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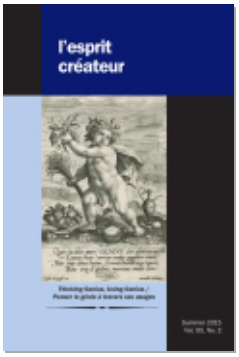

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GENIUSES ABOUND IN THE CULTURAL IMAGINARY, so that, when attempting to define the quality that distinguishes them, the wisest course often seems to be to cite famous and generally acknowledged instances. In face of the question "What is genius?" the immediate response is to provide examples.[1] Each case constitutes a *hapax*, a singularity, an exception that stands out from the commonality of the collective. But at the same time, amongst the famous figures who populate our pantheons, it is always possible to identify "*a* genius," even if it is impossible to define exactly what "genius" in general is. These examples of genius illustrate the values that are generally associated with this notion, amongst which originality is undoubtedly one of the most important. If genius has become a commonplace in our imaginary, genius itself, by contrast, never expresses received ideas, and it is this radical distance from common thinking that makes it possible to recognize and distinguish it. In this sense, genius is always para-doxical, which is to say that its ideas are to one side of the *doxa*, outside the bounds of received opinion. The attribution of genius can, of course, always be challenged: the genius of a particular individual does not always meet with consensus; but the existence of genius itself as a principle of distinction and excellence, a source of innovation and originality, an example to be imitated or revered, is rarely called into question. Exemplary of itself, genius is equally exemplary for the communities that recognize it as an exception.

My aim here is to explore the way this paradoxical function of genius became established, by tracing its history back to the moment when, in early modernity, the notion underwent a semantic shift whereby genius was no longer a particular characteristic (a given individual "has genius") and became an attribute qualifying the individual as a whole ("this person is a genius"). This history will seek to bring to light the factors involved in this tension between genius as exemplary and genius as exceptional.

The opposition between genius and the commonality has not always been as clear-cut as this, nor has it always formed the basis of its value. What is now understood by "genius" (with or without examples) is the result of a gradual process whose most significant moments can be identified by recourse to lexicographical history. Two definitions will demonstrate the extent of these transformations. The first is the one provided in 1606 by Jean Nicot in his *Thrésor de la langue françoise tant ancienne que moderne* where

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genius is defined in minimal terms as "The disposition or tendency of an individual."[2] This first definition does not include any idea of excellence associated with what is a principle of individuation, which makes it possible to distinguish individuals from each other, but not to distinguish an individual from the collective.

At the other extreme, in his *Néologie* of 1801, Louis-Sébastien Mercier writes: "Genius: A mind superior to that of other men: but by how much? That is the question." The very fact that a relatively ancient term[3] appears in a dictionary of neologisms indicates that it has undergone a shift in usage. At the time Mercier was writing, the issue is not that genius is a matter of gradation, as he suggests, but of *essence*. The real question is rather "To be or not to be a genius." Mercier, who described himself as a "literary heretic,"[4] deploys a particularly abrasive irony with regard to the principle of the superiority of genius in an age when, in the context of the Revolution, the existence of natural distinctions between individuals is being strongly challenged. At the end of the eighteenth century, genius has become synonymous with a superior individual: it is this new usage that Mercier is interested in, and he wants both to record it and to deconstruct it.

Exemplarity and the commonplace

The emergence of this new use of the term genius occurs under circumstances where exemplarity and the political function of commonplaces are being questioned. This questioning disrupts the structures of symbolic hierarchies and undermines the importance accorded to the past and to cultural inheritance in the formation of communities. On the one hand, by renegotiating the value of examples, it is the function of imitation in the production of knowledge that is challenged. This is because the re-evaluation of example does not just affect its didactic function, but also, more generally, the authority of ethical and esthetic models inherited from antiquity, an issue that was crystallized by the Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns at the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth.[5] On the other hand, the devaluing of commonplaces significantly transforms the relation between convention and innovation. The issue is not that of "received ideas" as Flaubert understood them when he took one of Chamfort's maxims as the epigraph to his *Dictionnaire des idées reçues*, according to which "One can safely bet that all publicly received ideas, all established conventions, are mere foolishness, because these are convenient to the majority."[6] Prior to this devaluation, commonplaces or "topoi" constituted shared "places of memory," contributing to the creation of a "commonality of meaning and value."[7] But over the course

Figure 1. *Genio populi romani*, roman coinage, © Trustees of the British Museum.

of the early modern period the function of this cultural category underwent a process of "atrophy"[8] in favor of the innovative faculty attributed to genius. Thereafter, genius becomes an exemplary symbolic topos whose virtue consists principally in giving new currency to old commonplaces. It is by means of this refashioning that genius makes it possible for values from the past to have currency in the present and for contemporaries to adopt them and establish their place in history around this community of meaning. Thanks to the mediating figure of genius, ancient examples are not so much forgotten as reintroduced into circulation in new forms.

