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THE "ANNALES" SCHOOL AND THE CHALLENGE OF THE LATE 20th CENTURY. CRITICISMS AND TENTATIVE REFORMS

Since the 1950s French historiography has been dominated by the "Annales" school, a research trend brought into being by the journal of that name. Its main aim was to give history a clearly scientific status through a re-definition of the object of the historian's interest and the use of objective analytical methods borrowed from the social sciences. The "Annales" school focused on economic and social questions and presented them in quantitative formulations. It denied the role of events in historical processes and rejected the traditional political history. It introduced the concept of total history which combined ecology with economy in order to explain long-term phenomena which shape mankind's history. Structures and trends were recognized as the main subject of historical research. The *longue durée* category worked out by Fernand Braudel has become the visiting card of the school. The historians who followed the guidelines of the "Annales" school stressed the importance of interdisciplinary studies, sought inspiration in sociology, economics and geography and repudiated all links with philosophy and literature.

Beside Marxism and the American modernization theory, the "Annales" school became one of the three great historiographic schools which explained history by means of socio-economic categories. It turned out to be the most vital of them owing, first and foremost, to its exceptional adaptation capability[1]. This was borne out by the changes introduced in the "Annales" school under the influence of the events of 1968. The younger generation of researchers treated the legacy of its predecessors in a creative

[1] F. Dosse, *L'Histoire en miettes. Des "Annales"' à la "nouvelle histoire"*, Paris 1987, p. 251.

way. The school's renewed programme was outlined in three volumes of methodological studies entitled *Faire de l'histoire* which appeared in 1974[2] and was later named "new history", in line with the title of the famous book-manifesto of 1978[3]. The main change was the introduction of new research subjects borrowed from structural anthropology, such as carnality, table manners, sex life, rites and myths. The old interest in man's "objective" condition merged with an analysis of the "subjective" features of human existence, producing as a result a history of material culture and a history of mentalities. The chronological framework of research changed, near-static phenomena replacing evolutions and long-term transformations. Syntheses and the idea of total history were gradually abandoned. In place of the previous unified criteria, diverse explanatory systems began to be applied. According to "new history" almost everything could be a subject of historical research and the methodologies of all social sciences could be used for this purpose. That the new road was the correct one, was soon confirmed by the appearance of several books which were recognized as spectacular scientific achievements, and by the enormous, unprecedented popularity of historical works on the publishing market in France and other countries.

The first critical voices questioning the world success of the "Annales" school were raised at the turn of the 1970s. The two most important texts, those by the Englishman Lawrence Stone and the Italian Carlo Ginzburg, appeared in 1979 and in the following year were published in a French translation in the prestigious journal "Le Débat". Both texts referred to the "Annales" school's conception of the scientific character of history, a question of fundamental significance for the school. According to Lawrence Stone, the socio-economic methods of explaining history, the French model as well as Marxism and American cliometrics, have turned out to be inefficient. History should return to narration, organize the material chronologically, and explanatory models should give way to an analysis of historical changes. In place of the quantitative approach Stone proposed studies on individual cases, and instead of alliances with sociology, economics and demography, he proposed a return to an-

[2] *Faire de l'histoire*, vol. 1-3, ed. J. Le Goff, P. Nora, Paris 1974.
[3] *La Nouvelle histoire*, ed. J. Le Goff, R. Chartier, J. Revel, Paris 1978.

thropology and psychology. He did not want the historian to be a scientist, a model promoted by the "Annales" school, but a man of letters[4].

Carlo Ginzburg's text was a kind of manifesto of the nascent Italian microhistory. Ginzburg questioned the sense of including history in the Galilean model of science, a model typical of the natural sciences which are experimental and cumulative. In his view, historiography should use the opposite "indicatory" paradigm, for historical reality can be decoded only by an analysis of the traces and indications it has left. Contrary to the principles of the repetitive Galilean model, history, in his opinion, is inseparably linked with individualization. Historical knowledge is indirect and hypothetical, it is by its very nature qualitative not quantitative. This kind of knowledge requires the arrangement of facts in narrative sequences and is acquired in the very act of historical creation, the historian's cognitive strategy remaining fully individualistic[5].

In France, too, it soon began to be asserted that historiography was in crisis. Suppositions were at first put forward that "New history" did not owe its hegemony to its scientific quality but to a skilful strategy of gaining intellectual and institutional authority in scientific institutes, at universities, in publishing houses and the media. The sharpest criticism was launched by François Dosse in his book *L'Histoire en miettes* published in 1987. In his opinion "New history" betrayed the ideals of the "Annales" school, and the direction it mapped out did not correspond to the challenges of contemporary times. It was a mistake to reject the idea of total history for this led to the fragmentation of historical research (to the history in crumbs as the title says). Having been divided into many specialistic sections closely linked with the social sciences, with their methods and subjects, historiography has lost its identity. Dosse expected that researchers who clung to the globalizing approach would renew the historical science, provided they rejected the annalistic concept of immov-

[4] L. Stone, *The Revival of Narrative: Reflections on a New Old History*, "Past and Present", vol. 85, 1979, pp. 3–24; French translation: *Retour au récit ou réflexions sur une Nouvelle Vieille Histoire*, "Le Débat", N° 4, 1980, pp. 116–142.

[5] C. Ginzburg, *Spie. Radici di un paradigma indiziario*, in: *Crisi della ragione. Nuovi modelli nel rapporto tra sapere e attività umane*, ed. A. Gargani, Torino 1979; French translation: *Signes, traces, pistes. Racines d'un paradigme de l'indice*, "Le Débat", N° 6, 1980, pp. 3–44.

able time. In his view, history annihilates itself by becoming ethnology for it undercuts its own foundations: duration and changes in it. In Dosse's opinion significance should be restored to what the "Annales" school had rejected since its foundation, namely, to the historical event. Dosse did not, of course, mean a return to 19th century scientific standards. He thought that "significant" events linked with the structures which made them possible would become the subject of historical research. He also drew attention to the necessity of preserving the causality of events in order to avoid descriptions of isolated cases and theories detached from reality[6].

Slightly different measures aimed at overcoming the crisis in the social sciences, including history, were proposed by Marcel Gauchet in "Le Débat" in 1988. In his opinion attention should be focused on the individual and not on social groups as the "Annales" school advised. This proposal was in keeping with the new trends present in French sociology in the 1980s, trends which were developing under the influence of Pierre Bourdieu. Gauchet also asserted that it was necessary to return to research into politics for this was the most general level of the organization of societies[7].

Another study which had a strong impact in France was the book *Demystifying Mentalities* by Geoffrey Lloyd, a British historian specializing in ancient times. The book was published in 1990 and three years later was translated into French under the significant title *Pour en finir avec les mentalités*. With great erudition the author undermined the sense and usefulness of the concept of mentality. He pointed out that to ascribe ways of thinking to groups was an excessive generalization for it is individuals who think, not social groups. Moreover, in Lloyd's opinion scholars engaged in research on mentality concentrated on permanent structural phenomena and ignored changes in these structures, a question which was of fundamental importance from the historical point of view. Lloyd also stressed that historians defined mentality too freely; the result was that it was impossible to make a reliable comparison of the results of their research[8]. Lloyd's matter-of-fact criticism won acclaim but, as

[6] F. Dosse, *op. cit.*

[7] M. Gauchet, *Changement de paradigme en sciences sociales?*, "Le Débat", N° 50, 1988, pp. 165–170.

