



# Taking Stock At the End of the World: Rites of Distinction and Practices of Collecting in Early Modern Europe

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## 1.

The royal entry festival held for Henri II and Catherine de Medici in Rouen (October 1550) was, by all accounts, among the most spectacular ever staged.<sup>1</sup> It included warring gladiators, elephants, and unicorns; mock sea battles between French and Portuguese ships; a parade of captives from recent victories over the English; pageants with Roman gods, nymphs, and muses; and a whole array of exotic and magnificent displays on a scale never before seen. Of all the sights that the king viewed on his journey through Rouen, none was more remarkable than the one he discovered just outside the city's walls, on the Faubourg Saint-Sever, for there he found constructed an 'exact' replica of a Brazilian village.

The village had no name, but had 300 inhabitants. Men as well as women, all completely naked. Fifty were Brazilian cannibals. The rest were sailors, who had frequented the land of Brazil, and were familiar with the language and customs of its people.

The king watched from a viewing stand specially constructed to afford him an unobstructed view. The village's inhabitants seemed to be unaware of his gaze, as they shot arrows at birds, relaxed in the shade, rocked back and forth in their hammocks, and chased after monkeys. Others cut Brazil wood and carried it to a

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*Received 20 October 1997; in revised form 14 August 1998.*

<sup>1</sup>For a good discussion of the royal entry in general, see the preface of Bryant (1986) and Strong (1984), pp. 7–11. There are several contemporaneous accounts of Henri II's entry into Rouen, see Anonymous (1550, 1551); A (). Of the secondary works which discuss the Rouen festival, the most complete can be found in Pottier (1835a, b), Chartrou (1928), McGowan (1968), Cloulas (1984), and Graham (1990). Regarding Henri's entry into Paris see Bryant (1986), pp. 52–66, McFarlane (1982) and Saulnier (1956); for his entry into Lyon, see Cooper (1997).

fort built along the Seine where they bartered with sailors for axes, fishhooks and iron chisels. Anchored just off-shore was a ship being loaded with the precious wood (*le bois de braise*) from which Brazil took its name, and from which the best quality red dyes were made.<sup>2</sup> (Fig. 1)

Suddenly, and without warning, a group of savages, who called themselves *Tabagerres*, set upon a rival band called the *Toupinabaulx* who also lived in the unnamed village. The war was fierce, but the *Toupinabaulx* quickly routed their attackers and burned their lodges to the ground. So near did this battle seem to reality that those present who had frequented the land of *Brasil* and the *Canyballes* swore in good faith that its effect was ‘a certain simulacra of the truth.’<sup>3</sup>

## 2.

Like Henri II four and a half centuries ago, modern readers are captivated by Rouen’s New World drama of ‘Brazilians’ fighting it out on the banks of the Seine. Perhaps this is due to our increasingly self-reflective attitude towards the social and historical roots of our own practices of representation. Rouen’s exquisite reproduction of a Brazilian village appears, at least in this light, as something of a landmark in the development of the ideas and practices which we have come to associate with modernity. And, indeed, that one might trace a connection between Rouen’s display of Brazilians in Henri II’s royal entry and later efforts to collect, classify and display the natural and human worlds is an intriguing possibility.<sup>4</sup> Yet this possibility entails substantial risks, for it suggests that one might be able to find incipient premodern forms of such modern ideals as objectivity and scientific display. To avoid this danger, a somewhat more round-about approach is called for; thus, rather than trying to uncover the historical precursors of objectivity in the sixteenth century, I will focus instead on the problems which created its conditions of possibility—i.e., as a solution.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, I will be more concerned to set Rouen’s representation of the New World within the context of the profoundly unsettling (and unprecedented, at least in terms of scope and scale) experience of religious, social, and epistemological relativism, than to highlight its emblematic significance for those interested in searching for a prehistory of objectivity. This is not to say, however, that there is not an interesting tale to tell with regards to this prehistory, but rather that we need to be very circumspect in telling it. My first step, therefore, will be to firmly set Rouen’s *mise-en-scène* of Brazil within the larger narrative context of the entry in which it appeared. Following from this, my second will be to locate this narrative within the specific social and cultural context(s) which framed the entry’s organization, enactment and reception. By

<sup>2</sup>See Hemming (1978), p. 8.

<sup>3</sup>This account follows that found in Anonymous (1551), fol. K iii(v)–K iv(r).

<sup>4</sup>See in particular Lorraine Daston’s important series of articles: Daston (1991, 1992, 1994).

<sup>5</sup>See, for example, Shapin and Schaffer (1985), see also Pagden (1986), introductory comments.

employing this method, I believe we can show not only the manner in which the cultural category of the “Other” came to inform and mediate the construction of elite identity in early modern France, but also a plausible genealogical connection between the way in which the Brazilians were used and understood in Henri’s entry, and later attempts to specify and articulate order, identity and difference into distinct disciplines (grammar and natural history) and their corresponding practices (classification and taxonomy).

### 3.

Though the Brazilians presented before Henri II in 1550 were by no means the first New World peoples to be displayed in Normandy,<sup>6</sup> they were entirely unique in that they were not simply displayed as curiosities, but were scripted into the complex narrative of the king’s ritual entry. As such, they were a crucial part of a larger story within which royal power, national mythology and local (Rouennais) interests were articulated and conjoined.<sup>7</sup> We can see this more clearly if we return to the narrative of the entry, joining Henri a few minutes after he watched the war between the two rival Brazilian tribes. Thus, as he was crossing over the old bridge into Rouen, the king was treated to another battle, this time between a French ship and a ‘Portuguese’ caravel.

The conflict began when the Portuguese attacked the French vessel anchored just off-shore of the Brazilian village. According to the chronicler, they fought furiously, as though they were fighting to the death. In the end, however (and not surprisingly), the French routed the Portuguese, and set fire to their ship. Henri watched happily as its crew abandoned the sinking ship and swam for their lives.<sup>8</sup>

The juxtaposition of these two staged wars made explicit the alliances (not mentioned by any of the contemporary accounts of the entry) between New World peoples and their Old World conquerors.<sup>9</sup> These alliances were common and indeed vital knowledge to those who travelled to Brazil—as demonstrated by the case of the ship-wrecked German, Hans Staden, who when captured by the Tupinamba in 1552 tried to save himself by claiming that he was French. The Tupi’s king, Konyan Bebe, however, was skeptical: as he put it, ‘I have already captured and eaten five Portuguese and every one of them has pretended to be French[!] . . .’<sup>10</sup>

Thus, to return to the events of the festival, just as the French responded to the unprovoked Portuguese attack, the Tupinamba (*Toupinabaulx*), who were allied

<sup>6</sup>For example, in 1508; seven were exhibited as part of Louis XII’s royal entry into Rouen, see Gaguin (1536), fols. cccxxxii(r)–cccxxxii(v).

<sup>7</sup>There are a number of secondary works which discuss the *mise-en-scène* of Brazil as a more or less isolated event; see, for example, Denis (1850), Massa (1975), and most importantly Mullaney’s fascinating account (Mullaney, 1988). A brief discussion can also be found in Chinard’s classic study (Chinard, 1911), pp. 105–106.

<sup>8</sup>Anonymous (1551), fol. M(v).

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, fol. K iii(v).

<sup>10</sup>Staden (1990), p. 104.

with the French, responded to the unprovoked attack of the Tobajara (*Tabagerres*), who were allied with the Portuguese. And just as the French viciously defeated, burned and sank their foe's ship, so too the Tupinamba overran their enemies and burned their lodges to the ground. The similarity of the narratives structuring these two battles points to the efforts of the festival's organizers to raise their particular local interest in trade with the New World to a national level by tying it both to on-going inter-European conflicts and to Henri II's well known imperial ambitions. Yet the reasons behind Rouen's display of the New World can be given other more subtle meanings than simply those of economic self-interest.

The ritual of Henri's entry gave voice to a specific dialect—that of the local merchants, city officials, clergy and savants who wrote, organized and enacted the festival. Of the nine men mentioned in the municipal archives as having been responsible for the entry, all were clearly identifiable members of Rouen's *noblesse de robe*.<sup>11</sup> With the rise of this class of individuals to social prominence, immense effort was expended to articulate distinct cultural modes of self-presentation and understanding by which they could legitimize their new-found social standing.<sup>12</sup> These efforts can be identified, for example, in the emergence, and proliferation, of works having to do with rhetoric, grammar, eloquence, and courtesy; or, as I will argue presently, in the writing of an entry festival.