Coinage

Coins provide excellent testimony of the relation between genius and commonplaces. Many coins in the Roman world bore images of the genius of Rome, based on the old sense of Latin *genius* which had the role of divine tutelary spirit and guardian (Figure 1).[9]

This practice was reintroduced in revolutionary France, where the images of the genius of the nation also adorned the currency minted under the Republic, in accordance with the neo-classical tastes of the period. This revival of a practice dating from antiquity indicates a clear intention to adopt the qualities with which it was associated: republican virtue, military prowess, justice, equity, civic freedom, etc. It amounts to a recasting of the values connected with the genius of the Roman people so that they might once again acquire currency under the French Republic. Roman genius, though worn thin as a result

FIGURE 2. French coinage, 1906 (1871), after the "Louis constitutionnel" engraved by Augustin Dupré in 1792, © National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History.

of the multiple uses to which it had been put, was refashioned so as to become the genius of France, as sculpted by Augustin Dupré in 1792 (Figure 2).

In the vocabulary of numismatics, "wear" refers to the erosion of coins caused by their circulation and to the consequent loss of weight in precious metal. Preventing wear on commonplaces and ensuring them new currency in history is precisely the role attributed to the modern figure of genius.

The genius quarrels

This role is demonstrated by Charles Perrault in the preface to his *Parallèle des Anciens et des Modernes.* This defender of the Moderns declares that his aim is not to convert the supporters of the Ancients to the cause he defends, since, in his view, this would be uncivil:

> It would be the same as if one were to propose a general devaluation of currency to people who had all their wealth in the form of cash, and no capital: what would become of their treasury of commonplaces and commentaries? All these riches would cease to have currency in their existing form; they would have to be recast and minted afresh, which genius alone can do, and these people do not possess such genius.[10]

Perrault's aim is to stigmatize his enemies by portraying them as pedants chock full of "commonplaces" and "commentaries" who exploit knowledge

that they do not own (because it is produced exclusively for exchange and circulation) and that masks an essential lack, since they do not possess land that produces wealth of its own. According to this comparison, the partisans of the Ancients are portrayed in social terms as miserly bourgeois who accumulate wealth as if it had inherent value (use value), whereas the supporters of the Moderns are gentlemen who possess within themselves a capacity for production (not simply designed for exchange) that makes them valuable by their very nature. It is best to produce from within oneself, rather than pointlessly accumulate wealth that belongs to others, even if one then polishes it by means of commentary. However, this production is not described as a form of creation, but as a "recasting."

"Genius alone," in Perrault's words, used as an absolute, is a new meaning of the term in 1688 when the first volume of the *Parallèle* was published. However, by using it in his polemic against the Ancients, he is relying on a notion that was fairly widely shared, at least among his readers. This is not the *genius* of Roman mythology, nor exactly the *ingenium* of rhetoric, but a refashioning of old categories to serve a modern argument. The genius invoked by Perrault is itself the result of a refashioning of old usage, and its virtue is precisely to refashion and recast former usage. In numismatic terms, genius is the *die* used to stamp value on the face of coins. This genius, according to Perrault, is essentially modern, in so far as the "general devaluation" he mentions demonstrates clearly that the value ascribed to the example of the Ancients no longer has currency.

