

SUGGESTIONS AND DEBATES

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THE *ANNALES* IN GLOBAL CONTEXT

Fernand Braudel liked to say that historians ought to take a ‘global’ approach to their work, in other words to see the historical problems on which they were working as part of a larger whole. “La globalité, ce n’est pas la prétention d’écrire une histoire totale du monde [. . .] C’est simplement le désir, quand on a abordé un problème, d’en dépasser systématiquement les limites.”¹ Braudel himself gave one of the most remarkable examples of this global approach by refusing to limit himself even to the Mediterranean and by placing the history of that sea between the Atlantic and the Sahara.²

Today, sixty years after the foundation of *Annales*, it is time to see the historical movement – if not “school” – centred on the journal as itself a part of history. In that case we might do well to follow Braudel’s example and try to place this movement in a global context. In recent years, it has become customary – in some circles at least – to describe the *Annales* approach as “the new history”.³

In this article I should like to ask the question ‘How new is the new history?’ and to try to define the contribution of the journal and the movement (which has lasted three generations now) by means of comparison and contrast. The area chosen for comparison will be Europe and America.

The first generation of *Annales* was marked by the desire for a broader and more interdisciplinary history, breaking the dominance of political history and allowing economic history, social history, and the history of mentalities a place in the sun. The second generation of *Annales*, that of Braudel, Labrousse, and their followers, was the generation in which French historians made their quantitative turn, towards the study of price and population trends over the long term (*l’histoire sérielle*), as well as to a serious, analytical history of social structures.

The obvious place to begin this sketch is with the third generation of *Annales*, and to examine its practice over the last twenty or thirty years.

¹ F. Braudel, “En guise de conclusion”, *Review*, 1 (1978), p. 245.

² F. Braudel, *La Méditerranée* (Paris, 1949).

³ J. Le Goff (ed.), *La nouvelle histoire* (Paris, 1978).

This practice has been summed up in the volumes cited in notes 3 and 4, with their references to “new objects” and “new methods”.⁴

The French have indeed discovered new objects of historical attention. Thirty years ago, most of us did not imagine the possibility of a history of climate, of childhood, of madness, of death, of dreams, of gestures, or of memory. Today, however, most of these topics have become well-established objects of research.⁵ There have also been new approaches, notably the anthropological approach associated with Le Goff and Le Roy Ladurie.

However, these topics and approaches are no monopoly of *Annales*. Not even in France. The “Sunday historian” Philippe Ariès was only on the edge of the group.⁶ Michel Foucault was not part of the *Annales* circle; his historical inspiration came above all from the history of science, as practised by his teacher Georges Canguilhem and by Gaston Bachelard.⁷

In any case, new approaches to history – and these new approaches in particular – are not confined to France. Historical anthropology appeals to anthropologists and archaeologists as well as historians. It has been practised widely, from the United States to the USSR. Its inspiration has come from other intellectual traditions besides the French. Aaron Gurevich, for example, has acknowledged a debt to Malinowski, Keith Thomas to Evans-Pritchard, Kirsten Hastrup to Ardener, Anton Blok to Elias, while Orvar Löfgren belongs, despite his innovations, to a Swedish ethnographic tradition.⁸

Historical anthropologists in many parts of the world, France included, have learned much from the American example, notably that of Clifford Geertz and Victor Turner. It seems fair to say that this particular new approach is polycentric. So is the associated approach commonly known as “micro-history”, practised with great panache by Le Roy Ladurie in his *Montaillou* (1975) but also by Italian, American and other historians.⁹

⁴ *Faire de l'histoire*, J. Le Goff and P. Nora (eds), 3 vols (Paris, 1974).

⁵ Among the pioneering studies: E. Le Roy Ladurie, *Histoire du climat depuis l'an mil* (Paris, 1967); P. Ariès, *L'enfance et la vie familiale sous l'ancien régime* (Paris, 1961); M. Foucault, *Histoire de la folie* (Paris, 1961); P. Ariès, *L'homme devant la mort* (Paris, 1977); J. Le Goff, “Les rêves dans la culture de l'occident médiéval”, in his *Pour un autre Moyen Age* (Paris, 1977); J.-C. Schmitt (ed.), *Gestures: History and Anthropology*, 1 (1984), and P. Nora (ed.), *Les lieux de mémoire* (Paris, 1984–, in progress).

