During the long eighteenth century the moral and socio-political dimensions of family life and gender were hotly debated by intellectuals across Europe. John Millar, a Scottish law professor and philosopher, was a pioneer in making gendered and familial practice a critical parameter of cultural difference. His work was widely disseminated at home and abroad, translated into French and German and closely read by philosophers such as Denis Diderot and Johann Gottfried Herder. Taking Millar’s writings as his basis, Nicholas B. Miller explores the role of the family in Scottish Enlightenment political thought and traces its wider resonances across the Enlightenment world.

John Millar’s organisation of cultural, gendered and social difference into a progressive narrative of authority relations provided the first extended world history of the family. Over five chapters that address the historical and comparative models developed by the thinker, Nicholas B. Miller examines contemporary responses and Enlightenment-era debates on polygamy, matriarchy, the Amazon legend, changes in national character and the possible futures of the family in commercial society. He traces how Enlightenment thinkers developed new standards of evidence and crafted new understandings of historical time in order to tackle the global diversity of family life and gender practice. By reconstituting these theories and discussions, Nicholas B. Miller uncovers hitherto unexplored aspects of the Scottish contribution to European debates on the role of the family in history, society and politics.

History of ideas / gender studies / Scottish Enlightenment
Histoire des idées / études de genres / Lumières écossaises
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Introduction

Of all our passions, it should seem that those which unite the sexes are most easily affected by the peculiar circumstances in which we are placed, and most liable to be influenced by the power of habit and education. Upon this account they exhibit the most wonderful variety of appearances, and, in different ages and countries, have produced the greatest diversity of manners and customs.¹

John Millar

Early modern domestic encounters: the challenge of cultural difference and the prerogative of progress

Over the course of the long eighteenth century, intellectual circles across Europe played host to an unfolding drama of global and domestic proportions. A dynamic challenge to standing European conventions, on matters ranging from human nature and man's place in society to the composition of the household and the performance of gender, was exerted by a mounting store of intercultural testimony furnished by the global information networks imbedded within early modern European colonial and missionary endeavour. The new arguments and theses produced in view of this evidentiary stock adopted ambitious and at times radical contours. In 1732, two years after taking refuge in London, the eccentric Italian aristocrat Alberto Radicati di Passerano constructed a defence of suicide upon the putative absence of any global consensus governing social behaviour.² As his proof, he pointed to the realm of familial and sexual relationships, that very sphere of social existence contemporary Christian moralists such as Francis Hutcheson drew upon in their attempt to rescue the notion of a sociable nature of mankind from philosophical scepticism.³ For Hutcheson, the happy

accounts of sexual, marital and familial life through the analytical prism of progressive history. This intellectual performance is the subject of this book. The explosion of travel literature over the course of the early modern period raised the stakes for novelty, with authors competing to develop new formats and media to satisfy public demand in dynamic interplay with new techniques for classifying cultural difference. Two less radical, yet ultimately more influential, interrogations of the philosophico-cultural challenge of familial difference preceded Radicati’s treatise. Rather than parading the irreconcilable alterity of the domestic lives of distant peoples as evidence of the hegemonic power of custom, habit and education, these works sought to narrow the conceptual ravine of difference by humanising alternate familial and gendered practices in other contexts. Bernard Picart and Jean-Frédéric Bernard’s Cérémonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde (Amsterdam, 1723-1737) awarded domestic rituals ranging from Aztec marriage to the sati in India with intricate engravings, situating them within a globally comparative critique of organised religion. The baron de Montesquieu turned to the belles-lettres, deploying in his Lettres persanes (1721) the trope of inquisitive polygamous visitors from the Muslim Near East to mock the internal contradictions of the practice of monogamous marriage in Europe, and the Christian priests whose supposed duty was to regulate it.

In 1748, Montesquieu changed the stakes of the game. Born from three decades’ worth of contemplation about the variety of domestic realities to be found across the world, his De l’esprit des loix offered a fascinating, if at times disjointed, web of speculative conjectures about the effects of historical, legal, religious, national and climatic forces upon sexual desire, marriage, procreation, gendered ratios at birth, childcare, inheritance and filial affection. Montesquieu identified a scene of intercultural inquiry which would captivate the comparative imagination of a generation of Enlightenment thinkers following his lead: the family’s place in the history of mankind as the universal first polity and the contingency of the performances of gendered, spousal and parental roles upon external factors. This book takes up the responses to this field of issues across Europe in the second half of the eighteenth century, homing in on the particularities of the Scottish context of Enlightenment, where the most extended and systematic reflection to be offered during the century was produced. The field of questions and issues here defined as the problem of familial difference has long been identified as a golden thread running

through Enlightenment thought, but not yet subject to book-length treatment. In his comparative study of Scotland and Naples, John Robertson identified ‘the interest in the earliest history of the family and of sexual relations’ as an overarching interest of actors across diverse contexts of Enlightenment. Several decades earlier, Werner Krauss, in his classical study on the Frühgeschichte der Menschheit im Blickpunkt der Aufklärung, branded the family as a ‘Grundproblem der Aufklärungsantropologie’ [basic issue of concern of the anthropology of Enlightenment]. Anthropology in this turn of phrase should be understood not simply in the sense consistent with the ‘history of mankind’, as a putatively scientific attempt to comparatively study the inner workings of societies across the world, but also in its philosophical sense as the study of the nature and essence of mankind. Radicati, Montesquieu, Picart and, as we shall see below, dozens of other figures of the long eighteenth century deliberated over the function of the exposition of familial difference, and more pressingly, how to interpret and make sense of it. In face of the decline of the explanatory power of Christian revelation, eighteenth-century thinkers turned to an expansive conception of history to navigate the cluster of concerns linking the varying achievements of societies with practices of family and gender, blending theoretical philosophy with practical concerns, and the most global of speculations with the most local. This book recounts the rise of the family as an object of sustained reflection within the hotbed of intellectual activity we term the European Enlightenment. The goals of this account are to reveal an early stage of globally comparative analysis of matters of gender, sexuality and family, to shed light upon the disciplinary legacies of early modern thinking structures such as natural jurisprudence upon contemporary social sciences and to situate the European Enlightenment squarely within the intellectual preconditions of the global eighteenth century.

