

***Nobility in Europe during the 20th Century:
Memories, Loyalties and Advantages in Context***

Complete List of Abstracts

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Heritage as Cornerstone in Aristocratic Lifestyles. Landowning, Family Manors and Cultural Taste as means of maintaining Noble Credibility in Finland.

Anna-Maria Åström

The most important sign of nobility is the noble name and its history. As a heritage this gift of the name must be put to good use. This involves distinctive strategies as the pursuit of high occupations and/or managing a family estate. – A family estate means belonging to an inner circle and still is the clearest mark of being an heir.

When the estates or manors are visited for instance by tourist groups the manor owner often himself presents narratives to public audiences. The points in the narrations will be analysed in the paper, as well as the signs of a balance between provincial landowning strategies and international manners. Other ways of exposing the inherited goods are taking part in the biannual exhibitions of the House of Nobility in Helsinki. The exhibitions, that involve loans of objects and belongings of noble families under varying themes, will also be analysed as to what they signify in a context of being shown to the public.

Both ways of exposition involves taste. Taste will be discussed according to theories of Georg Simmel and Pierre Bourdieu, but also a sort of theatrical stance of being both reserved and unreserved must be given attention. A gender aspect can be illustrative when confronting the male preferences in exhibiting the manors and the lands and the female in presenting the inherited goods.

The Persistence of the Aristocratic Model: Adaptations and Preservation Strategies of the Parisian Aristocracy 1900-1939

Alice Bernard

L'intervention que je vous propose de présenter vise à mettre en cause une théorie historiographique durable, qui fait de la Première guerre mondiale un tournant majeur dans l'histoire de la domination aristocratique, une rupture ayant entraîné le déclin rapide, irréversible et collectif des noblesses françaises dans l'entre-deux-guerres. Il s'agit de revoir le mythe de la « fin d'un monde » prophétiquement annoncé dans la presse et la littérature dès la fin du 19^{ème} siècle, en le mettant à l'épreuve d'une étude prosopographique approfondie. En effet, notre travail porte sur l'analyse de l'évolution des positions politiques, économiques, sociales et culturelles d'un échantillon de 263 hommes et 254 femmes, sélectionnés parmi les personnalités les plus citées dans la chronique mondaine du journal *Le Figaro*, et pouvant se rattacher à la haute noblesse parisienne au début du 20^{ème} siècle.

En introduction, après avoir démontré l'éminence du groupe avant la guerre –en insistant sur l'origine sociale, la formation et les activités, le niveau et la composition des fortunes, le mode de vie et la sociabilité de ses représentants -, nous exposerons en quoi ses positions se trouvent fragilisées dans le contexte de l'après 1914. Dans notre développement, nous tenterons ensuite d'établir l'impact direct et indirect réel du conflit sur le groupe. Pour cela, nous organiserons notre réflexion autour de trois axes principaux :

- *Les survivances aristocratiques dans la vie politique de la République française* : nous indiquerons ici que si les noblesses disparaissent progressivement des Chambres et des gouvernements de la Troisième République, certaines familles conservent un pouvoir local important, notamment dans les régions de l'Ouest de la France ; par ailleurs, le groupe dans son ensemble détient toujours une influence notable dans la vie politique française de l'entre-deux-guerres, à travers des associations provinciales et des organisations politiques nationales, telles que l'Action française.

- *Un déclin économique relatif* : nous montrerons dans un premier temps les effets négatifs de la conjoncture de guerre, de l'inflation chronique des années 1920, puis de la crise de 1930, sur le devenir des fortunes anciennement acquises. Puis, en exposant les différentes stratégies individuelles et familiales mises en place, nous essaierons de prouver que la Grande guerre n'a pas fondamentalement remis en cause le haut niveau de richesse globale du groupe.
- *Une société fascinante, au cœur de la sociabilité parisienne* : enfin, nous montrerons à quel point cette élite fait preuve de dynamisme, sur le plan social et culturel, dans les années 1920-1930. En nous appuyant notamment sur l'étude de la presse mondaine de l'époque, nous montrerons en quoi les représentants de l'ancien Second ordre continuent d'incarner jusqu'en 1939, l'élite suprême de la Nation française.

