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Heritage and its Lineage: A Case History of Transmission and Social Mobility over Five Generations

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At face level, this chapter is a case history of a French male lineage from a rural background, which was able over several generations to create a small family business, develop it, and eventually move into the ranks of the educated middle class: a pattern of slow upward mobility rather typical of French society. The chapter describes how this was achieved, focusing on the transmissions and reappropriations of family assets in successive generations. Through this analysis, the unexpected nature of this family's central asset is uncovered.

But this chapter was also first written in its original French version as a contribution to the debate currently referred to as 'structure versus agency'. During the 1980s, intense discussions took place around this topic within French sociology, in which all leading scholars participated: Bourdieu, Crozier, Touraine, Boudon, Morin. Such discussions revolved around the opposition between the structuralist approach, which had been dominant during the two preceding decades, and the (re-)emerging actionalist approach. Since the French readers to whom the chapter was initially addressed were perfectly aware of the foreign parameters of the debate, readers were expected to make the links themselves, which were not recalled in the paper. A reader, however, less aware of this intellectual context, might at first miss the chapter's meta-theoretical aspects.

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The debate which this chapter addresses has been at the heart of sociology since its beginnings. On the one side have been those who hold that social phenomena are determined by underlying laws (Comte), functions and constraints (Durkheim), structures (Levi-Strauss, Bourdieu), systems and sub-systems (Parsons, Luhmann); and on the other, those who believe that, ultimately, they are the results of human action or micro-interactions, from Simmel and Mead to Touraine, Morin, Boudon, the constructivists or the 'rational choice' theorists of today. It has never been solved; very few scholars were able to hold the two opposite points of view simultaneously (Marx and Weber are the two most obvious exceptions). Quite a number of theoretically minded contemporary sociologists are however trying to move beyond the opposition between structure and agency: it is this topic which led Giddens to develop his theory of structuration; which inspired much of Alexander's thinking in the 1980s, and which underlies Bourdieu's best theoretical piece so far, *The Logic of Practice*.¹ All these works stand in the background of the present chapter as silent sentinels.

The case history presented here aims at contributing to the debate, in an original way: by looking at a very small piece of social historical reality, and finding out which of the two grand theoretical approaches, structuralism or actionalism, appears to be most successful in making sense of *what really happened* in this small piece of reality.

Following Bourdieu's example in *The Logic of Practice*, a wholly structuralist interpretation of the observed phenomena is first attempted. It appears to be very successful in this case, as it discloses core underlying patterns of socio-structural relationships in the local society that would have remained undiscovered otherwise. At this point it seems as if the structuralist approach is vindicated by this case study. However, since some phenomena on the margins of the case remain unexplained, a new approach focusing on agency and strategies is then taken; and unfolding through its own logic, it is extended to the analysis of phenomena hitherto conceived as structurally produced, which suddenly appear in a wholly new light . . .

Thus the chapter has been constructed as an intellectual experiment in confronting the two main streams of sociological thinking on a (deceptively simple) case study.

We include it in this volume for a double reason: not only be-

cause its substantive topic is the social shaping of life trajectories, that is, of 'social mobility'; but also because, at the epistemological level, it addresses a central debate which, while being at the very centre of general sociology, has hardly been explicitly dealt with in the literature on social mobility, although the issues it addresses obviously underlie the ways in which social mobility phenomena and processes become conceptualized.

FAMILIES AND SOCIAL MOBILITY

For those sociologists who first attempted to think concretely about social stratification, the basic unit was not the individual but the family. With the development of representative sampling techniques, however, in which the basic unit is the individual, that sociological approach has vanished. Yet is it not an unnecessary loss to see a conceptual framework rejected and condemned to oblivion simply for technical reasons?

In recent years, we have attempted to reconstruct and develop this 'family-based' perspective for questions relating to stratification and social mobility. In this view, social status, for instance, is construed as a property of family groups rather than of individuals, taken separately: the latter simply have an occupational status, which is not the same thing. The idea of social status as an attribute of the family leads to the notion of family social trajectories as a sequence of social statuses for a 'family' (the fact that a long-range view of the 'family' as a 'unit' reveals its successive subdivisions and recompositions at each generation in no way cancels out the idea of its continuity, but makes it more complex and interesting). We also assume that in a class society—in contrast to a society of castes or corporations—a desirable social status cannot be passed on as such from parents to children: parents can only provide access to or pass on resources or assets (be they economic, cultural, relational, related to socio-spatial location, ethnicity, and so on), on the basis of which a social trajectory remains to be constructed. There is nothing mechanical about reproduction: it is a dynamic process, in which individuals can best be conceived as players involved in the social games of generalized social competition.

On such elementary principles a sociology of stratification and

social mobility may be reconstructed in which, at last, women have their place, as do family ties and so many other phenomena (such as how brothers and sisters raised together branch out into different schooling, vocational and—in the last analysis—social trajectories). An appropriate type of observation corresponding to this theoretical perspective is required, then, and it is for this purpose that we have developed case histories of families as a new tool for observing the processes involved in social mobility.²

It is a fact that these case histories of families constitute an extremely fertile means of access to the processes by which the social trajectories of individuals and families are shaped. This is particularly true for what we may call the processes internal to families and individuals themselves, as opposed to the external processes (including those connected to local labour markets and structures of opportunities, or collective historical events). In the case of employees, for instance, while the course taken by their career after their first job depends essentially on external processes, that first job, on which their entire subsequent career rests, seems to be determined to a large extent by their family background and personal school achievement. The family of origin, where primary socialization takes place, is indeed characterized by its level of economic, educational, and cultural resources, as well as of access to public facilities and to different segments of the labour market (such levels vary enormously from one family to another, in accordance with class position, at least in France); and also by the highly contrasting cultural micro-climates, even within the same social milieu. Children who grow up within these micro-climates with their tremendous diversity and contrasting resources internalize and eventually embody these differences. The statistical variable 'father's occupation' can only be a very rough indicator of such multidimensional variations.

But case histories of families do much more than unveil what is hidden behind the social origins of an individual: they produce a change in the angle of vision, so that instead of focusing our attention on individuals and their trajectories, we look at the relations between parents and children (or more generally, between ancestors, collaterals, and descendants). We view socialization processes as structured around the transmission of role models, attitudes, values, and taboos, and of linguistic, perceptual, cognitive, educational, communicational, and emotional resources (or handicaps),

along with economic and patrimonial resources. What is passed on here is transmitted more or less consciously, more or less voluntarily (in some instances transmission may be completely involuntary, sometimes even amounting to the reverse of consciously pursued objectives); 'reception' and appropriation by the intended recipients, the children and grandchildren, also appears to be quite variable. Be this as it may, what each child retains will condition, to a large extent, his or her personality and school career, as well as integration in the working world (and therefore, the point of departure of the person's vocational trajectory) and beyond that, social integration.

The conceptual framework behind our work on case histories of families is therefore one of the 'shaping of social trajectories', focused on the idea of transmissions. In collecting these histories, we leave our interviewees in full control of their narration whenever possible. The interviewer simply uses the memorized interview guidelines as reminders for introducing themes in the course of the conversation. The reconstitution of the family tree, or genealogy, reaching back at least to the two pairs of grandparents of the person interviewed (ego) and including all descendants of both of these couples as well as their spouses, often affords an opportunity to prolong the interview.

What interests us here is the question of analysis: how can the wealth of sociological facts implicit in any family case history be made explicit?

Clearly, the best method is comparative analysis. Let us take the example of ten families in which the 'grandparents' were peasants at the turn of the century, and compare their destinies: comparison will show the respective weight, for the subsequent differentiation of the vocational trajectories of their members, of external and internal factors, of initial differences in resources, however slight, as well as of local contexts, family micro-climates, and other specific events.

Once a relatively good understanding is achieved of the type of destiny that was probable, possible, or out of reach for people of given social origins at a given time—that is, of the 'champ des possibles', or range of possible destinies, as Sartre puts it—the same may be done for other social milieux. Only then can we go on to the next stage, involving the comparison between ranges of possibilities of different social milieux in a given period.