Historicising the family via historicising authority: the case of John Millar

What can be considered as the world’s first extended and synthetic history of gender, the family and sexuality was forged in the second half of the eighteenth century in the lecture halls, reading rooms and debating clubs of Scotland’s University of Glasgow. In 1771, its Regius Professor of Civil Law, John Millar (1735-1801), presented this to the public in his Observations concerning the distinction of ranks in society, best remembered today by its more confident title of 1779, The Origin of the distinction of ranks in society. The work quickly disseminated across the transnational space of late eighteenth-century European Enlightenment, being translated within a few years into French and German, closely read by Denis Diderot and reviewed by Johann Gottfried Herder. Readers from the eighteenth century onwards have been intrigued by its ambitious attempt to subject issues of gender, family relations, property relations, sexual practices and social difference to comparative historical analysis, to uncover the dynamics behind the ‘most wonderful variety’ and ‘greatest diversity of manners and customs’ governing the passions which unite the sexes [...] in different ages and countries. Yet Millar would have found the labels of ‘historian of the family’, ‘historian of gender’, ‘historian of sexuality’, ‘world historian’ or ‘global historian’ strange, conferred as they are not only according to the anachronistic sociological historical terminology of two centuries hence, but also because he did not set out to write any of these histories. Instead, he sought to intervene in interwoven contemporary philosophical, political and methodological debates concerning authority in society through the disciplinary lenses of a historicised natural jurisprudence that had developed at Scottish universities over the course of the long eighteenth century. Millar’s history of the family was a culmination of intersecting traditions and ambitions specific to the intellectual world of legal, comparative and historical reflection of late eighteenth-century Scottish Enlightenment. This accomplishment was additionally predicated upon the transnational intellectual and material links of Scottish universities with sites across the increasingly global European sphere of influence in the eighteenth century. In view of situating Millar doubly within his

specific local context as well as his broader Enlightenment context, this book aims to reconstrue diverse debates engaged with by Millar concerning the nature of the family and family affection, the cause of historical and global difference in familial and gendered practice, the role of religion, climate and racial difference in these variations, and the possible futures for family life.

A major impulse behind Millar’s history of the family was a global analysis of authority and inequality. To the end of grappling with these topics, Millar analysed four relations of power:

1. husband-wife;
2. father-son;
3. master-servant;
4. sovereign-subject.

Only the first three of these were in his view universal. Not accidentally, they corresponded with the three dimensions of household authority originally delineated by Aristotle and cemented in the canon of natural law by the interventions of Grotius and Pufendorf in the seventeenth century. By the eighteenth century, these authority relations formed a routine component of moral philosophical and legal instruction at Scottish universities, having been introduced in Glasgow by Gershom Carmichael around the turn of the century and maintained by Francis Hutcheson. Building upon his education at Glasgow under Adam Smith, Millar’s innovation to this framework was to introduce a fourth category, political authority, which he characterised as emerging from the gradual evolution of political society out of an original society of the family. Patriarchalists in the early modern period, most famously Robert Filmer, had used this understanding of the genesis of political society to support a genealogical argument for political power, that kings held the prerogative of unlimited power in society by dint of direct descent from the first patriarchs of mankind. Millar belittled Filmer’s ‘doctrine of passive obedience to a monarch, upon the unlimited submission which children owe to their father’ as not deserving the ‘serious refutation’ he had met with from John Locke and Algernon Sidney in the late seventeenth century, a sentiment Rousseau had voiced sixteen years earlier in his contribution to Diderot and D’Alembert’s Encyclopédie, the Discours sur l’économie politique (1755).18


The extremes of Filmer’s argument may have been long refuted, but much intellectual work remained to be done in resolving the incoherence between the individual liberalist contention of inborn human equality and conventional appraisals of family life grounded upon natural hierarchies of power and capacity.19 Almost all thinkers accepted the family as an inescapable, perennial feature of human existence in light of the fact that all humans start as helpless infants born to one or more parents. Additionally, the household ran consistently with proper ‘economy’ was decreed by natural law to be ordered in sync with natural inequalities: a husband was to dominate his wife, a father his children and a master his servants. So where did the natural equality of individuals ever historically exist?20 The approach Rousseau took was to keep this equality theoretical, playfully imagining a pre-societal, pre-familial state of mankind where procreation occurred through fleeting instances of sex and mothers quickly left their children to fend for themselves.21 Yet even Rousseau admitted this discussion’s empirical limits – this was ‘a state which no longer exists, perhaps never did exist, and probably never will exist’.22