Nevertheless, the birth of modern genius is not the unique prerogative of the detractors of the Ancients. A site of tension and negotiation, genius is a sufficiently well-recognized notion for it to be used as an argument in a literary quarrel, while at the same time it is sufficiently malleable for it to become the object of redefinition and to adapt to the different contexts in which it is used. For a defender of the Ancients like Boileau, genius is not so much a quality peculiar to an individual as it is an authority designed to be kept at a distance. To be exemplary, genius must be admired from afar, as he states in his *Traité du sublime*:

> Those great Men whom we propose to imitate, by presenting themselves in this manner to our imagination, serve us as beacons and raise our souls almost as high as the idea we have conceived of their genius, especially if we impress the following upon ourselves: What would Homer or Demosthenes think of what I am saying if they could hear me, and how would they judge me?[11]

In this way, Boileau demonstrates that what the partisans of the Moderns call dull imitation proceeds from a much more complex scenario:

> Indeed, we do not consider that we have a mediocre prize to compete for, if we can imagine that we will, quite seriously, have to answer for our writings before such a celestial tribunal [that of the "great Men" of antiquity], and on a stage where we have heroes such as these for judges and witnesses. (Boileau 362)

This tribunal of Ancients is associated with a dual function whose effects must be viewed simultaneously. First, this tribunal possesses a judicial function, which allows the productions of modernity to be submitted to presumed judgment and which presupposes a higher authority. But this tribunal also possesses an exemplary function that is grounded in emulation. The qualities attributed to the examples are ascribed principally to the person who conceives of himself as submitting his work to the tribunal of antiquity. Boileau's image of this tribunal underscores very clearly the constructed character of the figure of "genius" that allows modern authors to raise themselves to the level of the idea that they have of it.

Through this instrumentalizing of genius in the Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns where Perrault and Boileau were the most exemplary antagonists, one can begin to see the outlines of a tension between contradictory paradigms such as innovation and convention, imitation and invention, which it becomes the function of genius to resolve.

Establishing distance

It is also in this context that the notion of genius shifts from a regime of "having" to one of "being." "Genius" traditionally designated a "character" or a "skill": it referred to a tendency or a natural disposition, an individual aptitude that allows a person to do well what others do only with difficulty. For example, one can speak of a person having a genius for mathematics or poetry, etc. But during the Enlightenment, as the result of a metonymic displacement, the notion of genius also began to refer to the particular excellence of an individual. In addition to saying that a given individual *has* genius, it became possible also to say that he *is* a genius. The lexicographer Féraud testifies to this relatively recent usage when he writes in his *Dictionnaire critique de la langue française* of 1788 that "*Genius* […] is sometimes taken for *the person who possesses genius*."[12]

Genius is no longer just a predicate: it becomes an attribute that designates the overall condition of an individual and his intrinsic worth. From this point onwards, it is used in an absolute sense: genius is no longer simply a fortunate disposition that allows one to exercise successfully a particular technique. It is also a matter of distinction. In his *L'art de connaître les hommes par la physionomie* dating from the 1770s, Lavater registers the dis-

tinction between the having and the being of genius, by establishing the following opposition:

> Having a friend who is rich and wise, who can assist us with his advice in all our difficulties, and who offers his help in all our needs; or else being rich oneself, and in a position to provide for the needs of others, being wise oneself, and able to advise others: this, in my view, is the difference between having genius and being a genius.[13]

This discrimination reflects a repositioning that aims not only to make genius a distinctive value, but above all to make distinction the essence of its value. This lexicographical repositioning, on which the new usage depends, is brought about in part through the establishment of a difference between what belongs to talent and what to genius, the two having hitherto been regarded as synonymous. This difference is accentuated as a means of distinguishing genius from ordinary individuals. For example, in Marmontel's *Éléments de littérature*:

> A man of talent thinks and says things that a host of other men could have thought and said; but he presents them more advantageously and selects them with greater taste; he arranges them with more art, he expresses them with more refinement or grace; the man of genius, by contrast, has a way of seeing, feeling and thinking that is unique to him […]. An ordinary man looks without seeing; the man of genius sees so rapidly that it is almost without looking. If he is the first to mine a subject, he exhausts its richest seams and leaves only a few veins. If he takes hold of familiar subject, he will penetrate it so deeply that a field which seemed exhausted becomes fertile territory.[14]

Talent is nothing more than technical excellence, whereas genius becomes the general excellence of a person that is exclusive to him and pertains to his personal resources. The distinctiveness of genius is what belongs to him and him alone, to the exclusion of anyone else. For Marmontel the distinction that constitutes genius is based on an image-repertoire of resources. Mining and agriculture emerge as the two principal activities of genius: the inventions of art and science on the one hand, and the renewal of the legacy from the past on the other. This image-repertoire of resources associated with the new figure of genius also makes it possible to highlight its essential qualities, which are based partly on the usefulness of its creations and partly on the uniqueness of its outlook on the world.