⁶ P. Ariès, *Un historien de dimanche* (Paris, 1980).

⁷ J. G. Merquior, *Foucault* (London, 1985), pp 39f., and M. Jay, “In the Empire of the Gaze”, in D. C. Hoy (ed.), *Foucault: a Critical Reader* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 181f.

⁸ A. Gurevich, “Wealth and Gift-Bestowal among the ancient Scandinavians”, *Scandinavia*, 7 (1968), pp. 126–138; K. V. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London, 1971); K. Hastrup, *Culture and History in Medieval Iceland* (Oxford, 1985); A. Blok, *The Mafia of an Italian Village* (Oxford, 1974), and J. Frykman and O. Löfgren, *Culture Builders* (New Brunswick, 1987).

⁹ C. Cipolla, *Cristofano and the Plague* (London, 1973), an early contribution which seems to have gone unappreciated from this point of view; C. Ginzburg, *Il formaggio e i*

Historical anthropology, microhistory and the revived history of mentalities have been receiving a great deal of attention in the last few years, partly in reaction against the quantitative history of the 1950s and 1960s, now viewed by many as determinist and reductionist. In the development of this quantitative or “serial” history the French have played an important part: the historical demographer Louis Henry, the historical economist Jean Marczewski, the historian Pierre Chaunu, and many others.¹⁰ They have been particularly prominent in the exploration of “the quantitative at the third level” (as Pierre Chaunu called it), in other words at the level of culture, from literacy to attitudes to death.¹¹

All the same, from a global point of view it would be difficult to deny the USA the title of the capital of “Cliometrics” as the Americans call it, particularly in the field of the so-called “new economic history” associated with Robert Fogel and his colleagues.¹² The same goes for Freudian “psychohistory” as opposed to the history of collective mentalities. Febvre’s interest in psychology did not extend to Freud, perhaps because his adviser on psychological matters, Charles Blondel, was a severe critic of psychoanalysis. He also seems to have missed the work of Jean Piaget, despite its potential relevance to the interpretation of mentalities.¹³

Two topics which have been attracting increasing historical interest are the history of the everyday and the history of material culture. In both cases the inspiration of Fernand Braudel has been important – above all that of the volume originally entitled *Civilisation matérielle et capitalisme* (1967) and in its revised version, *Les structures du quotidien* (1979).

All the same it is only fair to say that the construction of these historical topics has been a cooperative venture, international and interdisciplinary. The phrase “the history of the everyday” is best known in its German version, *Alltagsgeschichte*, and important contributions to the development of this history and to the analysis of the problems it raises have been made by scholars as diverse as Norbert Elias, Henri Lefebvre, and Juri Lotman.¹⁴

vermi (Torino, 1976). The term “micro-history (*microstoria*) seems to have been an Italian coinage of the 1970s, when it was used to introduce a series published by Einaudi.

¹⁰ L. Henry, *Anciennes familles genevoises* (Paris, 1956); J. V. Marczewski, *Introduction à l'histoire quantitative* (Geneva, 1965), and P. Chaunu, *Séville et l'Atlantique*, 12 vols (Paris, 1955–1960).

¹¹ P. Chaunu, “L'histoire quantitatif au troisième niveau”, in *Hommage à Fernand Braudel* (Toulouse, 1973); M. Vovelle, *Piété baroque et déchristianisation* (Paris, 1973), and F. Furet and J. Ozouf, *Lire et écrire* (Paris, 1977).

¹² R. W. Fogel and S. L. Engermann, *Time on the Cross* (Boston, 1974).

¹³ C. Blondel, *La psychanalyse* (Paris, 1924). For the American approach, E. Erikson, *Young Man Luther* (New York, 1958); B. Mazlish (ed.), *Psychoanalysis and History* (Englewood Cliffs, 1965), and P. Gay, *Freud for Historians* (New York, 1985).

