

Narratives of resistance in Marc Bloch's *L'Étrange Défaite*

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Abstract

Marc Bloch's L'Étrange Défaite is a fundamental text of the French Resistance, a narrative about the will and means to resist in a society that seemed to have defeated itself. Bloch's belief that resistance began with a critique of French social and political culture made L'Étrange Défaite a therapeutic work for Bloch himself, as he wrote it in 1940, and for the French when it was first published in 1946. The core of the work is Bloch's effort to think as a historian about change in order to counter the paralysing effects of the traumatic memory of the First World War in France. It is a romantic text as well because the assertion of a new French identity, a goal shared by all internal French resistance movements, was an unrealised dream when Bloch wrote in 1940 and therefore could not yet be betrayed, as many of his Resister readers already thought was happening when L'Étrange Défaite appeared in 1946.

A deeply patriotic Jewish army captain whose family had left Alsace for France after the Franco-Prussian War delivers the scathing critique of the Intelligence Service of the French army that Captain Alfred Dreyfus had foresworn. Marc Bloch's *L'Étrange Défaite*, written in 1940, offers testimony and makes a compelling case against the Deuxième Bureau.¹ Born in 1886, Bloch identified himself as a member of 'la génération de l'affaire Dreyfus'.² His *L'Étrange Défaite*, rooted in the memory tradition of the Dreyfus Affair, is an early affirmation of internal resistance to the Occupation, a narrative about finding the will and means to resist in a society that had defeated itself, a colonial power that had played the role of the hapless colonised ('les primitifs'; 67) and was assimilated even by its allies as being like 'l'indigène des colonies' (101).³ The fall of France in 1940 was still very much on the minds of the first readers of Bloch's *L'Étrange Défaite*, published in 1946, year of 'the quasi-restoration of the Third Republic',⁴ when many French were intent on exploring what had gone wrong in the Republic they found themselves re-establishing. Only the next

generation would make the Vichy regime, rather than the defeat and renaissance of 1940, revelatory of the nature of French political culture.

If Army Intelligence of the Dreyfus era revealed the ideological and institutional weaknesses of the turn-of-the-century Republic, Bloch makes the Deuxième Bureau emblematic of the causes of French incompetence in 1940. The methods used by the Deuxième Bureau gave Bloch 'cruelles inquiétudes' (113); the information it provided was 'contradictoire' (119) and contained serious errors (117). This Intelligence Service labelled information it discovered in red ink 'très secret', then locked it up. 'Join des yeux de tous ceux qu'il pourrait intéresser, dans une armoire à triple serrure' (116). But Bloch also saw the army bureaucracy as making spying easy: 'un tour de quelques minutes à travers notre bureau [...] aurait suffi à mettre aux mains d'un mouchard, s'il s'en était trouvé dans notre personnel, des renseignements autrement précieux' (90). Of course, spying was not the problem in Bloch's analysis of the failures of French army. In fact, it is not clear even that Germany was the problem. The longest chapter of *L'Étrange Défaite*, 'La déposition d'un vaincu', reads like a consultant's critique of a failed business. 'The defeat was the result of French army leaders' inability to recognise that history is not a source of fixed lessons to guide future planning; history is a 'science de changement' (150), a resource that reveals unexpected changes and contingencies as well as apparent continuities. While Bloch's and Lucien Febvre's *Annales* journal, launched in 1929, is rightly associated with a concern for *longue durée* phenomena, it conceived its relation as a scholarly institution to the world of existing French historical journals as that of an innovative mobile force confronting an academic Maginot Line.

But Bloch is careful not to give the French army sole responsibility for the defeat. If the army was flawed and therefore could not blame defeat on a stab in the back by French society, the concluding chapter 'Examens de conscience d'un Français' reveals that French society could not in turn claim to have been betrayed by the army. The German reference, in the preamble to the armistice, to the 'résistance héroïque' of the French army rings particularly hollow to the reader of *L'Étrange Défaite*: to be effective, such resistance must be rooted in French society. Not only the French army, but French society itself, suffered from what might call the Verdun Syndrome, evident in the embrace of Maréchal Pétain in 1940. For the army remained the *levée en masse* of French society and, despite the particular corporate culture of the officer corps, the army manifested the qualities of French society and culture:

Si nos officiers n'ont pas su pénétrer les méthodes de guerre qu'imposait le monde d'aujourd'hui ce fut, dans une large mesure parce qu'autour d'eux, notre bourgeoisie, dont ils étaient issus, fermait trop paresseusement les yeux (182).