The distinction between genius and talent indicates very clearly the importance of establishing a distance between genius and ordinary people. However, this distinction is a spatial separation and not a break from the commonality. The instituting of an admiring distance between the genius and ordinary people raises a question about the correct distance and the appropriate degree

of spatial separation. As with any representation, genius needs to be admired from a distance that is neither too close nor too remote.

Originality

In order to understand the correct distance that genius should maintain in relation to ordinary people, it is worth examining the ambivalence of the adjective "original" before it became one of the chief characteristics of genius. This is the aspect that Féraud stresses in his *Dictionnaire critique*: "Original. […] Almost always used pejoratively as a noun, and the adjective is used in preference as a means of expressing praise; an original author is a man of genius, but an original is a bizarre and singular man (Féraud, "Original"). This view is corroborated by the entry for "originalité" in Louis Millin's *Dictionnaire des beaux-arts* at the very end of the eighteenth century:

> Originality: When an artist paints well, scorning to follow slavishly in the footsteps of others, when the particular character that he imprints on his works becomes useful to art, his originality is praiseworthy, and even approaches genius. But when he departs from the common path only to go astray, when he paints less well than the great masters, while priding himself on not doing as they did, his originality is a vice and takes the name of peculiarity.[15]

The bad part of originality is a peculiar originality, not just because it strays from the common path, but also because it is a sterile originality that is of no use to art. By contrast, praiseworthy originality approaches genius because it constitutes a genuine origin and opens up a new path.

It is now possible to conceptualize the regime of oppositions established around the ambivalent notions of genius and originality. The originality of genius is without example but is nonetheless exemplary; it matters to posterity, and it is a source of imitation and emulation. The originality of oddity, by contrast, falls flat and has no followers; it is an origin without effects, a failed origin. The value of this new figure of genius established during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is based not only on the distance from ordinary people that it establishes, the exception that it represents in relation to the common rule, but also on its exemplarity. Genius is at once exceptional and exemplary.[16]

The political uses of genius

This exemplary function of genius is the basis of its political importance, which becomes a central issue in Enlightenment thinking. Indeed, several aspects of the political function of genius are developed in the *Encyclopédie* of Diderot and d'Alembert, notably in the *Discours préliminaire* and the entry "Encyclopédie." In Saint-Lambert's eponymous article, he demonstrates that

the figure of genius belongs to the progressivist paradigm defended by the authors of the *Encyclopédie*: "Genius hastens the progress of Philosophy through the happiest and least expected discoveries: it flies up like an eagle towards a luminous truth that is the source of a thousand further truths towards which the timid crowd of prudent observers will crawl in its wake."[17] It is by virtue of his superiority over the rest of mankind and of his ability to see further, to create new combinations in the domain of knowledge, that the genius can hasten the march of progress and save his contemporaries from the weight of convention: "leaping beyond the past and the present, his insights illuminate the future: he runs ahead of his times which cannot follow him; he leaves far behind him the mind that criticizes him with good reason, but which in its steady advance never departs from the uniformity of nature."

The political role of genius is also the subject of the discourse that Chamfort submitted to the Académie de Marseille in 1767 and which won him the prize that year. The title of the discourse was "How much does the genius of great writers influence the spirit of its age?" According to Chamfort, two forms of power govern society: political power, which is supported by means of force, and the influence of genius, which is a much gentler but more durable power:

> Just as the action of genius has no limits in its duration, so it has none in its reach. An invisible, subtle element, no obstacle can intercept its effects; it penetrates from one man to another as a magnet penetrates bodies; it encompasses the entire human race and redirects the will without violence. The cause of this alteration is often not recognized by the pilot who steers the ship; but it is perceived by the philosopher who observes it.[18]

It is therefore pointless for political power to seek to deny the influence of genius or to constrain it by force, since genius is not a matter of human choice, but of natural distinction: "This sovereignty that the man of genius exercises over the human crowd is therefore not of our making: it is a law of nature, as ancient as the law of the strongest, often more powerful, and always more respectable" (Chamfort 73).

