Enfants de la ville:
Bourgeois Horsemanship and Combat Games in French Royal Entries

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The royal entry ceremony in France, in which a city received the first visit of a new king (or sometimes queen or other dignitary) with an elaborate procession and celebrations, reached a height of sophistication in the sixteenth century. The ceremony began with a civic procession that marched to meet the king outside the city gates. After reviewing this procession, the king and his party of soldiers and aristocrats would join it to march back into the city, which had been elaborately decorated to welcome him. The king's entry concluded at the city's cathedral or largest church, where a mass was celebrated. Over the following days, other events might be devised to entertain the king and his party.

The initial civic procession in front of the king generally included all of the city's corporate bodies, beginning with the religious corporations, followed in no consistent order by the militia, the city council, and civic and royal officials and magistrates. Sometimes these processions also included artisan guilds, the *basoche* (an organization of law clerks), and groups of prominent merchants and bourgeois. Finally, these processions often included a group called the *enfants de la ville*, or in some places the *enfants d'honneur*, a group of boisterous young men on horseback from the city's most notable families.[1] The narrative accounts of royal entries often pay particular attention to describing this group. What is more, these accounts sometimes add another element that is unique to the *enfants*: they describe them performing feats of athleticism in front of the king and spectators. In general, these were displays of horsemanship, but in one spectacular

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[1] "Enfants d'honneur" seems to have been mostly used in Normandy — it was used in all of the Rouen entries, and in at least one entry into Caen (Roy, 56) — but it was also used elsewhere at times in the second half of the century, in Orléans (*Ceremonial*, 948), Dijon (*Ceremonial*, 897), and sometimes in Lyon (*Ceremonial*, 900, Tricou, 109).

instance, the *enfants* also engaged in an elaborate demonstration of combat skills on foot.

In the following article, I will focus on these feats of athleticism by the *enfants de la ville* during the civic procession in front of the king, and examine, among other things, the extent to which they were a marker of status, in particular as a form of emulation of the aristocracy.[2]

Enfants de la ville

The *Enfants de la ville* first appear in descriptions of French royal entry processions at the end of the fifteenth century. The earliest known mention is from Lyon in 1481, and they appear again at Charles VIII's entry into Rouen in 1485.[3] From that point onwards, they take part in all royal entries into the major provincial cities of Rouen and Lyon until the beginning of the seventeenth century, in most of the entries into Paris during the same period, and in a fair number of entries into smaller provincial cities. In Lyon, they also appeared at times in the entries of lesser figures (Tricou, 109–111). For the most part they seem to make their last appearances in the entries of Henri IV, except in Lyon, where they appeared for the last time in Louis XIII's entry in 1622.[4]

The origins of this tradition are unknown. In early entry ceremonies, groups of children sometimes lined the route of the king's procession to sing "Noël" as he passed, but these were "petits enfants," children and not youth. These appearances declined at roughly the same time that the *enfants de la ville* emerged, although they continued to show up occasionally in the provinces.[5] It was also common, from an early stage in the development

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[2] I am very grateful to Treva J. Tucker for her advice, in particular regarding the complexities of horses and horsemanship, and for sharing relevant sections of her unpublished dissertation. I am also grateful to Lise Roy for sending me a copy of the account of François Ier's entry into Rouen, and to John Gagné for informing me about Tricou's article.

[3] Tricou, 109 (entry of the Dauphine d'Auvergne, Claire de Gonzague); *Charles VIII Rouen 1485*, MS description, 4.

[4] In addition to the general decline of the entry ceremony, of which the disappearance of the *enfants* was an early sign, Tricou (118–119) suggests that their place and prestige in Lyon was taken by the civic militia. This hypothesis is plausible, as the role of these civic militias in entry ceremonies increased visibly in many cities during and after France's Religious Wars in the second half of the sixteenth century.

[5] *Ceremonial*, 650, 659, 763. Graham and Johnson, 246, 281 (Charles IX, Toulouse and Bordeaux 1565, which include both "petitz enfans" and "enfans de la ville"). See also

of the ceremony, for groups of city notables to proceed along with the city council and civic officials to greet the king, but they included men of all ages (*Ceremonial*, 652, 654, 659).

The differentiation of a group of notable youths that emerged in the 1480s is too early to have been a result of Italian influence from the French invasion of Italy. Lyon did have an important Italian population before the invasions, but Rouen, where the *enfants* appeared nearly simultaneously, was not much influenced by Italy (at least directly).[6]

The *enfants* were certainly part of the process towards the elaboration of the entry ceremony in the second half of the fifteenth century, notably in the development of complex architectural decorations and theatrical entertainments along the entry route within the city (Guenée and Lehoux, 25ff.). As the printing industry developed, this elaboration coincided with, and was perhaps encouraged by, the development of purpose-written printed descriptions of royal entries. It is not the case, however, that modern scholars simply become aware of an already-existing tradition because of these more detailed descriptions — mentions of the *enfants* in civic archives likewise only begin appearing around this time.[7] The development of these printed accounts certainly encouraged the increasing prominence of the *enfants*, however, as their presentation in some entries was clearly influenced by their description in accounts of earlier entries.[8]

One simultaneous development that may have had an influence on this phenomenon was the gradual emergence, in large cities, of a class of notables who were distinct and independent of the traditional artisanal/

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Tricou, 107–108.

[6] In conversation, Serge Vaucelle suggested an interesting hypothesis, noting that the Angevin court retired to Anjou after being expelled from Naples in the fifteenth century, bringing with it a Mediterranean horse-rearing and training tradition that developed in this region of France, including in southern Normandy, in the second half of the century. It is conceivable that the early equestrian showmanship evident among the golden youth of Rouen derived from this very indirect Italian tradition, which might explain why the *enfants de la ville* phenomenon was strongest in Rouen as well as Lyon.

[7] For instance, they are not mentioned in city deliberations in Lyon for the entry of Louis XI in 1476 (Guenée and Lehoux, 202ff), although they are mentioned in later city archives (e.g. *Ceremonial* 688, 777).