The generational critique of the army in 'La déposition d'un vaincu' of officers 'dominés par leurs souvenirs de la campagne de la veille' (154) gives way to a socio-logical explanation of the failure of the French cultural imagination to recognise the world of mobility and change at the heart of the German victory in 'Examens de conscience d'un Français'. . . The Popular Front revealed that the bourgeois elite was having great difficulty

moving from a democracy which solidified bourgeois leadership (by displacing nobles) to one in which the lower classes exercised power and did not show deference to the bourgeoisie. The army officer corps perpetuated for the bourgeoisie this hierarchy of aristocratic origins (62–3).⁸ Sans se pencher sur le présent, il est impossible de comprendre le passé, Bloch writes (30), and, in exploring the present, new ramifications of the Dreyfus Affair appear. In *La Trahison des clercs*, Julien Benda had been concerned about intellectuals who abandoned the universalist principles of the Dreyfusard struggle to defend the particularist interests of classes and parties. Bloch is sensitive to this issue, but more concerned with intellectuals who abandoned the public sphere for engagement in their profession. The failure of the teaching profession in France to engage with the officer corps, beginning with the Dreyfus Affair, fostered a mentality among military leaders at once undemocratic and unable to respond to contingencies, crippled by an inability to recognise the popular resources of the republic and unable to respond to the enemy's practice of the unexpected (202).

Yet for Bloch, the bourgeoisie remained the source of the intellectual elite at the heart of the French cultural imagination. In the 19th century, the *renvier* bourgeoisie had produced an intellectual class driven by neither the vagaries of the market nor the corporate straitjackets of professions like the law, medicine or the university: 'Notre bourgeoisie, qui reste, malgré tout, le cerveau de la nation, avait sans doute d'avanantage le goût des études sérieuses au temps où elle était, en une large mesure, une classe de rentiers' (184). The new bourgeoisie of modern life had failed to perform the civic mission French society required: 'Avant tout, nous étions requis, une fois de plus, par la tâche quotidienne. Il ne nous reste, pour la plupart, que le droit de dire que nous sommes de bons ouvriers. Avons-nous toujours été d'assez bons citoyens?' (205) The French bourgeoisie did not want to take its place in the public world: how else can one explain that even the *Frankfurter Zeitung* of the Third Reich had more to it than the *Le Temps* favoured by the French interwar bourgeoisie (178)? And the inwardly-turned concerns of the bourgeoisie were a manifestation by the social elite of an egotism which undermined French society. Faced with the numerous rationales offered by Frenchmen for avoiding military service, Bloch wrote that 'devant le sacrifice, on ne saurait concevoir d'exceptions' (166). Army leaders sought to refigure the battles of the First World War; the youth lacked the spirit to do so. 'Il m'a semblé que, même chez les mobilisables, quelque chose s'était perdu de ce poussant élan d'égalité dans le danger, qui avait, en 1914, soulevé la plupart d'entre nous' (166). Mayors who opened their towns to the enemy for fear that property and cultural artefacts would be destroyed disgusted Bloch (164–5). Faced with rampant instances of a France in the 1930s driven by individual self-interest, Bloch embodied honour as a code of individual disinterest in the name of the collective interests he had defended in the trenches as a youth.