Before we reach that point, however, it is important to gain an understanding of what each case history of a family has to say, and more specifically, of its sociological significance. The lack of a comparative dimension, showing 'how variables vary', constitutes the main difficulty at this point. The fact that sociology lacks a tradition of case studies is a further handicap. Cursory application of the Aristotelian rule that 'there can be no science without generalization' leads to excessive incitement to ignore specific cases, whereas it is quite obvious that every specific case contains a 'general' dimension. Each history of a family is only partially unique; it has some points in common with many other histories, and much in common with a few other family histories. The 'general' dimension does not reside exclusively in large numbers; it must also be ferreted out in specific cases.

The family history that is analysed below—or rather, the account of that history by one of its members—was collected in a small town in central-southern France, called 'Sauveterre' in the rest of the text. We chose it because we felt it clearly illustrated one facet of the phenomenon of transmissions in general: the transmission of capital in a craft. Four successive generations of its men were craftsmen: one was a rural miller, one a backer, the third a seed merchant, the fourth a small manufacturer of cattle feed. Since we wanted to see how a small 'family' business determines or influences the destinies of the family descendants, the history of this family seemed to demand a thorough analysis.

As we proceeded, we discovered that this case history also afforded food for thought on a much more general question: what governs individual trajectories—the individual's agency or socio-structural relationships? Posed in this simple form, the alternatives may seem caricatured; nevertheless, the question underlies each and every concept used by sociologists of social mobility. The concepts of reproduction, barriers to mobility, and social homogamy (in choosing a spouse), for instance, are clearly conducive to the structuralist-objectivist views, whereas concepts such as achievement, status attainment process, or strategy reinforce the opposite conception. The structuralist approach so popular in French sociology in the 1970s can be exemplified by the old saying, 'It is not the peasant who inherits the land, but the land that inherits the peasant': in focusing on this case history we wanted to find out whether the same may be said of a line of descendants of craftsmen.

A BUSINESS LINEAGE OF FOUR GENERATIONS

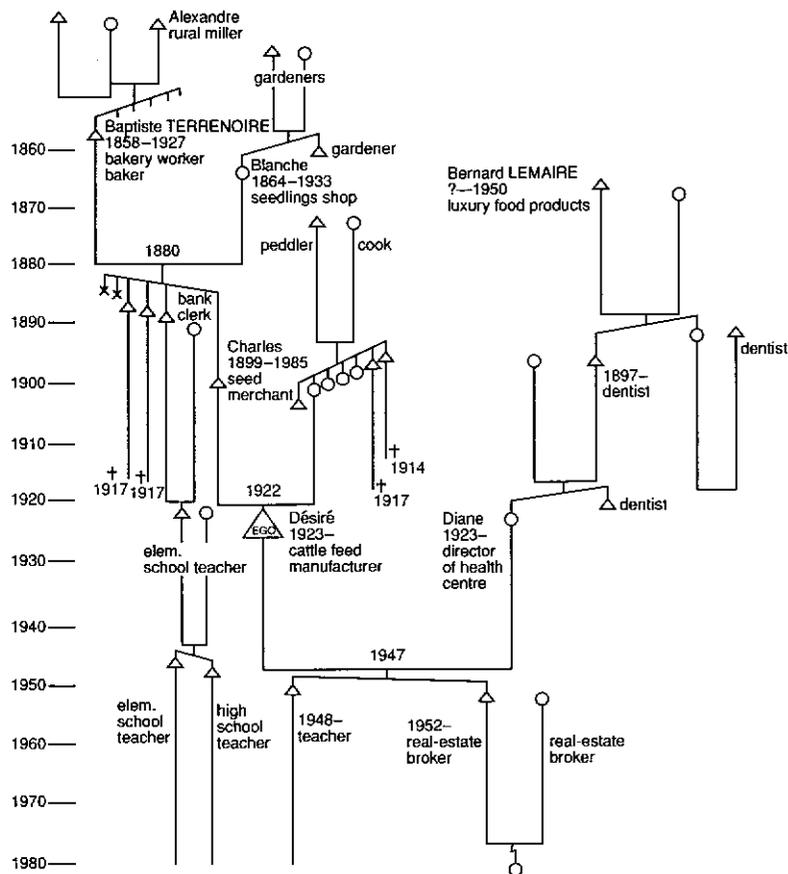


FIG. 3.1. Social Genealogy of the Terrenoire Lineage

The graph on p. 68 illustrates what we call a *social genealogy*, that is, a genealogy in which not only persons' names, but also their main occupations appear on the graph and their links become visible. The conventions used by ethnographers to represent kinship relations have been kept, but the graph has been drawn against the background of historical time.

Sauveterre, October 1987. The speaker is Désiré Terrenoire, a 65-year-old retired man:

My father died a little over a year ago. He was born here, in 1899, and died in 1985 at the age of 86. His father, who was my grandfather, was born in the countryside nearby in 1858, to a family of farmers . . . and small-scale millers. At the time, in the village of Beauvallon, the little mills were used not only to grind flour, but were also equipped to make cider and walnut oil, and there was also a small dye-works. That was all done at the mill off a small stream that teemed with fish. It was a real fisher's paradise: full of trout, according to my grandfather.

The grandfather, Baptiste, was the last-born of a family of seven children. At the death of his father, Alexandre,³ the rural miller, Baptiste was still a youngster. His mother remarried a farmer, also a widower, with six children (six other children were born to this second marriage). Baptiste was brought up by his grandmother, since 'there were problems at home'.

Towards the age of 17 or 18, Baptiste left for Sauveterre as a baker's apprentice. Several years later, in 1880, the young man opened his own bakery, on the outskirts of the town, right on the road leading to his native village.

The house was very tiny, the bakehouse was on the ground floor . . . It's quite complicated, because the house is located at the crossroads. The Rodez road side is higher than the other road, so there are actually two ground floors . . . there are different levels. The bakehouse was on one side and the bakery shop on the other, but above the bakehouse. There were two other rooms.

He was 22 when he set up trade. He married a girl of 16, whose parents were gardeners: 'they sold seedlings for vegetable gardens'.

At the time, my grandfather was a tall, rather handsome man and my grandmother had noticed him. But she had always seen him dressed in his baker's clothes. When they got married he put on a wedding suit and she hardly recognized him. For their honeymoon, they took a carriage and

travelled a few kilometres, and on their wedding night he got up at two in the morning to go back and make his bread! My grandmother told me all that.

The family life was entirely organized around the bakery. The young woman ran the store, but Baptiste sold most of the bread on his rounds through the country, with a horse-drawn cart, in the afternoon.

My grandmother was a very lively, dynamic person. She ran the bakery, and a grocery store as well. They also sold farm produce, seed, and fertilizer. My grandmother was a very good, very active businessperson at the time, and she thought nothing of travelling to Bordeaux to buy seed, or to Toulouse to buy noodles, or fertilizer, to handle dealings, and she did that all alone.

My grandfather only worked at his bakery, making bread, and he also had a little garden. He loved that, he loved gardening. He grew huge amounts of strawberries, to the point that he sold large amounts of them. He had organized his garden with reservoirs for watering: he had a well, the land was very fertile.

Baptiste and his wife Blanche had six children, two of whom died in infancy. There remained four sons, born between 1882 and 1899. The elder two left school early and stayed with their father, to make bread. They were drafted immediately when the First World War broke out. Both fought in the trenches for three years, and were killed in the great battles of the year 1917. The third son had also been drafted during the war; he came back alive, but broken by the experience. Charles, the father of our interviewee, was the youngest of the four. He finished elementary school, attended high school for two years, and took a job as a bank clerk in 1915. But when the war was over he had to leave that job, which he had held for nearly two years, and liked, to help his father at the bakehouse. In 1922 he married Camille, a girl who worked as housekeeper in a private home on the same street.

My mother came from a neighbouring region, her family was large and not very well-to-do. She had to 'go into service' very young, at the age of 11. Then, towards the age of 15 or 16, she came to town to work as a maid, for people who lived on the same street as my father. That's how he met my mother.