[8] For example, the description of the *enfants* in the entry of Henri II into Rouen uses some of the same phrases as the earlier description of his entry into Lyon (*Henri II Lyon 1548*, D1; *Henri II Rouen 1550*, I iv).

corporate categories that formed the backbone of medieval cities. Royal administrators, financiers, magistrates, rentiers, and merchants who traded on a large scale in a variety of goods were becoming a larger, more noticeable social group that was not easily definable — wealthier and of higher status than artisans, but not part of the traditional aristocracy. They stood out from their fellow members of the third estate because they worked, not with their bodies as artisans did, but with their minds.

The *enfants* were the sons of this kind of urban notable. They were described in Paris and elsewhere as "enfans des principaux Marchands & Bourgeois de [la] ville" or "enfans des bonnes maisons de cette Ville."[9] So, they were not artisans, who marched separately in entry processions;[10] nor were they members of the traditional hereditary aristocracy, who only joined the procession alongside the king when he entered the city. Although some of their families may have been technically ennobled, they were essentially townsmen whose families practiced commerce, law, and administration.

The *enfants* were not children, but youth. In one entry, they were described as aged from 20 to 28. In general, they most likely ranged in age from their late teens to their early thirties. They were probably mostly bachelors, but some could be married.[11] What distinguished them as *enfants* was that their fathers were usually still alive (and often marched elsewhere in the procession), so they had not yet inherited their father's property, titles, and responsibilities. Unlike the other members of the civic procession, they were not defined by their established role in society, but rather embodied the potential of the city.

For the most part, the *enfants* seem to have been brought together on an *ad hoc* basis for each entry. City council archives preceding a royal entry often record much effort to identify and round up a suitable group of young men from the city's leading families (*Ceremonial*, 789; *Éléonore d'Autriche Rouen 1531*, xviii). One exception was Lyon, where the *enfants de la ville* were a permanent, organized confraternity within the city (Tricou, 125ff.). This Lyon confraternity appears to have begun as the city's festive society, its "Abbaye de Jeunesse" (Tricou, 111, 123–25). This relationship does not appear

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[9] *Henri II Paris 1549*, e ii (v); *Charles IX Paris 1571*, 168; *Ceremonial*, 781; *Éléonore d'Autriche Rouen 1531*, xviii; Tricou, 109.

[10] E.g. *Henri II Rouen 1550*, C iv–D i for the artisans, I iv–J iv for the *enfants*.

[11] Graham and Johnson, 247. The author of the description of François Ier's entry into Caen, an *enfant d'honneur* in the procession, was 26 years old (Roy, 56). Tricou, 109.

to have been the case in most other cities, however. In Rouen, a few members of the local festive society (the *Abbaye des Conards*) were wealthy enough to be recruited into the *enfants d'honneur* for the entry of Henri II, but the *enfants* were clearly a separate grouping brought together for the occasion; the festive society itself staged an independent performance for the king a few days after the entry (Reid, 1034; *Henri II Rouen 1550*, R ii). In most cities, the *enfants* do not appear to have had an independent existence and were simply brought together when required.

The *enfants* on horseback numbered from half a dozen to at most a hundred and twenty, depending on the population of the city (Roy, 58–59; *Charles IX Paris 1571*, 168). In some later processions in larger cities, they were preceded by a group of *enfants* on foot, presumably from less prestigious and wealthy families, who could number up to 300.[12]

Although the *enfants* were generally considered to be one of the most prestigious and spectacular parts of the civic procession, and were portrayed as a source of great pride for the city, getting enough candidates to participate was not always easy. There is a considerable contrast between the glowing official accounts, in which the *enfants* eagerly and liberally offer up their wealth to their king, and the realities of the municipal archives, where city councils had to struggle to gather them in sufficient numbers and persuade them to spend the desired amount on their presentation. In addition to the notorious unreliability of wealthy young men, many of them — or, perhaps, their fathers — balked at the considerable expense required to adorn themselves and their horses to the level of luxury demanded by the city. City councils sometimes had to threaten the city's leading families with large fines, impose constraints or provide inducements before they could bring together a sufficient number of young men in the desired finery.[13] For example, the account of the entry of Henri II into Rouen boasts that, on hearing of the king's imminent arrival, the city council and civic notables gathered to organize the entry and "Tous liberallement s'offrirent d'y employer leurs biens & personnes, selon l'ordre qui leur fut lors assigné." By contrast, the city council records note laconically the broader range of actual reactions: "Les enfans d'honneur avaient été nommez dont les aucuns l'avoient libéralement accordés, les autres avoient proposés

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[12] *Henri II Lyon 1548*, B4v-C4; *Henri II Rouen 1550*, I ii; *Henri IV Rouen 1596*, 22; Tricou, 111.

[13] McFarlane in *Henri II Paris 1549*, 17; Tricou, 113–115, 117–118;

excuses, et les autres avoient esté contrainctz par la prinse de leurs biens."[14] The city sometimes paid the expenses of the captain of the *enfants*, whose costume was particularly lavish, but the others were generally expected to pay their own expenses.[15]

The expenses were daunting because the *enfants* were dressed in spectacular costumes, usually based on a design created by the entry's organizers, often in the colours of the royal personage being welcomed.[16] While everyone else in the procession was also expensively costumed, the *enfants* were usually the most spectacular of all, and often merited the most extended descriptions given to any of the groups in the civic procession. In the accounts of Henri II's entries into Lyon and Paris, the captains of the *enfants* are the only members of the civic procession to merit an illustration (the other illustrations being of the decorations and entertainments within the city itself) (*Henri II Lyon* 1548, C4, D1 v; *Henri II Paris 1549*, e iii). This attention is not surprising given the remarkable amount of money, workmanship, and time devoted to creating these costumes. The cloth alone for the costume of the captain of the *enfants* in the 1571 entry of Charles IX into Paris cost the considerable sum of 1,645 *livres*, and the itemization of all of the cloth and other elements purchased for his costume and accessories takes 20 pages in the city accounts (*Charles IX Paris 1571*, 351–361). Even ordinary *enfants* spent a great deal: the Mantuan ambassador at Henri II's entry into Lyon was struck by the wealth of their costumes, estimating that they cost at least 300 *scudi* each (Cooper in *Henri II Lyon 1548*, 50).

These costumes often had a military theme, and the *enfants* were generally armed.[17] From early in the sixteenth century, the *enfants* would

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[14] *Henri II Rouen 1550*, B i; *Archives communales de Rouen*, A 16, 11 August 1550 (I am grateful to GRES (Groupe de recherche sur les entrées solennelles) for the transcription of these records).

