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Response to Hilary Bernstein's review of **Michael Wintroub**, *A Savage Mirror: Power, Identity, and Knowledge in Early Modern France*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006. xii + 306 pp. Figures, plates, notes, bibliography, and index. \$60.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 0-8047-4872-1.

Response by Michael Wintroub, University of California, Berkeley.

In her review of my book, *A Savage Mirror: Power, Identity and Knowledge in Early Modern France*, Hilary Bernstein argues that my analysis of the performed event (the royal entry of Henri II into Rouen in 1550) was far more successful than my attempt to understand its social and political context. Bernstein's critique raises a number of important issues, certainly among the most important being the relationship between event and context. Is the former situated, inertly, as a kind of static reflection--or articulation--of the latter? If this is the case, as one might surmise, following Bernstein's critique, I should have looked behind the ritual performance to find what really mattered: politics, work, family, social class, the state, etc. But what if this is not the case; what if, rather, event and context are mutually determining and agonistic? [1] In this sense, an event such as the royal ritual that was the starting point of my book should be seen as a strategic act constitutive of context(s), not a mere "symbolic" performance or superstructural effect. And indeed, it was this view that dictated my attempts to elucidate simultaneously the context and the performance of the entry.

Towards the end of her review, Bernstein laments that it was a pity that one had to wait until the book's *Coda* for me "to acknowledge that royal entries presupposed a limited, juridical definition of monarchy, and that rather than pursuing the particular social, political, and personal concerns of the entry's different organizers, participants, and spectators, [I chose]...rather to combine them into an undifferentiated civic-cultural elite." There are two critiques here; as for the first, one does not have to wait until the final pages my book, as Bernstein inexplicably does, to hear me argue that the entry "was not in any simple sense a paean to royal power, but was an act of resistance to--and/or qualification of--this power" (p. 12). The book's very title, *A Savage Mirror*, refers to the entry's debt to "...the literary tradition of the *speculum principis*, or mirror of princes, which sought to educate kings in the virtues by which they should live and rule" (p. 3). As to the second, the question of who was constructing the entry's mirror is at the centre of my book's concerns.

Written in the language of ritual, the entry gave voice to a specific dialect: that of a new civic elite composed of local merchants and artisans, city officials, clergy and savants who wrote, organized and enacted it. The entry's narrative was, in this sense, a strategic articulation of the specific interest of this new civic "aristocracy" in reformulating elite identity in terms consonant with its own values and ideals. Thus while status had traditionally been identified with inherited rights of birth, military prowess and personal loyalty, Henri's entry attempted to identify it with such visible--and acquired--signatures of virtue as eloquence and learning.

Though Bernstein does not seem to believe that the organizers of the entry were concerned to make a social argument (by her reading this assumption is based upon "the extensive literature analyzing the development of a *noblesse de robe* and the unique culture of the *bourgeois gentilshommes*" who were only a minor part of the entry), I argue, through close textual analysis of printed and manuscript sources, that there was indeed a social narrative running through the entry. [2] Bernstein is not convinced. As she puts it:

Wintroub's formulation of this new "civic-cultural elite" and his interpretation of the entry as presenting arguments about the nature of elite identity are not convincing. To define this new elite, Wintroub first ascertains that a large number of the entry's organizers were members of Rouen's Puy de Palinod and other related devotional poetry societies (p. 77). He then sets about to argue that the composition of these Puy societies was more elite than some historians, including Jonathan Dewald, have assumed. This may indeed have been the case, but Wintroub's conclusion that approximately 40% of the Puy de Palinod's membership in 1548 were members of the robe elite is not to be trusted, since his representation of social distinctions within urban society leads him to equate municipal officials with office holders in Rouen's sovereign courts and to group a *maître des ouvrages* with a president of the Cour des Aides.

Let's look at the passage that Bernstein is referring to here.

