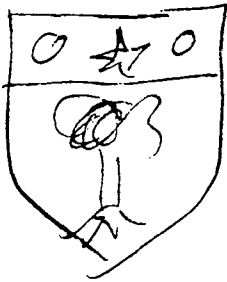

NEW TITLES

History

CARNIVAL IN ROMANS
 by Emmanuel Le Roy
 Ladurie
 Braziller, 1979
 400 pp. \$20

**THE TERRITORY OF THE
 HISTORIAN**
 by Emmanuel Le Roy
 Ladurie
 Univ. of Chicago, 1979
 345 pp. \$21

*Dauphiné
 romain!*



Guérin

Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

In 1580, the textile town of Romans lay within the old French province of Dauphiné, near Grenoble. Ladurie, one of France's distinguished historians, depicts the town midway between Reformation and Counter Reformation, on the winding road to the French Revolution. As in his best-selling *Montaillou*, Ladurie probes a single incident in an ordinary town to understand a larger world. His focus here is the 1580 Mardi Gras. The principal actors: Judge Antoine Guérin, social-climbing son of a jeweler and "powerful boss of the local political machine," and draper Jean Serve-Paumier, spokesman for commoner and craftsman, "a man of pacifist, perhaps temporizing nature." On the night of February 15th, Guérin's costumed thugs suddenly trained their harquebuses on Paumier and his followers and opened fire; many survivors were summarily tortured and hanged. Why? Ladurie portrays Romans as a town wracked by popular resentment at entrenched privilege, bloated bureaucracy, and cruel taxes. Great lords, clerics, and urban magnates were exempt, by charter or custom, from many tax levies; but the mass of commoners, as one contemporary chronicler observed, "wept they could take it no more." With tax revolts proliferating throughout France like spring crocuses, Guérin's bloody move, then, was a pre-emptive strike. (To commemorate the deed, Guérin designed a new coat of arms for himself—an uprooted apple tree, or *pommier*—a tasteless pun on his victim's name.) Culling the details of life in Romans from tax rolls, land registers, and contemporary descriptions, Ladurie builds his story to a crescendo, in deft counterpoint to the theatrical rhythms of Carnival.

By contrast, the 18 spirited essays collected in *The Territory of the Historian* are to Ladurie

as finger exercises are to a pianist—warm-ups for work to come, experiments in sheer technique. Topics range from the history of contraception to the rich research potential of the computer. In two fascinating chapters, Ladurie reviews the work of a dozen scholar-detectives who are piecing together the history of the Earth's climate. Their tools: tree rings, fossil pollens, the oxygen isotope O-18 in glaciers, and fragmentary evidence about wine harvests a millennium ago. Ladurie's well-directed curiosity is everywhere evident.

**AARON BURR: The Years
From Princeton to Vice
President, 1756–1805**
by Milton Lomask
Farrar, 1979
443 pp. \$17.50

Twice during his life, Aaron Burr (1756–1836) saw his innocence vindicated—once while on trial for the killing of Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton in an 1804 duel, and again three years later at a federal court hearing on charges of conspiring to head a Western secessionist empire. Given the views of many contemporaries and most historians, the courts appear to have held a minority opinion. In this first of two volumes, historian Milton Lomask joins novelist Gore Vidal (*Burr*) in defending Burr. He finds Burr too self-absorbed and ambivalent during emotional crises to serve his best interests. (Andrew Jackson saw the former Vice President differently: “As far from a fool as I ever saw and yet he is as easily fooled as any man I ever saw.”) When the presidential election of 1800 was thrown into the House of Representatives, Burr failed to push his cause with tie-breaking Federalists; in the end, they preferred Jefferson's “radical” positions to Burr's unpredictability. Lomask stresses Burr's admirable side: the superb political organizer who wooed New York voters with the first intensive canvassing by a political organization; the aspiring writer who wanted to chronicle the unsung heroes of the Revolution; the appreciative husband and father. Perhaps the final verdict on the man comes from Burr himself: “He is a grave, silent strange sort of animal, inasmuch as we know not what to make of him.”