For Scottish thinkers from the 1760s, Millar included, Rousseau’s approach was a dead end. More useful would be histories of mankind that analysed only what actually could be proven to exist, and which confirmed a historical trajectory of progress that Rousseau also posited, that advanced stages of society gave fruit to the fullest possible manifestation of the human spirit. Scottish thinkers differed about the virtue of this trajectory, but Millar was one of the more optimistic. For him, the history of human society was one of a steady, if slow, progress towards individual civil liberty in society, secured by the growing sovereignty of magistrates, the rise of court authority and a legal culture of restraints upon interpersonal relations of power. Whereas ancient Roman and Chinese fathers supposedly retained a tyrannical right of death over

their children as long as they lived, he thought the society of his day—understood variously as Scottish, British, Northern, European and commercial—had achieved the equality that individuals were naturally due both in society at large as well as within the family. Thereby ethnocentrically taking his own situation as the pinnacle of freedom, he sketched out a progressive historical narrative of how this state of affairs had come to arise. Aiming to illustrate what he termed the ‘natural history of mankind’, he historicised the three basic relationships of household power delineated in the Aristotelian and natural law traditions according to the empirical and theoretical arsenal of the Humanist project of a ‘science of man’. Revising Smith’s speculative narratives of the history of property relations offered in the 1760s during his Lectures on Jurisprudence, Millar wove together an account of how authority gradually, in many societies, evolved beyond the family, and how individuals escaped an initial despoticism framed by the classical model of the Roman patriarchal household. The emergence of a new power domain above individual households—the political—enabled an escape from the tyranny of the original society of the family. Whereas this new form of power could itself become despotic, Millar was confident that the recent history of Britain—culminating in the English Glorious Revolution—demonstrated how power tended to become gradually codified, and that the rising potency of law resulting from this dynamic enabled individuals in all dimensions of their lives to become freer than ever.

Millar’s trajectory for the history of the family was thus culturally and ideologically set. The standard characterisation of him as an especially political figure of the Scottish Enlightenment—a ‘scientific Whig’, to use Duncan Forbes’ clever formulation—has emerged with justice. Yet his project of an empirical history of liberty forced him into an extended grappling with the sources available to him on family life, a handling of difference that Millar pursued in earnest, if not without significant gaps. He acknowledged the formidable breadth of this variety, the ‘greatest diversity of manners and customs’ prevailed in familial life across the world and throughout history. His organisation of cultural, gendered and social difference into a progressive narrative of familial and authority relations yielded not only what should be understood as the first extended world history of the family, but also points to the depth of Enlightenment-era reflections upon gender, the domestic, comparative social analysis and historical practice. Millar presented the family life of his contemporary context—defined not only nationally or religiously but also as part of a putatively universal historical stage of economic relations, commercial society—as a historically unique form occupying the highest stage in history that had yet been reached. Effecting a temporalisation of family affairs, Millar understood the family norms and practice of his day as absolutely modern.

Millar and his contemporaries’ reflections upon the history of the family and household provide a useful complement to studies on the cultural history of the European family through the lens of intellectual history, identifying how contemporaries themselves understood the familial structures in place at their time and the trajectories of change they thought to be at motion within their societies. While rarely providing a specific temporalisation or connection with their own recent past, Enlightenment-era thinkers fashioned an account of the gradual shrinking of households and kinship networks in the march towards higher stages of social progress, culminating in the Scottish Enlightenment with the intimate domestic scene of ‘commercial society’. As we shall see below, Millar and others understood prevailing practices in Europe—in particular, the friendly companionship marriage—historically and globally exceptional, retaining aspects of a scriptural historical explanation of this type of domestic life as linked with the processes of Christian revelation. Additionally, the range of practices examined by Millar and others had already achieved the wide lens of late nineteenth-century historicist anthropology of the family, such as Edward Westermarck’s massive History of human marriage.

## Chapters

This book recovers the complex intellectual setting in which Millar’s engagement of familial difference and construction of a progressive historical narrative of the family took place. In order to produce his analysis, Millar not only had to take a position in a series of intersecting debates over historical method, cross-cultural comparison, human difference and the nature of man, the family and gender. He also had to subject the prevailing normative practices of his own context to a historical and comparative reflection, and construct explanations for how these had emerged and why contemporary Europe differed from other societies across the world and throughout history. Through the depth of his engagement with these issues, Millar serves as an ideal guide

to the fascinating, complex and under-studied discussion on family forms that took place during the eighteenth century, from the Amazon River basin to academies of science in Paris and Berlin. Millar was far from alone in his interest in different forms of family life. This interest was shared by a broad range of contemporaries, situated both in the very vanguard of the Enlightenment literati as well as figures who have been largely forgotten. Importantly, models that Millar and his contemporaries adopted to explain differences in familial regimens between societies would have lasting effects on understandings of the relationship between Europe and the world and the notion that Europe’s greatness could be traced to the unique contours of its domestic sphere. Through five case studies, this book examines how the intellectual resources of the Enlightenment were marshalled in the construction of these models, and identifies who produced them, where they emerged and how they were contested.

We begin with the family form that attracted the most discussion in the European Enlightenment, both in Scotland and farther afield: polygamy. Acquiring an indelible connection with the Muslim Near East over the course of the early modern period, discussions of polygamy possessed a charged, polemical nature, being used as a negative mirror by which to celebrate Europe’s purportedly more egalitarian system of gender relations. Men of the Enlightenment were challenged in their construal of this binary opposition by the ambiguous verdict of natural law on the origin of the prohibition of polygamy in Christianity. The chapter begins with a comparison of two ministers’ views on polygamy: first the Presbyterian historian William Robertson, a leading figure of the Scottish Enlightenment, and second the eccentric Methodist Martin Madan, based in London. While Robertson can be considered an emblematic figure of the ‘high’ Scottish Enlightenment, Madan on the other hand embodied a heterodox Methodist engagement with comparative legal-religious reflection. In 1755, Robertson speculated that emerging European global hegemony could achieve a universal liberation of women from the ‘slavery’ of polygamous marriage. A quarter-century later, the reactionary cleric Martin Madan, on the contrary, advocated the legislation of polygamy in England for purposes of social welfare. This sparked a fiery public reaction defined by a politics of global intercultural anxiety, with Madan accused of covertly seeking to spread Islam to Europe. Avoiding the polemics that defined late eighteenth-century discussions of polygamy, Millar subordinated polygamy to the stadial model of progress in his history of the family. Other thinkers, including Hume, Montesquieu, Robertson and Kames followed in a tradition inherited from the natural law thinkers of the seventeenth century of using the tripartite division of monogamy, divorce and polygamy as the main means of discussing the variety of marriage forms found across the world. This chapter sketches out a path Millar did not take, that of discussing family form primarily in terms of marriage practices.