Roger Chartier pointed out in a review published in "Le Monde", it was rather pointless, for French historiography had not worked out such a clear and full idea of the concept of mentality as the British researcher thought it had[9].

From the 1980s on, the globalization of the social and humanistic sciences, including history, progressed ever more rapidly. Even French historians began to pay attention to what was happening in other countries. The "Annales" school was faced with a challenge from the Italian *microstoria*, the German *Alltagsgeschichte* and, above all, the American *linguistic turn*, which gave birth to postmodernism in history. Let us point out that a whole series of paradoxes and misunderstandings had a bearing on the relationship between Anglo–American postmodernism and France, "this most modernistic country in the world"[10]. To begin with, the postmodernist theory evolved on the basis of opinions of some respected French intellectuals, such as Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jean Baudrillard, Roland Barthes, Julia Kristeva, Jean–François Lyotard and Gilles Deleuze. The problem is that in France they are usually not regarded as representatives of a common, coherent trend. As a matter of fact their contribution to the theory of postmodernism is due to a selective adaptation and elaboration of their views by some university circles in the USA[11]. From the French point of view this means that the Anglo–American postmodernists are inconsistent and use ambiguous criteria; this is why they have been sometimes accused of dilettantism[12]. It may be regarded as a paradox that in its criticism of the "Annales" school postmodernism frequently refers to the authority of Michel Foucault, even though his influence shaped the face of "Annales" in the 1970s[13]. One of Europe's most

[8] G. E. R. Lloyd, *Demystifying Mentalities*, Cambridge 1990; French translation: *Pour en finir avec les mentalités*, Paris 1993, pp. 16–19.

[9] R. Chartier, *Le Jeu de la règle. Lectures*, Bordeaux 2000, p. 87.

[10] M. Silverman, *Facing Postmodernity. Contemporary French Thought on Culture and Society*, London–New York 1999, p. 1.

[11] E. Varikas, *Féminisme, modernité, postmodernité: pour dialogue des deux cotés de l'océan*, in: *Féminismes au présent*, Paris 1993 (special supplement to the periodical "Futur antérieur"), p. 61.

[12] G. Noiriel, *Sur le "crise" de l'histoire*, Paris 1996, p. 143.

[13] Ch. Delacroix, F. Dosse, P. Garcia, *Les courants historiques en France 19e–20e siècles*, Paris 1999, pp. 201, 226.

prominent theoreticians of postmodernist historiography, Franklin Ankersmit, regards classic annalistic studies in the history of mentality, such as *Montaillou, village occitan* by Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie (Paris 1975) and *Le Dimanche de Bouvines: 27 juillet 1214* by Georges Duby (Paris 1973) as works typical of postmodernist historiography[14].

From the point of view of postmodernism, the "Annales" school's idea of history is unauthorized and fundamentally wrong. The conflict stems mainly from the "Annales" school's aspiration to impart a scientific, or rather scientistic, character to history and other social sciences. But postmodernists doubt whether objective knowledge can exist at all, especially in the social sciences. In their view, scientific theories are dependent on the ideology imposed by a system of power. According to them, science is an element of a regime's "intellectual economy"; moreover, the cognitive methods of science are in their opinion fallacious for every scientist is socially, ideologically and sexually determined. Consequently, knowledge is constructed socially and the stress put on the objectivity of scientific facts is aimed at masking the scientist's active role in the selection and grouping of facts.

The postmodernist criticism of historiography concerns mainly three questions, namely:

1. The epistemological status of the object of research. On the basis of Jacques Derrida's linguistic theories and the reflections of Roland Barthes, postmodernism regards it as a certainty that no reality can transcend the discourse in which it is expressed. The historian has therefore no access to past facts, only to texts. What is more, what the historian regards as a reconstruction of the past is the text constructed by him. Historiography is therefore not so much a search for historical truth as a way in which the historian creates a convincing discourse which is in keeping with the standards adopted by his milieu.

2. The quasi-empirical methodology. Following in the footsteps of social sciences (especially economics and sociology), the historiography promoted by the "Annales" school assumed that the use of the same research questionnaire and the same methods in the examination of various segments of the past would lay

[14] F. R. Ankersmit, *History and Tropology. The Rise and Fall of Metaphor*, Berkeley 1994, p. 176.

the foundations for reliable comparisons and ensure a cumulative growth of our knowledge (as in the natural sciences). Special value was therefore attached to "objective" data, especially to figures. Postmodernism denied their cognitive value and called into question scientistic methodology, proposing hermeneutics as the basic instrument for working on a text.

3. The status of historical writing. The undermining of historiograhy's claim on reconstruction of the past and of the scientific methods used by it made it necessary to think over the role of historical works. Postmodernism denied that there was opposition between history and literature, between fact and fiction. It inscribed on its banners the theory of Hayden White, according to whom historical writing is a literary artefact. The historian fictionalizes events, presenting them as a story of an artistic rather than a scientific character. The only difference between his work and literary work is that the historian "discovers" stories while a man of letters "invents" them. The stress laid on the rhetorical character of historical writing, backed by analyses of its poetics, dealt a blow to the "Annales" school's conviction that it was possible to employ a fully formalized, narration-free scientific discourse in historiography.

French historiography had to answer the challenge of postmodernism if it was to retain its world importance. It did this rather unwillingly, if only because of the above-mentioned intellectual misunderstandings between the two coasts of the Atlantic. The American adherents of postmodernism aroused little interest in France. For instance, Hayden White's views were practically unknown in France until the end of the 1980s, none of his texts having been translated into French. The name "postmodernism" is practically never used in France in reference to history, the rather imprecise term "linguistic turn" being employed. This does not mean that French historiography has not come across problems raised by postmodernism. But the discussion on these problems has never been so heated in France as in America and Britain[15].

The criticism to which the "Annales" school was subjected at the end of the 1980s showed that the dominance of the journal had become not only irritating but also groundless, for the

[15] S. Cerutti, *Le linguistic turn en Angleterre. Notes sur un débat et ses censures*, "Enquète. Anthropologie. Histoire. Sociologie", N° 5, 1997, p. 140.

explosion of French historiography in the 1970s blew it up from the inside. The aspirations to a synthesis turned out to be illusions doomed to failure, the scientistic claims were undermined by the return of subjectivism which placed history and literature on the same footing, and the concept of total history supported by other social sciences put its identity in crisis. Many historians began therefore to call for a critical self-reflection[16].

"Annales", whose strength lay in its susceptibility to new trends, took up the challenge, even though the journal had long before renounced any claim to leadership and even asserted that there was no such thing as an "Annales" school, though there were many successive paradigms[17]. A new language and a new approach to the problems of history could be noticed in the first issue of "Annales" of 1988, an issue dedicated to the question of historical modelling. A short preface by Bernard Lepetit, secretary of the editorial board, drew attention to the growing dissatisfaction with the use of quantitative methods in historiography, it noticed a return to narration and hermeneutics and approved criticism of descriptive statistics, contrasting it with simulation by means of hypothetical models, which made it possible to throw a bridge between theoretical language and empirical data[18].