¹⁴ N. Elias, “Zum Begriff des Alltags”, in Hammerich and Klein (eds), *Materialien zur Soziologie des Alltags*, (but cf. his *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation*), 2 vols (Basel,

As for material culture, this has long been the concern of archaeologists, who refuse to confine themselves to what historians call “pre-history”. The Russian Academy of the History of Material Culture was founded in 1919 (presumably in connexion with the materialist interpretation of history and the 1917 revolution). One of the leading journals in the field is the Polish *Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej* (founded in 1953).¹⁵

Another step backwards takes us to Braudel’s own masterpiece, *The Mediterranean* (1949), commonly considered the single most important and innovative historical study of the century. I would not dissent from this view. All the same, what are generally agreed to be the three most important features of the book, the author’s concern with geohistory, with the global view and with the long term, all have their precedents.

Geohistory

It is well known that an interest in geohistory goes back to the founders of *Annales*, to Bloch’s works on the Ile-de-France and Febvre’s on Franche-Comté and beyond that to the French school of human geography (*géographie humaine*) associated with Paul Vidal de la Blache (1843–1918).¹⁶ It is reasonable to suppose that *Annales* owes its very name to an act of homage to the *Annales de Géographie*, founded in 1891 by Vidal with the aim not so much of providing information but of connecting and interpreting it.¹⁷ Among the regional monographs inspired by Vidal, one might mention two to which Braudel’s debt is particularly obvious, Sorre on the Pyrenees and Cvijic on the Balkans.¹⁸

In any case, Vidal was not the first human geographer. He was preceded by the German “anthropogeographer” Friedrich Ratzel. Ratzel was attacked by Febvre for unduly restricting the area of human freedom, but Braudel marks something of a return to Ratzel’s approach not only in his tendency towards determinism but in his concern with particular themes such as empires and islands. Ratzel inspired other historians besides Braudel; the classical scholar Victor Ehrenberg, for example, cited him in a

1939), H. Lefebvre, *Critique de la vie quotidienne*, 3 vols (Paris, 1946–1981), and J. Lotman, “The Poetics of Everyday Behaviour in 18th-century Russian Culture”, in J. Lotman and B. A. Uspenskii (eds), *The Semiotics of Russian Culture* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1984), pp. 231–256.

¹⁵ A. Wyrobisz, “Storia della cultura materiale in Polonia”, *Studi Storici*, 15 (1974), pp. 164–173, and J. M. Pesez, “Histoire de la culture matérielle”, in Le Goff, *La nouvelle histoire*, pp. 98–130.

¹⁶ X. de Planhol, “Historical Geography in France” in A. R. H. Baker (ed.), *Progress in Historical Geography* (Newton Abbot, 1972), pp. 29–44.

¹⁷ *Annales de Géographie*, 1, p. iii.

¹⁸ M. Sorre, *Les pyrénées* (Paris, 1913), and J. Cvijic, *La péninsule balkanique* (Paris, 1918). Braudel acknowledges the importance of Vidal (1966, p. 543).

study of the development of the Greek state, from polis to empire, first published in 1932.¹⁹

The global view

So far as the global view of history is concerned, one of the most remarkable examples centres on the Mediterranean; the last book of the great Belgian medievalist Henri Pirenne, *Muhammad and Charlemagne* (1937), which goes outside the history of the west to explain the rise of Charlemagne, the end of the classical tradition and the making of the Middle Ages, and offers a vision of two hostile empires confronting one another across the Mediterranean some eight hundred years before Suleiman the Magnificent and Philip II. (Curiously enough, the idea of this book came to Pirenne in a prison camp during World War I, while Braudel worked on his in a prison camp in World War II.) It is no wonder that Braudel gave Pirenne's work the first place in acknowledging the works essential for the "general orientation" of his own.²⁰ More generally, what Braudel called "global" is close to what sociologists and anthropologists call the "holistic" approach.

The long term

As for *la longue durée*, this had – for a long time – been a concern of economic historians. The obvious cases to cite come from the history of price history.²¹ However, it may be worth adding that Braudel, in his famous programmatic essay, illustrated the possibilities of the long-term from the work of E. R. Curtius on medieval culture, a book which was itself inspired by Aby Warburg's famous studies of the classical tradition, its survival and transformation.²² The great Russian literary historian Mikhail Bakhtin also emphasised the importance of long-term trends (the *bolshoye vremya*) in the history of culture.