In his important work on Normandy's provincial nobility, Jonathan Dewald states that the Puy's membership was dominated by Rouen's "wealthiest and most cultivated bourgeois." From 1544 to 1554 there were between twelve and fifteen members of the Puy who were *conseillers* at Normandy's *parlement*. In 1548, for example, 46 names are listed as members of the Puy. One is singled out as a nobleman and 14 as *seigneurs*. Out of the 46, approximately 28 held—or were to hold—municipal or royal offices (including a *président* of the *cours des Aides*, a *secrétaire* and *receveur général du roi*, the city's *maître des ouvrages*, 3 members of the *Chancellerie*, 4 *notaires et secrétaires du roi*, 7 city counselors, 3 aldermen, 3 counselors in the *cour des Aides*, 4 Deputies of the Estates of Normandy, 2 lawyers in the *court laye*, 5 counselors and a lawyer in the *Parlement*). If we extend our gaze over the entire sixteenth-century [not 1548 as Bernstein says], we find that between 26 and 31 of the Puy's poets were counselors in the *Parlement*. If we factor in members who were officials at Rouen's other courts, who held royal office, and who were active in either Rouen's municipal government or in the *États* of Normandy, we find that approximately two-fifths of its members were associated with Normandy's robe elite. Especially interesting in this regard is the fact that in the year of Henri's entry, approximately half of the council of 24—which was the primary deliberative and administrative body of Rouen's city council—was associated with the Puy. Even more striking is the fact that of the six *échevins* leading the council in 1550—and thus responsible for assigning the men who wrote and produced Henri's entry—five were members (p. 77, emphasis added).

Apart from her misreading of the above passage, Bernstein seems particularly upset by her supposition that in my analysis of those members of the Puy who were also members of Rouen's administrative elite I "...equate municipal officials with office holders in Rouen's sovereign courts and...group a *maître des ouvrages* with a president of the *Cour des Aides*." Certainly the president of the Cour des Aides is not a *maître des ouvrages*, neither is a nobel prize-winning full professor at an Ivy a graduate student at a small state college, but both can be seen to be implicated in a 'form of life' characterized by common patterns of behavior and attitude, cognitive skills, and cultural competencies. But perhaps before pursuing this question further, it would be helpful to ask just who this lowly *maître des ouvrages* of which we speak was. His name was Richard Le Gay. We know very little about him, other than he was a member of the Puy, a *maître des ouvrages* and that he was singled out by one of his *confrères* at the Puy, the Bishop of Hippone and doctor of theology, Jean de la Massonnaye, as a notable at the 1533 dedication of the Church of Saint-Lô. Now, was the status of being a "notable" independent of Le Gay's status as a *maître des ouvrages*? Or were they mutually reinforcing determinations which were given further legitimacy by his participation in the Puy? Indeed what exactly was the status of a *maître des ouvrages*?

According to Louis Marie Albéric de Calonne d'Avesne, the *maître des ouvrages* was "...*élus des bourgeoisie au même titre et le même jour que le mayeur, choisis comme lui, parmi les plus notables*." [3] Le Gay, then, was among Rouen's most notable bourgeois citizens, a status clearly represented by his title as a *maître des ouvrages*. Though I wish we knew more about him, we can perhaps, with justification, cast our eyes a bit farther afield to examine some others who held this office. For example, towards the end of the sixteenth century, we have another member of the Puy who was a *maître des ouvrages*, his name was Lucas Boulaye (or Boullaye). Lucas was not only, like le Gay, a member of the Puy and a *maître des ouvrages*, he was also a *conseiller* in Rouen's municipal government, an *échevin*, a *procurer du Roi* at the *Baillage*, and a *secrétaire du Roi*. [4] He was also the brother-in-law of Jean Puchot, another illustrious

member of the Puy, *sieur de la Pommeraye*, deputy to the *États généraux* and *échevin/conseiller de la ville de Rouen*;[5] and son-in-law of another of the *Puy's confrères*, Vincent Puchot, *écuyer, sieur de Pubeuf et de la Pommeraye*, a wealthy merchant, and largest creditor of the Guise in Normandy. Not bad for the son of an iron merchant!

