4500, New York, NY 10004-1562.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

ISBN: 978-1-349-49764-2
E-PDF ISBN: 978-1-137-49767-3
DOI: 10.1057/9781137497673

Distribution in the UK, Europe and the rest of the world is by Palgrave Macmillan®, a division of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Genealogies of genius / [edited by] Joyce E. Chaplin and
Darrin M. McMahon.
pages cm.—(Palgrave studies in cultural and intellectual history)
Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Genius—History. I. Chaplin, Joyce E., editor.

BF412.G385 2015
153.9'8—dc23

2015019296

A catalogue record for the book is available from the British Library.

Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	ix
1 Introduction <i>Joyce E. Chaplin and Darrin M. McMahon</i>	1
2 The Problem of Genius in the Age of Slavery <i>Joyce E. Chaplin</i>	11
3 Genius versus Democracy: Excellence and Singularity in Postrevolutionary France <i>Nathalie Heinich</i>	29
4 Equality, Inequality, and Difference: Genius as Problem and Possibility in American Political/Scientific Discourse <i>John Carson</i>	43
5 Genius and Obsession: Do You Have to Be Mad to Be Smart? <i>Lennard J. Davis</i>	63
6 Inspiration to Perspiration: Francis Galton's <i>Hereditary Genius</i> in Victorian Context <i>Janet Browne</i>	77
7 "Genius Must Do the Scullery Work of the World": New Women, Feminists, and Genius, circa 1880–1920 <i>Lucy Delap</i>	97
8 The Cult of the Genius in Germany and Austria at the Dawn of the Twentieth Century <i>Julia Barbara Köhne</i>	115
9 Cultivating Genius in a Bolshevik Country <i>Irina Sirotkina</i>	137
10 Insight in the Age of Automation <i>David Bates</i>	153

11 <i>Genius and Evil</i> <i>Darrin M. McMahon</i>	171
<i>List of Contributors</i>	183
<i>Index</i>	185

Figures

4.1a	English search for Genius + Virtue (1700–1940)	46
4.1b	American English search for Genius + Virtue (1700–1940)	46
4.2a	English search for Genius and Talents + Virtue (1700–1940)	46
4.2b	American English search for Genius and Talents + Virtue (1700–1940)	47
4.3a	English search for Genius and Talents + Virtue + Republic (1700–1940)	47
4.3b	American English search for Genius and Talents + Virtue + Republic (1700–1940)	47
4.4a	English search for Genius and Talents + Virtue + Republic + Fame (1700–1940)	48
4.4b	American English search for Genius and Talents + Virtue + Republic + Fame (1700–1940)	48
4.5a	English search for Genius and Talents + Virtue + Republic + Equality (1700–1940)	48
4.5b	American English search for Genius and Talents + Virtue + Republic + Equality (1700–1940)	49
4.6a	English search for Genius and Talents + Virtue + Republic + Intelligence (1700–1940)	49
4.6b	American English search for Genius and Talents + Virtue + Republic + Intelligence (1700–1940)	49
7.1	Olive Schreiner's portrait in <i>Notables of Britain</i>	104
8.1	" <i>Geistesheldenbiographien</i> "—list of genius biographies from 1900	116

1

Introduction

Joyce E. Chaplin and Darrin M. McMahon

“Genius” is a seductive term and slippery too—used often, and frequently abused. Motivational speakers, magazine editors, and the authors of inspirational biographies have certainly grasped its appeal, to say nothing of the hopeful parents of tiny potential Mozarts, Austens, and Einsteins. But though genius’s allure helps to keep it in the public eye, popular fascination has tended to put scholars on guard. The late French philosopher Jacques Derrida acknowledged as much when he dared to broach the subject at a formal gathering among scholars in 2003. “In according the least legitimacy to the word ‘genius,’” he confessed, “one is considered to sign one’s resignation from all fields of knowledge... This noun ‘genius,’” he added, “makes us squirm.”¹ Some academic observers have doubted whether a word so commonly used can possess genuine meaning or intellectual merit. Others have worried about its associations with discredited theories of human superiority and inferiority. Social scientists and psychologists, meanwhile, respond by attempting to pin down the criteria of genius with greater rigor, hoping to detect its presence and understand its spread among populations for the benefit of humanity. As the psychologist Lewis Terman, a key architect of the IQ exam, put it in his landmark *Genetic Studies of Genius* (1925), “The origins of genius, [and] the natural laws of its development are scientific problems of almost unequaled importance for human welfare.”²