Afterwards, in chapter 2, we examine an area of Millar’s history of the family that has long been identified as curious or even ground-breaking, but not until now systematically explored: his discussion of an early stage in society where women prevailed over men. Although this cannot be labelled ‘matriarchy’ without falling into anachronism, Millar came very close to the concept. Millar generally contended that women were abused in primitive society. ‘It will be thought, perhaps, a mortifying picture that is here presented to us, when we contemplate the barbarous treatment of the female sex in early times, and the rude state of those passions which may be considered as the origin of society’. Following in the footsteps of Hobbes, he argued that the contractual nature of marriage meant there was a historical moment where women dominated in the family, and not men: that there was ‘one circumstance [...] in the manners of a rude age, that merits particular attention; as it appears, in some countries, to have produced a remarkable exception’ to the phenomenon of female oppression in savage society. This chapter examines the intellectual origins of Millar’s discussion of this exception, Millar’s practice as a reader of traveller narratives and the debate that occurred in the Scottish Enlightenment over the status of women in primitive society.

Chapter 3 homes in on the Amazonas, a classic device for playing with gender reversal in society that fell increasingly into obscurity over the long eighteenth century. While Millar’s Scottish Enlightenment counterparts rejected them as absurd, his standards of historical evidence prevented him from dismissing them as pure fantasy. Millar suggested that his discussion of maternal power offered a way to understand why so many eyewitnesses in various contexts across the world and throughout history had attested to the existence of Amazoners. Farther afield, the Amazonas retained believers in the Enlightenment, ranging from antiquarian historians to enlightened travellers such as Charles-Marie de La Condamin and Alexander von Humboldt. Attempts by these thinkers to defend the veracity of the legend evidences how the growing assessment by the main guard of Enlightenment thinkers of

30. Millar, Banks, ed. Garrett (2006), p.116. The emphasis that this state of manners ’merits particular attention’ was added in the second edition of 1773. This edition also saw the division of the chapters into sections, with Millar now considering this topic as meriting its own heading. John Millar, Observations concerning the distinction of sexes in society, 2nd edn (London, J. Murray, 1773), p.37.
them as fiction rested upon changing standards of historical credibility, which naturalised presuppositions about the possibilities of gender, family and social arrangements.

Moving on from the realm of legend, the fourth chapter examines a contemporary development of familial diversity that was also for the most part ignored by the Scots: the interacial world of Spanish America that had emerged in the aftermath of the conquest of the New World and centuries of racially crossed procreation. While all leading thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment were well acquainted with the main eighteenth-century source on this topic, the travel account of the Spanish natural explorer Jorge Juan and Antonio de Ulloa, it was only William Robertson who discussed the matter at any length. Ignorance of the state of Spanish America was less a cause of this than a general gap in Scottish historiography surrounding the dynamics of national change. While all agreed with David Hume that nations possessed specific and particular characters, the processes by which these characters could change over time, say through conquest and acculturation, were mostly ignored. This set the conditions for Millar's infamous description of an ostensibly 'savage' father who bashed his son's head against some stones in a fleeting fury of passion. Taken from Millar's reading of the travels of Commodore Byron, this image of savage fatherhood rested upon the problematic contention that insights into savage family life could be obtained from American Indian societies that had already lived under Spanish hegemony and been subject to Christian proselytisation for centuries, exposing the limits of Millar's evidentiary deliberations.

The compromised global character of Millar's ground-breaking analysis of the family rested in good part upon his interest in the political issues of his specific local setting. Millar undertook a comparative analysis of familial structures not only to resolve theoretical questions of the science of man, but also to derive the type of practical political reflection that Hume had defined as one of the science of man's objectives. He was anxious about fundamental social tensions posed by the advance of commercial society in Britain. Increasing labour mobility, economic risk and looser family ties meant that individual families could no longer be counted on to provide support in situations of individual existential necessity, and growing levels of suffering could result if society did not intervene to simulate forms of domestic care that had been readily resolved in more primitive forms of society through tribal solidarity. Through a holistic reading of Millar's surviving corpus, including his two published works (the *Ranks* and the *Historical view of English government*) and surviving student lecture notes, this chapter demonstrates that Millar's interest in the comparative analysis of family life and the changing contours of the domestic sphere was not limited to the *Ranks* but constituted a life-long passion. The discussion reveals significant problems with the common attribution of the radical 1796 *Letters of Sidney, on inequality of property* to Millar's pen, proposing that Millar's interests in the history of the family reveal the extent as well as limits of his political radicalism. Millar wrote a paean to the progress already achieved, rather than the force of progress itself. Like most of his Scottish contemporaries, he viewed with trepidation the hazy horizon towards which the train of progress was unyieldingly advancing.