[15] E.g. *Ceremonial*, 781 (city deliberations for entry of Eleanor of Austria into Paris, 1530): the city decides to gather "enfans de bonnes maisons de cette ville" to be dressed in a costume specified by the city, as long as "il se peut faire sans charger la Ville de dépense," although the city did decide that "l'on leur aydera de ce que l'on pourra," which in many cases meant paying incidental costs such as banners and costumes for accompanying fifers and drummers.

[16] *Ceremonial*, 781: the *enfants* will be asked to dress in "habillemens & caparassons, ainsi qu'il leur sera baillé par pourtrait aux couleurs de ladite Dame [Eleanor of Austria]."

[17] See Cooper, "Court Festival," 53. It is important to distinguish between the *enfants* and the local civic militia (generally in larger numbers, on foot and armed with firearms

be led in military fashion by a captain, a lieutenant, and a standard-bearer (over the course of the century this became more common for other groups in entry processions as well). In Rouen, this captain was often a high-ranking aristocrat from the region — for instance, in 1485, the *enfants* were led by Louis de Brezé, grand seneschal of Normandy.[18]

The location of the *enfants* in the procession varied from city to city and from year to year, but it generally suggested either a martial theme or high status. Often, they marched just after the city's military companies — its arquebusiers and other militia corporations. In Rouen, the *enfants* always marched at the very end, just before the king's party, as the culmination of the civic procession, "le parfaict & coronide [sic] des bandes & compagnies de ce triumphe" in the words of one account (*Henri II Rouen 1550,* I v). In at least one instance, in Paris in 1549, the *enfants* were allowed to integrate themselves right into the midst of the aristocrats of the king's party for the return to the city (Bryant, 56). In Lyon, the *enfants* also took part in some of the events held for the king in the days following the entry: in 1550, they were presented to him during a banquet in his honour, and they participated in the mock naval combat on the river (*Henri II Lyon 1548,* K2–K2v, K4v-L).

The intention of the spectacular clothing, the military imagery, the aristocratic captain, and the location in the procession was fairly clear. These golden youth of the city embodied the potential and ambitions of the city as a whole, and of its leading families in particular, and so were associated with high status, and ideally with aristocracy. The author of the description of Louis XII's entry into Troyes in 1510 made this association

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or pikes), sometimes referred to as the *infanterie* during and after the religious wars (*Ceremonial*, 894, 942, 991; Graham and Johnson, 237). The terms are confusing because they sound similar, and are sometimes used interchangeably. For instance, the sons of notables on foot in Lyon in 1550 are referred to as "la fanterie de Messieurs les Enfantz de la Ville," simply meaning they were on foot (*Henri II Lyon 1548*, B4v). At the entry of Henri d'Anjou as King of Poland into Orléans in 1573, the militia was referred to as the "Enfants de la Ville" while the young sons of notables on horseback were referred to as "Enfants d'honneur" (*Ceremonial*, 948).

[18] *Charles VIII Rouen 1485*, MS description, 4; Tricou, 111. We have no way of knowing if members of the *enfants de la ville* ended up actually fighting in military engagements. Unlike the militia, they were not treated as a permanent armed unit (although see the example of Orléans in 1573, below). However, during the Wars of Religion many notable townsmen were involved in the military defence of their cities during sieges, or even in street battles, so it is likely that some of them did see military action. See also note 43.

explicit, describing the *enfants* as "montez et accoustrez comme si c'eussent esté Gentils-hommes de grosses maisons."[19]

Horsemanship

In general, however, costume and a military bearing by themselves did not distinguish the *enfants* all that much from the other members of the civic procession. Everyone wore spectacular costumes, even if not quite as spectacular. The militia companies were also armed and proud of their martial bearing, and over the course of a century of external and then internal warring, more and more of the civic procession in royal entries tended to take on a military hue.

In some of the more detailed descriptions, however, the *enfants* stand out because an additional phrase or two is added which does not appear in descriptions of any of the other groups in the civic processions. These unique phrases describe the kind of horses that the *enfants* are riding, and then describe feats of horsemanship that the *enfants* performed in front of the king and the other spectators.

Many groups in the civic procession were mounted, but the kind of horses they were riding was rarely specified, unless it was to note that magistrates were riding their traditional mules. When the kind of horses ridden by the *enfants* were identified specifically, therefore, the statement was meaningful. Horses were a signifier of the rider, and the horses the *enfants* rode sent specific messages: status through wealth and splendour; military potential; and personal skill. [20]

The *enfants* were most commonly described as being mounted on "coursiers," and/or "genets," "genets d'Espaigne" or "chevaux d'Espaigne."[21] While the terminology in this period was not precise, all of these terms were used to designate horses that were considered valuable and prestigious, either for military uses or for horsemanship. By the sixteenth century, "coursier" was a word commonly used to describe a horse used by heavy cavalry or in tournaments. A *coursier* was strong, imposing, and very expensive, the kind

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[19] *Ceremonial*, 730 (entry of Louis XII into Troyes, 1510).

[20] For signifier, see Ribémont, 171, 173, 207–8, 224; for the message of high status, see Raber and Tucker, 6–14.

[21] *Ceremonial*, 805; *Henri II Lyon 1548*, C4v; *Henri II Paris 1549*, e ii (v); *Henri II Rouen 1550*, I iv; *Henri IV Rouen 1596*, 28.

of horse aristocrats rode in parade or war. The anonymous verse account of the entry of Charles VIII into Paris in 1484 described the "chevaliers et gentils hommes du roy" as riding "beaux coursiers" harnessed in cloth of gold, whereas the horses ridden by bourgeois are described with the more prosaic term "roncins."[22] The *cheval d'Espagne*, meanwhile, "was the *ne plus ultra* for noble heavy cavalrymen in sixteenth-century Europe, when armor was at its very heaviest, at least in part because these animals were simultaneously strong and beautiful."[23] The "genet" was a lighter, finer horse that was becoming increasingly appreciated and desirable in Europe during the Renaissance. Its lightness provided the opportunity to develop more complex styles of showy horsemanship that were becoming a mark of courtly refinement (Wells, 57–58; Trench, 93).