Whatever the veracity of that claim, the impetus behind it points to a presumption that the chapters in this volume seek to question: that genius is a constant and recurring phenomenon among human populations. That presumption, in turn, highlights the fact that genius as a *historical* concept, rather than as a presumed transhistorical fact, is surprisingly underexamined. Only a handful of studies to date have attempted to explain its emergence and development as a contingent category, one shaped by the exigencies of time and place.³ Building on this budding interest, the chapters in this volume seek to examine the uses to which concepts of genius have been put in different cultures and times. Collectively, they are designed to make two new statements. First, seen in historical and comparative perspective, genius is

not a natural fact and universal human constant that has been only recently identified by modern science, but instead it is a categorical mode of assessing human ability and merit. Second, as a concept with specific definitions and resonances, genius has performed specific cultural work within each of the societies in which it has had a historical presence.

It is precisely because of the varying historical manifestations of genius that we suggest it had multiple genealogies, even as its branching lines of descent can be traced to a common ancestor. That shared ancestry is at least as complex as it is long, but its main developments occurred in three phases during the ancient, early modern, and modern eras. In the first phase, the ancient Greeks referred to *daimones* (demons)—what in Latin would be called a *genius*—to describe a type of divinity that offered protection or inspiration. Such entities could occupy hearth and household, they could accompany individuals into workshops or onto battlefields, or they could hover over families, communities, and even entire nations. *Daimones* might be “demonic” in the present and negative sense of that word, or they could be what later peoples would think of as angelic; the idea of having two guiding *daimones*, good and evil, itself comes from antiquity. For the Romans, a *genius* originally meant this kind of deity, though gradually the term began to imply not just the origin of the divine force that possessed one but also the gift that an individual possessed. In Roman times (and here we see one origin of a long-standing and insidious prejudice), only men were thought to possess a *genius*. All men had a *genius* for something, which gave shape to their individual character, but the greatest individuals could lay claim to a superior force of this kind—what Cicero, in describing the *daimonion* or “little demon” of Socrates, called the philosopher’s *quiddam divinum*, his “divine something.” That mysterious force was what set a man such as Socrates—said by the oracle at Delphi to have been the wisest who lived—apart from all others. It was the supernatural source that gave him superhuman, even godlike, powers.

The eventual dominance of Christianity in Europe did not dispel these associations, nor did it do away with the name or the concept of the pagan *genius*. Although Christian monotheism in its western and eastern manifestations certainly discouraged open acceptance of blessings that did not come from the Trinity, faith in interventions from angels, appeals to patron saints, and fear of demonic influence bore more than passing resemblances to the pagan beliefs that had preceded them. In short, the *daimones* and *genii* survived.⁴ Well into the seventeenth century, European dictionaries bore testimony to that fact, recording, like Robert Cawdrey’s *A Table Alphabeticall of Hard Usual English Words* (1604), that genius implied “the angell that waits on man, be it a good or evil angell.”⁵

Genius as a notion that bore a more direct relationship to the modern understanding of individuals of superior creative or intellectual endowments began to emerge only gradually in the early modern period and rose to prominence in the eighteenth century. During the Renaissance, the elision of the word *genius* with *ingenium*, a classical Latin term for natural talent or ability, began to articulate the possibility that human beings could actually possess

godlike abilities, not just borrow them or receive them via divine inspiration or bestowal.⁶ “Genius,” that is to say, began to imply a kind of superior human mind, an understanding that gained widespread acceptance during the eighteenth century, when illustrious individuals were celebrated as geniuses themselves, persons who embodied the force of genius.

