

FROM GENEALOGIES TO CHRONICLES: THE POWER OF THE FORM IN MEDIEVAL CATALAN HISTORIOGRAPHY



by Jaume Aurell

Iste liber ostendit veritatem primi comitis Barchinonae
et omnium aliorum qui post eum venerunt,
et de ordinatione omnium comitatuum qui sunt in Catalonia
(Preface of the *Gesta Comitum Barcinonensium*)

“E per tal que ls hòmens coneguessen e sabessen,
can (quan) hauriem passada aquesta vida mortal,
ço que nós hauriem feyt ajudan-nos lo Senyor poderós,
en qui és vera trinitat,
leixam aquest libre per memòria.
E aquells qui volran hoir de les gràcies
que nostre Senyor nos ha feytes
e per dar exempli a tots los altres hòmens del món,
que façen ço que nós havem feyt:
de metre sa fe en aquest Senyor que és tant poderós”
(Chapter I of the *Llibre dels Fets del Rei en Jaume*)¹

The influence of the methodologies of literary criticism on diverse academic disciplines has helped produce a new cultural approach to history, alerting historians to the active role of language and narrative structure in the re-creation and description of historical reality. The linguistic turn in the 1970s and the methodologies associated with poststructuralism, postmodernism, and the cultural turn at the end of the twentieth century acknowledge the mediating force of language in the representation of the past.² As Ronald G. Suny notes, “The attention to language and its deep structures preceded the renewed interest in history within American social science in the 1980s and 1990s, a profound reversal of the post-1945 rejection of history from

I am very grateful to Gabrielle M. Spiegel and Adam J. Kosto for their suggestions. I would also like to thank the anonymous readers of this essay for their observations on earlier drafts.

¹ “And so that men may know and discover, / when we have passed this mortal life, / what we will have done with the help of the Lord Almighty, / in whom is the true Trinity, / we leave this book in memory. / And those who wish to hear of the graces / our Lord has granted us / and to give an example to all other men in the world, / may they do what we have done: / to put their faith in the Lord who is Almighty.”

² For the linguistic turn, see the work of Richard Rorty, ed., *The Linguistic Turn. Recent Essays in Philosophical Method* (Chicago 1967). For the cultural context in the seventies and its influence on social sciences, see Jean-François Lyotard, *La condition postmoderne* (Paris 1979). Some excellent and recent diagnosis of the new tendencies in history and social sciences are in H. Aram Veveser, ed., *The New Historicism* (New York 1989); Lynn Hunt, ed., *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley 1989); Marina S. Brownlee, Kevin Brownlee, Stephen G. Nichols, eds., *The New Medievalism* (Baltimore 1991); R. Howard Bloch, Stephen G. Nichols, eds., *Medievalism and the Modernist Temper*, (Baltimore 1996); Terrence J. McDonald, *The Historic Turn in the Human Sciences* (Ann Arbor 1996); Richard Utz, Tom Shippey, eds., *Medievalism in the Modern World*, (Turnhout 1998); Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt, eds., *Beyond the Cultural Turn. New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture* (Berkeley 1999).

political science and sociology particularly.”³ Historians have accepted the impossibility of direct access to historical events or persons, and, consequently, admit that all historical writing, whether medieval or modern, approaches the past via discourses of one sort or another.⁴ In this epistemological context, the study of medieval historiography has become one of the most useful and privileged methods of access to a specific historical reality, but also in order to apply recent tendencies to the historical discipline.

In a traditional society, the habits that survive the passage of time and succeed in becoming established in the present acquire a far greater influence than the novelties, of whatever kind they may be: “Every deliberate modification of an existing type of activity must be based on a study of individual precedents. Every plan for the future is dependent on a pattern which has been found in the past.”⁵ This, of course, contrasts with contemporary practice, where novelty is legitimate in itself irrespective of how long it lasts. The medieval rulers based a large part of their legitimacy on the authority of the past, what Max Weber calls “the authority of the eternal yesterday.”⁶ Historiography thus acquires unexpected interest, regardless of the number of its potential receivers.

The political history of medieval Catalonia underwent a radical transformation in the mid-twelfth century when the counts of Barcelona inherited the crown of Aragon as a result of their bold dynastic policy.⁷ When they received the title of monarch, the counts looked for procedures proportional to their new political status in order to consolidate their growing power. They soon realized that writing historical texts was one of the most effective ways of legitimizing their aggressive policy of expansion. This strategy became the setting of the most prolific output of chronicles in Catalonia in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The chivalric narratives of the late medieval chronicles efficiently replaced the serious early medieval *Annales*⁸ and the schematic genealogies of the twelfth century,⁹ contemporary with the epic legends, so highly appreciated in Catalonia, at least until the fourteenth century.¹⁰ Genealogies, histories, annals, and chronicles coexisted in the Middle Ages and their distinction is sometimes

³ Ronald Grigor Suny, “Back and Beyond: Reversing the Cultural Turn?” *American Historical Review*, 107 (2002) 1482. See also Terrence J. McDonald, “Introduction,” *The Historic Turn* (n. 2 above) 2–5.

⁴ Gabrielle M. Spiegel, “Introduction,” *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore 1997) xvi–xvii.

⁵ Text from Joseph R. Strayer, quoted in Jacques Barzun et al., eds., *The Interpretation of History* (Princeton 1943) 10.

⁶ Hans Heinrich Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York 1958) 78.

⁷ For this political context, see Martin Aurell, *Les noces du Comte. Mariage et pouvoir en Catalogne, 785–1213* (Paris 1995); Thomas N. Bisson, *Medieval France and Her Pyrenean Neighbors: Studies in Early Institutional History* (London 1989); Adam J. Kosto, *Making Agreements in Medieval Catalonia: Power, Order, and the Written Word, 1000–1200* (Cambridge 2001).

⁸ The *Annales* are the historical genre in which facts are collected schematically: Michael McCormick, *Les Annales du haut Moyen Âge* (Turnhout 1975). In medieval Catalonia, the *Annales* are called *Cronicones*: Miquel Coll i Alentorn, “La historiografia de Catalunya en el període primitiu,” *Estudis Romànics* III (1951–1952) 139–196, repr. in Miquel Coll, *Historiografia* (Barcelona 1991) esp. 24–42; Thomas N. Bisson, “Unheroed Past: History and Commemoration in south Frankland before the Albigensian Crusades,” *Speculum. A Journal of Medieval Studies*, 65 (1990) 281–308, esp. 287–289.

⁹ Leopold Genicot, *Les Généalogies* (Turnhout 1975).

¹⁰ Martí de Riquer, *Història de la literatura catalana* (Barcelona 1964) 1.373.

confused.¹¹ However, in thirteenth-century Catalonia the chronicles took pride of place. The experiments of the new times conditioned the regeneration of revised historical genres, more in tune with the transformed political and social context. The monarchs of Catalonia and Aragon thus sought new procedures for updating the past.

In 1136, Ramon Berenguer IV, count of Barcelona, married the daughter of Ramiro the Monk, the king of Aragon. The marriage finally provided the Catalan house with the possibility of acceding to the throne. A few decades later, in 1162, Alfons el Cast (Alfonse the Chaste, 1162–1196) inherited from his father Ramon Berenguer IV both the county of Barcelona and the kingdom of Aragon. The count of Barcelona thus became king of Aragon. A few years later, around 1180, one of the founding texts of medieval Catalan historiography took definitive shape in genealogical form: the *Gesta Comitum Barcinonensium*.¹²

In 1213, Jaume I el Conqueridor (James I the Conqueror) came to the throne as an infant, when his father, Pere II el Catòlic (Peter II the Catholic), the son of Alfons el Cast, the first count-king of Aragon, died at the hands of Simon de Montfort's crusaders. Jaume I's long reign was marked by an ambitious policy which laid the foundation for the expansion of the crown of Aragon, both on land on the Muslim front and towards the sea along the Mediterranean. Around 1280, shortly after his death, another of the germinal texts of medieval Catalan historiography appeared: the *Llibre dels Fets del Rei en Jaume*.¹³ This was the first of the four texts that comprise the cycle of the *Quatre Grans Cròniques* which the counts of Barcelona and kings of Aragon drafted over the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries to commemorate the deeds of their respective reigns. The four great Catalan chronicles are *Llibre dels Fets* or *Crònica de Jaume I* (written between 1244 and 1276); *Crònica de Bernat Desclot* (written between 1283 and 1288), *Crònica de Ramon Muntaner* (written between 1330 and 1336); and *Crònica de Pere el Ceremoniós* (written between 1375 and 1383).¹⁴ All of them, except the one by Bernat Desclot, are written autobiographically, which provides them with tremendous narrative drive, and they are of invaluable interest as historiographical sources.

These four inestimable documents of European historiography may not be very well known because of the difficulty of access to the original Catalan language. They

¹¹ For a distinction between the different historical genres in the Middle Ages, see Bernard Guenée, "Histoires, annales, chroniques. Essai sur les genres historiques au Moyen Âge," *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 28 (1973) 997–1016.

¹² Critical edition: Lucien Barrau-Dihigo and Josep Massó Torrents, eds., *Cròniques Catalanes. II. Gesta Comitum Barchinonensium* (Barcelona 1925).

¹³ Critical edition: Jordi Bruguera, ed., *Llibre dels Fets del Rei en Jaume*, 2 vols. (Barcelona 1991); for this article, I use the spelling "fets," preferred by Bruguera, but other spellings, such as "feyts" or "feits," depending on the original text, may be used. Trans. into English as *The Chronicles of James I, king of Aragon, surnamed the Conqueror*, trans. John Forster, 2 vols. (London 1883); and, more recently, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon: A Translation of the Medieval Catalan Llibre dels Fets*, trans. Damian Smith, Helena Buffery (Burlington 2003).