Following from this, the king's rite of entry can be seen as an expression of the interest of Rouen's *robe* elite in reformulating noble identity in terms consonant with their own values and ideals, thus in effect linking—and thereby stabilizing—their liminal status as a new elite to the seemingly immutable and transcendent values structuring notions not simply of kingship and social order, but of the very universe itself. We can see this more clearly if we revisit the beginning of the entry.

According to the chronicler, Henri was very pleased by the battle staged by the Brazilians.<sup>13</sup> His pleasure was rooted not only in the victory of the French and their New World surrogates over the Portuguese, but in his identification with the martial spirit so consummately exemplified by the savages from Brazil, for he too considered himself a warrior. As the Seigneur de Brantôme put it, the king is '*tout martial*'; he 'ardently loves to make war'.<sup>14</sup>

Like their king, France's old military nobility also identified closely with these ideals, as evidenced by the fashionability of such works as the *Roman de la rose*

<sup>11</sup>B.M.R., *Délibérations*, A. 16, fol. 78. For details see Wintroub (1995), chapter 4, 'The Social Poetics of the Triumph'.

<sup>12</sup>That words and manners increasingly fulfilled the symbolic function previously met by force of arms is characteristic of what Elias has called the 'civilizing process'. See, for example, Elias (1978), pp. 271, 280. See also Langer (1984), pp. 343–355.

<sup>13</sup>Anonymous (1551), fol. L(r).

<sup>14</sup>The arguments in this section are set out in somewhat greater detail in Wintroub (1998). On this specific point see Brantôme (1822), vol. 2, p. 330.

and the *Amadis de Gaule* at court.<sup>15</sup> The Brazilian cannibals brought to Rouen for the king's entry excelled in precisely the chivalrous ideals valorized by these celebrated and influential books. As the chronicler of the entry explained, their skill and bravery surpassed even that of the ancient heroes of Troy from which the French—according to numerous authorities—had descended.<sup>16</sup> This opinion was echoed by Montaigne, who, writing about several Brazilians he had met while in Rouen in 1562, affirmed their chivalrous character; as he put it, '[t]heir fighting is noble and disinterested . . . [t]heir only motive for war being the desire to display their valor.'<sup>17</sup>

Yet despite these 'positive' characteristics, from the time of their 'discovery' at the end of the fifteenth century, these warlike and savage beings from the New World were also classified as uncultured and ignorant barbarians. That this was the case is perhaps not surprising; what is, however, is that the French were characterized in much the same way.<sup>18</sup> Thus, for example, in 1509 Claude de Seyssel stated in blunt terms that 'the French [were] reputed by the Italians to be barbarians, both in regard to their morals as well as their language'.<sup>19</sup> Somewhat later Castiglione stated a similar view, namely, that the French ' . . . recognize only the nobility of arms and reckon all the rest naught; and thus not only do they not esteem, but abhor letters, and consider all men of letters to be very base . . .'.<sup>20</sup> Erasmus would have agreed with this assessment; as he put it:

a German boy could easily learn French in a few months quite unconsciously while absorbed in other activities. [And] if one can learn with such ease *a language as barbarous and irregular as French, in which spelling does not agree with pronunciation, and which has harsh sounds and accents that hardly fall within the realm of human speech*, then how much more easily should one be able to learn Greek and Latin?<sup>21</sup>

The charge of barbarism was not brought exclusively by foreigners, however, but was an opinion shared by the French themselves. Thus, for example, Pierre-Robert Olivetan, in the preface to his vernacular translation of the Bible, stated that the French language was little more than a barbarous jargon.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, the great humanist, and moving force behind the *Collège de France*, Guillaume Budé came to lament that his compatriots believed themselves to be ' . . . unsuited to

<sup>15</sup>See *ibid.*, pp. 103–104, and Bourcier (1967), who describes the *Amadis de Gaule* as a ' . . . bréviaire, où la Cour de Henri II apprit à penser et à exprimer ses sentiments . . .', (p. 63). See also Tilley (1959), p. 162.

<sup>16</sup>Anonymous (1551), fol. K iii(v).

<sup>17</sup>Montaigne (1976), vol. 1, p. 318, also see de Certeau (1986), p. 75.

<sup>18</sup>See Gadoffre (1997), especially, pp. 13–17. Among the French the Normans were regarded as being particularly savage; see Pagden (1986), pp. 15, 24, 50; with regard to their reputation as warriors see Austin (1977), especially pp. 66–97.

<sup>19</sup>Cited in Brunot (1894).

<sup>20</sup>Castiglione (1959), p. 67. See also Chastel (1989), pp. 19–20, and Denis (1979), p. 110.

<sup>21</sup>Erasmus (1990), p. 86 (my emphasis).

<sup>22</sup>See the preface of Olivetan (1535).

letters, in contrast to the Italians, whose sky and soil enabled even infants to wail with eloquence and poetry'.<sup>23</sup>

Yet despite its sting, or perhaps because of it, the charge of cultural barbarism provoked a strong nationalist reaction among French men of letters, becoming an energizing force in the rise of vernacular consciousness.<sup>24</sup> Thus men such as Tory, Dolet, Lemaire de Belge, Estienne, Budé, and Du Bellay took it upon themselves to reform, standardize and, more generally, to civilize the orthography, grammar, pronunciation, and usage of their mother tongue. Dolet well summed up the tenor of this quest:

. . . take my labor joyously in hand and completely reform our language, for by this means and this beginning we can succeed in making over the French so that foreigners will call us barbarians no longer.<sup>25</sup>

Henri's entry festival was part of this labor. The men who wrote and organized it were, like their better known courtly counterparts, endeavoring to reform and civilize France by persuading the king to embrace the ideals of the New Learning with which they so closely identified. The persuading began as soon as Henri departed from Brazil and approached the old bridge leading over the Seine and into the city.

As the king and his entourage made their way towards the ancient bridge leading across the Seine and into Rouen, a huge rock measuring more than 60 feet wide and 150 feet high blocked their way. Situated within the rock was a grotto with the figure of Orpheus seated deep inside. Orpheus, as the son of Apollo and Calliope, goddess of Rhetoric, was closely associated with the civilizing powers of language. Indeed, not only was he reputedly able to tame wild beasts with the merest touch of his harp, but he was said to have led men out of savagery and into civilization through the sheer force of his eloquence. As Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples said of him: 'by means of lute and song Orpheus tamed the passions of wild beasts, which means that by singing to the accompaniment of his lyre he reduced the savage customs and practices of men to those of temperate humanity'.<sup>26</sup> Yet though Orpheus civilized Man, it was Hercules who was said to have civilized the most distant ancestors of the French, the Celts. Thus, next to Orpheus, there was also an actor (said to resemble the king) portraying Hercules fighting a hydra (Fig. 1).

Hercules was a commonplace emblem of French kingship. Known as the Gallic Hercules, he combined the virtues of both immense physical strength, and

<sup>23</sup>Cited in Kinser (1971), p. 748; Beaune (1548) takes a similar stand, fol. B iii. See also Trapp (1990), especially pp. 8–21. On the attempt to model speech and manners along lines exemplified by the Italians see Bourcier (1967), pp. 268–299. On the cultural competition between France and Italy see Simone (1969), especially pp. 79–104.

<sup>24</sup>See Brown (1985), p. 153.

<sup>25</sup>Dolet (1540), pp. 4–5 (my emphasis). For the expression of similar views see also Du Bellay (1549); Sebillet (1910), p. 16; Du Val (1551), fol. Dv–Dvi; and Tory (1529), p. 3.

<sup>26</sup>See Hughes (1984), p. 5.



Fig. 1. A composite view of Henri's entry, from *Bibliothèque Municipale de Rouen Ms. Y. 28*.

unmatched eloquence.<sup>27</sup> As shown in Barthélemy Aneau's emblem, he was the avatar of humanist eloquence battling the vain sophistries of the scholastic philosophers represented as the hydra.<sup>28</sup> Elsewhere, as for example in Henri's entry into Paris (1549), or in the works of Geoffrey Tory, he is depicted as leading France towards an ideal of humanist civilization through golden chains extending from his tongue to the ears of the four estates.<sup>29</sup>

Orpheus, according to the text of the entry, having tamed the torments of the sea through the music of his harp, made it possible for Henri to continue his journey across the bridge into Rouen.<sup>30</sup> As he traversed the bridge, the king met Neptune, and other, lesser gods of the sea. Neptune presented Henri with a trident, symbolizing dominion over the oceans.<sup>31</sup> As a reaffirmation of this gift, Henri was treated to the naval battle between the French and Portuguese caravels. As the Portuguese vessel sank, the king crossed over to the other side of the ancient bridge and into Rouen.