The Renaissance of Dutch Nobility around 1900 in Context

Nikolaj Bijleveld

Around 1900 nobility had lost its self-evident position in Dutch society. We see a decrease in for instance the percentage of noblemen holding important political offices and the number of big landed estates owned by noble families. Due to the social, cultural and economic integration with non-nobled rich families and the rise of new professional and business elites, nobility as a distinct social group was threatened. However, sociological surveys of recent decades have made abundantly clear that noble birth still makes a difference in public and private spheres. Nowadays, nobility is still publicly manifest in societies like the Dutch Nobility Organisation, the Order of Saint-John and the Order of Malta, most of them having celebrated their centennial recently. So, it appears, an important phase in understanding the remarkable revival of nobility, is the period around 1900. This contribution focuses on the organisation and mobilisation of aristocrats as a means of safeguarding the position of nobility by investing in social and symbolic capital in a changing society in those days. Data will be drawn from some case studies as well as from international comparison. Even though the main actors in the studied cases pretend to rely on old traditions, this paper stresses the aspect of re-invention of nobility and its adaptation to a changing world.

German Aristocratic Writers as Theorists of European Identity, 1918-1945

Dina Gusejnova

Autobiographical reflections of nobles in the twentieth century are typically regarded as a form of nostalgic reminiscence. In my paper, focusing on the work of German-speaking nobles who endorsed the idea of a European politics, I attribute greater political importance to noble autobiographies and to nobles' work as public intellectuals after 1918/19. The official abolition of the nobility as an institution and a privileged status, which occurred almost simultaneously in all the successor states to the Habsburg, Hohenzollern and Romanov Empires, engendered the emergence a type of author that the Austrian publicist Karl Kraus once described as *aristocratic writers*. In turning to political theory, many *aristocratic writers* who had to reinvent themselves as intellectuals in a post-aristocratic society endorsed a European rather than a national perspective on politics. Authors such as the founder of the Paneuropa Union, Count Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, the editor of the journal *Europäische*

Revue, Prince Karl Anton Rohan, the founder of the Orientalist School of Wisdom for the creation of European leaders, Count Hermann Keyserling, and the cultural mediator and diplomat Count Harry Kessler, experienced the year 1918 as an historic caesura of a particular kind: for them, the year marked not just the end of a particular European political system, but also the decline of a form of society symbolically dominated by an aristocracy.

In the paper, I will show to what extent the contribution of German-speaking nobles turned political theorists left a profound influence on interwar visions of Europe. Seen through their work, the idea of Europe emerges as a response to the policies of the new republican governments of Weimar Germany, which Carl Schmitt described as Neo-Jacobin. This term can equally be applied to other states in Central and Eastern Europe where policies of abolishing the nobility were connected with nation-building. As writers, political mediators, and propagandists, nobles from a German cultural background occupied a unique role not only in the specific political situation of the successor states of the Hohenzollern, Habsburg and Romanov Empires. Their voice also had a distinctive tone in the context of what Gramsci described as the “new intellectualism” of the period after World War I, influencing visions of Europe in France, Italy and Britain. It also had an impact on South American intellectuals and the Afro-Caribbean theorists of *négritude*, whose negation of European identity drew on the Europeanist discourse of noble political theorists.

