



Carnival in Romans

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tionship might be transformed by lengthy evolution, and the balance of forces fundamentally altered in Ireland as a whole, but the public band endured, expressing itself in successive manifestations, from seventeenth-century covenants through eighteenth-century militias down to the Orange Order, and to the Protestant paramilitaries of the 1970s.

Miller is also concerned with the hotly debated question of where the Ulster Protestant community fits into the framework of modern nationalism—there are one-nation, two-nations, part-of-a-nation, and no-nation interpretations—and this leads him into long digressions on modernization and nationalism, with particular reference to such fashionable creators of “models” as Ernest Gellner and Karl Deutsch. At the risk of being dubbed old-fashioned, I must confess myself to be highly skeptical of the extent to which such voguish diversions can at all advance our understanding of historical problems. Indeed, the central defect of the work is that the earlier historical analysis, often brilliant and always richly documented, gives way to inconclusive speculation derived from the nebulous theories of sociologists and political scientists. Again, Miller’s observations about contemporary Ulster, though always stimulating, pinpoint the danger for the historian of making interim judgments on a situation that changes unpredictably from month to month. For example, the opinion that “the frequency of political violence appears to be declining” (p. 165), presumably formed sometime in 1976–77, is hardly a tenable thesis in the summer of 1979.

David Miller writes with compassion of the pathetic backwater that is Ulster loyalism today (though he might not agree with *that* description), but his principal service in writing this book is to give us a deeper understanding of the historical factors that have created the anachronistic phenomenon. His treatment of the period from, say, the middle of the seventeenth century to the early twentieth is so original and well researched that one wishes he had not ventured into more perilous contemporary waters. One must salute his courage, nonetheless, and I should be the last person to murmur *ne sutor ultra crepidam!*

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Carnival in Romans. By *Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie*. Translated by *Mary Feeney*.

New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1979. Pp. xvi+426. \$20.00.

During the last fifteen years historians have increased their efforts to probe beneath the surface of past societies, beyond and below the formal institutions, into the hearts and minds, the unwritten assumptions and mental categories of men and women long dead. By definition, this can only be achieved indirectly, partly through the use of hitherto unused records such as diaries, folklore sources, legal depositions, artistic materials, and partly through the use of models and analogies from other disciplines and particularly social anthropology with its interest in ritual, myth, and symbolism. The work of Peter Burke, Natalie Zemon Davis, Christopher Hill, Keith Thomas, and Edward Thompson in the early modern period, for example, exemplifies some of these approaches. Ladurie’s present book is in this genre, for in it he combines contemporary narrative accounts and folklore with interests and

theories drawn from anthropology. Thereby he hopes to let us see into the conflicts which occurred in the provincial city of Romans in southern France, with a population of about 8,000 persons, during two weeks in the year 1580. His methods and results will interest all those concerned with urban history, with the relations between anthropology and history, and with the religious and economic history of France in the sixteenth century.

The events which form the heart of the book were earlier described in five pages of the same author's well-known work, *The Peasants of Languedoc*. Rival carnival parades organized by the "peasants and craftsmen" on the one hand and the "gentlefolk" on the other ended in a tragic massacre in which between twenty and thirty people died, either at the time or in the judicial repressions after the event. There are two descriptions of what happened in 1580, one sympathetic to the peasants and craftsmen, one very hostile to them. They appear from the quotations to be relatively short pamphlets, though it is difficult to be sure since they are not described in detail. Ladurie also uses other, more general documents, such as household tax lists and plague lists for the 1580s, to reconstruct the urban background. Most historians who discovered such an event and such sources would turn the material into an article or, at the very most, a very short book. Through various strategies, Ladurie has succeeded in expanding five pages of an earlier description into over 400 pages of analysis and notes. Since, as the author admits, the crucial events of February 15 and 16 are not very well documented, nearly all of the book is concerned with setting the scene and analyzing the symbolism of carnival.

The first ninety pages are devoted to tracing the history of the general region back to the Middle Ages. There are many fascinating statistics and discussions which complement the earlier work of the author on Languedoc. But the cost to the reader is that he or she is already weary by the time we reach the run up to the central events. We then focus on Romans and the "shadow carnival" of 1579; this again turns out to be deceptive and to have little to do with carnival at all. After another short chapter on economic disturbances we finally, at page 175, reach the crucial events. There is then a really splendid description, full of that vigor and sensitivity which is characteristic of all Ladurie's work but which has seemed wasted in the earlier part of the book. By page 248 the events are all over and the following 120 pages are spent on unconnected events or reanalysis of the symbolism of carnival. Again there are many suggestive passages; on the symbolic meaning of time and of animals, on whether the events were the result of a class struggle (Porchnev, Marx) or of disputes among the ruling lineages and factions (Mousnier, Ibn Khaldun). There are discussions of the roots of modern egalitarianism, the effects of Roman law, the nature of peasant revolts. But many will feel that the framework is too loose to hold these together. Even the author apologizes on several occasions for various digressions (e.g., pp. 79, 282).

There are other more specific criticisms which one might make, some of which are the fault of the translator as much as the author. The book is littered with clichés: "no love was lost" (p. 98), "at wit's end" (p. 108), "the mind boggles" (p. 54), "kept under wraps" (p. 145) are only a very small sample. These and the overused metaphors, especially of fire and combustion, weaken the effect of the book. The same friend who should have advised Ladurie to cut the book to half its length should have weeded these out as

well as the overuse of exclamation marks and occasional unnecessary asides in brackets. They would also have pointed out the frequent repetition of the same quotations and the anticlimax created by the constant forward references to the great carnival massacre. There is too much drumming and parading before the introduction of a rather small carnival animal.

