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Author(s): Lynn Hunt

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Lynn Hunt

## French History in the Last Twenty Years: The Rise and Fall of the Annales Paradigm

**There is no one historical journal** that is more influential in the world today than the *Annales: Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations*. It is perhaps the only journal that is widely recognized by the shortened version of its title, and its intellectual hegemony within French history circles makes it an almost inevitable starting-point for discussion of debates and advances in French history in the last two decades. Although French history as it is practised in France is not the same as French history as practised in other countries, especially England and America, the *Annales* has become a standard point of reference in French history both for its admirers and for its critics.

The early history of the *Annales* is now well-known. Founded in 1929 by Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre at the University of Strasbourg as the *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*, the journal moved with its founders to Paris in the mid-1930s and took its current name in 1946. Bloch and Febvre intended to create an open forum for interdisciplinary research and to promote concrete, collaborative work that would not be tied to the 'positivism' of traditional historical scholarship in France. By the mid-1950s, the *Annales* and its associated historians had transformed the initial anti-establishment coterie into an alternative establishment institution in its own right. After the war, the journal was associated with the newly founded Sixth Section for economic and social sciences of the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes. Under Febvre and then under his successor Fernand Braudel (between 1956 and 1968), the reins of the Sixth Section and the *Annales* were held in one, increasingly powerful hand. In 1970, the Sixth Section and the *Annales* moved into the new Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, which was built with funds from the Ministry of National Education and the Ford Foundation, and in 1975 the Sixth Section became the independent Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales.<sup>1</sup> Given the affiliation between the journal and the

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institution, it is not surprising that many commentators refer to the 'Annales school'. Even though it is possible now to question whether the journal constitutes the core of a 'school', properly speaking, it seems undeniable that such was the intention of its early directors.

The *Annales* school's reputation for leadership in historical methodology reached far beyond French borders in the 1960s and 1970s. Its remarkable rise to prominence was chronicled in scores of articles and books. According to Traian Stoianovich, the author of a book on *French Historical Method* (subtitled *The Annales Paradigm*), 'it is clear that no other group of twentieth-century scholars in any country has made a more valuable contribution to historiography and historical method than the *Annales* School'.<sup>2</sup> Such recognition was not limited to followers of the 'new' history. In his introduction to the *International Handbook of Historical Studies*, Georg Iggers described the relationship between the Sixth Section and the *Annales* in these terms: 'Nowhere else in the West, however, did the new interdisciplinary history possess the firm institutional basis and the influence over the profession that it did in France'.<sup>3</sup> In the same handbook, which included articles on Italy, Japan, the Soviet Union, Poland, Romania, Latin America, India and Africa, there were more index entries for the *Annales* than for any other subject except Marx and Marxism. Even those unassociated with or critical of the *Annales* school from within the French historical profession have had to bow to its prestige. Thus, reviews of contemporary French history written by French scholars customarily begin with a consideration of the *Annales* and its ascendancy.<sup>4</sup>

At the centre of much of the fanfare about the *Annales* in the 1960s and 1970s was Fernand Braudel. He combined both institutional and intellectual influence in an extraordinary fashion. His mentors, his contemporaries, his followers and, eventually, the international, and especially the American, historical community all paid tribute to the breadth of his historical ambitions. Febvre described his thesis, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen* (published in 1949), as 'a revolutionary new way of looking at history . . . a historical mutation of the first magnitude'.<sup>5</sup> The second generation of the *Annales* has been called 'The Age of Braudel', and many commentaries on the *Annales* written during the 1960s and 1970s focus on Braudel himself.<sup>6</sup> In 1977, the Fernand Braudel Center for the Study of Economies, Historical Systems, and Civilizations was inaugurated at the State University of New York in Binghamton. The Center publishes a journal, *Review*, that is inspired in part by Braudel's work. Braudel's pre-eminence in the international community was described as follows by Samuel

Kinser: 'If the Nobel Prize were given to historians, it would almost certainly have been awarded to Fernand Braudel'.<sup>7</sup>

Braudel's publications have been the occasion for so much commentary not only because they are impressive in their own right but also because they have served as a stand-in for the *Annales* school in general. After Braudel had retired from his command post in the 1970s, scholars, particularly American scholars, began to attempt to define 'the *Annales* paradigm' for historical research. In his book on the subject, Traian Stoianovich argued that the *Annales* paradigm had largely displaced what he termed 'exemplar' and 'developmental' paradigms of historical explanation. In contrast to these earlier forms of historical analysis, the *Annales* school emphasized serial, functional, and structural approaches to understanding society as a total, inter-related organism. 'The *Annales* paradigm constitutes an inquiry into how one of the systems of a society functions or how a whole collectivity functions in terms of its multiple temporal, spatial, human, social, economic, cultural and eventmental dimensions.'<sup>8</sup> This might not be a very elegant formulation, but it does give some sense of how the *Annales* school could be considered imperial in scope and ambition.