And what about *présidents à la Cour des Aides*--were they almighty and empyrean creatures living on a plane of existence entirely distinct from that of a lowly *maître des ouvrages*? In a word, no. Antoine de Caradas, for example, was president of the *Cour des Aides* in 1584. Though his ancestors became quite well known as elites, Michel Mollat points out that they were clearly "d'origine authentiquement roturière." [6] Thus, for example, his father, also Antoine, was a bourgeois merchant and money lender who was called on to serve in *Parlement* because of his recognized competence as a savvy business man. [7]

In addition to suggesting the degree of social mobility from the end of fifteenth century, these examples illustrate why we ought to rethink--or at least question--traditional assumptions about birth, class, and title in the early modern period. French society in the sixteenth century was both more expansive than the explanatory power of such constraining social paradigms, and more fluid. To ignore the cultural, symbolic and intellectual dimensions of status/class distinctions in our attempts to understand the variety of ways that human beings in early modern France created, established, deployed and challenged hierarchies of class, status and power is to adhere to an impoverished notion not only of distinction as an analytic category, but of historical context as well.

But it is not only my treatment of the *Puy* that is the target of Bernstein's critique, for she argues I make similar errors with regards to the Conards. "Wintroub" she says, is concerned with arguing that the group of Conards actually included the kinds of elites who also participated in the *Puy* societies (pp. 130-31)." Well, yes I do, for in fact several of them were members of the *Puy*. More generally, she claims that I am mistaken in arguing that any of these self-proclaimed Conards were, in any sense of the term, elite. Other than the names of a small group of Conards arrested in 1542, we have little record of who the Conards actually were. However, as I indicate in the book, among those arrested were two (Noel Cotton and Jehan Robert de la Croix blanche) who were singled out in the deliberations of Rouen's *Hôtel de Ville* as being among the "noms et surnoms de plusieurs personnes des plus riches et notoirement solvables de lad. Ville" (A-16, fol. 95 v°). Sounds elite to me. A few pages further in the *délibérations*, among the city's *enfants d'honneur*, which Reid, describes as "an expensive and honorific position, which indicated a solid position in Rouen's middle classes," [8] can be found several other Conards: Ysaac Jehan, Naudin Baillart, Jehan de la Croix and Noel Cotton (A-16, fol. 113 v°).

Michel Rousse, in his important work *Le théâtre des farces en France au Moyen Age*, comments that "*pour les quelques noms de Conards qui nous sont parvenus, voilà un sondage révélateur, qui va à l'encontre de bien des idées reçues...que l'élite urbaine ne participait pas aux sociétés joyeuses et...que les Conards ne provenaient pas des 'meilleurs familles'.*" [9] Insofar as this is the case, it seems to me, that keeping an open mind is the best strategy. I therefore have no arguments with either Dylan Reid's admirable work or with that of Rousse, what I do argue, is that it might be a good idea to jettison "...anachronistic notions of class based upon professional and economic criteria that had at best...an ambiguous status in the sixteenth-century. Rather, like the members of the *Puy de palinod*, the Conards were defined less by common economic status, occupational affiliation, the possession of mercantile wealth or land and title than by a shared commitment to, and interest in, the cultural life of their city" (p. 132). Given the statistically small sample of named Conards, I pursue this line of thought through a detailed examination of the Conards' prolific--and quite sophisticated--literary output, both in terms of its form and its content. For both the *Puy de palinod* and the Conards we find a degree of literacy which betrays an erudite and studied familiarity with arcane and difficult rhetoric and grammar (as found, for example in *Le Grand et vrai art de pleine rhétorique* published in 1521 to benefit the *Puy's* poets by the Rouennais priest Pierre Fabri). I argue that the cultural practices and the dispositions that informed the *Puy's* poetry competitions, the Conard's *sotties* and *chevauchées*, and Henri's triumphal entry, were crucial to the crystallization of specific forms of social organization and identity formation. In this sense, the obscure and extremely complicated literary techniques demanded of--and displayed by--the *Puy's* poets and the Conard's members were expressions of a new sort of distinctive urban identity--a kind of civic oligarchy of the

cultured (see p. 70).