At the city's entrance a triumphal arch had been built. On its summit stood the figure of Saturn (again, said to look like the king). It was explained to Henri that it was through his support of arts and letters that he would restore the world to a

<sup>27</sup>See Jung (1966) and Bryant (1992).

<sup>28</sup>Aneau (1549), pp. 168–169.

<sup>29</sup>See Saulnier (1956).

<sup>30</sup>Anonymous (1551), fol. L(r).

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, fol. L ii(v).

Golden Age of peace and tranquillity. This message was reinforced by words engraved in gold on the arch:

The Golden Age, which flourished  
 Before the Silver, the Iron and the Copper  
 By the virtues of a king will rise into the world  
 And begin to live again.<sup>32</sup>

The first *tableau* that Henri was to witness upon entering the city was that of Hector. Standing fifteen feet tall, Hector was bleeding profusely from the wounds which he had received at the hands of Achilles. Through some unseen mechanical contrivance Hector's blood was made to shoot up into the sky to form the king's device: a triple crescent. Fortunately for those who watched, this enigmatic display had a written counterpart—a note from Hector to Henri, his descendant:

It pains me not, neither that Troy lay in ruins,  
 Nor Achilles' murderous blow,  
 For I see that my blood is distinguished,  
 By the favor of heaven, to form a triple crescent,  
 Which will fill this round machine.<sup>33</sup>

As the physical embodiment of Lemaire de Belges' genealogy of France, Hector was a potent symbol of French nationalism—his presence serving to undercut Italian claims to cultural superiority on the basis of their Roman ancestry. Indeed, not only was Hector's Troy thought to be chronologically prior to Rome, but its civilization was considered manifestly superior. The Romans, after all, only imitated the greatness of the Greeks and the Trojans, they did not originate it.

The king contemplated this remarkable display for some time before moving on to the convent of Notre Dame des Carmes where he viewed a likeness of himself depicted with a vine growing from his heart to fill the space of the theater with its leaves and fruit.<sup>34</sup> Kneeling on either side and before the simulated king were peoples from many nations who gathered round to receive the sweet liqueur of *amyable confederation et obeissance* dripping from the fruited vine. A clear allusion to the christomimetic qualities of his kingship, this pageant held out the promise that Henri would, as the chronicler said:

convert rude and uncivil enemies to gentleness and humanity, either by force or by reason, and being the terrestrial monarch, will restore the Golden Age of Saturn, and will rise, as the very Christian king, to time everlasting, despite any and all misfortune.<sup>35</sup>

From this remarkable and ingenious display, the king moved on to the final pageant of the entry at the Pont de Robec. There Henri discovered the Elysian Fields of the terrestrial paradise. Planted with trees, shrubs and a variety of herbs,

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, fol. M iii(v).

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, fol. N(r).

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, fol. N ii(r).

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, fol. R iii(r).

it was enclosed by trellises interlaced with vines and fruit. Standing in the middle of this paradise was Henri's father, François I. Beside him was a representation of Good Memory. She held in her hands a book—written in Latin, Hebrew, and Greek—which commended François for his love and support of letters. Behind them stood Egeria, from whose breast came a stream which fed a fountain consecrated to the Muses.

Egeria, according to the chronicler, represented the profit and renown François derived from his support of the Arts. François was here compared to Egeria's husband, Numa Pompilius, King of the Romans, who similarly attained immortality by following Egeria's council and transforming his barbarous people into virtuous men. Written on the placard accompanying this display were words praising both Henri and François for their support of letters:

This is the repose of happy paradise  
Of kings enamored with learning,  
François the first is freed and delivered  
And Henri the second will want to follow him  
Good memory has made this place for them.<sup>36</sup>

Another placard spoke of the benefits which would accrue to a republic when governed by a just king armed with the arts and sciences. A third carried the words which Aeneas used to entreat his companions to carry on with their voyage in the face of tremendous hardships and to have faith that what was divinely ordained would eventually come to pass: that they would reach a place of sweet repose, ease and joy.

Departing from the terrestrial paradise of the Elysian Fields Henri ended his journey by entering the Cathedral of Notre Dame. There his rite of passage was completed as he symbolically changed his clothes, and kneeled in prayer before the image of the Virgin Mary.<sup>37</sup>

#### 4.

Reading the narrative of the king's journey from beginning to end, the savage warriors from Brazil at its starting point can be seen to have consummately represented the ideals of chivalry and military virtuosity championed by France's old nobility. This meaning, however, far from being a stable one, was subverted through the course of the entry, such that by the final *tableau* of the Elysian Fields, one could look back upon the Brazilians as being exemplary of the humanist critique of the old nobility as being uncivilized and barbaric. By contrast, the festival's journey, as exemplified by its *finale*, the Elysian Fields, set out such qualities as

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, fol. O ii(v).

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, fol. O iv(v).

eloquence and learning as the distinguishing features by which true nobility could be identified.<sup>38</sup>

Put somewhat differently, humanist ideals of civilization and of being civilized narrated the king's journey as he made his way from Brazil to the Elysian Fields. Thus the king—and through him, all of France—was led from barbarism to civilization, from the warlike and uncultured savages of Brazil to an ideal of the humanist prince reposing in the terrestrial paradise, and from the ideals of the French feudal nobility to those of its new urban aristocracy of the *robe*. The king's role, as the entry makes clear, was to be the Christ-like avatar of the New Learning. As the chronicler repeatedly explains: the world would be reunited and the Golden Age reborn, through the powers—and the virtue—of a learned and eloquent king.

Yet it must be noted that the entry was not simply a teleological movement from barbarism to civilization, or a simple passing of the baton from the old nobility to the new, for among the manifold meanings associated with the New World were those which undercut this sort of simple linear narrative. Indeed, the New World was subject to a host of other interpretations and understandings, among the most common being its association with the Golden Age, and/or its identification with the virtues of life lived in simple concordance with nature.<sup>39</sup> As such, the naked Brazilians inhabiting the banks of the Seine can be placed in both the tradition of the *charivari* and the literary genre of the Rabelasian farce, as well as resonating closely with the growing number of works which spelled out the inherent depravities associated with public life at court.<sup>40</sup> In each case, however, the Brazilians stood as representatives of natural virtue, of life as it was lived before mankind's Fall from God's grace, and before the disciplined repression of bodily, gestural, and intellectual comportment by which the *noblesse de robe* sought to distinguish itself as being both civilized and noble.

This irony did not escape the observant eye of Michel de Montaigne, who in his famous essay 'Des Cannibales' wrote (of the Brazilians he met in Rouen in 1562) that they were

. . . wild in the same way as we say that fruits are wild, when nature has produced them by herself and in her ordinary way; whereas, in fact, it is those that we have artificially modified, and removed from the common order, that we ought to call wild. In the former, the true, most useful, and natural virtues and properties are alive and vigorous; in the latter we have bastardized them, and adapted them only to the gratification of our corrupt taste.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup>Indeed, it was only through these qualities that the richly coded text of the entry could be deciphered at all. More importantly, however, as scholars such as Norbert Elias, Paolo Rossi, Randolph Starn and Mario Biagioli have pointed out, the hermeneutics of emblematics was closely linked to courtly etiquette, serving to reinforce and establish social differences on the basis of class-specific interpretive skills (Starn, 1989, pp. 226, 230–231; Rossi, 1991, p. 161; and Biagioli, 1993, p. 112).

<sup>39</sup>Regarding the 'discovery' of the New World and its associations with millenarian eschatology, see Bataillon (1959), Phelan (1970), Watt (1985), West (1989), and Flint (1992).

<sup>40</sup>See, for example, Smith (1966), and of course Bakhtin (1984).

<sup>41</sup>Montaigne (1976), vol. 1, p. 306.