It is time to go back another step, to the generation of Febvre and Bloch. Suppose we describe their joint historical innovations in terms of six main themes; the regressive method, the comparative method, the interdisciplinary approach, the history of mentalities, the concern with structures rather

¹⁹ F. Ratzel, *Anthropogeographie*, 2 vols (1882–1891), *Politische Geographie* (1897), especially ch. 13 on empires and ch. 21 on islands. V. Ehrenberg, *Der Griechische und der Hellenistische Staat* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1932), pp. 60, 101.

²⁰ F. Braudel, *La Méditerranée* (Paris, 1949), p. 1125, and H. Pirenne, *Mahomet et Charlemagne* (Paris, Brussels, 1937).

²¹ G. Wiebe, *Zur Geschichte der Preisrevolution des XVI. and XVII. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig, 1895).

²² E. R. Curtius, *Europäische Literatur und Lateinisches Mittelalter*, a book dedicated to Warburg, cited by F. Braudel "Histoire et sciences sociales" (1958), reprinted in his *Ecrits sur l'histoire* (Paris, 1969), p. 51n; A. Warburg, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 2 vols (Leipzig, 1932).

than events, and finally the rejection of politics in favour of economic and social history. In all these cases there are significant parallels and precedents to take into account.

The regressive method

The phrase “regressive method” has become associated with Marc Bloch and in particular with his study of French rural history, which defends the method and deploys it to good effect. However, he did not claim to have discovered this method. Under the name of the “retrogressive method” it had already been employed by F. W. Maitland – a scholar for whom Bloch expressed considerable admiration – in his famous study *Domesday Book and Beyond* (“beyond” in this case referring to the period before 1086). Shortly before, another study of medieval England, still closer to Bloch’s interests since it dealt with the village community, began with a chapter on “The English Open Field System examined in its modern remains”, before working its way back to the Middle Ages. The great classical scholar Fustel de Coulanges had employed a similar approach in his study of the ancient city. Fustel had, incidentally, been the teacher of Bloch’s father Gustave, who was also an ancient historian.²³

The comparative method

The comparative method was not Bloch’s discovery either – not even its use in specifically historical analysis. Comparison was dear to Bloch’s friend Henri Pirenne, who thought it could help historians to escape the dangers of ethnocentrism, and he published an article on the subject ten years before Bloch.²⁴ Bloch’s comparisons were more systematically analytical, and in this respect are more reminiscent of his teachers the linguist Antoine Meillet (himself a pupil of Saussure) and (of course) Emile Durkheim, who had argued that “l’histoire ne peut être une science que dans la mesure où elle explique” while “l’on ne peut expliquer qu’en comparant”.²⁵

²³ F. W. Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond*; Bloch remarked “combien il est regrettable que l’oeuvre de ce grand esprit que fut F. W. Maitland soit trop peu lue en France” (“Mémoire collective”, *Revue de Synthèse Historique*, 40 (1925), p. 81n). F. Seebohm, *The English Village Community* (London, 1883), and N. D. Fustel de Coulanges, *La cité antique* (Paris, 1864).

²⁴ H. Pirenne, “De la méthode comparative en histoire”, *Cinquième Congrès International des Sciences Historiques* (Brussels, 1923), pp. 19–32.

²⁵ W. H. Sewell, “Marc Bloch and the Logic of Comparative History”, *History and Theory*, 6 (1967), pp. 208–218; R. C. Rhodes, “Emile Durkheim and the Historical Thought of Marc Bloch”, *Theory and Society*, 5 (1978), pp. 45–73, and L. D. Walker, “A Note on Historical Linguistics and Marc Bloch’s Comparative Method”, *History and Theory*, 19 (1980), pp. 154–164. The Durkheim quotation is from the preface to the first volume of the *Année Sociologique* (1896–1897).