Situating the challenge of familial difference: frames and contexts of Enlightenment

The Enlightenment has come back into fashion. Long a favourite whipping boy for scholars from an array of perspectives critical of 'European modernity' following the scathing critiques of Theodore Adorno, Max Horkheimer and Michel Foucault, the Enlightenment has recovered a wide-scale appeal. Bernard Yack, reviewing the state of Enlightenment scholarship several years ago, noted with pleasure that it was clear that 'the Enlightenment is back.' Recent scholarship on the Enlightenment is characterised by a highly developed degree of theoretical reflection, arising from the deeply problematic and contested nature of the concept of Enlightenment and the difficulties in negotiating between its philosophical, political and historical meanings. Applying the term of Enlightenment to denote an object of historical study assumes an intellectual historical terrain, exploring the intersection of ideas with social and cultural dimensions. The reinvigorated popularity of Enlightenment cannot, however, be attributed primarily to scholarly innovations. Rather, it has returned with force as a means of defending a supposedly philosophically and culturally besieged 'European modernity'. Yack's same phrase was used four years later in 2010 by the Australian editorials and Luke Slattery to a stridently ideological end: 'At last, strong voices are being raised in support of liberal enlightenment values and against fanatics. The Enlightenment is back.'


notes, philosophers from Anthony Grayling and Tzvetan Todorov to the controversial Dutch-Somali libertarian feminist Ayaan Hirsi Ali have all recently published paeans to the movement as founding the modern, liberal, individualist and secular state. Leftist political thinkers have also staked out a claim to the Enlightenment, focusing on their inheritance of its politically critical disposition.

However we may wish to interpret this polemical use of the Enlightenment, it is an inextricable component of the history of the concept. Paradoxically enough, the notion of a coherent, single Enlightenment movement – as opposed to the process implied by Aufklärung in the Kantian sense – seems first to have emerged from its opponents. Darrin McMahon’s reappraisal of Isaiah Berlin’s notion of counter-Enlightenment has demonstrated this for the French context, and James Schmidt has traced ‘Illumination’ as the first term exerting this function in Britain, where it was routinely used as a figure of attack by anti-Jacobins during the 1790s. ‘Enlightenment’ only emerged as the preferred English-language term in the late nineteenth century: before then, translations of Aufklärung tended either to leave the term in the original or use the odd, invented French term éclaircissement. Terms equivalent to ‘the Enlightenment’ have gradually emerged in most European languages with the exception of French, which retains the century-bound siècle des Lumières. This has not prevented the consistent deployment of the notion of a movement of modernising illuminati in the French national historical imagination, as Daniel Brewer has discussed.

Disciplinary particularities to history render these conceptual complications less fatal than they might be for an equivalent problem in other fields of studies, such as philosophy. The challenge of Hayden White notwithstanding, historians generally accept that frames of historical periodisation, although ultimately imperfectly contrived, are justifiable heuristic tools. The verdict on a particular periodisation for historians is borne out by its capacity to produce significant explanations and results. Eighteenth-century actors that we consider part of the Enlightenment may not have labelled themselves exactly as such; but, as Reinhart Koselleck has emphasised, they did recognise themselves as part of an intellectual vanguard living in a uniquely aware moment in history. Dan Edelstein’s recent Enlightenment: a genealogy suggests that the emergence of this self-perception is the strongest case for retaining the collective moniker of Enlightenment as a historical, as aside from a purely ideological, category. The Enlightenment did not need to be labelled literally as such; rather, it was the period in which a group of thinkers conceived of themselves as enlightened.

Edelstein’s argument combines revived contemporary attention to the process of the emergence of historicity with a nearly century-old contrasal of the movement as born from the late seventeenth-century querelle des ancients and des modernes. This debate began over the relative merits of modern and classical creative production and moved gradually on to technological, political and social aspects. Following Edelstein’s line, the Enlightenment can be distinguished from the vibrant intellectual world of the seventeenth century by the self-confidence it possessed as a uniquely accomplished moment in history, acting as a cauldron for the development of discourses of progress and futurity. Classical historical scholarship on the Enlightenment tended not to problematise these developments so much as accept them as steps towards higher stages of reason. Much like recent popular celebrations of the Enlightenment, Ernst Cassirer’s Die Philosophie der Aufklärung adopted an intellectual historical model grounded upon a holistic, programmatic and rationalist definition of the Enlightenment. In this Enlightenment, Paris is the capital and ideas leading to the emergence of the modern liberal democratic state radiated from there into other parts of Europe. Peter Gay retained this expansive vision, construing Enlightenment as the cauldron of the intellectual stock of modernity, yielding secularism, democracy, equality and science. This account faltered in the last quarter of the twentieth century not only due to the general turn away

40. Reinhart Koselleck, Vergangene Zukunft: zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten (Frankfurt am Main, 1979). This line of thought also underpins his earlier Kritik und Krise ein Beitrag zur Pathogenese des bürgerschen Welt (Frankfurt, 1959).
43. Ernst Cassirer, Die Philosophie der Aufklärung (Tübingen, 1922).
from grand narratives, but also because of growing doubts within Enlightenment scholarship of its historical validity or usefulness.

Millar in context: local and transnational settings of Enlightenment

Two general tendencies to the study of the Enlightenment after Peter Gay can be discerned: first a pluralisation of method beyond those of conventional intellectual history, involving the application of cultural and social historical techniques in particular, and second a fracturing of the scope of analysis. The former challenged any necessary division between intellectual history and other forms of history and demonstrated that the Enlightenment was only possible due to the existence of specific institutions, such as universities, salons, printing presses, cafés, book shops and the courts of enlightened monarchs, and practices of sociability and intellectual exchange developed therein. Jürgen Habermas’s emphasis on the importance of enlightened sociability in the emergence of the modern public sphere was a crucial inspiration.53 The second tendency towards a more context-specific study of Enlightenment has broadened our understandings of the range of people that can be considered as enlightened as well as uncovered thematic and institutional differences between regions.54 Given that this book places John Millar and his history of the family both in the context of a general European Enlightenment as well as a specifically local context of the Scottish Enlightenment, it is important to discuss this direction in the scholarship in some depth. This has been described as the national turn in Enlightenment studies.