From this perspective, the naked savages living on Rouen's Faubourg Saint-Sever were representative of a naturalistic freedom, a Golden Age which had escaped the pernicious effects of so-called civilized life. The *mise-en-scène* of Brazil could thus also be construed as a critique of *robe* culture, serving to relativize and undercut the artifices of courtesy, language, and manners by which urban élites sought to distinguish themselves as a new kind of nobility. In this sense, the shifting identity of the savages might also have challenged the supposed cultural superiority of those who would be noble as but a thin veil disguising their truly barbaric and spiritually deprived natures.

Taking this into account, as a strategy of socio-cultural legitimization on the part of Rouen's *robe* élite, the entry's message was only viable through its linkage to a religious message: the belief that the New Learning was the principal means by which the unmediated purity of God's word on earth could be restored. In this sense, the distinguishing characteristic by which the *noblesse de robe* sought to assert its social mastery was closely bound to the spiritual justifications underpinning the humanist project; that is, the attempt to re-establish—through philological means—the semantic connections to the time before the Fall, and thus to a resurrected Golden Age. Accordingly, the entry cast the king in the prophetic role of the Last World emperor who would triumph at the end of time over foreigners, barbarians and heretics, and lead them all to the terrestrial paradise of Christ's millennial kingdom—a place that some said was to be found in the New World.

## 5.

This New World was not just across the seas, however, but was also brought back to the Old World. This was true not only in the case of Rouen's *mise-en-scène* of Brazil, but for the circulation and display of representative physical objects—for example, war clubs, feathered cloaks, bows and arrows, etc.—in collections of curios throughout Europe. According to Peter Mason 'the special attraction of these objects was based on the principle of contiguity. Because they had been contiguous to a highly charged exotic setting, these objects re-established a tangible contact with a distant reality as parts of a larger whole'.<sup>42</sup> Mason's suggestion, however, also points to another sort of contiguity: that between the cabinet of curiosities and the ritual of the royal entry festival.

From the moment he stepped through the triumphal arch into Rouen's representation of the New World, until the moment he stepped into the nave of the Cathedral of Notre Dame, Henri II was surrounded by a collection which would rival that of any cabinet of curiosities.<sup>43</sup> As a collection of the strange, exotic, and marvelous, wonder cabinets were, as Krzysztof Pomian has argued, a theater of the world, a

<sup>42</sup>Mason (1994), p. 6.

<sup>43</sup>Michel de Certeau makes a similar argument with regard to *The Garden of Delights* by Hieronymus Bosch. See de Certeau (1992), vol. 1, p. 55.

microcosm 'containing specimens of every category of things and helping to render visible the totality of the universe, which otherwise would remain hidden from human eyes'.<sup>44</sup> Henri's entry was entirely consistent with this understanding of the cabinet's function. The Brazilian *mise-en-scène* was but one exhibit among the many that were displayed in the encyclopedic spectacle presented to him over the course of his triumph. A brief list will suffice to demonstrate the range of the collection assembled. It included junipers, boxwood, and trees from Brazil; grottoes encrusted with stones and minerals (both clear and of many colors); triumphal arches, Brazilian lodges, theaters, and gardens; monkeys, parakeets, elephants, hippopotami, unicorns, whales, and porpoises, as well as seven kinds of fish (*Aurades, Albachores, Thuns, Esturgeons, Haulsmoriens, Marsouyns, and Espardins*); and not only were there Brazilians, but there were also Turks, and Roman gladiators, gods, tritons and muses. As this strange congerie of natural and artificial, real and mythical, everyday and marvelously strange attests, the royal entry festival organized for Henri II in Rouen bore more than a passing resemblance to the early modern phenomena of the wonder cabinet.

Moreover, the entry aimed—precisely as would a wonder cabinet—to spread out and unfold the entire universe before the king's eyes. In a cabinet, as in an entry, vision was tantamount to an act of possession.<sup>45</sup> This was especially the case with regard to a king, whose prerogative was to possess all that he surveyed.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, it was through such acts of possession that he could extend his rule throughout the world. That the objects collected in early cabinets were frequently compared to relics is not surprising, indeed their mediating capacity to palpably present the world in its entirety firmly places them within the category of objects which Pomian has labeled the semiophore; that is, objects capable of mediating between the near and the far, the visible and the invisible, the material and the spiritual. Thus it was that through a cabinet's collection a king could mark not simply the geographical boundaries of his realm, but the entire expanse of the world, as his territory. In this sense, the cabinet stood at the intersection between a prince's desire for universal domination, and his presence as an embodied act of vision whose very seeing animated the capacity of a cabinet's collected objects to make present the universe in its totality. It was through such acts of ocular possession that the French monarch was told, in no uncertain terms, that he would bring unity to the world, and deliver mankind from the bloody Age of Iron into a new Age of Gold.

The belief that a terrestrial monarch would be born who would lead the peoples of earth out of darkness and into a new Golden Age was a relatively common one in the sixteenth century.<sup>47</sup> And, indeed, there was an almost desperate urgency

<sup>44</sup>Pomian (1990), p. 69. On early modern collecting see also Findlen (1994), Tribby (1992), and Olmi (1985).

<sup>45</sup>See Lestringant (1981), p. 207.

<sup>46</sup>See Olmi (1985), p. 5.

<sup>47</sup>Beaune (1985), Bouwsma (1957), Lecoq's superb study (Lecoq, 1987), Strayer (1969), and Yates (1975), especially pp. 121–126.

animating such a faith. At the time of Henri's entry, France was beset by constant war, intractable and violent religious controversy, innumerable plagues and famines, as well as unprecedented social mobility. In this situation, the discovery of the New World and its naked and barbarous peoples was taken as a clear portent that the world was moving inexorably toward a predetermined and cataclysmic end. This consciousness gave impetus to a search for solutions which could restore the world to its original and uncorrupted state of harmony—to the terrestrial paradise, the Elysian Fields, the Golden Age. It was, I believe, this quest for lost unity, conjoined with the appearance of the *noblesse de robe* and its longing for the stability of legitimate social position, which animated both the writing and enactment of Henri II's entry into Rouen, and the assembling of curiosity cabinets.

The wonder cabinet was a response to the apparent disorder of the world; through it the collector sought not only to win prestige, but to piece the variegated and multifarious mosaic of existence into a coherent—microcosmic—whole.<sup>48</sup> A collection, in this sense, was the first step in the attempt to decipher and interpret the secret narrative of nature whose key had been lost with the expulsion of Man from paradise. By carefully seeking out and establishing likeness, similitude, analogy, and correspondence, it was thought that man could once again rediscover the prelapsarian language of Adam and triumph over darkness, disorder and faction to re-establish the clarity of unmediated truth, secure order, and absolute identity.<sup>49</sup> It was thus not only the presence of kings which ritually activated the power of collections to stand for the world in its totality, but a special kind of knowledge—a sacred hermeneutics of resemblance by which the collector could discover and expose the unity underlying the appearance of diversity and difference. It was by this means that the limitless horizons of the world could be pulled back into the more restrictive and comforting circle of similitude in which identity was conceived less in terms of difference than in terms of kinship, attraction, and correspondence.<sup>50</sup>

Yet it is important to note that though the Renaissance hermeneutician was working in an intellectual horizon bounded by the figures of resemblance and similitude, his own status—his very place in the world—depended on his ability to distinguish himself in an ordered social hierarchy on the basis of his unique cultural capacities and skills: that is, as one capable of deciphering the hidden signatures of resemblance. Seen from this perspective, the hermeneutics of resemblance was also a strategy of social distinction and differentiation within a semiotics of status, class and power.<sup>51</sup> In this sense, there was a simultaneous and, indeed, parasitic relation

<sup>48</sup>See Rossi (1991), especially pp. 162–164; on pansophism see Evans (1997).

<sup>49</sup>On the Renaissance notion of resemblance see Foucault (1966), especially chapter 2, 'The Prose of the World', and also Hodgen (1964), pp. 391–394.

<sup>50</sup>See Foucault (1966), p. 40.

