

**DUMÉZIL, MOMIGLIANO, BLOCH,
BETWEEN POLITICS AND HISTORIOGRAPHY**

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Shortly before his death in the spring of 2000, E. Polomé, one of the leading American authorities on Indo-European languages and cultures, lamented the weakness of reactions in defence of the work of the French scholar G. Dumézil (1898-1986), against those who attack it basing their arguments on its foundations in political movements which were close to Nazism or Fascism in the 1930's (1996, 1998, 1999).

This is a very serious matter, as it casts a shadow of doubt over the important volume of work produced between 1924 and 1986 dedicated to the study of the mythology and religions of the historical peoples whose origins lie with the ancient Indo-Europeans (see the very useful bibliography drawn up by Couteau-Begarie). Of particular importance among these studies was a volume of texts from different branches of the Indo-European family, which gradually extended over a wide area. It is particularly significant that Dumézil was a great specialist in the field of Caucasian languages (whether Indo-European or not), an area in which he undertook studies of both linguistics and folklore.

Albeit the case, the political criticisms directed at him would lead us to think that this work leaves us with a bitter aftertaste: that in reading it, and being influenced by it, leads to the reader being an unwitting accessory to one of the most repulsive ideologies produced in twentieth century Europe.

This political criticism gained all the momentum of an avalanche: from a few lines by Momigliano (1983, 1984*a*), to an article by Ginzburg (1984), part of a book by Lincoln (1991) and finally a complete book by Grotanelli (1993). The most detailed response to date was that given by D. Eribon in an important work about the genesis of Dumézil's work, the formation of his comparative method, and his turbulent professional biography from the 1920's and 30's.

I have personally entered into this debate on several occasions, for two reasons. The first arises from the application of Dumézil's method to my own studies concerning Spain's protohistory (García Quintela, 1999), finding myself needing to justify its use in an academic environment where it carries little weight, and is sensitive to the political criticism against

Dumézil. The second motive is derived from a simple inclination towards historiographical matters, and contemporary history in general. In my paper of 1994 I examined a scientific critique of Dumézil's work (Belier, 1991) and the largest political critique published to date (Grotanelli, 1993); another paper (García Quintela, 1996), dealt with the critique, both political and scientific, offered by B. Lincoln (1991), who recently continued in this same direction (Lincoln, 1998), meaning it is unnecessary to reiterate my opinions about his method.

I have returned to these issues for two reasons. The first is quite straightforward. I am merely trying to communicate my views in English, considering that this was the language and the academic environment in which the political criticism of Dumézil's work has had and continues having the greatest importance, perhaps driven by a particular application of 'political correctness'.

The second reason appears to me as being more imperative. It is historiographic, and enters into the difficult field of the psychological genesis of the ideas or actions of individuals. In fact, the publication of the contents of part of Momigliano's archives has revealed that throughout the 1930's he was an active member of the Italian Fascist party, along with other members of his family (Di Donato, 1995). This calls for an examination of the political criticism which Momigliano directed at Dumézil in order to define the irrational elements he presented.

These are the focal points of the first part of this article. The second part concentrates on Ginzburg's contributions, with the apparition of an unexpected guest, the French mediaevalist M. Bloch, who was also introduced into the arguments against Dumézil by Grotanelli. Finally, I will conclude by making an attempt, as far as my capacities allow me, to return to a History of Historiography considered as a discipline which furthers knowledge, and not as a weapon for political in-fighting.

1. *Momigliano, Dumézil and Fascism*

A. Momigliano produced two publications about Dumézil's work. Both reproduce the passage about Dumézil's political stance, and have a similar structure. However, in 1983, he analyses the first phase of Dumézil's work, whereas in 1984a (= 1987, 135-59), in a similar fashion, he adds an extensive review of Dumézil, 1979. In both cases, the presentation of Dumézil's political experiences was reduced to two issues. Firstly, he was a friend of Pierre Gaxote, secretary of Charles Maurras, and editor-in-chief of *Candide*, a publication of the French far-right. Similarly, his book published in 1939 "shows clear indications of sympathies with Nazi culture" (1983, 331) or

“any unbiased reader [...] is bound to find in it sympathy with Nazi ideologies” (1987, 139). This is all that Momigliano refers to about Dumézil’s political stance, although he does also recognise that “he nearly always maintained a distance between politics and his scientific activity, in which he had the essential assistance of two Jews, Silvain Lévi and Émile Benveniste”¹. This lack of information does not prevent Momigliano from deducing a situation of enmity with the members of the French school of sociology², with socialist leanings, and presenting an examination of Dumézil’s different methods according to supposed variations in his political stances.

