1 For an egregious example of erroneous information on noble attitudes and practices, see: *The Economist*, 17 Dec. 2011, 130.
2 See E. Wasson, *Aristocracy and the Modern World* (New York, 2006) and M.P. Romaniello and Ch. Lipp, ed., *Contested Spaces of Nobility in Early Modern Europe* (Burlington, VT, 2011).
3 P.O. Christiannsen, *A Manorial World. Lord, Peasants and Cultural Distinctions on a Danish Estate, 1750-1980* (Oslo, 1996); N. Gonçalo Monteiro, *Elites e Poder. Entre o Antigo Regime e o Liberlismo* (Lisbon, 2003); W. Roszkowski, *Landowners in Poland, 1918-1939* (New York, 1991).
4 A. de Toqueville, *Recollections* (New York, 1959) 183.
5 A.L. Cardoza, *Aristocrats in Bourgeois Italy. The Piedmontese Nobility, 1861-1930* (Cambridge, 1997) 150-155.
6 H.W. Whelan, *Adapting to Modernity. Family, Caste and Capitalism among the Baltic German Nobility* (Cologne, 1999) 239-243.
7 See, for example: E. Wasson, ed., *Sources and Debates in Modern British History: 1714 to the Present* (Oxford, 2012) 234-238.
8 D. Eastwood, *Government and Community in the English Provinces, 1700-1870* (London, 1997); J.M. Lee, *Social Leaders and Public Persons* (Oxford, 1963).
9 For a full discussion of this problem, see: Wasson, *Aristocracy in the Modern World* ,115-117.
10 T. DeNora, 'Musical Patronage and Social Change in Beethoven's Vienna', *American Journal of Sociology*, XCVII (1991) 310-346; B. Zelechow, 'The Opera.The Meeting of Popular and Elite Culture in the Nineteenth Century', *History of European Ideas*, XVI (1993) 261-2666.
11 Count Miklós Bánffy, *The Writing on the Wall. The Transylvanian Trilogy* (3 vols.; London, 1999-2001; orig. ed. 1934-1940).
12 D. Cannadine, *Ornamentalism. How the British Saw Their Empire* (New York, 2001).
13 Wasson, *Aristocracy and the Modern World*, 179-182, 208-213.
14 Princess Marie Vassiltchikov, *Berlin Diaries, 1940-1945* (New York, 1985).
15 W. Doyle, *Aristocracy. A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2010) 102.
16 W.D. Godsey, 'Nobles and Modernity', *German History*, XX (2002) 512-513, citing Heinz Reif; E. Wasson, *The Role of Ruling Class Adaptability in the British Transition from Ancien Regime to Modern State* (Lewiston, NY, 2010) passim.

Noble Resilience in Early Modern Europe

Matthew P. Romaniello and Charles Lipp, ed., *Contested Space of Nobility in Early Modern Europe* (Ashgate: Farnham-Burlington, 2011, xi + 298 p., ill.)

Over the last decades scholarly interest in the European nobility has grown significantly and according to Hamish Scott, 'has reached such proportions that there is a considerable risk of exaggerating their historical role and importance.'[1] In general more research leads to a more nuanced – and often more complex – picture of the subject under study, something to which the volume *Contested Space of Nobility in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Matthew Romaniello and Charles Lipp, accedes. Because this volume contains twelve case studies of the nobility in various European countries, covering a time span roughly from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century, this review will not deal with every chapter separately, but will highlight some chapters instead – without giving the impression that the other contributions are less noteworthy. In addition the strengths and weaknesses of this volume as a whole as well as the more general ideas or conclusions presented in this volume will be addressed.