The decisive step was taken in a short editorial entitled *Histoire et sciences sociales. Un tournant critique?*, published in the next issue of the journal[19]. "A time of uncertainty seems to have come", admitted the editorial board in its diagnosis of changes in the scientific landscape. In the editors' opinion, the great paradigms, such as Marxism and structuralism, had lost their importance and the dispersal of research trends had made it impossible to produce an agreed interpretation of reality in the social sciences. The crisis had, to some extent, also affected history, which had lost its way in a disorderly multiplication of the subjects of its research. Therefore "Annales" set itself the task of defining a few landmarks for a meticulous but innovatory historical research in this new scientific reality. It opened its

[16] A. Prost, *Douze leçons sur l'histoire*, Paris 1996, p. 10.

[17] Ch. Delacroix, F. Dosse, P. Garcia, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

[18] B. Lepetit, *Histoire et modélisation. Présentation*, "Annales ESC", vol. 43, 1988, N° 1, pp. 3–4.

[19] *Histoire et sciences sociales. Un tournant critique?*, "Annales ESC", vol. 43, 1988, N° 2, pp. 291–293.

columns to reflections and discussions, pointing out at the same time which problems should be discussed. The journal mentioned first and foremost methodological questions, such as the scale of analyses. Referring to the experiences of microhistory, the editorial board of "Annales" stated that there was an interdependence between the dimension of the researched object, the way of observing it and the research questionnaire used. It also asked whether generalizations and comparisons were possible when objects of various dimensions were observed, from individuals to society, from a local community to global phenomena.

According to "Annales", historical writing was another important methodological question. Admitting that some rhetorical conventions were applied in both the literary and the quantitative variant of history, the editorial board wondered whether non-classic forms of argumentation, especially narrative ones, should be admitted. How can one control and verify their use so that they should retain a scientific character?

The editorial also raised the question of history's scientific alliances. It pointed out that it was necessary to take a new look at the history of art and the history of science and that there were new territories for expansion: retrospective econometrics, literary criticism, sociolinguistics and political philosophy. But the editorial board also wanted to make the understanding of the concept of interdisciplinary studies a subject for historians' reflection. In their summing up the editors expressed the conviction that they were participating not so much in a crisis of historiography as in its still uncrystallized transformation which they called "a critical turn".

Having started a discussion, the journal presented its results in its sixth issue of 1989. The texts by various authors were preceded by a preface signed "Annales" and entitled *Tentons l'expérience*[20]. In the preface the editorial board stated clearly that its aim was neither ossification nor a scattering of efforts, that it had no ambition to establish a school or become a letter box. It wanted the journal to be an area open to experiments where new research questionnaires and new workshop methods would clash and crystallize, laying the foundations for a renewal of history's dialogue with the social sciences. The editorial board wanted above all to solve the question of the specific character of history.

[20] *Tentons l'expérience*, "Annales ESC", vol. 44, 1989, N° 6, pp. 1317–1323.

What was it that made history different from economics, anthropology and sociology in their past-investigating variants? The "Annales" school's concentration on long-term, nearly static, phenomena deprived history of what was specific to it: reflection on the mechanism of changes in time. In its manifesto the editorial board rather distanced itself from that approach. Of course this did not mean a return to linear, positivist, cause-and-effect history in a chronicler's style. The reason for this new approach should rather be sought in the countless shifts in forms, structures and functioning. Such changes are of a purely historical character, that is, they are irreversible, unpredictable and predetermined. Societies are in a constant process of self-construction and it is in this process that one should look for the ways of breaking both with a banal description of events (a sin of positivist history) and a tautological analysis through the prism of predefined categories (a trait of the "Annales" school).

The authors of the manifesto then criticized thoughtless historical quantification which reifies research categories and attributes excessive significance to some phenomena only because they are countable. They also opposed the treatment of culture as a phenomenon secondary to the socio-economic background. According to the authors, the way historians understand society should be re-evaluated. One should not forget that society is a collection of individuals and not a unit that can only be examined from the point of view of its function and structure. The up-to-date currents in social sciences have laid stress on strategies, negotiations and social play but this is still something alien to historians. It is the internal dynamism of societies that should become the proper subject for historical research.

Of fundamental importance was the editors' remark that the development of history as a science does not consist in our learning more about past events. On the one hand the historical process is reflected in many existential, individual, irreducible experiences, on the other hand, historiography is only a commentary on the past, a proposal of how to understand it. A historical process will always be ambiguous and the historian's personality will always play an active role in imparting sense to it. History will progress as a science not by accumulating data but — and here the authors used a photographic metaphor — by changing the lens and the focal length. In that way they returned to

microhistorical inspiration which had been noticeable for some time. But they were against opposing the microhistorical approach to the macrohistorical one for they are complementary — a different scale of analysis reveals different conditions. The fact that an explanatory measure tried out on one echelon of the scale is not confirmed on another is not an obstacle, according to the authors. They were in favour of establishing complex historical models, for the diversity of the real world cannot be described by reducing it to a few hypothetical simple principles.

The editors also returned to the re-definition of interdisciplinarity in historical research. They stressed they had no intention of breaking with tradition, which had shaped the journal's image for 60 years, contributing to its worldwide success. But they pointed out that the outburst of history, caused, to a great extent, by the adoption of the methods of other social sciences, was fraught with grave dangers. First with a boundless multiplication of individual research paths. The methodology of every historian, in particular his way of throwing a bridge in his research between various disciplines of science, becomes his private affair, his own personal experience. This leads to an increase in the number of studies which are in no way comparable and whose contribution to the development of history is therefore doubtful. Another danger is that this situation is regarded as normal: the mere circulation of concepts and methods is thought to be sufficient for the development of historiography. While not negating the need for interdisciplinary research, the editorial board of "Annales" came out in favour of retaining the specific character of each social science, for the diversification of the methods and measures used by them encourages comparisons and shows that every scientific analysis of society is hypothetical and experimental. On the other hand, the interdisciplinary approach is purposeful only if there are marked differences between the individual sciences. It then expands scientific perspective and leads to the adoption of a critical attitude to the way in which reality is described by a given scientific discipline.

The sixth issue (1989) of "Annales", preceded by this introduction, contained texts on diverse matters. On the whole they complied with the general principles governing the new organization of the journal but testified to a far-reaching individualization of research paths. For instance, the issue included a reflec-

tion on biographical research, penned by Giovanni Levi[21], one of the most prominent Italian microhistorians, as well as a proposal by the economist Robert Boyer that historians should adopt some methods of modern economics[22].

