



Le Roy Ladurie, Emmanuel (Bernard)

July 19, 1929— French historian. Address: b. c/o Collège de France, 11 place Marcellin-Berthelot, 75231 Paris, France; h. 88 rue d'Alleray, 75015 Paris, France

Since the publication in 1966 of his now classic study of the peasants of Languedoc—*Les Paysans*

de Languedoc—Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie has acquired an enviable reputation not only among his fellow historians but also among a mass audience of lay readers for his ingenious re-creations of medieval society in such best-sellers as *Montaillou; the Promised Land of Error*, first published in France in 1978. Le Roy Ladurie is one of the leading disciples of the *Annales* school of historiography, which draws upon an amazing range of academic disciplines from climatology to literary analysis in an effort to depict the way of life and impact upon history of commoners who lived many centuries ago. Not without some justification, Lawrence Stone, an eminent colleague, has called Le Roy Ladurie "one of the most—if not the most—original, versatile, and imaginative historians in the world."

A native of the predominantly rural area of Normandy in northwestern France, Emmanuel Bernard Le Roy Ladurie was born on July 19, 1929 in the tiny village of Les Moutiers-en-Cinglais, which is located in the Calvados department. The son of Jacques and Léontine (Dauger) Le Roy Ladurie, he was raised in a conservative, strongly religious environment that he has described as having changed very little since before the French Revolution. Le Roy Ladurie's father, a wealthy landowner who has been prominent in public life for many years, served in the Vichy government for a few months during World War II as Minister of Agriculture. Later he joined the Resistance movement and actively fought against the Germans. Since 1929, when he was first elected mayor of Moutiers-en-Cinglais, Jacques Le Roy Ladurie has held several posts in that town and in Normandy. Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie has two sisters, Marie, who is an author, and Cécile. His brother, François, was killed in 1950 in an airplane crash.

An introverted child, Le Roy Ladurie quickly developed a taste for reading, which he indulged in his father's large library. By the time he was eight, he had decided to become a naval officer, but he gave up that ambition because of his nearsightedness and thought briefly of joining the priesthood. For several years before the outbreak of World War II, he lived with his grandmother in the departmental capital of Caen, where he attended the Collège Sainte-Marie. After war broke out, he transferred to the Collège Saint-Joseph in Caen, a school run by the Christian Brothers. He recalls being happy there, even though there was no instruction in history.

When he was sixteen, Le Roy Ladurie was sent to the Lycée Henri-IV in Paris to prepare for the Ecole Normale Supérieure. After a year and a half there, he was expelled by the headmaster for a prank. Because no lycée in Paris was likely to accept him after his expulsion, he enrolled in the Lycée Lakanal in Sceaux, a suburb of Paris. His interest in the politics of the extreme left had been piqued at the Lycée Lakanal by his fellow students, by such current events as Mao Zedong's victory in China, and by his exposure to Marxism in the history classes of Jean Bruhat. When in September

1949 he entered the Ecole Normale Supérieure where the majority of students were Communists, he immediately joined the French Communist party (PCF), according to Bertrand Poirot-Depech in the *Guardian* (March 28, 1982), "with the same abject devotion which very nearly took him into holy orders."

At the Ecole Normale Supérieure on the rue d'Ulm in Paris, much of Le Roy Ladurie's time was devoted to militant activities on behalf of the PCF, including violently provocative acts against rival Titoist and Trotskyite groups. He was also involved in the Fédération d'Education Nationale, the Union Nationale des Etudiants Français, and other union organizations. After completing his undergraduate degree in 1951, Le Roy Ladurie continued to work for the PCF, devoting himself to such tasks as a statistical analysis of the Paris working class. He also continued his own studies, and after completing a research paper entitled "L'Opinion publique française et la guerre du Tonkin sous Jules Ferry, vers 1880," an analysis of French policy in Indochina, he was awarded the *diplôme des études supérieures*. In 1952 he received France's most prestigious teaching diploma, the *agrégé d'histoire*.

