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The Annales *and French Historiography (1929-72)*

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Will the *Annales* fall victim to their own success? Born in 1929 as a protest against current historiographic values, they are now generally recognized as themselves representing a certain type of historical method. 'The *Annales* School' or the '*Annales* method' are terms which even Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch used only 'laughingly'[1] but which are now treated with the greatest seriousness. To some they have become a chapel, to others parish church or cathedral; but whatever they are always elevated to institutional status. This itself is a development which their founders would not have wished and which must threated their dynamism. Is it possible for the necessary process of self-renovation to be always faithful to the guiding programme?

The first, preliminary question which must be set is whether the *Annales* are in fact a single or a multiple entity. The succession of titles owes more to necessity than deliberate choice. After ten years in the hands of the original editor the *Annales d'Histoire Economique et Sociale* (1929-38) had hardly asserted their independence under the title *Annales d'Histoire Sociale* (1939-41) when the war and the occupation forced a difficult choice, that of submitting to censorship like all other periodicals or ceasing publication.

[1] LUCIEN FEBVRE, *Combats pour l'Histoire*, Paris 1953, p. 402. Wishing to give as much space as possible to the statements of those responsible for the direction of the review we have drawn widely on the three volumes in which the methodological positions taken by L. Febvre, M. Bloch and F. Braudel are to be found; these are, in addition to the *Combats pour l'Histoire, Apologie pour l'Histoire ou Métier d'Historien* by MARC BLOCH (Paris 1949) and the *Écrits sur l'Histoire* by F. BRAUDEL (Paris 1969). These will be referred to in the text in brackets in the following abreviated form: *C. H.*, *A. H.* and *E. H.*

Lucien Febvre rejected both alternatives by substituting the *Mélanges d'Histoire Sociale* (1942-45) which appeared irregularly and in which Marc Bloch, then in hiding, continued to collaborate under the *nom de plume* Fougères. It was only the further change of title in 1946, after the return to its original seat, that reflected a deliberate policy and a conscious choice, the definition of a programme and the desire for change. This at least was Lucien Febvre's claim in his ' manifesto of the new *Annales* ' in ' *Face au Vent* ' (1946, 1); ' in 1929 Bloch and I desired that the *Annales* should be full of life — and I truly hope that for some considerable time all those who help to continue our work will also continue this ideal. But to live is also to change '. *Annales. Economies. Sociétés. Civilisation*: the title has remained unaltered, although this is not necessarily true of the contents. Economics have recovered that primacy from which they had been ousted for ' purely contingent reasons '. By their side there is also the concept of ' civilizations ', that term which Febvre laboured at such length to define, which were to be seen increasingly as a plurality which was vanishing, resolving itself for the first time into the concept of one single civilization of global dimension. This was a wager on the future, a rejection of Valery's pessimism, and the statement of a function of history which responded to the needs and questions of a new world.

The *Annales* are both participants in their age and faithful to themselves; and even today this is still true. But this loyalty also implies change and an attentive and sensitive reaction to innovation. Men themselves cannot escape change; the Lucien Febvre of 1946 is no more the man of 1929. This is even more true of the various groups which succeeded to the direction of the journal. It is easy to distinguish — without necessarily giving way to the facile exercise of setting one against the other — the *Annales* of Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch, those of Febvre alone, those of Febvre and Fernand Braudel, and those of Fernand Braudel alone after the disappearance of Febvre in 1946. Finally there are those of today which are enlivened under Braudel's direction by the participation of the finest young French historians, François Furet, Jacques Le Goff, Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, Marc Ferro. But do these constitute a series of successive reviews, or are they the normal development of the initial project?.

1929; A PROGRAMME.

The short prefacing page which appeared at the start of the first issue of the review, signed jointly by the two directors, Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre, seems on rereading it today modest, if not timid. In fact each word counts. Compared with previous reviews, which were often used as models, what marked the *Annales* was ' a spirit which is all their own '. There is a spirit but no school. Above all it was necessary to react against the separation of the historians of the past ' convinced of their methods ' from ' those

men who, in increasing numbers, devote themselves, sometimes even feverishly, to the study of contemporary economies and societies'; 'two groups of workers who were made to understand each other yet who generally mingle together without recognizing one another'. But to this first division others which were even more serious could be added, which ended by dividing history against itself. These were the futile but immovable, because supported by the full weight of the university system, boundaries between Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the 'Modern Period'; between historians of Europe and those of primitive and exotic societies. What was needed was a unity of the past and a unity of past and present. The walls which 'block the view' and 'prevent us from seeing what our neighbour is doing', had to be knocked down.

For the historians, the economists, sociologists and all those 'researchers of different origins and *spécialités*', the *Annales* were to offer what they needed, even if they were not always aware of it. They were to be a place of 'intellectual exchange', they had no *a priorism*, either political or doctrinal (and the two normally go hand in hand). There were to be no 'essays on method', no 'theoretical dissertations', they were to rely on 'example' and 'fact'. The empirical modesty of the 'craftsman' should not be allowed to deceive. What supported the enterprise was a 'faith in the exemplary virtues of honest labour conscientiously and thoroughly prepared' and ambitious faith which was subject 'to a correct understanding of the events which will form tomorrow's history', of the present that is. A faith then that aspired to conquer and to spread.

This text, however, pregnant as it is with all that was to follow, must not be distorted and made to say more than it contained. During the ten or fifteen years which followed, life, with its day-to-day struggles, the appearance of unexpected supporters and predictable enemies, and also the spectacle of a world heading toward war, was to bring those early intuitions to maturity and lead to the emergence of the new conception of history which previously was there only embryonically. To measure the distance covered in this evolution it is enough to compare — as Lucien Febvre invites us to in his *Combats pour l'Histoire* (pp. 61-69), the two articles written fifteen years apert, in 1931 and 1946, to condemn, in the course of reviews of studies which were not particularly 'mauvais livres', the whole concept of diplomatic history. In both there is the same ironical and decisive rejection of the *homo diplomaticus*, no more a real man than *homo oeconomicus* and the same rejection of a diplomacy cut off, and voluntarily cut off, from the rest of history, devoid of geographic and natural factors, free of economics, and of the passions, ideologies and desires of men; such history condemns itself to dessecated abstraction. But it is the outspokenness and uncontained rage of the second article that reveals the revulsion of a man who, confronted by this

' pleasant little game ', crises out: ' We no longer have the time. We no longer have the right ' (p. 41).