Gérard Noiriel discussed the links between history and sociology. He stressed that knowledge of society should not be confined to countable categories but pointed out that sociology could be useful for history in other ways. His first proposal was sociology of historical cognition, that is the adaptation of scientific methods in research on the influence which the historians' social conditions exert on the historical knowledge created by them. This would mean an alliance with the sociology of science which had been made famous by Thomas Kuhn's theory of scientific revolutions. The second proposal concerned the use of the "subjectivist paradigm" in historical research. According to the author, this means that an historical analysis should be applied to all questions which cannot be examined by a quantitative analysis, for instance to unique experiences of individuals. This approach would make it possible to examine such questions as interiorization, an extremely important question for verifying Norbert Elias's model. The subjectivist paradigm made it possible to undertake a profound reflection on the dynamism of societies and the cumulative aspect of human history, for mankind's history is not only a history of technology and economy but also a history of emotional behaviour and of emotional ties between people[23].

However, the most representative of the "critical turn" were three studies written by Jean-Yves Grenier and Bernard Lepetit, Alain Boureau, and Roger Chartier. The first study, signed by two most active organizers of the "critical turn", sought inspiration in the origins of French economic history, in the early works of Camille-Ernest Labrousse. Grenier and Lepetit argued that Labrousse, accused of "flat positivism", had derived his methodology from principles which were opposed to positivism and that a return to these principles might exert an inspiring influence on research into socio-economic history[24].

[21] G. Levi, *Les Usages de la biographie*, *ibidem*, pp. 1325–1336.

[22] R. Boyer, *Economie et histoire: vers de nouvelles Alliances?*, *ibidem*, pp. 1397–1426.

[23] G. Noiriel, *Pour une approche subjectiviste du social*, *ibidem*, pp. 1435–1459.

Alain Boureau tried to restrain the concept of mentality, which was harshly criticized by the opponents of the "Annales" school. In his view the concept should be used only with reference to collective categories on the basis of regularities observed in the elementary units of a discourse, such as verbal, iconic or ritual expressions[25]. Of all the texts included in this issue of "Annales" it was Roger Chartier's study *Le Monde comme représentation* that had the greatest repercussions. Chartier presented his own vision of historical research which would reconstruct old societies through the prism of their own representations. In his opinion it was impossible to qualify cultural motives, objects and practices in sociological categories for their distribution and application did not necessarily correspond to an "objective" social division. Cultural differences were a result of dynamic processes and this, in his view, rehabilitated the role of the individual, his choices and actions in historiography[26]. In a way this text attempted to throw a bridge between the historiographic tradition of the "Annales" school and the American new history of culture with which the author had collaborated for some time.

The theoretical discussion continued in the successive issues of the journal. The next issue brought an article by André Burguière *De la compréhension en histoire.* The author glorified the achievements of the "Annales" school and argued that it was still an inspiring and up-to-date current[27]. At the same time the journal explored new methodological proposals. N° 3 of 1990 published an article by Daniel S. Milo on experimental history[28] (see below) and the next yearbook included a theoretical text by Jacques Guilhaumou who summed up research on the history of discourse, a research which though very popular with historians of the Revolution, was treated with reservation by "Annales"[29]. It was probably the article *Des catégories aux liens*

[24] J.-Y. Grenier, B. Lepetit, *L'Expérience historique. A propos de C.-E. Labrousse*, *ibidem*, pp. 1337–1360.

[25] A. Boureau, *Propositions pour une histoire restreinte des mentalités*, *ibidem*, pp. 1491–1504.

[26] R. Chartier, *Le Monde comme représentation*, *ibidem*, pp. 1505–1520.

[27] A. Burguière, *De la compréhension en histoire*, "Annales ESC", vol. 45, 1990, N° 1, pp. 123–136.

[28] D. S. Milo, *Pour une histoire expérimentale, ou la gaie histoire*, "Annales ESC", vol. 45, 1990, N° 3, pp. 717–734.

[29] J. Guilhaumou, *Décrire la Révolution française. Les porte-parole et le moment républicain (1790–1793)*, "Annales ESC", vol. 46, 1991, N° 4, pp. 949–970.

individuels: l'analyse de l'espace social by Mauritio Gribaudi and Alain Blum that came closest to the principles of the critical turn. On the basis of their research into 19th century records of registry offices, the authors took a critical look at strict divisions into statistical groups. They showed that it was possible to create a model for a quantitative analysis by considering micro-social determinant mechanisms, that is, to base research on individual life courses really followed by people instead of referring to a hypothetical solidarity and group movements[30].

The editors of "Annales" once again frankly expressed their opinion of the critical turn in the text *L'Expérimentation contre l'arbitraire* signed by Bernard Lepetit and Jacques Revel. This was the editorial board's reply to the sharp criticism of changes in the journal, levelled by a Russian medievalist, Yuri Bessmertny, who regarded them as a betrayal of annalistic ideals and a promotion of relativism in scientific history[31]. The editors tried to explain that, although they considered an historical study only as an interpretative model, this did not mean that strict procedures for the verification of the material and the coherence of its hypotheses did not exist. They stressed once again that the idea of total history should be abandoned and declared that they did not regard the microhistorical approach as more correct. But in our times it was, in their view, the most effective in deepening our historical knowledge[32].

The transformations in "Annales" were sealed by the change of the journal's subtitle from No. 1 of 1994. The traditional "Economies Sociétés Civilisations" was replaced by "Histoire Sciences Sociales". What is significant is that the name "history" finally appeared in the subtitle of the most important historical journal of the 20th century. The editors explained that the change was necessary to maintain the identity of scientific history and its basic research methods. They wanted to emphasize the diachronic sense of history and the journal's ambition to examine historicity in its inner differentiation[33]. Let us add that changes

[30] M. Gribaudi, A. Blum, *Des catégories aux liens individuels: l'analyse de l'espace social*, "Annales ESC", vol. 45, 1990, N° 6, 1365–1402.

[31] Y. Bessmertny, *Les "Annales" vues de Moscou*, "Annales ESC", vol. 47, 1992, N° 1, pp. 245–259.

[32] B. Lepetit, J. Revel, *L'expérimentation contre l'arbitraire*, *ibidem*, pp. 261–265.

[33] *Histoire, sciences sociales*, "Annales HSS", vol. 49, 1994, N° 1, pp. 3–4.

were introduced in the organization of the editorial board. Bernard Lepetit joined the publishing committee and his post of secretary of the editorial board was taken by Jean-Yves Grenier.

To sum up, the critical turn made by "Annales" consisted primarily in overcoming the model of social history which had for decades been associated with the journal and in freeing the school from the history of mentality, elaborated in the 1970s. This was reflected in the criticism of quantitative methods and in a departure from the concept of *longue durée*. But although "Annales" rejected the objectivist techniques borrowed from the social sciences, declaring them ineffective, this did not mean that it accepted the "rhetorical history" model promoted by postmodernists, a model based on narrative techniques and asserting that historical cognition was relative. The positive programme of the critical turn, though still rather diffuse, proclaimed the severance of ties with Marxism, functionalism and structuralism. The school planned to turn towards social constructivism and attach more significance to human actions. It declared that social realities should be analyzed as historical constructions of individual and collective actors, not as natural, fixed constructions, drawing attention to links with other social sciences, especially with ethnomethodology, hermeneutics, the theory of action and Clifford Geertz's anthropology.