The two families set up an arrangement. Since the baker and his wife lived over the bakery, the son occupied a house purchased by

the father a few years earlier, a bit down the street. Charles's older brother, a bank clerk, who had also married, lived there already. His wife was a postal employee. In 1923, one year after their marriage, a son—*Désiré*, the narrator of this story—was born to Charles and his wife Camille. To the keen regret of his parents and himself, *Désiré* was an only son.

Four years later, in 1927, his grandfather Baptiste died. A complete reorganization ensued.

Since the grocery store and the farm produce business had expanded somewhat, my father hired a journeyman baker and a maidservant, who worked in the store and in the house. Both of the employees took their meals with us: that was family life. In fact, I still see the baker's man, who was two years older than my father. He is 90 or 91 now. He made most of the bread. My father helped him at the oven, but he did most of the work, and before him it was my grandfather. My father mostly took care of the business, selling and managing the grocery and the farm produce store, and he went on the rounds with the bread.

The parents, Charles and Camille, moved in over the bakery, while *Désiré's* grandmother came to live with him: it was she who took care of him.

I was tremendously coddled by my grandmother. I was with my parents until the age of 4, then my grandmother raised me until I was 9 or 10. I was really coddled . . . too much so. For instance, she had asthma—at the time that was quite exceptional, in fact—and she took the cure at a spa in Luchon, and I went with her. I went there with her for three consecutive years. I was happy, because she didn't just take the cure, we also went touring in the area, just the two of us. I was between the ages of 7 and 10. I went back to the same place 50 years later, I was with my wife, and I saw the lady at the hotel—she was a girl at the time—who remembered my grandmother. People noticed her, because she was so dynamic . . . She talked a lot, she liked to learn things, she kept informed about politics, she was not marked, politically, but she was interested . . . That was quite unusual for a woman in our region at the time.

Not only was little *Désiré* surrounded by affection, he was also 'looked after' by a teacher related to his family. The (secular) elementary school he attended was named after a nephew of his grandmother, a soldier killed during the First World War. The nephew's brother taught there. *Désiré*, well supervised, has good memories of his school years.

I was 10 when my grandmother died, I was exactly 10. I was enormously affected by her death. She was an energetic woman, as I've said . . . She saw her death coming, and she was quite religious, in fact—she wasn't over-devout, she was Catholic but very broad-minded—and she insisted on having her two grandsons present when she received the extreme unction, it was very . . . she was a very energetic woman . . . That did mark me, after all, that marked me.

When the grandmother died, the estate accumulated by grandfather Baptiste was divided up between Charles and his brother. Charles kept the building with the bakery. His son Désiré moved into a small room there, on the second storey; the building in which he had lived with his grandmother became the property of his uncle on his father's side (Charles's brother), who also had only one son. Charles also kept a third house, purchased by Baptiste on the same street for use as a warehouse. In the following year he purchased the house alongside the bakery, to have more living space, because 'it was really tiny'.

Désiré passed the 'sixth form' entrance exam successfully. He continued his studies up to the baccalauréat with no great difficulty, with the support and encouragement of his family.

My father would have liked me to be a teacher. In fact, I didn't have any definite idea of my own . . . so, we were three friends, and after the bac, one of us said: 'why don't we go for the entrance competition . . .?' (I was 18.) 'why don't we go for the entrance competition for cadet officers at the Marseilles merchant marine school?'. For inland people, that was pretty surprising.

Still, there were a few precedents, here: I had an older friend who was a sea-going officer, and I knew his parents very well.

The three friends passed the competitive examination, which was relatively difficult (only 60 of the 300 candidates qualified). After two years of studies, Désiré failed the final examination.

We were young, we weren't limited, and we could easily have made another try at the exam; but this was in 1943, and I was 20. There was the Occupation. Now, in '42, I had registered with the Compagnie des Messageries Maritimes, not that I was obliged to do so, and I was supposed to leave for Black Africa, but the boat never succeeded in leaving the dock, I stayed there for a month and a half, waiting. As a result, in '43 I was requisitioned for the Compulsory Labor Service [STO] on the Baltic Sea, as cadet in the German navy. [NB: after the collapse of the French armed

forces in June 1940, France was occupied by German troops and remained so until the summer of 1944].

The prospect of being drafted into the German navy was far from attractive to Désiré Terrenoire: like many other young people at the time, he preferred to take to the maquis. At the end of the war, he took advantage of an opportunity to take accelerated courses for army cadets. In 1945, as second lieutenant in the artillery, he enlisted with the Far Eastern expeditionary corps, and awaited his departure for the Pacific. But when the Japanese capitulated, his enlistment lost its *raison d'être*.

I could have signed up for Indochina, but I didn't want to. I realized that the military career was not for me. They sent me to Rodez, near home, and I spent nearly three months there, waiting for my discharge. I had a few things in mind for my future, I had found out that I was very free-spirited, and that I couldn't pursue a career in the army, or anything like that.

During those months, Désiré Terrenoire filed a request for some 'trade licences' different from those his father had, which would enable him to go into the seed business. When he was finally discharged, he returned to Sauveterre with that new asset in his pocket, and entered his father's business, but with an idea of his own: 'I had set my mind on making cattle feed'.

He also had other reasons for returning to Sauveterre. He had met a girl of his age, Diane Lemaire, who was in high school with him at the time:

I hardly knew her. For her eighteenth birthday, she had a party, and she invited me, just like that, like some ordinary comrade. She had invited my friends, who she knew much better than me, and I was with them at the time, so she said, 'You can come too', just that simple, that's all. We went out together for six years after that birthday party, with ups and downs. I was a cadet in Marseilles and it was very simple, I didn't want to get married: it's incompatible with the Navy. We married in '47. She had gone to medical school, but in '47 she hadn't quite finished her studies. She passed her thesis the following year, in '48. Our first son was born shortly afterwards.

Diane came from a prominent family in Sauveterre. Her father and uncle were dentists there. She herself worked for several years as school doctor in a neighbouring town. But in 1952, when her second son was born, she put a temporary end to her medical work. Two years later she was asked to head a regional medical centre.

She then successfully passed the state degree required for the position. She is still in charge of that centre, which has expanded over those thirty years.

When they were first married, the young couple lived in one of the Terrenoire family houses (the one next door to the bakery). Soon afterward, however, another arrangement was found. When his wife's grandfather sold some business premises, Désiré Terrenoire purchased them, along with the adjoining house, that belonged to an elderly aunt. This enabled him both to move closer to the downtown area and to pursue his idea: to use the business premises to make cattle feed and sell it directly to farmers. He achieved this very gradually, between 1952 and 1958.

There was a man here who had a cattle-feed manufacturing business, a large one for the region. It made practically all of the cattle feed for the region, and my idea was precisely that since it covered everything, there was probably room for someone smaller. At one point I thought about being an officer in the gendarmerie, but . . . I could easily have done it, but actually one or two years later, because it's difficult to mount a business at the beginning. I realized that it was difficult, but in the back of my mind, so to speak, I always thought I would make cattle feed.

Mr Terrenoire was right about farmers' new needs. But he was not the only one: the local co-operative also began to make cattle feed. He then attempted to form an alliance with it, but was unsuccessful.

So I made cattle feed, to the point where my little business was doing well, and I was cramped for space. I had to think about expanding. I applied for land in the industrial tract, so I could put up a larger workshop. But to set up a little factory, even a relatively small one, required a heavy investment; I was already 44 or 45, and I was reluctant.

This was in 1968. Désiré Terrenoire hesitated for several reasons. His business had taken on regional proportions, thanks to fruitful connections with another firm established at the opposite end of the region. After some conflicts with its managers, however, he was anxious to break those ties. At the same time, a change had occurred at the head of the local co-operative, and he knew the new director personally. When the director proposed a merger—that is, that he become an executive in the co-operative and bring his clientele with him—he accepted immediately.

My entire business went into the local co-operative, which was a large one. I was taken on as business manager, and I could then turn my own facilities

into apartments, for rental. I stayed with them for ten years: and I took early retirement, because of some rather serious medical problems. [Mr Terrenoire had a mild stroke, from which he had not entirely recovered at the time he was interviewed.]