Braudel's particular contribution to the *Annales* paradigm has been termed a 'geo-historical structuralism', an approach traced by Roger Chartier to the human geography of Vidal de la Blache – a 'geo-history of past societies that promoted land, water, and climate to the front ranks'.<sup>9</sup> Braudel's influence is most often linked to his three-tiered conception of historical time: *structure* (the long-term) at the base, then *conjoncture* (medium-length units of ten, twenty, or even fifty years), and finally, *événement* (the event or short-term). *La Méditerranée* was divided into three parts – the geographical, the social, and the individual – which corresponded in a general way to these temporal divisions.

Braudel's greatest originality was shown in his examination of the relationships shaping the structure of *longue durée*. Conversely, his work has been most consistently criticized for its programmatic denigration of the 'event'. Space, time, and man were the three ruling abstractions in Braudel's conception of history, but man turned out to be little other than the vehicle for the long-standing, repetitive interactions between space and time: 'Behind all of human history there is this actor, an actor who promptly transforms himself, who is always adroit, who always presses himself forward, and who is often decisive in his intervention. What shall we call him? Space? The word says too little. The earth? An equivocal name. Let us say the geographical milieu.'<sup>10</sup>

As a consequence, for Braudel, 'events are dust', and the dust is particularly thick in the domains of politics and intellectual life, two of the staples of 'traditional' history.

Despite the enormous prestige of *La Méditerranée*, Braudel's example did not elicit many works within the French historical community on cross-national networks of commercial exchange. Rather, French historians of the third *Annales* generation focused largely on France, and usually on one region of France. The best known of these great *thèses* were *Les Paysans de Languedoc* (1966) by Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie and *Beauvais et le Beauvaisis* (1960) by Pierre Goubert. Braudel's influence lay not so much in choice of geographical area as in methodological imperatives. His hierarchical model of analysis (structure, conjuncture, event) meshed nicely with the three-part subtitle of the journal – *Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations* – and defined in broad terms the agenda of the *Annales* historians. Climate, biology, and demography were lumped together with long-term economic trends as the most fundamental determinants of society. Social relationships, which were more clearly subject to the fluctuations of the conjuncture, were considered a second order of historical reality; and civilization or what was called in the 1960s and 1970s *mentalités* was viewed as a third, subsequent and largely dependent level of historical experience. The model or paradigm was compelling by its very simplicity: the long-term was linked with the 'immobile history' of biological and geographical determinants, the medium-term with the economic and social fluctuations of regionally or nationally-defined populations, and the short-term with the political and cultural expressions of specific groups or individuals.

The three-tiered model linking time and historical determinations was widely accepted within the French historical profession. In a review of current research trends in France published in 1966 by Pierre Renouvin, for example, the layout was almost predictable: first came economic history, then social history, and then socio-psychological history (which included intellectual, political, and religious history). Renouvin himself regretted that the role played by the individual was often looked upon as 'negligible', and he was disturbed to find that the 'event' was likewise 'disdained'. Yet despite his criticism of young historians' penchant for 'unilateral interpretations', he did not seriously challenge the reigning tripartite model for historical explanation.<sup>11</sup>

The older and more traditional rival of the *Annales*, the *Revue historique*, itself recognized the growing predominance of economic and social history. Between 1876 (the date of its founding) and 1972 the proportion

of articles on biography dropped by nearly ninety per cent and those on political history fell by over thirty per cent. Correspondingly, the number of articles on economic history quadrupled and those on social history nearly doubled. Political history remained the largest single category, but by 1972 economic and social history had replaced biography and religious history as the next largest.<sup>12</sup>

Even the scholars pursuing the study of *mentalités* seemed to acquiesce in the predominance of economic and social history. In an article on applying quantitative methods to 'the third level' (certainly a telling title), Pierre Chaunu explained: 'It amounts to as complete an adaptation as possible of the methods that were perfected first by historians of the economy, then by social historians'.<sup>13</sup> Historians of culture had only to emulate their predecessors in economic and social history in order to succeed. As Roger Chartier remarked in a recent review of intellectual history in France, 'This almost tyrannical pre-eminence of the social dimension . . . is the clearest trace of the dependence of cultural on social history that marks post-war French historiography'.<sup>14</sup>