Regarding the details underlined by Momigliano, the first which calls our attention is that he contradicts one of his most famous pragmatic sentences about the method of the *History of Historiography*: “To write a critical *History of Historiography* one must know both the authors one studies and the historical material they have studied” (1980, 32)³.

However, Momigliano did not know Dumézil well enough, and it appears clear that although he was interested throughout his life in the exchange between Greek, Roman and Jewish civilisations, the material concerning the religious history of the Indians, Iranians or Scandinavians used by Dumézil was not known by Momigliano. This was not the case with the Roman materials to which Momigliano referred exclusively, with which he distorted the foundations of the comparative method. The dissension between Momigliano and Dumézil regarding the Roman world is based on a particular reading of Dumézil 1979.

To sum up, Momigliano accuses Dumézil of considering a primitive Roman society divided into rigid castes, by establishing the existence of customs trifunctionally oriented in slaves’ manumission, ways of marriage,

¹ MOMIGLIANO, 1987, 139. We may also quote L. Gershel and Dumézil’s dreyfusard attitudes, which may be explained by his family environment (DUMÉZIL, 1987, 207-208). ERIBON, 1992, draws attention to his friendship with Marcel Mauss (despite Momigliano), Jules Bloch, Jean Marx – other Jews. C. Lévi-Strauss was also on Dumézil’s side.

² Which is not the case. DUMÉZIL, 1924, iii-iv; and 1939, xvi, indicates the debt he owes to sociology. Particular attention is given to the communist M. Granet, to whom Dumézil always refers to as the inspiration of his way of reading old texts.

³ This sentence is referred to by Christ, 1988, 323; Christ, 1991, 11; Gabba, 1988, 380. We may also see in MOMIGLIANO, 1980, 13: “Judging a modern investigation about Greco-Roman history without knowing the original sources is, at best, haphazard; in the worst and most frequent of cases, it is a sign of a presumptuous ignorance. Most of what may be heard about Gibbon, Niebuhr, Grote, Meyer, Rostovtzeff etcetera, with no knowledge of the documents which these historians used, is worthless”. Aspects of Momigliano’s biography in BERTI, 1988 and 1990; MOMIGLIANO, 1990, 31-34; BOWERSOCK, 1991; DIONISOTTI, 1987; LEVI, 1989; MURRAY, 1988; DI DONATO, 1995.

and wills (1987, 147, 154), without taking into account that at different stages of his book Dumézil expressly renounces moving from the trifunctional elements discovered to a social analysis (1979, 10, 25-6, 48; see García Quintela, 1999, 77-8).

We would expect more refinement in other attitudes and reviews of Momigliano. Yet this is not so in another case which shows how, in order to rescue his particular thesis, Momigliano leaves other considerations to one side. I am referring to the review of Luciano Canfora, 1991 (Momigliano, 1984*b*, 513-19). In his book, Canfora underlines the relationship between fascist or nazi ideology and influential Italian or German scholars of Ancient History. In Momigliano's writing, this subject becomes a deficient exhibition of historiography of classical Italian studies. However, above all else, it angrily reacts against an error by Canfora in claiming that Felix Jacoby sympathised with Hitler before his exile in England. Why did Momigliano not have the same scruples when establishing the facts concerning Dumézil? He obviously uses two standards of measurement.

We should therefore ask why one of the most respected and influential historiographers of the XX century, at the prime of his life, abandons his own method in order to pervert a colleague's work and cast aspersions on his personality. I think here there are three possible answers.

Carmine Ampolo offers an initial answer which is worthy of consideration. He maintains that Momigliano's criticism of Dumézil was severe "because, in reality, he was really referring to his attitude towards structuralism [...] and the historiographical tendencies which predominated in France", alludes to political disputes, takes Momigliano's side regarding the background of the Roman question, and continues: "[Momigliano] was uncomfortable with Dumézil's system of investigation and writing, which was progressive, with a continuous revision, modification and updating of analysis and interpretations and, more generally, with the history of mentalities. Momigliano was interested in seeking the truth, not ways of thinking" (Ampolo, 1988, 294-95). We are thus witnessing a clash between two different historiographical concepts.