John Pocock is the most vocal proponent of this approach, arguing that the single Enlightenment implied by the phrase ‘the Enlightenment’ is a historical mirage. For Pocock, local differences in intellectual contexts – such as dominant institutions of intellectual expression (universities, salons, royal courts), the local press situation, and the power and disposition of the Church – produced a ‘family’ of Enlightenments, all pursuing free thought but coming to discordant conclusions.55 British Enlightenment, for example, could be characterised as conservative and pious versus a heterodox, sceptical French Enlightenment. According to Pocock, one can thus speak of Enlightenments (in the plural) and the process of Enlightenment, but not of the Enlightenment.56 While not denying the relevance or utility of the national context, a growing line of interpretation during the past decade has argued for a return to a supranational, more cohesive understanding of the Enlightenment. This perspective argues that the national focus artificially fractures what was actually a consciously cosmopolitan movement defined by extensive transnational exchange. That is, the Enlightenment serves as a model example of transnational intellectual history. John Robertson is this perspective’s most forceful proponent, deploying a comparative analysis of the early Enlightenments of Naples and Scotland to uncover common themes to Enlightenment that transcended national contexts.57 His point is not the rejection of the national frame but rather the necessity of placing national studies within a supranational, cosmopolitan perspective true to the spirit of the ongoing early modern republic of letters of which most eighteenth-century philosophers considered themselves members.58 Jonathan Israel should also be considered as a prominent supporter of this direction of Enlightenment scholarship, although his work has a character nearer to recent political treatises on the Enlightenment than to Robertson’s intellectual history.59 Dividing Enlightenment into radical and conservative phases, Israel suggests that the former came into being amongst the late seventeenth-century cohort of Baruch Spinoza in the Dutch Republic and did most of the heavy intellectual work of Enlightenment. In contrast, familiar canonical figures from Montesquieu and Voltaire to Smith and Kant merely conventionalised less radical conclusions of monism.

Although Israel’s intervention has reactivated debate on how various periods and contexts of the Enlightenment should be ideologically defined, academic consensus by and large characterises the Enlightenment—
ment that took place in Scotland as conservative. John Pocock considers this a general feature of a basically pious (with the important exception of Hume) 'British Enlightenment'. Richard Sher supported this interpretation, demonstrating the importance of the Kirk in the Scottish Enlightenment in his pioneering *Church and university in the Scottish Enlightenment*. Both Sher and Pocock marked a break from older approaches to the study of the Scottish Enlightenment that tended to treat it as divorced from England, which Franco Venturi and Hugh Trevor-Roper characterised as lacking any form of Enlightenment. More recent scholarship has shown that enlightened Scots had strong links south of the Tweed and that Scotland's place as the main hub of Enlightened activity in Britain was due perhaps not so much to its unique challenges of modernisation and Anglicisation posited by Venturi but rather to its possession of a more dynamic, flexible university system. Scotland's five universities (Edinburgh, Glasgow, St Andrews, King's College Aberdeen and Marischal College Aberdeen) were much smaller and poorer than Oxford and Cambridge, but as Roger Emerson has underlined, this made them all the easier to change. University chairs in Scotland were financed in good part from a small group of wealthy benefactors. Emerson even suggests that the enlightened donor Archibald Campbell, 3rd Duke of Argyll, should be considered the true father of the Scottish Enlightenment given the extent of his patronage and power in approving appointments. Scholars have also focused on the importance of long-standing teaching traditions at Scottish universities in setting the methodological starting-points of the social theoretical flourishing of the second half of the eighteenth century, particularly civil jurisprudence and moral philosophy. Roger Emerson, 52. John Grevelle Agrig Pocock, *Clergy and commerce: the conservative Enlightenment in England*, in *L'Est dei bimbi: studi storici sul seicento europeo in onore di Franco Venturi*, ed. Raffaele Ajello et al., 2 vol. (Naples, 1985), vol.1, p.526-62.


57. Alexander Brodside, *The human mind and its powers*, in *The Cambridge companion to the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. Alexander Brodside (Cambridge, 2003), p.60-78; Knud Haakonssen, *Natural jurisprudence and the theory of justice*, in *Cambridge companion, Charles W. J. Withers and Paul Wood, on the other hand, have emphasised the importance of medical training in the renaissance of the Scottish university system around the turn of the eighteenth century, showing that the pursuit of practical knowledge was important in enabling the institutions that Thomas Reid, Adam Ferguson, Adam Smith, Millar and others would go on to use for more philosophical purposes.

Works on the institutional and social location of Enlightenment have helped those interested in Enlightenment intellectual developments better situate their work. The university-based nature of the Scottish Enlightenment had two important ramifications upon the field of questions relating to familial difference pursued in this book. First, due to gender exclusion policies at Scottish universities, it meant that the main guard of the Scottish Enlightenment was almost exclusively male. While women in France ran important loci of sociability and intellectual exchange in the form of salons and were influential novelists, women were barred from the key institutions of Enlightenment in Scotland. Local gender norms also meant that Scottish women were excluded from more informal levels of intellectual life, such as Scotland's energetic debating clubs, until the 1770s, when women were permitted in a restricted capacity as public participants. Second, Richard Sher's examination of the social composition of the main debating society of Glasgow, the Literary Society, puts into doubt the popular notion that the comparative method of Scottish Enlightenment social theory developed somehow out of close interaction with merchants active in the burgeoning trans-Atlantic trade. He contends that not only was commercial patronage of 'enlightened institutions [...] on the whole meagre', but also that there is little evidence of direct contact between men interested in practical knowledge and the leading figures of academic Enlightenment. This, according to Sher, was especially true for Millar's
home base of Glasgow, where, 'far more than in Edinburgh, the university virtually was the Enlightened'.64 Although this is not to say that John Millar and other university men lived in a hermetically sealed academic bubble, it does suggest that they must be approached above all as academicians.