White and Red Forever: the Socialist State and the Nobility in Poland

Longina Jakubowska

The gentry, both aristocrats and the lesser nobility, have re-emerged in post-communist Poland as still something of a dominant and dominating culture. Why and how, we might ask, is it possible after 50 years of communism? Further, how can we understand the processes by which a group maintains its identity through time, not just as one identity among others, but as dominant and dominating? Historically, the gentry were quick to adapt to any new political order and honed the art of conversion of the enabling capital – land, money, and skills, as well as lifestyle – into a relevant resource in each era. Using life histories and archival materials, this paper traces the strategies employed by them after the newly installed socialist government implemented the radical land reform in 1944/45 that destroyed the gentry as a land owning class. It argues that contrary to aggressive revolutionary rhetoric, the dynamics and the reality of socialist transformation in Poland demanded incorporation and collaboration of the gentry in the process of gradual replacement of elites. Since bloodshed was a poor option in a society with a historically weak middle class that had already suffered a tremendous loss of its elite from the hands of the Nazi and the Soviet forces during the Second World War, at no time did the communist government attempt to eliminate the gentry physically in the manner of other revolutionary takeovers. Instead, they were accommodated, co-opted, or coerced into compliance, thereby finding a new niche in the society. For one, the gentry possessed the highly desirable agricultural expertise and skills in estate management. In the initial stages of the recovering agricultural and industrial economy, the state employed them in various supervisory capacities. The gentry were also indispensable to the regime in other ways. Literate and educated in what was then a largely illiterate country, they swiftly converted their skills into professions forming in the process the core of intelligentsia.

L'évolution des valeurs familiales au sein de la noblesse belge aux XXe et XXIe siècles

Paul Janssens

La famille noble est-elle aujourd'hui différente de ce qu'elle était à la veille de la Première Guerre mondiale? A-t-elle connu ces dernières décennies les mêmes bouleversements que la famille bourgeoise?

Durant le XVIIIe et XIXe siècle, l'allongement de l'espérance de vie avait renforcé les liens du foyer. Mais dans la seconde moitié du XXe siècle, on assiste au développement prodigieux du divorce et de la cohabitation, qui remettent en cause le mariage traditionnel. Ces nouveaux modes de relation ont-ils été adoptés par les nobles?

Depuis le XVIIIe siècle, la noblesse a recours aux méthodes contraceptives en vue de planifier les naissances. Qu'en est-il aujourd'hui? Peut-on constater une réduction du nombre des enfants comme dans les autres couches de la population?

Prenant appui sur une base de données individuelles très étendue, cette communication se réfère à une recherche en cours abordant de nombreuses autres questions : le choix des carrières est-il encore déterminé par l'ordre des naissances et le sexe des enfants, alors que l'accès aux études s'est généralisé? Quelle est la part respective des parents et des fiancés dans le choix du conjoint ? Le château est-il resté la résidence familiale par excellence?

Educational Strategies of Noblemen compared to Commoners in Old Regime Hungary (especially before 1918).

Victor Karady

Hungary in the end of the Dual Monarchy (1867-1918) experienced a rapid process of urbanisation, industrialisation and social modernisation together with the considerable expansion of the educational market, so much so that the proportion of secondary school graduates (*Abiturienten*) by age groups concerned was similar to that of the French *bacheliers*. In this pool of selection of educated elites the sizable Hungarian nobility (some 6 % of the global population) had more and more frequently to compete with a growing number of outsiders, like descendants of non noble *honoratiors* and ethnic aliens like Jews and Germans (newcoming candidates in the 'gentlemanly middle class'). With reference to similar analyses made by Monique de Saint-Martin of the specificity of educational investments made by members of the contemporary French nobility, this paper presents various types of statistical evidence on the highly singular – mostly persistingly conservative – educational strategies of students of noble background in Dualist Hungary, as compared to their counterparts of common social standing. Data resorted to in the paper include evidence on higher studies in Hungary and abroad, since some noble clusters were more often than others exposed to temptations of peregrination outside the frontiers, especially in exclusive institutions in Vienna. The main focus of the paper concerns group specifically differential study options and other characteristics of the student population under scrutiny, with a view on developments in the post Trianon rump state in the inter-war years.

Nobility among the Austrian Economic Elite in 2008.