In 1946 the *Annales* took on a new look, but in their early form they were a product of the climate prevailing just after the first world war. Lucien Febvre has himself recounted how this had first been formulated in the early '20s, had then been abandoned, was subsequently taken up again by Marc Bloch, and then realized through their joint efforts (C. H., p. 398). Their principal enemy was the historiography which then predominated in France, that of the *Introduction aux Études Historiques* by CH.-V LANGLOIS and CH. SEIGNOBOS (1897), which together with the *Méthode historique appliquée aux sciences sociales*, also by SEIGNOBOS (1901), claimed to impose its example on the other disciplines too. This approach was summarized by F. Braudel in 1953 ' not without a little irreverence ': ' Imagine an artist, a landscapist. In front of him there are trees, houses, hills, roads — a whole peaceful countryside. In the same way the reality of the past is presented to the historian, a reality which is verified, polished and reconstructed. In this landscape nothing must escape the painter, not a bush, not a puff of smoke... Nothing must be left out; except however the painter who will not add his own person, for ideally the observer must be suppressed as if it were necessary to come up upon reality by surprise without frightening it away, as if history outside our reconstructions of it could be seized at the moment of birth, at the stage of bare material and pure fact. The observes however is the source of error and it is against him that the critic must be on guard...' (E.H., p. 18). Erudition and its requisite critical prudence were not to be totally banished, however, for the historian needs material in order to write and he also needs the emotion of a Michelet. Michelet was the foremost of the masters and was the most frequently invoked, along with Ranke, Burkhardt and Fustel de Coulanges. The critical method is not an end but a means, for there is no history without an awareness of the unity of the social and of life.

These insufficiencies of the official historiography were adequately illustrated individually by the two founders of the review. In his *Franche-Comté*, ' that fat history book which is more social than economic, yet more economic than religious or political ' and in his *Terre et l'évolution humaine*,[2] Febvre had already thrown down the first bridges and made the initial, necessary gestures toward the neighbouring disciplines. In his *Rois thaumaturges* Bloch had put history and psychology together and produced the first history of a collective belief, studied over a millenium. His preliminary studies for the *Caractères originaux* had taken him also into the field of linquistics.[3]

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[2] LUCIEN FEBVRE, *La Terre et l'évolution humaine. Introduction géographique à l'histoire*, Paris 1922 and *Philippe II et la Franche-Comté, étude d'histoire politique, religieuse et sociale*, Paris 1911.

[3] MARC BLOCH, *Les Rois thaumaturges*, Paris 1926 and *Les Caractères originaux de l'histoire rurale française*, 2nd edition, Paris 1952.

In this pioneering venture they had, it is true, already found allies. Few of these, however, at least in France, were historians. The most illustrious supporter was Henri Pirenne whose famous discussion on *Histoire comparée* (C. H., p. 395) they had listened to together in 1921. They preferred to look for friends and models in fields other than history; from linguistics came Antoine Meillet (but not Saussure), from collective psychology Charles Blondel, from applied psychology Henri Wallon. But in particular it was the two disciplines which had had the greatest success from the beginning of the century in changing their form. The first was human geography, which Vidal de la Blache had elevated to the status of a ' supply discipline ', and which in A. Demangeon's *Picardie*[4] had produced its masterpiece. It was to this that Lucien Febvre owed his continually stated taste for ' history which smells of the good earth, of the countryside, of toil and of the harvest ' (C. H., p. 393). The second was Durkheim's sociology, which scorned history and had abandoned to it, as a sort of unwanted residue, the task of chronological narrative. Unlike Lucien Febvre, who saw in Durkheim's success primarily the failure of history (C. H., p. 423, n. 1) and preferred the more concrete content of Mauss, Marc Bloch was the more open to its influence and readily acknowledged his debt; ' He has taught us to analyse more deeply, to come to grips with problems more closely and to think... less derivatively ' (A. H., p. XV).

Among these allies then there was but a single historian, Henri Pirenne, geographers such as A. Demangeon and J. Sion, sociologists such as M. Mauss, a sociologist turned economist like F. Simiand; and the last supporter on whom the *Annales* called was also a non-historian by origin, Henri Berr, the great enemy of the ' spirit of specialization ' who in 1900 had founded the *Revue de Synthèse Historique*, of which Febvre was a faithful collaborator, and also the series *Evolution de l'Humanité* to which Febvre contributed three important volumes — one of them being his *Rabelais* — and in which Marc Bloch realized his projected ' comparative history of European societies ' with the publication of his *Société féodale*.[5] Under his direction L. Febvre would also inspire the collective achievement of the *Encyclopédie Française*. All of these parallel efforts serve to illustrate that the *Annales*, far from being an isolated product, formed part of a much wider cultural movement, although this in no way affects their originality. Confronted by the reappraisal of methods and goals which was taking place in all the social sciences, and especially in the more dynamic, history resumed the initiative and changed course. In the process it was its own most stringent critic; it sought its models and examples outside its own field, in the *Empire britannique* of the

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[4] Albert Demangeon, *La Picardie et les régions voisines*, Paris 1905.

[5] Marc Bloch, *La société féodale*, I: *La formation des liens de dépendance* (Paris 1939); II: *Les classes et le gouvernement des hommes* (Paris 1940).

geographer A. Demangeon, ' that fine history book ' (C. H., p. 382), or in ' the fine volume of Greek history, which is in fact a study in linguistics ', the *Aperçu d'une histoire de la langue grecque* by A. MEILLET which was published in 1913 (C. H., p. 163). L. Febvre became the impassioned advocate of these necessary contacts and exchanges, even competition, between neighbouring disciplines; ' A borrowing of ideas? Sometimes. Above all it is a borrowing of methods and attitudes ' (C. H., p. 14). ' A readiness to establish agreements and exchanges between allied disciplines '. ' The great discoveries are made on the very frontiers of the sciences » (C. H., p. 207).