In Chamfort's discourse, Montesquieu is the exemplary representative of genius. Even though the genius of Montesquieu was not recognized by those in political power, the influence of *L'esprit des lois* can already be felt, despite the resistance of royal power:

> Kings, beware of believing that you reign alone over nations and that your subjects obey only you. All the apparatus of power is gathered gleaming around your throne; you hold in your hands the tiller of the ship of state; but it is a ship borne on an inconstant and moving sea, the spirit of the nation and the will of man. (Chamfort 86)

The unifying power of genius enlists the will of men because it is closely linked to what Chamfort calls "the spirit of the nation," which also goes by the name of the "genius of the nation."[19] As a result of this connection, not only is genius a principle of distinction in individuals, it also serves to reveal the spirit of a nation, where its exemplarity acts as a lever:

> If you are unable to master the power and direction of this inescapable and insensible current, it will carry the ship away from the goal the pilot has set. This current acts in both calm and stormy weather; and the scale of its imperceptible effects at work in every moment is revealed too late, when the ship is almost on the rocks. And if it goes in a direction contrary to the one you seek to impose upon the government, who can stop it or alter it? Is it power? […] No: only genius is able, without disruption or pain, to assemble and reunite the separate members of the body politic. It is through genius that the scepter in your hands can become a lever of infinite power with which you can lift an entire nation. (Chamfort 86–87)

Chamfort's discourse demonstrates very clearly how the increased prestige of the figure of genius becomes a national issue in the eighteenth century. But he also shows how genius serves to reconfigure the hierarchies of political power, by reminding his readers that the influence exerted by the exemplarity of genius is more effective than the exercise of power through force.

The misuses of genius and historical decadence

The political function of genius is also found in Condillac's *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines* (1746), where it is the opportune encounter between men of genius and the genius of their language, the perfect fit between them and their times, that explains why certain ages stand out in history:

> When a genius has discovered the character of a language, he gives it forceful expression and upholds it in all his writings. With this support, other talented men, who before were unable to grasp that character on their own, now clearly perceive it and, following his example, express themselves in it, each in his particular genre. The language is gradually enriched with many new turns of phrase which, by their relation to its character, develop it more and more, and analogy becomes like a torch whose light constantly grows brighter to enlighten a greater number of writers. Then everybody naturally focuses on those who stand out, with the result that their taste becomes the prevailing taste of the nation. Each writer brings to his own subject matter the discernment he has borrowed from them; new talents spring up; all the arts assume their proper character; and superior artists arise in all genres.[20]

For Condillac, the exemplarity of genius is revealed in the domain of language. This exemplarity is further reflected on a historical plane, which makes it possible to explain the phenomenon of *translatio imperii*. However, an examination of the zenith of civilizations also presupposes an analysis of their

decline, and here again it is the influence or the exemplarity of genius that is the cause. Once the genius of a language has been fully realized, once a nation has produced all kinds of geniuses in every genre, what remains for the geniuses who succeed them? In attempting to be original, they become merely bizarre, and as they are geniuses, their example leads the nation into ruin and decay:

> When a language has original writers in every genre, then the more genius a writer has, the more readily he sees obstacles to surpassing them. To equal them does not satisfy his ambition; like them, he wants to be the first in his genre. Thus he tries a new path. But since all the styles analogous to the character of the language and to his own have already been used by his predecessors, he has no choice but to keep his distance from the analogy. And so in order to be original he is obliged to contribute to the ruin of a language whose progress a century sooner he would have hastened. (Condillac, 266 [193])

What Condillac indicates here is that genius is not just a question of distance based in admiration, but of temporality, *kairos*, the opportune moment. If he arrives too late, the genius becomes a bad example, and for the nation as a whole this leads to a bad use of genius; genius ceases to be the origin of progress in the arts and the sciences, becoming instead the cause of a corruption of taste. There is a time for genius, precisely because his destiny is linked to that of the community to which he belongs and which he exemplifies.

In sum, over the course of the eighteenth century, genius becomes the object of a major repositioning in the symbolic landscape. This repositioning is visible first in linguistic usage, where for some, such as Mercier, the term genius becomes a neologism. This new usage is primarily a paradoxical revalorizing of the figure of genius, which entails both a distancing from the common herd and an exemplary function within this same community. This privileged status does not, however, presuppose that genius is a self-evident notion. Far from it: the unresolved tension between genius as exception and genius as exemplary turns this figure into an object of dispute more than consensus, even though to be recognized as such, genius needs to meet with general endorsement. As the determiner of value, the notion of genius is also the focus of a conflict of contradictory values which it reveals and exemplifies.