L'Étrange Défaite represents a final sally in the Verdun Syndrome, the paralyzing effect of the experience of the First World War. This has not always been clearly appreciated because the book was not published until 1946, when another syndrome was taking shape. The Verdun Syndrome involved pacifists, whom Bloch accused of an egotism born of the trauma of the First World War, and equally traumatised

warriors preparing to refight the previous war. Both sought to learn lessons from a specific past rather than from study of the past, which emphasises change. *L'Étrange Défaite* is the intervention of Bloch, the citizen-historian, in an effort to free France from the paralysing hold of the First World War over the French. Bloch himself escaped the trauma of the First World War—he is among the minority whom he sees retaining the spirit that led France to victory in 1918. He is of a different generation or, more accurately, not solely of this generation of the war. A man who came of age with the Dreyfus Affair, Bloch refutes once again the charges made against the Alsatian Jew Dreyfus by embodying the model French citizen and republican in seeking to serve at age 53.

What was to be done? France was undermined by its reified culture, but the Occupation offered an opportunity to defeat this culture and in so doing to prefigure the France of the future. What is shocking to the reader of *L'Étrange Défaite* today are Bloch's frequent praising references to elements of the Third Reich—an army more innovative (66, 79), youthful (206) and democratic in appearance (124), and a society blessed with a coveted 'union des âmes' (124)—even if Bloch concludes these comparisons with a vindication of the French Revolution's cultivation of virtue versus Hitler's of vice (207–8). Yet Bloch differs from Ernest Renan who had suggested after the Franco-Prussian War that the French learn from those who had defeated them. Bloch obviously had no sympathy for Hitler's regime (and could not have known of the greater horrors which it would later perpetrate), but his implicit message is that the successes of the Third Reich were born of the preservation or resuscitation of a spirit akin to that Bloch had felt among the French in the First World War.¹⁰ France could find within itself—not in Germany—the resources it required for rejuvenation. Defeat in 1940 did not close off this project. If Hitler could recognise the importance of change which most French people before 1940 could not see (186), might the experience of Germany's defeat in 1918 have something to do with this? Counter-revolutionary efforts in France to take advantage of foreign invasion to re-establish the old regime—whether in 1815 or 1940—were, Bloch believed, doomed efforts contrary to the national will.¹¹

Bloch's sources of rejuvenation for France were manifestations of working-class solidarity—the world of 'le Front populaire—le vrai, celui des foules, non des politiciens— [où] il revivait quelque chose de l'atmosphère du Champ de Mars, au grand soleil du 14 juillet 1790' (199).¹² Drawing inspiration from Fernand Pelloutier, Bloch spurns trade unions' *kleinbürgerlich* fixation on 'petits sous' (171–2), but looks to the solidarity of the moral proletariat as an antidote to social egotism.¹³ He condemns the businessman who cannot understand why workers would engage in a 'grève de solidarité', on the grounds that it does not concern their own salaries (198). Bloch opined that the soldier who was a scab in civilian life and betrayed his fellow miners, not surprisingly lacks what it takes to defend his country (136). This workerist faith is lost in contemporary French republican ideology, which echoes *L'Étrange Défaite* without evoking the essence of the industrial working class, now in unquestionable decline.¹⁴

L'Étrange Défaite emerges as a founding text of the Resistance when Bloch abandons the legal model of a witness presenting evidence and turns to an examina-

tion of conscience. He too, he writes, has been too engaged in his professional world to assume the civic role France demands of its social and cultural elite. But French culture contains the seeds of its own regeneration—reason exercised critically rather than to reiterate the status quo. There was no treasonous individual for the Intelligence Service to track down; France had sold out its own social and cultural heritage, castigating possibilities of change in terms of the alien other, ‘américanisme’ (181).

L'Étrange Défaite derives its iconic status not only from the identity of the author and his arguments, but from its relation to two contesting narratives of resistance in wartime France, Gaullist and internal. Product of the months following the armistice, the work's critique of the army resonates with de Gaulle's call to wrest victory from apparent defeat. However, *L'Étrange Défaite* moves in the final chapter to the internal resistance model of an intra-French struggle in which the French will use the struggle against the Germans to reclaim their true identity. Yet writing in 1940, following the ignominious demise of the Third Republic, Bloch thinks not in terms of the *other* ‘unfinished mourning’ of the Vichy Syndrome, that of resisters after the war who had known the radiant future prefigured during the war and since then lost. Bloch can imagine this future, but not its disappearance. The past of the Third Republic and the Occupation will pass; his faith is in a future. *L'Étrange Défaite* is a romantic text precisely because the victory it projects has not yet occurred—and therefore cannot be betrayed.

