CATALONIA AND THE MIDI: SIXTY YEARS OF MEDIEVAL URBAN HISTORY (1946-2006)

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Date of reception: 29th of December, 2006
Final date of acceptance: 27th of November, 2007

ABSTRACT

As the Mediterranean has surged to the forefront of medieval studies, so, too, the urban history of Catalonia and the Midi has attained an increasingly prominent place. Urban historiography roughly tracks that of medieval history more generally —institutional history predominated in 1940s and 1950s, followed by economic history in the 1960s and 1970s, and then by social and cultural history from the 1970s to the present. Yet the various methodologies employed by social and cultural historians, together with the continued presence of traditional approaches, have helped the field to reach an enviable level of vitality. The diversity of the field, however, calls into question the extent to which it really exists as a field.

KEY WORDS

Urban history, Economy, Bourgeoisie, Catalonia, France.

CAPITALIA VERBA

Vrbana historia, Oeconomia, Optimates, Catalaunia, Gallia.

1. Introduction

Historiographers seeking to identity which way history is headed have two powerful instruments at their disposal: academic prizes and academic journals. The latter reflect the thinking of publishers and editors as they try to tap into those fields where they anticipate the greatest demand will be; the former reflect the thinking of historians themselves, as they identify contemporary works that seem to them to be the most worthy of admiration and imitation. When both instruments point in the same direction and receive confirmation from additional sources, then one can feel confident that an important change is taking place.

Between 1986 and 1990, medieval historians found themselves confronted with a new challenge: how to keep straight the titles of all the new academic journals devoted to Mediterranean history. The *Mediterranean Historical Review* published its first volume in 1986; *Mediterranean Studies* did the same in 1989, followed by the *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* in 1990.[1] Brill Academic Publishers established its book series "The Medieval Mediterranean" in 1993; the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, in cooperation with the Mediterranean Studies Association (incorporated in 1994), put out the first volume in the "Mediterranean Studies Texts and Monographs" series in 2002.

Future historiographers will likely explain this Mediterranean flood in terms of concurrent geopolitical, demographic, and cultural shifts. The end of the Cold War, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the perception that the new era's defining conflict would be a "clash of civilizations" pitting the West against the Middle East, turned eyes toward the long history of conflict and interaction between Christendom and Islam —and, by extension, to the geographical area where that conflict and interaction took place. The influx of Hispanic immigrants into the United States (the "browning of America,") and the sometimes fraught relations between European natives, on the one hand, and Muslim immigrants and their descendants, on the other, also generated increasing interest in the religiously and ethnically heterogeneous Mediterranean world. Ideological commitments to multiculturalism, too, led scholars to the Mediterranean. Admittedly, some commentators have queried just how "Mediterranean" some recent Mediterranean history really is, implying that the term is employed on occasion as an "alluring shorthand" for southern Europe.[2] But

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1. The idea for this essay came to me after I participated in a roundtable discussion devoted to "Urban Culture in the Mediterranean Region and Its Place in Medieval Studies," held at the 38th International Congress on Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo, Michigan, on 9 May 2003. My thanks to all those who organized, participated in, and attended this roundtable. My thanks, too, to Professor Flocel Sabaté, whose kind invitation to contribute to the inaugural issue of *Imago Temporis. Medium Aevum* gave me the nudge I needed to complete the essay. Finally, I would like to thank Professors Paul Freedman and Max Turull i Rubinat for generously sharing with me offprints of their works relevant to this essay.

On the proliferation of Mediterranean journals from the mid 1980s onward, see Alcock, Susan E. "Alphabet Soup in the Mediterranean Basin: the Emergence of the Mediterranean Serial", *Rethinking the Mediterranean*, William Vernon Harris, ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005: 314-336.

2. Horden, Peregrine. "Review of *Mediterranean Urban Culture, 1400-1700*". *The Medieval Review*. 29 January 2003. Western Michigan University, 2 November 2006 <name.umdl.umich.edu/baj9928.0301.029>. See

whether they see it as a marketing device or as an analytic unit, medieval historians are happy today to describe themselves as scholars of the Mediterranean.

The history of Mediterranean Europe encompasses far more than the urban history of medieval Catalonia and the Midi. Nevertheless, on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, that sub-field currently enjoys a certain pride of place. In North America, Stephen Bensch's *Barcelona and Its Rulers* won the Medieval Academy of America's John Nicholas Brown Prize in 1999, and Daniel Smail's *Imaginary Cartographies: Possession and Identity in Medieval Marseille* won (among others) the American Historical Association's Herbert Baxter Adams Prize in 2000. Smail now holds a position at Harvard University, and Paul Freedman, another scholar who has worked in the field, teaches at Yale University. One might also mention the numerous prizes awarded to two recent books that, while not works of urban history per se, nonetheless were largely set in Catalan and Occitan towns: David Nirenberg's *Communities of Violence: the Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* and Fredric Cheyette's *Ermengard of Narbonne and the World of the Troubadors*.[3] As for European interest in the field, the "XVII Congrés de Història de la Corona de Aragó," held at Barcelona and Lleida in 2000, took as its theme the urban history of the Crown of Aragon between 1137 and 1716. The proceedings of that conference consist of more than 180 essays, which comprise more than 2,600 printed pages.[4]

The purpose of this essay is to provide a selective historiographical survey of Catalan and southern French urban history. By no means does this essay examine, or even mention, every book and article of significance to the field. Space and time limitations have led me to exclude, for example, scholarship that focuses on Jews and Muslims, except in cases where authors have embedded that scholarship in broader studies of Christian urban society. For some books and articles, but not others, I have included critical reflections about their central claims. The presence or absence of such reflections should not be taken as presumptive evidence of my broader opinion of a book's overall quality or merit —I have included these reflections only when they seemed germane to the book's historiographical significance. And, of course, these reflections represent nothing more than one reader's perspective. Were any of the authors under consideration here to have written this essay, it would contain a different set of observations.

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also Horden, Peregrine; Purcell, Nicholas. "The Mediterranean and 'the New Thalassology'". *American Historical Review*, 111 (2006): 722-740.

3. Nirenberg, David. *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996; Cheyette, Fredric L. *Ermengard of Narbonne and the World of the Troubadors*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001.

4. *El món urbà a la Corona d'Aragó del 1137 als decrets de Nova Planta (XVII Congrés de Història de la Corona de Aragó)*, 3 volumes. Barcelona: Publicacions Universitat de Barcelona, 2003.

2. Urban history as institutional history: the 1940s and 1950s

To make sense of recent historiographical developments, it is necessary to place them in a broader scholarly trajectory that stretches back several generations. Specifically, we must consider briefly how urban history was practiced in the 1940s and 1950s, a period when institutional and economic approaches to urban history predominated. These approaches can be illustrated by considering three historians (one Catalan, one North American, and one French) who, within a span of eight years, each published a book that would serve as a touchstone for much of what was to come: Josep Maria Font Rius, who published *Orígenes del régimen municipal de Cataluña* in 1946; John Mundy, who published *Liberty and Political Power in Toulouse, 1050-1230* in 1954; and Philippe Wolff, whose *Commerces et marchands de Toulouse (vers 1350-vers 1450)* appeared in that same year.[5]

Font Rius' study of the origins of municipal government in medieval Catalonia remains an impressive achievement, and in certain respects it has not yet been equaled. The chronological and geographical sweep of *Orígenes del régimen municipal* sets it apart from most every other book that will be discussed here. Font Rius examines the emergence and development of urban governments in all of Catalonia's towns during the twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries. (Font Rius also examines those villages that adopted forms of government modeled after urban ones.) The massive scholarship on which Font Rius' study rests is evident in his 1,089 footnotes, which are filled with extensive extracts from printed and archival sources —even today, readers can learn much simply by glancing at the book's scholarly apparatus. Expansive in scope, *Orígenes del régimen municipal* is less broad in its methodology, because Font Rius practices an especially pure sort of positivist institutional history. He attributes the emergence of municipal government neither to social developments nor to any other sort of external force, but rather to administrative imperatives: municipal governments emerged to facilitate cooperation between royal and local officials, and the development of urban institutions reflects an unending quest for greater administrative efficiency.

An emphasis on institutional history characterizes John Mundy's *Liberty and Political Power at Toulouse* as well, as chapter titles such as "The Mid-Twelfth Century Constitution," "The Rise of the Consulate," and "The Decline of the Vicar" suggest. Like Font Rius, Mundy places his subject in a tripartite chronological schema. For Font Rius, the three stages consisted of a premature attempt at the foundation of urban governments during the late twelfth century, a subsequent and more successful attempt to found such governments during the second half of the thirteenth century, and the spread of such governments to non-urban locations during the fourteenth century. Mundy's three-part chronology, on the other hand, covers a

5. Font Rius, Josep Maria. *Orígenes del régimen municipal de Cataluña*. Madrid: Instituto Nacional de Estudios Jurídicos, 1954; Mundy, John. *Liberty and Political Power in Toulouse, 1050-1230*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1954; Wolff, Philippe. *Commerces et marchands de Toulouse (vers 1350-vers 1450)*. Paris: Librairie Plon, 1954. One could, of course, name other important works from the same period, such as Gouron, André. *La réglementation des métiers en Languedoc au Moyen Age*. Geneva: E. Droz, 1958.

much briefer period: "an epoch" between the early twelfth and early thirteenth centuries "in which the political form went from monarchy, through aristocracy, to democracy."[6] Mundy's geographical focus, needless to say, is also much narrower than that of Font Rius.