Indeed, whatever the place of reason in the Enlightenment, and despite that era’s amply noted liberationist tendencies in political philosophy and actual reform, it was precisely during this period that the genius figure achieved prominence as a member of a kind of supra-human elite with godlike capacities that seemed to surpass ordinary human reason. That may have been gratifying to the early living exemplars—almost exclusively white men of European origin—though genius, like sainthood, was most often conferred after the fact. Still, it is from contemporary descriptions that we inherit the designation of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, for example, as a genius in letters, Isaac Newton or Benjamin Franklin as geniuses in natural science, or Napoleon Bonaparte as a genius in statecraft and war. This novel meaning of genius as a human individual of original and exalted powers was also, in the eighteenth century, extended backward in time, bestowed upon the likes of Homer or William Shakespeare, neither of whom would have recognized the label in its new form, however convinced the latter may have been of his “ingenuity” and “genius” for playmaking.⁷

But it was really only during the modern period, the nineteenth century and continuing into the twentieth, that geniuses acquired the full range and complement of associations they now most commonly share. The genius became in this period a human paragon—unique, exceptional, and one of a kind—and yet somehow multiplying in ever-greater numbers and across an expanding set of domains. The proliferation was first apparent in terms of Romantic definitions of the individual, and especially the artist, as beyond human typicality. That view endorsed a strong sense of individual differentiation, indeed of individualism as essential to the human personality—any personality. But geniuses were deemed more individual than ordinary human beings, less likely to think and act by established conventions and norms, genuinely original and so often eccentric, or even mad.⁸ Geniuses were imagined as lawgivers and lawmakers (at times lawbreakers) who challenged established authorities in art and thought and were believed to follow a higher law. And they were driven by powerful energies and an intense capacity for sustained concentration and labor.

As if to make genius indelible, beyond any human ability to acquire or alter it, nature was assigned a fundamental role in governing human experience (and determining human aptitude). That designation of genius as deeply natural grounded it within each person who had it, or supplied him (typically) with an intensity of knowledge from without, as in Wordsworth’s “impulse from a vernal wood.” And it was precisely because of their engagement with nature, with universal truths based in materiality, that many more scientists joined artists as the kinds of people thought most likely to personify genius, just as they increasingly played a role—in fields such as phrenology,

craniometry, statistics, and medical psychology—in identifying its alleged presence. Whereas artists broadly conceived (poets, musicians, painters, etc.) captured truths about the human soul, scientists saw into the tiniest constituents of life and across the vast expanse of the universe. Together, they could be imagined as visionaries and prophets, revealers of wonder. At the same time, those working in the human sciences—philosophy or social theory—might lay claim to such prerogatives. Nietzsche would be hailed as a prophet, or, as Engels said of Marx, a “genius.” Statesmen, finally, could be styled (or style themselves) on the model of Napoleon as visionaries and “artists,” who might shape from human material works of imagination, originality, and sublime and transcendent power.

Such emerging cultural ideals helped to give genius, and geniuses, a commanding presence in nineteenth-century Europe, as well as the neo-Europes created by imperialism abroad. Even before the cults surrounding the British Lake Poets, and thereafter resounding in the reverence for cultural figures and virtuosi such as Byron, Beethoven, Goethe, Verdi, Delacroix, Darwin, Hugo, and Wagner, the ideal of the genius figure merged with that of the celebrity, who was also an eighteenth-century invention.⁹ The hundreds of thousands of well-wishers and enthusiasts who attended Victor Hugo’s funeral in 1885 are just one indication of the extraordinary outpouring of reverence for publicly recognized “geniuses,” whose lives and deaths were followed closely in the press, encouraging a trade in “relics” and memorabilia, along with “pilgrimages” to select sites of memory.¹⁰ Such veneration, whether among the living or the special dead, carried over into the first half of the twentieth century, when contemporaries were quick to compare the worship of genius to a “religion,” replete with martyrs such as Van Gogh, saints such as Einstein, and wizards such as Edison.¹¹ And though, after World War II, the religious enthusiasm for great men was steadily called into question, a figure such as Picasso could still pay his restaurant bills with a sketch. Genius commanded privilege.