Following Bloch's advice in his book, we see how the historian's engagement with the present leads to insights about the past. Bloch's experience during the First World War clearly gave him new perspectives on the Middle Ages.¹⁵ But the dialogue also involves the historian's construction of the past allowing a questioning of the historian's present. Early in volume one of *La Société féodale*, published in 1939, Bloch wrote a chapter on the ‘enseignements’ derived from study of the Saracen, Hungarian and Norse invasions of western Europe in the 9th century. The nomadic raiders were born soldiers and had a great advantage over the settled communities in western Europe defended by professional armies:

L'incapacité où ce mécanisme, monté pour la guerre, fut jusqu'au bout, somme toute, de fournir les moyens d'une résistance, vraiment efficace, en dit long sur ses défauts internes [...] [B]raves en face du danger familial, les âmes frustes sont à l'ordinaire incapables de supporter la surprise et le mystère. Le moine de Saint-Germain-des-Prés qui, très peu de temps après l'événement, a raconté la remontée de la Seine, en 845, par les barques normandes, voyez avec quel accent trouble il observe 'qu'on n'avait jamais ouï parler d'une chose semblable ni lu rien de pareil dans les livres' [...]. Les lettres qu'Alcuin expédia en Angleterre après le désastre de Lindisfarne ne sont qu'exhortations à la vertu et au repentir; de l'organisation de la résistance, pas un mot. [...] La vérité profonde est que les chefs étaient beaucoup moins incapables de combattre, si leur propre vie ou leurs biens se trouvaient en jeu, que d'organiser méthodiquement la défense et—à peu d'exceptions près—de comprendre les liens entre l'intérêt particulier et l'intérêt general.¹⁶

Bloch's portrait of France in *L'Étrange Défaite* echoes the opening of *La Société féodale*. ‘Le proche passé est, pour l'homme moyen, un commode écran; il lui cache les lointains de l'histoire et leurs tragiques possibilités de renouvellement’ (162). In

the France of 1940, the elite allowed individual interests to take precedence over collective interests; the highly mobile invaders took actions that stunned the defenders, who had never seen them in their books. After the defeat, collaborationists displayed a willingness to 'nous engager à entrer, comme vassaux, dans le système continental allemand' (182).

Volume two of *La Société féodale* was published in 1940. Bloch sent copies to colleagues 'De la part de l'auteur aux armées.'¹⁷ In the final paragraph of the tome which laid out how feudalism created the social basis for a society which could protect itself from alien invaders and provided the origins of national allegiance (as well as the differences between France and Germany), Bloch underscored that the mutual obligations of ruler and ruled endowed the latter with the 'droit de résistance' when the ruler betrayed the contract binding kings and vassals.¹⁸ That is to say, out of the chaos of the earlier invasions came the basis of the social and political order at the heart of European civilisation, and this order embodied the right—and responsibility—of resistance to illegitimate order and injustice.

In *L'Étrange Défaite* Bloch shows the army in 1940 premised on a rigid conception of order, which, when faced with the unexpected, collapsed into chaos, leaving no place for resistance:

l'ordre statique du bureau est, à bien des égards, l'antithèse de l'ordre, actif et perpétuellement inventif, qu'exige le mouvement. L'un est affaire de routine et de dressage; l'autre, d'imagination concrète, de souplesse dans l'intelligence et, peut-être surtout, de caractère (91).