But some critics pointed out that the methodological changes brought about in "Annales" by the critical turn resulted from the immediate needs of the milieu rather than from the inner logic of the school's evolution. Christian Delacroix, who depicted the history of the critical turn as early as 1995, pointed out that at first the turn looked rather like an "*ad hoc* modification" forced through by the identity crisis of the group linked with the journal. The undermining of the leading role of "Annales" in French historiography coincided with the breakdown of the scientific paradigm used by the school. The "Annales" milieu did not want to admit failure and tried to continue to use its paradigm in a polemic version, which laid stress on loyalty to the group and condemned betrayal. The editors applied the method of an "escape forwards", declaring that they were the vanguard of changes in French historiography. The attractive name "critical turn" allowed them to close ranks. It was only after some time that, thanks mainly to Bernard Lepetit, Jean-Yves Grenier and

Jacques Revel, the milieu's reformed historiographic model began to crystallize, a model based on a matter-of-fact revision of *longue durée*, structuralism and statistical methods. But "Annales" did not enter into discussion with the most vehement critics of the school, such as François Dosse and Lawrence Stone, and rejected proposals for a return to narrative, event-fraught or political history. After a short period of philosophical discussion on complex epistemological questions, the proponents of the critical turn adopted a realistic, pragmatic attitude, concentrating on inscribing history in the latest trends in social sciences as "an empirical, interpretative science"[34].

The critical turn was also sharply criticized by Gérard Noiriel and Antoine Prost for the use of scientific parlance which frequently covered up emptiness and for the construction of learned arguments which could be attractive for some historians but were completely devoid of social significance[35].

The top achievement of the critical turn was the collection of studies entitled *Les formes de l'expérience. Une autre histoire sociale* published in 1995 under Bernard Lepetit's editorship[36]. In an extensive introduction the editor presented his own vision of the development of French historiography in the 1990s. In his view one of its fundamental ideas was the rejection of unified methods in social sciences, a rejection which was supported by the new interdisciplinary plan promoted for the last few years in "Annales". Another principle was the profound understanding of historical explanations which should be reduced neither to a reconstruction of reality nor to a linguistic construction. The aim was, of course, knowledge of the past, which could be achieved by testing explanatory models. Thus historical explanation would at the same time be a discourse and a research technique, a narration and a use of critical procedures. Historical science should therefore abandon the mechanical use of theoretical schemes and pay more attention to the identity of researched objects and really existing social links. Lepetit called this approach a pragmatic paradigm. The volume included studies which differed from the chronological and methodological points

[34] Ch. Delacroix, *La Falaise et le rivage. Histoire du "tournant critique"*, "Espaces Temps", N° 59-61, 1995, pp. 86-111.

[35] G. Noiriel, *Sur le "crise"*, pp. 154-158; A. Prost, *op. cit.*, p. 286.

[36] *Les Formes de l'expérience. Une autre histoire sociale*. ed. B. Lepetit, Paris 1995.

of view but, in the editor's opinion, they formed the nucleus of a new unity of historical research, consisting in the deepening of empirical and theoretical research, in the introduction of questions concerning social ties, norms and individual experiences, and also in the use of the short-term category combined with other chronological structures worked out by historiography. The authors of the studies included in the volume, though they realized that scientific objectivity may distort the picture of the researched reality, did not become relativists and looked for a remedy against relativism in their methodological experience[37].

The studies in the volume cannot however be regarded as an implementation of some concrete scientific paradigm. It seems that the authors simply continued the research that interested them formerly and that the main reason why they contributed their studies was that they wanted to participate. Thus Alain Boureau in his study on the genesis of the *ius primae noctis* referred to Chartier's concept of representation[38], Jacques Revel presented the prospects of a microhistorical analysis of institutions[39], and Jean-Yves Grenier deconstructed the concept of empirical series in order to deepen statistical methods in research into economic history[40]. The volume also included articles by Jocelyne Dakhlia, Éric Brian, Alain Dewerpe, Simona Cerutti, Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, Nancy L. Green, Maurizio Gribaudi and André Burguière. What united all these texts was that the authors did not assign any logical rules to the evolution of the social processes described by them. They presented them as discontinuous, kaleidoscopic, undefined, multidirectional processes. Maurizio Gribaudi went farthest in this respect. The pattern of the determinants of social stratification which he presented on the basis of a meticulous research into the 19th century records of French registry offices was close to the theory of chaos[41].

[37] B. Lepetit, *Histoire des pratiques, pratique de l'histoire*, in: *Les Formes*, pp. 9–22.

[38] A. Boureau, *La Compétence inductive. Une modèle d'analyse des représentations rares*, in: *ibidem*, pp. 23–38.

[39] J. Revel, *L'institution et le social*, in: *ibidem*, pp. 63–84.

[40] J.-Y. Grenier, *Expliquer et comprendre. La construction du temps de l'histoire économique*, in: *ibidem*, pp. 227–251.

[41] M. Gribaudi, *Les Discontinuités du social. Un modèle configurationnel*, in: *ibidem*, pp. 187–225.

Had they continued their team work, the supporters of the critical turn might have worked out a joint research formula, but the development of their current was halted in 1995 by the sudden death of Bernard Lepetit who played a key role in that milieu.

The editorial board of "Annales" began to distance itself gradually from the achievements of its former secretary. In 1998 the journal published a critical review of *Les Formes d'expérience*, written by the English historian Gareth Stedman Jones who blamed the authors of the texts in the volume for presenting an incomplete methodological vision and for ignoring questions which were important for Anglo–American postmodernist historiography, such as the significance of discourse and textual analysis of history. He also pointed out that references to interactionist sociology were pointless for interactionist sociology could be used only in descriptions of Western societies. The editorial board of "Annales" only brought itself to explain that *Les Formes d'expérience* did not constitute the creed of the journal's new intellectual line and was not even a book of "Annales" but a collection of studies written in the aftermath of a CNRS colloquium. It also pointed out that contrary to the reviewer's assumption "Annales" had not fully rejected economic determinism[42].

Yet in N° 3/1997 of "Annales" Jacques Le Goff, presenting selected studies on laughter, stated that this subject, even though it belonged to the category of long–term structures and global history, could also inspire researchers associated with the critical turn[43]. However, the first issue of "Annales" in the new millennium without any excuse reverted to explaining history on a global scale and contained such essays as e.g. the one on Braudelian regions in China[44].

As early as 1999, Antoine de Baecque, a historian specializing in the 18th century and editor of "Cahiers du cinéma", asked in an article published in "Le Débat": *Où est passé le "tournant critique"?* He emphasized that his generation which began adult scientific life at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s believed that the "critical turn" would bring new ways of understanding history and would open French

[42] G. Stedman Jones, *Une autre histoire sociale?*, "Annales HSS", vol. 53, 1998, N° 2, pp. 283–394 (the issue also contains the reply of the editorial board).
[43] J. Le Goff, *Enquète sur le rire*, "Annales HSS", vol. 52, 1997, N° 3, p. 455.
[44] *Une histoire à l'échelle globale*, "Annales HSS", vol. 56, 2001, N° 1, pp. 3–4.

science to world influences and bold interpretative hypotheses. After Bernard Lepetit's death the older generation of historians succeeded in stifling the innovatory spirit and marginalizing the idea of the critical turn. Its rejection meant a withdrawal from reflection on discourse and representations in the name of a hypothetical "social reality", it was tantamount to depriving the researched societies of their right to autonomous reflection, tantamount to binding history with an epistemological concept which was reductionist and reactionary. It was also a nostalgic attempt to return to the world hegemony of "Annales", an attempt that was doomed to failure[45].