However, the interest in comparison was not limited to the French-speaking world. Think of Max Weber for example, or of his disciple the historian Otto Hintze.²⁶ Or think of the Norwegian Institute for Comparative Cultural Research (Instituttet for Sammenlignende Kulturforskning), founded in the 1920s. Their Durkheimian orientation is suggested by the fact that they invited not only Bloch but also Meillet and Granet to deliver lectures there.²⁷

The interdisciplinary approach

The interdisciplinary approach was not invented by Bloch and Febvre. Among their own seniors, the obvious name to cite is that of Henri Berr, who did so much to encourage their early work. It was precisely to break down the barriers between disciplines that Berr founded his journal, the *Revue de Synthèse Historique*.²⁸ In Germany too the interdisciplinary approach had its advocates, including Aby Warburg (whose dislike of intellectual *Grenzwächertum* is notorious), and Karl Lamprecht, whose circle at Leipzig included the geographer Ratzel and the psychologist Wundt. In Britain this approach had less support, but Eileen Power, appointed professor of economic history at the London School of Economics in 1932, used her inaugural lecture to plead for cooperation between historians and economists, sociologists and anthropologists.

A similar broad approach was advocated by some American scholars, such as James Harvey Robinson and Harry Elmer Barnes, associated with what they called the “New History”. This American movement of the early years of the century had a programme not at all unlike that of *Annales*. “History”, wrote Robinson, “includes every trace and vestige of everything that man has done or thought since first he appeared on the earth”. In other words, total history. As for method, “The New History will avail itself of all those discoveries that are being made about mankind by anthropologists, economists, psychologists and sociologists”. Robinson’s own circle, based on an institution which he helped to found, The New School for Social Research, included the philosopher John Dewey, the anthropologist Franz Boas and the sociologist Thorstein Veblen. His pupils included the in-

²⁶ Despite Maurice Halbwachs’ article on Weber in the first volume of *Annales*, his ideas do not seem to have interested Bloch or Febvre. On Febvre’s lack of interest in Weber, F. Braudel, *Les jeux de l’échange* (Paris, 1979), p. 506, contradicting F. Braudel, “Lucien Febvre et l’histoire”, *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie*, 22 (1957), p. 17. On Hintze (1861–1940), see F. Gilbert’s introduction to *The Historical Essays of Otto Hintze* (New York, 1975), pp. 3–30.

²⁷ On the aims of the Institute, F. Stang, *Four Introductory lectures* (Oslo, 1925).

²⁸ On Berr, M. Siegel, “Henri Berr’s *Revue de Synthèse Historique*”, *History and Theory*, 9 (1970), pp. 322–334, and W. Keylor, *Academy and Community* (Cambridge, MA, 1975), ch. 8.

tellectual historians Carl Becker and Lynn Thorndike.²⁹ In a similar way, the History of Ideas Club, founded in Baltimore in 1924 by Arthur Lovejoy and his friends, was intended to further research on the neglected areas between disciplines, notably between history, philosophy and literature.³⁰

The history of mentalities

The history of mentalities, as practised by Bloch in *Les rois thaumaturges* (1924), Lefebvre in his article on “*Foules révolutionnaires*” (1934) and Febvre in his *Problème de l'incroyance* (1942) had a number of precedents, of which the most important is surely Johan Huizinga's masterpiece *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, first published in Dutch in 1919, translated into French in the 1930s and then discovered – and warmly welcomed – by Lucien Febvre.³¹

In this book, Huizinga was essentially concerned with what he called different “forms of thought” (*gedachtenvormen*). Like Bloch and Febvre, Huizinga was interested in psychology, and had indeed studied in Leipzig (as Durkheim had done) with the social psychologist Wilhelm Wundt. Again like Bloch and Febvre, Huizinga was interested in social anthropology, and had read his Lévy-Bruhl.³² So had a group of Cambridge classicists, including Jane Harrison and F. M. Cornford, who emphasised the primitive mentality of the ancient Greeks.³³ So had the philosopher and intellectual historian Ernst Cassirer.³⁴ There was indeed an international fashion for Lévy-Bruhl which spread across a number of disciplines in the 1920s. But it would be a mistake to give exclusive attention to Lévy-Bruhl. Appropriately enough, the study of collective mentalities was the work of a group, (including Durkheim and Mauss, Hertz and Hubert) rather than the work of an individual.³⁵

²⁹ J. H. Robinson, *The New History* (1912) on him, L. V. Hendricks, *J. H. Robinson* (New York, 1946), and H. E. Barnes, *The New History and the Social Studies* (New York, 1925): note the references to Ratzel and Febvre in the chapter on geography.