Perhaps most importantly, Mundy tries to connect institutional development to non-administrative forces. Mundy himself characterizes his study as "a social history of political power," and he sees social change as the motor driving institutional change.[7] The formation circa 1150 of a land-based urban patriciate, which provided the town with its own leadership, sparked Toulouse's subsequent drive for liberty from its lords. In 1202, a merchant-led "popular party" broke the landholding patrician "oligarchy," established control of the urban government, and launched Toulouse's attempt to conquer the surrounding countryside with the intention of eliminating tolls, promoting free trade, and opening markets to Toulousan goods.

Philippe Wolff published his seminal study of Toulouse's merchants in the same year that Mundy published *Liberty and Political Power*, yet *Commerces et marchands* is a markedly different book. Because he dealt with the period from 1350 to 1450, Wolff had available to him a richer source base. Wolff draws upon Toulouse's administrative documents (royal charters and town ordinances), but he also makes heavy use of notarial manuals and the economic contracts contained therein to reconstruct what he terms the "Directions and Objects of Toulousan Commerce" and the "Methods of Exchange." Wolff examines the movements of foodstuffs, raw materials, and manufactured goods between Toulouse and various parts of Europe (including England, Spain, and Italy), and he also studies the history of currency, credit, and transportation in order to uncover the mechanisms that made commerce possible. After *Commerces et marchands*, economics would be at the center of urban history for decades to come.

Although Wolff is able to reconstruct Toulouse's economic history in vastly greater detail than Mundy can reconstruct its social history, he faces the same problem as Mundy: deciding what place to give the town's governing institutions in his book. Wolff does not follow Mundy and argue that institutional development was an expression of social development. Neither does he follow Font Rius and depict institutional development as autonomous. Instead, Wolff largely leaves the town's institutional history aside, and his avoidance of institutional history might be seen as reflecting an *Annaliste* influence that is certainly evident elsewhere in *Commerces et marchands* —indeed, Wolff's book played a crucial role in opening the field of urban history to broader intellectual influences. In his avant-propos, Wolff speaks movingly of his wartime meetings and conversations with Marc Bloch. The book's first part is a lengthy introduction that assesses the milieu in which the Toulousan economy operated, and in the best *Annaliste* tradition, this milieu is presented in the broadest possible terms —it includes both demographic and military considerations, especially the Black Death and the Hundred Years War, and Wolff's

6. Font Rius, Josep Maria. *Orígenes del regimen municipal...*: 352-411; Mundy, John. *Liberty and Political Power...*: xii-xiii.

7. Mundy, John. *Liberty and Political Power...*: xii.

analysis of the Toulousan economy is attentive to geographical considerations as well. Wolff's chapter on "Individual Destinies," which charts the careers of several different merchant families and their individual members, points toward a more richly developed social history; his chapter on "Problèmes humaines" considers the town's surviving late-medieval buildings and, based on information culled from wills, the physical objects that existed inside them. Using these expressions of material culture, Wolff strives to describe how the inhabitants of Toulouse lived and understood their world. In this sense, *Commerces et marchands* is a trailblazing work in the field of urban mentality.

One should not speak of Catalan, French, and North American "schools" of urban history. There has been too much fruitful exchange of ideas, subjects, and methods among scholars of all nationalities for any such schools to emerge. Nonetheless, one can make a case that since the 1940s and 1950s, there have been Catalan, French, and North American historiographical tendencies, many of which have their origins in the influence exerted by the pioneering works of Font Rius, Wolff, and Mundy.[8]

3. Urban history as economic history: the 1960s and 1970s

The pre-eminence of institutional history in the 1940s and 1950s yielded to that of economic history in the 1960s and 1970s. It was not simply a matter of historians following Wolff's lead and paying more attention to economics (trade, manufacturing, wages, and so on). It was also a matter of historians emphasizing the explanatory importance of economics, and treating both institutional and social developments as the outcome of economic transformations and dislocations. Two of the greatest products of this historiographical development are Claude Carrère's *Barcelone, centre économique à l'époque des difficultés, 1380-1462* and Carme Batlle i Gallart's *La crisis social y económica de Barcelona a mediados del siglo XV*.[9] Both Carrère's and Batlle i Gallart's books argue for, or at least take as their premise, the causal primacy of economics, and they both treat Barcelona during roughly the same period. Yet they are hardly interchangeable. Carrère is interested in economics for economics' sake, and in that regard he resembles his fellow Frenchman Wolff more than Mundy or Font Rius. Batlle i Gallart, with her somewhat more muted emphasis on economics and her evident interest in the history of urban institutions, comes closer to her fellow Catalan Font Rius.

8. On differences between medieval studies as practiced in North America and in Europe, see van Oostrom, Frits. "Spatial Struggles: Medieval Studies between Nationalism and Globalization". *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 105 (2006): 5-24.

9. Batlle i Gallart, Carme. *La crisis social y económica de Barcelona a mediados del siglo XV*, 2 volumes. Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1973; Carrère, Claude. *Barcelone, centre économique à l'époque des difficultés, 1380-1462*. 2 volumes. Paris and the Hague: Mouton & Co., 1967. For a bibliography of Batlle i Gallart's publications between 1955 and 2004, see "Bibliografia de Carme Batlle i Gallart". *Acta Historica et Archaeologica Mediaevalia (Homenatge a la Prof. Dra. Carme Batlle i Gallart)*, 26 (2005): 14-26.

Based on Carrère's systematic examination of some 4,000 notarial registers and of the town's administrative records (not to mention documents that he found in royal registers too numerous to be read in their entirety), *Barcelone, centre économique* provides readers with an enormously detailed reconstruction of mercantile activity. Some 650 out of its nearly 1,000 pages are given over to a description of Barcelona's merchants (their legal status and organization, their commercial training and techniques) and of the "structures" that supported their commercial activity (the shipping fleet, the agricultural and manufacturing sectors that provided the merchants with products to trade, the merchants' contacts in markets throughout continental Europe and the Mediterranean region). In the final third of the book, Carrère argues that between 1380 and 1462, an economic crisis enveloped Barcelona with such disastrous consequences that it ultimately resulted in Catalonia's civil war between 1462 and 1472, in Barcelona's fall from major Mediterranean center to regional capital, and in the reduction of Catalonia to a second-rank power that could not keep up with Castile.

Using municipal tax records that reflect changing consumption levels, royal tax records that reflect the importation and exportation of goods, price series (especially of cloth) that Carrère uses to estimate trends in wages, as well as a slew of administrative documents in which contemporaries spoke of and reacted to their current economic situation, Carrère argues that the economic crisis moved through two main stages. Between 1380 and 1420, Barcelona edged toward an economic crisis; during the decade between 1420 and 1430, Barcelona moved "from a period of difficulties that were real but not yet catastrophic, to a much more profound problem, an outright crisis."[10] The root of the problem was not demographic —despite the ravages of the Black Death, Carrère feels that peasant immigration and the acquisition of slaves kept the population of Barcelona more stable than one might have thought, at least until the end of the fourteenth century. Rather, Barcelona's difficulties from the 1380s onward were rooted in falling wages, at least in the clothmaking industry; in a series of banking collapses; and in bad currency. In other words, the causes of Barcelona's problems were financial, and what pushed Barcelona from a difficult to a catastrophic situation was, according to Carrère, a *"conjuncture internationale,"* an international financial crisis that dragged Barcelona, and with Barcelona the whole of Catalonia, into an economic predicament that it never managed to solve during the Middle Ages.[11] The major political events and institutional reforms of the period: the attempted reform of Barcelona's government in the 1380s; the emergence of the *Biga* and *Busca* factions in the 1430s and 1440s, with the former favoring the status quo and strong money, and the latter favoring change and devaluation; even Catalonia's civil war between 1462 and 1472, were all ultimately examples of a "rupture of the social equilibrium," a rupture that had been in the making ever since Barcelona entered its period of economic difficulties.[12]

10. Carrère, Claude. *Barcelone...*: 663.

11. Carrère, Claude. *Barcelone...*: 752.

12. Carrère, Claude. *Barcelone...*: 928.

Some specific elements of Carrère's analysis are open to question. One sympathizes with Carrère's statement that, if he had examined the period from 1348 to 1380 as scrupulously as he examined the period from 1380 to 1462, he would never have been able to finish a book that is already very long. Still, it is difficult to demonstrate the emergence of a crisis in the 1380s without demonstrating the absence of a crisis in the preceding decades —one wonders just how financially sound and socially cohesive Barcelona really was in the 1350s, 1360s, and 1370s. Although Carrère argues that low wages were an essential part of Barcelona's problems, leading to lower levels of consumption, he does not have records that permit him to observe wage levels and movements directly —he extrapolates wage levels from cloth prices, but those prices surely changed in response not just to the wage levels of potential purchasers, but to other factors as well. The evidence for the "international economic conjuncture" that allegedly brought Barcelona's economy to the point of ruin in the 1420s is surprisingly thin; in effect, the evidence consists of Jacques Heers' work on the economic history of fifteenth-century Genoa and some scraps of information about Marseille.[13] Yet, even though one can question when, how, and why Barcelona fell into the difficult situation that Carrère describes, there seems little doubt that Carrère's assessment and description of that situation remains as compelling as ever.

