

# Genealogy, Ontogeny, and the Narrative Arc of Origins

**Smail, D.L. 2011. Genealogy ontogeny, and the narrative arc of origins. *French Historical Studies* 34(1): 21-35.**

French history in part created by François Guizot

"By the end of the nineteenth century, the shifting nature of origins-talk, in France, is palpable." 11 on pdf

*Paleolithic and medievalists could also find common ground talking about the problem of searching for origins History provides the radiocarbon date*

"...metaphors of origin, birth, roots, and revolution have proliferated in medieval historiography, as medieval Europe...became the period of origin for civil society, the state, commerce and trade, banking cities, individualism, universities, the modern nuclear family, scientific method, law and justice, human rights, citizenship, colonialism, fashion, and more recently, even persecution." 17-18 on pdf

"The French case is different. The pedigree of origins-talk, after all, takes us back to the discourse of the Enlightenment, and the makers of the French Revolution were conscious of their role as inaugurators of a new world. The novelty of the late nineteenth century did not consist of developing origins-talk from scratch; rather,...it was a question of applying it systematically to the origins of France in the middle ages." 20 of pdf

*is the metaphor of origins perhaps subconsciously adopted in part because it reflects the act of memory? we remember the least from our time as babies but this is still inherently part of our lifespan...is there not another issue of the need to argue for relevancy and how this may have driven the development of medieval studies or at least the "marketing" of it?*

"In this way, medieval Europe has become History's prehistory." 24 of pdf

"The point here is that evocations of birth or origins, perhaps inevitably, perhaps unintentionally, lead to a flattening of history and a compression of historical time. To postulate a leap or a rupture is to flatten everything that came before into an uninteresting prehistory and stifle historical curiosity in the Great Before." 25 of pdf