These types of horses were the most expensive and beautiful in Europe, and they were often described in the texts about the *enfants* as "beaulx" and, in one instance, "de gran prix." The horses were part of the image of wealth and splendour associated with the *enfants*. But a *coursier* or a *cheval d'Espaigne* was also a war-horse, "brave cheval de service," (*Henri II Paris 1549*, e ii (v); *Charles IX Paris 1571*, 169) and these terms conveyed the message that these young men were not only ready to fight for the king, but to do so in the cavalry, along with the king's aristocrats. Meanwhile, the "genets" suggested that these young men were skilled in sophisticated horsemanship, in the manner of refined courtiers.

This message was confirmed by the feats of horsemanship performed by the *enfants* during the procession in front of the king. These descriptions of horsemanship only appear in a few of the most elaborate accounts, and they are usually only described in a sentence or two. But they stand out as striking and unusual, because no-one else in the procession is described in terms of athletic activity — everyone else just marched by in their costumes and, in some cases, gave a speech to the king.

The first such mention that I have discovered comes from the entry of Louis XII into Rouen in 1508. The *enfants d'honneur* are described as having their horses perform "saulx et pannades," and later "voulstes et saulx" during the procession (*Louis XII Rouen 1508*, A ii). The most elaborate description comes from Henri II's entry into Lyon in 1548, where the narrator says of the *enfants de la ville*, "ce qui accroissoit merveille sur merveille, c'estoit de voir le

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[22] *Dictionnaire* II, 607. Guenée and Lehoux, 106–107. Ribémont, 182–184.

[23] Treva J. Tucker, private correspondence.

Capitaine, Lieutenant, Porte-Enseigne, & bonne partie des autres, si adextres à cheval, & si bien le sçachans manier, faire pennades, bondir, voltiger, & redoubler le saut en l'air" (*Henri II Lyon 1548*, D1). It is well known that these accounts tended to idealize the events of an entry (Migneault, 13; Johnston, 197–198), and also tended to repeat attractive conventions (the description of the *enfants*' horsemanship in Henri II's entry into Rouen two year later is similar in its phrasing to that of the Lyon entry) (*Henri II Rouen 1550*, I iv). Even if these descriptions are somewhat idealized, however, they demonstrate the image that the city wanted to project of the skills and deportment of its golden youth.

We cannot be certain exactly what these manoeuvres were in modern terms. *Pennade* (*pannade*, *penade*) was an ubiquitous term, almost always used in the sixteenth century where feats of horsemanship were concerned. It seems to have been somewhat generic, referring to any kind of show-off riding (*Dictionnaire* V, 709). By the time French horse-training began to be codified at the end of the century, the term *pennade* fell into disuse, replaced by more specific terms derived from the Italian. The *saults* presumably described various kinds of jumping actions. *Voltes* and *voltiger* refer to very tight turns made by a horse, often on its hind legs (*Dictionnaire* VII, 510–511; Trench, 101). These terms were often combined together to suggest a general display of horsemanship — Rabelais describes young Gargantua making his hobby-horse "penader, saulter, voltiger, ruer et dancer" (Rabelais, 83).

We can also get a sense of some of the moves the *enfants* engaged in from illustrations of these horsemen in the entry descriptions. The horses are sometimes posed in an elevated trot, with one foreleg raised high in the air, which was one of the most common poses for horsemen in art. It was a parade gait, the highly-trained movement that would be expected of a horseman on display in a procession, and so very appropriate for the circumstances.[24] However, in a few cases the captain of the *enfants* is shown in a pose that would much later be known as a *levade* (*Henri II Lyon 1548*, D1v; *Henri II Rouen 1550*, I iv). In this pose, the horse raises its forelegs off the ground in a controlled manner, at less than 45 degrees, keeping the forelegs tucked in close to the body, while the rider remains in a formal pose, upright and motionless. It looks like a kind of half-rear, but is much more contained

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[24] E.g. *Henri II Paris 1549*, e iii. Liedtke, 61–63. This pose echoed that of the famous classical equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius, still visible in Rome, which gave the pose added popularity as an artistic subject.

than a rearing motion. This pose was not common in art in 1550, although it became common later in equestrian portraits and statues.[25] It became a standard part of formal elite horsemanship in the seventeenth century, but its presence here shows that it was already a position known to horsemen in France before any of the formal Renaissance treatises were published. While it is conceivable that the image simply reflected contemporary equestrian iconography, the choice of this pose for the illustrations suggests that it was probably actually executed by the captain and perhaps other young bourgeois in front of the king, demonstrating a high level of skill and control.[26]

Accomplishing all of these manoeuvres would have required extensive training of man and horse.[27] As with so many sports, the sixteenth century was the period in which training in horsemanship was first written down, codified and systematized, starting in Italy and moving rapidly throughout Europe. The publication of these manuals followed the foundation of the first horsemanship academies in Italy in the second quarter of the century, which eventually attracted young noblemen from across the continent (Raber and Tucker, 9). Yet these developments got underway well after the *enfants de la ville* of 1508 or even 1548 got their training. Federico Grisone published the first printed manual, *Gli ordini di cavalcare*, in Italy in 1550, based on techniques he had developed at his academy in Naples, one of the earliest, which was only established in the 1530s. So these formal academies and published manuals were in fact simply codifying long-standing practices. The horsemanship of these city youths shows there was a strong tradition of

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[25] Liedtke, 19ff. There was a tradition of portraying French kings on horses that had their forelegs raised, but it is not clear if these were *levades* or rearing. There was an image of Louis XII on a rearing horse on a triumphal arch in his entry into Milan in 1509, and the temporary statue of François I prepared for his entry into Rouen in 1517 had "les pieds de devant jettez en lair" (Wagner, 36, 41).

[26] Tucker, "Noble Identity," 283–285 (this action was called a *pesade* in the seventeenth century); Raber and Tucker, 18.