The volume of Bernard Lepetit's diverse studies published by his friends posthumously in 1999 under the title *Carnet de croquis* can therefore be regarded as a monument to, and also a tombstone of, the critical turn[46]. What else has remained of this current? The only source book written by its leader, *Les Villes dans la France moderne, 1740–1840* (Paris 1988), several books in which his closest collaborators developed their own research plans which in a way were part of the critical current[47] and several works by authors who declared their access to the movement, though their methodology was not quite convergent with that of the movement[48]. The EHESS milieu continues to work on ideas inspired by the critical turn but these studies are rather a margin of its work and they depart more and more from history, while researchers interested in a more profound methodological reflection pin their hopes on the proposal for a history of culture which is in opposition to the "Annales" milieu[49].

The experimental history current was linked with the critical turn by social and intellectual ties but it worked out its own methodology and ideology which many researchers regarded as

[45] A. de Baecque, *Où est passé le "tournant critique"?*, "Le Débat", N° 104, 1999, pp. 162–170.

[46] B. Lepetit, *Carnet de croquis. Sur la connaissance historique*, Paris 1999.

[47] E.g. A. Boureau, *Le Droit de cuissage. La fabrication d'un mythe (XIIIe–XXe siècle)*, Paris 1995; J.-Y. Grenier, *L'Économie d'Ancien Régime. Un monde de l'échange et de l'incertitude*, Paris 1996; *Espaces, temporalités, stratifications, Exercises sur les réseaux sociaux*, ed. M. Gribaudi, Paris 1998.

[48] E.g. A. Cabantous, *Histoire du blasphème en Occident. Fin XVIe–milieu XIXe siècle*, Paris 1998; J. Guilhaumou, *L'Avènement des porte-parole de la République (1789–1792). Essai de synthèse sur les langages de la Révolution française*, Villeneuve-d'Ascq 1998.

[49] A. de Baecque, *Les Éclats du rire. La culture des rieurs au XVIIIe siècle*, Paris 2000, pp. 21–22.

a symptom of decadence[50]. From the end of the 1980s the members of the "Annales" circle spoke ever more frequently about restoring the experimental dimension to history. Jean-Yves Grenier and Bernard Lepetit searched it in the early works of Camille-Ernest Labrousse, creator of French quantitative history[51], and Jacques Revel looked for it in Italian microhistory[52]. It may seem preposterous to regard history as an experimental science for it is impossible to carry out experiments on the past. However, the "Annales" school was based on the assumption that the past is not directly accessible to the historian. Passive observation is fruitless in this case. A historian not only defines his research problems but also constructs the objects of his research, chooses the way of reaching them, selects and elaborates devices and finds sources which correspond to his questionnaire. Therefore in history experimentation does not consist in manipulating the past but in manipulating the instruments which make it possible to know it.

It was a group of researchers rallied round Daniel S. Milo and Alain Boureau that went farthest in reflection on the experimental dimension of history. They found an ally in Bernard Lepetit who agreed to publish Milo's manifesto *Pour une histoire expérimentale, ou la gaie histoire*[53] in "Annales". This was the most radical and also the most interesting plan for renovating history in France in the 1990s. What is more, the plan was carried out. The following year saw the publication of a volume of studies entitled *Alter histoire. Essais d'histoire expérimentale* (Paris 1991), which included an improved version of the manifesto and essays by several authors who applied its principles in their research.

The theoretical principles of experimental history presented by Daniel S. Milo referred to classic 19th century theories applied in the natural sciences[54], according to which experimentation

[50] E.g. Ph. Boutry, *Assurances et errances de la raison historienne*, in: *Passés recomposés. Champs et chantiers de l'histoire*, ed. J. Boutier, D. Julia, "Autrement. Série Mutations", N° 150-151, 1995, pp. 56-68.

[51] J.-Y. Grenier, B. Lepetit, *L'Expérience*, p. 1344.

[52] J. Revel, *L'Histoire au ras du sol*, in: G. Levi, *Le pouvoir au village. Histoire d'un exorciste dans le Piémont du XVII siècle*, Paris 1989, p. XV.

[53] See fn. 28.

[54] For the principles of experimental history in the amended version of this manifesto see: D. S. Milo, *Pour une histoire expérimentale ou le gaie savoir*, in: *Alter histoire. Essais d'histoire expérimentale*, ed. D. S. Milo, A. Boureau, Paris 1991, pp. 9-55.

consists in the use of simple or compound procedures aimed at modifying natural phenomena in such a way that they should appear in circumstances or states in which they do not occur in nature. An experiment is therefore in fact a provoked observation and consists in violating the object of research by submitting it to a research procedure. The following methods are archetypal experimental methods: injection (that is, the adding of an alien element to the object of research), separation (that is, a separation from the object of an element which is part of it), transfer of the object beyond its natural environment, change of scale (taking the object through successive echelons of observation), the combining of objects which do not occur jointly, denomination (presentation of the object in categories not usually applied to it).

It seems that in the case of history, the above list of possible experimental procedures can be applied only to "what-would-happen-if" reflections, which are usually groundless from the scientific point of view. Of course there are exceptions, e.g. Robert F o g e l's work *Railroads and American Economic Growth: Essays in Econometric History* (Baltimore 1964), a work quoted by Daniel S. Milo, which denies that the development of railways contributed to the economic growth of the United States in the 19th century. But as I have pointed out, the aim was to experiment not with the past but with the methods which make it possible to know it. Instead of submitting to the established patterns of world perception, an experimental historian should find them himself. Referring to the most prominent contemporary French sociologists, Pierre B o u r d i e u, Jean-Claude P a s s e r o n and Jean-Claude C h a m b o r e d o n, Daniel S. Milo defined experiment in social sciences as "the imagination's challenge to facts and their representations, both the naive and the learned ones". According to him, an experiment involved both the object and the researcher whose role goes far beyond a simple observation of the course of the experiment.

Daniel S. Milo mentioned several experimental measures which could be applied in history. As far as approach to sources is concerned, he mentioned:

— the analysis of the peripheries of the discourse, that is realization of what the source conveys unconsciously and unin-

tentionally; this is similar to the methods used by a psychoanalyst in reconstructing a patient's childhood;

— the use of non-verbal and immaterial sources, in line with the principle that everything can be decoded, the only thing that is necessary is to ask questions (this is the approach offered by semiotics);

— manipulation of sources, the best example of which is provided by quantitative history which transforms sources into unified series of figures.