<sup>51</sup>See, for example, Bourdieu (1984, 1985, 1989) regarding status distinction based upon specific cultural and intellectual dispositions and practices. With specific regard to natural philosophy, see Daston (1995), p. 402.

between strategies of social and cultural distinction based on the delimitation of order, difference and identity, and the articulation and elaboration of seemingly opposing intellectual systems based on resemblance, analogy and similitude. Thus, contrary to the view that identity was only seen in symbolic, allegorical, and emblematic terms during the sixteenth century, in this particular case—that is, in the case of social identity—it was divided up, categorized and (as we shall see) displayed in ordered hierarchies of carefully delineated difference.<sup>52</sup>

In Henri II's entry it was through the mediation of a reformed and perfected language as spoken by a learned and eloquent king that the unity of the world would be restored. As the Imperial ambassador put it, Henri's entry praised François I 'for having restored letters and saved [Rouen] from barbarism', while encouraging Henri to follow in his footsteps.<sup>53</sup> And who better to help him along the way than the local élites responsible for writing, organizing and producing his entry. The entry's linkage of the Golden Age to the New Learning was thus clearly made with reference to humanist interests in linguistic propriety and the formal rules and protocols which governed it. Such rules and protocols, as articulated in books of grammar, rhetoric, and courtesy, were perceived to be the means by which the increasingly turbulent social world of the sixteenth century could be successfully navigated, and by which the distinction of legitimate social status could be achieved and maintained. In this sense, one can see that books of rhetoric, grammar and courtesy were based upon principles closely intertwined with those operating in both wonder cabinets and in Henri's entry. This is nowhere better exemplified than in the grammar written by the Rouennais priest Pierre Fabri, *Le Grand et vrai art de pleine rhétorique*.

## 6.

There were six editions of Fabri's book between 1521 and 1544. Its stated purpose was to educate the members of a local Rouennais poetry society dedicated to the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary, the *Puy de palinod*.<sup>54</sup> In addition to laying out the proper rules for the writing of *palinodic* verse, it was also a catalogue of the figures, ornaments and colors of eloquent speech.<sup>55</sup> For Fabri and his contemporaries, such linguistic embellishments were not merely formal rhetori-

<sup>52</sup>Foucault (1966), pp. 52–57. Accordingly, the social field within which these processes took place sketched out both the frontier demarcating the Renaissance and Classical *epistemes*, and the conditions of possibility for movement between them—mainly, what Foucault has called the 'sciences of order': general grammar, natural history and the analysis of wealth. See also comments by Schiffman (1991, pp. 142–143, note 10).

<sup>53</sup>Calendar of State Papers (Spanish), 1550–1552, X, 182, cited in Mullaney (1988), pp. 71 and 90, n. 14.

<sup>54</sup>Six of the nine men named as organizers of Henri II's entry were participants in this poetry society, while of the remaining three, two were closely connected to it through members of their immediate family. See Wintroub (1995), chapter 4.

<sup>55</sup>Fabri (1534), for example, vol. 2, p. 2.

cal conventions, but were the very foundations of truth, honor and respectability.<sup>56</sup> As Fabri points out, for the orator, ‘the force of eloquence isn’t only about leading listeners to believe a thing is as it is, . . . but rather to lead listeners to believe that he himself is true’.<sup>57</sup>

It is a commonplace of current scholarship that collecting in the early modern period was a means of attaining social status and authority. It is important to note in this regard that collections were not simply casual conglomerations of discrete elements,<sup>58</sup> but were constituted both in and by specific social and cultural narratives. Following from this, what I want to suggest is that in books of grammar and rhetoric this narrative was contiguous with a social field in which status and legitimacy were established with reference to specific cultural capacities, dispositions and skills.<sup>59</sup> In books like Fabri’s, words and texts were collected, ordered, and displayed on the printed page as markers of social, cultural, and spiritual distinction—as perhaps demonstrated by their deployment in the religious verse performed at the *Puy de palinod*’s annual poetry competitions.<sup>60</sup> Literary excellence, eloquence, and oratorical flair were accordingly set out by Fabri—and his fellow poets at the *Puy*—as the basis for claims to social status and spiritual authority. It is thus perhaps not a coincidence that of the six *échevins* (aldermen) leading Rouen’s city council in 1550 (and therefore responsible for overseeing the production of Henri’s entry), five were also poets at the *Puy*.

As with Fabri’s grammar, Henri’s royal entry into Rouen also tells a tale of social differentiation and distinction. Indeed, the entry aimed at setting out a version of social and political order which conformed closely to the interests of its *robe* organizers. This was clearly demonstrated in the opening moments of the entry, when Henri was presented with a thorough going taxonomy of the city’s inhabitants in the form of a ceremonial procession. As he sat on his elevated throne, representatives of all Rouen’s inhabitants paraded through his field of vision, and then on into ‘Brazil’, where Henri was to join them moments later. Processions, of course, were part of every royal entry festival, in Rouen and elsewhere, but few before, at least in France, had ever been so elaborate, so carefully choreographed, or so detailed by ordering of rank, occupation and social status. This singular precision, as Philip Benedict has rightly pointed out, provides a marvelous window into the city’s complex social structure;<sup>61</sup> yet seen from a slightly different perspective, it

<sup>56</sup>Similarly, the act of showing, of display, as a means of status distinction, implies a parallel transformation in ways of seeing; the theater of correct manners, dress and speech demands not only that the actor be seen by an audience, but that he too observes—measures, dissects and evaluates—the manners and motives of those around him.

<sup>57</sup>Fabri (1534), vol. 1, p. 21.

<sup>58</sup>See, for example, Stewart (1984), p. 153.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup>The *Puy*’s competitions were among the most important events on Rouen’s ritual calendar. On the *Puy de palinod*, see Beaurepaire (1907) and Gros (1994). On the decontextualization of language and its epistemic significance see Ong (1967), pp. 17–92; Goody (1977), pp. 37–73; Slaughter (1982), pp. 38–48; Latour (1986), pp. 1–40; Schiffman (1991), pp. 1–24; and Blair (1997), pp. 65–82.

<sup>61</sup>See the prologue of Benedict (1981).

also points to the heightened and almost desperate compulsion of the city's civic leaders to establish a precise order by which to organize and display its populace.

At the end of the fifteenth century Raymond de Sebonde wrote that it was necessary to recognize the diversity of worldly estates and to reduce them all to an appropriate order; as he put it: 'there is a perpetual diversity of estates between us, first there are laborers, who are the lowest [*le plus vil*], after them come the merchants and the bourgeoisie, then the nobles . . . , and then the king . . .'.<sup>62</sup> By the mid-sixteenth century, however, the estates mentioned by Sebonde had become highly differentiated and vastly more complex. According to Jonathan Dewald, social categories in Normandy 'were becoming more sharply defined in the later sixteenth century, and rankings of more and less honorable positions were assuming new precision'.<sup>63</sup> In the 1550s this new precision was already becoming evident. Thus in Henri's entry social rank was represented both by order of appearance, and by the elaborate costumes that each group was assigned. For example, the chronicler of the entry describes the twenty-four Grain Measurers as riding

on horseback wearing long coats of gray taffetas, with doublets of violet satin, caps of black velour decorated with white feathers, britches of violet velour and gray taffetas, with silver buckled white boots, and belts and scabbards of violet velour . . . each carried a short standard which was sown with gold *fleurs de lys* on fields of azure.

And then, the *courtiers de vin*, who were

dressed in large-cut gowns of black damask, with doublets of white satin, bonnets of black velour decorated with white feathers, wearing white Moroccan boots, and a belt and scabbard of white velour . . . with long coats of black velour . . .<sup>64</sup>

Such minute descriptions follow the order of the procession in tedious detail, recounting not simply the order and dress of the municipal and royal officials, the clergy and visiting dignitaries, but Rouen's tradesmen as well:

40 master weavers, 5 bit-and-spur makers, 8 skimmers, 25 innkeepers, 4 dyers, 2 furrers, 2 nail-makers, 6 saddlers, 14 tailors, 4 pen-makers, 12 chandlers, 4 inkwell-makers, 15 shoemakers, 8 comb-makers, 2 hook-makers, 10 joiners, 10 bakers, 2 balance-makers, 6 sheath- and wallet-makers, 15 cordwainers, 10 hatters, and 1 oar-maker, 30 cloth retailers, 6 silk weavers, 20 goldsmiths, 12 dyers, 6 linen dyers, 12 coopers, 3 makers of trunks, 8 pastry chefs . . .<sup>65</sup>

(See Fig. 2.)

Clearly, the effort expended in establishing the correct order and social place of Rouen's citizens at its beginning resonated closely with the overall narrative structuring the entry as a whole. Taking this into account, it might be possible to see that the collection, classification and display of Rouen's social world was consistent

<sup>62</sup>Quoted in Hodgen (1964), pp. 399–400.