Ironically, however, the *Annales* paradigm began to disintegrate at the very moment of its triumph. Since the retirement of Braudel from his chair at the Collège de France, from his presidency of the Sixth Section, and from his leadership of the journal, the *Annales* school has gone through a continuing process of fragmentation and even self-doubt. The dispersal of interests within the *Annales* school cannot be attributed entirely – and perhaps not at all – to the departure of Braudel himself. If there has been a decline of the *Annales* paradigm (and I think that one is under way), then the 'fault' must be traced in part to the success of the paradigm. No other approach can claim as much success in challenging Marxism as the major inspiration for historical research in many parts of the world. Yet, as the *Annales* paradigm has been diffused, it has also come under increasing criticism, not only from non-French and non-*Annaliste* historians, but even from within the school itself.

There are many reasons for the fragmentation of the *Annales* school, but one stands out as particularly significant. From the very beginning, the *Annales* was characterized by a strong methodological emphasis whose corollary was an ever-present weakness of focus. As a method, the *Annales* paradigm could presumably be applied to any place and to any epoch, and it has been applied to an astonishing variety of places and times. Less than a third of the articles published in the *Annales* between 1965 and 1984 concerned France.<sup>15</sup> Yet the concentration on what François Simiand in 1901 called 'stable, well-defined relations'

was not without its risks.<sup>16</sup> The collection of serial data on prices, marriages or book production sometimes seemed to constitute an end in itself. In the absence of a defined focus of research, method thus ran the risk of becoming a fetish. A newer, more technologically-advanced form of positivism replaced the old one.

The emphasis on method reflected a more general reaction against Marxism. As François Furet, the immediate past president of the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes*, explained, 'The *Annales* offered an almost boundless range of topics and methods – a heaven-sent oasis on the path away from Stalino-Marxist historicism, whose power to mystify we had only recently come to recognize'.<sup>17</sup> Although the *Annales* school shared Marxism's insistence on the primacy of the economic and social over the political and cultural, the *Annales* paradigm itself did not include an analysis of change, conflict and rupture that could rival the Marxist vision of the historical process (many within the school and outside of it would consider this a virtue in itself). As a consequence, the *Annales* paradigm has proved much less amenable to the investigation of major periods of upheaval such as revolutions. The paradigm has had much more appeal to scholars who study periods before 1789, and there has been a marked tendency to emphasize long-term continuities (the structure) over medium-term fluctuations (the conjuncture) and supposedly short-term events. Although the proportion of articles on French history after 1815 published in the *Annales* has grown (from twenty-six per cent between 1965 and 1974 to thirty-five per cent in the last decade), it is still far outweighed by the proportion of articles on pre-1815 France (sixty-five per cent between 1975 and 1984).<sup>18</sup>

Prominent members of the *Annales* school have themselves recognized the existence of problems. Jacques Revel noted that 'the identification of stable systems is at the heart of the undertaking. It is even striking to note that the history of the *Annales* is in no way concerned with a theory of social change or with the shift from one historical model in (sic) its successor.' As a result, the *Annales* today emphasizes 'experimentation and interrogation', without presumably any settled ideas about where the experiments and questions might point.<sup>19</sup> Furet observed that the *Annales* now exercises 'only a hegemony of influence and reputation'; it is 'not a school of thought nor even, any longer, a collective spirit'.<sup>20</sup>

Revel traced the fragmentation of the *Annales* to a general disintegration of the belief in a totalizing interdisciplinarity. 'The field of research in the social sciences is splintering. Man, the central figure of the preceding mode of analysis, has ceased to be the basic referent and has become the

transitory object, and a dated one, of a particular pattern of scientific discourse.' In the place of a hypothesis of global unity appeared an emphasis on partial, local units and 'concrete scientific work', whose spirit Revel defended as essentially anti-positivist (because it was not motivated by an optimism about the achievement of a final unity of product).<sup>21</sup>

The general disintegration of the belief in a coherently unified inter-disciplinarity was given added impetus by the *Annales* school's own pursuit of the history of *mentalités*. The application of *Annales* methods to 'the third level' of mental events itself eventually began to undermine the Braudelian three-tiered model of analysis. The shift of interest to *mentalités* is exemplified in the career of Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, whose earliest articles focused on history and climate and who proclaimed in *The Territory of the Historian* (English translation 1979), that history that is not quantifiable cannot claim to be scientific. However, in the second half of his career Le Roy Ladurie has turned more and more to the history of mentalities. Such works as *Montaillou* (English translation 1978) and *Carnival in Romans* (English translation 1979) are almost entirely concerned with significant, short-term events that could be taken to reveal underlying mentalities and, in sharp contrast to his earlier work, these books are largely narrative in presentation.<sup>22</sup>