Arguably, it does so still—witness the adulation heaped on Stephen Hawking or Steven Jobs. Yet the gap between celebrity and genius, always close, is now closer than ever, with less and less differentiation between the two. At the same time, the field of possibility has widened well beyond the domains of high culture, science, and statecraft that once confined it. Geniuses now bask under that designation in every possible realm of human endeavor, from cooking, to sports and rock and roll, to the selling of goods on the Internet. The trend is quite obviously an aspect of a new willingness to democratize human excellence, to make exceptionalism typical, as if everyone were a genius at something. Never mind that this is paradoxical—what was once considered the prized possession of a natural human elite is now imagined to be within the grasp of all.

It is easy enough to mock the process. Already in the 1950s the philosopher Hannah Arendt was decrying what she saw as the “commercialization and vulgarization” of genius, and it is difficult today not to laugh when genius is presented in a thriving self-help literature as an aspirational goal (Learn

to think like da Vinci!).¹² To be sure, the tendency to define genius broadly and democratically is laudable insofar as it has facilitated the recognition of extraordinary achievement in overlooked, maligned, or marginalized groups, especially those who have struggled against the historical exclusions of racism and sexism. Yet, to make everyone a genius would be the end of the idea. Do we face a future, to paraphrase Andy Warhol, when all might enjoy 15 minutes of genius? By that point, clearly, we would be ready for a new term.

In order to help make sense of these developments, this book aims to explore the changing fortunes of genius since its self-conscious birth in the eighteenth century. It aims to do so in new ways. For although the literature on genius is extensive, too rarely have scholars considered the subject from a position of historical awareness, let alone historical knowledge.¹³ On the one hand, social and natural scientists since the nineteenth century have sought to identify the enduring properties of genius, searching (largely in vain) for its markers and traces in everything from cranial size to the intelligence quotient. Such investigations persist, as witnessed by the ongoing fascination with studying the brains of luminaries such as Einstein, while social psychologists continue to study the qualities and correlations of eminence and elite performance.¹⁴ Scholars of literature, the arts, and aesthetics, on the other hand, though once concerned to identify genius and geniuses as the creators of timeless *chefs d'oeuvres*, have in recent decades been more interested in toppling genius as an arbiter of aesthetic distinction, unmasking its ideological character and exposing its myths.¹⁵ Though often instructive, this literature has tended, with some exceptions, to eschew a broader historical analysis of genius in favor of exposing specific facets of its use around salient individuals or themes.¹⁶ Finally, there persists to this day a celebratory literature that has accompanied genius since the eighteenth century. Seeking to glorify rather than to analyze or explain, such writings seldom bother to question the category they seek to promote.

The chapters of this volume, by contrast, build on recent work examining the history of genius in order to bring greater historical awareness to the complex and often contested ways the category has been deployed in the modern era.¹⁷ The volume includes ten essays, which together span the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries, and is organized into three chronologically distinct sections that examine the changing meanings of genius over time. Collectively the essays bring to light a revealing and persistent paradox: that the conceptual category of genius, understood as a natural and privileged form of human difference constituting a new kind of human elite, emerged alongside and often in conjunction with modern democratic societies that frequently claimed legitimacy on the basis of some form of human equality. As with all historical paradoxes, this demands explanation, which the essays of the volume undertake in a series of focused, evocative case studies.

The book's first section concentrates on definitions of genius in the age of Atlantic revolutions, the period of the modern genius's birth. At that time, multiple reforming trends called into question established ways of defining human beings as different from one another in order to organize them,