Philipp Korom & Jaap Dronkers

Since 1918 nobility is abolished by constitutional law and it is forbidden to use noble titles or form associations of nobles in Austria. The main aim was to destroy the power of the nobility in the Austrian-Hungarian societies. In this paper we investigate whether the Austrian nobility has managed to maintain parts of their former advantages, as has been proven for the Dutch, German and French nobilities (Schijf, Dronkers & Broeke-George, 2004; Saint Martin, 1993; Dronkers, 2008). Our aim is mainly descriptive, but this has to be done for Austria.

We analyse the members of the Vorstand, Aufsichtsrat and the Geschäftsführer of a list of about 30.000 persons (managing directors and other authorised officers, partners or shareholders) who are affiliated to the 5000 biggest Austrian firms and are mentioned in the Austrian Company Register 2008. Using Hueck (2002), the various issues of *Genealogisches Handbuch des Adels* and other indicators of noble descent („von“) we established whether these board members belong to one of the German and Austrian noble families. The first step is to find out which percentage of these board members belong to the nobility, and what type of nobility (Austrian, German, Hungarian, medieval nobility, etc). As a second step we will compare the noble member of these boards with the other members in various aspects: sector of firm, place in the network between the firms, university education, etc. By these result we hope to answer the question whether the Austrian nobility has maintained some of its advantages to enter economic elite position even in the 21st century.

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Hueck, S.-M. von, 2002. *Gesamtverzeichnis der Bände 1-127 Genealogisches Handbuch des Adels*. Limburg/Lahn: Starke.

Saint Martin, M. de, 1993. *L'Espace de la noblesse*. Paris: Éditions Métailié.

Schijf, H., Dronkers, J. & Broeke-George, J van den, 2004. "Recruitment of members of Dutch noble and high-bourgeois families to elite positions in the 20th century". *Social Science Information* 43: 435-475.

How Noble was the Dutch Nobility? A Biographical and Comparative View on an Old Noble Family

Yme Kuiper

Van Wassenaer is the name of one of the oldest baronial families in the Netherlands. My paper deals with the practices and images of nobleness in this family during the twentieth century. The Van Wassenaers developed and transmitted their noble attitudes through many generations. But how did they do that? Which strategies did they use and what were their aspirations? Using a family biographical approach and inspired by research on the French and German nobility by De Saint Martin (1993) and Conze (2000) I will formulate some answers to these questions. One puzzle deserves special attention. How could this family preserve its noble identity in a society with such a strong bourgeois and egalitarian culture (at least, it had this image). Even a professional historian as Johan Huizinga once wrote: "The unity of the Dutch people lies in its bourgeois character. Even if we try to deny it, we are and remain bourgeois, from the notary to the poet, and from the baron to the proletarian." Like other noble groups in twentieth-century Europe the Dutch nobility acted internally more

heterogeneous than the outside world perceived it. The question remains whether the apparently weak corporate identity in this 'bourgeois' context made the Dutch nobility really different from their peers elsewhere in Europe. Had the Dutch nobility an exceptional status in modern Europe? The main objective of this case study is to show practices and images that point into another direction. I will do that in terms of successful strategies of 'staying on top', new constructed identifications with family property (land, housing, memorabilia, archives, and beloved objects) or family history (genealogy, publications, news letters) in family foundations, the revitalisation of noble orders and associations, and the pursuit of indispensable academic certificates. We can find this whole range of phenomena among the Van Wassenauers - and they are certainly not typical Dutch.