In the general introduction the editors firmly place the volume within the historiographical current which rejects the thesis of the decline of the nobility. (10) Noble decline was presented in the older historiographical tradition as being almost inevitable, as the nobility could not cope with the changes of a modernizing world. This teleological or 'Whiggish' view of history, which proposes that nobles lost power and influence as a result of 'modernizing' actors such as the centralizing state or the rise of the bourgeoisie, has become increasingly criticized by historians from the last decades of the twentieth century onwards.[2] The contributors of this volume present another picture, namely that of noble resilience and adaptation to a changing world. Change in

itself is not denied, but the idea that change necessarily led to the demise of the nobility is challenged. On the contrary, in some cases nobles proved to be able to exploit the new circumstances and strengthened their position. To give but one example, some nobles in Poland in the eighteenth century made use of 'enlightened ideologies' such as the 'sacred rights of property' to defend serfdom. (251)

The introduction is followed by a historiographical survey by Hamish Scott who is, as editor of the well-known volumes on the European nobility in the early modern era, well suited to provide an overview of the developments regarding research on the nobility from around 1950 to 1980.[3] Scott analyses the emergence of the idea of the decline of the nobility, its later critics, and explains how the nobility 'became part of the historiographical mainstream.' (39) Interestingly, he shows that some theories and ideas that left little room for the nobility – such as modernization theories – did eventually generate interest in the nobility and contributed to the increasing number of studies on the nobility. Scott also notes that in the 1970s and 1980s research that was inspired by the decline of the nobility thesis, 'had the opposite effect anticipated' and would lead to the demise of this thesis. It would have been interesting to see how historians arrived at these opposite conclusions, but the article does not follow up on this point.

The other articles in this volume consist of case studies of the nobility in various European countries, ranging from fifteenth-century Spain to the Balkans lands of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth-century. Four articles are devoted to the nobility in France and Spain (two each) whereas, sadly, not a single chapter deals with the nobility in the Low Countries. A case-study on the nobility in the Dutch Republic could have been worthwhile, if only because the Dutch Republic, which 'exemplified a non-aristocratic and so more "modern" form of social and political organization' has been used as an example to support the older thesis of the decline of the nobility. (17)

A number of articles deal – either implicitly or explicitly – with controversies about the (legal) definition of nobility. This is an important topic because similar discussions took place in most countries in early modern Europe as the boundaries which separated nobles from non-nobles were often blurred and permeable. In a lucid analysis of several judicial treatises dealing with the legal definition of nobility, Elie Hadad shows that nobility 'never was an "essence" with a fixed definition recognized by all [but] was a contested space and the law was its battlefield.' (148) Haddad describes how the French state in the middle of the seventeenth century tried to control the legal definition of nobility by demanding that 'one had to prove nobility at least since 1560.' By decreeing this, the French state intervened in an ongoing discussion about the prescriptibility of the French nobility. On the one hand, this decision 'lengthened the time ordinarily presumed for prescriptibility (three generations).'(160) On the other hand, it challenged the noble notion of imprescriptibility (the idea that it was impossible to trace the noble origins of the family) by demanding prove of their noble status since 1560. Moreover, noble families that were ennobled after 1560 could no longer claim *immémorialité* at a time when nobles tried to trace the noble origin of the family as far back as possible.[4] By setting the legal definition of nobility the French state contested noble ideology and the French nobles' justification of their nobility. However, state officials responsible for investigations into nobility soon experienced noble resistance and had to compromise. Moreover, in spite of the new definition of nobility propagated by the French state, tensions that existed between different ideas about nobility were never resolved.

The controversies about the notion and definition of nobility that were going on in early modern Europe can make it difficult for historians to apply this term. The nobility was not a unified group, but that differences in wealth, political power, and social status created various layers within early modern nobilities. Moreover, nobilities have never been completely closed groups and at times were renewed through the influx of new families. The volume underscores this understanding by pointing at the fiction of noble unity, changing definitions of nobility, and the entry of *homines novi* because of various ways of ennoblement. Interestingly, Mathieu Marraud shows that upward mobile families did not necessarily seek to confirm their increased

'Der Weisskunig'. The Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I directs a group of soldiers wearing bird masks and Hungarian costumes in a masquerade *(print, Hans Burgkmair the Elder, 1514-16; cover illustration of* Contested Spaces of Nobility in Early Modern Europe)

wealth and social status by acquiring noble status. Some families, for instance, saw ennobling offices more as an economic asset than as a means to break with their former non-noble social origin. (217-218)

Leaving all the national differences aside, the nobility was not always a clearly delineated group and differences between nobles and non-nobles could be very subtle and difficult to discern. Nobility was never an 'essence' and our increasing knowledge about this groups renders it a less tangible and more complex object of study. According to the editors, even though not all groups studied 'may not have been technically called noble,' there was a clearly demarcated social group distinguished by 'a similar set of obligations and rights.' (5-6) They thus opt for a more inclusive view of the nobility, something which has it advantages but also includes the risk of downplaying notions of nobility held by contemporaries.