As regards analysis, it is the comparative method which is experimental. Daniel S. Milo criticized the principle that only comparable things could be compared for their choice by historians was completely arbitrary anyhow. The experimental comparative method did not require the existence of any links or a plane of comparison between the things compared. Its aim was to understand a phenomenon better through the prism of another phenomenon. The criterion of choosing things for comparison was therefore purely pragmatic.

Another method which is par excellence experimental is quantification. A historian's arbitrariness plays a fundamental role at every stage, from the standardization of source data, through structurization and formalization to modelling. Daniel S. Milo came out in favour of quantitative methods even with respect to phenomena regarded as uncountable, for instance high culture. But he emphasized that historians who apply the quantitative approach faced the danger of automation, for a thoughtless use of research patterns killed the experiment by turning the instruments used in it into the subject of research.

The drawing of conclusions from the absence of a fact is also regarded by Daniel S. Milo as a useful experimental method. He recalled the fruitful research on the absence of neoclassicism in German art in the last decade of the 18th century, and the absence of eagles in the imperial emblems of the 8th–10th centuries. Another proposal for experimental studies was a conscious use of anachronism. For instance, it is an anachronism to treat Jerom Bosch's painting as precursory to surrealism. Milo referred to José Luis Borgès who, having compiled a list of Franz Kafka's precursors, emphasized that even though each of them displayed some trait of Kafka's uniqueness, nobody would have noticed it if Kafka had not written anything.

According to Milo, it would be an interesting experience to rewrite great historiographic works, e.g. Fernand Braudel's *La Méditerranée*. It would be an equivalent of the repetition of an experiment in the natural sciences, where this is a standard procedure for validating a conclusion. But since the rewriting of books is not profitable from the scientific point of view, Milo proposed that famous works should be equipped with critical remarks and commentaries.

Thus, the methodological plan for experimental history, though it did not discover new research methods, it selected and assembled those that already existed and were used. But it reformed their theoretical grounding, submitting it to the vision of history as an experimental science, and exposed the historians' groundless claims that their methods, especially the quantitative and comparative ones, were objective.

Since the choices made by each historian in the course of his work were arbitrary, postmodernism denied that history was a science and put it on the level of literature. But experimental history seems to be a fully scientific and positive proposal, for can there be a better defence of the scientific status of history than an honest disclosure of its weak points, its departures from scientific objectivity, followed by an explanation of why this happens? Paradoxically, when explaining the grounds for the arbitrary stance of some historians, the plan for experimental history referred to the positivist model of the experimental sciences, showing that a certain, quite large extent of arbitrariness in historical research was compatible with strict scientific procedures. Historians should not therefore be accused of creating literary artefacts.

The plan for experimental history contained not only some methodological solutions but also a no less important deontological, even an ethical reflection, on the historian's role. Daniel S. Milo has repeatedly stressed in his manifesto that an historical experiment should consist not so much in the historian violating the object of his research as in his violating himself. Milo referred to some currents of 20th century avant–garde art which claimed they were of an experimental character. Their aim was to overcome the automatism of perception, which restricts an artist for, as the Russian formalist Victor Shklovsky pointed out, the objects we see too often begin to be perceived through recognition,

which means that when we look at such an object we do not see it in fact but recognize its image planted in our memory. This of course limits an artist's aesthetic sensitivity. He must therefore apply a whole series of deautomating techniques. The danger of automatism also hangs over the historian. It consists not only in an unconscious use of contemporary categories in his research on the past. For history has created some ideas of the past which the historian perceives through recognition, e.g. Renaissance, the Franciscan order, the medieval autumn, and the like. The historian should therefore, like an artist, use deautomating techniques.

Milo proposed a classic method which he called *ostranieniye* (from Russian) or defamiliarization. What he means is that it is necessary to restore to a well known object its strangeness, its oddity. In this way a historian may protect himself from the danger of observing the object through recognition. This is a method frequently used in literary narration, to mention only Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* or Grass's *Tin Drum*, in which a well known reality is described by a hypothetically alien hero. In scientific history the creator should apply this method to himself, which undoubtedly requires a well developed sense of self-consciousness. Defamiliarization is therefore most reminiscent of a game practised by the Polish poet, Miron Białoszewski who tried to see the world through the eyes of the Marsians[55].

Decontextualization offers the researcher a new approach to his object, an approach which is different from the way one usually thinks of this object. This is why according to Daniel S. Milo experimentation in history is an act of violence against the researcher, his habits and his way of thinking. But the effort which a researcher puts into carrying out his experiment should by no means be of a tragic character. On the contrary, the very title of the manifesto referred to Friedrich Nietzsche and his *gaia scienza*. The practising of experimental history should be unselfish and be a result of the researcher's love of knowledge. The fact that experimental history is interesting and gives joy to the researcher is enough to regard it as purposeful.

[55] See, for instance, M. Białoszewski, *Zawał (Infarct)*, in: *Utwory zebrane (Collected Works)*, vol. 6, Warszawa 1991, p. 196.

Experimental history is by its very nature of a carnival, rather marginal character for it needs the existence of normal (positivist?) history to feed on and play with. This brings the experimental historian close to the archetypal Dadaist, always ready to start a joyful experiment, even in those fields where experimenting is out of the question. Even if the experiment yields no scientific results, the joy the researcher feels will compensate him for the failure. According to Milo, historical experiments can be restrained only by an immanent respect for people of the past.

Milo emphasizes the ludic aspect of historical experimentation, for every experiment is both a game and an amusement. The spirit of an experimenter is a mixture of scientific precision and relativism for, as J. Huizinga has stated, the concept of game contains the best synthesis of belief and disbelief[56]. When one plays one can, of course, lose, but a loss also provides some knowledge. This is why a Utopian periodical dedicated to experimental history should have a regular column called false paths (*fausses pistes*).

But the volume *Alter histoire* included not only a theoretical part but also a presentation of attempts to use the experimental method. They were made by Daniel S. Milo, Alain Boureau, Hervé Le Bras, Paul-André Rosental, Aline Rousselle, Christian Jouhaud, Min Soo Kang, Mario Biaggiolli and Tamara Kondratieva. The first part of the book deals with the pleasure which a historian finds in a good metaphor. It contains, among other essays, a study by the demographer Hervé Le Bras on the sources of geological metaphors used in descriptions of maps of electoral preferences[57], and Christian Jouhaud's reflections on the ways in which the links between the anomalies in Cardinal Richelieu's skull and the prerogatives granted him by the king have been explained[58]. The authors of the other studies in this part of the book follow Daniel S. Milo's proposal and equip other historians' works with their own free commentaries. This

[56] This is perhaps an abuse of Huizinga's theory for he meant sacral actions carried out by primitive peoples and not contemporary scientists' actions in which he failed to see any amusement.

[57] H. Le Bras, *La Métaphore interdite: Karl Marx et André Siegfried entre histoire et géologie*, in: *Alter histoire*, pp. 63–84.

[58] Ch. Jouhaud, *De l'histoire à historien: métaphore incertaine, métaphore implicite*, in: *ibidem*, pp. 99–108.

is what Alain Boureau does with Ernst H. Kantorowicz's book *The King's Two Bodies*[59] and Paul-André Rosental with the most famous work of the "Annales" school, Fernand Braudel's *La Méditerranée*[60].