De Saint Martin, M., *L'espace de la noblesse* (Paris 1993)

Conze, E., *Von deutschem Adel. Die Grafen von Bernstorff im 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart/München 2000)

Brokken, H.M. (ed.), *Heren van stand. Van Wassenauer 1200-2000. Achthonderd jaar Nederlandse adelsgeschiedenis* (Zoetermeer 2000)

(including: Kuiper, Y, 'Van heerlijkheid tot familiestichting. Van Wassenauers (van Catwijk) in de 19^e en 20^e eeuw, pp. 201-243; 'From Seigniorship to Family Foundation. Van Wassenauers (van Catwijk) in the 19th and 20th Centuries')

The reconversion of the Italian Nobility. Aristocracy and the Fascist Regime between Consent and Resistance

Maria Malatesta

Fascism was an unexpected occasion for reconversion by the Italian nobility. Early Fascism was for many provincial nobles of modest lineage a propitious moment to acquire a visibility which in many cases turned into powerful positions in the Fascist regime. But also some members of illustrious families responded to Mussolini's summons and were among the first to enrol with the National Fascist Party. The Fascist regime for its part had for some years carried forward a neo-nobiliar policy characterized by the creation of new nobles to reward the faithful or social categories held in high esteem like the industrialists, and by the desire to give a new institutional order to the nobility but without increasing its prestige.

This paper draws on a database comprising 220 exponents of the Italian patriciate and persons ennobled by the Kingdom of Italy and the Fascist regime, from which it has been possible to reconstruct their careers and positions held with the National Fascist Party as *podestà*, senators, diplomats, and military officers.

Completely ignored by historiography has been the other face of the nobility of those years represented by anti-Fascist families or by members of pro-Fascist aristocratic families who after 8 September 1943 chose to fight in various ways against Nazi-Fascism. The second part of the paper reconstructs the small group of resistant nobles, and it identifies the motives that induced them to resist, their family strategies, and how they have reconstructed their memory as protagonists of the resistance.

Noble Memories in a 'Denobled' Society: The Albertines returning to Saxony in 1989

Silke Marburg

1989 was a crucial year for European history. In Germany the coming down of the wall reshaped the nation. For many Saxon nobles mostly living in the Western part of the country the question arose how to redefine their relationship to Saxony. For more than four decades this treasure of identity had been hidden behind the iron curtain. Now the often stressed longing for home had been fulfilled, at least the main barrier had disappeared. A return was not only a problem because of the fixed positions of many Saxons abroad. Moreover the returning of nobles caused the need to present themselves to the locals. Nobles had to describe their special bonds to the location and by doing so expose their traditions and legitimatise their social identity as nobles.

This was the case for the Albertines, too, the former reigning house in the Kingdom of Saxony. The family had just celebrated its 900th anniversary in Regensburg in spring 1989, and only few months later Maria Emanuel Margrave of Meissen and his brother Albert headed the princely home coming group. The Saxonian public was confronted with a behaviour that was in many respects strange. It expressed a latent claim for special treatment as well as memories to buttress these claims. The paper asks on which memories the Albertines based their return and how they tried to regain a noble position in a 'denobled' society.

The Transformation of the Swedish Aristocracy 1900–1975

Göran Norrby

As in many other Western European countries, the Swedish nobility was markedly affected by the bourgeois revolution. At the very end of the 19th century, it had left most of its former positions in the power elites of the state. This seemingly startling development prompted renowned historians in Denmark and Sweden to perform research on the reasons for this abdication of power (and the obvious physical dying out of many famous noble families); degeneration or *déclassement* were explanations commonly used.

However, applying the social stratification criteria used in the new population statistics as from 1911, it becomes evident that the nobility still belonged to the uppermost strata of the Swedish society – though important shifts had occurred regarding the role and aims of the nobility.

Three processes of change are central to explaining this adaption process:

- The professionalization of the role of military officer. Before the Swedish army was thoroughly reformed by the turn of the century, it was relatively easy to acquire a military title, the burden of active service was very limited – and for many noblemen the quest for symbolic capital took precedence over professional career ambitions. The peculiar Swedish army organization was finally abandoned in 1901, when universal military service was introduced – resulting in a loss of noble interest in the traditional role of military officer.
- The reformation and growth of industry and business life. As the economy developed and new career opportunities were offered, the nobility abandoned the military profession, and subsequently also agriculture, in favour of leading managerial positions in private business and industry.
- The increasing demand and supply of higher education. As strict demands for formal exams grew during the 19th century, the nobility responded well, adjusting

successfully to the changing circumstances. In the 1960's and 1970's, when all education became cost-free to all students, a special pattern emerges, where noblemen strongly prefer schooling of an elite and versatile nature. Also for noble women a divergent educational profile is evident.