But this relentless curiosity did not embrace everything. One might easily apply to it Braudel's definition or civilisation: [6] ' to live is to be capable of giving, of receiving, of lending... But it is also true that a great civilisation is at times recognized by its refusal to borrow '. Rejection, indifference, or awareness of the difficulties of a discussion conducted on mistaken lines — this at least was the case, despite the hesitations, of the reservations and *nuances* regarding philosophy. It was also the case, but this time with no hesitation, with regard to any sort of philosophy of history. Spengler's success scarcely disguised, like a ' thin veneer ', the ' political composition of a man who is adroit, persuasive and eloquent ' (C. H., p. 126). The philosophy of Toynbee, the ' new prophet ' and of his comparative history was ' the XXth century resurrection of an old literary *genre* which had had its day and produced its masterpieces...: the *Dialoque des Morts* ' (C. H., p. 143).

The attitude which the *Annales* have maintained until today toward Marxism is typical and significant, although it may well surprise those who judge by appearances or who consider only the importance accorded by the journal to economic and social problems. Not that all Marxist influence has been totally rejected. Lucien Febvre was himself ' an attentive reader of Marx ' [7] — although he remained a stranger to Marc Bloch — and remarked that our intellectual universe had been so impregnated with Marxism that not even the fiercest anti-Marxist could remain untouched by it. His rejection of it was based on two points, the simpler being that the historian is not neutral and, like any scholar, needs hypotheses and theories to guide a research which is involved in time and which does not hide behind false claims to objectivity. But the aim must be to understand, not to judge (A.H., pp. 69-71, and C. H. p. 108). At a deeper level, however,[8] the *Annales* remained free of any dialectic conception of history. What separated them from the Marxists was their relative conceptions of time. The dialectic relationship for them

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6 FERNAND BRAUDEL, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*, vol. II, 2nd edition, Paris 1966, p. 101.

7 « Annales E. S. C. », 1957, 2, p. 180.

8 MARINA CEDRONIO, *Profilo storico delle « Annales »* to appear shortly in the « Atti dell'Accademia di Scienze Filosofiche e Morali », 1972: I am extremely grateful to the author who kindly let me see a copy of this article before its publication.

lay between the past and the present and not within the past itself, for history has no meaning if set apart from the present, the dead past arranges itself as a function of life and is for life. 'I would freely define history' — wrote Lucien Febvre — 'as a need of humanity; that need shown by each human group at each stage of its evolution to discover and evaluate from the past the events and tendencies that lead up to the present, which provides an understanding of the present and which assists in living it' (C.H., p. 113).

The rejection of an immanent historical finality was accompanied by the rejection of all determinism *'à sens unique'*. The conception of the *Annales* as a meeting point for all the sciences involved in the study of man and society represented something more than a practical programme, it represented the enunciation of a method. The complex reality of human life, 'the constant interchange of actions and reactions' (A.H., p. 78), can only be explained in terms of a multiplicity of factors. To isolate indefinitely one of them was the capital sin, for it implied a mutilation of the reality. No one factor exercised a real primacy over the others, and even that of nature was denied, with the support of human geography itself: 'man acts on thing at the same time as they act on him' (A. H., p. 75). The case of economics, despite the importance accorded it for the first time in a French review, was the same. The different layers of human history, both the conscious and the subconscious, formed an integrated whole, but not a hierarchy. History has also to be continually re-made, it is a 'science on the march', because it quickly ceases to respond to the questions and concerns of the present, and also because the aquisition of fresh ground by any field of study at once poses new problems for its neighbours and so revitalizes the research process. Far from being in opposition, the synchronic and diachronic approaches to history were to prove complementary. In the search for origins Marc Bloch saw no more than an idol; research must be concerned with causes, not beginnings. 'European feudalism in its most characteristic institutions was not an archais web of survivals. At a certain moment in our past it was born from a particular total social situation... A historical phenomenon can never be fully explained if seen divorced from its background... The Arab proverb, that men are more similar to their times than to their fathers, said this before us' (A. H., pp. 8-9).

Fifteen years of struggle; toward a new history.

The first fifteen years of the life of the *Annales* represent the gradual formulation of the new history that their founders had desired. They had provided the example, which was continued equally by their individual research of the same period, and by their academic recognition which was confirmed by the transfer from Strasburg to Paris, for one to the Sorbonne

and Henri Hauser's chair of economic history and for the other to the chair in the history of modern civilizations designed to his specifications, at the Collège de France. Quite apart from the daily life of the review, their two careers, running parallel at times and at others divergently, drove them to define their 'métier' as historians. While they never ceased to enrich the review, and although they were both equally involved in the *Annales*, these did not form their sole horizon; to reduce them both to a common identity would be mistaken.

Marc Bloch was the more influenced by sociology and in developing his analytical methods looked to all the techniques offered by the various human sciences. He employed not only written texts but also geographical observation, those 'well-worked texts », the fields of France, which formed the starting point for the *Caractères originaux*, linguistics and scientific techniques. All his major works, the *Rois thaumaturges*, the *Caractères originaux*, and *Société féodale*, present a diachronic reading of history which goes beyond the everyday and the immediate, and has already begun to consider the long term, the *'très longue durée'*. Following the model of the natural sciences it is evident that all things pass away, and an effort of abstraction forms the first essential stage for the reconstruction of reality, in which man is set in his proper place again.