Désiré and Diane Terrenoire had two sons, who grew up in the downtown house. The eldest son entered medical school, and then decided to become a teacher. He is a bachelor, in poor health; for the time being he is not considering either marrying or pursuing his professional training. His father had an interesting remark to make about him: 'He was kind of depressed, so the best thing for him was to become a high school teacher in the Education Nationale (the state-supported school system).' The youngest son studied architecture, taught in a technical school for a while, then returned to Sauveterre to work as a real estate broker. His young wife also works in the agency: they have a daughter about 10 years old. The couple live in the downtown house.

As for Désiré and Diane Terrenoire, they are now living in a villa they built on a hilltop. It is there, in the large, sunlit living-room overlooking all of Sauveterre and the surrounding countryside, that Désiré told the history of his family, waving his arms as he pointed out one place or another, such as the plush home of his parents-in-law, visible in clear weather, or some more distant places like his great-grandfather's village, Beauvallon, the birthplace of the male lineage, vaguely glimpsed beyond the fields and woods.

STRUCTURES, THE RANGE OF POSSIBLE DESTINIES, AND THEIR DETERMINATION

We are looking at four generations of men of the same lineage. Baptiste had two sons who reached adulthood; his son Charles had a single son, Désiré; and the latter had two sons, Emile and Etienne. This is what makes the case history of this family relatively easy to comprehend.

THE SEQUENCE OF TRADES

There is no doubt that this is a line of craftsmen and small businessmen, all self-employed and directly involved in the daily workings of their family enterprise.

One might think that the craftsman's trade would be passed on automatically: but this is not the case here. The Terrenoire were neither millers nor bakers for generation after generation (Charles Terrenoire stopped being a baker, in the strict sense, as soon as he could). Each generation seems to have had its own vocational project, its own strategy for accumulation, and to have distinguished itself from the previous one by developing a different activity, by innovating; it galvanized itself around its own specific stakes.

If something was passed on from one generation to the next, it does not seem to have been in the form of transmission of sameness, as is the case when 'the land inherits the peasant', or when the son of a notary public becomes notary public in turn.

Faced with the data he or she has collected, the first job of the sociologist, as we conceive of it, is to look for socio-structural determinations: this is the structuralist moment.

In this case, we first note the technical proximity, or 'kinship' of the trades. Miller, baker, grain and seed seller, and manufacturer of cattle feed all have something in common: they all deal with grain. Exactly a century later, and *mutatis mutandis*, the great-grandson actually does exactly the same work his great-grandfather, the miller, did: he grinds grain. The miller did it for human consumption, the cattle-feed manufacturer makes food for animals.

There is a possibility that the similarity is purely formal: further scrutiny is required to discover whether or not there is continuity in this sequence of subsequent trades.

The main point is that not only are all involved in the processing and/or commerce of grain and its derivatives, but further, although the Terrenoire family, in the person of Baptiste, migrated from a rural setting to an urban one in 1875, its activities continued all along to be oriented towards farmers.

In the rural context from which Baptiste came, dealings were actually done without the mediation of money. One of the best examples is, precisely, the local wheat-flour-bread circuit: each peasant would bring his wheat to the mill and would recover the flour (his own flour) in exchange for a few measures of wheat. He could then either store the flour at home and bake bread on the farm, or take it to the baker in town and recover the equivalent over the course of the year, in the form of bread. Not a cent was paid at any point in this complex circuit; the exchanges were spread

over the entire year, and were obviously grounded in the peasant's trust in both miller and baker.

When Baptiste went off to town, he apparently broke with this type of transaction: what are small towns in rural areas, if not market-places? But the reality is quite different. Both the location chosen by Baptiste in building his bakery (on the outskirts of the town, on the road leading to the region from which he originated) and some incidental remarks in his grandson's account seem to indicate that from the outset this 'urban' bakery was purposely oriented towards a rural clientele; that is, towards those peasant families who no doubt already knew Baptiste to be son of Alexandre, the miller.

The rounds through the surrounding countryside, made by Baptiste every afternoon in his horse-drawn cart, become fully meaningful in this light: he was making the rounds of his clientele, of the goodwill indirectly inherited from his father. Now, the reader will remember that his wife sold farm produce, fertilizer, and seeds. Who were her customers? Certainly not the townspeople, but the same farmers to whom her husband sold his bread.

Charles, their son, took over these activities and developed them. His own son remembers that clearly:

In the old days bread was made with leaven (. . .)

(My father) sold leaven sometimes, to customers who made their own bread. There (were) many country people who made their own bread and bought leaven from the baker. I clearly remember when I was young, seeing my parents sell leaven to farmers for their homemade bread . . . Later on, (my father) gradually changed to using yeast.

Do you remember whether your father sold to the farmers or the people from (Sauveterre) on credit?

Yes, he sold on credit. Often the farmers paid for their bread in kind, either in wheat or in flour that was called exchange, and it continued until somewhere around 1950-1960 . . . My parents had a little notebook, in which they wrote down deliveries.

As for Désiré, who had first worked with his father, Charles, he set up his own business, manufacturing and selling cattle feed. And who would his first customers be—one must surmise—but those same peasant families, those same farmers whose great-grandparents brought their wheat, loaded on a donkey's back, to the miller of Beauvallon, Désiré's great-grandfather.

There have been many changes over these four generations. The goods sold to farmers are no longer the same, the horse-cart was replaced by a gas-propelled car, then by a gasoline-run truck. But over and beyond those changes, there is continuity to be found in the network of intertwining acquaintanceships between the Terrenoire family following its move to the town, and the peasant families who remained on the land. This web of relations, although invisible, immaterial, elusive, none the less forms the stable core of the variously transformed types of business run by the successive generations of the Terrenoire family.

One realizes, then, that the series of transformations undergone by the Terrenoire family business was not the product of whim. On the contrary, it corresponded quite accurately to the successive phases of development of farming in general (on the regional, national, and even European levels) in the course of a century. To be more explicit: it was only at the beginning of the 20th century that the gradual improvement in their resources enabled peasants to buy bread from a baker instead of having their wives go through the tiresome, fortnightly process of home-baking. After the First World War, the practice of buying selected seed slowly tended to replace use of one's own, thus creating the market for seed. And after the Second World War, the increasing affluence of the entire French population drastically transformed consumption patterns. Meat, especially beef, became affordable to city-dwellers, and peasants followed the market by shifting from mixed farming production geared to home consumption to cattle-raising: hence the growing market for cattle feed. The continuity of the Terrenoire business resides in its function, involving the processing of grain and its resale to farmers in a given area. Milling, bread-making, the selection of seed, the making of cattle feed are four activities of the same kind. Each of them arose at a historically appropriate time, and at each point there was a member of the Terrenoire family ready to be one of the first people present on that new market.

The above analysis yields a measure of the exceptional continuity of the Terrenoire enterprise, from generation to generation. The capital handed down from one generation to the next was not simply confined to physical plant or money, it was also, and above all, a capital of interpersonal relations, of relations between families, woven over the generations, in a world characterized by its stability, and by ongoing relationships through which goods, of

various sorts, depending on the period and consequently on the demand of farmers, would circulate. In other words, what is known as goodwill.

But this 'social capital' only retains its value as long as there is a Terrenoire son who takes advantage of it personally. This is its specificity, and it is therefore a highly determining factor which, all else being equal, will tend to 'catch' an heir in each generation. This somewhat self-reproductive structure seems to account accurately for what appears to be a true occupational genealogy, a lineage of trades, with the successive shifts simply reflecting adjustments to the market.

Perhaps the most surprising point is the immaterial nature of this structure, which reinforces its self-reproductivity. Any material capital might be sold, and its monetary value recovered, thus freeing the heir; but a clientele, with goodwill of that sort, cannot be sold, or at least not at its full value.

To fully comprehend the sociological significance of this phenomenon, a break with our spontaneous view of business activity is required. No activity is more anonymous, in our present-day world, than selling: the customers have only brief, limited, impersonal and practically entirely instrumental contacts with the supermarket cashier, the newspaper vendor or the gas station attendant. But in the traditional world to which this family case history belongs, selling—commerce—meant very much the exact opposite. That meaning may be found in some old French expressions which have been handed down to us: He (or she) is 'd'un commerce agréable', or 'le commerce des hommes', in the sense of keeping company with people. In that world, business was only done among people who were old acquaintances and trusted each other, and moreover, who knew that their partner would not disappear unexpectedly. The social dimension was indissolubly contained in every dealing.