The second part of the volume is a record of a practical experiment in the defamiliarization method aimed at deautomating the historian. A group of researchers was asked to reflect on one of two sources: a diary of a German Jewess, Glückel von Hammeln (1645–1719) or an early biography of St. Ignatius Loyola. Each of these texts, ignored by French historiography, was completely alien and uncommon to the person who chose to consider it[61]. The results of the experiment varied in quality. Some studies were brilliant, others were very weak. This was, of course, in keeping with the following principle of experimental history: *On s'engage — et on voit et si on ne voit rien, on s'engage ailleurs*[62]. It seems however that the quality of the obtained result depended mainly on the class of the examiner.

The idea of experimental history remained a single intellectual attempt because its methodological principles were too radical. But its adherents have enriched the scope of French historiography. The experimental approach exerted the greatest influence on the critical turn. Bernard Lepetit adapted many of its elements in his proposal but he invested them with a greater scientific discipline, thus making them palatable to historians brought up in the scientistic tradition of the "Annales" school. Alain Boureau became one of the most active promoters of the critical turn, though he mainly developed his own research ideas. The scientific work conducted by Hervé Le Bras, Christian Jouhaud and Paul-André Rosental also brought them close to the critical current. In 1999 Rosental published an extensive source work on migration in 19th century France in which he used the technique of change in the observation scale and closely followed the principles of experimental history, but what was missing in his work was the joy of experimentation[63].

[59] A. Boureau, *La Compétence inductive. Une modèle d'analyse des représentations rares*, in: *ibidem*, pp. 23–38.

[60] P.-A. Rosental, *Métaphore et stratégie épistemologique:"La Méditerranée" de Fernand Braudel*, in: *ibidem*, pp. 109–126.

[61] *Ibidem*, introduction to the part entitled *Dépaysement*, pp. 141–143.

[62] *Ibidem*, p. 143.

Daniel S. Milo won acclaim by his intriguing study *Trahir le temps* in which he deconstructed our periodization of history by means of experimental models and argued that there was no reason why the use of chronological contexts for historemes (*i.e.* the smallest, indivisible units of time-space) should be more privileged than other, e.g. metaphorical contexts[64]. Later he set up a one-man *Nouvel Institut d'Ingénierie Ethique* (abbreviated to N.I.E.T, which means "no" in Russian) and made himself known by his erudite but eccentric essays which he published at his own cost in a small number of copies.

The intellectual ferment which engulfed the "Annales" milieu at the beginning of the 1990s is over. Internal discussion within the school seems to have died out. But practical results of the theoretical deliberations held ten years ago may not emerge until a few years later for to be solid, a research inspired by them must take several years. Moreover, the disciples of the reformers of the "Annales" school, for whom the critical turn was an integrating generational experience, are only now starting an active scientific life[65].

However, irrespective of how the "Annales" milieu may develop in the future, it should be stressed that its animated theoretical discussion held in the last decade of the 20th century has led to a few important changes in French historiography. To begin with, the paradigm of the "Annales"school has been decomposed. The version which was the target of the postmodernists' attacks has been thrown into the dustbin, but it is not yet known if the new annalistic way of practising history has been accepted. Secondly, the "Annales" milieu has finally renounced the claim to be "the only correct" historical school in France. Thirdly, French historiography has opened up to foreign, mainly Anglo-American and Italian, influences, to a lesser extent also to German influence.

It is surprising that the transformations introduced by the "Annales" school in the 1990s aroused so little interest in Poland, a country in which this school enjoyed (and still enjoys) great respect and popularity. It would be futile to look for information

[63] P.-A. Rosental, *Les sentiers invisibles. Espace, familles et migrations dans la France du 19e siècle*, Paris 1999.

[64] D. S. Milo, *Trahir les temps (histoire)*, Paris 1991.

[65] See A. de Baecque, *Où est passé*, p. 168.

on this subject in the specialized periodical "Historyka" dedicated to questions concerning methodology and historiography. The latest books dealing with this subject also focus on Anglo–American historiography[66]. The only exception is Wojciech Wrzosek's work *Historia — kultura — metafora. Powstanie nieklasycznej historiografii (1995) (History — Culture — Metaphor. The Emergence of Non–Classic Historiography)*, wholly devoted to the "Annales" school. But Wrzosek ends his analysis in 1992. In his view, after turning towards "historical anthropology" the "Annales" school is blooming and enjoying world–wide respect and intellectual stability. Wrzosek devotes but two sentences to the critical turn which was then in progress: "It is to the credit of the "Annales" school that it has created non–classic historiography which already lives an independent life, irrespective of whether the school exists or does not exist. The dispute over its existence or non–existence, animated by various anniversaries, seems to be waning". In a footnote Wrzosek then refers to the fundamental programmatic texts of the critical turn, which were published in "Annales" at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s[67]. The only text in which the methodological discussions held in the "Annales" milieu in the 1990s have been examined in Poland is probably the article by the Russian historian, Yuri Bessmertny, published in English in the book commemorating the 70th birthday of Jerzy Topolski[68]. But Bessmertny's analysis covers only the years 1994–1997 and the author himself was involved in the disputes held in Paris (see above).

It seems therefore that after the long domination of French methodology, a radical shift of interest towards Anglo–Saxon, mainly American, science took place in the theoretical reflections of Polish historians[69]. French theoretical thought was tacitly

[66] See e.g. the most interesting studies representing this current: E. Domańska, *Mikrohistorie. Spotkania w międzyświatach (Microhistories. Meetings in the Interworlds)*, Poznań 1999; A. Radomski, *Kultura — tekst — historiografia (Culture — Text — Historiography)*, Lublin 1999.

[67] W. Wrzosek, *Historia — kultura — metafora. Powstanie nieklasycznej historiografii (History — Culture — Metaphor. The Emergence of Non–classic Historiography)*, Wrocław 1995, p. 140.

[68] Y. Bessmertny, *Paradigms of Historiography on the Threshold of the Twenty First Century (On Methodological Currents in the French Historical Science of Today)*, in: *Świat historii. Prace z metodologii historii i historii historiografii dedykowane Jerzemu Topolskiemu z okazji siedemdziesięciolecia urodzin*, ed. W. Wrzosek, Poznań 1998, pp. 81–95.

adjudged to be uninteresting and fixed once and for all in the *nouvelle histoire* project of the 1970s. This is an alarming phenomenon for it would strengthen Polish historiography if it managed to keep an equal distance from the American and the French school (and also from the German and Italian schools). For each of these schools is conditioned by the specific problems of national culture, by local historiographic tradition and even by current political relations. This is the reason for the frequently paradoxical misunderstandings between them. Polish historians could therefore take advantage of the lack of cultural encumbrances and criticallly accept what is best in world historiographic schools, playing the role of mediators between them.

(Translated by Janina Dorosz)

[69] But a group of Hungarian historians have zealously joined in the reformation of the "Annales" school, see the volume *Villes et campagnes en Hongrie XVIe–XXe siècles*, ed. R. M. Lagrave, Budapest 1999.