L'Étrange Défaite was written by an individual in a world of shattered collectivities, the antithesis to the bureaucratic world of reports Bloch contests and resists. No authority requested *L'Étrange Défaite* and Bloch could not know its fate: 'Ces pages seront-elles jamais publiées? Je ne sais' (29). And yet writing *L'Étrange Défaite* represented the affirmation of a new France to come, the narrative of a resistance leading to a renaissance. Perhaps the apparent finality of the title given to the book after 1946 when the original title, *Témoignage*, became unavailable, is misleading.¹⁹ Bloch argues that the four years of the First World War had given the French time to develop new modes of thought. If the six weeks of May–June 1940 are not taken as a final defeat, but as one step in a long war, France, in continuing the struggle, would have a chance to do the same.

In concluding the first chapter of *L'Étrange Défaite* Bloch writes that he felt a 'certain gêne à vivre dans le mensonge' (54), but after completing the book he would learn to give in to 'le malicieux plaisir, enfin de jouer, sans qu'il s'en doutassent, un bon tour à ces messieurs', the Germans (53), when he became 'Narbonne' of the Mouvements unis de la Résistance (MUR). The 'jusqu'aboutistes' of the First World War offered a model of 'une chouannerie', the Resistance to come: working from 'quelques îlots de résistance [...] une fois le premier effet de désarroi obtenu, on aurait vite regagné le "bled", pour recommencer plus loin' (81). An officer tells Bloch he learned from the German invasion in 1940, 'qu'il y a des militaires de profession qui ne seront jamais des guerriers; des civils, au contraire, qui, par nature, sont des guerriers' (33), and Bloch himself argued, 'au

développement des qualités qu'exigent des circonstances si nouvelles, beaucoup de professions civiles sont un bien meilleure école' than the military (138). This is the basis of the world turned upside down of the individual who steps forward to serve in the army aged 53 and later the social world turned upside down of the Resistance. In 1943, Bloch, a terminated professor, was put in contact with the Franc-Tireur resistance movement by a student. Living a double life as travelling salesman 'M. Blanchard' (the name of the general he excoriated in *L'Étrange Défaite* for speaking of capitulation when continued combat should have been the order of the day; 143), Bloch served on the Comité directeur of Franc-Tireur and as Rhône-Alpes regional delegate to the MUR, where his organisational skills were put to the test. In *L'Étrange Défaite*, Bloch vents his frustration in the army with fruitless bureaucratic labours that did not draw upon his skills and, he joked, accounted for his failure to be promoted. The Resistance made use of Bloch's talents and gave him authority no captain in the army would exercise.

Dominique Veillon, historian of Franc-Tireur, characterises Bloch's work as disentangling a knotted skein, favouring the creation of autonomous services in a number of places over their centralisation in a single locale in order to deal with the diversity of functions in a resistance organisation:²⁰ in the words of Bloch's biographer, Carole Fink, he 'distinguished himself by bringing order and discipline to a hitherto chaotic organization'.²¹ Reading his Franc-Tireur colleague Georges Altmann's description of Bloch's activities organising and arranging the communication of information—'je voyais Marc Bloch avec son pardessus au col frileusement relevé, sa canne à la main, échanger de mystérieux et compromettants bouts de papier avec nos jeunes gars en "canadienne" ou en chandail'²²—one sees that Bloch was creating and living the world of information exchange and contingency whose absence he saw at the heart of the failure of the French army and which he had sought to counter in the army through bypassing the hierarchical order (95). In *L'Étrange Défaite*, the Resistance to come was secondarily about defeating Germany and primarily about forging a new French culture, neither irrational nor sluggish, which would emerge from the chrysalis of defeated France. This is why *L'Étrange Défaite* has no place for fundamentally egotistical *attentisme*; waiting for the return of a failed system was no solution. Writing in 1940, Bloch is engaged in a dialogue with Vichy propaganda, offering his own critique of the British and the communists and, like Vichy, celebrating the virtues of the people, workers' solidarity and the *nuque dure* of the peasant. But for Bloch, the anarchy that Vichy blamed for loss of the war had its origins in the culture the Vichy *État français* sought to preserve. In *L'Étrange Défaite*, Bloch presented an alternative to the Franco-French left/right civil war that would characterise the later years of the Resistance and the dominant postwar memories of the Resistance.