[27] Raber and Tucker, 7; Wells, 57–8; Gillmor, 8. Performing these manoeuvres required a great deal of physical training and athletic skill on the part of the rider, requiring the development of strength and balance to stay astride the horse comfortably and elegantly, and of superbly trained precise reflexes to direct the horse clearly. This form of athleticism on horseback is the direct ancestor of the modern sport of dressage, which is an Olympic sport.

horsemanship training already in place in France well before any academies were founded or manuals were published.[28]

The diffusion of the Italian training methods in the second half of the sixteenth century may in fact have shaped and changed the native tradition and exuberant attitudes towards horsemanship displayed by the *enfants*. Twenty years after Henri II's entries, in Charles IX's entry into Paris in 1571, there is a sense that the traditional, loosely defined *voltiger* and *pennader* may be perceived as lax and undisciplined. Unlike the unrestrained enthusiasm of earlier entries, the narrator feels the need to excuse these activities, saying the *enfants* made their horses "quelquefois voltiger et pannader, mais de si bonne grace qu'ils se rendoient tousjours en leur reng et place." By contrast, the narrator glories in their skill in more disciplined movements that were in the process of being codified as part of the art of horsemanship: they were "quasi tous dressez au galop, en rond, à toutes mains, à corbettez, et à passades."[29]

The manoeuvres performed by the *enfants* were related at least indirectly to the necessities of warfare. There is much debate about how relevant fancy horsemanship was to combat, but it is clear that skill in handling your horse was a fundamental requirement in battle.[30] In close combat on horseback, where it was difficult to do anything complicated with weapon handling, a soldier's ability to handle his mount was of great importance (Anglo, 253–255). The ability to turn rapidly, for instance, was essential in enabling a fighter to get on an opponent's back side, and prevent opponents from getting on his own back. The *passade*, for one, with its combination of sprint, stop, and turn, remained an essential part of training warhorses well into the seventeenth century (van Orden, 202–203). One possibility is that the more informal early techniques displayed by the *enfants* could have been more

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[28] Providing some evidence for Gillmor's supposition (15) that the treatises "surely recorded knowledge communicated by the oral traditions of aristocratic culture." Also Trench, 101. See also the hypothesis in note 6 above. While the entry of 1548 took place after the foundation of Grisone's academy, it seems highly unlikely that any of the bourgeois youth of Lyon would have travelled to it for training at this early stage in the academy's development.

[29] *Charles IX Paris 1571*, 169. The *courbette* was a kind of showy, elevated canter; it should be noted that this action is different from the one described by this term in modern horsemanship. The *passade* was a real show-off piece, a short gallop with a sudden stop, followed by a turn (*volte*) and possibly other actions, repeated several times. Tucker, "From *Destrier*," 176–79, 250–251.

[30] Van Orden, 201–204, 213–215; Wells, 58, 61; Gillmor, 8, 16; Trench, 103.

closely related to combat, but this relevance was lost as the art of horsemanship became more formalized over the course of the century. At the least, the more elaborate manoeuvres of formal horsemanship demonstrated that the rider possessed the degree of skill required to handle a horse in military action.

It is difficult to identify exactly why more sophisticated styles of horsemanship developed in the sixteenth century. A change in the expectations of aristocratic behaviour — the development of a need for grace as well as power — may have played a role. As the aristocracy's military function became less dominant, it maintained its emphasis on physical training and skill as a marker of aristocratic status by shifting focus towards graceful display in a variety of physical activities. Treva Tucker argues convincingly that this development was expressed in horsemanship through a move away from the increasingly obsolete military role of heavy cavalry towards an emphasis on highly-skilled horsemanship as a distinguishing characteristic of nobility (Tucker, "Noble Identity"). Castiglione mentions that his ideal courtier is expected to ride well,[31] and training in how to ride lighter types of horse to their full potential became an integral part of courtly life in Italy and elsewhere in Europe over the course of the century. Noblemen from all over Europe went to Naples and later other parts of Italy to learn horsemanship at the new schools of equitation, which were often restricted to those of noble blood.[32] Over the second half of the sixteenth century, horse ballets and carousels which displayed the skilled horsemanship of the high aristocracy became a common court entertainment (Cooper, "Triumphal Entries," 56).

Horsemanship spoke explicitly of status, and the ability to ride well was one of the defining attributes of aristocracy.[33] Sir Thomas Elyot, in his courtier's manual *The Boke named the Governour*, identified horsemanship specifically with aristocracy: "the moste honorable exercise in my opinion, and that besemeth the estate of every noble persone, is to ryde suerly and clene, on a great horse ... whiche undoubtedly ... importeth a majestie and drede to inferiour persones, beholding him above the common course of men" (Elyot, 79). From classical times onwards, riding a spirited horse with skill and grace in parade in front of a crowd had been considered a way for

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[31] Castiglione, 38. See also Wells, 57–58, and Shalk, 169–175.

[32] Raber and Tucker, 22–23; Liedtke, 21, 90; Shalk, 173.

[33] Raber and Tucker, 6–14; Wells, 61; Salvadori, 113; Shalk, 173. Martin, 20, also notes that in artistic representations "l'image du chevalier continue à s'identifier à l'expression de la force militaire et de l'autorité globale de la noblesse."

leaders to demonstrate their fitness to lead. Xenophon, in the oldest surviving European treatise on horsemanship, said "men who manage such [spirited parade] horses gracefully have a magnificent appearance" (Xenophon, 355). It was just as true in the sixteenth century. Demonstrating skill in horsemanship was one of the fundamental methods of showing off and establishing status. In fact, over time *pennader* began to take on a general meaning of strutting or showing off (*Dictionnaire* V, 709; Salvadori, 113). When François Ier entered Paris in 1515, still a young man, he refused to remain under the ceremonial canopy held by the townsmen, but instead "displayed his horsemanship by continually curvetting and prancing."[34] This kind of demonstration was characteristic of aristocracy — in the entry of Charles VIII into Paris in 1484, the nobility had their "moult riches coursiers" doing "grands saults" as they paraded through the city ahead of the king (Guenée and Lehoux, 107).

The displays of horsemanship by the *enfants*, on mounts of military quality, therefore sent the message that the city's youth were splendid, capable, and worthy in terms associated with aristocracy. This message was not subtle — several of the narrators of royal entries made a deliberate point that the *enfants*' horsemanship was worthy of aristocrats. In Henri II's entry into Lyon, we are told, their horsemanship gave "grand plaisir au Roy, aux Princes, & autres Gentils-hommes, non sans s'esbahir de les voir (pour gens de Ville, & non appellez à cela) si adroits, qu'il seroit Presque impossible de mieux faire" (*Henri II Lyon 1548*, D1). By associating the offspring of the city's notables with aristocratic qualities, this horsemanship suggested that the city itself was worthy of the respect and status accorded to nobility.