accordingly, into hierarchies. Were aristocrats really superior to commoners by blood? Was there really such a thing as a natural slave? How could one understand the differences between the sexes and between peoples of different “races”? While the movements to abolish the slave trade and emancipate slaves, and the political insurgencies that climaxed with revolutions in North America, France, the Caribbean, and “Latin” America did not all conclude with the establishment of modern democracies, their legacies contributed to that longer history. But how large a contribution was it? Historians have long pointed out that, beginning in the eighteenth century, modern liberal regimes showed themselves particularly adept at defining “liberal exclusions” to the rights and privileges accorded to others. Women and people of color, among other disenfranchised groups, were held, on the basis of a spurious new science and anthropology, to be less equal than others, thus calling into question the apparent self-evidence of the claim that all were created equal. The category of genius, which sought to identify in dramatic terms the disparity in natural human endowments, is useful in this context as a means to further identify the extent to which revolutionary politics altered conceptions of human inequality in the American and French republics. Joyce E. Chaplin thus considers “The Problem of Genius in the Age of Slavery,” examining how the word was applied to new world individuals, at first as a kind of incredulous admission that they, of all people, might be extraordinary, and then withdrawn once the designation threatened to appear as an actual compliment, least of all with respect to slaves or former slaves, and by implication others of non-European ancestry. Nathalie Heinich, in her chapter “Genius versus Democracy: Excellence and Singularity in Postrevolutionary France,” also establishes that utilizing the label and concept of genius was logical in postrevolutionary France. Yet doing so clearly revealed what the revolution had not accomplished. Finally, John Carson examines “Equality, Inequality, and Difference: Genius as Problem and Possibility in American Political/Scientific Discourse,” tracing how deployment of “genius” within two professionalizing communities in nineteenth-century the United States, those of politicians and scientists, registered unease with what the concept implied about the postrevolutionary republic.

In the next section of the book, the authors analyze nineteenth-century conceptions of genius, with particular attention to the role of science and to the challenges of feminists. In “Genius and Obsession: Do You Have to Be Mad to Be Smart?” Lennard J. Davis tackles the persistent efforts to link positive and negative forms of human exceptionalism, identifying the origins of this shotgun marriage in nineteenth-century sciences of the human mind and body. Janet Browne analyzes one particularly famous proponent of scientific definitions of genius—as themselves genealogies—in her “Inspiration to Perspiration: Francis Galton’s *Hereditary Genius* in Victorian Context,” which pays special attention to the class- and gender-specific assumptions about how talent ran through families, though somehow unevenly, lodging with particular strength in some (including Galton, in his generous self-estimation), but

finding no purchase in others. Not everyone agreed. Lucy Delap focuses on the exclusion of women from concepts of genius and on the radical redefinitions that modern feminists accordingly insisted on to reshape the concept in her “‘Genius must do the scullery work of the world’: New Women, Feminists, and Genius, circa 1880–1920.”

Chapters in the final section of the book concentrate on the twentieth- and twenty-first-century debates over who was or could be a genius. Julia Barbara Köhne, in “The Cult of the Genius in Germany and Austria at the Dawn of the Twentieth Century,” examines genius idolatry in the German-speaking lands before and after World War I, a culturally and historically specific fascination that seems, in retrospect, ominous and prophetic. Irina Sirotkina, in her “Cultivating Genius in a Bolshevik Country,” pursues the western concept of genius into the postrevolutionary Soviet Union where, no less than in postrevolutionary America or France, the idea both reinforced the status of certain heroic figures yet warred with the claims of a self-announced egalitarian state and society. David Bates traces a possibly even more radical affront to humanity. His chapter, “Insight in the Age of Automation,” considers how modern definitions of that quality, as a peculiarly rapid and penetrating form of cognition, have been conditioned in large part in relation to artificial intelligence; no longer is the superhuman demonic, but instead, robotic. In the concluding chapter, Darrin M. McMahon’s “Genius and Evil,” the author examines the once widely disseminated contention that genius was somehow beyond good and evil. That, ultimately Nietzschean, contention existed well before Friedrich Nietzsche, and it would have a disturbing trajectory afterward, as incisively analyzed in the work of Thomas Mann.