This is true. Momigliano was educated following the rules of German historical science, with emphasis on political events and the methodology used to deal with sources. He was also influenced by Benedetto Croce, leading him to ideological issues. He also kept his distance from French sociology, and would have had great difficulty in agreeing with Dumézil, one of its representatives⁴.

⁴ Momigliano was only interested in Weber, as he accepted his concept of the religious foundations of society. He considered sociology, psychoanalysis, anthropology and

Put differently, historical schools, particularly when they are rooted in national cultures. Produce studies in which, apart from formal elements which may be perceived by the academic community as a whole, there exists a series of irrational elements which give it meaning, giving this work a framework which is practically impossible to communicate. The establishment of the irrational elements which come together in the process of historiographical creation corresponds to historical imagination. This said, in the same way that individuals may not participate in two different symbolic systems, they may not have two historical imaginations, whose characteristics take shape unconsciously in historians and readers of historical works, at the same time as they assume more explicit standards (Sperber, 1978, Bermejo, 1991, 81-96).

It is therefore evident that Dumézil's work breaks away from many of the unconscious key elements which are present in historical works. It does not reconstruct any particular historical process (the Indo-Europeans are the genetic hypothesis needed in a general ideological model whose historical variations are what are really being studied). It also breaks down the established space-time co-ordinates (mediaeval Scandinavian texts clarify passages from Titus Livius). On the contrary, Momigliano remained faithful to the methodological tradition. His greatest contribution was his dedication to the History of Historiography.

However, this explanation, based as it is on the distance between the symbolic frameworks of reference in the work of two historians, allows us to understand the distance between what was written by Dumézil and understood by Momigliano in his polemical paper of 1984*a*. This said, it does not explain why Momigliano had to introduce comments regarding Dumézil's political stance.

Moving on to the second explanation, we may see that there is a question of *habitus* involved (Bourdieu, 1988, 24-26). Momigliano is a historian trained as a political historian who, in his writings on the History of Historiography, repeatedly detects the political influences which affected other political historians (Momigliano, 1934, Gabba, 1988, 362-70). It was obvious, therefore, that this method would be applied to Dumézil and his work. To this is added a constant element in Momigliano which may be seen in some of his writing and is emphasised by his analysts. This is the personal implication which he establishes with his work. For example, he explained that "In a sense, in my scholarly life I have done nothing else but try to

structuralism as XX century fashions (SHILS, 1989, 62). See his distancing from M. Mauss in MOMIGLIANO, 1987, 179-90, with BOWERSOCK, 1991; regarding the history of "mentalities", see MOMIGLIANO, 1980, 329-35 and 1987, 427-30.

understand what I owe to the Jewish house in which I was brought up and to the Christian-Roman-Celtic village in which I was born" (1987, 432). On the contrary, as Momigliano recognises, Dumézil always maintained a distance between his writing and his beliefs or political activities. His work is also framed within an intellectual project bequeathed by the linguist Antoine Meillet, which Dumézil made his own without the influence of his personal situation (Eribon, 1992, 102-6; Belier, 1991, 19-20; Coutau-Bégarie, 1998, 207).

Momigliano's *habitus* was therefore inadequate for understanding Dumézil. If we add to this the lack of data given, the result is an erroneous analysis which, due to Momigliano's prestige, received a disproportionate echo.

Yet this does not prevent us from finding a final line of defence. If we understand why Momigliano did not understand Dumézil, and clearly see why he attempted to establish the political foundations of this work, we do not understand the moment, nor the meaning which may be given to the whole.

It is important to consider the moment of Momigliano's intervention. He had already indicated his distancing from Dumézil in several previous isolated comments, putting off a more detailed analysis (see appearances of Dumézil in the indexes of Momigliano's *Contributi*). However, this was not due to a non-existent documental gathering. In order to understand the moment chosen by Momigliano, it is necessary to examine two issues: firstly, Momigliano's interest in the origins of Rome, with numerous articles, reviews and syntheses; secondly, there was a simultaneous return to Jewish questions, together with a certain obsession with the beginning of his career in Italy in the 1930's. The confluence of these academic and personal situations was the starting point of Dumézil's examination at that particular time.

This dedication to the origins of Rome needs no further explanation (Ampolo, 1988). However, we should examine Momigliano's situation in the 1930's before the surprising revelations of Riccardo Di Donato regarding his joining the Fascist party, testimonies existed which allowed us to deduce his refusal to clash with fascism. For example, his friend Carlo Dionisotti affirmed:

"Those who decide to work at University in the 1930's had to decide on the stew which the Fascist regime imposed as the first course, or an empty plate. The majority, who were not interested in politics and, like Momigliano, followed an imperious vocation as students and academics, could not be expected to leap into the void which, particularly for the young, would be a leap into darkness" (1987, 557).