Lucien Febvre's historical insight was, on the other hand, always concerned with the concrete and human elements involved in the times he studied. It was the understanding that men of the XVIth century, men like his own Rabelais, were unable to formulate the 'problem of disbelief' in the totally modern terms which we would like to impose on them, since they lacked all the scientific equipment for a rational explanation of the world. It was the understanding that the heart of the Reformation lay not in all the theological debates on transsubstantiation and the real divine presence, but in an anguished desire for salvation and in the new need for personal contact with God; an anguish and need for which the Catholic Reformation was also in its own way to provide a solution. It was also the understanding that the XVIIIth century, the 'century of the saints', could be best explained for France not so much in terms of the triumphal reconquests of the Catholic Church at the end of the Wars of Religion as in the new religious sentiment that effected a real revolution and can be dated between 1590-1640. 'History is the study of Man and of the human past. It is not the study of things nor of concepts' (C.H., p. 12). It was this that led him to define the possibilities of a psychological science on the boundaries of the two disciplines, the project which was later to be taken up by ROBERT MANDROU in his *Introduction à la France Moderne.*[9] 'We have no history of Love... we have no history

[9] ROBERT MANDROU, *Introduction à la France Moderne. Essai de psychologie historique 1500-1640*, Paris 1961.

of Death. We have no history of Pity, or of Cruelty. We have no history of Joy. Thanks to HENRI BERR's *Semaines de Synthèse* we do have a brief outline of the history of Fear...' (C. H., p. 236). But these were so many research projects of which only a few yet been successfully followed up; on the history of death there was the study by A. Tenenti and the more recent books by F. Lebrun and G. and M. Vovelle.[10] According to the dictionary love, death, hate and cruelty are words which have not changed their meanings over the centuries and bear witness to the constancy of human emotions, identical throughout history. But in fact in each period the sensibilities of men have given them a different meaning and differing values. Taking an even more concrete example, L. Febvre showed how the hierarchy of the senses has also altered: at the time of Rabelais sight held third place after hearing and touch and was followed by smell and taste. Yet with the development of reading and writing, with the organization of space and the scientific spirit, sight was to be elevated in the scale.

In contrast to Bloch's definition of history as 'the study of man in time' and as 'the study of change' Febvre preferred not to stray too far from the factual and wrote of 'the study of men in time' and of 'the study of changes'. It was these same plurals which were to reappear from 1946 in the sub-title of the review. This tension between two conceptions that were complementary and yet conflicting at the same time underlay the early *Annales* of the pre-war period. In this period they were all-conquering, dynamic, persuasive, at times impassioned beyond the bounds of justice, always arousing enthusiasm or hostility. From the very first year they kept to the proclaimed programme. There were no chronological limits: three articles on Greek and Roman antiquity and three others on contemporary problems flanked HENRI PIRENNE's essay on the *Instruction des marchands au moyen-âge*. Nor were there geographical limits; not only Europe, but the world itself, with R. BLOCH's *Problèmes et conflits contemporains. La concurrence et les groupements de producteurs*, or the colonial territories — *Irrigation, colonisation intérieure et main d'oeuvre au Soudan français* — were its subjects. Economics, with regard both to antiquity — *les finances de guerre d'Alexandre le Grand* and *le prix du papyrus dans l'Antiquité grecque* — and to the contemporary world, took first place and kept it until the war. But the articles themselves accounted for only a part of the review. A series of new sections was to become even more significant in that, often written or directly inspired by the two founders, they laid out patterns for the future.

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10 FRANÇOIS LEBRUN, *Les hommes et la mort en Anjou aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles. Essai de démographie et de psychologie historique*, Paris 1971; ALBERTO TENENTI, *La vie et la mort à travers l'histoire du XV^e siècle*, Paris 1952; G. and M. VOVELLE, *Vision de la mort et de l'au-delà en Provence, d'après les autels des âmes du purgatoire (XV^e-XX^e siècles)*, Paris 1970.

The first of these sections was devoted to collective studies. Two of these had been undertaken with the first issue; one, inspired by Marc Bloch, concerned the land and title registry, a document which he tried to make, in the fullest sense of the word, a historical documentation; it closely followed the pattern set in *Caractères originaux* and stole a march on the geographers. The other concerned private commercial and industrial archives, and reflected an interest which the *Annales* have always maintained, that of preparing documentation for tomorrow's historians, the authentic documentation which historians of today either lament in its absence or are forced to reconstruct. L. Febvre was to become the systematic theoretician of these studies. They answered a double need; firstly that of programming historical research and distinguishing the real problems which it was necessary, and not merely possible, to study. Secondly they coordinated the efforts of different historians, and those of scholars in other fields, in order to cope with documentary sources too large to be dealt with by individual researchers, and, in order to go quickly and directly to the problem, reducing to a large minimum the time gap between the formulation of a research hypothesis guiding a particular project and the discoveries which might redirect it on unexpected paths.[11] This was the best way to overcome obstacles, to increase production, and to speed the progress of history. In the 1960s the *Annales* announced their 'return to collective study' (on diets) as a mark of loyalty to L. Febvre and M. Bloch.

A second undertaking, which found its fullets expression in L. Febvre's often savage but always thought-provoking book reviews, was the attempt to distinguish the chief gaps in the field of historical research and in those of neighbouring disciplines. An example which we have already mentioned was the discussion of the theme 'history and sensibility' which originated to some extent from a study of the works of psychologists (Ch. Blondel) and of scholars of literature (A. Monglond, H. Bremond). In a totally different spirit, but also in the very first issue in a review of a study on Genoa and Marseilles in the modern period, one finds the formulation of a research project which was in fact taken up after the war in the series *Ports. Routes. Trafics*, in the individual studies of F. Braudel and R. Romano on Livorno, and that of P. Chaunu on Seville and the Atlantic: 'in XVIth century Europe, ebullient, heady with newly-born capitalism, there were great world ports where the products of the entire globe — or such of it as was then known and explored — came together... But how much of all this do we really know about? In fact, hardly anything'. There was also a lesson in method

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[11] Cf. in *Combats pour l'Histoire*, « Pour une histoires dirigée. Les recherches collectives et l'avenir de l'histoire » (« Revue de Synthèse », XI, 1936), pp. 55-60 and pp. 433-35 one of the conclusions of « Vers une autre histoire » with regard to Marc Bloch's, *Métier d'Historien* (« Revue de Metaphysique et de Morale », LVIII, 1949).

here, the lesson that the same questions should be applied to the past as were set by economists of the contemporary world: 'it is here that lies that great mine of inspiration which can and must require in the historian a well prepared knowledge of the events of the contemporary world'.[12] It was a lesson that M. Bloch also repeated: 'Unterstand the present through the past', certainly, but the reverse is also true 'understand the past through the present' by seeking in the latter that 'bustle of human life, which it demands the greatest imaginative effort to restore to ancient texts' (A. H., p. 11-15).