<sup>63</sup>Dewald (1980), pp. 100–101.

<sup>64</sup>Anonymous (1551), fol. B iii(v)–B iv(r).

<sup>65</sup>B.M.R., A 16, *Délibérations*, fol. 110; Benedict (1981), pp. 3–7.



Fig. 2. *Procession of the city of Rouen*. From B.M.R. Ms. Y. 28.

with a range of practices associated with the ordering, classification and display of language as found in books of grammar, rhetoric and courtesy—for both were recounting a similar tale of social distinction and the means by which it could be achieved and identified. As Fabri said, ‘all language . . . is composed of words or terms put in order, which [thus] assembled composes a proposition, [with] . . . several propositions, orderly disposed, making an oration’.<sup>66</sup> Taken in this sense, Rouen’s citizenry—well ordered, arranged and disposed—formed a kind of social narrative which foreshadowed that which would structure the king’s journey from the barbarity of Brazil to an ideal of civilization based upon eloquence, learning and piety as represented by François I in the *tableau vivant* of the Elysian Fields. As such, this narrative converged not only with the ritual self-representation of the civic élite responsible for the entry, but with such texts as Fabri’s *Grand et vrai art de pleine rhétorique*, Sebillet’s *Art poétique francoys*, Tory’s *Champ fleury*, and Du Bellay’s *La Deffence et illustration de la langue francoyse*, etc., which sought to civilize the French language by collecting, ordering and classifying it. Such classificatory acts, I would argue, underwrote and paralleled the performative deployment of—‘civilized’—linguistic *fashion* as the means by which social distance could be legitimately asserted, maintained and recognized.<sup>67</sup> However, I think

<sup>66</sup>Fabri (1534), p. 17.

<sup>67</sup>There is a clear relationship between linguistic fashionability and other outward markers of social distinction. On the importance of clothing in this regard see Hughes (1992) and Jouanna (1977), pp. 89 and 93. Regarding speech and social performativity see Bakhtin (1981) and Bakhtin (1986), especially pp. 132–172. See also, for example, Henri Estienne’s biting satire of courtly affectations (Estienne, 1578, pp. 43–61 and 231–232).

we can push this analysis even further, for the discursive practices which made possible both the processional order of Rouen's inhabitants during the entry, and the distancing of language as an object to be collected in grammars and deployed in civil conversation, also embraced efforts to collect the natural world in cabinets of curiosity and in books of natural history, as for example, those by Belon, Belleforest, Rondelet and Thevet.<sup>68</sup>

## 7.

Nature was, of course, the language of God and all the earth's inhabitants—its fish, birds, animals and plants—formed the alphabet in which it was written.<sup>69</sup> It was through the contemplative reading of these visible signs that one could gain access to the hidden order underlying the apparent incoherence of everyday experience. The collection of these visible things (their names, their characteristics, their place and order in the world)—whether in manuscripts or cabinets, in gardens or menageries—was the first step in the effort to decipher the mystical language of God in terms of its intelligible signatures. The study of natural history, in this sense, was not distinct from humanist attempts to reform and civilize language, for both were considered in essentially philological terms: that is, how to correct for the impurities and barbarisms which had infiltrated and corrupted postlapsarian language. The solution, whether with regard to the study of language or of nature, was to create order from the vicissitudes of human experience by discovering the hidden marks of correspondence, analogy and similitude which could establish the unicity of words and the world.<sup>70</sup> One way to accomplish this was to begin the long and painstaking processes of collecting, setting out, and ordering the language of nature (natural history), and the nature of language (general grammar). In both cases, the restoration of divine knowledge was to be accomplished through similar efforts of 'decontextualization'—that is, through the distancing of words and beasts as objects to be collected, classified and ordered on the printed page. One such collection was to be found in Pierre Belon's *L'Histoire de la nature des oyseaux*, written in 1555.

In the sixteenth century, the cultural milieu within which the practice of natural history took shape was not distinct from that which defined the stylistic boundaries for the writing of poetry and court fêtes. This is amply demonstrated by the case of Pierre Belon, who was associated not only with the literary theorist, poet and

<sup>68</sup>This is also suggested by Schiffman (1991), p. 10, Jouanna (1977), p. 108, and by Hodgen (1964), pp. 124–125, who notes that a 'linkage appears to have existed . . . between the study of flora and fauna and the study of language or folklore.' She cites the example of Conrad Gesner, who wrote the most widely read of all natural histories in the early modern period (Ashworth, 1996, p. 17), and who was also a linguist and author of a *Universal Dictionary* (1545).

<sup>69</sup>Ashworth (1990), p. 309.

<sup>70</sup>See Glardon's introduction to Belon (1997), pp. xxx–xxxv. See also Michel de Certeau (1986), p. 87 and, Céard (1975), p. 136.

mathematician Jacques Peletier du Mans, but also with Dorat, Ronsard, and Amyot—all men dedicated to the reform and ‘civilization’ of the French language.<sup>71</sup> This ‘civilizing process’ was not simply a meta-social process of grammatical standardization any more than it was simply a social strategy of class identity formation (though it was, no doubt, both of these things), for it was inspired by a profoundly felt spiritual motivation: that through the civilization of language one could recreate the semantic connections to the time before the Fall when the language of Man was a direct translation of ‘the prose of the world’. According to this view the relation between language and nature was a symmetrical one, and as such—at least in principle—reversible; that is, a relation in which nature itself could be seen as a discursive field to be organized according to arts and methods of rhetoric, poetry and oratory. Following from this, it would perhaps not be too presumptions to suggest that Pierre Belon’s system for arranging his subject matter could also be understood, after the rhetorics of his day, in terms of the organizing figures of *inventio*, *dispositio* and *elocutio*.<sup>72</sup>

*Inventio*, as it was understood by Belon and his contemporaries, did not mean—as it does today—to create *ex nihilo*, but rather implied the gathering up and collecting of materials already pre-existing in nature.<sup>73</sup> Nature was the *fond* (the fund) of *inventio*, said Belon’s compatriot, Jacques Peletier; while art, he continued, was the *forme* according to which it was to be arranged.<sup>74</sup> *Dispositio*, he argued, was this art, and it consisted in ordering and giving proper rank to the matter that was to be collected. Yet there was a real danger in this method; for the very copiousness of this matter could lead to an unbridgeable disjunction between the natural world

<sup>71</sup>See Chamard (1939), tome I, p. 127, Belon (1555), p. 222, and Naïs (1961), p. 148.

<sup>72</sup>William Ashworth has argued that Belon’s more narrowly conceived and stripped down natural history ‘had lost too much of its richness and meaning’ to be of much interest to his contemporaries. ‘One can see’, he says, ‘why Belon and Rondelet have emerged as heroes to modern zoologists, for their narrow approach to natural history is much more akin to ours than the grand vision of Gesner.’ See Ashworth (1990), p. 312, and Ashworth (1996), p. 30. Compare this, however, with Belon’s observations whilst traveling along the shores of the Red Sea: there, he says, he found a huge round stone, ‘large like a silver coin [*teston*] that we thought to be a medal . . . upon which was written naturally some Hebrew letters’ (see Belon, 1997, p. xxxi, from Belon, 1555, II, 69, fol. 233 v). Belon’s comments suggest the importance that signatures of correspondence, similitude, and analogy had for his natural history. Moreover, far from being ignored by his peers, he was cited favorably—and used—not only by Gesner, but by the poets of the Pléiade, amongst others. See Naïs (1961), pp. 137–139, 140, 154. Nor perhaps is it a coincidence that several of Belon’s works were published by Guillaume Corrozet (author of a number of well known emblem books), or that others were published by G. Cavellat, publisher of the 1574 translation of Alciati’s emblems into French, nor that his natural history of birds was turned by Cavellat into an emblem book, as demonstrated perhaps by the *quatrain* accompanying an illustration of the Swan:

*Beauté, bonté, force et cœur sont au Cygne  
Qui es estangs et rivieres demeure,  
Et doucement chante, avant qu’il se meure,  
Qui est pour l’homme enseignement insigne.*

See Belon (1557), fol. 30(r), cited in Naïs (1961), p. 158.

<sup>73</sup>See Griffin (1969), pp. 8–9.