Carme Batlle i Gallart's *Crisis social y económica* provides a narrative of social conflict and that conflict's consequences for Barcelona's institutional development. Although the author begins with an examination of thirteenth-and fourteenth-century antecedents —the first three chapters examine the revolt of Berenguer Oller in 1285, the king's short-lived attempt to reform Barcelona's municipal government in 1386, and the attack against the town's Jewish quarter in 1391 respectively— most of the book is given over to the conflict between the *Biga* and the *Busca* parties. Batlle i Gallart narrates the rise of the two parties in the second quarter of the fifteenth century, the *Busca*'s brief period in power during the 1450s, and the ways in which the struggle between *Biga* and *Busca* contributed to the outbreak of civil war in 1462. However brief royal support for the reforming program of *Busca* might have been, that support alienated those citizens of Barcelona who supported the *Biga*, especially the *honrats*, or rentiers, who constituted the wealthiest segment of Barcelona's society. Batlle i Gallart condemns the *Biga* and holds them responsible for causing the confrontation between themselves and the *Busca*, and thereby precipitating a civil war that punished the whole of Catalonia —she characterizes the position taken by the *Biga* as "arrogant" and a "defense of class interests."[14]

For all of its emphasis on narrative development, policy, and municipal government, Batlle i Gallart's *Crisis social y económica* represents a fusion of the Catalan emphasis on institutional history with the period's emphasis on the primacy of economics. The book started out as a dissertation written under the supervision of Jaume Vicens Vives (and, after his death, by Emilio Sáez), who was (along with Pierre

13. Carrère, Claude. *Barcelone...*: 752-755.

14. Batlle i Gallart, Carme. *Crisis...*: 377.

Vilar) instrumental in introducing a more structuralist and economically oriented approach to Catalan history.[15] Batlle i Gallart agrees that the *Biga* and *Busca* emerged out of "a serious internal social crisis, which was related to an economic depression," and if the economic roots of that depression are not discussed in nearly as much detail as its consequences, that is because, as Batlle i Gallart states, Carrère's book had already appeared during the course of her investigations, causing her to shift her emphasis "toward the social component and toward municipal reforms."[16]

Hindsight makes it clear that predicting the historiographical future is a futile undertaking. Of the historians already discussed, some stuck closely throughout their careers to the topics and methods with which they first made their name: such is the case with Josep Maria Font Rius.[17] Some, like Philippe Wolff, moved into new fields that might be connected in obvious ways to Occitan urban history (for example, Wolff's work on the history of late-medieval popular revolution), but then again, might not be (for example, Wolff's work on the history of language.) More often than not, though, scholars such as Mundy, Carrère, and Batlle i Gallart changed along with the field of urban history itself, as it moved away from institutional and economic history, and instead came to focus increasingly on social history and the history of urban mentalities.

4. Urban history as social history and as cultural history: from the 1970s to the present

In the field of urban history (as elsewhere), the rise of social history has been marked by the increasingly detailed and sophisticated study of specific segments within urban society. This trend could be illustrated in many different ways: recent work on slaves and slavery, especially as they existed in Barcelona, or artisans, or the family.[18] In two areas, however, social history has been exceptionally

15. On Jaume Vicens Vives, see Payne, Stanley G. "Jaime Vicens Vives and the Writing of Spanish History". *Journal of Modern History*, 34 (1962): 119-134. Jaume Aurell i Cardona's recent survey of Iberian scholarship is useful for understanding the nature and significance of this shift: Aurell i Cardona, Jaume. "A Secret Realm: Current Trends in Spanish Medieval Studies". *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 105 (2006): 61-86.

16. Batlle i Gallart, Carme. *Crisis...*: 16, 378.

17. Font Rius, Josep Maria. "La significació de la història municipal". *Barcelona: Quaderns d'Història*, 4 (2001): 9-17, defines its subject in terms strikingly similar to the ones that Font Rius had used fifty-five years earlier in *Orígines del régimen municipal*.

18. On slaves: Batlle i Gallart, Carme. "Els esclaus domestics a Barcelona vers 1300", *De l'esclavitud a la llibertat: esclaus i lliberts a l'edat mitjana (Actes del Col.loqui Internacional celebrat a Barcelona del 27 al 29 de maig de 1999)*, Maria Teresa Ferrer i Mallol, Josefa Mutgé Vives, eds. Barcelona: Consell Superior d'Investigacions Cientifiques, 2000: 265-296; Bensch, Stephen. "From Prizes of War to Domestic Merchandise: the Changing Face of Slavery in Catalonia and Aragon, 1000-1300". *Viator*, 25 (1994): 63-94; Hernando i Delgado, Josep. *Els esclaus islàmics a Barcelona: blancs, negres, llors i turcs: de l'esclavitud a la llibertat*. Barcelona: Consell Superior d'Investigacions Cientifiques, 2003; Mutgé i Vives, Josefa. "Les ordinacions del municipi de Barcelona sobre els esclaus", *De l'esclavitud a la llibertat...*: 245-264. On artisans:

vigorous and innovative: the history of women and the history of merchants. The latter had always figured in traditional institutional history, thanks to merchants' overrepresentation in municipal governments; women, by virtue of their exclusion from those same governments, were hardly to be found in works of institutional history. Yet the surge of women to the forefront of urban social history has hardly forced merchants out of the spotlight.[19]

4.1. Women

Teresa-Maria Vinyoles i Vidal's *Les barcelonines a les darreries de l'edat mitjana, 1370-1410*, published in 1976, was a door-opening work in the history of urban women.[20] Its goal is to provide basic information about the experiences of women throughout their lifecycle: what their names most commonly were, how they dressed, and how they were educated; what sorts of jobs they worked; how and where their marriages took place. Information about these subjects was not abundant, which helps to explain the brevity of Vinyoles i Vidal's book. The text is little more than one hundred pages long, and the same concision characterizes other important studies of urban women by Leah Lydia Otis and Rebecca Winer, discussed below. To create as complete a portrait as possible, Vinyoles i Vidal combines both archival sources and literary sources, such as the sermons of Vicent Ferrer and the writings of Francesc Eiximenis and Bernat Metge —indeed, archival and literary sources play equally important roles in *Les barcelonines*, which remains exceptional in its willingness to employ both. Yet the significance of *Les barcelonines* resided not so much in its specific conclusions or in its methodology as in its very existence. The women of medieval Barcelona, at long last, had a monograph of their own.

Bonnassie, Pierre. *La organización del trabajo en Barcelona a fines del siglo XV*. Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1975; Batlle i Gallart, Carme. "La família i la casa d'un draper de Barcelona, Burguet de Banyeres (primera meitat del segle XIII)". *Acta Historica et Archaelogica Mediaevalia*, 2 (1981): 69-91; Julià Viñamata, José-Ramón. "La menestralía barcelonesa del primer tercio del siglo XIV a través de un manual notarial de testamentos", *Història urbana del Pla de Barcelona: Actes del II Congrés d'Història del Pla de Barcelona celebrat a l'Institut Municipal d'Història els dies 6 i 7 de desembre de 1985*, Anna Maria Adroer i Tasis, ed., 2 volumes. Barcelona: Institut Municipal d'Història, 1989-1990: I, 277-292. On the family: Michaud, Francine. *Un signe des temps: accroissement des crises familiales autour de patrimonie à Marseille à la fin du XIIIe siècle*. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1994; Otis-Cour, Leah. "Les 'pauvres enfants exposés' à Montpellier aux XIVe et XVe siècles". *Annales du Midi*, 105 (1993): 309-327.

19. In addition to the books discussed below, see: Batlle i Gallart, Carme. "Noticias sobre la mujer catalana en el mundo de los negocios", *El trabajo de las mujeres en la Edad Media hispana*, Angela Muñoz Fernández, Cristina Segura Graiño, eds. Madrid: Asociación Cultural Al-Mudayna, 1988: 201-221; Batlle i Gallart, Carme; Palomares, Marta. "La història de la dona a la Barcelona del segle XIII, segons els testaments". *Universitas Tarraconensis*, 10 (1991): 13-31; Winer, Rebecca Lynn. "Defining Rape in Medieval Perpignan: Women Plaintiffs before the Law". *Viator*, 31 (2000): 165-183; Haluska-Rausch, Elizabeth. "Transformations in the Powers of Wives and Widows near Montpellier, 985-1213", *The Experience of Power in Medieval Europe, 950-1350*, Robert F. Berkhofer III, Alan Cooper, Adam Kosto, eds. Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2005: 153-168.

20. Vinyoles i Vidal, Teresa-Maria. *Les barcelonines a les darreries de l'edat mitjana*. Barcelona: Fundació Salvador Vives Casajuana, 1976.

Leah L. Otis's *Prostitution in Medieval Society: the History of an Urban Institution in Languedoc*, published in 1985, similarly helped to establish the history of women as central to the growing field of urban social history, especially in North America. John Mundy's frank admission in his *Men and Women at Toulouse in the Age of the Cathars*, published in 1990, reveals just how easy it once had been to write women out of urban history: during his first examination of Toulouse's records in 1946, he habitually excluded female first names from his transcriptions, as he did not think that those women were likely to be of any importance.[21] Mundy himself, through his own subsequent contributions to the field, helped to fill the gap that by the 1980s had become obvious, yet it was Otis's work (based on a dissertation written under John Mundy's supervision) that marked a North American turning point.

However novel its subject matter, *Prostitution in Medieval Society* is written in an idiom that even the most traditional scholars can understand and feel comfortable with, for, as Otis puts it, "the sources available have made it [*Prostitution in Medieval Society*] perforce institutional in orientation; if it must be seen as part of a larger history, then it is a chapter in the history of urban institutions."[22] *Prostitution in Medieval Society* is marked by its careful, lengthy, and ultimately positivist rather than postmodernist readings of individual documents (nearly all regulatory in nature), as well as by its wide geographical reach. (Otis wrote the whole of the book while in France during an extended stay there —her prolonged residence in Languedoc enabled her to work in a variety of archives and to examine prostitution in a number of different towns and villages big and small.) In spirit and scope, Otis' work resembles Font Rius', even if her subject matter is not one that he was likely to tackle.