What was in fact being defined was a new, searching history which demanded much where the 'historicizing history demanded little, very little, too little... (C. H., p. 118). It was a history which rejected any passive submission to facts, which posed questions even when — almost especially when — it did not have the means to answer them; solutions would later be found simply because they were sought; 'without knowing of what one is looking for, one cannot know what one has found'. The whole polemic taken up by the *Annales* was constantly repeated; why should historical texts be given privileged status, why consider only archive materials? Febvre ironically referred to 'the time when the peasants laboured only with bundles of documents — with a notary as their sole assistant...' (C. H., p. 394). The historians' documents were *'the texts'*, certainly, but *'all the texts'*, and not, *'nothing but the texts'* (C. H., p. 13). All the 'facts' used by the traditional historian in his reconstructions resulted from a subjective choice. Even among written materials there were still a huge number which the historian ignored because he had not learned how to use them. Before F. Simiand, G. Parenti and E. Labrousse administrative price records were not used as the basis for any price history, just as the dates of the *'bans de vendage'* were neglected before E. Le Roy Ladurie, continuing the research begun in the mid-XIXth century and abandoned due to prevailing historiographic pressures, used them in constructing his climate statistics. In the same way parish registers were hardly touched by genealogy historians before becoming the fundamental source for the demographic history of the pre-statistical age.

It is also true that when there is written documentation available the historian must be able to emancipate himself from it and to overcome the 'irresistible pressure of the dead which smothers the living' (C. H., p. 436). When it does not exist, however, the historian must know how to work without texts but 'with words, with signs, with the countryside, with thatches, the shape of the fields and bad crops, the eclipses of the moon and types of harness. He must make use of the geologists' knowledge of stones, of the scientists' analysis of metal swords. In short he must have a knowledge of everything wich derives from, serves, and expresses man, of every-

12 « Annales d'Histoire Économique et Sociale », 1929, I, pp. 94-5.

thing that indicates his presence, his activity, his tastes, his mode of existence as man' (C. H., p. 428). One of the greatest achievements of the *Annales* has been to include prehistory in the study of history by which it had formerly been rejected for lack of ' documents '. The first volume in the series *Destins du Monde* which L. Febvre launched just after the war, was a collective study edited by A. Varagnac which had the symbolic title: *l'Homme avant l'écriture.* It was also from prehistoric and not classical archaelogy that the new study of medieval archaeology, which is closely concerned with material factors, took its basic methods.

At the heart of this redefinition of the objectives, means, and methods of history it is easy to see the confirmation of a principle which itself owed much to that common Marxist fund which Febvre considered to form part of the intellectual baggage of XXth century man; men ' fascinated by the brilliance of the event ' have only a superficial understanding of the history which they live. ' Men make history but are unaware that they are making it '. It is necessary to search for the reality behind the appearances; for only once it has restored to the past its complexity can history begin to lead to a better understanding of the present. And this it can only do by taking a new form, by rejecting out-dated positivist certitudes and by taking risks. There was no choice. The other sciences had in fact given the lead, as both M. Bloch and L. Febvre wrote virtually at the same time (A. H., p. XVIII and C. H., pp. 26-31), and headed by physics with the theories of relativity and the quantum, had thrown aside the old certainties and in particular the idea of a natural law. History could only make good its backwardness by updating itself to the standards of neighbouring fields of study, instead of leaving the clock stopped at 1880.

Annales. Economies Societies. Civilisations: History and the Human Sciences.

After fifteen years' struggle and the irreplaceable loss of M. Bloch the *Annales* were caught up in the wave of post-war enthusiasm. This was the fresh start indicated by the change in title after two final volumes dedicated to M. Bloch: ' the *Annales* are continuing, in a new climate, with new ideas — and with a new title '. It was the *Face au Vent* manifesto which outlined a series of requirements rather than a real programme, among which the most important was the need for the study of history in a world in which even the rhythm of change was growing faster. The 1947 programme defined ' a new history based on the full range of the human sciences which are its comrades and brothers ' which would refuse to lecture on the lessons of the past but which would participate in the debates of the present. There was also the 1949 reappraisal, the ' twenty years on ': ' have we succeeded? Yes

and no'. No, in so far as the old history proved resilient and had been able to resist with the support of the teaching system. Yes, in that the *Annales* were no longer alone; they had received their official consecration, and in this no doubt lay the first novelty.

From now on in its confrontation with the traditionalist University the *Annales* had a 'sister', the Sixième Section of the École Pratique des Hautes Études, which was dedicated to economic and social studies and which provided a meeting place for historians, economists, sociologists, ethnologists and mathematicians. It had no *ex cathedra* courses, no examinations, no competitions, but only research seminars along the lines envisaged by Victor Duruy at the time of Napoleon III to shake up the lethargy of the old Sorbonne. Presided over by L. Febvre then F. Braudel, who has now been succeeded by J. Le Goff, the Sixième Section in twenty years has become the key institute for historical research in France and follows the lines laid down by the *Annales*. When this occurred it became possible to realize the hopes expressed by L. Febvre that hitherto had been no more then wishes. 'For a planned history', he had written in 1936; and the first two research centres set up, one economic, the other historical, were to fulfil his wishes. They had the means, even if they were not sufficient, the researchers, even if they were not enough, and a series of publications: *Ports. Routes. Trafics., Monnaies. Prix. Conjonctures., Démographie et sociétés*, and *Affaires et gens d'affaires*, etc. There was also the *Cahiers des Annales* published by the *Société Marc Bloch*. Hardly any important historical works appeared in France in the years 1950-65, especially in the fields of medieval and modern history, which were not financed by the *Centre de Recherches Historiques* of the Sixième Section; the same body also provided the initiative for a series of collective studies — on prices in Venice, on the Paris building trade, on 'the book and society' in XVIIIth century France, and on the social anthropology of French conscripts in the XIXth century. At the end of the '50s the 'division of cultural areas' specialized in the study of the contemporary world began and the model of American *'area studies'*, with all their trappings, was introduced in France. Ten years, even fifteen, passed before the Universities took up the challenge.