In contrast, Dionisotti himself points to Gaetano De Sanctis and Leo Ginzburg's refusal to swear allegiance to *Il Duce*. Furthermore, in 1933 Momigliano himself took over the Roman professorship left vacant by his teacher De Sanctis, who was moved on for not taking the oath, until in 1936 he obtained a post in Turin, the University from which he had graduated in 1929. He also published in the magazine *Roma*, the official organ of Mussolini's propaganda (Canfora, 1991, 73-74, 86-87; Momigliano, 1984*b*, 516-18). Also, his article about imperial Rome in the 1936 *Enciclopedia Italiana* shows signs of affinity with the intellectual climate of the time (re-edited in 1980, 591-673; Bowersock, 1991, 35; Christ, 1989, 49-51).

In order to understand Momigliano's position about the past in the 1930's, two details about his relationship with De Sanctis are highly indicative. Faced with occupying the post of his ex-professor, expelled for being anti-fascist, Momigliano offers as a sign of his own problems a letter from Mussolini, concerned that all of the candidates available to take over from De Sanctis were Jewish (1984*b*, 516). A letter and attitude which were inconsequential as Momigliano occupied the post. Regarding De Sanctis' substitution, Momigliano treads very carefully in his biographical presentation: "[De Sanctis] put an end to his career by refusing to swear an oath to the regime imposed on the teaching staff. He was forced to retire, and reduced to poverty". However, Momigliano presents a De Sanctis who was in favour of some aspects of fascist politics: "the same man who had no doubt in losing everything by opposing fascism, was uncertain about the war in Ethiopia and even more so about World War II". All this really belongs to the history of the most intimate ideas, as De Sanctis "never spoke about this in public, although his spirit [...] was tortured" (1975, 183-84).

We now know that Momigliano took over his professor's post, and swore allegiance to *Il Duce*, because quite simply as a militant fascist from 1928 until his expulsion in 1938 for being Jewish – not through his own resignation (Di Donato, 1995, 219) – there was not a problem at that time. However, after being expelled from the party, the University and the country, and the death of eleven members of his family in concentration camps, how is it possible to comprehend this attitude? Who is really tortured by the evolution of their ideas and the actions of their past?

Momigliano's attitude about his own life in the 1930's was later quite ambiguous. He had no hesitation in republishing his writings from that time, without ever delving into his attitudes from the period, as we have seen in his writings about the replacement of De Sanctis. However, the documents presented by Di Donato, which reveal his relationship with the Fascist Party

and the political and cultural debate of the time, were in his personal files, and obviously not destroyed by him.

I believe that G.W. Bowersock is correct in underlining the autobiographical value of a sentence written by Momigliano: "Is it necessary to say that nobody capable of compassion would spit into the face of their own professor, after 45 years, the same words pronounced in the book-burning atmosphere around the year 1933? Particularly when the burning of books turns into gas chambers for men, women and children" (1984*b*, 519; Bowersock, 1991, 36). But this sentence, referring to the testimony given by Canfora to indicate hitlerian affinities in Felix Jacoby, should also be seen in the light of Momigliano's comments about De Sanctis. I do not know if we are seeing a change in sensibility by Momigliano towards his own past between the time of De Sanctis' biographical note (1969) and the review of Canfora's book (1981), or faced with a case, common in individual psychology, of a sensibility which is different with ones' self or with others.

Remembering Momigliano's position towards fascism, there is no need to infer mysterious political relationships, as the facts are clear. Neither is there any need for scandal, as a political alignment with power, or passiveness, was the case with most German professors under Nazi power; with most Italian professors with fascism, and French professors under the Vichy government or when occupied by the Germans⁵, or the vast majority of Spanish professors under the dictatorship of Franco⁶. Or, even now, the "democratic" passiveness of German professors in the purges of communists from universities of the GDR, whose posts they rush to fill (H. Bruhns, *Le Monde*, 18 mars 1993, p. ix). It is not possible to say, therefore, that *homo academicus* is a species which is generically conflictive with power.