The content of articles in the *Annales* in the 1960s and 1970s reflects the interest in 'the third level' (see Table 1). Although demographic and social history were much more prominent in the *Annales* than in the *Revue historique* (where they accounted for two and fifteen per cent of the articles respectively), intellectual and cultural history were surprisingly well-placed within the *Annales* too (whereas they accounted for no more than twenty-five per cent of the articles in the *Revue historique*).<sup>23</sup> Not everyone was enthusiastic about the growing interest in mentalities. A report of the Centre National de Recherche Scientifique characterized this field in 1969 as 'filled with pitfalls and in danger of too hasty realizations'.<sup>24</sup> More recently, Furet has carried the criticism even further: 'All too often, it is merely a Gallic substitute for Marxism and psychoanalysis'. Furet attributes the explosion of interest in *mentalités* to nostalgia for a rooted, traditional society: 'It is no accident that this type of history has enjoyed its greatest popularity in the past decade or two, in a French society violently torn away from its past by economic growth and feeding in compensation on a world of nostalgia'.<sup>25</sup>

Furet's criticism of current trends in the study of *mentalités* could well be extended to the *Annales* school more generally (which is not surprising given the general shift within the school to research on 'the third level'):



This history, owing to the vagueness of the word that gives it a label if not a content, presents an almost infinite range of methodological possibilities. . . in the random pattern of its various applications, *l'histoire des mentalités* blurs the classic distinctions observed in the study of individuals and societies. . . [and] does not offer any true additional explanatory power. However, it presents French historiography with the danger of self-satisfaction in a vacuum, since the word that it holds up like an emblem – *mentalités* – has no equivalent in other languages.<sup>26</sup>

In Furet's view, the very lack of definition of the vast field of *mentalités* is itself dangerous, for it fosters an 'unending pursuit of new research topics', which have as their basis only a fleeting intuition or an ephemeral fashion. Since these researches are not grounded in a unified social theory, they yield 'endlessly debatable results'.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, Robert Darnton charged that, 'Despite a spate of prolegomena and discourses on method. . . the French have not developed a coherent conception of *mentalités* as a field of study'.<sup>28</sup>

TABLE 1  
Content of Articles in the *Annales*, 1965–1984  
(in per cent)

	Economic	Social	Demographic	Political	Intellectual/Cultural
1965–74	18	22	13	14	34
1975–84	19	24	13	11	35

Percentages are rounded, and in a handful of cases articles were entered in more than one category. These percentages should be considered approximations only, since it is very difficult to categorize many of the articles appearing in the *Annales*.

The historians who study *mentalités* are themselves worried about the methodological and theoretical foundations of their endeavour. It is no longer enough to be satisfied with pursuing research on 'the third level' of the *Annales* paradigm. In the 1960s, *mentalités* were conceived as fundamentally different from the objects of traditional intellectual history; rather than study the conscious construction of an individual mind, historians of *mentalités* looked for the 'collective mentality that regulates, without their knowing it, the representations and judgements of social subjects'.<sup>29</sup> But is serial analysis of wills, iconographic themes, or book production the best method for getting at this collective mentality? A quantifying approach supposes that collective thoughts can be captured in their 'most repetitive and least personal expressions', that they can be 'reduced to a limited number of formulas that need only to be studied in terms of their differential

frequency in the diverse groups of a population'.<sup>30</sup> How can the work of 'great' thinkers be incorporated into such a schema, and even more important, how can such an approach determine the reasons for the shift from one system of representation to another? The problems faced by the *Annales* paradigm in general seemed especially acute to those studying the representations of collective mentality.

French historians of *mentalités* are no longer convinced that ideological systems or collective representations can be simply taken as reflecting material (that is, social) reality. The 'third level' turns out not to be a level at all, but itself a primary determinant of historical reality. As Chartier put it, 'The relationship thus established is not one of dependence of the mental structures on their material determinations. The representations of the social world themselves are the constituents of social reality.'<sup>31</sup> Ultimately, therefore, the history of *mentalités* calls into question the entire *Annales* paradigm. Economic and social relations are not prior to or determining of cultural ones; they are themselves fields of cultural practice and cultural production.