It was at this moment that Braudel's *la Mediterranée*,[13] 'direct product... of the *Annales*' vigorous adolescence' assumed, as soon as it appeared in 1949, the proportions of a manifesto of the new history. Starting from the general line evolved by Febvre it filled a crucial gap in the *Annales* programme by reconciling time and space, geography and history, the conscious and the subconscious. This was an attempt to write the total history of a unique subject, the Mediterranean Sea, and it set out a hierarchical scheme of historical time which was to provide a ready-made analytical tool, being readily

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13 Fernand Braudel, *La Méditerranée*... cit., Paris, 1st ed. 1949, 2nd ed. 1966.

applicable to other areas and periods. At the basis of this scheme lay the concept of the long term, *le temps long*, the almost unchanging time-scale of geography, the 'slowly built equilibrium' which hems man in, makes him as it 'prisoner', and from which he can only emancipate himself step by step: 'climate, vegetation, animal population, agriculture'. It is a conception of time which is virtually unchanging and infinitely repetitive, which was soon to be discussed in the vocabulary of structures. At a less fundamental stage there were the slower cycles of economies, societies and civilizations, seen in spans of a century or of fifty years. The third and final stage is the historical surface, the time perspective of happenings and of men, of Philip II filling in niggling reports day after day in the Escorial, of Don John of Austria hazarding and winning the battle of Lepanto — a victory which meant little or nothing. The multiple interconnections between these three layers assure the historical unity. The war provides a good example of this: itself an everyday human reality, it was also influenced during the century by the factors which gradually evolved, it was dependent on military techniques, on the power and wealth of the states, on the permanence, for both Spain and Turkey, of the conflicting interests which prevented them from fully contesting the Mediterranean and which finally forced them both to assume the defensive. But these forms and procedures themselves, be they 'war by naval squadrons or by fortified frontiers', or corsair wars, were all part of a perspective of much longer duration and permanence, which was derived from the situation of towns, of sea and land routes, of the areas of confrontation (from Actium to the Prevesa and Lepanto), from the pressures of the seasons which made the summer the time for combat, both on land and sea, and the winter the time for negotiating. Over and above political divisions, then, the unity of the human situation asserted itself daily. Even the adversaries spoke the same language; Philip II and Soliman understood one another although they never met.

These repeated achievements themselves, the results of long preparation, describe well enough the climate of the 1950s. Through L. Febvre and F. Braudel the *Annales* spoke powerfully for a self-confident history that was unshakeably based on its own research and methods, interested in all that took place, and freely tried to give an 'imperialist' turn to Febvre's well-known formula: 'historians, you must become geographers. You must also be lawyers, sociologists and psychologists'. The development of what were already being called the sciences of man was what this history had always desired and encouraged. From them it had already received much — or to be more accurate, had taken much. But from now on it considered itself capable of giving, and handsomely. Going further, history alone was considered capable of organizing the 'necessary gathering' of the other disciplines around itself, and after modestly providing the meeting place it claimed the right to preside. This was the goal which F. Braudel set the

Annales in 1959, on their thirtieth anniversary: ' to maintain history's essential place as the obvious meeting point of all the social sciences '. This was also the significance of the exceptional gathering of historians, linguists, geographers, economists, sociologists and ethnologists brought together in the *Eventail de l'Histoire vivante* presented to L. Febvre in 1953 — and other fields might well have followed the example of the sociologist G. Friedman in recognizing their debt to history.[14]

The « Annales » and Structuralism.

If a unity of these studies was essential, was it in fact possible? The anarchical potential of the human sciences, themselves ' weighed down by their own progress ', had already begun to break out in numerous demarcation disputes, to which the *Annales* vainly responded with the voice of experience in the language of peacemaking and the spirit of reconciliation. While psychology, economics and sociology were more tied to the present and to short time spans, and so rejected any definitive move closer to history, it was the more dynamic of the new studies, in particular comparative mythology, semiotics, general linguistic and structural anthropology (the latter repeating the experience of the historians and opening its doors to all other disciplines) which really changed and formed themselves into sciences. But this was done at the cost of rebelling against history, which they ignored, or pretended to ignore, in order to emancipate themselves from the achievements of the latter over the previous thirty years. History was dismissed, on grounds similar to those of Durkheim fifty years earlier, as being concerned with the factual, with the purely conscious, with simple diachronic narrative. It was also unscientific. Henceforth the monopoly of mathematical formalisation was bequeathed on the structure, that system of repetition and total transformation which was outside or inside time.

The structuralist attack in the '60s caught the *Annales* off balance. They had welcomed from the start Georges Dumézil's studies in comparative mythology, but L. Febvre had been hostile to the very term ' structure ': ' it is a word I do not much care for... a fashionable term... which even in the *Annales* on occasions is flaunted too much for my liking. For what real ' structure ' is there among the multiplicity of structures which meet the eye? After all, why talk of structures and not rhythms, pulses, currents and cross-currents? '.[15] But the term gained support even if it underwent a certain

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[14] *Hommage à Lucien Febvre; Eventail de l'histoire vivante*, Paris 1953 and Georges Friedmann, *Lucien Febvre toujours*, « Annales E.S.C. », 1957, I, pp. 3-6.

[15] Lucien Febvre's preface to Huguette and Pierre Chaunu, *Séville et l'Atlantique*, vol. I, Paris 1959, p. XI.

reshaping as F. Braudel defined it, and he, far from treating it with caution, worked hard to incorporate it and annex it to history.[16] For him structure comprised everything which changes extremely slowly, requiring centuries if not millenia, as in that first time layer he had proposed in the study of the Mediterranean; it was a ' putting together ', an ' architecture ', as it was for the other social sciences, ' but even more it is a reality which time utilizes very poorly and moves very slowly '; it both ' sustains and obstructs ', it is ' a long term prison ' (E. H., p. 50) but it is always involved in time. For the historian there is no — and can be no — ' perfect synchronism or static structure ': ' all the structures of history are dynamic even at their most elementary '.