Like Font Rius, Otis describes a general evolution of prostitution that spanned centuries. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, prostitution was "accepted," while during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, it was "institutionalized." Until circa 1300, prostitution was only lightly regulated, with certain areas declared off-limits to prostitutes, or with prostitutes allowed to work only one day per week. (In smaller towns and in villages, which could not support continuously operating brothels, this temporal rather than spatial regulation of prostitution remained the norm even as larger places adopted new ways of regulating the trade.) In the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, larger towns such as Montpellier and Narbonne began to confine prostitution to specific streets (known as the "Hot Street" in Montpellier) or individual houses. Such confinement offered prostitutes a certain amount of protection, as any attempt to expel prostitutes from their designated place or to injure them might be regarded as an offense against municipal or even royal authority. It also helped to protect the prostitutes' clients, as royal officials were forbidden to arrest for the crime of adultery men found with prostitutes in the designated areas (this exemption would later be lifted during the course of the fifteenth century). The primary reason for spatial confinement, however, seems to

21. Mundy, John. *Men and Women at Toulouse in the Age of the Cathars*. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1990: ix.

22. Otis, Leah Lydia. *Prostitution in Medieval Society: the History of an Urban Institution in Languedoc*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985.

have been a desire to maintain public order by limiting the mayhem associated with prostitution to a specific place that could be watched.

A similar thirteenth-century attempt to deal with some of the fallout generated by prostitution was the establishment of "houses of repentance," which provided support for women who wished to leave their careers as prostitutes, either of their own free will or because they had grown too old to support themselves financially through prostitution. As municipalities intervened more directly in the functioning of prostitution, they likewise took more of a hand in the establishment and operation of these "houses of repentance." Toward the end of the fourteenth century, towns themselves acquired ownership of brothels, farming them out to investors who oversaw day-to-day operations. The farming out of brothels meant that brothel management increasingly became a male rather than a female occupation (though some women purchased the farm for brothels as well), and municipal governments sometimes earmarked the revenue gained through brothel ownership for charitable purposes. Their new stake in the financial success of these brothels caused towns to stamp out with greater vigor the competition posed by unauthorized brothels and unaffiliated individuals. The sixteenth century saw "the institution dismantled," as Protestant influence led town governments to close their municipal brothels.

Information about the women themselves is hard to come by in the sources. Prostitutes seem rarely to have worked in their home towns but instead came from elsewhere, and some of them earned enough money to make substantial bequests in their wills. Beyond that, the prostitutes remain elusive figures. Nonetheless, *Prostitution in Medieval Society* reinforced the point made by Vinyoles i Vidal: the history of urban women could and should be written.

Prostitution became a well-studied topic; by virtue of their profession, prostitutes figure uncommonly often in charters and municipal regulations, which make them accessible to modern historians.[23] Yet prostitutes were a small subset of the total female population, and historians found ways of studying other sorts of women as well. John Mundy's *Men and Women at Toulouse* indicated that historians could use notarial registers to study married and unmarried women in their various occupations and vocations, and one of the most recent works to undertake this task is Rebecca Winer's *Women, Wealth, and Community in Perpignan, c. 1250-1300*, published in 2006. Based largely on Winer's examination of seventeen notarial registers (all that survive from Perpignan for the period 1261-1287), *Women, Wealth, and Community* aims to demonstrate "how a woman's place in the religious majority or one of the minority communities shaped her commercial and legal life."[24] Specifically, Winer studies Christian and Jewish women in their various familial capacities (daughter,

23. On prostitution, see Reyerson, Kathryn L. "Prostitution in Medieval Montpellier: the Ladies of Campus Polverel". *Medieval Prosopography*, 18 (1997): 209-228. See, too, Joëlle Rollo-Koster's remarkable study of the repentant prostitutes of Avignon: Rollo-Koster, Joëlle. "From Prostitutes to Brides of Christ: The Avignonese *Repenties* in the Late Middle Ages". *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 32 (2002): 109-144.

24. Winer, Rebecca Lynn. *Women, Wealth, and Community in Perpignan, c. 1250-1300*. Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2006: 3.

wife, mother, and widow), insofar as those familial capacities defined their opportunities to own property and to bequeath that property to heirs. Among Christian men and women, the dowry system was the most common; prior to marriage, the bride's family bestowed upon her a dowry that, augmented by the groom's countergift, provided financial support for the couple and became the wife's property upon the husband's death. The dowry system protected the family (and especially the wife) from ruin when the husband encountered substantial economic hardship, as creditors had no claim to any property that was considered to be part of the wife's dowry. The drawback for the dowered wife was that she then possessed limited rights over the couple's other property. A minority of poorer Christians, usually artisans, preferred the system of *mig per mig*, in which the husband and wife had joint ownership of all property. Winer is struck by how relatively few Jewish women were moneylenders and how most Jewish moneylenders were widows, which suggests that married Jewish women had limited control over property.

Winer devotes extra attention to the issues of whether and how Christian and Jewish widows acted as legal guardians for their children. The death of a husband and father necessitated the drawing up of a new set of familial property relationships and responsibilities, which a notary recorded; female guardians of fatherless children therefore appear frequently in the seventeen notarial registers. Here the contrast between Christian practice and Jewish practice is strong. Christian widows normally became the sole legal guardian for their children and remained in that position unless they remarried, at which point they were supposed to (but did not always) name a new legal guardian for their deceased husband's children. Jewish widows normally did not become the sole legal guardian for their children. Generally, the legal guardianship passed to a group of individuals, some of whom were blood relatives and some of whom were prominent community members. Slightly more often than not, the mother was not among this board of guardians. That is not to say that she no longer had the responsibility for raising the children —she simply did not have the legal authority to administer the family property.

One of the great strengths of Winer's book is her willingness to consider the histories of Jewish and Christian women together, rather than separately; equally admirable is her ability to integrate the history of Muslim women as well as the history of the unfree, specifically female Muslim slaves in Christian households. Despite their relatively light presence in the notarial records (there are only five recorded sales of female Muslims in the seventeen registers), Winer makes the case that these slaves were valued especially as wet nurses. The scarcity of such slaves put Christian servants able to nurse in a relatively strong bargaining position, which, in turn, resulted in wages and benefits (such as unlimited access to the family food pantry) well beyond those that a servant would expect.

4.2. Merchants

Beginning in the 1960s, Claude Carrère and Carme Batlle i Gallart began to examine the merchants of late-medieval Barcelona with regard to their mindsets and material surroundings.[25] The most ambitious attempt to get at how these merchants lived and thought, though, is Jaume Aurell i Cardona's *Els mercaders catalans al quatre-cents*. Published in 1996, this book brings together and expands the findings that Aurell i Cardona had described in a series of articles released during the 1990s.[26] Focusing on the period between 1370 and 1470, Aurell i Cardona takes what he calls a "cultural-anthropological" approach to the subject.[27] Aurell i Cardona extracted from Barcelona's notarial registers some 450 wills, 80 *post mortem* inventories, and 80 marriage contracts involving merchants. The wills, inventories, and marriage contracts provide Aurell i Cardona with the raw materials that he uses to reconstruct the merchants' world in its various aspects: how merchants lived and worked, what they believed and valued, and how they organized themselves socially.

The result is a rich and detailed portrait. During the one-hundred-year-long period that Aurell i Cardona examines, Barcelona's merchants lived in families characterized by strong nuclearity, the active involvement of women in their husbands' professional lives, the relatively equal distribution of inherited goods among siblings, and, for some merchants, the ownership of a handful of domestic slaves (mentioned in eleven of the *post mortem* inventories at Aurell i Cardona's disposal). Their houses tended to contain rooms that served their professional needs: offices that might double as libraries, *botigas* where they met clients and stored goods in transit, and cellars that provided additional storage.

As regards the merchants' mental world, reading for pleasure and for edification was common. About 50 percent of estate inventories name the books that were once in the merchants' possessions, and, as Aurell i Cardona points out, the absence of books from estate inventories does not mean an absence of reading. Those merchants whose estates included no books might have disposed of their books as death approached, or have borrowed books from others. The merchant's library generally contained some two dozen books (the biggest library approached sixty books) both profane and sacred —few merchants eschewed one or the other entirely, and to the extent that any trend can be detected, it is a trend toward the

25. See, for example, Carrère, Claude. "La vie privée du marchand barcelonais dans la première moitié du XVe siècle". *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 3 (1966): 263-292; Batlle i Gallart, Carme. "La mentalitat i les formes de vida dels mercaders catalans medievals". *Cuadernos de Historia Económica de Cataluña*, 21 (1980): 81-94; Batlle i Gallart, Carme. "La riquesa de la burguesia de Barcelona: el cas d'Elisenda de Banyeres (segle XIII)". *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 32 (2002): 633-691.

26. Aurell i Cardona, Jaume. "Espai social i entorn físic del mercader barceloní". *Acta Historica et Archaeologica Mediaevalia*, 13 (1992): 253-273; Aurell i Cardona, Jaume. "Vida privada i negoci mercantil a la Barcelona baixmedieval". *Acta Historica et Archaeologica Mediaevalia*, 14-15 (1993-1994): 219-241; Aurell i Cardona, Jaume. "Els inventaris *post mortem* i la cultura dels mercaders medievals". *Mediaevalia*, 11 (1994): 107-121; Aurell i Cardona, Jaume. "El process de sedentarització dels mercaders barcelonins al segle XV". *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 24 (1994): 49-65.