¹⁴ A critical edition of the four Catalan Chronicles in Ferran Soldevila, ed., *Jaume I, Bernat Desclot, Ramon Muntaner, Pere III. Les Quatre Grans Cròniques* (Barcelona 1971). For the critical edition of the chronicle of Bernat Desclot, *Crònica. Bernat Desclot*, ed. Miquel Coll i Alentorn (Barcelona 1982). Trans. into English of these chronicles in Ramon Muntaner, *The Chronicle of Muntaner*, trans. Lady Goodenough (Nendeln 1967); *Chronicle. Pere III of Catalonia (Pedro IV of Aragon)*, trans. Mary Hillgarth (Toronto 1980); Bernat Desclot, *Chronicle of the Reign of King Pedro III of Aragon by Bernat Desclot*, trans. Frank L. Critchlow, 2 vols. (Princeton 1928–1934).

were written within the finest medieval chronicle tradition and are therefore of enormous value as both history and literature. The fact that a medieval king should write his memoirs, as with the chronicles of Jaume I (1213–1276) and Pere IV el Ceremoniós (Peter IV the Ceremonious) (1336–1387), is in itself sufficiently indicative of their interest. Interestingly, though other literatures also have historian kings, such as the Castilian Alfonso X el Sabio (Alfonse X the Wise), these tended to be historians of the past, and not of their own reign. The autobiographical chronicles of the Catalan kings, however, invite us to consider the discursive implications of their writing in their specific historical and political context.

TABLE I
CHRONOLOGY OF KINGS AND HISTORICAL WRITING IN MEDIEVAL CATALONIA

Alfons II el Cast	1162–1196
<i>Gesta Comitum Barchinonensium</i>	1162–1184
Pere II el Catòlic	1196–1213
Jaume I el Conqueridor	1213–1276
<i>Llibre dels Fets</i> of Jaume I	1244–1276
Pere III el Gran (Peter III the Great)	1276–1285
<i>Crònica de Bernat Desclot</i>	1283–1288
Alfons III el Liberal (Alfonse III the Liberal)	1285–1291
Jaume II el Just (James II the Just)	1291–1327
Alfons IV el Benigne (Alfonse IV the Benign)	1327–1336
<i>Crònica de Ramon Muntaner</i>	1330–1336
Pere IV el Ceremoniós	1336–1387
<i>Crònica del rei Pere</i>	1375–1383

This article compares two of these historical texts, the genealogies of the *Gesta Comitum Barcinonensium* and the chivalric narratives of the *Llibre dels Fets*, to determine to what extent certain mutations in literary genres result from or reflect changes in historical contexts, and how they contributed to modify it. In this way we establish interesting links between the texts and their context: the *Gesta Comitum Barcinonensium* (late-twelfth century) are a response to the fledgling monarchy's need to establish a genealogy—real or imaginary—which will allow it to connect with the mythical grounding of the dynasty and, in particular, to its founder, Count Guifré of Barcelona.¹⁵ The *Llibre dels Fets*, from the mid-thirteenth century, arose from different motives which derive from the political context within which it was structured: its purpose consisted of demonstrating the greatness of a monarch in his full splendour, detailing his conquests in a heroic, chivalric style.

The contrast between the two texts is evident in both in the content and the form: in the type of narrative, the style and literary genre, the language used, and the grammatical forms chosen.¹⁶ The *Gesta* analyze the chronological succession of the

¹⁵ Thomas N. Bisson, "L'essor de la Catalogne: identité, pouvoir et idéologie dans une société du XII^e siècle," *Annales. Économies. Sociétés. Civilisations* 39 (1984) 454–479, esp. 459–463. Bisson compares this Catalan genealogical narrative with the French genealogies that were being produced at the time: Georges Duby, "Remarques sur la littérature généalogique en France aux X^e et XII^e siècles," *Hommes et structures du Moyen Âge* (Paris 1973), chap. 16. See also, as a methodological model, Leopold Genicot, "Princes territoriaux et sang carolingien. La *Genealogia comitum buloniensium*," *Études sur les principautés lotharingiennes* (Louvain 1975) 217–306.

¹⁶ For this section of the article I have used as a methodological model William H. Sewell, Jr., *Work and*

counts of Barcelona and, only incidentally and succinctly, their most important deeds and conquests, whereas Jaume I's *Crònica* concentrates from the outset on recounting the outstanding military feats of his reign. The rhythm of the narration in the *Gesta* is cadenced and predictable; in the *Crònica* it is dramatic and full of chronological leaps, asides, and everyday details. The first is in Latin; the second in Catalan, at that point a Romance language already consolidated in popular speech but only beginning to be written. The *Gesta* use a controlled, predictable literary style; the *Crònica* bases its effectiveness on a forceful, expressive form of writing. With regard to literary genre, the *Gesta* were written in the serial form conditioned by their genealogical option, while the prose of Jaume I's *Crònica* has epic and dramatic flourishes, largely because its sources are the earlier rhymed texts that celebrated the deeds of Kings.¹⁷ In terms of the grammatical forms used, the complexity of the *Crònica* reveals the writer's greater mastery of narrative techniques, which undoubtedly makes it far more dynamic than the rigidly structured *Gesta*.

All these textual features are closely linked to the conditioning factors and motivations that arise from the context within which they were written. Just as the *Gesta* were produced in the cloisters of the monastery of Ripoll in the second half of the twelfth century, the chronicle of the *Llibre dels Fets* was drafted in the physical and intellectual context of the Barcelona court of the monarchs of Aragon in the mid-thirteenth century. If at the end of the twelfth century the Aragonese monarchy was struggling to establish itself, by the end of the thirteenth century the force of events had confirmed its prestige and soundness, enabling it to embark on a daring policy of political, military, and commercial expansion.

Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1948 (Cambridge 1980).

¹⁷ Coll, "La historiografia de Catalunya" (n. 8 above) 139–196.

TABLE 2
THE TEXT AND THE CONTEXT OF THE *GESTA COMITUM* AND *LLIBRE DELS FETS*

	<i>GESTA COMITUM BARCINONENSIVM</i>	<i>LLIBRE DELS FETS</i> (Chronicle of Jaume I)
Date	1162–1184	1276
Language	Latin	Catalan
Author	Anonymous	Jaume I
Context of Origin	Monastic environment (the monastery of Ripoll)	Courtly environment (The Court of Jaume I)
Objective	Legitimization of the dynasty of the counts of Barcelona	Legitimization of territorial expansion
First Reference	Guifré el Pelós (Wilfred the Hairy) (9th c.) (the first count of Barcelona)	Alfons el Cast (Alfonse the Chaste) (twelfth c.) (the first king of Aragon)
Main Characters	The Catalan counts	The king and the aristocracy
Setting	Catalonia	The Mediterranean
Narrative Style	Chronological and formulaic	Episodic and dynamic

Naturally, those features, which affect both the content of the form of the text and the circumstances of the context, do not exist in isolation: we need to consider both (the context of the text and the content with its form) in order to achieve a comprehensive study of medieval, modern or postmodern historical texts.¹⁸ For this reason, the “new social historians,” the “new cultural historians,” and the “new philologists” strive to unify their methods.¹⁹ Medieval and modern historiography has always been highly sensitive to changes in the political, ideological, and epistemological perspectives across the disciplines. It is therefore significant that the cycle of the four great Catalan

¹⁸ I use the expression coined by Hayden V. White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore 1989). White’s reflections on historiography are useful for studies about medieval, modern, and postmodern historiography, and I use some of his epistemological concepts for this article.

¹⁹ See the Presentation of the special issue of *American Historical Review*, 107 (2002), entitled “Review

historical chronicles is contemporary with the *Grandes Chroniques* of France, written in the second half of the thirteenth century, and other similar texts published in other European countries, notably England.²⁰

THE GENEALOGY OF THE COUNTS:

APPROPRIATING ORIGINS TO LEGITIMIZE THE PRESENT

In the last thirty years, symbolic anthropologists and structuralists like Clifford Geertz or Pierre Bourdieu have attempted to discover and display the variety of human experience by using spatial metaphors rather than time coordinates: “in the past they study, historians find words, structured differently from ours, worlds where people’s motives, senses of honor, daily tasks, and political calculations are based on unfamiliar assumptions about human society and the cosmic order.”²¹ Nevertheless they also emphasize that, as political scientists show us, the most powerful moment for this act of discovery of the human diversity is the study of origins.²² As Bourdieu posits: “There is no more potent tool for rupture than the reconstruction of genesis: by bringing back into view the conflicts and confrontations of the early beginnings and therefore all the discarded possibles, it retrieves the possibility that things could have been (and still could be) otherwise. And, through such a practical utopia, it questions the *possible* which, among all others, was actualized.”²³

One of the principal aims of the emerging medieval monarchies was to establish their genealogy in order to forge links between a remote legendary past and a present that needed validation. Genealogies had powerful political overtones in the Middle Ages.²⁴ This might be perceived as a consequence of the well-established biblical tradition of collecting the genealogies of the patriarchs, which reached its climax in the opening of the first gospel (Matt. 1.1–17), which records the genealogy of Jesus Christ. But this meant more than merely reproducing an established testamentary tradition, because it involved imitating a model that was becoming ubiquitous in medieval Europe: lists of Kings.²⁵

To construct the dynastic successions of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, scriptural typology was used only as a secondary model, which highlights the lay character of the new dynastic genealogies that became accepted from the eleventh century onward. While ecclesiastical values were being definitively introduced inside the great

Essays. What’s Beyond the Cultural Turn,” 1475.