The sad and cruel paradox of Momigliano is that his fascism, his participation in Hebrew organisations of the party (Di Donato, 1995, 222-8), had an effect similar to the definition and concentration of the Jews through the orders of the occupying forces (Hilberg, 1988, 61-74, 138-64).

⁵ We should remember some names: Lucien Febvre changed the name of *Annales* in order to continue publishing it, despite the disappearance of Marc Bloch as co-director and collaborator. Bloch dodged Vichys anti-Semitic legislation, at the same time as Dumézil also managed to rehabilitate himself from his masonic past (FINK, 1989, 252-53; ERIBON, 1992, 231-24).

⁶ We should underline a difference between the situation in Spain and the rest of Europe. In Spain the universities were basically dismantled after the Civil War (1936-1939) because of their reduced size, the exile of many professors, and 'purification'. Vacant posts were filled through merits on the battlefield or/and Catholic fervour. This applies to those who started their studies in the time of Franco. In the rest of Europe the purges of Jews, masons or communists took place under the passive gaze of unaffected colleagues, who at times even collaborated in these purges.

When the persecution began, these Jews were visible to their enemies, and accordingly were the first victims. In the case of the Italian intellectual, his exile and the death of his loved ones was the paradoxical consequence of their visibility as Jewish fascists. The least that can be said is that this situation can do nothing but affect the personality and work of someone who brought together both aspects as Momigliano did.

The context of reflection therefore explores his place in the world as a historian and Jew from Piemonte (Italy), exiled for much of his life, interwoven with his studies about ancient Rome. Here is where we find a “parallel life”, a Roman “historian” distanced from everything except the ideological sphere of the 1930’s, partially consonant with both. In fact between 1933 and 1935 Dumézil published, under a pseudonym, a series of articles with fascist undertones, although in 1936 he joined a masonic lodge (Eribon, 1992, 119-43). The fact that this crossroads of lives and interests was important for Momigliano may be seen in two articles he dedicated to Dumézil, as well as a seminary given in Pisa published in the second volume of *Opus* (1983). Momigliano surrounds his colleague’s questioning with a full display of academic ostentation.

I find it impossible to avoid asking a question in order to understand Momigliano’s attitude towards Dumézil: did Momigliano, either consciously or unconsciously, select Dumézil, who was in one way close to him and in another distant, as an *alter ego* upon which he could project a (self-)critical image of his own political activity as a young man?

An affirmative response to this is based on the indices we have gathered up to this point. The falseness of the facts which Momigliano attributes to Dumézil (his appreciation of Mussolini may not be identified with an appreciation, of any kind, of Hitler, with whom Mussolini had a tense relationship until 1938). The parallel concealment of significant facts concerning his own life. The incomprehension of Dumézil’s work. Other irrational manifestations concerning issues of the Nazi and Fascist periods. Naturally, all of this is subject to historiographers in a better position to give precise answers to questions about Momigliano (I am thinking of R. Di Donato), offering new arguments.

2. *Dumézil, Bloch and Nazism*

Carlo Ginzburg follows on immediately from Momigliano in examining Dumézil’s work. In his article he studies *Mythes et dieux des Germains* attempting to situate it in a philo-Nazi environment. It pays particular attention to several sentences in which Dumézil underlines the continuity of

themes seen in Germanic mythology in the Nazi praxis of the time, stating that:

“as may be seen in the passages quoted herein, the mention of names and institutions of the Third Reich is not accompanied by explicit judgements. There are no words of criticism or condemnation, although neither are there words of elogy or exaltation. The tone appears on a first reading to be sober and neutral” (Ginzburg 1984, 861).

Yet the problem is not that Dumézil accepts the elements of Nazi propaganda. The problem lies in the favourable review given of the book by Marc Bloch: how could a Jew, member of the resistance and shot by the Nazis, ignore the book’s underlying ideology?

The Dumézil case turns into the Bloch case, the predominant issue of the rest of the article. Ginzburg studies the relationship between Bloch and Dumézil (which was minimal, according to Dumézil) and indicates concerns for the subject of historical continuity in Bloch’s work, which may be similar to the continuity detected by Dumézil between Germanic mythology and Nazi ideology. Dumézil’s antecedents are also studied, and particularly the work of Otto Höfler, who had already indicated a continuity between the brotherhoods of warriors and the SS, and was to all other concerns a Nazi author.

However, Ginzburg is surprised that Bloch had also offered favourable comments about Höfler, without having discovered his ideological roots, in an article dominated by anxieties about the nationalist and racist distortions in German historiography of the time. He seeks an explanation in Bloch’s pre-war biography without success, leading to him to turn to an examination of the Parisian intellectual sphere of the time.