But apparently, none of this matters, for as Bernstein tells us, the end result of my work is to efface all possible social distinctions. This raises a troubling question for me, why did I spend so much time and go to such trouble to show what a mixed bag the membership of the *Puy* was—i.e., that it had nobles, royal and municipal officers, courtiers, lawyers, doctors, priests, wealthy (and not so wealthy) merchants, printers, artisans, sea captains and explorers? To answer this question, I need to make a small digression towards something that Bernstein thinks I did right; thus, she concedes that the book “is very convincing in showing how the devotional concerns of *palinodic* verse informed the particular symbolic program of the entry.” I am very happy about this, but I’m afraid this praise misstates my intentions. In *A Savage Mirror* I argue that devotional—spiritual—concerns were not simply about the “symbolic program of the entry,” but were crucially implicated in, indeed expressions of, its social narrative. In other words, we are not talking about three separate and distinct categories—the symbolic, the devotional and the social—but rather, following Mauss, “a phenomenon in which religious, legal, moral, aesthetic and economic institutions found simultaneous expression” (p. 194, n. 4).

In this sense, the linguistic virtuosity exemplified by the literary and theatrical oeuvre of Rouen’s cultural elite, was also a display of religious virtuosity and an articulation/enactment of a new kind of social identity; indeed, it was not only the means by which individuals sought to win status and prestige, it was also considered a “pathway to truth and salvation.” As I put it: “The *Puy de palinod* enabled individuals occupying diverse positions in a extremely hierarchical society to intermingle and compete on the merits of their poetry. Notwithstanding often pronounced social differences, the degree of literacy and the knowledge of versification required of these individuals distinguished them as sharing a common literary culture. In addition to this collective sensitivity to the written and spoken word, the *Puy*’s poets were also adepts in a ritual recitation of poetry dedicated to the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. The *Puy* thus acted as a kind of bridge between the cultural skills of Normandy’s new elites and the social legitimacy of a religious tradition” (p. 85).

But this argument must be understood in terms of another element of the social/cultural/religious context that I explore—namely, the pervasive eschatological anxiety that the end times were at hand. Using sixteenth century (and insofar as possible, local—Rouennais) sources, I describe factors that contributed to this fear; in order of appearance, I discuss plague, meteorological signs and portends, earthquakes, expiatory processions, heresy, the discovery of the New World and its peoples, the view that the French monarch was the prophesied Last World Emperor, the apocalyptic/millenarian themes to be found in *les entrées joyeuses*, the instabilities promulgated by constant war, recurrent subsistence crises, unprecedented social mobility and the growth of religious dissension. It was as a response to these problems and instabilities that one needs to understand the cultivation, development and articulation of the linguistic and cultural dispositions and skills of France’s new civic elites. In other words, these dispositions and skills were not just symbolic markers of status and authority, they were the means by which the dangers of disorder and immanent cataclysm were to be confronted and assuaged. This is why it was so important for me to provide a prosopography of the *Puy*’s members—for the social differences and the degree of social mobility (and perceived social disorder) they represented were among the crucial problems to be overcome through the mediation of culture.[10] As the Conards said in their intervention into the debate between the illustrious poets, François Sagon and Clément Marot: “French Poets I bid you/To love one another like brothers and sons/Of Minerva, and say to discord: Fie” (p. 133).

Bernstein next argues “that the notion that Roman symbols, such as the triumph, could be reinserted into an existing ritual structure without any dissonance or reinterpretation is to deny the self-consciousness with which Renaissance practitioners imitated, employed, and transformed the classical elements they adopted.” I couldn’t agree more. My aim in *A Savage Mirror*, as I say quite explicitly, is to “situate the synchronic event of Henri II’s triumph within this diachronic flow of ritual memory” (p. 143). Whereas Bernstein argues “that clearly established Christian liturgical context for political ritual is more than adequate to account for the millenarian overtones of the entry,” I believe that this liturgical context did not appear miraculously out of thin air, but that it too had a history. And indeed, though “the particular concerns of Rouen’s new civic-cultural elite were grounded in the unique historical