While the *Annales* historians were themselves beginning to question the intellectual stranglehold of their reigning paradigm, much of the most important work on *mentalités* was being carried out by non-*Annaliste* historians, such as Philippe Ariès and Michel Foucault. In the 1970s, the much older work of the German Norbert Elias on *The Civilizing Process* was rediscovered (German edition 1939; French translation 1973; English translation 1978), and it too had a powerful impact on the *Annalistes'* own research into *mentalités*. Ariès, Elias and Foucault shared with Lucien Febvre an interest in long-range trends in the alteration of the structure of the psyche, but unlike the original *Annales* founder, the other three went beyond the study of a particular epoch (for Febvre the sixteenth century) to elaborate more general theories of collective mentalities.<sup>32</sup>

Elias, Ariès and Foucault each offered a view of what Elias called the civilizing process.<sup>33</sup> Elias traced the changing 'threshold of shame' across European history and attributed these changes to the social power of value-setting élites. Ariès gave primacy to the idea of the formative stages of the life of the individual; the historical development of the idea of the life cycle prepared the way for the idea of progress through civilization. Foucault defined the essence of the civilizing process as one of increasing discipline, but in many ways his overall schema resembled that of Elias: spontaneous behaviour was tolerated in the Middle Ages; in the early modern period increasingly sophisticated systems of external restraint were imposed in the name of morality; and in the modern era,

these external restraints were internalized. Unlike Elias, however, Foucault did not attribute these changes to deeper transformations of the social structure and of the distribution of value-making power. Although Foucault implicitly provided a set of stages in the civilizing process, he repeatedly insisted on discontinuities in history; rather than interrogate the discourses of discipline for their underlying causes, he stressed the importance of seeing 'historically how truth-effects are produced inside discourses which are not in themselves either true or false'.<sup>34</sup>

Much of the current work on collective mentalities in French history has been devoted to elaborating or contesting the overarching schemata provided by these three writers (none of whom were professional historians in the usual sense). The work of Foucault has posed especially threatening challenges to those who wish to study *mentalités*, because his writings on the civilizing process include recurrent and corrosive attacks on the prevailing methods of historians. Foucault has had few emulators within the French historical community, but he has posed apparently inescapable questions. He has shown most forcefully that there are no 'natural' intellectual objects; as Chartier explained, 'Madness, medicine, and the state are not categories that can be conceptualized in terms of universals whose contents each epoch particularizes'.<sup>35</sup> Man himself is a recent invention, according to Foucault, and even sexuality was only produced as a 'discursive object' in the eighteenth century. What is time-bound in discursive practice cannot provide the enduring foundation for historical method. Thus, the human sciences (as the social sciences are known in France) cannot be relied upon in the search for a total history of man, for they themselves must be historically deconstructed as the product of contingent 'micro-technologies of power'.<sup>36</sup>

Some commentators would go so far as to call Foucault's approach an 'anti-method'.<sup>37</sup> Foucault called it an 'archaeology' (*The Archaeology of Knowledge*, English translation 1972) and more recently a 'genealogy'.<sup>38</sup> Neither term was meant in a conventional sense as a search for origins. Foucault explicitly rejected most current historical methods. He systematically side-stepped any form of causal analysis (though one might argue that he offered an implicit one) and also denied the validity of any simple congruence or analogy between discursive formations and their socio-political context. Genealogy is a method that denies the usual forms of grounding – that is, it makes no necessary reference to extra-discursive conceptions of reality. A discourse is not an ideology, therefore, because it cannot be explained by reference to something outside of it. Genealogy is 'a discourse about discourses', in which the

aim is to analyze how one constellation of power-knowledge relations displaces another. Despite his attention to the civilizing process, Foucault repeatedly insisted on discontinuities rather than continuities, and more controversially still, he insisted that there was no subject (agent) in this history of discontinuity. Genealogy showed, in contrast, how the subject was produced by discourse. What we call the author or the individual was the product of a certain, time-bound discursive formation (similarly, madness, medicine, punishment and sexuality, the topics of his major works).