The structure of demography comes from the rhythm of birth, marriage and death with their regular interruptions by epidemic and dearth, by the huge infant and juvenile mortality which were all common to the societies of *Ancien Régime* Europe and probably also elsewhere. At birth a man born before 1750 had hardly three chances in four of surviving his first year, hardly more than one in two of reaching the age of twenty, and his total life expectation did not exceed thirty. Although these societies were capable of doubling their numbers in a century and of rapidly making good losses caused by plague, surplus mouths were periodically purged by disease and there was no over all increase, except perhaps an extremely slow one, and they remained permanently threatened by regression right up to the XVIIIth century (and for Ireland until the mid XIXth century).

A second structure connected to the former is the cyclical movement of grain prices caused by the regularity of bad harvests. The longer term cycles explored by Kondratieff and F. Simiand are also structures. A further structure, this time a mental one, is the myth of the crusade which A. Dupront has examined and which shows a conscious and later subconscious aspect of psychology from the Middle Ages to the present, which provided an organizational and integrating schema for collective and individual protest and dreams. Hobsbawm's social banditry is also a structure, in which all aspirant Robin Hoods are transcribed in legend regardless of their actual conduct. Yet while these are all structures they are in no way abstract, for without men they cease to exist; they are part of their flesh and spirit and they are endowed with a certain pliability which leaves room for human initiative, for chance, for the fortuitous. The Mediterranean towns in the XVIth century did not succeed in overcoming chronic scarcity, but their commercial policies and the resources of the sea allowed them to limit the cyclical rise in grain price to a factor of two in each crisis, while in central France it ran to three or four.

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[16] It is interesting that F. Braudel's most important essays on method, « Histoire et sciences sociales. La longue durée », « Unité et diversité des sciences de l'homme », « Histoire et sociologie », « Sur une conception de l'histoire sociale » etc. were written precisely in the period 1958-60. (Cf. *Écrits sur l'Histoire*, cit.).

And if the population stagnated and failed to advance in the XVIIth century, the great disasters of the XIVth century were not repeated, because it had by then become possible to tame, or at least limit, the progress of the terrible epidemics to which it had also, quite possibly, become more accustomed. Its economic and social structures always resisted the crises in a way that allowed for rapid recovery. Identical causes always led to identical effects, but the scale varied and this variation was crucial...

The historian has also accepted the value of models. Generally their use has been freely advocated, with the Marxists giving the lead. The historians' models are still hypotheses and — what is worse — « very rough and rudimentary ones » (E.H., p. 65). In only a very narrow field can their effectiveness and durability be seen, although it may still prove possible to improve and bring them to perfection. Yet even those of the mathematical sociologists are always, notwithstanding claims to the contrary, ' quasi-intemporal '; they ' move about in the dark and unknown passages of long-term time scales...' (E. H., p. 66).

There is no doubt that F. Braudel's emphasis on the long term and on the concept of structure no longer corresponds with the attitudes of either Marc Bloch or Lucien Febvre. Similarly there is no doubt that it was the attitude of the *Annales* that made in possible for history to resist the structuralist attack without ever being forced into a defensive position. One has only to take the third issue for 1966; side by side one finds an article on *l'Européo-centrisme et la découverte du Tiers-Monde*, a second on colour symbolism among different Indo-European groups, an analysis of the structural changes in American society, another on the frontier as the myth or the reality of American democracy, and finally there is also the introduction of new subjects, anthropological archaeology and the American ' new economic history '. Is this pure eclecticism or is it a demonstration of loyalty to that profession of the *Annales* ' to expose the historians ' craft to innovations and new problems '? In either case the *Annales* have taken their decision quite consciously.

In the long run this policy has proved fruitful, as a recent issue devoted to *Histoire et Structure* (May-August 1971) shows; the ' real problem ' had not been transformed into a ' fictitious debate ' and the ' turning of the tide back toward history ' argued by A. Burguière for the review is ' already perceptible '. Ethnology and epistemology, for example, have already felt the need for, and made steps to draw closer to, historical methods. By virtue of its own unbounded interests history too has succeeded in escaping the caricaturing strait-jacket which its adversaries attempted to impose on it ' All that history has adopted into its own field of study, from historical geography to the history of mentalities, from the history of price series, of demographic factors, of food consumption, of climate, to the history of social relations and institutions, has been done through overthrowing the bound-

aries of the conscious and the factual, of the known fact. And even when history now turns its attention to conscious expression, to literature and, its analysis is able to go beyond purely apparent significance and is based in the structure of the subconscious, the implied, what Lucien Febvre called the 'mental gear'. History has made its own appeal against a simplistic condemnation. A number of points have emerged during the debate which the historians have generally accepted: 'The idea has gained ground in a number of disciplines that there has never been, in the field of human sciences, any immediate communication. Observable phenomena and available sources are not the results of a specific intention but rather the fragmentary outcrops of an underlying system'. The European-centred picture of growth has similarly given way to the concept of 'cold societies' taken from C. Lévi-Strauss. In the field of interpretation of the symbolic and underlying significance of human messages, be they myths, institutions, languages, works of art or of literature, the joint article by J. Le Goff and E. Le Roy Ladurie on Mélusine shows that history still has a contribution; as yesterday diachronic and synchronic, so today the permanent and changing coexist.

Today's « Annales »; a fresh start?

For their fortieth anniversay the *Annales* have again changed skin. This was in 1969; in 1968 they too, in their own way, had been affected by the current mood. But for the first time their alteration — always justifiable in itself on the basis of the law of change, and as such a vital necessity — was not accompanied by the formulation of a precise programme; 'the significance of our new efforts will be evident from the first issues'. Was this then an admission of crisis, of a difficulty in defining anything more than a sense of urgency? The best way to answer this question is to attempt an appraisal of the two years 1969-1970.

The reduced importance given economics in the 'domains of history' was due not to indifference but to new requirements; the articles *'l'indice de la production industrielle française au XIX siècle'* (F. Crouzet), or the *'modèle de croissance interséculaire du commerce mondial'* (H. Van der Wee and Théo Peeters) showed the new path in moving resolutely away from the purely descriptive. The same happened for social history as witnesses the article *'rapports sociaux et répression dans la société d'Ancien Régime'*. Well filled sections on 'history less Europe' proclaimed the voluntary rejection of a European centred approach which in any case had been more insidious and suffered than desired: the subjects covered were Japan and Africa (1969, 3), India and China (1969, 4), Turkey and the Ottoman Empire (1969, 5)... All these initiatives contributed to that history of the present which the *Annales* had championed from the very start but which was still

the poor cousin of European historiography; it was, for example, the sociologists who were asked to analyse the crisis of May 1968 and the student problem.