27. Aurell i Cardona, Jaume. *Els mercaders catalans al quatre-cents*. Lleida: Pagès Editors, 1996: 18-22.

increasing popularity of religious literature as the fifteenth century progressed. In the realm of secular literature, chivalric and heroic literature were popular, as were Roman and Catalan legal texts (the Codex, the Digest, the *Consolat de Mar*, the *Usatges of Barcelona*, and the *Constitucions de Catalunya*) —even works of canon law could be found on the merchant's bookshelf. Works of classical literature (Sallust, Ovid, and Virgil, among others) could be found there, too, though to a lesser extent, which Aurell i Cardona sees as evidence of the relatively weak presence of humanism among these fifteenth-century merchants. Philosophical works (Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas) were even less common. There was also a smattering of medical treatises, merchants' handbooks, and grammatical texts. Religious texts tended to be found in the smaller and less valuable libraries; devotional texts such as psalters of various kinds and Books of Hours were the most popular. Somewhat less well represented were scriptural texts (merchants showed a preference for the Sapiential Books of the Old Testament and some or all of the gospels) and hagiographical texts. Among early Christian authors, Boethius was the most popular, easily surpassing Jerome, Augustine, and Gregory the Great. Among recent Catalan authors, Francesc Eiximenis was popular, Ramon Llull less so.

In making provisions for masses to be said for their souls after their deaths, merchants revealed the intensity of their desire for salvation. Usually merchants' wills stipulated that the "thirty-three masses of Saint Amador" should be said for the soul of the deceased, but it was not unknown for merchants to set aside money to pay for literally thousands of masses to be said on their behalf in the year following their death, or for sixty masses to be said on the actual day of death. Money could assist the merchants' quest for salvation in other ways: their wills contain charitable bequests that were to be used to ransom Christian captives from Muslims, to provide dowries for women whose families could not otherwise afford them, and to provide succor to the indigent —at the merchant's funeral, crowds of the poor gathered in the expectation of such bequests. The religious images with which they decorated their houses and their propensity for remembering their confessors (nearly all mendicants, as one might expect, especially Dominicans) in their wills likewise reflect the merchants' deeply felt desire for heaven.

One of the criticisms often raised against cultural-anthropological studies is their lack of interest in (the harshest critics would say, their neglect of) political history. Aurell i Cardona, however, attempts to establish a link between his cultural-anthropological examination of the merchants of Barcelona, on the one hand, and the political fate of Catalonia, on the other. Indeed, Aurell i Cardona argues that his study provides the answer to the central question in the history of late-medieval and early-modern Catalonia: how and why it was eclipsed by Castile. For Aurell i Cardona, this eclipse was not the result of Castilian involvement in the Americas, or from the economic devastation wrought by the Catalonian civil wars in the second half of the fifteenth century. Rather, it was the result of a loss of social cohesion among Barcelona's merchants. In the thirteenth century, merchants possessed a strong social cohesion, and an appetite for large risks and commensurate rewards; those qualities, in turn, fueled Catalan expansion and made Catalonia a Mediterranean power. In the fifteenth century, Barcelona's merchants lost their

social cohesion and grew timid; they could no longer formulate coherent policies to deal with the period's challenges, and they lacked the will and energy to carry out such policies anyway.

To support the notion that Barcelona's merchants lost their social cohesion between 1370 and 1470, Aurell i Cardona studies the residence and marriage patterns of Barcelona's merchants. At the beginning of his period, merchants were heavily concentrated in the quarters nearest the Mediterranean, especially the quarter of Santa Maria del Mar. During the fifteenth century, merchants dispersed throughout the city and migrated to interior quarters, thereby losing the cohesion that close proximity presumably brought to them. The frequency with which the children of merchants married the children of those following other professions further weakened merchant solidarity. Aurell i Cardona examines marriage contracts in which the groom, the groom's father, or the bride's father was a merchant, and only in one third of such contracts were the fathers of the bride and the groom both merchants —that is to say, more often than not, the children of merchants married the children of non-merchants. (Usually the children of merchants married the children of lawyers, notaries, and others involved with the law, but the children of the wealthiest merchant families sometimes married the children of nobles and rentiers, and the children of less wealthy merchants sometimes married the children of artisans.) Merchants' sons did not necessarily follow their fathers' profession —testamentary evidence suggests that only about one half did so. The increasing presence of rents, land, and income generated through the financing of public debt in their wills reflects how merchants came to prefer secure and steady revenue, and to shun the high risks and rewards of commercial activity.

Aurell i Cardona's attempt to link his cultural-anthropological analysis of Barcelona's merchants to the political history of Catalonia is ingenious and imaginative —perhaps too much so. To make that link, Aurell i Cardona must make two leaps, and not all those who read this book will want to make those leaps alongside its author. The first leap is from the behaviors he describes (residential and marital dispersion, land acquisition) to the consequences he infers (loss of social cohesion and economic dynamism). There may well have been a loss of social cohesion and confidence among Barcelona's merchants in the fifteenth century, but the wills, inventories, and marriage contracts that Aurell i Cardona masterfully mines for data about family relations, housing, reading, and prayer, might not be the best place to look for that loss of cohesion and confidence. Those documents, after all, show merchants doing most everything but the one thing that defined them as merchants: trading. Nor do those documents say much about the merchants' political activities, and it is in the merchants' commercial and political dealings that we are most likely to find confirmation or refutation of Aurell i Cardona's argument that Barcelona's merchants lost confidence in themselves. The second leap involves the jump from the plight of Barcelona's merchants to the plight of Catalonia as a whole. Like Batlle i Gallart before him, but for different reasons, Aurell i Cardona is tough on the merchants of fifteenth-century Barcelona, but even under the best of circumstances, could they have managed to formulate and enact any set policies that would have

saved Catalonia from the challenges posed by demographic regression, absentee monarchs, the struggle between peasants and nobles over the end of serfdom, and the rise of Castile?

To raise questions about the link between merchant mentality and the political history of Catalonia is not, however, to raise questions about the book as a whole, which should be regarded as a tour de force. In addition to giving us a sound overview of the historiography and many instructive comparisons between Catalan and Italian developments, Aurell i Cardona has given us a comprehensive picture of how merchants lived in the period from 1370 to 1470. His book is the benchmark against which all similar studies will henceforth be measured.

4.3. Urban space

Daniel Smail's *Imaginary Cartographies: Possession and Identity in Late Medieval Marseille*, published in 2000, encapsulates two important historiographical developments. The first is the increasing importance of urban space as an object of study; the second is the application of a foregrounded theoretical framework to the historical record. The first trend is a trans-Atlantic one: Catalan and French scholars have been as eager as North American ones to explore the nature of urban space, even if European scholars have tended to focus their attention on actual physical space, while North Americans have shown more of an interest in mentally constructed space.[28] The second trend is largely North American; European scholars have generally not made extensive, or at least explicit, use of theoretical material.

On the face of it, the idea of applying the techniques of literary and cultural studies to the documents preserved in late-medieval notarial registers might seem dubious. Presumably scholars interested in the study of discourse would find little worthwhile in the formulaic accounts of mundane economic transactions that fill those registers. Smail's *Imaginary Cartographies* puts that presumption to the test. The book blends a conventional quantitative approach to the notarial registers with what is, by the standards of urban history, an unconventional theoretical framework, derived from such staples of late-twentieth-century graduate-level historiography courses as Roland Barthes, Maurice Halbwachs, Peter Sahlins, Benedict Anderson, Mary Douglas, and James C. Scott, among others. The result is a sophisticated book of enormous creativity, and one might even say audacity.

From the seventy-two notarial registers that survive (out of, Smail estimates, eight hundred that might once have existed) for the period from 1337 to 1362, as well as from other supporting documents, Smail reconstructs the "mental maps" of the inhabitants of late-medieval Marseille; to put it another way, he wants to

28. Cuadrada, Coral; López, María Dolores. "L'organització de l'espai urbà: Barcelona al segle XIII". *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 26 (1996): 879-908; Reyerson, Kathryn L. "Public and Private Space in Medieval Montpellier: the Bon Amic Square". *Journal of Urban History*, 24 (1997): 3-27.

know how those inhabitants thought of space.[29] Based on the ways that contracts in notarial registers describe property sites, Smail postulates the existence of multiple "linguistic communities," three of which are the focus of the investigation: public notaries, seigneurial officials, and "non-noble speakers of Provençal." Membership in these communities was not exclusive —an individual could easily belong to all three simultaneously, and every public notary almost certainly was also a non-noble speaker of Provençal. What defined these communities was "their tendency to share certain cartographic conventions." Their members spoke of and presumably also imagined space in distinctive ways, employing one or at most two of the four major "cartographic templates" that obtained in late-medieval Marseille. Those templates were based on either 1) streets and plazas; 2) "islands," or city blocks, bounded by a series of streets or perhaps the town walls; 3) vicinity, which might perhaps best be understood as a neighborhood, a "space of sociability" whose precise boundaries were not defined in terms of specific streets; or 4) landmarks, which might be a church, an oven, or even the house of a well-known citizen.[30] Public notaries, the first of Smail's three linguistic communities, favored the first template; seigneurial officials favored the second; "non-noble speakers of Provençal" favored the third and fourth, which were in fact very similar, as often the identity of a vicinity was rooted in the presence of a specific landmark. (Smail distinguishes between the two on the basis of prepositional usage: "Typically, one lived at or in a vicinity. In contrast, one lived next to, across from, close by, under, or above landmarks.")[31] A notary would describe a house as being "on the moneychangers' street," a seigneurial official would describe that same house as being "on the moneychangers' island," and "non-noble Provençal speakers" would say that the house was "in the Change" (*Cambio*).