There is a certain superficial similarity between the positions of Foucault and those of the classic *Annales* historians. Foucault's genealogy does not take events as conventionally given (the great thinkers and great texts of intellectual history, for example), but rather constitutes its own events.<sup>39</sup> Foucault looked for the anonymous rules governing discursive practices; Braudel looked for the deep structures in biology, demography, climate and the economy that shaped Mediterranean history; and historians of *mentalités* looked for the equally anonymous rules that informed collective mental representations. All participated in a displacement of the 'subject' from history (and not just great individuals but collective action in general). But Foucault took this tendency to its logical consequences. He did not argue from a neo-positivist position that assumed that all the social sciences could be united in an investigation into the nature of man; rather he devoted himself to undermining belief in continuity, in concepts such as the nature of man and in the methods of the social sciences. Foucault radically historicized all such beliefs and, by insisting on discontinuity in discursive formations, he also seemed to render futile any investigation into historical process, itself always apparently tainted with the much disdained search for origins. Genealogy, then, was not another structuralist method (Foucault rejected structuralism along with Marxism and psychoanalysis as 'totalizing discourses'). Genealogy, or better, genealogies are anti-sciences devoted to defending 'the claims to attention of local, discontinuous, disqualified, illegitimate knowledges'.<sup>40</sup> It is small wonder, then, that most historians find Foucault useful only in small doses. He posed fascinating epistemological challenges, but these have been largely ignored in favour of consideration of his local insights into the historical functioning of particular institutions and types of discourse.

As compelling as Foucault's work has been, it would be a mistake to think that French history has now stopped in its tracks, mesmerized by the epistemological problems he so strikingly exposed. Indeed, some of the most lively debates and controversies in French history in the last

two decades have concerned those epochs and problems that were relatively untouched either by the classic *Annales* paradigm or by the work of those interested in *mentalités*, including Foucault. The history of modern France (contemporary France to the French) and in particular the history of revolutions and of social movements have continued to attract historians in France and in England and America.

French history, in fact, has had a growing audience. The proportion of articles on France in *The Journal of Modern History*, for example, grew from twenty-two per cent between 1965 and 1974 to twenty-seven per cent between 1975 and 1984. In America, French history has not been entirely colonized by *Annales* methods and perspectives, though the influence is evident. In *French Historical Studies*, for example, political history continues to be an important category (fifty-five per cent of the articles published between 1965 and 1974, forty-one per cent between 1975 and 1984), whereas demographic history never made a dent (less than one per cent of the articles published in either of the last two decades). Still, the rise of economic and social history is unmistakable (from twenty-four per cent of the articles published between 1965 and 1974 to forty-six per cent of those published between 1975 and 1984), though intellectual and cultural history remain minor (nineteen per cent of the articles published between 1965 and 1974, thirteen per cent of those published in the subsequent decade). In general, in America social history has carried all before it, but the methodological problems posed by research in *mentalités* have yet to make a large impression.<sup>41</sup>

Very little has been said here about Marxism in historical studies in France. Marxist interpretations continue to have an important impact on historical debates in France, particularly, though not exclusively, in modern history. Debates about the French Revolution have long been a staple in the diet of French historians, but since the 1970s the polemics have to a great extent subsided. The career of François Furet is particularly telling in this regard. From the publication of his joint history of the Revolution (with Denis Richet) in 1965–66, he was at the centre of swirling controversies over the Marxist interpretation. His frontal assault of 1971 on the so-called ‘revolutionary catechism’ is still standard reading for graduate students.<sup>42</sup> But in the years since the publication of his collection of essays on the Revolution (French version 1978), Furet has become more and more interested in methodological problems.<sup>43</sup> Although the Marxist interpretation of the French Revolution continues to elicit comment from scholars, the atmosphere of scholarly exchange is remarkably less acrimonious than it was ten or fifteen years ago.

The decline in bitterness does not mean that Marxist interpretations are *passé* in French history. The influence of Marxist perspectives is still very strong in the many new studies of 1848 in France, for instance.<sup>44</sup> Even work that emphasizes the importance of culture in modern France has shown the imprint of the Marxist schema, which is perhaps not surprising given the importance of the ongoing dialogue within Marxism about the role of 'the superstructure'. Willam Sewell's much-discussed examination of *The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848*, for instance, combines anthropological and Marxist perspectives in an attempt to provide a reading like that of E. P. Thompson's for the French working class.<sup>45</sup> Charles Tilly's work on collective action in modern France consistently emphasizes two factors as overwhelmingly important: the formation of the national state and the development of capitalism. Over the years, Tilly has turned away from urbanization as the primary factor of explanation for large-scale changes in French social and political life towards such obviously Marxist factors as proletarianization.<sup>46</sup>

Although many of the *Annales* historians such as Furet have defined their endeavour as explicitly non-Marxist, the *Annales* school and Marxist historians are not as far apart as some would like us to believe. In recent years, as the *Annales* school has moved toward the study of *mentalités*, the Marxists have been drawn to the study of 'culture'. The Marxist model of substructure-superstructure has been questioned on much the same grounds as the three-tiered paradigm of the *Annales* school. At the very moment that social history seemed to reign supreme (within both camps), many historians began to question the foundations of social history, of the *Annales* paradigm and of the Marxist explanatory model. As the polemics have subsided, certain recurrent issues have surfaced. Is a total history possible or desirable? What is the role of culture in daily life, in social movements, in revolutionary changes? Can or should an interest in culture or *mentalités* be integrated into a social-historical theory?