Economic transactions and relations were still embedded in social transactions and relations. To push the point, one might advance the hypothesis that the Terrenoire men did not derive their social status from their occupational status but, conversely, that their inherited social status—the position in a locus of mutual sociability and family statuses—enabled them to pursue and develop their professional activity.

What was really passed down within the Terrenoire family? Was it not a position on the local market, rather than physical plant or

financial capital; a position inseparable from the Terrenoire line of descent? Seen from this angle, we understand the extraordinary self-reproductivity of that 'structure', and the concept of reproduction becomes fully meaningful. Over and beyond the differences in their successive trades, we discover a hard, permanent core; and these differences, far from resulting from personal 'orientations' of the men involved, suddenly appear as shifts expressing the extent to which these men were held in the grip of the gradually changing economic market. The changes themselves seem to be dictated by the objective evolution of the productive forces and of standards of living: here we have the triumph of materialist determinism and structuralist thinking.

EXPLORING THE RANGE OF POSSIBLE DESTINIES

This structuralist moment has led us to discover, or at least to hypothesize a stable structure, the network of relationships established over the years between the Terrenoire family and the peasant families in the Sauveterre area. From the sociologist's viewpoint, what is passed on from father to son in this lineage is the centrality of their position within that network. Structuralist thinking ultimately leads to a complete reversal of perspective: the fact that in each generation a male Terrenoire decides to take up the family business and to reorient it according to his ideas is only a consequence of the 'structure'. Actually, it is the family business that captures the son, and thus inherits an heir.

The structuralist model has the merit of consistency. This quality is its strength, and makes for an initial break with appearances. But we cannot stop at that point, for the vision of the world it yields may be distorted by its (momentarily necessary) search for consistency. As soon as we return to the concrete case histories, the real contradictions, forgotten for the needs of the structuralist moment, crop up again sharply.

The fact that Charles worked for two years as a bank clerk before being called back to the bakery by his father seems to indicate some looseness in the structural reproductive mechanism. Somewhat similarly, Désiré left Sauveterre to engage in a career as a naval officer, which adventure lasted from 1940 to 1945 (from age 18 to 23): again, this seems to indicate a lack of predetermination here.

Furthermore, the 'reproduction' of the particular structure identified above seems to have ceased definitively when Désiré closed the Terrenoire business in 1968: one of his sons became a teacher, while the other became a real estate broker, neither of which occupations has anything to do with grain.

Perhaps what is most surprising, here, is what Désiré—an only son—has to say about his father's wishes: 'My father would have liked me to be a teacher.'

This is an astonishing statement indeed, with regard to the structuralist model outlined above, and one that seems to ruin its consistency, since it indicates that the very agent through whom the parallel lines of reproduction ran did not want to foster reproduction.

But that statement is less surprising for anyone who is familiar with the ambivalence of modern-day craftspeople and small-business owners towards their trades, at a time when they are in competition with the major industrial or commercial firms. On the one hand, they complain: 'we are being ground under with taxes and social benefit contributions . . . we work hard to fatten the state . . . competition with the "big guys" makes it increasingly hard to succeed . . . never any vacation . . . working twelve hours a day, six days a week, and not even any decent old age pension . . .' Which complaints, when expressed in the presence of their children, inevitably end with: 'I do hope you will do some other work.' French shopkeepers and self-employed craftsmen both resent and envy civil servants 'who live off our back' but have stable jobs, holidays, and good pensions; now, teachers are civil servants . . .

For, alongside of this complaining, another discourse unfolds, expounded by every individual who exerts some control over his or her working conditions: a discourse that places emphasis on some satisfactions, connected either to the positive side of the day-to-day work or to an overall assessment of the course of a lifetime: 'we worked hard, but we did achieve something.'

And still, this is only one example of the many 'double messages' that parents communicate to their children, and which are obviously not confined to the families of craftspeople and small-business owners. Precisely because of these fundamentally ambivalent relationships, it is essential to go beyond the structuralist phase, which is necessarily deterministic. We have described the ambivalence of self-employed craftsmen's relations to work, and of

what children are told about it (and therefore, of children's relations to their own future occupation). However, the field of application of the concept of built-in ambivalence of social relationships is considerably broader (for instance, in the employer/employee productive relationship, the employer is both a supplier of work and an exploiter of the employee).

The ambivalence of social relationships is only one of the reasons why life is not predetermined; another resides in the multiple levels of determination, resulting in the repeated occurrence of situations in which the determinants exert pressure in opposite directions. Paradoxically, this 'contradictory overdetermination' creates space for liberty under constraint, since the actors are forced to choose, so to speak.

And so, for each individual a range of possible destinies opens up at each point in time. The youthful years of Désiré Terrenoire are a perfect illustration of this apparent state of indetermination, with several tracks being followed for a while, then dropped, or even simply considered: 'there are ups and downs in any lifetime: at one point I thought about being an officer in the gendarmerie, but . . . I could easily have done that.'

One of the tasks of the case history approach to social mobility processes should be precisely to attempt to think out the concept of a range of possible destinies. Certain 'possible destinies' are more probable than some others, and much more probable than a number of others, depending on the concrete context, the social setting, age, sex, and so on. But what remains to be uncovered is precisely wherein that difference in probability resides. Be that as it may, an attitude grounded in a too narrowly 'positivist' conception of reality and confined to studying only the actually attained destinies appears, paradoxically, as unrealistic, since the unachieved possibilities are an effective part of reality. If this were not the case, predicting the future would be child's play . . .

THE CALL OF THE FAMILY BUSINESS

We have not yet exhausted the dialectics of the external and the internal, of objective and subjective determinations, the structural and the innovative. As Désiré Terrenoire told us, when he discovered that the adventurous path he had dreamed of following would

lead him straight into a military career, 'I found out that I was very free-spirited'—that is, too free-spirited to accept military discipline. And where did that free spirit lead him? Back to work with his father.

One is tempted to postulate the existence of a force, exerted by all family businesses, calling all descendants back to their destiny. And yet a close look at the indications yielded by this single case history of a family is enough to show how complex the issue really is.

The way the destiny of Charles, father of Désiré Terrenoire, was shaped provides the clearest example of the self-reproductivity of the family business form:

(My father), this is a real story. My father did not intend to become a baker. It was one of his brothers who was supposed to take over. But he had two brothers killed in the war. He himself was a bank clerk. He had started working at 16 or 17, but when the brother who was supposed to take over the bakery died, he took over the heritage . . . He absolutely had to help his father.

This is indeed a perfectly clear case. The founder of the bakery had 'chosen' an heir, no doubt his eldest son, to whom he had taught the trade. In doing so, he excluded the other three sons from the family heritage: the second son was also trained as a baker—just in case?—but the two younger sons were encouraged to become bank clerks. (This choice was probably related to the bakery itself in some way: the baker may have resorted to a bank loan to build his oven, and had realized the importance of being on good terms with the local banker.)

When the business catches one of the sons as heir, the choice excludes the others. In other words, as soon as there are several children, the reproduction of the family business generates both inclusions and exclusions, determines the destiny of one child whereas it strengthens the indetermination of the destinies of the others. It is only because there were only one or two sons in the latter generations of the Terrenoire lineage that this phenomenon is not clearly visible here.

The case of Charles illustrates this logic by rebound. Excluded from the heritage by his birth rank, as the youngest of four brothers, and actually glad to escape from the confinement to which people in small-scale bakeries were condemned at the time—they

worked seven days a week—Charles was suddenly called back to it at the death of the brother for whom the heritage was 'destined'. Once heavy-handed contingency had shattered his plans, the full force of the call made itself felt. Under the circumstances, there was no avoiding it: that would have meant betraying his father, as well as the memory of his two elder brothers.