This situation was still very far from being resolved in the upheavals at the end of the eighteenth century, when the Revolution glorified the great men of the new regime by creating a temple designed as a symbolic replacement for the Basilica of St Denis which had housed the tombs of the kings of France. The "French Pantheon" now became the site of a concrete memorial for the new heroes of the people, preserving for posterity the debt of homage rightly owed to them.

FIGURE 3. Unattributed, *Aux grands hommes la patrie reconnoissante: le génie de Voltaire et de Rousseau conduisit ces écrivains célèbres au temple de la gloire et de l'immortalité*, print, © Bibliothèque nationale de France.

An engraving from the time shows the eternal rivals, Voltaire and Rousseau, being led to the temple of fame and immortality by a single "Genius" who bears their laurel crowns and the torches of renown (Figure 3). This allegorical use of the *genius* of antiquity, which is grafted onto the same motifs as those depicted by Augustin Dupré on the new coins minted by the Republic, is indicative of the multiple recuperations that genius underwent during this period, demonstrating how the virtues associated with it in the course of its long history are superimposed, in a process of accumulation rather than substitution.

The Pantheon nevertheless represents a gamble with regard to the judgments of posterity. Owing to the desire to run ahead of the present and preempt the rights of posterity, the balance between genius as exemplary and genius as exception is even more difficult to maintain in times of upheaval and revolution. For proof of the risks entailed by this gamble, one need look

no further than the vagaries of Mirabeau's ashes, which were removed from the Pantheon in 1792 after the discovery of documents that compromised the memory of the hero of the Revolution. In 1795, it was the turn of Marat, "the Friend of the people," whose ashes suffered the same fate. The Revolution accelerated apotheoses and magnified on the spot, seeking to regulate memory in a process of uncontrolled enthusiasm that overturned thrones as readily as it glorified genius. One result of this process was that, amongst the many neologisms that were created in his period, the word "pantheonize" was followed almost immediately by "depantheonize":

> Pantheonize: The Pantheon has been sullied twice over. The statue of Jean-Jacques Rousseau has ousted those of Voltaire and Mirabeau! Ah! we should beware of pantheonizing too casually; we should cease to idolize. The verb pantheonize has produced depantheonize as well as the nouns pantheonization and depantheonization. (Mercier, *Néologie*)

Glorification is too carelessly undertaken in these revolutionary times, and the honoring of the memory of contemporaries constitutes a dangerous anachronism and an error of judgment: "No one can know which of our books will surprise, instruct or charm posterity" (Mercier, *Néologie*). Or again: "It requires a tribunal or an assembly of several centuries to judge the man of genius in this regard."[21] It falls to Time, and not to the heady fervor of revolution, to create great men and geniuses, whose image with the arrival of a "democratic regime"[22] was about to embark on an equally paradoxical history.[23]

University of Oxford

Notes

1. See Andrew Robinson, *Genius: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford U P, 2011), whose first chapter, "Defining Genius," begins with a list of names of ten famous individuals about whom it is stated that "each possessed something we call genius."
2. "Le naturel et inclination d'un chacun." Jean Nicot, *Thresor de la langue français* [1606], https://artfl-project.uchicago.edu/content/dictionnaires-dautrefois. Nicot omits all reference to antiquity and makes no mention of the Latin tradition, which was hitherto presupposed by the use of the term through the figure of "Genius."
3. Lexicographers situate the first occurrence of the word in Rabelais's *Pantagruel* (1532). See Jean Dubois, Henri Mitterand, and Albert Dauzat, *Dictionnaire étymologique et historique du français* [1964] (Paris: Larousse, 1993); Alain Rey et al., *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française* [1992] (Paris: Dictionnaires Le Robert, 1998); Paul Imbs, ed., *Trésor de la langue française: Dictionnaire de la langue du XIX^e^ et du XX^e^ siècle (1789-1960)* (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1971–94).
4. Louis-Sébastien Mercier, "Palais royal," *Tableau de Paris*, Jean-Claude Bonnet, ed. (Paris: Mercure de France, 1994), 2:932–33. See also Jean-Claude Bonnet, ed., *Louis-Sébastien Mercier, un hérétique en littérature* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1995).
5. For a discussion of exemplarity, see Jean-Charles Darmon, "De Montaigne à Saint Évremond: Crise de l'exemplarité et variation des formes de la pensée morale," *Montaigne Stud-*