At the centre of these issues and at the point of convergence of the *Annales* school and Marxist history is the theme of power. Both Elias and Foucault made power the central concept in their work; for Elias, it was the power of value-setting élites, and for Foucault, it was the always anonymous micro-technologies of the various disciplinary apparatuses. It seems in retrospect that an analysis of power was the missing ingredient in both the *Annales* and Marxist paradigms; in the *Annales* school, power was relegated to the 'dust' of ephemeral events, and in Marxist interpretations, it was an all-too-automatic consequence of economic and social hegemony. In the last two decades, these reflex reactions have come

under pressure. Just what the outcome will be is far from clear, as there are now obvious problems with all of the models available.<sup>47</sup> It is not even clear whether the concern with power-culture will generate scores of interesting, isolated local studies or lay the foundation for a new style of social theory. It is evident, however, that the methodological sophistication and even the self-doubts of French historians will make for interesting reading in the decades to come.

### Notes

1. There are many sources on the history of the *Annales* school. See, for example, Traian Stoianovich, *French Historical Method: The Annales Paradigm* (Ithaca 1976); Guy Bourdè and Hervé Martin, *Les Ecoles historiques* (Paris 1983); and Jean Glénisson, 'France', in Georg G. Iggers and Harold T. Parker, *International Handbook of Historical Studies: Contemporary Research and Theory* (Westport, Connecticut 1979), 175–92.

2. Stoianovich, op. cit., 235.

3. Iggers and Parker, *International Handbook*, 5–6. For a much more critical analysis of the success of the *Annales* school, see Hervé Coutau-Bégarie, *Le Phénomène 'Nouvelle Histoire': Stratégie et idéologie des nouveaux historiens* (Paris 1983). Coutau-Bégarie places great emphasis on the *Annales* school's penetration into the mass media and its influence within the major publishing houses.

4. See, for example, Bourdè and Martin, *Les Ecoles historiques*, and Glénisson, op. cit.

5. As quoted in Glénisson, op. cit., 177.

6. See, for example, the special issue of the *Journal of Modern History* on History with a French Accent which included articles by J. H. Hexter on 'Fernand Braudel and the *Monde Braudellien*' and H. R. Trevor-Roper on 'Fernand Braudel, the *Annales*, and the Mediterranean', vol. 44 (December 1972).

7. In 1978 *Review* published an entire issue on the *Annales* and its impact on historical studies around the world. In later years, however, *Review* has been much more obviously associated with the world systems analysis of its founder, Immanuel Wallerstein, than with the work of Braudel and the *Annales*. For Kinser's quote see his 'Annaliste Paradigm? The Geohistorical Structuralism of Fernand Braudel', *American Historical Review*, 86 (1981), 63–105, especially 63.

8. Stoianovich, op. cit., 236.

9. Kinser, op. cit.; Chartier quote from Glénisson, op. cit., 177.

10. As quoted in Kinser, op. cit., 67–68. In this paragraph I have relied heavily on Kinser's penetrating analysis, which is very interesting, in particular for its attention to the rhetorical strategies of Braudel's writing.

11. Pierre Renouvin, 'Research in Modern and Contemporary History: Present Trends in France', *Journal of Modern History*, 38 (1966), 1–12, quotes from 11.

12. Statistics from Alain Corbin, 'La Revue historique: Analyse du contenu d'une publication rivale des *Annales*', in Charles-Olivier Carbonell and Georges Livet (eds.), *Au Berceau des Annales: Le milieu strasbourgeois, L'histoire en France au début du XXe siècle* (Toulouse 1983), 136.

13. As quoted in Roger Chartier, 'Intellectual History or Sociocultural History? The French Trajectories', in Dominick La Capra and Steven L. Kaplan (eds.), *Modern European Intellectual History: Reappraisals and New Perspectives* (Ithaca, N.Y. 1982), 25.

14. *Ibid.*, 26.

15. I am indebted to Sheryl Kroen for her assistance in compiling information about publication patterns in the *Annales* and other journals.