Charles worked in the bakery as little as possible. He married at an early age: the young couple might have been expected to form a working couple. Another possibility would have been for his young wife to go to work with her mother-in-law, at the farm-produce business the latter had created. Neither was the case, however, and it was the third, and a priori least probable solution that prevailed: Charles went to work with his mother, whereas the young daughter-in-law formed a team with her father-in-law. The division of labour that was set up then, with its hybrid working couples, was to condition the destiny of Désiré, the yet unborn child.

Désiré, raised by his grandmother—and he probably inherited his liking of travel from her—did indeed find himself faced, at adolescence, with a transformed form of the family business. The pivotal activity on which the enterprise rested was no longer the bakery founded by his grandfather, but the business founded by the grandmother, and run out of the same tiny building: in the space of a single generation, the family business had been through a first metamorphosis. It should be said in passing that these 'generational' metamorphoses are possibly the necessary condition for the heir's subjective—that is, symbolic—investment in the undertaking. The fact of doing something new, of his own, enables him to take possession of it subjectively. Ironically, if the innovation introduced by the heir is to make him successful, it must be perfectly in line with the evolution of the market, and therefore objectively foreseeable, whereas if that heir intends to take possession of the business by investing his personal fantasies in it, he may very well lead it to ruin. Praxis, generally viewed as the opposite of the structured 'pratico-inerte' (the given) is never as effective as when it is embedded in the invisible fabric of an objective structure.

Whereas his father, Charles, had first been excluded from the heritage and then suddenly called back to it, apparently against his will, Désiré, the only son and therefore only heir, although dissuaded by his father to take over the trade, finally went back to it.

His case illustrates another form of expression of what we have named the call of the family business. It was not his birth rank that made Désiré the heir, nor was he called back, like his father; in a sense he discovered the resource represented by the family business, on which he had long turned his back.

That resource was manifold. First, a family business provides employment, and is therefore a source of income. Désiré Terrenoire did have a trade—officer in the artillery—but the drawback of soldiering is the existence of some occupational hazards in wartime: war had just broken out in Indochina, and he may not have been very anxious to go there.

Along with the offer of a more or less permanent job, the family business provides somewhat special working conditions: you work at home, with your own kin. The adjustment period is reduced to a minimum, and communication is theoretically at its best. And on top of this, since Désiré is the only son, there is the prospect of eventually becoming the head of that business.

In Désiré's case, however, this objective job offer carried still another asset with it: the potentially free nature of the work. It is probably not by chance that he used precisely that term to explain why he left the army: 'I was too free-spirited,' he says repeatedly. He, the prodigal son, actually took care not to return empty-handed, but with those trade licences he had obtained, and which would also make him somewhat free of his father.⁴ The initiative led to a second metamorphosis of the business, and since it was Désiré's own achievement, it enabled him to identify with the enterprise.

But this case history of a family provides us with a third and more unexpected form of the call of the family business. It involves Désiré's second son, Etienne. Born in 1952, Etienne studied architecture after his 'baccalauréat':

but . . . how should I say? He saw that the profession was really . . . there were too many people. He became a real estate broker in Sauveterre. He has an excellent position, across from the town hall, in one of the buildings I own. The house belonged to my father-in-law, who was a dentist, and we bought my brother-in-law's share of it. He (Etienne) is also a condominium manager, his customers trust him. He is very well integrated. He could have taught in a technical school, but he's like his father, very independent. He didn't want to continue teaching. Now he is really very happy.

My daughter-in-law works with him, she specializes in managing rentals. My son mostly takes care of selling. He is an estate manager. He is doing well. And his daughter does well at school.

It should be remembered that the remains of the family business, founded by the grandfather, Baptiste, in 1880, had been 'realized'; that is, sold, or rather, exchanged, by Désiré Terrenoire for a post as business manager in 1968. Hence there was nothing left of it in 1978 at the latest, when Désiré Terrenoire went into premature retirement. Now it was at about that time that one of his sons went into an independent profession, as condominium manager, estate agent, and real estate broker.

There is no direct, objective link, apparently, between the two businesses, except for the fact that the very building in which Etienne worked was loaned to him by his father. In reality, however, when rereading the entire interview one is struck by the frequent mentions of the real estate investments made by the Terrenoire family. Grandfather Baptiste set the example, with his successive purchases, on the same street, of one house, followed by a second and a third one next to the first. His son Charles bought a fourth one, on the same street, and perhaps others that were not mentioned. Désiré Terrenoire bought a large house belonging to his wife's aunt; in 1968, he transformed the cattle-feed manufacturing facilities into residential buildings, for rental; then his wife contributed her share of inherited real estate. Was it by chance, then, that their son set up business precisely in the real estate sector? Or was there some calling effect here as well, not the call of the family business, this time, but the call of the family estate?

It is true that almost all well-to-do business and craft families invest their savings in real estate—this trend is particularly strong in France—without one of their children necessarily becoming a real estate broker. It would be absurd to generalize on the basis of a single case. What is interesting in the connection between the accumulation of a heritage of real estate over three generations, on the one hand, and the profession of the great grandson Etienne on the other, is the discovery of how long a time span is bridged by transmission. For what an ancestor accumulated long ago may determine the vocational trajectory of his great-grandson, through a series of metamorphoses of the heritage.

With this series of examples, we are led to fill in the notion of

determination with a meaning specific to the social sciences. For too long a time, determination was synonymous with constraint: such was the case for Auguste Comte and Emile Durkheim, Friedrich Engels and the French structuralists, but also for neopositivists working with survey data. The epistemological views of the physical sciences were smuggled, so to speak, into a sphere where they did not apply. This led to a conception of the social sphere as composed exclusively of constraints imposed on agents, who are obliged to conform to the norms of their social group, under the threat of sanctions. Now, punishment aside, there is at least one other way of obtaining desirable behaviour: that is the reward principle. Since social life is not reducible to constraints, but also contains resources, the existence of resources to which the agent may gain access by means of some specific behaviour may 'determine' that behaviour just as reliably, if not more so, than the fear of punishment.

This new meaning (reward) of the concept of determination would definitely be meaningless in the physical sciences; but was the old one (constraint) meaningful for the social sciences in any other than a purely metaphorical sense? Is it in the same sense that social beings, on the one hand, and objects in the physical world on the other, act 'in compliance with the laws that determine their movements'? When we claim, then, that an earlier generation may very well 'determine' the shape of the trajectories of future generations through what it passes on to them, we do not use the term determination to designate a constraint only, but also a desirable resource susceptible, precisely because it is desirable, of generating foreseeable conduct.

MARRIAGES, SOCIALIZATION, AND THE APPROPRIATION OF CHILDREN

We have reasoned so far as if the existence of the Terrenoire line of descent was self-evident, whereas for two reasons it is actually an unusual case. First, it was built around the transmission of a family business; and secondly and above all, from the demographic viewpoint, each generation raised only one or two children to adulthood, and all were boys.

These two peculiarities do indeed make the Terrenoire family

something of an ideal type, and that in fact is why we chose it. But even in this case, there is admittedly a considerable gap between actual kinship relations and the construction of a lineage.

Brief mention must be made of the fact that Charles had a brother, who worked as a bank clerk throughout his life, never left Sauveterre, had two sons—cousins of Désiré—both of whom are teachers. They too are full-fledged members of the Terrenoire family. They are defined here as a ‘collateral branch’ first of all in relation to our narrator—this is the narration effect—but also because it was Charles who was heir to the family business accrued by Baptiste.

It is definitely the business heritage, then, however transformed, that created the Terrenoire line of descent described here. But no lineage can be perpetuated without spouses. At each generation, the heir to the lineal heritage introduces, by marriage, a person from another family. And the children of that couple are then a part of both families, at least formally speaking. This formal symmetry in marriage cannot be transformed into the representation of a lineage unless a principle of pre-eminence governing the relations between the two families is established, a pre-eminence defining the children as ‘belonging’ only to one of the two.

The Terrenoire family provides a most striking illustration of what is commonly known in France as the *pièce rapportée* phenomenon (the ‘added piece’ is the outsider who ‘marries into’ a family); that is, the situation of the spouse who enters a closely knit family all alone (‘*rapporté*: something added for completion’, according to the Robert Dictionary).