What does this book not cover or, to put it another way, where might future research on the history of the concept of genius be fruitfully extended? It became clear in organizing and editing this volume that the concept of genius has been (and is being) much better studied in relation to the nations of the global West. On the face of it, and according to the dialectical tension between genius and democracy examined here, there is a certain logic to this pattern. Just as forms of democracy and arguments over political and social inequalities have dominated scholarship on western nations in a way that is less apparent for other parts of the world, so it would make sense that a subject like genius would have loomed less large in non-western historiographies. Certainly, the etymological history of genius, with the word’s classical origins in the ancient Mediterranean, would indicate a birthplace for the concept, as well as its persistence in those societies claiming cultural descent from Greece and Rome. And it may be that the emergence of the concept of genius in the eighteenth century was related to religious and economic developments specific to the West, where it developed in tandem not only with (and as an antidote to) certain forms of disenchantment, but also with the dictates of commercial society.¹⁸ As scholars have long recognized, genius—with its emphasis on creative originality—was a concept particularly well suited to buttressing emergent notions of intellectual copyright.¹⁹

And yet these same conjectures beg new questions. Future research might, for instance, draw comparisons with the understandings of divine protection (and inspiration) that extended well beyond the classical world to Africa and much of the ancient Near East, if not farther still. The old correlation between the West and modernity, moreover, of which increasing social and political equality has been a part, is itself suspicious. It may be an artifact of historiography rather than a fixed truth of history. Given that a steady and straightforward trajectory toward human equality is no longer assumed for the West (as this volume's essays themselves make clear), it is possible that nations and cultures that had even less linear histories of democracy were, nevertheless, incubators of concepts similar to that of genius. In any case, virtually all societies possess conceptions of intellectual, artistic, or inventive/creative heroism. In what ways are they comparable to the western paragon of genius, and how did they evolve in different social, religious, and economic contexts? The circulation of western ideas of genius to other parts of the world, moreover, and the subsequent patterns of cultural uptake, criticism, rejection, or modification, is a subject ripe for further exploration. It is our hope that future scholarship on the category of genius will take up some of these unexplored possibilities.

Finally, a word of thanks is due to the Huntington Library in Pasadena, California, and particularly to its successive directors of research, Robert C. Ritchie and Steve Hindle, who kindly allowed us to convene the majority of this volume's contributors for two days of fascinating discussions in the spring of 2012. It became very apparent to us there that the subject of genius has the capacity to stimulate passionate interest and exchange. We hope the essays in this volume will do the same.

Notes

1. Jacques Derrida, *Geniuses, Genealogies, Genres, & Genius: The Secrets of the Archive*, trans. Beverley Bie Brahic (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 3–4.
2. Lewis M. Terman, ed., *Genetic Studies of Genius*, 5 vols. (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1925–1959), 1: v.
3. The seminal study is Edgar Zilsel's *Die Entstehung des Geniebegriffes: Ein Beitrag zur Ideengeschichte der Antike und des Frühkapitalismus* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1926). See also Penelope Murray, ed., *Genius: The History of an Idea* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989); Norbert Elias, *Mozart: Portrait of a Genius*, ed. Michael Schröter (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Tia DeNora, *Beethoven and the Construction of Genius: Musical Politics in Vienna, 1792–1803* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Jochen Schmidt, *Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens in der deutschen Literatur, Philosophie und Politik, 1750–1945*, 2 vols. (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag, 2004). Most recently, the two editors of this volume have published studies on the subject: Joyce E. Chaplin, *The First Scientific American: Benjamin Franklin and the Pursuit of Genius* (New York: Basic Books, 2006); Darrin M. McMahon, *Divine Fury: A History of Genius* (New York: Basic Books, 2013).
4. The story of the transmutation of the ancient *genii* into Christian and modern forms of spiritual guardians is told in McMahon, *Divine Fury*, esp. chs. 1–2. See also Jane Chance Nitzsche, *The Genius Figure in Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), and Jean-Patrice Boudet, Philippe Faure, and Christian Renoux,