More seriously, in the context of the allegations by David Herlihy (*Social History* 4, no. 3 [October 1979]: 517-20) that Ladurie's interpretation of documents upon which *Montaillou* was based is suspect, the author's technique of quoting the odd word, phrase, or sentence, sometimes in a way which makes it difficult to decide where it was taken from, is worrying. It is not encouraging, furthermore, to find out what Ladurie considers to be direct speech. He writes that he has found "another of those precious, exceedingly rare instances of actual peasant speech being quoted" (p. 153). Instead of the quoted words which we might expect, we are told that the peasants used "nasty and annoying words." I am not competent to examine Ladurie's two principal authorities in their original context, but given the difficulty of the evidence and the necessity which Ladurie feels to dismiss the record of one of the witnesses and to believe the other, it will be necessary for someone to check the originals in the way Herlihy has done before the central description of the events can be fully accepted.

At a deeper theoretical level, there are two major possible objections. Although the overarching framework or thesis underlying Ladurie's description is not made very explicit except in a few paragraphs, it is clear that in general he sees the events in Romans as a prime example of the clash between a conservative peasantry and a "traditional" order on the one hand and a modernizing, "capitalist," wealthier bourgeoisie on the other. Yet Ladurie never says this in so many words, perhaps because he is well aware that though this is what the events should indicate, in practice, the facts that the urban craftsmen were on the "conservative" side and that it was these groups who showed more interest in Calvinism confuse the picture. In fact, while accepting that there is a "class" struggle, the author specifically denies the thesis of a "bourgeois revolution." The confusion of the underlying interpretation helps to explain the immense detail of the description of the religious, economic, and cultural divisions. A second objection is that at times Ladurie tends to treat the whole of Europe as one similar object, moving from a "traditional" to a "modern" social formation. Thus he refers to peasant revolts and other phenomena in Germany, England, and elsewhere as if they were in the same class as those he is studying in the Languedoc. Yet for an English historian, his account of a world of peasant poverty and Catholic ritual appears to show a situation that is amazingly different from that of post- and probably pre-Reformation England. Even carnival is very weakly elaborated in northern Europe, an absence which would repay further investigation.

It would be wrong to end a somewhat critical assessment on a negative note. The shadow of earlier major works looms over this book, and it is difficult to judge it objectively. The French edition may be free of some of the blemishes of this translation. There is great vigor, a huge amount of detailed research, and a lively and sensitive mind at work. The use of anthropological writing is suggestive and well informed. Ladurie has once again attempted something which is very difficult indeed, namely, to make the past live again for us. At times he succeeds, and we really feel what it must have been like to

participate in an urban carnival. If, ultimately, the book fails to be a great work through the absence of either a grand vision of the world or the appropriate sources with which to sustain it, it is nevertheless of very considerable interest, especially for the use of the "social drama" approach pioneered by Victor Turner and other anthropologists.

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Un Horizon bloqué: Ussel et la montagne limousine aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles. By *Nicole Lemaitre*.

Ussel: Musée du pays d'Ussel, 1978. Pp. 239. Fr 75.

One of the leitmotifs of old regime scholarship is the youthful vigor of the eighteenth century. It was a century of substantial population growth, not as "revolutionary" as A. Landry once contended, but more dynamic than most experts believed until the recent Institut national d'études démographiques reports. It was a century of marked economic expansion. Commerce especially flourished as the market conquered new space in the interior and as new trade connections were fashioned the world over. The city was the locus of much of this burgeoning prosperity, but capitalism also penetrated the countryside. It was not uncommon to find maximizing, managerial lords on the Burgundian or Languedocian models or peasant "matadors" behaving like a rural bourgeoisie. Finally, it was not only a time of enormous intellectual vitality from above but also of the deepening acculturation of the masses as they became literate in increasing numbers.

Viewed against this backdrop, the *chef-lieu* and hinterland of Ussel in eastern Limousin do not seem to belong to the eighteenth century that characterized the better-known parts of France. Ussel constituted an egregious counterpoint, an economic, social, demographic, and cultural "Phase B." The economy remained depressed; the population declined or stagnated; dreadful crises of mortality persisted; exile loomed as virtually the sole avenue to upward mobility; literacy sharply regressed from the end of the seventeenth century to the decade before the Revolution; and the peasants, with their long hair, bare feet, and desperate mien, would have frightened enlightened Frenchmen infinitely more than the exotically savage Huron.

Nicole Lemaitre paints this gloomy portrait of mediocrity and marasmus with considerable aplomb. The monograph is divided into three parts, preceded by an ecological introduction (that boasts, *inter alia*, a striking sociotopographic description of local dwellings). Part 1 focuses on demographic questions. Lemaitre insists on the ubiquity and precocity of deaths (staggering rate of infant mortality and incidence of rapidly broken families), on the prevalence of extended or complex family structures (marked by the ponderous influence of the parents), and on the critical role played by the exports of persons. The second part deals with the economy, whose activity was seriously constrained by radically poor communications, traditional technologies, modest natural endowments, and devastating natural disasters. Part 3 treats social structure and wealth. The urban notables were reasonably well off while the city *journaliers*, like their rural counterparts, provoked fear and suffered sociojuridical prejudice. Seigneurial implantation was weak. As one might expect in a work directed by Pierre Goubert, the chapters on the