³⁰ A. O. Lovejoy, *Essays in the History of Ideas* (Baltimore, 1948).

³¹ J. Huizinga, *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen* (Groningen, 1919), L. Febvre, “Sensibilité et histoire”, *Annales d'histoire sociale*, 3 (1941). But cf. H. O. Taylor, *The Medieval Mind*, 2 vols (London, 1911), subtitled “A history of the development of thought and emotion”.

³² I. N. Bulhof, “Johan Huizinga Ethnographer of the Past”, *Clio*, 4 (1975), pp. 201–224.

³³ J. E. Harrison, *Themis: a Study of the Social origins of Greek Religion* (Cambridge, 1903), and F. M. Cornford, *Thucydides Mythistoricus* (London, 1907).

³⁴ E. Cassirer, *Sprache und Mythos* (1925).

³⁵ Mauss's use of the term “mentalité” in 1906 has been registered by M. Carrithers, in M. Carrithers *et al.* (eds), *The Category of the Person* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 38.

The emphasis on structures

Curiously enough, the critique of the history of events offered by the *Annales* group had parallels in England as early as the late 1920s and early 1930s. Writing economic history naturally involved an emphasis on structures, so it is hardly surprising to find one of the editors of the *Economic History Review*, R. H. Tawney, turning his inaugural lecture at the London School of Economics into a manifesto for a new history which would concentrate on the analysis of structures rather than the narrative of events. Tawney, incidentally, also pleaded for what he called *l'histoire intégrale*, in other words total history.³⁶ Eyebrows were raised, however, when Lewis Namier insisted on approaching eighteenth-century politics in a structural manner in his famous study of *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III*.³⁷

Of course the rejection of the history of events as superficial was already something of a tradition in France. The obvious name to cite is that of the economist François Simiand, a scholar whose talents for polemic were not far behind those of Lucien Febvre, as his attack on the “idols of the tribe of historians” (and especially the tribal chieftain, Charles Seignobos), makes abundantly clear.³⁸ However, we should not forget Simiand’s master Emile Durkheim, who also criticised Seignobos and dismissed individual events (*événements particuliers*) as no more than a “superficial” or “apparent” history (*des manifestations superficielles qui constituent l'histoire apparente d'un peuple déterminée*).³⁹ Still earlier, Auguste Comte had called for a “history without names”, while Lord Acton had told his colleagues to study problems rather than periods.

The emphasis on economic and social history

By the time *Annales* was founded, the dominance of political history had often been challenged. Economic history in particular was being promoted by a prominent international group of scholars. The *Economic History Review*, for example, had been founded two years earlier, in 1927: E. Lipson and R. H. Tawney were the editors, and the contents of the early issues were not so different from those of *Annales* at the same period – indeed, some of the contributors were the same, notably Henri Pirenne, who was asked by Bloch and Febvre to edit their own journal. The *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* went back to 1903.

³⁶ R. H. Tawney, “The Study of Economic History”, *Economica* (1933), pp. 1–21.

³⁷ L. B. Namier, *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III* (London, 1929).

³⁸ F. Simiand, “Méthode historique et science sociale”, *Revue de Synthèse Historique* (1903), reprinted in *Annales* as an act of homage in 1961.

³⁹ *Année Sociologique*, 1 (1896–1897), p.v. Cf. R. N. Bellah, “Durkheim and History”, *American Sociological Review*, 24 (1959), pp. 447–461.

Indeed, as Febvre pointed out with characteristic vehemence, *Annales* had not been founded as another journal of economic history but to fight a particular (narrow) conception of economic history.⁴⁰ He was doubtlessly referring to the Marxists. Marx himself was not so far from the *Annales* in his concern with economic and social history and in a totalising approach over the long term. But what about his followers? It is a pity that a general history of Marxist history is still lacking – as much for the countries where Marxism used to be compulsory as for those where it used to be forbidden.