²⁰ *Les Grandes Chroniques de France*, ed. Jean Viard, 10 vols. (Paris 1920–1953); Antonia Grandsen, *Historical Writing in England, c. 550–c. 1307* (Ithaca 1974).

²¹ William H. Sewel, “Cultural Systems and History: From Synchrony to Transformation,” *The Fate of Culture. Geertz and Beyond*, ed. Sherry B. Ortner (Berkeley 1999) 37. See Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Culture. Selected Essays* (New York 1973).

²² Suny, “Back and Beyond” (n. 3 above) 1498.

²³ Pierre Bourdieu, “Rethinking the State: Genesis and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field,” *State/Culture: Stat –Formation after the Cultural Turn*, ed. George Steinmetz (Ithaca 1999) 57.

²⁴ Bernard Guenée, “Les généalogies entre l’histoire et la politique: la fierté d’être Capétien en France au Moyen Âge,” *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 33 (1978) 450–477; Gabrielle M. Spiegel, “Genealogy: Form and Function in Medieval Historical Narrative,” *History and Theory* 22 (1983) 43–53. See also Amy G. Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past. Monastic Foundation Legends in Medieval Southern France* (Ithaca 1995).

²⁵ David M. Dumville, “Kingship, Generalogies and Regnal Lists,” *Early Medieval Kingship*, ed. P. H. Sawyer and I. N. Wood (Leeds 1977).

aristocratic houses, the culture of the court was being secularized.²⁶ This was a first secularization of time—dynastic time—which became an eloquent precedent for the definitive laicization of time at the end of the Middle Ages.²⁷ The legitimizing historical texts no longer needed to refer to biblical times: it was enough for them to have legendary access to the heroic founders of the dynasties. The links in the chain of hereditary succession were designed to mark the spaces of time which were constantly shrinking. The historical narrative was thus controlled by the dynastic rhythm, which replaced the rigid chronological *tempus* of the *Annales* and the *Calendarii*.

The emergence of genealogical literature in that period was not conditioned by the scriptural tradition, because it lay much closer to the growth of the sense of dynasty and the consolidation of the agnatic organization of the family from the tenth century. The genealogical literature of the monarchies and the great counties comes from a context which is still ecclesiastical and monastic, but whose intention was more political and courtly than religious. Some such genealogies have been preserved, such as those of the count of Flanders, Arnold the Great, composed by Vuitgerius between 951 and 959 and kept at the Abbey of Saint-Bertin; the genealogy of the count of Flanders, Arnold the Younger, written in the monastery of Saint-Pierre-au-Mont-Blandin between 1050 and 1110; the genealogy of the counts of Vendôme inserted in the Vendôme cartulary; six genealogies of the counts of Anjou from Saint-Aubin d'Angers; from the end of the eleventh century, the first edition of the genealogy of the counts of Boulogne and a fragment of the history of the counts of Anjou; between 1110 and 1130, two new genealogies of the counts of Flanders appeared. Around 1160 there was a particularly fertile period as the Flemish and Angevin genealogies were revised and the authors of regional chronicles and histories paid far more attention to genealogical data. Lastly, in 1194 Lamberto d'Ardres wrote the *Histoire des Comtes de Gines*, regarded as a model of the genealogical genre.²⁸

The historical text of the *Gesta Comitum Barcinonensium* is an integral part of that context. Important transformations were enacted during the twelfth century in Catalonia: the aggressive expansion and conquests of Ramon Berenguer III (1097–1131) and Ramon Berenguer IV (1131–1162), the reconsolidation of the court, the increasing power and efficacy of the fiscal collection, the spread of the *Usatges* and the establishment of the Peace and Truce of God.²⁹ As a result of the accumulation of genera-

²⁶ José Enrique Ruiz-Domènec, “Reminiscencia y conmemoración: el proceder de la literatura genealógica,” *La memoria de los feudales* (Barcelona 1984) 219. See also Constance B. Bouchard, *Those of My Blood: Constructing Noble Families in Medieval France* (Philadelphia 2001).

²⁷ Jacques Le Goff, “Au Moyen Âge: Temps de l'Église et temps du marchand,” *Pour un autre Moyen Âge. Temps, travail et culture en Occident* (Paris 1977) 46–65; and Jacques Le Goff, “Le temps du travail dans la crise du XIVe siècle: du temps médiéval au temps moderne,” *Le Moyen Âge* 69 (1963) 597–613.

²⁸ Some of these examples are found in Duby, “Remarques sur la littérature” (n. 15 above) 287–298.

²⁹ For this historical context, see Martín Aurell, “L'expansion en Occitanie,” *Les noces* (n. 7 above) 389–426; José Enrique Ruiz-Domènec, *A propósito de Alfonso, rey de Aragón, conde de Barcelona y marqués de Provenza* (Barcelona 1996) 109–130; Thomas N. Bisson, *Fiscal Accounts of Catalonia under the Early Count-kings (1151–1213)* (Berkeley 1984); Paul Freedman, *The Origins of Peasant Servitude in Medieval Catalonia* (Cambridge 1991) 135–139; Jeffrey A. Bowman, “Councils, Memory, and Mills: The Early Development of the Peace of God in Catalonia,” *Early Medieval Europe* 9 (2000) 99–129; and Thomas N. Bisson, “The Organized Peace in Southern France and Catalonia (c. 1140–1233),” *American Historical Review* 82 (1977) 290–311. Edition of the *Usatges* in *Usatges de Barcelona: el codi a mitjan segle XII. Establiment del text llatí i edició de la versió catalana del manuscrit del segle XIII de l'Arxiu de la Corona d'Aragó de Barcelona*, ed. Joan Bastardas and Teresa Gràcia, Lluïsa de Nadal i Pere Puig i Ustrell

tions and the consolidation of power, the counts of Barcelona became more aware of their sense of dynasty and their belonging to an exceptional lineage. This renewed consciousness led them to construct a genealogy without taking the trouble to check the historical truth of their annotations, or even consciously manipulating them. In a sense, the title *Gesta Comitum* may be deceptive, because that historical text is not a compendium of the *gesta* or deeds of the counts of Barcelona, but a rational, strict compilation of the dynastic successions that culminated in the last scion of the line and first monarch of the dynasty, Alfons el Cast. The text also contains the dynastic avatars of the holders of the other counties of Catalonia, but always in relation to the counts of Barcelona, who were their *primus inter pares* and were to be the ones who effectively inherited the kingdom of Aragon.³⁰

The choice of the genealogical form by the counts of Barcelona to construct their past emulates the increasingly widespread practice by European monarchs of searching for their dynastic origins, regardless of the verifiability of the information about those roots. The remote past is easier to manipulate; the invention of the recent past is more complex. To rummage into one's remote past can be a balm, but to look into one's recent past is more painful. Indeed, the peculiar formal structure of the genealogy enabled the emerging monarchs to create the necessary links to legitimize the hereditary principle of the monarchic succession.³¹ One of the paradigmatic examples of bringing a legendary past close to a hegemonic present was the French monarchy's strategy to establish kinship with the Carolingian kings and from there to find links with the Merovingians and even the kings of Troy, as written in the preamble to the section devoted to the Capetians in the *Grandes Chroniques*³² and illustrated from the early manuscripts of this Chronicle.³³

In the context of twelfth-century Catalan historiography, the genealogical form was the most reasonable option, especially if we consider that the monks of Ripoll who wrote the *Gesta* were quite familiar with biblical texts, which they read assiduously both in community and in private. However, from the first chapters we discover that their links are far closer to the literary context of the numerous genealogies that were being constructed in the twelfth century in the counties of Flanders and Anjou than to any distant precedents in the Scriptures. The texts were structured in a zone influenced by certain literary centers with Carolingian roots. There was also a Visigothic intellectual heritage, particularly in places like Ripoll, which may have influenced the writing of subsequent texts. And, in fact, from the late tenth century, many lay and ecclesiastic leaders in Catalonia sought to distance themselves from Carolingian politics.³⁴ But in the twelfth century the prestige of the Carolingian dynasty weighed more

(Barcelona 1984); and trans. in *The Usatges of Barcelona: the Fundamental Law of Catalonia*, trans. Donald J. Kagay (Philadelphia 1994). See also Adam J. Kosto, "The Limited Impact of the *Usatges de Barcelona* in the Twelfth-Century Catalonia," *Traditio* 56 (2001) 53–88.

³⁰ For medieval Barcelona and its connections with other Catalan counts, see Stephen P. Bensch, *Barcelona and its Rulers, 1096–1291* (Cambridge 1995).

³¹ Spiegel, "Genealogy: Form and Function" (n. 24 above) 43–46.

³² *Les Grandes Chroniques de France* 5.1–2.

³³ Anne D. Hedeman, *The Royal Image. Illustrations of the Grandes Chroniques de France, 1274–1422* (Berkeley 1991) 95–105.

³⁴ See Ramon d'Abadal, "A propos du legs visigothique en Espagne," *Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi Sull'Alto Medioevo. V. Caratteri del secolo VII in Occidente. 23–29 aprile 1957* (Spoleto 1958) 541–585 and 678–682; and Ramon d'Abadal, "La Catalunya carolíngia," *Dels visigots als catalans*

than its real influence. The interest of the writer of the *Gesta* in connecting the legendary origins of the dynasty of the counts of Barcelona with the Carolingian dynasty, using the counts of Flanders as intermediaries, is significant and clear.