Titled Outsiders. Jewish Nobility in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century

Huibert Schijf

The emancipation of the Jews due to legalization enacted in many European countries since the end of the eighteenth century opened many economic and academic opportunities in the nineteenth century. At the end of that century, capitals like Berlin, London, Paris and Vienna counted a substantial Jewish bourgeoisie and several members had a noble title. For instance, members of the French and the British branches of the Rothschild bankers were barons. The remarkable exception is Amsterdam, a capital with a large Jewish population (about ten per cent) but a relatively small Jewish bourgeoisie.

In Germany these coveted titles were mostly non-hereditary. Hereditary titles were a rarity only conferred in exceptional cases. In Amsterdam there lived very few titled Jews and the exceptions were either well-established Sephardic families or bankers with titles granted by foreign counts or kings.

Based on available statistics and printed sources the paper purports to explain this phenomenon of Jewish nobility by discussing several societal contexts, the desire of successful and integrated members of the Jewish bourgeoisie in Paris and London to be acknowledged for their achievements and to become the equals of non-Jewish members of the nobility. In societies where noble titles were in abundance, especially in imperial Germany, noble titles offered more prestige than conspicuous consumption alone as that was often seen as the vulgar behaviour of parvenus. However, social acceptance was not always the case, even with a title, as several case studies will elucidate.

Trying to Escape the Basement. The Hungarian Aristocracy in Transylvania 1949-2009

Jaap Scholten

In the morning of March 3rd, 1949, all members of the Hungarian aristocracy in Transylvania were taken from their houses and deported to four cities. They were separated from their economical, political, cultural and social background. Consequently, they had to survive in a socialist state hostile to noble memories, loyalties and advantages. Now in 2009, the situation has changed. Due to the Romanian restitution law of July 2005, members of the Hungarian aristocracy reclaim their former properties successfully from the state. Some consider, or have even taken the step to return to their family properties.

This contribution focuses on the life of the Transylvanian aristocracy in the socialist as well as in the post-socialist state. It discusses the considerations, ambitions, ideals as well as success of families in contemporary Romania in deciding to reclaim and return to their former properties. Furthermore, closely connected to the contemporary situation, is the question how the aristocracy succeeded in surviving under many decades of socialist regime. This will be discussed in terms of collective memory, keeping traditions alive and the separation of private and public spheres. Data are drawn from anthropological fieldwork and interviews with members as well as descendants of the Hungarian aristocratic families removed from their homes.

A “Community of Opinions and Convictions”: Remembrance Techniques and Self-Perception of the East Elbian Nobility in West Germany, 1945/49-1974