ies, 19 (2007): 135–54, and François Rigolot, "The Renaissance Crisis of Exemplarity," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 59 (1998): 557–63. On the Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns, see Larry Norman, *The Shock of the Ancient: Literature and History in Early Modern France* (Chicago: Chicago U P, 2011).

6. Chamfort, *Maximes*, quoted by Flaubert, *Dictionnaire des idées reçues* (Paris: Éditions du Boucher, 1913). Translation from Chamfort, *Maxims and Thoughts* by Maarten Maartenz, http://z.umn.edu/vnk.
7. Éric Méchoulan, ed., *Le sens (du) commun, histoire, théorie et lecture de la topique*, *Études françaises*, 36 (2000), 6. See also Christian Plantin, ed., *Lieux communs: Topoï, stéréotypes, clichés* (Paris: Kimé, 1993).
8. Emmanuel Bury, "Vers une atrophie de l'*inventio* topique à la fin du XVII^{e} siècle," *Cahiers de l'AIEF*, 49 (1997): 95–108.
9. On Latin "*genius*" see Robert Schilling, "Genius et ange," *Rites, cultes, dieux de Rome* (Paris: Klinckseick, 1979), 414–43, and Georges Dumézil, "Encore Genius," in *Hommages à Robert Schilling*, Hubert Zehnacker and Gustave Hentz, eds. (Paris: Les Belles-Lettres, 1983), 85–92. The article by Jonathan Morton in this issue discusses some of the echoes of this figure found in medieval French writing.
10. Charles Perrault, "Préface," *Parallèle des anciens et des modernes en ce qui regarde les arts et les sciences* (Geneva: Slatkine reprints, 1971), 1:12. This is a facsimile of the edition first published in Paris by Vve. Coignard in 1692.
11. Nicolas Boileau, *Traité du sublime*, *Œuvres*, François Escal, ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), 362.
12. Jean-François Féraud, "Génie," *Dictionnaire critique de la langue française* (Mossy: Marseille, 1781–88), http://artfl.atilf.fr/dictionnaires/FERAUD/
13. Gaspar Lavater, "Physiognomonies intellectuelles: du genie," *L'art de connaître les hommes par la physionomie* (Paris: 1807), 6:85.
14. Jean-François Marmontel, *Éléments de littérature*, Sophie Le Menahèze, ed. (Paris: Desjonquères, 2005), 585–86.
15. Aubin-Louis Millin, "Originalité," *Dictionnaire des Beaux-Arts* (Paris: Desray, 1806).
16. See Jean-Alexandre Perras, *L'exception exemplaire: Inventions et usages du génie, XVI^{e}–XVIII^{e} siècle* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2015).
17. Jean-François de Saint-Lambert, "Génie," *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des arts, des sciences et des métiers*, vol. 7 (Paris: Briasson, 1757), http://z.umn.edu/wvq.
18. Nicholas de Chamfort, *Œuvres* (Paris: Madran, 1812), 72.
19. The notion of a genius of languages and nations, frequently supporting the idea of national superiority, is also part of the political uses of genius. See Gilles Siouffi, *Le génie de la langue française: Études sur les structures imaginaires de la description linguistique à l'Âge classique* (Paris: Champion, 2010), and his article in this issue.
20. Charles Bonnot de Condillac, *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines* [1746] (Paris: Galilée, 1973), 263; English translation, *Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge*, Hans Aarsleff, trans. and ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 2001), 189–90.
21. Louis-Sébastien Mercier, "Panthéonisé," *Le nouveau Paris*, Jean-Claude Bonnet, ed. (Paris: Le Mercure de France, 1994), 874–75.
22. See Nathalie Heinich, *L'élite artiste: Excellence et singularité en régime démocratique* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005).
23. See Ann Jefferson, *Genius in France: An Idea and its Uses* (Princeton: Princeton U P, 2015).