However, it does not seem too rash to suggest that at the time *Annales* was founded, Marxist history still had a relatively low profile. It is not easy to think of major works in this tradition – works which would satisfy professional standards – published before the mid-1930s.⁴¹ The profile of Marxist history was all the lower because some of its most impressive contributions were published in languages many western scholars did not read, such as Dutch, Norwegian and Russian.⁴² Thus the spread of Marxist history and *Annales* history occurred more or less together, despite the very different chronology of their origins.

If one accepts the idea that the fundamental achievement of the *Annales* group was to break the monopoly or stranglehold of political history and to allow economic social and cultural history a place in the sun, then it must be admitted that the ideal was an old one. The dominance of the Ranke paradigm had been challenged many times before.

In Germany, for example, Karl Lamprecht had thrown down his glove in the 1890s with a manifesto against the dominance of political history, which was merely “the history of persons”, as opposed to cultural and economic history, which was the history of the people. He later defined history as “primarily a socio-psychological science”.⁴³ A generation before Lamprecht, the economic historian Gustav Schmoller (1838–1917) had criticised what he called the “imperialism” of political history. Still earlier, the work of Jacob Burckhardt, above all his *Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*

⁴⁰ L. Febvre in *Annales* (1933), p. 267.

⁴¹ In 1930, Febvre reviewed Henri Sée’s study of historical materialism in *Annales*.

⁴² H. Koht, *Norsk Bondereising* (Oslo, 1926); J. Romein, *De Lage Landen bij de Zee* (Utrecht, 1934), and E. A. Kosminsky, *Angliskaya Dereviya v xiii veke* (Moscow, 1935). Mention should also be made of J. Jaurès, *Histoire socialiste de la Révolution Française*, 4 vols (1901–1903), not so much because it was a professional piece of work but because of its influence on the young Lucien Febvre. Cf. F. Venturi, “Jaurès historien” (1948), reprinted in his *Historiens du xxe siècle* (Geneva, 1966), pp. 5–70.

⁴³ K. Lamprecht, *Deutsche Geschichte* (second ed.) (Leipzig, 1894), foreword, *Moderne Geschichtswissenschaft* (Leipzig, 1904). On Lamprecht, K. J. Weintraub, *Visions of Culture* (Chicago, 1966), ch. 4. B. Lyon, “Marc Bloch: did he repudiate *Annales* history?”, *Journal of Medieval History*, 11 (1985), p. 183, claims (with some exaggeration) that the ideas of Bloch and Febvre were largely those of Lamprecht. It is likely that they knew of Lamprecht’s work through Henri Pirenne. The Durkheimians had long been aware of it; see C. Bouglé’s account in *Année Sociologique*, 2 (1897–1898), pp. 139f.

(1860), illustrates an approach to history which it is difficult to call other than “total”. The same point might be made about the conception of history held by Burckhardt’s contemporary Karl Marx.

In England, too, dissenting historical voices could be heard in the nineteenth century. J. R. Green opened his *Short History of the English People* (1874) with the bold claim to have “devoted more space to Chaucer than to Cressy, to Caxton than to the petty strife of Yorkist and Lancastrian, to the Poor Law of Elizabeth than to her victory at Cadiz, to the Methodist revival than to the escape of the Young Pretender”.⁴⁴ In a similar manner, the sociologist Herbert Spencer complained that “The biographies of monarchs (and our children learn little else) throw scarcely any light upon the science of society”, and called for a different kind of history, for example that of “the control exercised by class over class as displayed in social observances – in titles, salutations and forms of address”.⁴⁵

In France, Durkheim’s criticisms of the history of events had been anticipated by Auguste Comte, who was even more scathing about what he called “les détails trop minutieux, si puérilement recherchés par la curiosité irrationnelle des aveugles compilateurs d’anecdotes stériles”, and advocated what he called, in a famous phrase, “l’histoire sans noms d’hommes, ou même sans noms de peuples”.⁴⁶ A similar call for history without names or history from below had been made by Jules Michelet a few years earlier, speaking of “l’histoire de ceux qui ont souffert, travaillé, languì, fini, sans pouvoir dire leur souffrance”.⁴⁷