The first two chapters of the text tell the fascinating story of the founder of the dynasty, Guifré el Pelós (Wilfred the Hairy).³⁵ His father, Guifré I of Barcelona, had received the county of Barcelona from the Frankish king. On a visit to Narbonne, during an altercation with a Frankish knight who pulled at his beard, the count, furious at the affront, ran the knight through, killing him. The count and his son were taken prisoner, and Guifré of Barcelona was then executed. When the Frankish king found out what had happened, and enraged at the insult to one of his counts, he rescued the youth and sent him to the count of Flanders to be brought up. In the Flemish court, Guifré embarked on a secret liaison with the count's daughter. The countess, in an attempt to avoid the perverse effects of a union outside marriage, made Guifré swear on the four gospels that, should he inherit the county of Barcelona, he would take their daughter as his wife. In order to see if he would be able to regain the county, the countess sent him to Barcelona in disguise. Guifré's mother recognized him because of a physical feature that characterized the men of their lineage, believed to be an abundant growth of hair along his spine (hence his nickname, "the Hairy"). She then presented him to the Barcelona barons, who, perceiving his dead father in him, set the stage for Guifré's revenge on Salomon, the usurper of the county. Thus Guifré el Pelós claimed the counties of Barcelona and Narbonne. As agreed, he married the count and countess of Flanders's daughter in a solemn ceremony. When he received the news, sent by the count of Flanders himself, the Frankish king confirmed Guifré as count of Barcelona.

The most significant event in Guifré's reign occurred shortly afterwards, with the threat of a Saracen invasion. As the Frankish king could not extend him any military aid at the time, he was promised that his descendants would have the right of inheritance of the county of Barcelona in perpetuity, in return for a single-handed defeat of the Saracens. After a heroic campaign, Guifré vanquished the Saracens and claimed the county of Barcelona for his lineage. Thus, the chronicler concludes, "the county of Barcelona passed from the royal power into the hands of our counts." The last phrase of the fine tale is dedicated, significantly, to the foundation by the count of Barcelona, Guifré el Pelós, of the monastery of Ripoll, where the chronicle was written.³⁶

The narrative of the deeds in the *Gesta* has some claim to historical accuracy: the father of Guifré el Pelós, erroneously called Guifré in the *Gesta*, was actually Sunifred I, who had received Prades, in Conflent, as a gift from Charles le Chauve (Charles the Bald).³⁷ Sunifred had had dealings with Salomon, a Frank who succeeded him as

(Barcelona 1986) 1.135–239.

³⁵ For this story, see Coll, "La historiografia de Catalunya" (n. 8 above) 54–61; Josep M. Salrach, *El procés de formació nacional de Catalunya (segles VIII–IX)* (Barcelona 1978) 87–107; Paul Freedman, "The Legendary Origins of Catalonia," *Past and Present*, 121 (1988) 3–28; Armand de Fluvià, "La qüestió de l'ascendència del comte Guifré I el Pelós," *Revista de Catalunya* 28 (1989) 83–87; Martin Aurell, "La réminiscence du mariage fondateur," *Les nocces* (n. 7 above) 504–513; Paul Ponsich, "El problema de l'ascendència de Guifré el Pelós," *Revista de Catalunya* 23 (1988) 35–44.

³⁶ *Gesta Comitum Barchinonensium* 3–6 (chaps. I and II).

³⁷ For these two figures, see Roger Collins, "Charles the Bald and Wifred the Hairy," *Charles the Bald, Court and Kingdom*, ed. Janet Nelson and Margaret T. Gibson (Oxford 1981).

count of Urgell and Cerdanya in 848. Lastly, in 870, Guifré el Pelós succeeded him as count of Cerdanya and expelled the Muslims from the county of Vic.³⁸ But the author of the text turns out to be much more conditioned by a present in which he is deeply involved, the second half of the twelfth century, than a remote past—the ninth century—which he knows more from collective memory than actual existing documents.³⁹ The anti-Frankish attitude that pervades the text corresponds to the context of an Alfons el Cast obsessed by independence from the Capets and the counts of Toulouse. For that reason, Guifré's murderers are Frankish legates; the intruder Salomon is French; and the king of France is incapable of fighting the Muslims. This detail is crucial at a moment when victories over the Saracens legitimized the annexation of their territories. At the same time, the whole text seems conditioned by the desire to validate the independence of the counts of Barcelona from the French crown, as shown by the *moral* of the story: "And so it was that the county of Barcelona passed from the royal power into the hands of our counts." National consciousness is established around the Barcelona dynasty through rejection of Capetian otherness.

The details of the narrative reveal a good deal about the intentions with which the *Gesta* are written and say more about the time in which they were written than about the period written about. As the first text designed to exalt the Barcelona dynasty, the *Gesta* strive to ensure the legitimacy of the founder of the lineage. The text is based on the repetition of certain verbs such as *genuit* and *successit*, but does not hesitate to insert allusions to the deeds of arms when they fit the desired political intention.⁴⁰ The *Gesta* was written between 1162 and 1184, when Alfons el Cast had just come to the throne and united Catalonia and Aragon in his person, recovered Provence, annexed Roussillon and reorganized the reconquest against the Saracens. All that sovereign power had to be celebrated and its continuity assured. At the same time, the spread of the legal compilation called *Usatges*, though of limited impact, is part of this strategy.⁴¹

The monarch turns to the monks of Ripoll to obtain all the power that comes from the union between archaeological and literary memory. Ripoll was the necropolis where the counts of Barcelona had been buried for centuries. The epitaphs in honor of the counts' ancestors had been written, since time immemorial, by the monks of

³⁸ Paul Ponsich, "Le rôle de Saint-Michel de Cuxa dans la formation de l'historiographie catalane et l'historicité de la légende de Wifred le Velu," *Etudes Roussillonnaises* (1954–1955) 156–159; Ramon d'Abadal, *Els temps i el regiment del comte Guifré el Pilós* (Sabadell 1989); and Aurell, *Les noces* (n. 7 above) 507.

³⁹ For the context of 9th- to 10th-c. Catalonia, see Ramon d'Abadal, *Els primers comtes catalans* (Barcelona 1965); Pierre Bonnassie, *La Catalogne du milieu du Xe à la fin du XIe siècle. Croissance et mutations d'une société*, 2 vols. (Toulouse 1976); Josep M. Salrach, *El procés de formació nacional de Catalunya (segles VIII–IX)* (Barcelona 1978); Michel Zimmermann, *Écrire et lire en Catalogne (IXe–XIIe siècle)* (Madrid 2003); Ramon d'Abadal, "Formació i evolució dels comtats catalans," *Dels visigots als catalans* (Barcelona 1986) 1.240–362; Michel Zimmermann, *Ens els orígens de Catalunya. Emancipació política i afirmació cultural* (Barcelona 1989).

⁴⁰ Joan Pau Rubiés and Josep Maria Salrach, "Entorn de la mentalitat i la ideologia del bloc de poder feudal a través de la historiografia medieval fins a les quatre gran cròniques," *La formació i l'expansió del feudalisme català*, ed. Jaume Portella (Girona 1985) 479.

⁴¹ See Thomas N. Bisson, "Feudalism in Twelfth-Century Catalonia," *Structures féodales et féodalisme dans l'Occident méditerranéen Xe–XIIIe siècles : Bilan et perspectives de recherches* (Rome 1980) 173–192; and Adam J. Kosto, "The Limited Impact" (n. 29 above).

Ripoll, so they were therefore the best equipped to write their genealogy: the relation between epitaphs and genealogies is well known.⁴² At the same time the very authority of the church was at stake, as the monastery of Ripoll was the site where the history of the counts of Barcelona commenced.⁴³ The fall of Barcelona to Al-Mansûr in 985, with the loss of a large part of the historical documents, demanded a fresh effort in the rewriting of history.⁴⁴

The role played by the counts of Flanders in the *Gesta* is not simply a minor detail. The founding marriage of the dynasty was made between Guifré el Pelós of Barcelona and the daughter of the count and countess of Flanders. Protected by the count of Flanders and linked forever to his family, the count of Barcelona ensured his independence from the Franks while conserving a valuable link with the Carolingian monarchy, from whom the Flemish had received the crown. The connection with the Flemish genealogies of the second half of the twelfth century crops up again. In 1194, Lambert of Ardres completed his genealogy of the counts of Guines, whose chaplain he was.⁴⁵ The founder of the Guines dynasty was Siegfried, a Scandinavian adventurer who seduced the daughter of the count of Flanders. She bore his illegitimate child, who was adopted by his brother-in-law, the boy's maternal uncle.⁴⁶

The theme of the Scandinavian warriors, seducers of the count of Flanders's daughter and enemies of the king of France, spread all over Europe by word of mouth.⁴⁷ But the important thing about those stories in terms of their reception in Catalonia is the role played by the Flemish women. The *Annales de Saint-Bertin*, copies of which probably soon reached the Pyrenean monasteries, tell the story of the founder of the lineage of the counts of Flanders, Baudouin I Bras-de-Fer, who had married Judith, daughter of Charles le Chauve. The union had been made without the King's consent, but had ensured the Carolingian descent of the house of Flanders through its women.⁴⁸ The blood of the imperial lineage runs in the veins of the counts of Barcelona, because they too had seduced a daughter of the count of Flanders.⁴⁹ Both the counts of Guines and the counts of Barcelona followed the example of Baudouin I, who had raped the daughter of Charles le Chauve to produce, through

⁴² Duby, "Remarques sur la littérature" (n. 15 above) 294.