Beyond the integration of social and cultural history into intellectual historical accounts of the Scottish Enlightened, the field has greatly benefited from recent attempts to seriously respond to critiques of Enlightenment by postmodernist, postcolonial and feminist scholars. In so doing, these studies follow John Robertson's call for Enlightenment studies to return to the field of ideas in order to prevent it from falling into an empty label essentially coterminous with 'eighteenth-century'. Historians such as David Allen Harvey, Sankar Muthu and Silvia Sebastiani have examined the diversity of Enlightenment verdicts on race in order to assess charges that the movement gave birth to modern racism and Eurocentric hierarchies of ordering global societies.65 While not denying that these were outcomes of Enlightenment human sciences, they contend that such analyses are insufficient. In their eyes, Enlightenment reflection upon other societies must be understood in a more nuanced, complex and ambiguous manner. As it relates to modern racism and the civilising mission, they assert that the Enlightenment produced both the seeds of these discourses but also the conceptual shears for cutting them down. Enlightened thought was diverse and rife with contradictions and opposing tendencies.

Sebastiani's work is unique in assessing race in the Scottish Enlightenment alongside gender, two categories which she argues showed the limits of just who Scottish Enlightenment thinkers thought were capable of progress.66 Her work continues an important interrogation into Scottish Enlightenment conceptions of women initiated by Sylvana Tomaselli and Jane Rendall.67 Tomaselli demonstrated how women played a pivotal role in Scottish Enlightenment narratives of the progress of society, including those offered by John Millar. Naturalised as gentle and soft, women exerted a civilising force upon men. Savage men, contradistinctively characterised as indifferent to the charms of women and incapable of restraining their animalistic sexual desire, were not prepared to enjoy this benefit but, as society progressed, men became increasingly fond of women, spent more time with them, and in the process became more influenced by them. Women were thus conceived of as key to the process of Enlightenment in a paradoxically active passiveness: civilisation as feminisation, as Tomaselli has put it. Karen O'Brien more recently has shown that this conception was not limited to the men of the Scottish Enlightenment but also embraced by contemporary female writers such as Catharine Macaulay and Mary Wollstonecraft, who adopted it in their contributions to the practice of historiography and history-writing.68 What is in need of more study is the broader narrative that enlightened progressive feminisation was couched within: the story of the emergence of a supposedly uniquely Christian-European familial form, one defined by life-long pairing marriage with tight restrictions on divorce. A sustained exploration of this in conjunction with the sources used to develop it reveals the contours of an ethnocentric narrative of exceptional progress which remains with us, the idea that women required the civilising process in order to obtain a dignified place within family and society, and that Europe (later 'the West') is the only region of the world where this has taken place.

The theoretical structures of Scottish Enlightenment thought have been well analysed, particularly in relation to its social theory and the praxis of its distinctive 'science of man', which David Hume initiated in 1739 in his Treatise of human nature.69 A shining example of what Franco Venturi described as the common reforming spirit of the Enlightenment, the goal was to bring the pursuit of knowledge to the service of enhancing everyday existence.70 The discovery of physical laws had done wonders for the study of the physical sciences, and it was hoped that a corresponding uncovering of laws governing social existence could likewise prove a great boon for practical politics. Millar's cohort in Scotland – Adam Smith, Adam Ferguson, William Robertson, Henry Home (Lord Kames), Gilbert Stuart, James Dunbar, James Burnett (Lord Monboddo) and William Alexander – produced more than a dozen histories from the 1770s to the 1790s in the spirit of this impulse. While the subject of these histories varied from civil society to the conquest of the New World and from the history of language to the history of world

64. Sher, 'Commerce, religion and Enlightenment', p.548.
population, all were united by a desire to derive progressive accounts out of the ordering of the diversity of customs and living arrangements that were presented by the testimony of antiquity, history and travel narratives.

As Silvia Sebastiani has shown at length, practitioners of the science of man after Hume were influenced by two methods in particular: Hume's own innovative analysis of national characters and Montesquieu's pursuit of the history of laws. Adam Smith's intervention into this matter in the 1760s during his lectures on jurisprudence at Glasgow was also critical, introducing the widely deployed 'statal model' of social development, a stage-based means of understanding differences between societies along twinned lines of progressive developments in property relations and means of obtaining sustenance. Millar, who became Smith's loyal protégé while attending these lectures as a student, has been considered this model's most systematic exponent. The French physiocrat Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot developed basically the same model simultaneously, but apparently independently of Smith. Whereas Turgot's model had three stages, Smith's had four:

1. Savagery, where people lived as hunters and gatherers.
2. Pastoralism/safariarism, where property-in-kind emerged through the amassing of stock of livestock.
3. Agriculture/sedentarism, where landed property was thoroughly entrenched.
4. Commercial/commercial society, where trade was the centrepiece of economic as well as property relations.

Smith's stadal model and its subsequent refinement over the course of the Scottish Enlightenment by other thinkers, including Millar, has been the subject of much study, beginning with Marxist theorists who viewed it as a proto-materialist theory of history. Amongst these was the great historian of economic ideas Ronald Meek, who was the first to analyse the centrality of intercultural comparison in the development and practice of the stadal model. While later studies have emphasised the anchorage of reading the stadal model backwards through historical materialism, Meek's identification of it as a sustained engagement with the testimony of cultural diversity circulating in eighteenth-century Europe remains fundamental. Christopher Berry has shown that the histories of society produced during the late Scottish Enlightenment cannot be understood without the structuring functions of this model, as although its uptake by each thinker differed, it played a pivotal role in all of their narratives of historical development. Further, Fania Oz-Salzburger and Annette Meyer have shown how this pursuit had important impacts beyond Scotland, particularly in Germany, where all major Scottish works were quickly translated and interest in them remained strong into the nineteenth century. In the case of John Millar's Ranks, a new translation was carried out by the Leipzig publicist Johann Adam Bergk two decades after Millar had made his major revisions of the third English edition of 1779.