The Marc Bloch of *L'Étrange Défaite* has become an icon and an oracle in the world of the Vichy Syndrome,²³ a *citoyen thaumaturge* whose identity as Jewish republican patriot resister and martyr today offers a healing touch. Bloch might even be seen as a *lieu de mémoire* in the sense that Pierre Nora's *lieux de mémoire* resemble grottoes suitable for pilgrimages of the imagination that resulted from the identification and destruction of an all-encompassing collective memory by the kind

of historical examination which Bloch himself championed. Resistance is an act of self-defence in the sense of defence of the self, not the self of the egotistical, but a response to the corruption of self brought by the shame and humiliation of defeat. Bloch wrote *L'Étrange Défaite* as a Jew of the French republican tradition, before the depths of Vichy betrayal. Bloch's book remains an archetypal text of De Gaulle's 'invented honour' because it was written before honour was fully lost, but appeared in 1946 when its invention was the order of the day. When *L'Étrange Défaite* was published, it was a place, in Freud's terms, where the past was acted out. It is a testament to its vital qualities that it remains a site where the French can 'work through' their past.

Lucien Febvre's willingness to remove the Jew Bloch's name from *Annales* in order to keep the project they had co-founded alive in Paris during the Occupation prefigures another possible postwar future than that for which Bloch fought.²⁴ Febvre's behaviour features prominently in the 40-page reflection written to Bloch with which Daniel Schneidermann, columnist for *Le Monde*, concludes *L'Étrange Procès*, his account of the trial of Maurice Papon. Each night of the trial Schneidermann read a few lines from Bloch's *L'Étrange Défaite* and found in Bloch the anti-Papon, a role that only a contemporary of Papon like Bloch or Jean Moulin could play. *L'Étrange Défaite* served as 'un excellent antidote contre les poisons de l'audience du jour'; Bloch 'lave l'esprit de souillure quotidienne des renoncements et des compromissions' which 'le procès Papon et sa plongée dans l'esprit de Vichy' inflicted on Schneidermann.²⁵ Bloch's critique of army bureaucracy as unable to deal with the unexpected becomes for Schneidermann a critique of the Vichy administrative bureaucracy that appeared unable to deal with the unthinkable—to say 'non' to deportations of Jews.

While Bloch employs the judicial format in the opening chapters of *L'Étrange Défaite*, presenting himself as a witness and presenting evidence, his argument both here (104) and in his other posthumously published wartime book, *Apologie pour l'histoire*, that the historian's task is to understand rather than to judge,²⁶ has become a mantra for those who see history as a response to the Vichy Syndrome, itself fruit of the effort to resolve what can never be resolved.²⁷ *L'Étrange Défaite* constitutes Bloch's effort to wrest the French from the paralysing trauma of the Verdun Syndrome. Historians today turn to Bloch for guidance to respond to the fixations of the Vichy Syndrome,²⁸ without succumbing to the trap of *tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner*.²⁹ Yet when analysing contemporary events—the Not-Yet-History—historians like Bloch in *L'Étrange Défaite* have another task. They can offer testimony and make judgements as *citizens* who benefit from their training in history.³⁰ But Bloch does not stop there in *L'Étrange Défaite*. In dialogic fashion, he uses his exploration of the French army, society and culture in 1940 not solely to condemn others, but to judge himself and his community as citizens and to foster change, beginning with himself. The contemporary historian is necessarily involved in all judgements and understandings of the world in which he lives. Self-analysis has a crucial role to play in understanding, condemning and pardoning—and in making and carrying out projects for the future. 'Tout malheur national appelle, d'abord, un examen de conscience; puis (car l'examen de conscience n'est qu'une

délectation morose, s'il n'aboutit à un effort vers le mieux) l'établissement d'un plan de renovation.³¹

L'Étrange Défaite retains its power today, arguing that professionals can become entrapped in egotism, attempting to keep *Annales* in occupied Paris, or can apply their skills to resist injustice in the public sphere, whether the expertise of *chartistes* during the Dreyfus Affair or of an administrator and analyst like Bloch during the Resistance. If fidelity to memory of the Resistance today ironically risks replicating errors of the post-First World War generation whose loyalty to memory of the war led to a failure for many to engage in resistance in 1940, those who refuse to thrill to the Resistance, and those who read *L'Étrange Défaite* unmoved will never really understand French history.³²