⁴³ Michel Zimmermann, "La prise de Barcelona par al-Mansûr et la naissance de l'historiographie catalane," *Annales de Bretagne et des pays de l'Ouest* (1980) 191–218.

⁴⁴ Miquel Coll i Alentorn, "La Crònica de Sant Pere de les Puel·les," *I Col·loqui d'història del Monaquisme Català* (Santes Creus 1966) 35–50; José E. Ruiz Doméneq, "Iluminaciones sobre el pasado de Barcelona," *En las costas del Mediterráneo Occidental*, ed. David Abulafia and Blanca Garí (Barcelona 1997) 63–93, esp. 63. See also Paul Freedman, "Symbolic Interpretations of the Events of 985–988" *Symposium internacional sobre els orígens de Catalunya (segles VIII–XI)* (Barcelona 1991) 1.117–129; Manuel Rovira i Solà, "Notes documentals sobre alguns efectes de la presa de Barcelona per al'Mansur," *Acata Historica et Archaeologica Mediaevalia* 1 (1980) 31–53; Joan Vernet, "La Barcelona del segle X, segons les fonts àrabs coetànies," *Symposium Internacional sobre els orígens de Catalunya (segles VIII–XI)* (Barcelona 1992) 2.201–208.

⁴⁵ Edition in Lambert of Ardres, *Historia comitum Chisensium*, ed. H. Heller (Hanover 1876); trans. in Lambert of Ardres, *The History of the Counts of Guines and Lords of Ardres*, trans. Leah Shopkow (Philadelphia 2000).

⁴⁶ Duby, *Hommes et structures* (n. 15 above) 280.

⁴⁷ Aurell, *Les noces* (n. 7 above) 510.

⁴⁸ Thomas N. Bisson, *Medieval France and her Pyrenean Neighbours* (London 1989) 138.

⁴⁹ On the claims by European counts of the 12th c. to Carolingian blood, see Andrew W. Lewis, *Royal Succession in Capetian France: Studies on Familial Order and the State* (Cambridge 1981) 120.

her, descendants who carried the prestigious blood of the Carolingians in their veins.⁵⁰

The French chronicles and the Flemish genealogies, which had reached the libraries of the Catalan monasteries, were to be a valuable material used by the monks to write the historical texts patronized by the monarchs. Those histories met with a particularly enthusiastic reception in the territories that emerged on the boundaries of the Carolingian empire, such as the ones Georges Duby studied, which emerged in the far north-western part of the empire.⁵¹ The Catalan *Gesta* were probably created in the same context, also on the borders of the empire, this time in the far southwestern part.

The circumstances surrounding the legend of Guifré el Pelós are highly illustrative in this context. The adventure of the founder of the dynasty consolidated his function as founder of the lineage and his prestige as the holder of a historic county. The parallels with other legendary heroes, founders of the great Western lineages through a journey fraught with perils, are clear. They are the heroes of a large part of the genealogical literature written in the second half of the twelfth century. Many of them are of Scandinavian origin, such as Gero, the Norman chieftain, grandfather of the Blois; Achard, founder of the dynasty of the counts of Bar-sur-Aube; and Raoul Barbeta, creator of the Roucy family. The counts of Anjou have a founder of modest but heroic extraction, Tertulle le Forestier; of similar origin are Archambaud and Gouffier, who are to be found at the source of the viscounties of Comborn and Lastours; the Robertien dynasty are descendants of Witikind, the Saxon rebel vanquished by Charlemagne.⁵² The characteristics required for the founder of the dynasty privileged his chivalric nature over his proven princely ascendancy, a condition he acquires through a clearly exogamic marriage.⁵³

The legend of Guifré el Pelós has much to do with those conditioning factors and, through the intrinsic force of the historical narrative in the opening of the *Gesta*, is definitively linked to the legendary origins of the Catalan dynasty, even taking into account the weakness of the historicity of the story. The tale of Guifré's rise to the county of Barcelona is certainly based on the narrative of the *ancients*. The opening of the original version of the *Gesta* is critical and eloquent: "Antiquorum nobis relatione compertum est quod miles quidam fuerit nomine Guifredus."⁵⁴ The writer based his account on the oral tradition of the *ancients* and on writings probably kept in the monastery of Ripoll, which had a long tradition of writing historical, legendary and even poetic texts.⁵⁵ The author of the *Gesta* may well have received the legend of Count Guifré, orally or in writing, incorporating certain details that allowed him to integrate contemporary significance to the definitive version. It is difficult to substantiate the

⁵⁰ For the strength of the legend and memory of Charlemagne in medieval Europe, Robert Folz, *Le souvenir et la légende de Charlemagne dans l'Empire germanique médiéval* (Paris 1950).

⁵¹ Georges Duby, "Structures de parenté et noblesse dans la France du Nord aux XIe et XIIe siècles," *Hommes et structures* (n. 15 above)

⁵² These examples are collected in Eric Bournazel, "Mémoire et parenté," *La France de l'an mil*, ed. Robert Delort (Paris 1990) 114–124.

⁵³ Aurell, *Les noces* (n. 7 above) 509–510.

⁵⁴ *Gesta Comitum Barcinensium* 3.

⁵⁵ Lluís Nicolau d'Olwer, "L'escola poètica de Ripoll en els segles X–XIII," *Anuari de l'Institut d'Estudis Catalans* (1915–1920) 3–84. See also, for this monastic center, Ramon d'Abadal, "La fundació del monestir de Ripoll," *Analecta Montserratensia* IX (1962) 25–49; and Manuel Riu, "L'Església catalana al segle X," *Symposium internacional sobre els orígens de Catalunya (segles VIII–XI)* (Barcelona 1991) 1.161–189.

process of historical manipulation that culminated with the final inscription of the legend of Guifré el Pelós. Nonetheless, in spite of its complicated process of composition, the story's enormous effectiveness as consolidator of the historical memory of a nation is indisputable.

Experts in lineages speak of the prevalence of hypergamic marriage—unions where the wife is of a higher social status than her husband—clearly exemplified in the active role of women in the genealogies of the twelfth century, where the consorts of the Counts have a primordial function.⁵⁶ The women in the *Gesta* play active roles: not only are they needed to pass on the posterity of royal blood, but they leave their powerful imprint on the course of events with sharp, bold actions. After concealing her daughter's pregnancy, the countess of Flanders organized Guifré el Pelós's journey to Barcelona, leading her husband to grant the county to his future son-in-law. The remote memory of Scripture returns, recalling the painstaking strategy that Jacob's mother, Rebecca, contrived so that the dying Isaac would confirm primogeniture on their second son, to the detriment of the filial rights of Esau. But the recent tradition of the genealogies of the period is stronger; in them, women are assigned functions beyond that of hereditary transmission; they are driven to act boldly so that the story designed in the courts could actually happen.

When the action moves to Catalonia, Guifré's mother takes over the central role in the narrative when she recognizes him because of the physical characteristic that gave him his nickname. Interestingly for the narrative account, the emphasis on Guifré's hirsuteness—with its connotations of virility and power in Iberian contexts—contrasts with the more ineffectual representation of Charles le Chauve. This detail serves as further proof of the antagonism the chronicler tried to highlight between the founder of the house of Barcelona and the master whose domination he rejected. Once she had recognized her son, she began to use her influence so that Guifré would recover the title of count which had belonged to his father, disregarding the fact that the rights of hereditary transmission of the county had not yet been obtained.

The function of the two mothers, therefore, is decisive and lucid, in contrast to the rather elusive figure of the count of Flanders's daughter, who plays a merely passive role. In that way the Catalan text of the *Gesta* portrays the social practices of the time: the passivity of the nubile young girl (the count of Flanders's daughter, who allows herself to be seduced by the stranger), the concealed but effective power in the household of the married woman (the countess of Flanders, who weaves the whole plot once she finds out her daughter is pregnant) and the public strength of the widow (the count of Barcelona's mother, who wields the power to summon the assembly of the nobles of her lands and impose her son as count, in the presence of his opponent).⁵⁷

Historiography of the 1970s discovered the wealth of the historical genealogical narratives, whose content had been ignored by positivist historiographers, because of

⁵⁶ Georges Duby, *Medieval Marriage: Two Models from Twelfth-Century France* (Baltimore 1978); José Enrique Ruiz-Domènec, "Système de parenté et théorie de l'alliance dans la société catalane (env. 1000–env. 1240)," *Revue Historique* (1979) 305–326; Georges Duby, Jacques Le Goff, eds., *Famille et parenté dans l'Occident Médiéval* (Palais Farnèse 1977); Martin Aurell, "La détérioration du statut de la femme aristocratique en Provence (Xe–XIIIe siècles)," *Le Moyen Age* (1985) 5–32.