The displays of horsemanship also served to set the *enfants de la ville* apart from the greater mass of their own co-citizens. The militias and armed citizens who marched ahead of the *enfants* in the procession could certainly fight effectively, and were proud of their martial bearing and abilities. But they fought as townsmen, on foot, and especially from behind town walls, which is why civic militias were usually based on missile weapons — crossbows and later arquebuses. The contrasting individuality and skill of the *enfants*' horsemanship emphasized the superior status of their fathers and the prospect of continued civic dominance by their families. They were showing, in essence, that they were the aristocracy of the city.

Finally, the demonstration of splendour and military skills by the *enfants* was a kind of gift to the king, showing what quality of men (and horses)

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[34] Bryant, 58 n. 23, quoting the description of a foreign eyewitness.

the city could provide for his service. As the narrator of Henri II's entry into Rouen described them, they were "Enfantz ... qui pour les affaires de leur Roy, ne craindroient respandre leur sang, & vie" (*Henri II Rouen 1550*, I iii).

The Mock Combat, Lyon 1548

It was more difficult to associate the less prestigious *enfants de la ville* who paraded on foot with aristocratic qualities. Emerging as a phenomenon in the middle of the century, they were generally in greater number — up to 300 — and preceded those on horse. During the civic procession before Henri II in Lyon in 1548, however, they too engaged in an elaborate and skilled athletic display, a mock combat. This combat is described in far more detail than the brief accounts of horsemanship, and it touches on some of the same fundamental issues, although its interpretation is somewhat more complicated and problematic.

This event certainly sounds spectacular in the official account of the entry, where it takes more than two pages to describe. Between the vanguard and the main body of the *enfants de la ville* on foot marched twelve men described as "Gladiateurs," divided into two teams of six, one in white, the other in red. Each member of a team was armed with a different kind of weapon, such as a two-handed sword, swords with various kinds of shields, or spears, but the range of weapons was the same on both teams. Arriving before the king, they began a combat described as "à l'antique." This term referred not to the weapons used, but rather to the way the fight was choreographed: "à l'antique, non quant aux armes, mais quant à l'ordre de se sçavoir secourir, & entrer les rangs les uns dans les autres sans se rompre." The two teams started fighting three against three, matching up different kinds of weapons, and when one set of three began to falter, their teammates stepped in to take their place, relieving them so they could rest. The fight continued furiously for half an hour, with both teams repeatedly executing variations of this relieving manoeuvre, climaxing in a six-on-six melee (matching the like weapons from each team) that only ended when the fighters were exhausted and all the weapons were broken by the fury of the combat (*Henri II Lyon 1548*, B4v-C2).

This remarkable description is clouded by two issues. First, only one of the several other accounts mentions this supposedly remarkable event, and then only in passing. The official account, where it is described in detail, was written by the main designer of the royal entry, the humanist poet Maurice

Scève, and we know from the archives that the gladiatorial combat was his idea. So there is, inevitably, a suspicion that the real event did not end up being as successful as envisaged, and that Scève's text reflects the ideal rather than the reality.[35] The mock combat proved to be influential — echoes of the gladiators appeared in other entertainments and entries in subsequent years (*Inventaire archives communales Lyon*, 34; Cooper, "Triumphal Entries," 54) — but it is impossible to say whether this influence came from witnesses to the event itself, or rather from people reading Scève's text.

The other issue is that, although the gladiators were clearly meant to be associated with the *enfants de la ville* on foot, appearing between their vanguard and the main body, we know from the archives that the city in fact hired three professional *maîtres d'armes* to organize the combat and find the other nine fighters (Cooper in *Henri II Lyon 1548*, 19). So, unlike the displays of horsemanship, this combat was not necessarily conducted by actual *enfants* themselves. Despite these complications, it is clear that the account of the combat reflects the image of the *enfants* that the city desired to project, and it can still tell us something about how this physical activity was understood.

The combat itself was a synthesis of the practices of Renaissance weapons training on the one hand, and humanist investigations of Roman combat on the other. In the sixteenth century, larger cities generally had a number of specialized masters of arms, and the practices of weapons training were not only becoming systematized, as with so many other sports, but were also becoming more respectable (Anglo, chapter 1). This training emphasized developing skills at fighting with a variety of weapon combinations, notably the combinations featured in the Lyon combat such as two-handed swords and sword-and-buckler (Anglo, 25–27). Thus to some extent the fight was a virtuoso display of professional combat skills. However, it was combined with a humanist interest in Roman practices, which was manifested in the elaborate choreography. This aspect undoubtedly reflected the investigations of Scève's fellow Lyon humanist, Guillaume du Choul, who was fascinated by Roman combat practices and was soon to publish a book on the subject.[36]

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[35] Cooper in *Henri II Lyon 1548*, 19–20, 37 (the other mention, by Denis Sauvage, is reproduced 325–326). The possible gap between the ideal described in the accounts and the reality as it actually transpired is a common problem with descriptions of royal entries: see Wantanabe-O'Kelly, "Festivals," 22; McGowan, "Triumph," 30; Cooper, "Triumphal Entries," 66.

[36] Cooper in *Henri II Lyon 1548*, 37. Further investigation is required in order to find out where Scève and du Choul got the idea that having team members relieve each other

Like the *jeu de paume* built by the city of Lyon specifically for the occasion, the combat was primarily an attempt by the city to appeal to Henri II's well-known love of sports (*Inventaire archives communales Lyon*, 34; McGowan in *Henri II Rouen 1550*, 6). In this, according to the account, it was successful, as Henri is said to have thoroughly enjoyed it "comme d'une nouvelle mode de combatre & si dangereuse" and asked that it be performed for him again a few days later (*Henri II Lyon 1548*, C1v). The combat also reinforced the overall humanist message of the entry, reminding the king and court of Lyon's past as an early Roman colony in France (Cooper in *Henri II Lyon 1548*, 39).

But the identification of these gladiators with the *enfants* also suggests that it was supposed to send a message about the *enfants* themselves, presumably an aspiration to aristocratic ideals similar to that of the horsemanship. The message is not as clear, however, because masters of arms had long been established in cities, training whoever could pay the fees in how to handle weapons. It was therefore hardly a surprise that wealthy young bourgeois could fight on foot with a variety of weapons.