Other articles deal with – aspects of – noble ideology and status as well, such as the contribution of Grace E. Coolidge who analyses the concept of masculinity in fifteenth and sixteenth-century Spain. Some aspects of masculinity involved extramarital sexuality, demonstrating sexual potency and heterosexuality, which led to an 'unofficial form of polygamy.' (62) However, exactly these elements of masculinity came under attack in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries because of, among other things, the stricter moral propagated by the Council of Trent. It is not so much this change that Coolidge analyses, but the role of women in upholding noble masculinity. For another aspect of masculinity was to govern the families estates and wealth well, and extramarital sexuality could provide the necessary male heirs – and thus safeguard the masculinity of the nobleman – in case his marriage remained childless.[5] Noblemen resorted to the aid of women to safeguard the family's possessions, one nobleman even going as far to arrange his second wife to be the guardian of his grandson to whom his title had to pass (this was the child of the nobleman's son who was born out of an extramarital affair but was later legitimized). Women were thus consciously employed to protect male masculinity and the interests of the

family. However, female cooperation was uncertain and marriages with mistresses 'gave them legal rights that threatened male control over them.' (70) By claiming legitimacy and inheritance rights illegitimate children could 'make the noble family a contested space' (62) and noblemen had to tread carefully.

While Coolridge shows that Spanish noblemen used social networks that even included their extramarital families and the fact that polygamy was largely unchallenged in the fifteenth and part of the sixteenth centuries, the position of the mistresses in Spanish society could be explained in more detail. For instance, how did families react when one of their daughters was or became someone's mistress? Was this reaction influenced by the status of the daughter's lover? Was it less problematic when younger instead of older daughters of noble families were mistresses? These and other questions are raised by this stimulating article which broadens our understanding of the strategies noble families employed to serve their interests.

Most of the case-studies succeed in making clear that the European nobles were not a victim of change, but were very much able to resist change, either by exploiting new ideas or theories for their own benefit or by employing their – in some countries formidable – political power. For instance, the Polish nobility had to make some concessions regarding their political influence, but change only occurred at 'the slow, measured pace which the elites were prepared to accept.' (256) In some cases, however, it is less clear how the nobility managed to safeguard their position in society. Sukanya Dasgupta states that the English nobility 'needed to consider strategies for continued prosperity' and these 'had to be strategies that could not be matched by lower ranks of the society.' (189) English nobles devised such a strategy, namely to build country houses that were in turn glorified, together with its possessors, in the so-called 'country-house poems.' Yet she does not explain why this set nobles apart from the rest of society, especially because rising merchant families would have had to money to build these country houses as well. We know, for instance, that in the Dutch Republic wealthy merchant and regent families started to buy seigneuries and noble mansions in the sixteenth and especially in the seventeenth centuries in order to mimic the lifestyle of nobles. Did wealthy non-noble families in England not buy country houses and if so, why not? If they did, what exactly made buying country houses a successful strategy for nobles in England to show their prosperity and status?

In order to provide an overarching framework or backdrop against which the individual chapters are placed, the concepts of space as put forward by the French sociologist Henry Lefebvre and the urban planner Edward Soja are introduced by the editors. In this volume space is analysed 'as a dynamic arena of society, politics, and physical environment.' (4) In different spaces, which could be physical but abstract as well, the nobility had to negotiate – another keyword that enjoys popularity among historians nowadays – their position with other actors, such as the state or the rising middle classes, for instance. This notion of space turns out to be very diverse, for a woman's womb is seen as a contested space, as is the concept of noble masculinity, educational programs, the royal court, and the legal definition of nobility. The scope of the concept of space is useful because it can serve as the glue which ties the different chapters together, but one wonders whether this concept should have been explained in more detail in order to provide the reader with a stronger sense of the usefulness of this methodology (or 'approach' as the editors call it). Moreover, it seems that some contributors only casually refer to the idea of a 'contested space', probably because this concept is more difficult to apply to certain topics.