Michael Seelig

The end of World War II has also been the end of the particular form of life of the nobility in East Germany. But this did not mean that the East German nobility – especially the East Elbian nobility, which is studied here – did disappear as a social group. Although the largest part of the East Elbian nobility had fled from the approaching Soviet army or had later been expelled by the newly established communist regimes, the loss of its homes and homelands did not imply the loss of its noble identity. For sure, the former East Elbian nobility did not only lose its economic resources but also its natural, social, and cultural environment – a sociological configuration best described by the German term *Lebenswelt* (in English usually ‘lifeworld’). Nevertheless, that part of the East Elbian nobility which settled down in post-war West Germany, the later German Federal Republic, was able to maintain a noble identity. With reference to traditional forms and techniques of noble self-identification, the East Elbian nobility successfully reinvented itself. In this process memory played an important part. In order to reassure the challenged noble identity, a large reservoir of traditional remembrance techniques could be used. The well proven method of remembering selected aspects of history – concerning one’s own family, the nobility as a whole or the German people – contributed to the shaping of the noble identity. The re-invention of noble traditions (cf. Eric Hobsbawm) restored the collective mentality and cohesion that seemed to be threatened after the loss of the noble lifeworld in 1945. Moreover, memory did not only produce identity but also distinction. In the entire history of the East Elbian nobility, there has never been a greater necessity for distinction than after 1945. Memory could ease this urge. Concerning this, the noble “culture of memory” (Marcus Funck/Stephan Malinowski) did not only consist in mental representations but also in ‘real’ socio-cultural practices. Noble memory caused a specific type of self-image that manifested itself in a specific way of life. By means of memory, the East Elbian nobility reinvented itself as a “community of opinions and convictions” (*Gesinnungsgemeinschaft*). In my presentation I will demonstrate how the reciprocal relation between remembrance techniques and certain components of self-perception contributed to the reinvention of the East Elbian nobility after 1945.

Return to Saxony. Minor German Nobility in Saxony after Reunification - Definitions of Family and Home

Sophia von Knobelsdorff

1945 and the years following saw an exodus of most of the landed nobility from Saxony – after expropriation of their lands, many fled or were banished. Various avenues were explored to mitigate the sense of loss of the homeland during the 40 years of German Democratic Republic rule. To maintain cohesion within the Saxon nobility, “Der Sächsische Adel e.V.” (“The Association of the Saxon Nobility”) was founded in 1951, which became a forum of exchange for its members. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, some members of the association resettled in Saxony whilst others retained their residence in western Germany. This, in spite of the fact that one of the declared aims of establishment was, after all, a return to the region of origin after an eventual reunification.

Remarkably, it was not only those members of the nobility which had been born in Saxony who resettled in the former Heimat, but also later generations of the nobility. We have to assume a cross-generational transfer of a characterised definition of home. It is here that the

influence of family-specific values come to the surface.

Resettlement in Saxony brought challenges for much of the returning nobility: it turned their lives upside down, exposed them to precarious financial situations, confronted them with legal aspects of the reunification-treaty and obliged them to bridge the cultural gap which had ensued. This is the background upon which the ideas of return and Heimat are questioned, and which frame their reorientation. The sources are “Das Nachrichtenblatt des Sächsischen Adels e.V.” (“The Newsletter of the Association of the Saxon Nobility”) and various publications by members of the Saxon nobility on the subject.

In fond Remembrance? Images from Noble Life in the Past

Marja Vuorinen

My paper deals with the testimony given by a Finnish nobleman, Arvid Järnefelt (1861-1932), about the 19th century noble way of living. Despite his birth – perhaps also because of it – he was a dedicated egalitarian and an original social theorist, who vented his ideas in his many literary works. In my paper I concentrate on the magnum opus of his later life, a three-volume real-life novel about his family, *The Novel of my Parents I-III*, 1928-30.

Järnefelt's mother was a daughter of a Russian noble family renowned for its artistic and political talent; one of her most important objectives was to introduce the Finnish readership to Lev Tolstoy's teachings. His father was a member of Finnish military nobility, who in later life became a fervent nationalist. Both parents thus participated after their fashion in the moulding of the Finnish nation state. The son continued their ideological work towards more radical goals.

In his novels Järnefelt programmatically criticised nobility for exploiting the people and planned a more democratic future, stating that if nobility wished to survive, it should “climb down from the shoulders of the people”. Because of his political bias he is often overly critical about the luxurious, selfish, spiritually empty noble living. Nevertheless he gives a full and detailed – perhaps even secretly longing – picture of a way of life that had all but ceased to exist.

In my paper I seek to deep-read the retrospective 20th century text and to assess its semiotic, discursive and ideological content against the double backdrop of the two centuries.