- eds., *De Socrate à Tintin: Anges gardiens et démons familiaux de l'Antiquité à nos jours* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2011).
5. Robert Cawdrey, *A Table Alphabeticall of Hard Usual English Words* (1604), a facsimile reproduction with an introduction by Robert A. Peters (Gainesville, FL: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1966), 61.
 6. On *ingenium* and the fusion of *genius* and *ingenium*, see Zilsel, *Die Entstehung des Geniebegriffes*, 265–96; Harald Weinrich, “Ingenium,” in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. Joachim Ritter, 13 vols. (Basel: Schwabe, 1971–2007), 4: 36–63, and the discussion in the text and appendix of *ingenium* in Patricia Emison’s *Creating the “Divine” Artist: From Dante to Michelangelo* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).
 7. See Chaplin, *First Scientific American*, 1–3, 134–36; 342; Fred Inglis, *A Short History of Celebrity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 37–73; McMahon, *Divine Fury*, ch. 3, and Jonathan Bates, *The Genius of Shakespeare* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), esp. ch. 6 (“The Original Genius”).
 8. References to the extensive literature on the perceived connection between genius and madness will be found in the essays that follow. A somewhat dated, but still essential, place to begin for the modern period is George Becker, *The Mad Genius Controversy: A Study in the Sociology of Deviance* (London: Sage, 1978).
 9. Antoine Lilti, *Figures publiques: Aux origines de la célébrité (1750–1850)* (Paris: Fayard, 2014), and David Higgins, *Romantic Genius and the Literary Magazine: Biography, Celebrity, and Politics* (Milton Park, UK: Routledge, 2005).
 10. McMahon, *Divine Fury*, ch. 5. On the fascination with the brains of geniuses, see Michael Hagner’s excellent *Geniale Gehirne: Zur Geschichte der Elitegehirnforschung* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch, 2007).
 11. Edgar Zilsel, *Die Geniereligion: Ein kritischer Versuch über das moderne Persönlichkeitsideal*, intro. Johann Dvorak (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1990 [1917]); Nathalie Heinich, *The Glory of Van Gogh: An Anthropology of Admiration*, trans. Paul Leduc Browne (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996); Julia Barbara Köhne, *Geniekult in Geisteswissenschaften und Literaturen um 1900 und seine filmischen Adaptionen* (Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 2014).
 12. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 210–11.
 13. For a broad overview of scholarly (and other) attempts to study genius, see Darrin M. McMahon, “Where Have All the Geniuses Gone?,” *The Chronicle Review*, October 21, 2013.
 14. See, for example, Hans Jürgen Eysenck, *Genius: The Natural History of Creativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), or the prolific body of work on genius and creativity by the psychologist Dean Keith Simonton.
 15. A notable exception is Harold Bloom, *Genius: A Mosaic of One Hundred Exemplary Creative Minds* (New York: Warner Books, 2002).
 16. Noteworthy examples of this literature include Christine Battersby, *Gender and Genius: Towards a Feminist Aesthetics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989); Andrew Elfenbein, *Romantic Genius: The Prehistory of a Homosexual Role* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Barbara Will, *Gertrude Stein and the Problem of “Genius”* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 2000); Peter Kivy, *The Possessor and the Possessed: Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, and the Idea of Musical Genius* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001).
 17. In addition to the historical works already cited, see Kathleen Kete, *Making Way for Genius: The Aspiring Self in France from the Old Regime to the New* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012); Eliyahu Stern, *The Genius: Elijah of Vilna and the Making of Modern Judaism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013); Patricia Fara, *Newton: The Making of a Genius* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).
 18. For a discussion of the role of commerce, see John Hope Mason, *The Value of Creativity: The Origins and Emergence of a Modern Belief* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), esp. chs. 4–6. On commerce and religion, see McMahon, *Divine Fury*, esp. 5–6, 71–75.
 19. See, for example, Mark Rose, *Authors and Owners: The Invention of Copyright* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983); Martha Woodmansee, “The Genius and

the Copyright: Economic and Legal Conditions of the Emergence of the 'Author,'" *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 17 (1984): 425–48; Zeynep Tenger and Paul Trolander, "Genius versus Capital: Eighteenth-Century Theories of Genius and Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations," *Modern Language Quarterly* 55 (1994): 169–89; Carla Hesse, "The Rise of Intellectual Property, 700 B.C.–A.D. 2000: An Idea in the Balance," *Daedalus* 131 (2002): 26–45.