On the other hand, the usage of terms such as 'negotiation' and 'contest' does serve the aim of this volume as these terms underline the idea that nobles were not passive victims of change but active participants. This volume succeeds in showing the different ways in which nobles met the challenges they had to face and further enhances our understanding of the strategies nobles employed to do so. Although covering a number of countries and a period of almost four centuries, the contributors make clear that the history of the nobility was rather a history of

resilience and adaptation than inevitable decline. Not falling into the trap of seeing noble history as a story of either resilience or decline, this volume contributes to a more nuanced picture of the successes and failures of the nobility's different responses to a changing world.

Jaap Geraerts

1 M.P. Romaniello and Ch. Lipp ed., *Contested Spaces of Nobility in Early Modern Europe* (Farnham-Burlington, 2011) 12.
2 Whig history is criticized by historians working on other topics such as religious tolerance and intolerance as well. See, for instance, A. Walsham, *Charitable Hatred. Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 2006) and B.J. Kaplan, *Divided by Faith. Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, Mass-London, 2007).
3 While the title of his chapter suggests otherwise, the period he analyses covers more than the 30 years between 1950 and 1980.
4 Examples abound, also from other countries. To give but one: In the seventeenth century the noble family Van Arkel form the Dutch province of Guelders tried to link their lineage to the Trojans. B.H. Slicher van Bath, 'Thomas Walraven van Arkel, heer van Ammerzoden, Well, Wordragen, ter Lucht en Ypelaar, de laatste van zijn geslacht', *Bijdragen en mededeelingen Gelre*, XLIV (1941) 77-78.
5 This did require the legitimization of children, which was not always easy. See Romaniello and Lipp, ed., *Contested Spaces*, 70-74.

Panorama van de Nederlandse adelcultuur

Ileen Montijn, *Hoog geboren. 250 jaar adellijk leven in Nederland* (Amsterdam-Antwerpen: Uitgeverij Contact, 2012, 448 p., ill., index)

Wat is de positie van de adel in de Nederlandse samenleving? Bestaat er in Nederland zoiets als een 'adelscultuur' en in hoeverre draagt deze meer dan in het buitenland een 'burgerlijk' karakter? Deze vragen vormen sinds enkele decennia de kern van het toenemende wetenschappelijk onderzoek dat naar de Nederlandse adel wordt verricht. Ze komen echter ook steeds terug in de rijke herinneringsliteratuur die inmiddels aan het adelsleven is gewijd en staan ook steevast centraal in de journalistieke reportages die opvallend frequent in dag- en weekbladen aan de Nederlandse adel worden gewijd. Het zal de lezers van dit jaarboek niet zijn ontgaan: in haar nieuwe boek *Hoog geboren* heeft Ileen Montijn al deze uiteenlopende genres op een knappe wijze weten te combineren. Met de vlotte pen van een journalist, de vertrouwdheid van een deelgenoot en de grondige kennis van een wetenschapper, leidt zij een groot publiek rond in een sociale wereld, een verleden en een onderzoeksterrein die tot dusverre slechts voor een kleine kring toegankelijk waren.

Historica Ileen Montijn, die eerder succesvolle boeken schreef over het huiselijke leven van de gegoede kringen (*Leven op stand, 1890-1940)* en het stadse verlangen naar landelijkheid (*Naar buiten!)*, heeft zich voor haar studie naar de Nederlandse adel meer nog dan bij haar voorgaande boeken gebaseerd op een brede, bijna jaloersmakende waaier aan bronnen waar doorsnee vakhistorici zich niet snel aan zouden durven wagen. Behalve op een ruime en up-to-date verzameling van recente wetenschappelijke literatuur (onder andere Aalbers, Bruin, Dronkers, Gietman, Hoogenboom, Kuiper, Van der Laarse en Streng),[1] het verslag van een enquête over adellijke identiteit die in 2006 in dit jaarboek verscheen en inventief speurwerk in gedigitaliseerde historische kranten, baseert ze zich vrijelijk op de genoemde herinneringsliteratuur (onder andere Pauw van Wieldrecht en Den Tex), maakt ze royaal gebruik van journalistieke reportages en eigen interviews, en schrikt ze er, gelukkig, evenmin voor terug om romans en novellen op te voeren. Onbelemmerd en schijnbaar moeiteloos schakelt ze tussen al deze bronnen – en tijd-