circumstances of their day, they were not thereby divorced from the past; rather, their interests were enacted with reference to a durable, though historically mutable, store of practices and traditions that traced the complex genealogy of the triumph from antiquity through the Renaissance” (p. 143). My aim was thus to study how “inherited ritual forms intersected with, were transformed by, and in turn inflected contingent ‘local’ interests” (pp. 150-151). Accordingly, I aim to understand the triumph across a number of different but intersecting registers; which is to say, I analyze the triumph (and the liturgy of the *adventus*) not as if were simply lifted out of ancient history and dropped willy-nilly into Renaissance France as Bernstein implies, but as a “site of strategic mediation—a place where divergent aspects of elite culture were articulated, negotiated, and contested” (p. 64). The significance of the triumph for sixteenth century Rouen cannot be underestimated; at “...the time of Henri’s entry, triumphs could be seen at practically every turn...in bas-reliefs decorating the homes of its most prominent citizens; in the windows of its most important churches; in the city’s public spaces and monuments; and in the poetry of...the *Puy de Palinod*” (p. 65). Again, the triumph was not simply a symbolic representation but a instantiation of intellectual, social, economic and religious ideas about the nature of power and authority.

Whether we are speaking of the translation of Petrarch’s *I trionfi* into French in Rouen’s *scriptorium*, the sculpting of triumphal themes onto the homes of Rouen’s leading citizens, the designing of the king’s triumphal entry, or the representation of the triumphal Virgin (who would return at the end of time to defeat the devil and redeem mankind) in the *Puy*’s poetry or in the windows of Rouen’s most important churches, we are speaking of an assertion of the rising social status of Rouen’s new elites and about the relationship between these elites and the religious, cultural and intellectual values that defined them as a group. Indeed, the triumph constructed for the king was not just about the king, for it was also the triumph of the new elites who wrote, organized and enacted it. As one of the *Puy*’s poets said: “Triumph a tout, triumphez, Rouennoys...” (p. 90).

Bernstein concludes her review by pointing out that it is not clear why I assume “that the ‘new learning’ extolled in the entry was a learning based solely on linguistic virtuosity and not also on ... more ‘material’ [antiquarian] aspect of erudition.” I don’t, and I didn’t. She continues, “...eloquence and erudition were complementary aspects of French learning throughout the period, and it is by no means obvious that the latter was seen as a solution to the problems of the former.” Strangely, though so sensitive to my supposed insensitivity to context, Bernstein herself manages to entirely elide both the context of early modern anti-rhetorical and anti-intellectual critiques and the integrity of my argument. What I argue is the following: “The antiquarian scholarship from which entries were fashioned in the sixteenth-century was integrally related to the *studia humanitatis* and its valorization of rhetoric and eloquence” (p. 186). This fact does nothing to minimize the equally important fact that “the New Learning was viewed by many to be foremost among the causes for the world’s ‘fallen’ state” (p. 174). In the first instance, I am arguing, following sixteenth century sources, that the dispositions and skills associated with linguistic/cultural competencies were much sought after as signs and vehicles of social status mobility; but, for precisely this reason, they were also considered dangerous and untrustworthy. Thus, the same circles that championed the virtues of erudition, eloquence, rhetoric, etc., also articulated an anti-intellectual/anti-rhetorical discourse that stressed simplicity, plain speaking, modesty and a reliance on direct experience. These ideas extended beyond the valorization of anti-rhetorical rhetoric and the primacy of direct “unmediated” experience, to arguments which valorized antiquarianism and the material artifacts associated with it as a counter to the lies and dissimulations of rhetoric. Such arguments were commonplace and were to become dominant tropes in the elaboration and articulation of natural history, juridical thought and historiography from the mid sixteenth century on. What I try to do in *A Savage Mirror* is to understand the genealogy of these intellectual-social-spiritual tensions and to understand how they were related to contrasting—and often contradictory— notions of elite identity, royal power and epistemic authority. Indeed, it is within these multivalent socio-cultural contexts that I try to understand the verisimilar *mise-en-scène* of Brazil constructed for Henri’s triumph. Moreover, in working to uncover the complex play of cultural and social forces that ended with distinctions being made between rhetoric and truth, words and things, vain and idle speech and the incontrovertibility of material/factual evidence, my aim in *A Savage Mirror* was to understand not only

the context of the king's marvelous entry into Rouen, but to historicize (and give context to) our own--modern--practices of representation.