This was obviously the case for Camille, the mother of Désiré Terrenoire. He himself has little to say about her. She came from a large, rather poor family:

The railway line was built somewhere around 1900 . . . My mother’s parents travelled [with the construction crew], along the line. My grandfather worked on the track, and my grandmother ran the kitchen [for the workers]. That explains why my mother herself and some of her sisters were born along that line.

Camille went into service as a maid at a very early age, in Sauveterre, far from her parents. Her marriage finalized that geographic move. Moreover, she ‘had nothing’, as they say, and by marriage she entered a relatively well-to-do family of crafts/busi-

ness people. There is no doubt that she contributed enormously as a worker in the Terrenoire family business, to the point where her son was raised by her mother-in-law between the ages of 4 and 10; she was absorbed, so to speak, by her in-laws’ business . . .

The situation was different for her mother-in-law, Blanche. Her grandson depicts her as a very energetic, dynamic, innovative woman. Above all, she created her own province within her husband’s enterprise, copying and developing the type of business—farm produce—that her own parents ran. And in fact, it is that business, rather than the bakery, that her son eventually took over. Like her husband, Blanche came from a somewhat propertied family. In short, this couple of grandparents seems to be more balanced.

But what is the situation for Désiré Terrenoire himself? As an only son, he seems to be the continuer—but also the liquidator—of the Terrenoire lineage, built around the constitution and transmission of a productive heritage. He succeeded in mounting his own business:

I already [in 1945] thought about making cattle feed.

And therefore about creating your own business?

Absolutely, (but) in the relatively long term, because that required investments that I didn’t have. And my wife, who is my age, had gone to secondary school, and because she was really a good student . . . she was a class ahead of me, she got her baccalauréat at 17, we didn’t know each other . . . That’s paradoxical, we actually spent six or seven years at the same school, she was a class above me . . .

In response to a question about the creation of his business, Désiré launched into a long digression about how he met his wife, their long engagement, their marriage in 1947, and so on. And finally:

And somewhere around 1950 or ’52, the factory—my wife’s grandfather’s little factory—was put on sale and my father-in-law said to me, ‘Look, that’s what you should buy’ . . . The facilities weren’t too large, but my wife’s grandfather made luxury food products and dried mushrooms. He was one of the world’s largest exporters of dry mushrooms. He was the exclusive supplier of the Tsar of Russia . . . So I bought the factory, thanks to my father-in-law, I must admit, and to my father.

That indeed was the period when Charles Terrenoire sold the bakery: there is no doubt that the money helped purchase the

industrial site. The productive capital of the Terrenoire family underwent a last metamorphosis, at the initiative of Désiré—and, as he himself mentions, with the help of his wife's family.

Désiré purchased the house alongside those buildings at the same time:

(When we were newlyweds) we lived in small quarters on 4, Rodez road [next to the bakery]. We stayed there for five or six years. (Then, since) we had bought that site from my wife's grandfather, I must say there was the workshop, but there was also a very lovely house next door, and it belonged to my wife's aunt. And we were able to buy it: we paid a life annuity. So we lived in that lovely house for— . . . until '71.

(In 1968), just after my merger with the co-operative, I bought the land we're on (now), with a view to building a house . . . This house was ready in 1971, and we've lived here ever since.

And my youngest son lives in the house we were in previously.

Both of Désiré's children were therefore raised in a house that came from their mother's side. It is in that same house that the son who appears to be the designated heir now lives. His real estate brokerage is located in a downtown building 'that belongs to me', says Désiré but actually belongs to the two parents, half by inheritance, half by redemption of the heritage.

In addition, it should be said that Diane Terrenoire comes from a prominent Sauveterre family, several members of which had studied in Paris. Is it mere coincidence that Désiré says, and repeats, 'my wife was a class above me'? Might there be some unintended added meaning, since 'class' refers not only to the classroom but to social class as well? All of this points to one question: is there a possibility that this time it is Désiré Terrenoire who is the 'outsider', or 'pièce rapportée', in his own marriage?

Actually, the contemporary part of his account—starting with his marriage—may be reread in that sense. Had we collected an account by his wife or one of his sons, we would no doubt have noticed the same change in perspective as the reader of Lawrence Durrell's *The Alexandria Quartet* finds when he goes from the first volume (written in the first person) to the second, and discovers that what he had taken for the hero of the story was only a secondary character, unwittingly manipulated by forces far beyond his reach and awareness. Without going into the details, we will simply state that many features of the story told by Désiré Terrenoire take

on new meaning, and 'fall into place' when seen in this perspective. Following this reinterpretation, his undeniable social ascent also seems to be the result of his marrying well.

The marriage was certainly due to his personal qualities, for the most part: his imposing bearing, particularly when in uniform, the romantic image tied to the choice of a sea-going trade, his social poise, perhaps derived from the summers spent with his grandmother Blanche . . . In any case, marriage introduced him not only to a more affluent family, but to one that had long been a part of the local bourgeoisie. That family was to help him to succeed professionally. And as often happens in such cases, he moved near his wife's family; his children became the grandchildren of his wife's family; the lineage which he was the last to uphold yielded to his wife's line of descent, the Lemaire lineage. His children bear his name, of course, but most probably for his family-in-law 'they belong to the Lemaire family'. The younger son, in particular, is perpetuating the Lemaire lineage.

The broader issue raised here through a specific case history and the concept of the outsider (*pièce rapportée*) involves the rivalry between lineages within a marital union. While marriage is the formal consecration of the union of two families, it is quite common—and inherent in the situation—for those two families to engage in secret rivalry, the real long-term stake being their symbolic appropriation of the grandchildren.

We consider the question here as a sociological rather than a psychological one. The promising young man from a modest background who marries a middle-class girl may well play the dominant role at home, he will still always be an outsider. The chances are that the couple will end up being housed with the help of the wife's family, located 'in exchange' near that side of the family; and that their children will see their maternal grandparents more often, and perhaps in a more formalized ritual. The relative frequency of visits to grandparents and the provenance of living quarters constitute two excellent indicators, at least in France, of the relative strength of the two lineages vying for the symbolic appropriation of the grandchildren.

Only over the long term can the effects of the imperceptible workings of socialization be assessed. The man who dominates his partner in their everyday life is astonished, later in life, at having fathered children who bear no resemblance to him and may even

seem to be strangers. What are socialization processes, if not a mysterious alchemy, with constantly interacting psychological and social elements, tending to trade forms with one another. All adults in a concrete family group—thus including all those members of the extended kinship network who interact significantly—are present for the others as both psychological and social individuals, and actually only allow some portion of those complex, ambivalent entities composing both their social identity and their psychological 'identity' to transpire through each of the differentiated roles conferred on them by their status.

These interactions are extraordinarily difficult to grasp in action. And yet, it is to a large extent through their workings over the long term, that destinies are shaped. Like Minerva's owl, case histories of families cannot exhibit the extreme complexity of socialization as it proceeds, but they have the merit of yielding a view of the effective results of that socialization.

TRANSMISSION AND TRANSMISSIBILITY

Considering the absolutely focal position occupied, within the field of sociology of social mobility, by the relationship between social origin and social position at adulthood, as well as the roughness of the empirical indicators used to 'measure' these two 'variables', it is more essential than ever for us to reflect on the concrete mediations through which personal destiny is affected by origins (the family of birth, socially situated).

The present chapter is an attempt to reflect on this relationship through the concept of transmission. The question turns out to be quite complex, even when confined solely to the transmission of a productive heritage. How complicated would it have been had we concentrated on the transmission of values, attitudes, and prejudices, and if we had had to deal with large numbers of siblings?

The initial hypothesis inferred that social status is a family attribute—therefore the attribute of a small group—and that it cannot be transmitted as such. Only its component parts, be they economic, cultural, interpersonal, geographic, or other, may be passed on. Upon completion of our study, we find that even that element for which transmission would seem to be simplest, easiest, and most direct—capital, in the economic sense of the term—

apparently must undergo a metamorphosis if it is to be re-appropriated by the following generation. Because transmission of sameness reifies the heir (treats him as an object), it seems to carry the kiss of death. To become the subject of the heritage, the heir must act on it by leaving his or her mark on it.⁵

If this is the case for productive capital, one of the most objectified forms taken by any component of social status, one would assume that the same must be true for other, less objective components. Parents who are determined to transmit their—possibly frustrated—liking for higher education, business, some art or sport to one or another of their children will most probably meet with a patent lack of enthusiasm in the potential recipients. Whence the first hypothesis: transmission of sameness is the exception rather than the rule.