To establish links between linguistic communities and cartographic templates, Smail quantifies. From the notarial registers, Smail has extracted "932 distinct property conveyances with legible site clauses."[32] In 58.3 percent of these property conveyances, notaries identify the location of property via the streets with which the property was in contact; in 16.6 percent of the cases, via "islands" and their various linguistic equivalents; in 16.4 percent of the cases, via vicinities; and in 8.7 percent of the cases, via landmarks. Of these figures, the one that Smail finds most striking is the first: in nearly three fifths of site clauses, notaries identify locations by referring to streets. Smail also argues that these four cartographic templates were not static: "a fairly rapid and unscientific sampling of 269 site clauses drawn from the casebooks of twenty different notaries active between 1445 and 1455 reveals that usage of streets and similar open spaces had increased by some fifteen percentage points."[33] Soundings in the notarial registers of the sixteenth century

29. Smail, Daniel L. *Imaginary Cartographies: Possession and identity and Late Medieval Marseille*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000: 8-9.

30. Smail, Daniel L. *Imaginary Cartographies...*: 11-13.

31. Smail, Daniel L. *Imaginary Cartographies...*: 14.

32. Smail, Daniel L. *Imaginary Cartographies...*: 71.

33. Smail, Daniel L. *Imaginary Cartographies...*: 95.

suggest further extension of the notarial template, which slowly triumphed over other ways of defining space.

As for why notaries but not others favored the street template, Smail offers a number of possible reasons. Perhaps it was because notaries lived scattered throughout Marseille and lacked their own vicinity. Perhaps it was because of the peripatetic nature of their profession —more often than not, notaries traveled to their clients, and thinking of space in relatively precise, street-based terms would have helped notaries to locate their clients efficiently. Notarial documents required specificity: "The legal nature of their acts demanded a certain degree of precision and, hence, the notarial gaze tended to petrify the landscape."[34] "Non-noble speakers of Provençal" adopted the notarial conception of space by virtue of the sheer number of "cartographic conversations" in which notaries and their clients were necessarily involved. Ultimately, the spread of the notaries' preferred street-based conception of space paved the way for the relatively precise systems of classification preferred by modern states.

The challenge for Smail is to demonstrate that notaries, when identifying locations via adjoining streets, were imposing their own cartographic template on the parties to the land conveyance. Without direct access to the verbal exchanges between notaries and those who were employing them, how can we know that notaries were putting words in the mouths of others, and that those parties had actually described the locations in terms of islands, vicinities, or landmarks?

Smail maintains that it is indeed possible to prove that their clients spoke of space differently than the notaries themselves wrote about it, thanks to "a register of accounts kept, in Provençal, by one of Marseille's confraternities, the confraternity of St. Jacques de Gallicia, between the years 1349 and 1353."[35] This register, according to Smail, was not written by notaries: "its peculiarly angular handwriting is typical of literate merchants or artisans, not notaries." Three scribes are named in the text as having written at least a part of it —the professions of the scribes are not given, but on the basis of a prosopographical register that he compiled for Marseille, Smail suggests that they were a merchant, a baker, and a laborer. Artisans figure prominently among the confraternities' officers, and of the 560 members whose names are inscribed, 177 are identified by their trade. For all of these reasons, Smail opines that the register is uniquely valuable: "the addresses found in this Provençal register are the closest approximation we have to what people actually *said* in the fourteenth century when asked by a notary to name a place of domicile or identify a house site...The confraternal register of the hospital of St. Jacques de Gallicia is extraordinary because it reveals a Provençal and artisanal cartography unmediated by notaries and their Latinate norms."[36] Members of this confraternity identify their place of domicile with reference to streets 13.3 percent of the time and with reference to vicinities 54.3 percent of the time —these percentages are roughly

34. Smail, Daniel L. *Imaginary Cartographies...*: 183.

35. Smail, Daniel L. *Imaginary Cartographies...*: 73.

36. Smail, Daniel L. *Imaginary Cartographies...*: 143-144, 157, 160.

the opposite of what Smail found in the notarial registers. As for how a substantial number of street-based identifications wound up in this confraternity register without notarial intervention, their presence "indicates, I would argue, that the notarial street-based template was beginning to infiltrate the ordinary cartographic grammar of Provençal speakers."[37]

The existence of the four cartographic templates seems to have been demonstrated fully. The relationship between the four cartographic templates, on the one hand, and the three linguistic communities, on the other, is not so certain. Not all readers will be willing to accept with great confidence the paleographical and prosopographical evidence adduced to demonstrate that the confraternity register has not been mediated by notaries at all. Even if one accepts that the register was written by "non-noble Provençal speakers" who were not notaries, and even if one accepts that the scribes composing the register simply wrote down addresses exactly as the confraternity members spoke them, the question remains: should one expect that an artisan about to sell or buy a house or some other property site, and an artisan about to join a religious confraternity, would have described the location of the place in question in the same way on both occasions? Smail's answer is yes; as regards the addresses in the confraternity register, "there is no particular reason to think that Provençal speakers would have used dissimilar terms when defining or thinking about property sites."[38]

Some readers, however, might well imagine a particular reason why "non-noble speakers of Provençal" would have used dissimilar terms when identifying a place of residence upon joining a religious confraternity, on the one hand, and when buying or selling a piece of property, on the other. Buyers and sellers had their own compelling reasons for describing property sites relatively precisely in acts of property conveyance, giving specific street locations and identifying bordering properties rather than just naming a nearby landmark: sellers to avoid giving away more than what the buyer had paid for, buyers to make certain that they received nothing less than what they had paid for. While it is possible that the majority of "non-noble speakers of Provençal" thought and spoke about space in the same way on very different occasions, no matter how inappropriate or inimical to their own interests, it is also possible (and some readers will think it more likely) that "non-noble speakers of Provençal" possessed sufficient agency to draw upon various cartographic templates according to what seemed most advantageous to them in any given situation. If the latter is a possibility, then the link between particular geographical templates and particular linguistic communities, even ones as amorphous as "non-noble speakers of Provençal," remains hypothetical —and the same would then have to be said of the links between a distinctly notarial way of thinking about space and the bureaucratic practices of the modern state.

Imaginary Cartographies sits outside the urban historiography of Catalonia and the Midi. It engages neither with the works of Mundy, Font Rius, Wolff, Batlle i Gallart,

37. Smail, Daniel L. *Imaginary Cartographies...*: 147.

38. Smail, Daniel L. *Imaginary Cartographies...*: 146.

and Carrère, nor with the issues with which those historians grappled. The works of Noël Coulet and Louis Stouff (discussed below) appear in *Imaginary Cartographies* simply as sources of incidental information. Yet this historiographical disengagement can and should be construed positively: so original is Smail's approach that he can hardly be faulted for failing to engage other meridional urban historians. Smail quantifies, as Wolff and Aurell i Cardona had done, but he also moves beyond quantification by taking a group of seemingly jejune geographical descriptions, identifying patterns within them, and unpacking the unstated assumptions behind them.

That Smail's *Imaginary Cartographies* has opened up a fruitful new field is suggested by Joëlle Rollo-Koster's article "The Politics of Body Parts: Contested Topographies in Late-Medieval Avignon."[39] Here Rollo-Koster integrates high ecclesiastical and political history (specifically, the Great Papal Schism and the French subtraction of obedience from the Avignon papacy between 1398 and 1403) with a theoretically informed analysis of "the utilization of space as an apparatus of power." The French withdrawal of support created a fluid and uncertain situation within the town, and as a result its topography changed: "traditional space and monuments...fell into disfavor, while new space...assumed new symbolic meaning...and new monuments and urban areas established a new core."[40] Specifically, areas to the south and east —away from the papal palace— assumed a new importance between 1398 and 1403. Mendicant convents located there became "new centers of power for the king of France, his family, rebellious cardinals, and citizens at large."[41] The corpse of Pope Clement VII was reburied there in 1401; the tomb of cardinal Jean de la Grange, who had supported the French king's withdrawal of support for the Avignon papacy, was built there between 1394 and 1402, a visual expression of French royal authority; and supporters of Benedict XIII were executed, dismembered, and their extremities put on display in that part of the town. But Rollo-Koster's analysis extends past the description of movement toward the south and east; it also contains sophisticated, anthropologically influenced readings of the symbolism inherent in, for example, the dismemberment of bodies and the physical display of limbs.

It is too soon to say how important the theoretically informed history of urban space will eventually be for the field of urban history more generally, but given its reception thus far, one suspects that its impact might be prove to be quite substantial.

4.4. Institutional and economic history: whither or wither?

Although up to this point this essay has stressed how much has changed since the 1940s and 1950s, we must also take into account areas of continuity, as well as

39. Rollo-Koster, Joëlle. "The Politics of Body Parts: Contested Topographies in Late-Medieval Avignon". *Speculum*, 78 (2003): 66-98.