Ginzburg indicates a letter written by the anthropologist and sociologist Marcel Mauss, critical of the idea of “societies of men”, an idea which Dumézil, according to Ginzburg, took in a “completely different” manner. It describes in detail the *Collège de Sociologie*, directed by Georges Bataille and Roger Caillois, whose scientific and political ambiguity and heterogeneity was outstanding. However, Bataille wrote a letter revealing his alarm at the fascist death aesthetic; Bataille was an inspirational force with Caillois in the *Collège*; Caillois was a close friend of Dumézil; it may then be said that Dumézil took full part in this type of ambiguities and concerns (Ginzburg, 1984, 874-6). I do not know if it is true or false, and it appears to be false! (see Lévy, 1992, 165, 171-2). What is clear is the argument bears more resemblance to the type of reasoning used by Stalin’s police described by A. Kloester in *Darkness at Noon*, or those of the interrogator described by

George Orwell in 1984, than that of a History of Historiography worthy of its name.

Finally, Ginzburg considers another letter by Lucien Febvre, in which he finds the same political ambiguity as in the *Collège de sociologie* and concludes: “against this background of insecurities, questions and attempts to understand a phenomenon – nazism – which appears to partially elude the instruments of the most widely accepted historiography [...] Bloch’s reviews of Höfler and Dumézil’s books appear less surprising” (1984, 876). I agree with Dumézil when he says that Ginzburg fails in recognising the state of mind of intellectuals in the pre-war period (1985, 985). I will restrict myself to three examples.

Firstly, M. Bloch complained, with a strong degree of self-criticism (Fink, 1989, 100-3; Bloch, 1990, 204-5), about the lack of civic compromise among professors in the period between the world wars. Secondly, L. Althusser evokes as an exceptional figure J. Hours, his History professor in Lyon, who he describes as one of the few who have a precise idea about the social and intellectual situation in France between the wars, when he stated in 1938: “The French bourgeoisie so detests the Popular Front that it now prefers Hitler. Hitler will attack and the French bourgeoisie will take advantage of the defeat to flee from the Popular Front” (Althusser, 1992, 87, 297-8).

Finally, away from personal testimonies, which appear to be more moral demands than historical analysis, François Furet reminds us that

“it is necessary to leave behind the stereotyped image that in those years the antifascists, led by the communists, clashed with a more or less pro-hitlerian right, which had set its mind on a national disaster through anti-communist passions, and whose arguments were based on a pacifistic intellectualism aimed at ‘collaboration’. The reality of the period is much more complicated in of all its facets. Firstly, because there was no influence of a ‘hitlerian’ ideology, unless we consider the very generalised attraction of fascism in France since Mussolini. Secondly, because the fundamental question is to keep the peace, which should be differentiated from the option offered by fascism” (Furet, 1995, 345).

It appears to be particularly true that at this time the lack of ideas and ambiguities about what was on the horizon was very widespread. Ginzburg’s reproach to Dumézil for having lived through his period like anyone else does not appear to make sense. If we add misinformation (he was unaware of Dumézil’s germanophobia, a characteristic of all French nationalists — remember François Mitterrand’s reticence towards German reunification in 1986) and forgetfulness (his complete rejection of any type of racism), we

are obliged to think that we are faced with an attempt at denigration disguised as a historiographical study.

Curiously, the relationship between Dumézil and Bloch reappears in a different guise in a book by Cristiano Grotanelli about Dumézil. Its chapter about the relationship is constructed as a structural opposition: it underlines the parallel and divergent academic careers but mainly details their differing positions with regard to myth. Myth/lie, for Bloch, myth/building block of a people's ideology, for Dumézil.

A war story and its inverted use is another axis of opposition. Based on misinformation obtained from a captured German soldier, Bloch extracts an analysis about the distance between the facts and their telling, and about the spreading of information by rumour in a wartime situation. Dumézil, from contacts with another prisoner, extracts a lesson about the comparative advantages of the continuity of political regimes. Bloch's posture is defined by criticising myth as lies, and a progressive political option. Dumézil's is based on a re-evaluation of mythical thought within the context of the crisis of western rationality and the right wing of the political spectrum.