Reconsidering Millar's significance

This book contends that the adoption of a content- and problematic-based analysis of the handling of familial diversity in Scottish history writing during the Enlightenment permits a deeper understanding of the achievements and limitations of Scottish comparative thought than that which can be offered simply by the structural analysis of methodological models. What interests us here is not so much Millar's use of the stadal model itself—described by mid-twentieth-century Millar expert William C. Lehmann as the heart of his early form of sociology—but rather the extent to which Millar, in his relative openness to his sources, struggled to maintain the persuasive unity towards which the model aspired. Michael Ignatieff has adjudged Millar as falling towards the end of his life.
into 'intellectual disarray' following his inability to escape from the straitjacket of the stadial model and his own moral anxieties, sliding 'from the minutely documented, self-consciously "scientific" analysis to the sweeping moral jeremiad of the final pages of the Historical view'.

I find two limitations in this judgement of Millar. First, it awards too much credit to the positivist quality of Millar's handling of difference – 'minutely documented', as we shall see, is not the right phrase to describe this. Additionally, it fails to recognise how Millar's angst-ridden politicalisation of family life during the contentious atmosphere of the French Revolution grew out of a life-long interest in the matter, explored at length below in chapter 5. Millar must be appreciated as an interesting thinker beyond his engagement with the stadial model. He, more than any other thinker, evidences the complex decisions that Enlightenment-era thinkers making the history of the family had to make in negotiating several competing models of organising familial difference and assessing the origins and causes of gendered difference.

The significance of gender and the progressive narrative of feminisation and civilisation have not only been well researched for the Scottish Enlightenment in general, but also for the particular case of John Millar. That Millar's history of gender was only one component of his broader history of the family and authority has been less appreciated. Paul Bowles has indicated the argumentative similarities between Millar's history of the family and that found in Marx and Engel's Ursprung der Familie, des Privat- eigentums und des Staates, pointing to the extensive notes Marx took on the first section of the Ranks concerning the historical progress of the husband-wife relationship. In general however, Bowles adopted the women's history focus that later scholars have found so compelling with Millar. A recent exception is Mary Catherine Moran, who has demonstrated how Millar as well as William Robertson conceived of the domestic sphere as an essentially 'social sphere', meaning one of fundamental import for the broader political life of a community.

This book expands on Moran's contentions not only to show how deeply this applied to the thought of John Millar but also how widely this was appreciated in the Enlightenment, both within and beyond Scotland. Studies undertaken in two major schools in intellectual history – the predominantly Anglo-American Cambridge School approach to the history of political thought and the originally German practice of conceptual history (Begriffsgeschichte) – have tended to make little of the family as a subject of intellectual history. While an extended article on the family was provided in Koseleck's Geschichte der Grundbegriffe, it paid little attention to Enlightenment debates outside Germany on the topic besides the rather eccentric (though influential) contributions of Rousseau. Further, in occupying a place, as Moran has identified, between the political and the purportedly private, and in undergoing change only in a gradual, long-term timespan, historians of Enlightenment political thought have found dynamics related to the family easier to grapple with through other prisms, such as gender. An important exception is the historiography of the French Revolution, which has long studied the radical debates on family form that took place during it in depth, debates that led to the legalisation of divorce. Family politics, however, preceded the 1790s. Proponents of the then-standard practice of life-long monogamous heterosexual marriage – which included most men of Enlightenment, particularly in Scotland – deployed polemical world historical assessments of certain familial structures to demonstrate why it would not be wise to adopt any alternative practices. In particular,}

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this involved the circulation of a spectre of tyrannical and infantilising ‘Oriental’ polygamy.

Beyond confirming the importance of comparative reflection upon family life in the thought of Enlightenment, a close study of the transfer of models, sources and discussions of familial difference in various contexts in Enlightenment constitutes an instructive means of transcending the national frame of analysis. The contextual, institutional and intellectual preconditions of Scottish universities were indeed critical for Millar, given that most of his direct intellectual contacts as well as all of his long-distance travels were restricted to the island of Great Britain. Yet the study of the production and transmission of specific reputations reveals communities of interaction determined not by pre-set groupings of language, nation or ideology but rather loose ‘virtual’ communities produced by the intersection of shared interests. Millar and other Enlightenment figures sought to understand the family doubly as a universal category of social life as well as an institution subject to great local variation. This task amounted not to an abandonment of the framework of natural human sociability as advanced by Francis Hutcheson and continued by Thomas Reid, but rather to a historicisation of their accounts of interpersonal social relations in light of the range of cultural variation found across time and space. To do this, he and other late century Scottish thinkers drew upon sometimes surprising figures, thinkers with whom they otherwise had little in common culturally, institutionally or philosophically. For Millar, the tripartite Aristotelian and natural law division of household authority relationships that he inherited from Francis Hutcheson and Gershom Carmichael provided the main means for understanding the basic outlines of historical changes in family form, and Smith’s stadial model a solution to the question of intercultural variation.87 Neither, however, was capable of standing up to the full testimony of diversity posed by recent travel literature, reappraisals of classical history and circulating pro-monogamy treatises.

Importantly Millar, like his predecessors across Europe around the turn of the eighteenth century, was suspect of an approach to the rejection of strange practices common amongst his Scottish contemporaries on grounds of their basic impossibility due to a priori assessments of human nature. By his time, it had become commonplace that standing historical accounts were littered with miracles and imaginary creatures, and a rational history built upon the foundations of question-