40. Rollo-Koster, Joëlle. "The Politics of Body Parts"...: 66-67.

41. Rollo-Koster, Joëlle. "The Politics of Body Parts"...: 98.

those areas where continuity and change have blended. Economic history continues to be practiced in a manner much like Carrère's, as in Damien Coulon's recent study of late-medieval Barcelona's *commenda* contracts and what those contracts reveal about Barcelona's trade with Egypt, Syria, and Palestine, and as in David Abulafia's work.[42] The field of urban institutional history, too, is still tilled. Although Pierre Racine recently deplored the state of medieval urban institutional history in France, medieval historians there and in Catalonia remain committed to the study of urban institutions, examining them in ways that Font Rius would find familiar.[43] André Castaldo's work on Agde; Josefa Mutgé Vives's work on Barcelona; Max Turull i Rubinat's work on Cervera and, in collaboration with Jaume Ribalta Haro, on Tàrrega; Christian Guilleré's work on Girona; Jacqueline Caille's work on Narbonne; and Albert Rigaudière's work on Saint-Flour all represent significant, "traditionalist" contributions to the history of urban institutions, as do the writings of André Gouron.[44] Even Toulouse, the object of John Mundy's work, has had its institutional history scrutinized and interpreted anew by scholars on both sides of the Atlantic: Christopher Gardner in North America and Judicaël Petrowiste in France.[45]

Yet the study of institutional history has not been unaffected by recent trends in social and cultural history. If anything, the integration of social and cultural history has contributed to the continuing vibrancy of institutionally oriented studies, by giving historians new and different ways of approaching their subjects. This "hybrid" institutional history tends to be written by North American historians, while the "purer" form of institutional history tends to be written by Europeans. This distinction between North American and European historians is by no means a strict rule: Flocel Sabaté has shown an anthropological sensibility in studying urban participation in royal funeral ceremonies, and in showing how that participation

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42. Coulon, Damien. *Barcelone et le grand commerce d'Orient au Moyen Age: un siècle de relations avec l'Egypte et la Syrie-Palestine (ca. 1330-ca. 1430)*. Madrid-Barcelona: Casa de Velázquez-Institut Europeu de la Mediterrània, 2004; Abulafia, David. *A Mediterranean Emporium: the Catalan Kingdom of Majorca*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994; Abulafia, David. *Commerce and Conquest in the Mediterranean, 1100-1500*. Aldershot and Brookfield: Variorum, 1993.

43. Racine, Pierre. "Où va l'histoire urbaine?" *Le Moyen Age: revue d'histoire et de philologie*, 106 (2000): 383.

44. Castaldo, André. *Seigneurs, villes et pouvoir royal en Languedoc: le consulat medieval d'Agde, XIIIe-XIVe siècles*. Paris: A. et J. Picard, 1974; Mutgé Vives, Josefa. *La ciudad de Barcelona durante el reinado de Alfonso el Benigno*. Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1987; Turull i Rubinat, Max. *La configuració juridical del municipi baix-medieval: règim municipal i fiscalitat a Cervera entre 1182-1430*. Barcelona: Fundació Noguera, 1990; Turull i Rubinat, Max; Ribalta Haro, Jaume. "'De voluntate universitatis': la formació i l'expressió de la voluntat del municipi (Tàrrega, 1214-1520)". *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 21 (1991): 143-231; Guilleré, Christian. *Diner, poder i societat a la Girona del segle XIV*. Girona: Ajuntament de Girona, 1984; Caille, Jacqueline. *Hôpitaux et charité publique à Narbonne au Moyen Age: de la fin du XIe à la fin du XVe siècle*. Toulouse: Privat, 1978; Caille, Jacqueline; Reyerson, Kathryn L. *Medieval Narbonne: a City at the Heart of the Troubador World*. Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2005; Rigaudière, Albert. *Saint-Flour, ville d'Auvergne au bas Moyen Age: étude d'histoire administrative et financière*, 2 volumes. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1982; Gouron, André. "Les consuls de Barcelone en 1130: la plus ancienne organization municipale a l'ouest des Alpes?" *Anuario de Historia del Derecho Español*, 60 (1991): 205-213.

45. Petrowiste, Judicaël. "Le consul, le comte et le marchand: commerce et politique à Toulouse au seuil du XIIIe siècle". *Annales du Midi*, 117 (2005): 291-321; for Christopher Gardner's work, see below, note 47.

expressed both the solidarities and the divisions within urban society; Christopher Gardner's work on the consulate of Toulouse, by way of contrast, is more in the classic institutional mould, as are Paul Freedman's articles on the consulate of Vic.[46]

Nonetheless, the distinction still holds good more often than not, and it is probably rooted in the audiences for which each group is writing. For French and Catalan audiences, the significance of local urban institutional history needs no explanation or justification —everyone feels the significance of his or her own history to be evident. North American audiences, on the other hand, might not have any personal connections to, or inherent and natural interest in, places such as Barcelona or Marseille. To satisfy that audience, the North American historian usually tries to have a hook, and often it is a methodological one. For Perpignan, there is *True Citizens: Violence, Memory, and Identity in the Medieval Community of Perpignan, 1162-1397* which attempts to link the study of urban institutions to the study of collective memory, and to show how collective memory shaped institutional development.[47] For Barcelona, there is Stephen Bensch's *Barcelona and Its Rulers, 1096-1291*.[48]

The aptly named *Barcelona and Its Rulers* is concerned not so much with the development of Barcelona's urban institutions as with the formation of Barcelona's patriciate, the ruling class that would people those institutions. As such, it as perhaps as much a social as an institutional history, but Bensch firmly places the development of Barcelona's patriciate within the institutional development of Catalonia as a whole. Relations between Barcelona's patriciate, on the one hand, and the counts of Barcelona and the kings of Aragon, on the other, loom large in Bensch's story. The twin pillars of Bensch's argument are that 1) Barcelona's patriciate took shape at a relatively late date, during the period 1140-1220, and 2) Barcelona's patriciate developed its identity not through acts of defiance against its rulers, but through acts of co-operation with those same rulers. Before the period 1140-1220, economic growth was too uneven and too oriented toward "a local market-oriented agriculture and a tributary, frontier economy driven by the success of Catalan arms in extending an extortionate protectorate over the petty princes of al-Andalus" for a commercially oriented economy or a distinctly urban ruling class

46. Sabaté, Flocel. *Cerimònies fúnebres i poder municipal a la Catalunya baixmedieval*. Barcelona: Rafael Dalmau, 2003; Gardner, Christopher. "Négocier le pouvoir: Toulouse et son gouvernement sous les Capétiens (vers 1200-vers 1340)". *Annales du Midi*, (forthcoming); Gardner, Christopher. "Vengeance, Exacted or Suppressed, as a Means to Establish *Universitas*: Evidence from Toulouse, 1120-1230". *Proceedings of the Western Society for French History*, 33 (2005): 1-20; Freedman, Paul. "An Unsuccessful Attempt at Urban Organization in Medieval Catalonia". *Speculum*, 54 (1979): 479-491; Freedman, Paul. "Another Look at the Uprising of the Townsmen of Vic (1181-1183)". *Acta Historica et Archaeologica Mediaevalia (Homenatge al Dr. Manuel Riu i Riu, vol. I)*, 20-21 (1999-2000): 177-186. Also of note is Sabaté, Flocel. "Les factions dans la vie urbaine de la Catalogne du XIVe siècle". *Histoire et archéologie des terres catalanes au Moyen Age*, Philippe Sénac, ed. Perpignan: Presses Universitaires de Perpignan, 1995: 339-365

47. Daileader, Philip. *True Citizens: Violence, Memory, and Identity in the Medieval Community of Perpignan, 1162-1397*. Leiden: Brill, 2000.

48. Bensch, Stephen. *Barcelona and Its Rulers, 1096-1291*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

to emerge.[49] An especially difficult economic period, combined with an especially tumultuous and disordered period in Catalonian history between 1040 and 1060, caused Barcelona's nobles to absent themselves from the city —the low profile of nobles in its subsequent history would be one of Barcelona's distinctive characteristics. Between 1140 and 1220, however, the economic situation changed. A new phase of economic growth began, presenting inhabitants of Barcelona with new economic opportunities. Certain families began to underwrite the activities of the counts of Barcelona and their expansion into the Mediterranean, to take positions in royal service, to invest in land near Barcelona rather than deep in the hinterland, and to participate in long-distance commerce —these families would become the core of Barcelona's patriciate. Barcelona's communal institutions emerged in the second half of the thirteenth century, only after the patriciate's gestation.

Whether the twelfth-century co-operation evident between Barcelona's emerging patriciate and its rulers can be extended to other cities remains an open question that would be interesting to pursue —after all, Barcelona is the seat of the county, and the strong comital presence there might be expected to pull that city into a trajectory different from that followed by other Catalan urban centers. Sadly, that question can probably never be answered, as no other town has the sort of records that Barcelona has for the twelfth century. Certainly Barcelona's communal institutions developed after the period that Bensch has identified as formative for the city's patriciate, but one might question whether individual acts of co-operation between patricians and rulers were the primary cause for the emergence of Barcelona's communal institutions, or precluded collective acts of defiance. Still, both of the book's main contentions appear to be amply demonstrated, and Bensch's study of the formation and emergence of Barcelona's patriciate is impressive and persuasive. By tracking down charters scattered among various holdings, Bensch has amassed an enormous amount of information about the economic activities of Barcelona's leading elements. Bensch's patriciate is not an abstract, ahistorical category; it is a collection of individuals whose precise financial dealings Bensch has been able to recover, and one of the great strengths of Bensch's book (which, I might add, is unusually well written), is this emphasis on historical specificity.