16. The Simiand quote appears in Jacques Revel, 'The *Annales*: Continuities and Discontinuities', *Review*, 1 (1978), 9–18, quotation from 12. The Simiand article on 'Méthode historique et science sociale', from the *Revue de synthèse historique*, 6 (1903) was reprinted in *Annales: E.S.C.*, 15 (1960), 83–119 as one of the most crucial texts for historians of the *Annales* school. Neither Simiand nor Revel saw any link between the study of stable, well-defined relations and positivism.

17. François Furet, 'Beyond the *Annales*', *Journal of Modern History*, 55 (1983), 389–410, quotation from 391.

18. See note 15.

19. Revel, *op. cit.*, 16.

20. Furet, *op. cit.*, 391.

21. Revel, *op. cit.*, 17.

22. Despite its uncritical reflections on the narrative mode, many useful observations on the *Annales* school in the 1970s can be found in Lawrence Stone, 'The Revival of Narrative: Reflections on a New Old History', *Past and Present*, 85 (1979), 3–24. On the attitudes of Bloch and Febvre to the history of *mentalités*, see André Burguière, 'The Fate of the History of *Mentalités* in the *Annales*', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 24 (1982), 424–37.

23. The figures for the *Revue historique* come from the period 1951–72. Corbin, *op. cit.*, 136.

24. Glénisson, *op. cit.*, 182.

25. Furet, *op. cit.*, 404–5.

26. *Ibid.*, 405.

27. *Ibid.*

28. Robert Darnton, 'Intellectual and Cultural History', in Michael Kammen (ed.), *The Past Before Us: Contemporary Historical Writing in the United States* (Ithaca 1980), 346.

29. Chartier, *op. cit.*, 23.

30. *Ibid.*, 30.

31. *Ibid.*, 41. An especially acute analysis of some of the epistemological problems involved in the study of French popular culture can be found in Stuart Clark, 'French Historians and Early Modern Popular Culture', *Past and Present*, 100 (1983), 62–99.

32. In this paragraph and the next one, I rely heavily on the useful critique of Patrick H. Hutton, 'The History of Mentalities: The New Map of Cultural History', *History and Theory*, 20 (1981), 237–59.

33. Representative works of the three thinkers include Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York 1978); Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York 1962); Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York 1979).

34. As quoted by Mark Poster, 'Foucault and History', *Social Research*, 49 (1982), 116–42, quotation from 128.

35. Chartier, *op. cit.*, 43.

36. There is a fast-growing literature on Foucault. Among the most useful pieces for historians are Jan Goldstein, 'Foucault among the Sociologists: The "Disciplines" and the



History of the Professions', *History and Theory*, 23 (1984), 170–92 and Larry Shiner, 'Reading Foucault: Anti-Method and the Genealogy of Power-Knowledge', *History and Theory*, 21 (1982), 382–97. See also, the much more comprehensive book by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago 1982).

37. See, especially, Shiner, *op. cit.*, upon which much of this paragraph is based.

38. See, for example, Michel Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy and History', in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* (Ithaca 1977), 139–64.

39. Shiner, *op. cit.*, especially 388.

40. As quoted in Shiner, *ibid.*, 396.

41. Robert Darnton provides some interesting data on the general turn toward social history in 'Intellectual and Cultural History'. He shows that as of 1978 social history outstripped political history as the most important area of research in American doctoral dissertations (p. 334).

42. Reprinted in *Interpreting the French Revolution*, trans. Elborg Forster (Cambridge 1981).

43. His essay on the *Annales* school was reprinted in a volume entitled *In the Workshop of History*, trans. Jonathan Mandelbaum (Chicago 1983).

44. Several of these studies are reviewed in Eugen Weber, 'The Second Republic, Politics, and the Peasant', *French Historical Studies*, 11 (1980), 521–50.

45. William Sewell, Jr., *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848* (Cambridge 1980). On Sewell's methods, see Lynn Hunt and George Sheridan, 'Corporatism, Association, and the Language of Labor in France, 1750–1850', forthcoming, *Journal of Modern History*.

46. A recent summary of Tilly's views can be found in Charles Tilly, 'Retrieving European Lives', in Olivier Zunz (ed.), *Reliving the Past: The Worlds of Social History* (Chapel Hill 1985), 11–52.

47. Foucault offers some interesting reflections on the analysis of power in his afterword, 'The Subject and Power', in Dreyfus and Rabinow, *op. cit.*, 208–26.

Lynn Hunt

is Professor of History at the University of California, Berkeley. She is the author of *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley 1984) and *Revolution and Urban Politics in Provincial France* (Stanford 1978). She is now working on the relationship between liberal politics and violence in French history.