⁵⁷ Aurell, *Les noces* (n. 7 above) 511–513.

its highly schematic nature.⁵⁸ Genealogy is assumed by the medieval chronicler to be a privileged medium for establishing a rigorous, orderly succession of events, which are considered the true foundations of the structure of history.⁵⁹ At the same time, the genre confirms the deep links established from the twelfth century between the historical text and literary fiction. The genealogies became increasingly separated from their scriptural, liturgical, and monastic origins and entered the field of chivalric fiction, based on the tradition of the epic legends and the supremacy of the courtly context. Thus, legendary heroes occupy a privileged place in a supposedly historical genre. History opens up to legend and the imaginary. If anything characterizes the genealogical literature of the twelfth century, including the Catalan *Gesta*, it is the invention of legendary antecedents of the national dynasties in the remote past in order to consolidate a present that needs to be given new life. The genealogies refer to the Carolingian period because this is the supreme moment immortalized by the singers of the lays.⁶⁰

When the monks of Ripoll prepared to establish, more or less officiously,⁶¹ the origins of the dynasty of the counts of Barcelona, the genealogical method proved to be the most effective in achieving that aim.⁶² The *Gesta Comitum Barcinonensium* was written between 1162 and 1184. After recounting the odyssey of the founder of the dynasty in detail, the text continues with a summary description of the outstanding deeds of the counts of Barcelona and the other counties of Catalonia from the time of Guifré at the end of the ninth century to the marriage of the count of Barcelona, Ramon Berenguer IV, and the daughter of King Ramiro of Aragon in 1136, through which the count of Barcelona also became king of Aragon.⁶³ Once the foundation of the county has been told, the *Gesta* emphasize the patrimonial and hereditary side of the dynasty of the counts of Barcelona, pointing out the gradual joining of the counties in a single principality and mentioning women only in relation to the men who were their fathers or husbands.⁶⁴

The compiler considers the genealogical form the one that best suits his motivation, stating from the beginning of the *Gesta* his intention to make an orderly list of all the counts of Barcelona from the first one to their rise to kingship, as well as of all the other holders of the other counties of Catalonia.⁶⁵ Throughout the dispassionate narra-

⁵⁸ See Duby, "Remarques sur la littérature" (n. 15 above); and Spiegel, "Genealogy: Form and Function" (n. 24 above)

⁵⁹ Northrop Frye, *The Anatomy of Criticism* (New York 1969) 15.

⁶⁰ For the Carolingian world and its historical context, Karl F. Werner, *Structures politiques du monde franc (VIe–XIIe siècles). Études sur les origines de la France et de l'Allemagne* (London 1979).

⁶¹ For the distinction between *official history* and *officious history* and their different levels of spontaneity, see Bernard Guenée, *Histoire et culture historique dans l'Occident médiéval* (Paris 1980) 337–346.

⁶² See the connections between the concepts of *chronology* and *genealogy* in Bisson, "Unheroed Past" (n. 8 above) 293–301.

⁶³ In the edition of the *Gesta Comitum* by Barrau-Dihigo and Massó there is a valuable introduction (XI–LXXIII) specifying the different stages of the writing of the text, which has a "primitive" (original) edition and another "definitive" one. I will concentrate on the first two stages of that writing (1162–1182 and 1200–1208), because the later ones respond to different chronology and motivations which, in any case, would need to be studied according to other criteria.

⁶⁴ Bisson, "Unheroed Past" (n. 8 above) 299.

⁶⁵ "Iste liber ostendit veritatem primi comitis Barchinonae et omnium aliorum qui post eum venerunt, et de ordinatione omnium comitatuum qui sunt in Catalonia, et nomina et tempora illorum qui tenuerunt unus post alium comitatus, et qualiter regnum Aragoniae primo venit, et qualiter fut unitum comitatui Barchi-

tive, he keeps strictly to the previously selected schema. And so the text of the *Gesta Comitum* gives off a notable air of credibility, which is paradoxically compatible with the contradictions of its historicity. That may, to a large extent, be attributed to the narrative form chosen by the compiler. Although there are many historical errors and legendary passages in the text, which later critics have undertaken to locate, it is highly significant that the text worked as a model and template for the drafting of the successions of the Catalan counts and the kings of Aragon until well into the twentieth century. And so the text of the *Gesta*, with the cycle of the *Quatre Grans Cròniques*, functions perfectly as a *canon* of Catalan historiography, as defined by Pierre Nora for French historiography. The French historian referred to three French historical texts as the main referents of the shaping of their historical memory: the *Grandes Chroniques*, completed in 1274 by the monks of the abbey of Saint Denis; Etienne Pasquier's debunking text *Recherches de la France*, 1599; and the historiography of the Restoration, which created the modern concept of France as a nation state.⁶⁶

Applying that model to Catalan historiography, the *Gesta* founded a new structure of Catalan historical memory, which was the backbone of Catalan historiography, not only in the Middle Ages but well into the overhaul of historical studies in the mid-eighteenth century.⁶⁷ Nonetheless, it would be more accurate to say that the tendency prevailed until well into the nineteenth century, with the shift from the *legendary* phase of Catalan Romantic historiography to the *erudite* phase.⁶⁸ Moreover, it is highly significant that the ambitious project of the historian Jaume Vicens i Vives to write a general history of Catalonia around 1950 would be entitled "Biografies Catalanes," proof of the credibility of that type of historical narrative.⁶⁹ The parallels between the twentieth-century "Biografies" and the twelfth-century *Gesta* are clear enough. Lastly, one of the leading experts on medieval Catalan historiography, the scholar Miquel Coll i Alentorn, began one of his documented articles on the legend of Guifré with the following words: "The founder of our national dynasty enjoyed prestige and renown in his own lifetime."⁷⁰ The essay was published in 1990.

The explanation for that enormous influence may lie in that the *Gesta* condense the dynastic and genealogical memory of Catalonia in an extraordinarily simple structure. The text works with great efficiency, ushering in a new way of acknowledging the historical continuity of the emerging nation and concentrating its legacy in the figure of the count of Barcelona and king of Aragon. It is not fortuitous that the text dates

nonae. Item ponuntur in eo facta et gesta nobilia quae fuerunt facta per reges Aragoniae suis temporibus et per nobiles comites Barchinonae" (*Gesta Comitum* 22).

⁶⁶ Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations* 26 (1989) 21; and Gabrielle M. Spiegel, "Medieval Canon Formation and the Rise of Royal Historiography in Old French Prose," *The Past as Text* (n. 4 above) 195–212.

⁶⁷ Miquel Coll i Alentorn (*Historiografia* [n. 8 above] 54) considers that the publication of the *Història de Poble* in 1746 by the historian Jaume Finestres was a turning point in the change of historiographical canon in Catalonia.

⁶⁸ For the making of historical *imaginaire* in modern Catalonia, Jaume Aurell, "La formació del imaginari històric del nacionalisme català, de la Renaixença al Noucentisme (1830–1930)," *Historia Contemporània* 16 (2001) 257–288; and Josep Fontana, "Els historiadors romàntics," *L'Avenç*, 200 (1996) 10–11.

⁶⁹ Josep M. Muñoz, *Jaume Vicens i Vives. Una biografia intel·lectual* (Barcelona 1997) 256–261.

⁷⁰ Miquel Coll, "Guifré el Pelós en la historiografia i la llegenda," *Memòries de la Secció Històrico-Arqueològica de l'Institut d'Estudis Catalans XXXIX* (1990), republished in *Llegendari* (Barcelona 1993) 51.

from the threshold of the thirteenth century, when the counts' policy of expansion in the Mediterranean is about to burst into life, once expansion in the south of France has been brought to a halt after the Battle of Muret and the Albigensian Crusade (1213). The remote past of the Carolingian origins of the county of Barcelona is *re-presented*, enacted again at the service of the needs of a dynasty with bold expansionist ambitions.⁷¹

THE CHRONICLES OF THE KINGS:

NEGOTIATING THE RECENT PAST TO STRENGTHEN THE PRESENT

Quite different circumstances surround the writing of the *Llibre dels Fets del Rei en Jaume*, which is the first of the historical texts that make up the cycle of the four great Catalan chronicles (*Les Quatre Grans Cròniques*).⁷² The first half of the thirteenth century was a crucial moment in the political and social history of medieval Catalonia. Politically the bases for territorial and commercial expansion in the Mediterranean were laid just because of the collapse of the expansion in the south of France after the defeat at Muret (1213).⁷³ If the expansion to Provence had been based to a large extent on an effective marriage policy, the monarchs now found themselves obliged to bring other mechanisms into play, some of them in the intellectual sphere, to achieve their ends.⁷⁴ At the same time, the feudal model was losing power as the court became consolidated as the political and cultural centre,⁷⁵ chivalric values were being spread, an urban patrician class increasingly committed to expansion was on the rise, cities were growing and, lastly, the monarchy was being definitively consolidated as the political backbone of Catalan society.⁷⁶

This is the context in which the new models of historical writing which were to have enormous influence on later Catalan historiography, was forged: the *Grans Cròniques*, which base their expressive narrative structure on the influence they receive from their main sources, the poems designed to commemorate the deeds of the monarchs. It is therefore understandable that from the end of the twelfth century—a critical period that required a reinterpretation of the Catalonian past in order to correct

⁷¹ The concept of *re-presentación* in the context of medieval historiography is explained by José Enrique Ruiz-Domènec, "Reminiscencia y conmemoración: el proceder de la literatura genealógica," *La memoria de los feudales* (Barcelona 1984) 219–239.

⁷² I borrow the concept of the title of this epigraph from Lee Patterson, *Negotiating the Past: The Historical Understanding of Medieval Literature* (Madison 1987).

⁷³ For the meaning of the Catalan Mediterranean expansion, see Jocelin N. Hillgarth, "The problem of a Catalan Mediterranean Empire, 1229–1327," *The English Historical Review*, Supplement 8 (1975) 1–54; Marta van Landingham, *Transforming the State: King, Court and Political Culture in the Realms of Aragon (1213–1387)* (Leiden 2002); Robert I. Burns, *The Crusader Kingdom of Valencia: Reconstruction on a Thirteenth-Century Frontier* (Cambridge 1967); David Abulafia, *A Mediterranean Emporium: the Catalan Kingdom of Majorca* (Cambridge 1994).

⁷⁴ Together with the construction of historical texts, one of these "mechanisms" was the doctrine called *pacisme*: Jaume Vicens Vives, *Notícia de Catalunya* (Barcelona 1982) 107–139.