Soon after his appointment as *professeur* at the Lycée Montpellier in 1953, Le Roy Ladurie left that school to fulfill his military obligation. As a result of his two years in the army of occupation in the German Federal Republic, his enthusiasm for Communism, waning since the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953, diminished further, and the 1956 exposé of that Soviet leader by Nikita Khrushchev and the Russian invasion of Hungary obliterated it. He resigned in 1956 from the Communist party, though he was active for a while in the French Socialist party (PSU). By 1963 he had "slipped into [his] old skin," as he recounted in his autobiography, *Paris-Montpellier, PC-PSU, 1945-63* (Gallimard, 1983), and put his "political conscience on a back-burner."

Instead he turned his attention to history, and when he resumed his duties at the Lycée Montpellier he began an exhaustive study of the region in southern France that was formerly known as Languedoc. Through tax records and other documents, he reconstructed and explored the peasant society of that region over the course of more than two hundred years, from the late fifteenth to early eighteenth centuries, or roughly from the end of the Hundred Years' War through the reign of Louis XIV. After seven years of research, his brief survey, *Histoire du Languedoc* (History of Languedoc), was published by Presses Universitaires de France in 1962, and for his 1,037-page expansion of that study, *Les Paysans de Languedoc* (SEVPEN, 1966; *The Peasants of Languedoc*, Univ. of Illinois Pr., 1974), he was granted a doctoral degree in letters by the Sorbonne in 1963.

Les Paysans de Languedoc was hailed as one of the masterpieces of the *Annales* school of historiography, which takes its name from *Annales: Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, a journal founded in 1929 by the school's two originators and principal

figures, Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch. *Annales* historians reject as inadequate the *histoire événementielle*, or straightforward chronicle of events, that was characteristic of nineteenth-century historiography. Since no event occurs in a vacuum but results from an extremely complex concatenation of factors, the *Annalistes* recreate as far as possible whole cultures in an attempt to understand a certain event or era. As a result, anthropology, theology, demography, sociology, psychology, among many distinct disciplines, all fall within the purview of the *Annalistes*. Their focus on the common people rather than on the ruling class is another hallmark of the *Annales* school.

Climatology is yet another tool Le Roy Ladurie exploited in his researches. While studying such phenomena as crop failures and famines in Languedoc, he began to appreciate the crucial importance of climate in agrarian history. By using grape-harvest dates, parish records, and even dendro-chronological analysis of tree trunks embedded in French glaciers, he was able to chart fluctuations in temperature and climate in Europe, principally in France, since the year 1000 A.D. The result was his pioneering study *Histoire du climat depuis l'an mil* (Flammarion, 1967; *Times of Feast, Times of Famine: A History of Climate Since the Year 1000*, Doubleday, 1971). In his review of the English edition for *Scientific American* (February 1972), Philip Morrison praised Le Roy Ladurie's effort "to restore the historian's interest in climate for itself, in a document-based history of climate; not overstated, not crudely cyclical and not ignorant of the physical clues." Although *Times of Feast, Times of Famine* may be rough going for the layman, the majority of critics agreed with Morrison that for historians and experts in other fields it is a useful and authoritative treatment of the impact of climate on history.

Montaillou: village occitan de 1294 à 1324 (Gallimard, 1975; *Montaillou: The Promised Land of Error*, Braziller, 1978), Le Roy Ladurie's next major study, is not only much more accessible to the general reader but also one of the best-selling historical works ever published in France. He based that book on a unique document that had been preserved in the Vatican Library for over six hundred years: an amazingly exact, early fourteenth-century transcript of an inquisition of ninety-eight Cathars, twenty-seven of whom lived in Montaillou. (The Cathars, a heretical sect, maintained that all matter is evil and that since Jesus Christ was angelic, he never underwent the carnal experiences of birth and death.) The chief inquisitor, the bishop of Pamiers (who later became Pope Benedict XII), grilled the accused and other villagers on every aspect of their lives, both personal and social, as well as on their beliefs about magic, religion, fate, and a wide variety of other topics. In the course of the investigation, commonplace customs like the village grooming sessions—during which the women deloused both themselves and the men while gossip and intimate secrets were often exchanged—as well as the notorious lechery of the local priest, Pierre Clergue, were discussed with equal candor.