<sup>74</sup>Castor (1964), p. 46.

and man's capacity to coherently systematize it.<sup>75</sup> On the other hand, however, nature's bewildering copiousness also had certain positive connotations, for it was a clear and tangible sign of God's infinite creative power. Deployed appropriately, the copiousness of nature could thus also be an apposite model for the demonstration of social mastery in discourse.<sup>76</sup> Hence the importance of *elocutio*—the imperative to effectively communicate the matter present in nature.<sup>77</sup> For Belon, effective communication consisted in marvelously produced and illustrated books dedicated to powerful patrons. Such books, however, functioned only insofar as they were able to effectively orchestrate the attention, imagination and memory of important readers. In this regard, Belon's natural history, following the strictures of *elocutio*, was only able to persuade and convince through an articulation of natural order which appealed to the self-understandings and everyday practices of his readers.<sup>78</sup> In the first instance this consisted in mapping his version of the order of the natural world onto the social order as it was perceived by the élites of his day; in the second, it consisted in tying his natural history to the values and ideals with which both nobles and humanists most closely identified—in the case of the former, hunting, and in the case of the latter, obscure and erudite knowledge in recognizing and reading the ineffable signs of Nature and of God.

Belon begins his *L'Histoire de la nature des oyseaux* by arguing that he is going to distinguish each bird according to its differences, and to 'distribute each according to its rank'. Order, says Belon, is understood when 'things, whether artificial or natural, ascend or descend each according to their degree'.<sup>79</sup> This order, however, was not simply an intellectual imposition, but was written into the very structure of the natural and human worlds. 'Is it not true', Belon asks '. . . that the earth, the sky and all the firmament are duly ordered according to the roles each is to play?' His answer is an unequivocal yes, for, as he puts it, '. . . if it were otherwise, everything would fall into confusion'.<sup>80</sup> Belon thus finds the template for his ranking of birds in the well established and recognized order of the human world; consequently each bird was placed in an order according to its relative status, from the highest to the lowest, from the most noble to the least: 'these are the most grand, others less so, and still others even less. But all of them are distinguished by proper names, which distinguish these here as being the most noble and these others as base-born (*bastardes*).'<sup>81</sup> Belon's system, however, did not aim at a simple vertical correspondence between human and aviary worlds, for his hierarchy also demarcated filiations of sympathy between humans and birds along

<sup>75</sup>Blair (1997), p. 30.

<sup>76</sup>Thus it was a commonplace injunction of books of grammar, rhetoric and courtesy that one's speech ought to appropriately mirror the copious plenitude of nature. See Cave (1979), especially pp. 1–34.

<sup>77</sup>For example, Schiffman (1991), p. 15.

<sup>78</sup>On the importance of this see Bloch (1987).

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>80</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>81</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 87.

the horizontal axis of class. Thus Belon used falconry manuals, such as that by Jean de Franchieres, to tune his natural history to the qualities and tastes of his noble—or would-be noble—readers.

According to Franchieres: ‘kings, princes, grand seigneurs and other noble and well-born spirits, will never find a pastime more virtuous or more dignified of their grandeur [than falconry]’.<sup>82</sup> Belon closely follows Franchieres’ lead in interweaving his natural history with elite interest in falconry, citing the example of the late king, ‘François, father and supporter (*nourrisier*) of letters’, as someone practiced in the arts of Falconry and as the owner of a number of well known and noble birds.<sup>83</sup> As Belon said, falconry

is now considered such a noble science, that grand seigneurs dedicate themselves to it and reserve it as their principle pastime, such that the French nobility would judge that if a gentleman were ignorant of this science he would be less [than noble]; indeed, after arms, there is nothing considered higher or more magnanimous . . .<sup>84</sup>

Though Belon disparaged the lack of erudition displayed in manuals of falconry,<sup>85</sup> he borrowed extensively from them,<sup>86</sup> copying whole passages verbatim, including descriptive strategies which aimed to duplicate the anthropomorphic correspondence between aviary and human social hierarchies. Thus, in a word-for-word lifting of Franchieres’ text, Belon describes the Pelerin as if it were itself a noble; that is, as ‘naturally valiant, hardy and of good [disposition], being most courteous [*courtois*] to his [human] master.’<sup>87</sup> However Belon doesn’t just insert these lifted descriptions into his natural history, but he adds to them according to the prescriptions of rhetorical dilation and embellishment. His stated aim is not simply to put together an encyclopedic collection of paper birds, but to provide ‘examples sufficient to induce and move men towards virtue, and to give them knowledge of many subtleties of which the human spirit would do well to be advised’.<sup>88</sup> In this sense, again following Franchieres’ lead, he plays on elite sensibilities to legitimate natural history, making knowledge of birds and discourse about them an important accessory to the hunt; as Franchieres puts this, he has ‘declared the diversity of Falcons and other birds of arm and wrist, and described their nature, briefly and summarily, so that gentlemen who take pleasure in Falconry can themselves practice and learn the nature and complexion of each bird . . .’.<sup>89</sup> Accordingly, nature was not simply something to be hunted and eaten, but was, in effect, the material substratum of elite discourse—that is, it was the stuff

<sup>82</sup>Franchieres, in Gentil-homme P. (1585), fol. ii(v).

<sup>83</sup>For example, Belon, 1997, pp. 83 and 100.

<sup>84</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 89 and 105.

<sup>86</sup>As he himself admits, see *ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>87</sup>Compare Gentil-homme P. (1585), fol. A ii(r) and Belon (1997), p. 116.

<sup>88</sup>Belon (1997), p. 10.

<sup>89</sup>Gentil-homme P. (1585), fol. C ii(v).

(*inventio*) from which civilized and noble men were to construct well ordered (*dispositio*) and appropriate (*elocutio*) civil conversation.

The manner in which nature and art were to interact in the composition and deployment of civil discourse is amply demonstrated by Belon in his *L'Histoire de la nature des oyseaux*. Thus, to the relatively straightforward descriptions of Franchieres, Belon adds details culled from ancient texts, and then embellishes upon them—an exercise well known in rhetorical handbooks as *amplificatio* (the act of expanding upon and elaborating a discourse through the creative appropriation—*imitatio*—of ancient texts).<sup>90</sup> Accordingly, in his description of the ‘Royal Eagle’, otherwise known as the ‘king of birds’ or the ‘eagle of Jupiter’, Belon copies Franchieres’ text word-for-word, and then goes on to discuss—at length—the merits of Aristotle’s description of the same bird, and then (using Herodotus and Dio Cassius), proceeds to discuss this bird’s role in ancient royal funeral ceremonial, where it was said to have transported the deceased emperor’s soul from earth to the heavens.<sup>91</sup>

Seen from a wide-angled view, Belon’s natural history, like Henri II’s entry festival, was an attempt to mediate between two contrasting notions of élite identity—one based on the self-image of the old warrior nobility (and such archetypal pursuits as hunting and falconry), and the other on specific intellectual attributes and skills in recognizing, reading and talking about the natural and human worlds. It would be mistaken, however, to think that the latter simply and definitively won out over the former; rather, it was only through the linkage of new values to old that France’s cultural nobility was able to renegotiate the basis of élite identity. Indeed, books of grammar, rhetoric, courtesy, and natural history (like entry festivals) were neither simply reflexive acts of self-definition or prescriptive acts of a new hegemonic culture, but appeals to patrons who had the authority and the power to sustain and legitimize bids for social status mobility. It is thus surely not a coincidence that the very first dictionary of the French language, said to be written by Jean Nicot, was in fact a revised and supplemented version of a manuscript composed by Belon’s contemporary, Aimar de Ranconnet (1485–1559), for the purpose of setting out the proper words for hunting, fishing and falconry.<sup>92</sup>

## 8.

Whether we are speaking about the social world of language, citizens, or of nature, collectors, like the organizers of Henri II’s entry, were endeavoring to display the unity of the world by showing how it seamlessly fit together into a complex and all-embracing ordered system, while at the same time being motivated by the

<sup>90</sup>See Cave (1979), pp. 35–77.

<sup>91</sup>See Gentil-homme P. (1585), fol. C ii(r) and Belon (1997), pp. 93–94.