Notes and references

1. Page references in the text are to BLOCH, M., *L'Étrange Défaite* (Gallimard-Folio, 1990).
2. BLOCH, M., *Apologie pour l'histoire ou Métier d'historien* (Armand Colin, 1993), p. 184.
3. Read during the Fourth Republic, when the collapse of the Empire confirmed for many French the defeat of 1940, these lines would carry new weight, as they do today for those who look to Bloch as a republican and national inspiration in efforts to resist alien projects of globalisation.
4. HOFFMAN, S., 'The trauma of 1940', in J. BLATT (ed.), *The French Defeat of 1940. Reassessments* (Berghahn, 1998), p. 367.
5. ROUSSO, H., *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944* (Harvard University Press, 1991). For an excellent summary treatment of the defeat and its memory, see SHENNAN, A., *The Fall of France, 1940* (Pearson Education, 2000).
6. 'Ce chef de 2e bureau, qui omit de transmettre au seul officier intéressé un renseignement de première importance. Supposez-le, pour un instant, à la tête d'un grand service, dans une entreprise privée. Que se serait-il passé?' (126)
7. JORDAN, N., 'Strategy and scapegoatism: reflections on the French national catastrophe, 1940,' in BLATT (ed.), *The French Defeat*, p. 37.
8. Bloch offered a more hard-hitting formulation of this argument a few years later in 1943: in 1936 members of the elite proved 'd'instinct prêts à en appeler à l'étranger contre leur peuple. Leur manqué de désir de la victoire créa dans tout le pays une atmosphère propice à la défaite et, venue enfin la débâcle, c'est avec une sorte de soulagement qu'elles se préparèrent à exercer le pouvoir sous la tutelle et au profit de l'ennemi;' BLOCH, 'Pourquoi je suis républicain', in *L'Étrange Défaite*, p. 219.
9. See also BLOCH, *Apologie pour l'histoire*, p. 96.
10. See BARTOV, O., 'Martyrs' vengeance: memory, trauma, and fear of war in France, 1918–1940', in BLATT (ed.), *The French Defeat*, pp. 54–84.
11. BLOCH, 'Pourquoi je suis républicain', p. 218.
12. These pages recall what Bloch termed Jules Michelet's 'beau livre' *Le Peuple* (BLOCH, *Apologie pour l'histoire*, p. 92), although without Michelet's explanation of rapacious Jews as source of the people's problems.
13. On the moral proletariat, see REID, D., *Paris Sewers and Sewermen: Realities and Representations* (Harvard University Press, 1991), pp. 102–4.
14. It is revealing that republican activists launched a group with the name 'Association pour la Fondation Marc-Bloch' in March 1998. They defended themselves (unsuccessfully) against the case brought by Étienne Bloch, Marc Bloch's son, for illicit use of his father's name, as thinkers confronted with the 'étrange défaite' of the Mitterrand presidency and made frequent reference in their defence to passages from *L'Étrange Défaite*. They saw themselves evoking the resister Bloch writing as citizen, and therefore to a figure in the public domain, not Bloch the historian; 'L'étrange victoire d'Étienne Bloch', *Le Monde* (10–11 octobre 1999).
15. For Henry Rouso, thinking of Bloch, 'l'expérience personnelle de l'historien [...] constitue un atout