The transcript had long been known to exist, and excerpts had in fact been published by 1965, but through his careful sifting of facts, immense erudition, and informed judgments, Le Roy Ladurie extracted from the manuscript a description of late medieval village life unrivaled in its accuracy, sense of immediacy, and depth of detail. In her appraisal of *Montaillou* for the *Christian Science Monitor* (September 20, 1978), Jane Majeski expressed reservations about his method of culling information from the document and his manner of presentation. However, D. H. Fischer voiced the critical consensus in the *New Republic* (December 9, 1978), when he lauded the study as "a virtuoso performance, which brings its subjects to life with remarkable success. No other book I can think of," he continued, "communicates so clearly the nature of the new history as this one." Quick to recognize the importance of *Montaillou*, Le Roy Ladurie's colleagues were especially enthusiastic about its revelations of the *mentalité*, or psychology, of the village's inhabitants. The drama that came alive in the manuscript, the sexual frankness of much of the testimony, including disclosures of homosexuality, and its appeal to the strong sense of regionalism in southern France made *Montaillou* a best-seller, and almost 200,000 copies of it were bought within a few months of its publication.

In *Le Carnaval de Romans: De la Chandeleur au mercredi de Cendres, 1579-1580* (Gallimard; *Carnival in Romans*, Braziller, 1979), Le Roy Ladurie moved ahead two centuries to the town of Romans in the Dauphiné region of France. The focus of the narrative is an abortive uprising by peasants and craftsmen against the ruling elite that ended with the brutal massacre of the leaders of the insurgents during the town's annual Mardi Gras festival in 1580. Le Roy Ladurie saw the uprising in Romans, triggered by high taxes, an oppressive government, and other problems, as symptomatic of the growing political, social, religious, and cultural turbulence in France at that time. He hoped that a close examination of that microcosm—through available official documents and manuscript accounts by eyewitnesses and direct participants—might provide some insight into the state of affairs in the country in general. Like many other critics, Lawrence Stone, writing in the *New York Review of Books* (November 8, 1979), greeted *Carnival in Romans* as a "dazzling psychodrama," but he took issue with what he thought to be Le Roy Ladurie's too ingenious interpretations of the symbolism of the parades, costumes, and feasts of the carnival and his biased portraits of its principal figures. Nevertheless, he asserted that "what matters is the fascination of the story, and the author's dextrous interweaving of a brilliant analysis of social conflicts . . . with a more dubious but intriguing reading of the various elements of that historic carnival in Romans."

Next, Le Roy Ladurie scrutinized marriage and village life in eighteenth-century southern France, a region also known as the Pays d'Oc. Expanding his arsenal of investigative skills to include such

techniques as structuralist literary analysis, linguistics, and comparative folklore, he based his study on the short tale *Jean-l'ont-pris*, a masterpiece of Occitan literature written by Jean-Baptiste Castor Fabre, and its relationship to the old, well-known folk tale "Godfather Death." Written between 1756 and 1760, *Jean-l'ont-pris* narrates the attempts of the wily title character to marry the daughter of a certain wealthy landowner, and it was also long considered a faithful portrait of peasant society. "Godfather Death" also centers on a crafty young man. Asked to be the godfather of a poor couple's son, in gratitude Death gives the child when he turns eighteen the ability to predict whether a sick person will live or die. Because of that gift, the young man wins renown, a fortune, and in some versions the hand of the king's daughter. In the end, of course, Death, whom the gentleman had tricked more than once, evens the score by claiming his godson's life. Ladurie's resulting treatise, *L'Argent, l'amour et la mort en Pays d'Oc* (Seuil, 1980; *Love, Death and Money in the Pays d'Oc*, Braziller, 1982), clarifies the relationship, according to the Occitan commoners' way of thinking, between marriage, money, mortality, and the supernatural. The book met with a lukewarm critical reception. Although most reviewers found it intriguing, John Bossy, for one, considered it to be repetitious and overloaded with diagrams and lists. However, Bossy conceded in *Encounter* (April 1983) that "it is a worthy effort and ought to provoke a good deal of constructive thought." Le Roy Ladurie's adeptness at combining literary analysis with historical anthropology is also apparent in *La Sorcière de Jasmin* (Seuil, 1983), a study of peasant beliefs about witchcraft.