The fight did reinforce the martial theme associated with the *enfants*, but there is a great deal of question about the extent to which this kind of individual weapons training was really applicable to mass infantry fighting in war (Anglo, 283). In fact, this individualism may be the key to the message. The gladiators do not appear to have been wearing any armour. They are described as "desarmez" (which refers to a lack of armour, since they carried weapons), and as dressed in satin with no mention of armour — unlike the main body of *enfants* on foot whose armour is described in detail. Fighting without armour was how masters of arms trained their pupils to fight in individual combat (Anglo, 277–280. *Henri II Lyon 1548*, B4v), and, despite the choreography, the gladiators essentially fought a series of one-on-one battles. The fighting, in other words, was more reminiscent of duelling than of war. Single combat without armour to defend points of honour — what would eventually be termed duelling — had emerged in the first half of the sixteenth century in France as an increasingly common practice among the minor nobility serving in the army (Carroll, 155–158), precisely the kind of

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in the midst of battle was a distinctive feature of ancient combat. It should be noted that matching up different kinds of weapons was not what made the fight "à l'antique" — it was common in sixteenth-century fighting demonstrations (Anglo, 25–27), and Scève does not single it out as an ancient feature. Nor did the gladiators dress in ancient-style clothing or armour (unlike the rest of the *enfants* on foot) or use ancient-style weapons.

martial status to which these young men aspired. While the combat was not exactly like a duel because of its use of shields and a variety of weapons, it was likely intended to send the message that the *enfants* were able to defend their honour in single combat in the manner of a nobleman. Equally significant was the message to their fellow-citizens. Fighting individually hand-to-hand required vastly more skill and training than fighting with missile weapons or with the massed pikes carried by the city's artisans in the same procession, and was as a consequence seen as more honourable.[37] This individual hand-to-hand combat, therefore, set these golden youth apart from their social inferiors elsewhere in the procession who wielded more prosaic weapons in mass formations. The message was not as strong as that of the *enfants* on horse, but it was perhaps the best that could be done by those on foot. It served to extend the message of athletic prowess deeper into the Lyon elite.

The combat in Lyon had some influence on future entries. Mock combats were in general more common in the second part of the entry, when king paraded into the city, or as part of the subsequent entertainments in the following days, but in a few subsequent entries combat also took place during the initial civic procession, following the model of Lyon.[38] There is a brief reference to a combat in Rouen in 1550 that clearly echoes that of Lyon. It featured gladiators marching after three bands of militia drawn from the city's artisans (not in fact *enfants d'honneur*, although their captains were), but their actual combat is only mentioned briefly and was nowhere near as elaborate (Henri II Rouen 1550, C iv, D ii, and McGowan in *Henri II Rouen 1550*, 14).

An interesting variation took place during the entry of Henri d'Anjou as King of Poland into Orléans in 1573. There, the golden youth of the *enfants d'honneur*, on horse and armed with pistols, fought a furious mock battle with the larger civic militia (confusingly called the *enfants de la ville*), who were on foot and armed with arquebuses (*Ceremonial*, 948). This

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[37] As Anglo points out (4), many manuals were written about hand-to-hand fighting, but they included almost nothing about using guns, despite the fact these were becoming a common weapon in war, because firearms provided little opportunity for skill or display. In some sense, this is still true — in many modern action films and television shows, the ultimate fighting scenes still often devolve into individual hand-to-hand combat despite its improbability when guns are available.

[38] Cooper, "Court Festival," 54, describes some of its subsequent influence, although he does not always distinguish between combat in the civic procession and elsewhere in the entry ceremonies. The combat was repeated in later royal entries into Lyon (*Ceremonial*, 942, for Henri IV's entry).

development shows the impact of constant civil war. Rather than showing off an imaginative hand-to-hand combat of individuals, the young men of the city demonstrated a realistic combat of two large groups using firearms and practical battle tactics. The foot combat may also have been influenced by similar developments happening outside of France, in Germany and Italy, in this same period, where combat between foot-soldiers started to become a standard feature of tournaments marking important ceremonial events, reflecting the increasing importance of infantry in battle. Like the Lyon combat, these tournament events featured both individual and group fighting using various weapons, between teams identified by colour. Unlike the Lyon combat, the combatants were armed like real infantry, with pike and sword, and the combat was not choreographed. What is particularly interesting about these tournament battles on foot is that they were considered noble and knightly, since noblemen increasingly fought on foot even in battle (Wantanabe-O'Kelly, "Tournaments," 459–460). Given the attachment of the French nobility to combat on horse, however (Tucker, "Eminence"), and the fact that the elite *enfants d'honneur* in the Orléans example still fought on horseback, it may be that this change in attitude happened much more slowly in France.

Concluding Thoughts

I would like to conclude with some fairly speculative thoughts about the meaning of these displays of athletic activity by *enfants de la ville* during royal entry processions.

First of all, their youth seems to have been a key factor in their appeal. It is worth remembering that their fathers, the city's notables, generally also marched in the procession. However, despite the fact that they were men of greater importance and power, the written accounts generally passed over them with a sentence or two, compared to the extended descriptions afforded to their sons.

The written descriptions of the *enfants*' athletic activity celebrated the youthful exuberance of this "belle & vigoureuse jeunesse" (*Ceremonial*, 933), and also an independence from the social constraints that came with adult responsibilities. In most of the procession, the descriptive emphasis was on the sedate, well-ordered dignity suitable for corporate bodies and civic leaders:

"plusieurs bourgeois sur roncins / Qui sagement se contenoient."[39] The displays of athleticism by the *enfants*, by contrast, projected a sense of individuality and vitality. Because they were young, and because they were not yet responsible heads of households, they had the freedom to express themselves with their bodies in a way that would be inappropriate for their elders.[40]

This dichotomy highlights the importance of athletic skill as a marker of aristocratic status. As warriors, aristocrats literally worked with their highly trained bodies, whereas the city's notables worked with their brains, as merchants and magistrates. It was significant that as the French educational system developed in the seventeenth century, the children of the high nobility were likely to attend the new military academies such as that of Antoine de Pluvinel, which focused heavily on horsemanship and other physical training such as dancing, fencing and gymnastics (van Orden, 198), while the children of urban notables attended the new Jesuit schools, which put more emphasis on intellectual subjects such as classical literature.