<sup>92</sup>Nicot (1606); see D. Douceur’s preface regarding the origins of Nicot’s dictionary. On the importance of the trope of the hunt, see Eamon (1994), pp. 269–300.

seemingly contradictory impulse to establish and solidify social distinctions through their very acts of system-making. In this sense, the elaboration of a taxonomy of social and cultural distinction can be seen to have been intimately related to the articulation of epistemological strategies underwriting (as a possibility) the disciplines and practices associated with collecting, classification and taxonomy as they developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Following this line of reasoning, it might be possible to locate the transition from the Renaissance to the Classical *episteme* within this disjuncture between epistemic and social strategies. Over the course of the sixteenth century social mobility, as a vendable skill learnable through books and enacted in gesture, speech, clothing, etc., became increasingly problematic.<sup>93</sup> A widening gap thus came to separate the ‘tropes’ of social status from the accreditation of authority.<sup>94</sup> In this context, courtly emblematics, the flowers of rhetoric, the ostentations of ancient learning, all seemed to point away from authenticity and towards the *parvenu*.<sup>95</sup> Insofar as this was the case, we might conjecture that an open disdain for luxurious acts of self-advertisement generated momentum (clearly discernible in anti-court tracts in the last third of the sixteenth century) towards naked—more humble—ways of speaking and acting (that is, *sprezzatura*); this would help to explain, at least in part, the transition towards the putatively anti-emblematic—stripped down—natural history of the ‘Classical Age’.<sup>96</sup>

## 9.

George Canguilhem has suggested that the early modern articulation of a systematized vernacular grammar was the seed crystal of normalization which spread

<sup>93</sup>See Jouanna (1977), pp. 133–134.

<sup>94</sup>This is made wonderfully explicit in Montaigne’s essay ‘Des Cannibales’, where he credits the words of a ‘plain and simple man’ and the common sense of naked Brazilians before that of his more learned peers.

<sup>95</sup>One of the first expressions of this tendency was to be found in the poetic arts; thus we see a movement from the laboured technical virtuosity of the *rhétoriquer* school (to which Rouen’s poets belonged) to a notion of poetry as a divine gift which could not be learned. See Céard (1996), p. 196. As Du Bellay (1549, pp. 108–109) put this: ‘. . . leave all these old French poesies . . . to the *Puy* of Rouen: the rondeaux, ballades, virelays, chants royaux, songs, and other such spices which corrupt the taste of our tongue, and serve for nothing beyond bearing witness to our ignorance.’

<sup>96</sup>On the rhetoric of anti-rhetoric see Wintroub (1997). Ashworth suggests that this apparent rupture might be explained by the discovery of the New World, on the one hand, and antiquarianism on the other. Ashworth argues that, insofar as New World animals were without the emblematic associations attached to Old World animals, natural historians had little choice but to abandon the usual armature of emblematics and to present them as discrete zoological entities. This view, however, is difficult to reconcile with recent scholarship on the reception of the ‘New World’ by the ‘Old’; for rather than being seen as ‘New’, as numerous authors have shown, this world was seen through—and mediated by—a complicated network of texts, emblems, myths, theories and commonplaces. Anthony Pagden summarizes this well when he suggests that ‘. . . observers in America, like observers of anything culturally unfamiliar for which there exist few readily available antecedents, had to be able to classify before they could properly see; and in order to classify in any meaningful sense they had no alternative but to appeal to a system which was already in use.’ See Pagden (1986), p. 2; see also Elliot (1970), Grafton *et al.* (1992), and MacCormack (1991, 1995). That the sources of this transformation might be found in antiquarian practice seems to be a promising insight; as of yet, much work remains to be done in this regard.

into virtually every domain of human existence.<sup>97</sup> As I have tried to show, such systemic processes of normalization derived much of their animus from processes of inter-class competition and identity formation; that is, from attempts to articulate and stabilize elite identity through the establishment of distinguishing norms and values. In the first instance, the ability to span the gulf between the sign and signified of elite status was built from the human material of embodied performance (speech, comportment, manners, etc.). Yet the power of these norms to persuade and convince did not derive simply from the referential link to the authority of the élites who embodied them, but from a prior claim: that they were linked to the invisible world of God and of nature. Accordingly, the capacity of these affected attributes to translate into the presence of recognized authority was itself an effect of attempts to ascribe a ritual equivalence between the natural and social worlds. And indeed, efforts to articulate social, natural and cultural distinctions cannot be isolated from the spiritual concerns which animated them. Thus, though the “civilization” of language was a means of establishing social mastery, it was also the means by which the confusions of Babel would be overcome and the Golden Age restored. In this sense, the passion to collect, whether in books of rhetoric or natural history, cabinets or court *fêtes*, was not simply a *prise-de-position* of an ascendant class, but was an act of faith performed with the knowledge that the Last Days were immanent.

## 10.

Lucien Febvre has pointedly reminded us that the sixteenth century was a century of believers.<sup>98</sup> Indeed, the beliefs that were held were infused with a kind of desperate urgency by repeated wars, famines, plagues, the confusions of unprecedented social mobility, and the tempests of religious controversy. The apocalypse, in this context, was not an abstract idea; it was an inescapable and omnipresent reality.<sup>99</sup> The New World and its peoples played an integral part in this eschatology.

For Amerigo Vespucci, the inhabitants of the New World were without faith, law, or religion.<sup>100</sup> Most sixteenth-century commentators agreed with this assessment.<sup>101</sup> According to Villegagnon, they ‘were a savage people, remote from all courtesy and humanity . . . without religion, [or] . . . knowledge of honesty or

<sup>97</sup>Canguilhem (1989), p. 244.

<sup>98</sup>Febvre (1982).

<sup>99</sup>Columbus, for instance, was a prodigious collector of prophetic literature, believing that his voyage was divinely inspired, and that his finding of the New World was a providential sign that the dawn of the Last Age had come. See Columbus (1991), p. 71; cited in Kadir (1992), p. 221. Also, in addition to those works cited in note 53 above, see Reeves (1984), p. 41. As Reeves puts this, ‘the Middle Ages lived in the consciousness of being in the end of time’. I would add that much the same point can be made with regard to sixteenth-century France. Regarding apocalyptic thought, and its ‘omnipresence in the system of representation of the first part of the sixteenth century’, see Crouzet (1990), vol. 1, pp. 182 ff.

<sup>100</sup>Vespucci (1992).

<sup>101</sup>See for example, Hodgen (1964), pp. 199–201.

virtue . . .'.<sup>102</sup> While for André Thevet they were people marvelously strange and savage: without faith, law, religion, or any civility whatsoever; they lived, he said, 'as if unreasoning beasts'.<sup>103</sup> A strange balance of 'without's characterized them—they were without kings, but they were also without masters; they were without clothes, but they were also without the artifices of fashionability; they were without laws and, indeed, without writing, but they were also without those affectations which could cloud a more immediate apprehension of truth. Somewhere between beasts and angels, they were less than human and at the same time almost divine. At once the innocent and favored children of God living in Edenic repose, they were also devil-worshipping and lascivious cannibals. But whether they were perceived to live in the terrestrial paradise or in the vestibule of hell, whether demonized or idealized, they constituted a portent and a sign: the end of the world was fast approaching, the Last Days had arrived, and a new and Golden Age of peace and tranquillity would soon appear. However, before this happened, or, indeed, could happen, there was an almost desperate effort to set things right, to make an order, to line up, and take one's appropriate place in the scheme of things.

It was between the spectral light emanating from the newly discovered paradise across the seas, and the nightfall of the impending apocalypse, that a final stock-taking had begun. Henri's entry marked a point of juncture between this apocalyptic theology and its social roots in the liminality of an emerging élite. It was at this intersection, where the Old World met the New, and where the new nobility met the old, that the Brazilians made their appearance on Rouen's Faubourg Saint-Sever.

*Acknowledgements*—I have presented versions of this paper at Cambridge and Oxford Universities; at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; at the University European Institute, Florence; and at Florida International University, Miami. In particular I'd like to thank Henry Atmore, Jim Bennett, John Brewer, Nina Caputo, Yves Cohen, Carlo Ginzburg, John Michael Gorman, Mitch Hart, Nicholas Jardine, Hélène Mialet, Simon Schaffer and Nick Wilding, as well as two anonymous readers for *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science*, for their comments. Any errors of fact or interpretation are, of course, my own.

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<sup>102</sup>Quoted in Léry (1990), p. xlix.

<sup>103</sup>Thevet (1983), p. 49.

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