Over the years, Le Roy Ladurie has explored various means of compiling historical data, including for a short time the computer. That interest as well as the breadth of his studies—birth control methods in medieval France, the global spread of disease, the rise of the nation-state, the role of the modern historian, to name a few—are reflected in his articles and essays. Many of those originally printed between 1964 and 1973 were published in *Le Territoire de l'Historien* (Gallimard, 1973), a two-volume work. Selections from it comprised *The Territory of the Historian* (1979) and *The Mind and Method of the Historian* (1981), both published by the University of Chicago Press. *Parmi les Historiens* (Among the Historians, Seuil, 1983) is his most recent collection. He has also collaborated with others on several studies and has contributed to many reference works.

During his twenty-year career, Le Roy Ladurie has been honored with many prestigious academic appointments. He taught at the Sorbonne (1970-71) and at the University of Paris VII (1971-73) before he accepted his present position at the Collège de France. His appointment there to the chair of the history of modern civilization in 1973 was regarded as especially significant since his two predecessors had been among the most distinguished *Annales* historians, Lucien Febvre and Fernand Braudel.

Since 1965 he has also held the position of the director of studies at L'Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, the major research center for *Annales* historians. The French historian has taught at Princeton University and at the University of Michigan, where he holds the rank of adjunct professor of history. The universities of Leeds, England and Geneva, Switzerland have awarded him honorary degrees.

Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie was married on July 9, 1955 to Madeleine Pupponi, whom he met during his student days while both he and his future wife were active in the Communist party. The couple have two children, Anne and François. Besides cycling and swimming for recreation, Le Roy Ladurie devotes much of his spare time to movies, opera, ballet, and theatre. He speaks English fluently and has been "fascinated" by American culture ever since his first visit to the United States. A popular figure in the French media, Le Roy Ladurie often appears on state television and contributes articles and book reviews to publications such as *Le Monde*, *L'Express*, and *Le Nouvel Observateur*. In 1979 he collaborated with film director Daniel Vigne on a six-hour television documentary on French peasant life entitled "Inventaire des Campagnes" (Téléproductions Gaumont) that was awarded the Prix de la Critique and was later published in book form (Editions Jean Claude-Lattès, 1980). Le Roy Ladurie is a *chevalier* of the French Legion of Honor.

References: *Guardian* p14 Mr 28 '82; *Historia* p83+ Mar '80; *International Who's Who*, 1983-84; *Le Roy Ladurie, Emmanuel*. Paris-Montpellier: P.C.-P.S.U. 1945-63 (1982); *Who's Who in France*, 1983-84

MacDermot, Galt

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The Canadian-born composer Galt MacDermot, a white musician strongly influenced by African rhythms, has written thirteen musicals, ranging from the reggae score for Derek Walcott's *The Charlatan* to the music for five Broadway shows. Among the latter were the innovative *Hair*, the first pop-rock musical, which had a Broadway run of 1,750 performances beginning in 1968 and became a worldwide stage and recording sensation; the more quietly successful *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1971-72), originally scored for the New York Shakespeare Festival; and *The Human Comedy* (1984), a short-lived musical version of William Saroyan's screenplay and novel. Outside of his work for the stage, most of MacDermot's creative energy goes into instrumental compositions, especially those for his own combo, the New Pulse Jazz Band.