However, the pages of Grotanelli which I have summarised have different shades of meaning. When one attempts to politically disqualify a scientific work, every care possible should be taken considering the mistakes which may be made. I have referred to the senselessness of the implications seen by Grotanelli in another publication (García Quintela, 1994, 24-36) As a simple example, I consider it appropriate to concentrate on a specific issue.

As part of the lifelong struggle between two characters, Grotanelli points out that in World War II : "Dumézil had problems with Vichy [...] as he was a mason, although he received help from a Vichy minister, the Roman historian Jérôme Carcopino. Bloch entered the resistance in Lyon, with the name of Narbona, in 1942. In 1944, as we have seen, he was killed" (1993, 26). It is the coupling of a collaborator and a resistance fighter which offers the ultimate explanation of their intellectual positions. It is important to specify the dates involved in this period.

Dumézil was taken away from his academic position, after Vichy applied its laws regarding masonic activity, on the 21st of November 1941, and returned, thanks to Carcopino, Mauss and others on the 14th January 1943⁷. In turn, Bloch was affected by Vichy's anti-Semitic 'statute' of October 3rd 1940, although by the 5th January 1941 he was on a list of 125

⁷ ERIBON, 1992, 215-41, COUTAU-BÉGARIE, 1998, 207. It is interesting to point out that the support given by Jerome Carcopino to Dumézil came about thanks to the intervention of Marcel Mauss, a co-student of Carcopino who was persecuted for being a Jew.

Jewish university members (of around 4000) who were exempted because of the services they offered to France. Carcopino's help was also essential for Bloch – he had been a disciple of M. Bloch's father (Fink, 1989, 251-54, 264-7, 276). By the end of 1942 and the beginning of 1943, Bloch finally joined the resistance movement, mainly because of the growing anti-Semitic climate (Fink, 1989, 295; Laborie, 1993). This means that whereas Dumézil suffered Vichy's repression, Bloch continued in the University, with some difficulties, having dodged the anti-Semitic legislation.

This being the case, the polarity of Bloch and Dumézil's attitudes described by Grottanelli disappears. It is true that the years after the military defeat of 1940 were times of great confusion for all the French people, whether at University or not. Only the passage of time made it possible for postures to be defined which became 'official' after liberation. A reading with this apparently clear vision of the personal behaviour which took place between the summer of 1940 and the winter of 1942-43 (when German defeats in northern Africa and Stalingrad, and the end of the French 'Free Zone' in November 1942 clarified a great many positions) is a senseless act, or a concerned manipulation of particular individual actions.

3. *From politics to historiography*

I have elsewhere described the attitudes of Momigliano, Ginzburg, Lincoln or Grotanelli towards Dumézil as those of a witch hunt tinged with political correctness rather than a real History of Historiography. A necessary discipline for historical studies in general, with a magnificent example, simply to quote another Italian academic, to be found in the work of R. Di Donato about Momigliano and many writings by Momigliano himself.

I would like to draw this article to a close examining another point suggested by Herve Coutau-Bégarie, referring to G. Dumézil's political relationships; "from the 1930's onwards, he was exclusively dedicated to his work", and a further quote Henri de Montherlant which states "On ne bâtit pas une grande oeuvre sans une terrible indifférence pour tout ce qui n'est pas elle" (1998, 207, the quote is from the theatrical piece *Le Cardinal d'Espagne*, 1966). A work which in 1930's was, in Dumézil's case, that of a philologist specialised in Caucasian languages (see appendix) whose political attitudes could have had little relevance for their public impact or for the influence which they may have exerted over his academic work.

Yet these sentences are also relevant for M. Bloch who, despite his left-wing opinions and his anti-Nazi compromise which led to his death by firing squad, spent the 1930's more concerned about starting his career in

Paris (Fink, 1989, 166-204, and appendix *infra*). We have already seen how, later on, he felt a certain bitterness for his political inhibitions in those years.

And indeed they are true when referring to A. Momigliano. His scientific output in the 1930's (see *infra*) is comparable to that of many academics throughout all of their working life. Di Donato also points out that despite being a member of the Fascist Party, he had a non-militant attitude. For example, his works were greeted in the fascist press with a very different tone than those of Mario Attilio Levi, another fascist Italian Jew. Momigliano was also discreet in rejecting what he considered a drift towards Sionism in some Italian Jewish communities, as he refused to make his criticisms public. His posture involved underlining his own patriotism, which he considered compatible with a non-religious Jewishness.