This effort also influenced interchanges with the currently more dynamic disciplines. *'Frontières nouvelles'*, covering psychoanalysis, American 'new economic history', anthropology, *'Inter-sciences'*, covering language, literature both oral and written, mathematics, semiotics, comparative mythology, palaeobotany, climatology. Interest is also extended to the new devices which will tomorrow — if they are not already — be used by historians: ordinators, carbon 14, mathematical analysis. The article *'Art et Société'* takes up and enlarges on the legacy of P. Francastel. Antiquity, which has always been a poor cousin in the *Annales*, is restored to its proper place. And finally something quite new in view of its underdeveloped status in France, historiography has been introduced; as a facet of a given culture and the representation of a given historical period history, as L. Febvre would not have denied, bears man's imprint just as literature, art or myth.

The change is even more clearly accentuated in the special issues. The subtitle *'structures et comportements démographiques'* of the issue devoted to *'Histoire biologique et société'* (1969, 6) is sufficient to indicate the opening given research derived from a source similar to that of the *Annales* themselves. *'Histoire et urbanisation'* (1970, 4) resolutely takes a fresh look along lines suggested by F. Braudel at the reverse of a historical, even bourgeois, tradition which originated with the Communist Manifesto ('the bourgeoisie has subjected the countryside to the domination of the towns') and studies exclusively the conflict between towns and countryside. The choice of title (of urbanisation rather than towns), the selection of Russian and U.S. models for the present, and of Asian, African and American models for the past, with Europe supplying only the 'approaches', shows how the research is directed in a way which clearly conforms to the *Annales* pattern; understand the present and interrogate the past in order to answer the questions of the present. And in 'this joint effort' of the human sciences 'the historian most certainly has his own piece to say' and is happy in the knowledge, when all is said and done, that without his help no problem can be thoroughly settled.

Subject to a fresh challenge due to their own successes it appears that the *Annales* were right to adopt a flexible position. History, which according to F. Braudel 'is the least structured of the human sciences' saved itself through the rigorous criticism to which it subjected its new acquisitions and through its curiosity about all things new. It is an open discipline that rejects all definition as if its true definition lay in not having one. 'A good historian', Marc Bloch had written (A.H., p. 4), 'is like the ogre of a fairy tale. Where he scents human flesh he knows that there his prey is also'. But he also knows, one is tempted to add, that pleasure lies in fresh hunting

rather than complacent enjoyment of habitual foods, in the taste of wild game rather than domestic kine. But it is thanks to him in any case that the statistician and the specialist in religious sociology or collective beliefs know that they are speaking the same language, or at least that their research has some common ground and that they can, if need be, understand one another.

On the other hand, however, the *Annales* history is less able than ever to satisfy all those who expect from it a rational, stringent and dialectic ordering of the past. Its structures hesitate between a true mathematical formalization and the empirical establishment of simple *topoi*: its concept of a model is still undefined. Faced with this the followers of Croce — who is so little known or even read in France that one asks oneself if the *Annales* themselves are not partly to blame — together with those of Marx can only underline their reserve. But today the Croceans pay with an indisputable immobility for their contemptuous indifference towards the social sciences. As for the Marxists, while it is true that they have constructed a precise and coherent historiography, this still awaits its historians, and so far has produced no great historical school. But then the illdefined status of history itself, one moment the Cinderella, next the queen of the establishment, indicates the still incomplete nature of the human sciences.

Involved in its age, and in its day to day struggles, the *Annales* have certainly performed over the last forty years the function which they were originally given. It is the most lively French historical review and has in turn condemned and triumphed. This does not mean that they have carried all before them, even in France, but the long period between the XIth and the XVIIIth centuries, with the long medieval and modern movements, has indisputably become their priveleged sector — a period which is neither totally identical with nor totally alien to our own, for which reason the *Annales'* dialectic of the past and the present proves reciprocally illuminating and demonstrates too its functional value. But if it has proved possible to incorporate prehistory, ancient history, with its strong attachment to traditional techniques and to the textual, has only been touched in a superficial and marginal way. The same is true of the present; its requisite history still awaits definition and method.

In a more subtle way other forces of inertia have slowed down a development which L. Febvre, through collective studies, would have wished to speed up. While the *Annales* have succeeded in keeping pace with the rapid rhythm of events — *'le temps court'* — for the principal traditional sectors the general rule remains isolated research taking some ten or fifteen years, following established French custom. This is the delay intervening between the conception of a particular study, the formulation of the basic problems which it confronts, and its completion, no matter what findings may be produced in the meantine. A purely external factor serves to illustrate this: the finest studies produced over the last fifteen years on the *Annales* pattern,

P. Goubert's *Beauvaisis*, Baehrel's *Basse-Provence*, and E. Le Roy Ladurie's *Languedoc*[17] are all faithful to the regional monograph tradition that originated with L. Febvre's study, under the influence of human geography, of the *Franche-Comté*. Naturally regional history provides only a pretext and there is no concern with local history. It is also true that each study brings fresh research ideas, demographic structures in the *Beauvaisis*, the first tables on agricultural production and the first studies on land registry in *Basse-Provence*, the first statistics on the climate and on the long-term development of peasant property in the *Languedoc*. Yet none of them — although this is not a reproach — makes a complete break with previous studies, and the range of problems which they treat is derived rather from the successive residual layers of earlier research. But here we are again thrown back to that long time scale, or at least to the time scale of human societies which even today evolve only very slowly over many decades. But it is certainly this that explains the success of the *Annales*, the spearhead of French historical research which patiently stores up its discoveries.

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17 Pierre Goubert, *Beauvais et le Beauvaisis de 1600 à 1730. Contribution a l'histoire sociale de la France du XVII^e siècle*, Paris 1960; René Baehrel, *Une croissance, la Basse-Provence rurale (fin du XVI^e siècle - 1789)*, Paris 1961; Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Les paysans de Languedoc*, Paris 1966.