⁷⁵ That is, the exhaustion of the "feudal model" described by Bonnassie, *La Catalogne* (n. 39 above); and the rise of the "urban patriciate" studied by Bensch, *Barcelona* (n. 30 above).

⁷⁶ For this historical context, see José Enrique Ruiz-Domènec, *El rei, el burgués i el cronista: una història barcelonina del segle XIII* (Barcelona 2001); Carme Batlle, "La burguesia de Barcelona a mediados del siglo XIII," *Congreso de Historia de la Corona de Aragón*, X (Zaragoza 1980–1982) 2.7–19; Ferran Soldevila, *Jaume I. Pere el Gran* (Barcelona 1955); Philip Banks, "L'estructura urbana de Barcelona, 714–1300," *Història de Barcelona*, ed. Jaume Sobrequés (Barcelona 1992) 2.25–72.

the future⁷⁷—until the mid-thirteenth century there was a substantial transformation of historiographical practice in Catalonia. This shift was already clearly established by the contrast in form and content between the *Gesta* and the *Cròniques*. Here we can ascertain a distinct parallel between Philip Augustus, the powerful conqueror of Bouvines, and Jaume I, conqueror of Valencia and Mallorca. Both monarchs imposed a style of government in accordance with the renewed requirements of the time and with a clear expansive component, which would affect all spheres of the societies they ruled over.⁷⁸

The rhymed chronicles and the epic lays, which contain many passages filled with legends and fictions, were adapted in the first half of the thirteenth century to historical texts in vernacular prose, more in tune with the demands of the context and the new political and cultural motivations, what Sewell calls *semiotic coherence* of the culture.⁷⁹ This is evident in the beginning of the *Quatre Grans Cròniques* cycle, along with the first chapters of the chronicle of Jaume I, written around 1244. The canons of official chancellery prose are imposed over the rigid molds of historiography written in the cloisters. Moreover, the process of prosification of the historical texts runs parallel to the phenomenon of prosification of literary texts originally in verse, which are typical of the Romance literatures of the early thirteenth century.⁸⁰

The *Llibre dels Fets*, written in elegant Catalan, was composed in two periods, the first around 1244 and the second around 1274.⁸¹ From the vantage point of the end of his long reign, Jaume I el Conqueridor sensed that it was the moment to immortalize the memory of his reign through a narration of the most important events that had taken place during his lifetime. In a rather grandiloquent Catalan, he states his reasons for writing his memoirs, at the end of the first chapter of his *Crònica*: “E per tal que ls hòmens coneguessen e sabessen, can (quan) hauriem passada aquesta vida mortal, ço que nós hauriem feyt ajudan-nos lo Senyor poderós, en qui és vera trinitat, leixam aquest libre per memòria. E aquells qui volran hoir de les gràcies que nostre Senyor nos ha feytes e per dar exempli a tots los altres hòmens del món, que façen ço que nós havem feyt: de metre sa fe en aquest Senyor que és tant poderós.”⁸²

Jaume I's moralizing purpose is clear from the outset of the chronicle. The references to God and the saints recur, and the first sentence makes reference to the king's patron saint, St. James, who affirms in his epistle that “faith, without works, is dead” (James 2.17). Jaume I el Conqueridor wants to illustrate with his narrative that the central purpose of his life has been to confirm his Christian faith with deeds.⁸³ The king strives to justify his actions and, at the same time, leave an indelible memory of his heroic, chivalric nature. This is compatible with the inclusion in the text of some

⁷⁷ Bisson, “L'essor de la Catalogne” (n. 15 above) 472.

⁷⁸ For the context of Jaume I's reign, see Jane C. Wilman, *Jaime I “El Conquistador” and the Barons of Aragon, 1244–1267. The Struggle for Power* (Ann Arbor 1987); for Philip Augustus's France, see Robert H. Bautier, ed., *La France de Philippe-Auguste: Le temps des mutations* (Paris 1982).

⁷⁹ William H. Sewell, Jr., “The Concept(s) of Culture,” *Beyond the Cultural Turn* (n. 2 above) 49–50.

⁸⁰ Riquer, *Història de la literatura* (n. 10 above) 1.378.

⁸¹ Lluís Nicolau d'Olwer, “La Crònica del Conqueridor i els seus problemes,” *Estudis Universitaris Catalans* XI (1926) 79–88.

⁸² *Llibre dels Fets* (n. 13 above) 2.7.

⁸³ “Retrau mon senyor sent Jacme que fe sens obres morta és. Aquesta paraula volch nostre Seyor complir en los nostres feytz” (*Llibre dels Fets* [n. 13 above] 2.5).

everyday scenes which serve to heighten the realism of the narrative.

The chronicle is written in the first person, as if it were the monarch himself who had written it. The grammatical form used makes the text highly expressive, but poses the problem of authorship. It is equivocal to attribute the material authorship of the text to King Jaume I el Conqueridor, as there is no evidence that he was a literary man or that his lifestyle left him much time for writing. The most likely explanation is that, at the odd spare moment in his intense, eventful reign, he dictated his memoirs to his scribes and they rewrote them, following the models of the historical chronicles of the time.⁸⁴

We can dismiss the idea that one of his knights, who had been present at most of his adventures, ended up writing the chronicle and then attributed its authorship to the king by narrating it in first person. Fifty years later, the chronicler Ramon Muntaner, a soldier in the king's service, half knight and half literary man, would do just this by recounting the events of the reigns of Jaume's successors. Muntaner combined his function as protagonist of the events with that of literary observer.⁸⁵ But the exhaustiveness of the chronicle and the abundant details of the king's personal life make us think rather of a direct intervention by Jaume I, who would have dictated his memoirs to his collaborators. The explanation may well come from Jaume's son-in-law, King Alfonso el Sabio of Castile, who explains in his delightful Spanish: "... dixiemos nos muchas vezes: el rey faze un libro, non porqué el escriba con sus manos, mas porque compone las razones dél, e las emienda e yegua e enderesça, e muestra la manera de cómo de deven fazer, e desí escrívelas qui él manda, pero dezimos por esta razón que el rey faze el libro. Otrossí quando dezimos: el rey faze un palacio o alguna obra, non es dicho porque lo él fiziesse con sus manos, mas porquel mandó fazer e dio las cosas que fueron mester para ello."⁸⁶

The comparison between the dictation of a historical text in which "he composes the contents" and the commissioning of an architectural work which "he has done" is unequivocal. Nonetheless, whoever the actual writer of the chronicle was, the king's personal stamp is evident in every page. In a passage of the chronicle, the king talks about Guillem de Puyo, "who was with us when we were writing this book," which is valid evidence of Jaume's real proximity to the drafting of the text and his express intention to do it in his own lifetime. The style of the Catalan, full of Aragonese and Provençal expressions, betrays the influence of the dialects he had spoken during his childhood in those regions.⁸⁷ The use of the first person is a resource seldom used in the other medieval chronicles, except when they employ direct address. We have an important precedent in the genealogy of the counts of Anjou, where Fulk Nerra uses

⁸⁴ For the possible influence of Islam on the autobiographical form of the Chronicle of Jaume I, see Robert I. Burns, *Muslims, Christians and Jews in the crusader kingdom of Valencia* (Cambridge 1987), app. 1, "The King's Autobiography: The Islamic Connection."

⁸⁵ The text of Ramon Muntaner's chronicle in *Les Quatre Grans Cròniques 665–944*.

⁸⁶ "... we often say: the king writes a book, not because he writes it with his own hands, but because he composes the contents of it and amends them and links and straightens, and shows how it should be done, and so the one he commands writes it, but we say for that reason that the king writes the book. Just as when we say: the king builds a palace or does some work, we do not say that because he does it with his own hands, but because he has it done and gives the things that are necessary for it." Antonio G. Solalinde, "Intervención de Alfonso X en la redacción de sus obras," *Revista de Filología Española* II (1915) 286, cit. in Riquer, *Història de la Literatura* (n. 10 above) 1.399.

⁸⁷ Riquer, *Història de la Literatura* (n. 10 above) 1.428–429.

the first person and claims to have written the text.⁸⁸ In any case, this way of narrating the story emphasizes the strong mark left on the text by the king. An experienced court official, used to drafting royal documents, would never have let slip the “I” which appears in certain passages of the chronicle as an exception to the “we” with which most of the text is written, in accordance with monarchic dignity and current practice. In short, the work seems to have been dictated by the king, who would have used different collaborators to give it literary form.