While some townsmen had the wealth to ape the trappings of aristocracy in terms of clothing and land, achieving the physical skills of an aristocrat was a more challenging step for a city family seeking to live nobly and eventually be recognized as noble. Skilled horsemanship required extensive, time-consuming training of both horse and rider. Through their athletic display, the *enfants de la ville* at least temporarily shed the sedentary image of their mercantile and administrative families, and claimed a place for themselves and, by extension, their city in the aristocratic honour system, based on physical prowess, which governed status in France. It was a claim that could only be asserted fully through physical activity.

This physical statement contrasted with the eloquent speeches given by the representatives of the other groups in the procession, such as the clergy, city council and magistrates. These speeches displayed the quality of the city's citizens through their erudition, assuring the king of the city's willingness to serve, but also suggesting the rights and privileges to which the city felt entitled and the "power and hope of the citizens who did him homage" (McGowan,

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[39] Guenée and Lehoux, 106, from the entry of Charles VIII into Paris, 1484.

[40] It is fascinating to contrast this celebration of exuberant horsemanship with the very different emphasis on control and discipline exhibited in French seventeenth-century horsemanship. It reinforces the overall sense of transformation, in many different areas of activity, from the exuberance of French Renaissance culture in the mid-sixteenth century to the restraint and control of French neo-classical culture by the mid-seventeenth century.

14; McFarlane in *Henri II Paris 1549*, 48). Such speeches displayed sedentary, intellectual skills such as rhetoric and erudition that typecast the groups they represented as bourgeois (although in some entries, the captain of the *enfants* also gave a speech).[41] The message of the *enfants* had similar content — a willingness to serve the king, but also an assertion of status. By contrast, however, they conveyed this message visually and physically, through their splendid, martial costumes and through their display of athletic skill.

Their performance in the procession also contrasted with the decoration of the city. Commissioned and designed by urban notables, rife with rarified visual allusions and sententious inscriptions that often went over the heads of even educated spectators, these decorations often spoke more to the tastes and sentiments of an urban elite than to the traditional aristocracy or even to the greater mass of humble citizens.[42] The *enfants*' direct display of splendour and athleticism, offering wealth and service to the king while requesting recognition of status from him, could well have been more comprehensible and had a greater impact on the king and most of the audience. When Maurice Scève added an elaborate combat to the civic procession in front of Henri II, he may well have had in mind that it would convey the city's messages more effectively to the king than the complex and erudite architectural decorations with which he embellished the city.

Although the *enfants* displayed remarkable skill in the aristocratic sports of horsemanship and single combat, there was one area of aristocratic physical prowess they could not hope to emulate — full scale jousting. Townsmen certainly engaged in various kinds of light pseudo-jousting, such as riding at the quintain and water-jousting on rowboats (Cooper in *Henri II Lyon 1548*, 93–94). But there was no way they could afford the equipment or the training time required to engage in full-armour heavy tournament jousting, nor could they be part of its military extension, the heavy lance-based cavalry that was the most prestigious element in the French military. Treva Tucker has proposed that it was this quality as a marker of social status that explains the persistence of full-armour lance charges in French warfare

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[41] Roy, 63; Wintroub, 485. For speeches by the captain of the *enfants*, Tricou, 116; McFarlane in *Henri II Paris 1549*, 23.

[42] McGowan in *Henri II Rouen 1550*, 13ff, details numerous instances during the entry of Henri II into Rouen where the well-educated foreign ambassadors misunderstood the allusions and symbolism of the decorations. Also McGowan, "Triumph," 29, McFarlane in *Henri II Paris 1549*, 50, Cooper, "Triumphal Entries," 67. Migneault, 9–10; Wintroub, 485, 491.

even as they lost their military effectiveness, a factor that probably applied to the persistence of jousting as a sport as well (Tucker, "Eminence").

When the *enfants* were parading and fighting in royal entry processions, they were displaying skills that might have made them effective as light cavalry (Tucker, "Eminence," 1060), but they were unable to reach for the status of jousters or heavy cavalry that was still the pinnacle of aristocratic skill in both sport and war at the time. However, the dominance of full-armour sport and combat was waning. During the civil wars of the second half of the century, full-armoured lance charges were increasingly exposed as ineffective, and Henri II's death in a jousting match made the sporting version less attractive as well.[43]

By the end of the century, this mode of action had been largely abandoned in both war and sport, to be replaced by lighter cavalry tactics — tactics for which these young bourgeois were already developing the required skills. Significantly, by the seventeenth century a wealthy young bourgeois, his family ennobled through royal office-holding, could acquire the athletic skills and equipment required to be successful in the most prestigious branches of the cavalry, which had not been the case half a century before. Indeed, the prosopography of notable families in Rouen shows that, over the course of the seventeenth century, many of their younger sons went into military service (Frondeville, *Présidents* and *Conseillers*, *passim*). These developments probably played a role in the changes in the relationship between civic notables and traditional aristocracy in that century. At the same time, this bourgeois horsemanship may have been a factor in pushing the ever-increasing refinement of French horsemanship in the seventeenth century — possibly in part as a way of ensuring the accepted styles remained too difficult and abstruse for non-aristocrats to learn easily.

The architectural decorations in a royal entry are often interpreted as creating an image of an ideal city for the king (e.g. Wagner, 30). The corollary is that the civic procession by the city's inhabitants in front of their monarch presented the king with his ideal citizens — splendid, wealthy, proud, martial,

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[43] Tucker, *passim*. McFarlane in *Henri II Paris 1549*, 61, notes that the traditional post-entry tournament in Paris was no longer held after Henri II's reign because "the death of Henri II in a joust cast its shadow over subsequent entries in this respect." We have no way of knowing whether members of the *enfants de la ville* in fact engaged in light cavalry warfare in the sixteenth century, although given the demand for trained horsemen as soldiers during the Wars of Religion, and the considerable amount of local skirmishing between factions that took place, it seems possible some of them did.

loyal and well-ordered. Among them, the *enfants de la ville* stood out as the most splendid of all, full of vitality and potential in the service of their city and their king. When they furthermore displayed their athleticism through horsemanship and combat, they transcended their everyday status in order to emulate a higher ideal of a royal subject, standing out from their fellow citizens as not merely urban notables, but as a veritable civic aristocracy.

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