A much more common occurrence is probably the transmission of equivalents. The baker's son who becomes a seed merchant, the son of the small manufacturer who becomes a real estate broker, the dentist's daughter who becomes a doctor: three examples among thousands of transmissions of equivalents. The writer's son who becomes a reporter, the cutter's son who becomes an engineer, the nurse's daughter who becomes a radiologist, the policeman's son who becomes an internal revenue agent, all are examples where something is retained and, inseparably, a transformation takes place. What is retained may be the occupational status (the physician's son who becomes a lawyer) or the vocational locus (the nurse's daughter who becomes a doctor), and compose the core of the equivalence. The new element, involving both the rejection of the past and innovation, enables the heir to take possession of something that actually was passed on to him. The point is not simply that he must 'make something of what was made of him', as Sartre put it so aptly, but that he make something of what has been passed on to him.⁶

At this stage, we feel it necessary to introduce an essential concept: namely, transmissibility. Its point is to remind us that all of the elements composing the social status of the family of origin are not equally transmissible, and that this is the case irrespective of the receptiveness of the potential heirs.

A few gross examples may be given, for the sake of clarity. Cash is 100 per cent transmissible from parents to children. Real estate is 80 per cent transmissible in France (there is a 20 per cent tax on

inherited property). But what is the degree of transmissibility of high academic or intellectual achievement, or of a gift for some art? Of skill in a trade? Of a prominent political position? Of integration in an exclusive social milieu? However great the will—and the ability—of the older generation to achieve this transmission and the ability—and the will—of the descendant to receive it, the transmissibility of these resources or assets is extremely variable. Their transmission may be greatly facilitated or inhibited by various contexts. The transmissibility of an element of status as a resource is directly proportionate to its degree of objectivation, and reversely proportionate to its degree of subjectivation; and this is perhaps one of the reasons that encourage people to try to convert the other elements of status—academic achievement, political position, reputation—into money, an entirely objectivated and therefore transmissible form. In short, the relative degree of transmissibility seems to be an essential feature of those resources that parents attempt to pass on to their children. For this reason, it may be said that one can only pass on what one really possesses, and more accurately: one only really possesses what one can give away.

It is because many elements of status have a low degree of transmissibility that transmissions are so frequently implemented by transforming a resource into a condition for action. For instance, the capital accumulated by Baptiste, followed by Charles, generated some income, which was used to place Désiré in academically conducive conditions in the best secondary school in town.

This 'strategy', which aimed at having him go on to higher education, was relatively unsuccessful as such, for he became neither a teacher nor an officer. But conversely, that strategy put him in the right place to marry well. In both cases, however, for a successful education as well as for successful marriage, he was obliged to go through a period of personal praxis. Seduction, like academic success, could not be achieved without a modicum of effort of his own. His parents and life itself had created a range of possible destinies for him, but it was up to him, through praxis, to transform a potential into actual fact.

These remarks simply point to a direction through which we may surmount the dilemma of structuralism versus voluntarism; for the sociology of social mobility, the latter translates into the opposition between the 'reproductive' view and the 'competitive' view of social mobility. We have attempted to demonstrate that socio-

structural components may be found in those decisions and acts apparently most clearly powered by will: and conversely, that praxis may be found in the very heart of what, viewed from afar, seems to be pure reproduction by direct transmission. The idea, quite self-evident in fact, that a life trajectory may be determined—or rather, conditioned—much more easily by the supplying of a resource than by the imposition of a constraint lends an entirely new content to the concept of determination: one that includes both the socio-structural dimension and praxis.

ON QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

If we were to advance a conclusion to this chapter—which would be contradictory to its spirit since, conversely, it attempts to open doors—we would not review all of the notions and hypotheses advanced here, but rather, would take a look at the very concept of qualitative analysis. Never before, as strongly as during the present case study, had we felt the need to name the phenomena identified, to operate apparently arbitrary comparisons, to reverse the usual perspectives, simply to see whether the opposite angle was meaningful (and it usually was). And as it comes to the close, this study imparts the impression that theorization plays exactly the same role with respect to 'qualitative' material as statistical methods do for quantitative data.

Indeed, the foremost difference between quantitative material and the material derived from direct observation does not reside in the fact that the former, as opposed to the latter, are intended to be quantified, but rather, that quantitative material claims to be post-theoretical—the verification of hypotheses—whereas 'qualitative' observations are pre-theoretical. In the latter case, analysis and theorization are synonymous, and take place in a dialectical to-and-fro movement between observation and conceptualization. Whereas the quantitative paradigm involves the identification of statistical relations of covariance between factors defined prior to data collection, qualitative analysis aims at discovering what it's all about: at identifying relationships, processes, causal links, contradictions, shifts in meaning, all visible only through the shadows they cast. This is the practice so admirably illustrated by the work of Clifford Geertz.⁶

This conception of sociological practice is certainly nowhere near the scientific view, which would have sociology become 'a science among others'; that is, a science bent on discovering invariable laws. But perhaps the time has come for us to acknowledge the existence of a third space, outside of those spaces occupied by the natural sciences and by literature and the arts: one that possesses its own regimen of truth. It is precisely because that space contains criteria for comparing the relative value of various interpretations of a same phenomenon that the interpretative imagination may be given free rein.

Translated by Helen Arnold

NOTES

1. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford, Calif., 1990), first published in French as *Le Sens pratique* (Paris, 1980); Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis* (London, 1979), and *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Cambridge, 1984); J. Alexander, *Action and its Environment* (New York, 1988).
2. Daniel Bertaux and Isabelle Bertaux-Wiame, 'Artisanal Bakery in France: How it Lives and Why it Survives', in Frank Bechhofer and Brian Elliott (eds), *The Petite Bourgeoisie: Comparative Studies of the Uneasy Stratum* (London, 1980); Daniel Bertaux and Isabelle Bertaux-Wiame (in collaboration with Paul Thompson), *Familles et mobilité sociale: Une enquête comparative*, Research Project, CNRS, 1984; Daniel Bertaux, 'L'Indépendance, la délinquance, et les deux salariats', *Annales de Vaucresson*, 26 (1987), 279-95; 'Familles et mobilité sociale: La Méthode des généalogies sociales comparées', in Nunes de Almeida et al. (sous la dir. de), *Familles et contextes sociaux: Les Espaces et les temps de la diversité* (Lisbonne, 1991), 297-317; and 'Social Genealogies, Commented and Compared: An Instrument for Studying Social Mobility Processes in the "longue durée"', *Current Sociology*, special edition, Marco Diani (ed.), 'The Biographical Method', 43 (2) (1995), 70-88.
3. The actual first names have been changed, and we took this opportunity to use names whose alphabetical order designates the order of the generations: the miller was given a name beginning with an A, his sons' names begin with a B, and so on. This system was extended to their wives (Blanche, Camille, Diane).

4. For a sociologist, the trichotomous classification of occupations prevailing in Italy is extremely interesting: there are independent workers, civil servants, and 'dependenti', i.e. dependent wage-earners. This distinction amongst wage-earners, between those who are dependent because they are constantly threatened with the loss of their job, and the civil servants who have the benefit of job security and are therefore somewhat 'independent' within the wage-earning category, seems extremely relevant. There is nothing surprising in the fact that Désiré's father encouraged him to become a teacher; from the craftsman's or businessman's standpoint, a civil-servant job combines the advantages of job security with those of a degree of independence. Risk-free independence, the perfect combination.
5. As Goethe puts it so aptly:

Was du von deinen Vätern	What from your ancestors
Ererbt hast	You have inherited
Erwirb es	Earn it thoroughly
Um es zu besitzen.	To make it your own.

6. Clifford Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York, 1977); *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York, 1985); Barney G. Glaser, *Theoretical Sensitivity: Advances in the Methodology of Grounded Theory* (Mill Valley, Calif., 1978).