16. BLOCH M., *La Société féodale* (Albin Michel, 1968), pp. 93-4.
17. GERMERK, B., 'Preface' to M. BLOCH, *Ecrire 'La Société féodale'. Lettres à Henri Berr 1924-1943* (IMEC Éditions, 1992), p. 9.
18. BLOCH, *La Société féodale*, p. 618.
19. *L'Étrange Défaite* removes the defeat from the realm of the inexplicable calamity and makes it the logical development of a 'strange' event, in the sense of an event alien to the true French narrative.
20. VEILTON, D., *Le Franc-Tireur* (Flammarion, 1977), p. 176.
21. FNK, C., *Marc Bloch: a Life in History* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 306.
22. 'Avant-propos de Georges Almann', in BLOCH, *L'Étrange Défaite*, p. 276.
23. DUMOULIN, O., *Marc Bloch* (Presses de Sciences Po, 2000), especially pp. 21-50.
24. BURRIN, P., *France Under the Germans: Collaboration and Compromise* (The New Press, 1996), pp. 317-23.
25. SCHNEIDERMANN, D., *L'Étrange Procès* (Fayard, 1998), p. 170.
26. BLOCH, *Apologie pour l'historien*, pp. 156-9.
27. See, for example, JEANNENEY, J.-N., *Le passé dans le présent* (Seuil, 1998), pp. 51-4. Historian Annette Wievorka makes a similar case, using Bloch's *L'Étrange Défaite* to criticise participants at the UN Durban conference on racism in 2001 who rejected history as a 'science du changement' and tried 'de plaquer mécaniquement des modèles historiques sur un présent caricaturé'; WIEWORKA, A., 'L'étrange défaite', *Le Monde* (19 septembre 2001).
28. In other words, if Carlo Ginzburg is correct that Bloch's call was an affirmation of social and cultural history over event-based history (GINZBURG, C., *The Judge and the Historian*, Verso, 1999, pp. 14-15), the response today to a social and cultural phenomenon, a collective syndrome neurotically calling for judgement, has been a reaffirmation by historians like Henry Rousso of an event-based history necessary for understanding. CONAN, E. and ROUSSO, H., *Vichy: an Ever-Present Past* (University Press of New England, 1998).
29. For Primo Levi writing on the Holocausts, 'Perhaps one can not, understand what happened, because to understand is almost to justify. Let me explain: "understanding" a proposal or human behavior means to "contain" it, contain its author, put oneself in his place, identify with him. Now, no normal human being will ever be able to identify with Hitler... We cannot understand it, but we can and must understand from where it springs, and we must be on our guard. If understanding is impossible, knowing is imperative...'; LEVI, P., 'Afterword' to *The Resawakening* (Touchstone, 1995), pp. 227-8.
30. 'Toute l'Apologie peut être lue, on l'a vu, comme un immense effort visant à conforter l'autonomie de la communauté professionnelle des historiens. Même si Marc Bloch ne le dit pas explicitement, il s'agit là, me semble-t-il, d'une réponse à ceux qui, en application des lois antisémites du Gouvernement de Vichy, l'ont révoqué de son poste peu de temps auparavant. Renforcer les liens de solidarité entre les membres de la communauté savante est un moyen de résister à l'intrusion du pouvoir politique dans les activités scientifiques. On ne peut, selon lui, avancer dans cette voie que si les historiens excluent de leur propre fonctionnement interne, le langage, les normes et les pratiques qui gouvernent la vie politique. C'est la raison essentielle pour laquelle Marc Bloch s'empare contre ceux qui, parmi ses collègues, confondent leur métier avec la fonction de procureur et succombent à la "manie du jugement". C'est ce qui explique aussi la différence de ton et de préoccutions entre l'Apologie et l'autre ouvrage que Marc Bloch a rédigé dans la même période: *L'Étrange Défaite*. Là, c'est le citoyen qui parle, mobilisant toutes les ressources du langage politique, mettant en cause les responsabilités de ceux qui ont conduit le pays à la déroute'; NOIRIEL, G., *Sur la "crise" de l'histoire* (Belin, 1996), p. 179. See also NOIRIEL, G., *Les origines républicaines de Vichy* (Hachette Littéraires, 1999), p. 33.
31. 'Sur la réforme de l'enseignement', in *L'Étrange Défaite*, p. 254.
32. 'Il est deux catégories de Français qui ne comprendront jamais l'histoire de France, ceux qui refusent de vibrer au souvenir du sacre de Reims; ceux qui lisent sans émotion le récit de la fête de la Fédération...'; (198).