An instructive example of how traditional approaches have changed as a result of broader historiographical trends is the work of Kathryn Reyerson on Montpellier. Reyerson's *Business, Banking, and Finance in Medieval Montpellier*, published in 1985, examines both the economic and social aspects of its subject matter for the period between 1293 and 1348. Reyerson demonstrates that lending and borrowing were frequent at all social levels. As one would expect, Jews (until their expulsion from the Kingdom of France in 1306), merchants, and money changers were the primary lenders (with many Christian lenders identified as "Lombards," which is to say, resident Italians); nevertheless, women and working men of virtually every occupation were active in smaller-scale credit transactions. Only nobles held aloof from this lending activity (at least, to the extent that the notarial registers record

49. Bensch, Stephen. *Barcelona and Its Rulers...*: 396.

said activity). The bulk of Reyerson's study, though, is concerned with the formal aspects of borrowing, lending, and depositing money: the types of partnerships that merchants formed (the *comanda* and the *societas*) and the terms on which money was lent (loans might have to be repaid on demand, and generally fell due on important religious feast day; often the borrower had three to six months to repay, unless he or she had borrowed money from a Jewish creditor, in which case he usually had nine months to a year to pay; and interest rates seem to have varied between 15 and 20 percent).

Seventeen years later, Reyerson produced another book-length study taking as its subject commercial activity in medieval Montpellier. *The Art of the Deal: Intermediaries of Trade in Medieval Montpellier* expresses dissatisfaction with traditional approaches to medieval economic history, especially approaches that look at the Middle Ages in order to discover practices that were "harbingers of things to come."[50] Instead of detailing the formal elements of contracts, Reyerson now looks at people and relationships. Specifically, Reyerson wants to examine a set of little-studied individuals whose place in commercial networks was nonetheless essential to their functioning: notaries, innkeepers, and brokers, whose knowledge of the economic environment made them invaluable intermediaries who put purchasers and sellers in touch with one another and who facilitated the movement of goods. Such individuals do not figure as prominently in notarial records as the merchants themselves, and so, in order to tease them out from a reticent historical record, Reyerson narrows her focus, drawing heavily from a single, unusually rich notarial register, which records the business contracts of the Cabanis family between 1337 and 1342. No one would mistake *The Art of the Deal* for a work of cultural anthropology, but its emphasis on the personal over the contractual and on the informal over the formal is noteworthy.

4.5. Roads not taken

Historiographical essays, when speaking of older works, tend to focus on those that are directly related to current scholarship, whether as an inspiration and a model, or as a foil. Discussed less often, but still worthy of consideration, are those works that in hindsight appear as outliers, unique products of a specific period and circumstances, but seemingly without progeny. In the field of urban history, two such books are Louis Stouff's *Arles à la fin du Moyen Age* and Noël Coulet's *Aix en Provence: espace et relations d'une capitale (milieu XIVe siècle-milieu XVe siècle)*, published in 1986 and 1988 respectively.[51] These works are of the highest scholarly quality, and the reasons why they are without successors have little to do with their intrinsic

50. Reyerson, Kathryn L. *The Art of the Deal: Intermediaries of Trade in Medieval Montpellier*. Leiden: Brill, 2002: 2.

51. Stouff, Louis. *Arles à la fin du Moyen Age*, 2 volumes. Aix-en-Provence: Publications Université de Provence, 1986; Coulet, Noël. *Aix-en-Provence: espace et relations d'une capitale (milieu XIVe siècle-milieu XVe siècle)*, 2 volumes. Aix-en-Provence: Publications Université de Provence, 1988.

value. In historiography, timing is everything, and these books happened to appear at a time when both historiography and the structure of French postgraduate education were shifting in different directions.

The two books share much in common: their massiveness (each book is over one thousand pages in length, with roughly five hundred pages of text and five hundred pages of notes); their origins as *thèses d'état* researched over the course of nearly three decades; their focus on Provençal towns; and their emphasis on the connections between towns and the surrounding countryside, especially the role of agriculture in urban economies. These similarities owe a great deal to the fact that both Stouff and Coulet were students of Georges Duby, who taught at Aix-en-Provence during the 1950s and 1960s and retained close ties to that place even after taking a position at the Collège de France in Paris. Stouff's *Arles* and Coulet's *Aix-en-Provence* resemble Duby's influential *La société aux XIe et XIIe siècles dans la région mâconnaise*, which reconstructs, with a specificity and level of detail that was unprecedented at the time of its publication in 1953, the economic and social history of one high-medieval region, and which would inspire many other similar regional studies written during subsequent decades.[52]

Stouff's study of Arles, based on an exhaustive examination of hundreds of notarial registers compiled before 1450, on a selective examination of the hundreds of notarial registers that survive from 1451-1475, and on charter evidence as well, attempts to provide a snapshot of Arles as it existed between 1425 and 1450. Stouff describes, in staggering detail, the town's economic functions, with much attention given to the role of land ownership —the second of the book's two parts is called *Une ville de la terre*, and in his conclusion Stouff speaks of his hope that he has demonstrated "that the true originality of Arles resides in this contradiction between its grandiose pretensions and its peasant nature" ("sa grandeur et son aspect paysan").[53]

Two years later, Coulet published his study of Aix. It, too, is based on an exhaustive reading of the town's surviving notarial records for a relatively brief period (in Coulet's case, from 1380 to 1400); it, too, focuses largely on the economic function of the town with a strong emphasis on the relationship between Aix and the surrounding countryside. The reconstruction of that relationship, in fact, comprises most of the book.

There have been studies of the relationship between town and countryside since the appearances of Stouff's and Coulet's books, but there have been no similarly massive studies of towns based on the complete reading of notarial registers drawn

52. Duby, Georges. *La société aux XIe et XIIe siècles dans la région mâconnaise*. Paris: Armand Colin, 1953. For two important, but very different, assessments of Duby's work on the Mâconnais and its subsequent influence, see Bisson, Thomas N. "*La terre et les hommes*: a Programme Fulfilled". *French History*, 14 (2000): 322-345; Cheyette, Frederic L. "Georges Duby's *Mâconnais* After Fifty Years: Reading It Then and Now". *Journal of Medieval History*, 28 (2002): 291-317.

53. Stouff, Louis. *Arles...*: 319, 481.

from a period of time lasting a single generation.[54] The reasons why there would not be another "urban Mâconnais" are numerous. By the time that Stouff's and Coulet's books appeared, the outpouring of regional *thèses* inspired by Duby's work, by then more than thirty years old, had just about run its course, and changes in French graduate education during the 1980s meant that the production of one-thousand-page-long theses researched over a period of several decades was no longer mandatory. Furthermore, while Stouff's and Coulet's works showed that Duby's work could be used as a model for urban history, they also showed the limitations of that model. Duby provides not a snapshot but rather a full-length film full of development, twists, and turns, which he could do because he had a manageable number of documents with which to study a two-hundred-year-long period. The huge number of documents in the archives of late-medieval Arles and Aix meant that historians would have to limit themselves to a much smaller time period if they were to recapture the local economy and society in their totality. As a result, while these books might match Duby's in its breadth, they could not hope to match it in its dynamism.

5. Conclusion

Convivencia rules among the urban historians of medieval Catalonia and the Midi. The increasing diversity of approaches and subjects has not touched off polemics between those who tend toward traditionalism and those who trend toward experimentation. Historians might disagree over specific points, but without dismissing out of hand the projects that their colleagues are pursuing.

On the other hand, success generates its own problems. Increasing geographical and topical specialization has driven the field. Historians have tended to specialize in the histories of individual towns, and when studying those towns, have tended to exploit one type of source (notarial registers, say, or charters), to the substantial or complete exclusion of others. This narrowness of focus has resulted in a much more complete and nuanced picture of social organization and institutional development; it also augments efficiency and productivity, and helps to prevent duplication of effort.

Yet it is hard to escape the conclusion that increasing specialization is ultimately responsible for the lack of interest in defining what, if anything, is specifically urban about urban history. One misses Philippe Wolff's ability to draw upon notarial and charter evidence with equal authority and consequence; one also misses the geographical sweep of Font Rius' *Orígenes del régimen municipal*. By failing to take a more comparative, or at least expansive, approach, historians are probably missing out on insights and findings that cannot be gained when every town, or every

54. For example, *Urban and Rural Communities in Medieval France: Provence and Languedoc, 1000-1500*, Kathryn L. Reyerson, John Drendel, eds. Leiden: Brill, 1998.

document series within each town, is examined in isolation. In theory, one should be able to take all the individual studies and extract from them the material with which to construct a narrative much like the one that Font Rius offered, only richer. In practice, that synthesis, if anyone ever dares to undertake it, will be difficult to achieve. History remains as much an art as a science, and each historian frames questions and handles evidence in ways that are personal and idiosyncratic, thus making explicit comparison and integration hard. Only infrequently have historians offered explanations for the same phenomena in such a way that readers can decide for themselves which explanations seem to be the most convincing.[55] For the most part, readers have to content themselves with an appreciation of each book's individual achievement, while wondering if the whole will ever be greater than, or even equal to, the sum of its parts.

55. See, for example, the differing ideas of Josep Maria Font Rius, André Gouron, myself, and Max Turull i Rubinat on the origins of the consulate in Catalonia: Font Rius, Josep Maria. "Génesis y manifestaciones iniciales del régimen municipal en Catalunya". *Miscellanea Barchinonensia*, 16 (1967): 67-91; Gouron, André. "Diffusion des consulats méridionaux et expansion du droit romain aux XIIe et XIIIe siécles". *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*, 121 (1963): 26-76; Daileader, Philip. "The Vanishing Consulates of Catalonia". *Speculum*, 74 (1999): 65-94; Turull i Rubinat, Max. "*Universitas, commune, consilium:* sur le rôle de la fiscalité dans la naissance et le développement du Conseil (Catalogne, XIIe-XIVe siècles)", *Excerptiones iuris: Studies in Honor of André Gouron*, Bernard Durand, Laurent Mayali, eds. Berkeley: The Robbins Collection, 2000: 637-677.