In challenging Ranke (or more exactly Ranke’s followers) in this way, the nineteenth-century sociologists and historians who have just been cited were in fact returning to an earlier tradition, the “history of society” as it was practised in the France of Boulainvilliers, Montesquieu and Voltaire, the Italy of Giannone and Vico, the Germany of Möser and above all in the Scotland of David Hume, Adam Smith, John Millar and William Robertson.⁴⁸

These scholars deliberately aimed at a history which would not be confined to military and political events but concerned with laws, trade, morals and “manners”. Some of them offered a criticism of *l’histoire événementielle* long before Durkheim and Simiand, let alone Febvre and Braudel.⁴⁹ Lord Kames remarked that “Singular events, which by the prevalence of

⁴⁴ J. R. Green, *A Short History of the English People* (London, 1874), preface.

⁴⁵ H. Spencer, *Essays on Education* (first edn. 1861) (London, 1911), pp. 26f.

⁴⁶ A. Comte, *Cours de philosophie positive*, 5 (Paris, 1864), Leçon 52, pp. 10–14.

⁴⁷ J. Michelet, *Oeuvres complètes*, 4 (Paris, 1974), p. 8 (from a lecture of 1842). Cf. T. Burrows, “Their Patron Saint and Eponymous Hero: Jules Michelet and the *Annales* School”, *Clio*, 12 (1982–1983), pp. 67–82.

⁴⁸ I make this point at greater length in P. Burke, “Ranke the Reactionary”, *Syracuse Scholar*, 9 (1988), pp. 25–30.

chance and fortune, excite wonder, are greatly relished by the vulgar. But readers of solid judgement find more entertainment in studying the constitution of a state, its government, its laws, the manners of its people.” In similar vein, his Glasgow colleague John Millar dismissed what he called “that common surface of events which occupies the details of the vulgar historian”.⁵⁰

Other scholars were interested in the history of mentalities: it was Montesquieu, for example, who offered an explanation of the medieval ordeal in terms of “*la manière de penser de nos pères*”.⁵¹ The main difference between these men and their twentieth-century successors is that the *Annales* group had accepted and assimilated the professional standards of the Rankeans without accepting the narrowing of the historical enterprise.

My aim in this article was in no way to belittle the achievement of the *Annales* group, but rather to place it in a wider perspective than usual and so to describe it with greater precision. To sum up the argument in a single sentence, I have tried to show that virtually all the innovations associated with Bloch, Febvre and Braudel have precedents, while the combination does not. Their principal aim, the construction of a new kind of history, had been the dream of many scholars over a long period, and it had been put into practice – to a limited extent – in more than one country. The French tradition of innovation, from Michelet and Fustel de Coulanges to the *Année Sociologique*, Vidal de la Blache and Henri Berr is of course extremely well known. On the other hand, the alternative traditions (notably the German traditions) remain generally underestimated.

It remains true of course that the other movements in favour of a new history were less successful than *Annales*. Although J. H. Robinson, for example, was largely responsible for the introduction of courses on “western civilisation” into the curriculum of many American universities, he and H. E. Barnes were unable to launch a movement for collaboration between history and the social sciences. Again, despite (or because of) the controversy he stirred up, Karl Lamprecht was unable to make much of an impact on the German historical Establishment.⁵²

The achievement of Bloch, Febvre and Braudel was essentially to go further than any other scholar or group of scholars had done in achieving these shared aims, and to create and lead a movement which spread more widely and lasted longer than its various competitors.

⁴⁹ Cf. A. Momigliano, “18th-Century Prelude to Mr Gibbon” in his *Sesto Contributo* (Rome, 1980), p. 249, citing the examples of D’Alembert and Anquetil-Duperron.

⁵⁰ Lord Kames, *Historical Law-Tracts* (Edinburgh, 1758), preface, and J. Millar, *An Historical View of the English Government* (London, 1787).

⁵¹ Montesquieu, *Espirit des Lois* (Paris, 1744), Book 28, ch. 17.

⁵² Cf. G. Oestreich, “Die Fachhistorie und die Anfänge der sozialgeschichtlichen Forschung in Deutschland”, *Historische Zeitschrift*, 208 (1969), pp. 320–363.