NOTES

[1] As A. M. Hocart said: "...if it were already there already there would be no point in having a ritual." A. M. Hocart, *Kings and Councilors* (Cairo: P. Barbey, 1936).

[2] See, for example, chapter 3 of *A Savage Mirror*, or my article "L'ordre du rituel et l'ordre des choses: l'entrée royale d'Henri II à Rouen (1550)," *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 56 (mars-avril, 2001): 479-505.

[3] Louis Marie Albéric de Calonne d'Avesne, *La vie municipale au XV^e siècle dans le nord de la France* (Paris, 1880), 179 (my emphasis).

[4] Julien Félix, *Comptes rendus des échevins de Rouen avec des documents relatifs à leur élection (1409-1701)* (Rouen, 1890), 98; and Charles de Beaurepaire, *Cahiers des États de Normandie sous les règnes de Louis XIII et de Louis XIV...* (Rouen, 1876-1878), 166.

[5] See Stuart Carroll, *Noble Power During the French Wars of Religion: The Guise Affinity and the Catholic Cause in Normandy* (Cambridge, 1998), 217; he was married to Marie Hallé, a family with strong links to the Puy, to overseas trade and which, from the middle of the sixteenth century, rose in status from holders of relatively lesser posts in the city's administrative hierarchy to positions of eminence in municipal and royal administration. See Gayle Brunelle's *The New world Merchants of Rouen, 1599-1630* (Kirkville, Miss.: Truman State University Press, 1991), 62ff.

[6] See Michel Mollat, *Le commerce maritime normand à la fin du Moyen Age: Étude d'histoire économique et sociale* (Paris: Librairie Plon 1952), 483.

[7] *Ibid.*, pp. 483-485. Either Antoine's uncle or cousin (Jehan de Caradas) was listed as a member of the Puy the same year as Robert Le Gay. See *Précis analytique de travaux de l'Académie des sciences, belles-lettres et arts de Rouen* (Paris, 1834), 255.

[8] Dylan Reid, "Carnival in Rouen: A History of the Abbaye des Conards," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 32 (2001): 1034.

[9] Michel Rousse, *Le théâtre des farces en France au Moyen Age*, 5 vols. (Rennes: Presses universitaires, 1983), 9 (my emphasis). He goes on to argue: "Si besoin était d'en donner d'autre preuves, la délibérations des chanoines du 17 mars 1546 à propos de l'affaire de la Houssaye nous en fournirait une: les chanoines qui ont obtenu un arrêt du parlement en leur faveur, craignent que les Conards n'agissent auprès du roi ou de son chancelier pour que l'arrêt soit rapporté. Les craintes des chanoines nous font mesurer l'influence que les Conards pouvoit avoir."

[10] Norbert Elias makes a similar argument with regards to civility; as Jacques Revel eloquently puts it: "The beginning of the modern era, Elias argues, was a moment of change and uncertainty between two ages of social glaciation. The unity of Catholicism had broken down, and the rigid hierarchies of the Middle Ages had suffered profound damage as courtly and chivalric society was called into question, but absolutism had not yet established its dominion. This was a period of social and cultural realignment. Social groups were more diverse than ever before, and relations among them more complex. Changing societies required a new common language and common points of reference." See Jacques Revel, "The

Uses of Civility”, pp. 167-205 in Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby, eds., *A History of Private Life*, volume III, Roger Chartier, ed., *Passions of the Renaissance* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 173. The cultural, spiritual and linguistic skills and dispositions that *A Savage Mirror* argues were characteristic of Rouen’s new civic cultural elites were precisely this sort of common language.

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