Tireless workers in their different fields, the three of them experienced the toughness and intransigence of a triumphant totalitarianism. Momigliano was forced to go into exile, and nearly saw his career come to an end (see his zero production in 1939 and 1940), and found out about the death of many of his loved ones in gas chambers. Bloch was persecuted firstly for being Jewish, then as a resistance fighter, which he paid for with his life. Dumézil was forced out of his job for nearly two years for being a mason since 1936, another civic compromise which has nothing to do with fascism or nazism (Eribon, 1992, 164-75). Of the three, he was the one who escaped most unscathed from the darkest moment of modern European history.

However, if we examine the bibliographies of these three academics, there is a notable lack of publications about modern issues. Dumézil signed his journalistic writings with a pseudonym, and left few clues about his Masonic activity. Momigliano kept his correspondence about modern political themes private. Bloch's political work is from a period of the war which is later than the years considered (texts collected in Bloch, 1990, 213-68; see Fink, 1989, 353-4).

I would like to end by suggesting a recovery of the History of Historiography, suggesting two possible lines of investigation. Firstly, if we have to consider the intellectual relationship between Bloch and Dumézil, then it would be appropriate to question oneself about the concept of comparison. Used by Bloch, who in the 1930's aspired to the chair of "Comparative History of European Societies" in the *Collège de France* (texts in Bloch, 1998, 105-72), and applied by Dumézil. We should do so considering the intellectual and academic environment in which these types of investigation appeared.

Secondly, Dumézil insisted *ad nauseam* on the breakdown of 1938, when he had an intuition of the three functions based on a comparison between the Roman *flamines maiores* and the main Vedic gods (Dumézil, 1980). If we

are to seek his roots in the context of his life, the predominant direction is that of his contacts with the masons and the communist sinologist Marcel Granet, whose lectures he then attended. We should remember that his relationship with Charles Maurras, which is stressed by his detractors, had taken place more than ten years previously.

In closing, I do not believe that an examination of the political postures of these intellectuals is essential in order to understand their work, and that there is no basis for controversy based on the two unfortunate statements by Momigliano about Dumézil. The alternative is clear: the recovery of a History of Historiography aimed at understanding the conditions for the genesis of historical works, and not fuelling Manichean notions about their authors.

Appendix: Writings of Dumézil, Bloch and Momigliano in the 1930's

Table 1. Bibliography of G. Dumézil

<i>years</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>40</i>
Books	1	1	1	2	2	2	-	1	1	1	1
papers	1	-	-	2	1	1	2	1	13	2	3

Table according to Coutau-Bégarie, 1998. Of the 14 books, 10 are dedicated to Caucasian philology and folklore, and some contain no more than a few dozen pages. From the 26 articles, 14 deal with Caucasian themes, with the rest dealing with religious and philological issues. This division by subject is confusing, as studies dealing with Indoeuropean issues increase towards the end of the decade: the two books from 1939 and 40, most of the articles from 1938, and of the 16 reviews from the period, the 3 regarding History of Religions were published in 1939, with the rest being books about Caucasian philology.

Table 2. Bibliography of M. Bloch

<i>years</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>40</i>
books	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	1
papers	4	-	5	3	1	2	-	3	3	1	-

Table according to Fink, 1989, 347-54. I count the extensive “Bulletin historique: Histoire d’Allemagne. Moyen Age” published in *Revue Historique*.

This bibliography only includes a selection of the reviews published by Bloch.

Table 3. *Bibliography of A. Momigliano*

years	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
books	1	-	1	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Papers	16	19	17	12	12	8	6	2	7	-	-

Table according to Momigliano, 1969, 670-88. I have not included re-
 editions or the English translation of a book about the emperor Claudius.
 Neither have I included inclusions in the *Enciclopedia Italiana* in which he was
 a collaborator at that time. There is a total number of 85 reviews from this
 period.

ABSTRACT

Between the 1980's and 1990's, the historians Momigliano, Ginzburg, Lincoln and Grotanelli set out in different ways to question the political content of the work of G. Dumézil, denouncing his ideological affinities with Nazism. This paper explores the very basis of their work into obtaining real (yet scarce) information about Dumézil's life, and the unconscious elements (political, but also national cultural traditions or individual psychology) that are brought into play in writing historical works. An overview of the important work of Dumézil, Bloch and Momigliano in the 1930's makes it possible to reach the conclusion that their political involvement was secondary in all three cases, and that in order to fully understand them a historiographic approach is required, which explores in directions other than the political sphere.

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