That is quite compatible with the essential function of oral transmission in the final result of the chronicle. The composition of the more complex poetic fragments would have been entrusted to some literary expert at the court, who would have drawn on the rich Catalan epic oral tradition for the writing. The latest tendencies of the romances highlight the role of orality in much of the oldest medieval literature, as in the case of epic poetry. The *Llibre dels Fets* transmits a strong sense of *oral prose*, which links up with that tradition, using a literary genre more appropriate to the historical text. Orality was more connected with vernacular culture, as writing was with Latin culture. Oral transmission of the content of the chronicle was largely encouraged by the scarcity of events from remote history. That conditioned writing in the vernacular language, which nevertheless was the most widely used in late medieval written chronicles. In the reverse operation, the work was also written with the idea that it would in turn be transmitted orally. Orality, which had been frozen in writing, re-emerged triumphant when it came to reading.⁸⁹

The text of the *Llibre dels Fets* focuses on words and events as much as on the gestures that accompany them. In this way, the narrative becomes more expressive and the reader’s task made easier. Moreover, on several occasions, the king addresses the people who will be *hearing* his book. The syntactic style is variable and spontaneous. The sentences are long and the work passes from direct to indirect style with great ease, with no preset rules. The king’s memoirs flow so spontaneously that they are at times abruptly interrupted because they have already been narrated in another passage of the chronicle. The striking changes of language in a single sentence—one, in particular, begins in Catalan and includes phrases in Castilian and Provençal!⁹⁰—illustrate the King’s multilingual education: he had been brought up by women from Languedoc until he was three, educated at the French court of Simon de Montfort from three to six, lived with Aragonese Templars in Monzon from six to thirteen, married a Castilian at thirteen, a Hungarian at twenty-seven and a woman of Navarre at the age of forty-eight, and was constantly surrounded at court by Aragonese, Catalans and people from Montpellier in the south of France. The scene of the conversation between Jaume I and Pope Gregory incorporates phrases in Latin, French, and an Italian dialect, heightening the spontaneity of the document.⁹¹ This scene, vital from a strategic point of view, also stresses the comic dimension of the

⁸⁸ About the count of Anjou and his sources, Louis Halphen, *Le Comté d’Anjou au XIe siècle* (Geneva 1974); and Olivier Guillot, *Le comte d’Anjou et son entourage au XIe siècle* (Paris 1972).

⁸⁹ Josep M. Pujol, “Introducció,” *Jaume I. Llibre dels Fets*, ed. Josep M. Pujol (Barcelona 1994) 11–12.

⁹⁰ “E sempre, lo rei de Castella, *fízolo clamar, e vino el comanador e dixo-le* denant Nós: -Comanador, muit noz plaz d’ajuda e de servicio que vós fagades al rei d’Aragó, *tanto o más que si a nós los fiziésedes, e esto vos pregamos e vos mandamos que vós lo fagades*” (Catalan in Roman; Castilian in italics; Provençal is underlined). Quoted by Pujol, “Introducció” (n. 89 above) 14.

text in the account of the amusing complaint of a Templar (Guillem de Corcelles) who seems more concerned with not being portrayed as older than he is than with the transcendental events under discussion.⁹²

The text reads like an oral narrative, as when listening to someone speaking colloquially, drawing in continuous twists and turns to the story, with no predetermined pattern or disposition. The book has a main plot line, but the variations and digressions are such that the asides narrated become the most interesting part of the text. The spectacular flashbacks are notable: while he is telling of the taking of Liçana, the king looks back to conjure up the grotesque figure of a conquered knight, Don Pedro Gomes, sunk in the mire which has been stirred up in the heat of the battle.⁹³ When he tells the story of his first wedding, he recalls the opposing destinies of the four daughters and two sons of his father-in-law, Alfonso VIII of Castile.⁹⁴ When he returns to the Puig to help the defenders of the square, he relives the touching tenderness shown to him by the knight Don Fortuny Lopes de Sàdaba.⁹⁵ Shortly before the dramatic siege of the Muslims at Morvedre, he gently mocks the precarious armor Don Fortuny is wearing at such a critical moment: only the helmet is of decent quality and he is led by a coarse mule instead of a knightly stallion.⁹⁶

All those apparently formal details confirm that Jaume's motivations when compiling the material to compose his *chronicle* with his collaborators are quite different from the ones that weighed on the spirits of the monks of Ripoll when writing the *Gesta* during the reign of Alfons el Cast in the twelfth century. Traditionally, the *Llibre dels Fets* has been given a moral and religious motivation, based on the tenor of the words of the introduction, which were probably added after the monarch's death by someone of the court.⁹⁷ Jaume's moral motivations are made clear from the moment he quotes the apostle James, in whose epistle we read of the importance of a faith substantiated by deeds. For that reason, the king devoted his entire life to making his God-given talents bear fruit through the exercise of his power. However, the chivalric and epic tone that dominates the narrative indicates that there is more than a moralizing motivation to this text. We cannot ignore the fact that medieval historiography was also a powerful instrument at the service of political motivations and utilities.⁹⁸

The chivalric tone of the *Llibre dels Fets* recalls the phenomenon of the prosification of earlier epic poems. This literary phenomenon was fairly typical of thirteenth-century Europe, when the prosification of literary texts originally composed in verse

⁹¹ *Llibre dels Fets* (n. 13 above) 2.370–371.

⁹² Joan d'Escarcela answers the Master of the Temple, half amused and half indignant: "Master, please take care with my years," a reference to the age he had assigned to him before, older than he really was (*Llibre dels Fets* [n. 13 above] 2.370).

⁹³ *Llibre dels Fets* (n. 13 above) 2.18–19.

⁹⁴ *Llibre dels Fets* (n. 13 above) 2.21.

⁹⁵ *Llibre dels Fets* (n. 13 above) 2.194.

⁹⁶ *Llibre dels Fets* (n. 13 above) 2.195. The *barbuda* was a piece of metal mesh meant to protect the beard. Don Fortuny had lost the rest of his harness in a battle narrated earlier in the chronicle. The scene is grotesque, all the more so since the mule was only used as a mount for women or peaceful folk such as clerics, merchants, or knights errant and, of course, as a beast of burden.

⁹⁷ *Les Quatre Grans Cròniques* (n. 14 above) 191 n. 10.

⁹⁸ Gabrielle M. Spiegel, "Political Utility in Medieval Historiography: A Sketch," *History and Theory*, 14 (1975) 314–325.

became widespread. Indeed, fragments of repeated assonances and intact verses of the four great chronicles of medieval Catalonia have been found, confirming their rhymed origins.⁹⁹ In the *Llibre dels Fets*, the conquests of Mallorca and Valencia are narrated largely on the basis of prosification of earlier songs which recounted those glorious campaigns in poetic form.¹⁰⁰ The epic overtones of the abundant warlike events of Jaume I's chronicle are heightened by the rhymed origins of the text. All that has made the experts think that in medieval Catalonia there was an epic literature that has partly disappeared due to the oral nature of its diffusion. The orality of the minstrels was received by the chroniclers and frozen in their historical texts. That does not rule out, as may well have been the case of the compiler of the *Llibre dels Fets*, that some lays were written down and conserved in manuscripts which were then used by the chroniclers.

The *Llibre dels Fets* does not inscribe genealogies, which had been deployed for the legitimation of the power of the counts of Barcelona, but was no longer required for the consolidation of the kings of Aragon. The king no longer had any need to secure a power which was legally founded on election and consecration. The exaltation of the Carolingian ascendancy of the counts of Barcelona had been vital to guarantee successive inheritances, but it was unnecessary for the monarchs of Aragon to establish their origins in a legendary context. The text of the *Gesta Comitum* must be included in the materials that consolidated the establishment of the counties that sprang from the dissolution of central power from the eleventh century; the chronicle of the *Llibre dels Fets* belongs in the context of the rebirth of the monarchic dynasties from the twelfth century. The *Gesta* are fully integrated into the context of the genealogical literature of Europe in the second half of the twelfth century; the *Llibre dels Fets* is set in a context in which vernacular literature and fiction predominate, which gives it a far more dramatic content than the restrained tone of the genealogies.

LINKING THE PAST AND THE FUTURE:

THE POLITICAL FUNCTION OF THE FORM IN HISTORICAL TEXTS

The historical text was used in the Middle Ages to legitimize the prevailing situation. The shortage of set chronological referents in the past makes its manipulation in the present easier. Though the lack of chronological rigor in medieval historiography has often been criticized, we should question if that lack of rigor might be more a political tool rather than a methodological lacuna. Many of the dynasties of that period tried to reduce the distance separating them from the founding generation of their lineage as much as possible, as we have seen earlier, for very specific political reasons.

The *Gesta Comitum Barcinonensium* tell the story of the first count of Barcelona in detail in order to bring the figure of the founder of the dynasty closer to the monarchs of the twelfth century. Contemporary critics perceive an enormous contrast be-

⁹⁹ The search for verses camouflaged in prose in the medieval Catalan chronicles was made by the great Catalan scholars of the 20th c., starting with the publication of the article by Manuel de Montoliu, "La canço de gesta de Jaume I," *Bulleti Arqueològic* (Tarragona 1922). His work was taken up by Ferran Soldevila, "Les prosificacions en els primers capítols de la Crònica de Desclot," *Discurso de recepción de la Real Academia de Buenas Letras de Barcelona* (Barcelona 1958); and Coll, "La historiografía de Catalunya" (n. 8 above).

¹⁰⁰ Some examples of the *prosifications* in Riquer, *Història de la Literatura* (n. 10 above) 1.390.

tween the beginning and end of that story. There is in fact a long period between the time the story is told, at the end of the twelfth century, and the narrated time, at the end of the ninth. However, the text works with great effectiveness, among other reasons, due to the lack of fixed chronology in medieval culture. There is a similar case in neighboring Castile, with the overwhelming attention paid to the figure of the king in the chronicles of the Alfonso III of Castile cycle, in their deliberate intention to link the kingdom of Asturias with the Visigoth kingdom of Toledo.¹⁰¹ No less effective is the resource of the French *Grandes Chroniques* of finding the Merovingian, Carolingian and Capetian roots of its monarchy.¹⁰²

The content of the *Gesta* has a chronological span of about three centuries (from the first count of Barcelona, Guifré, at the end of the ninth century, to the first Count-King Alfons el Cast the end of the twelfth). In contrast, the autobiographical narrative of Jaume I only goes back two generations, opening with the marriage of his grandfather Alfons el Cast a century earlier.¹⁰³ An interpretation of that apparent paradox is made easier by comparing the beginnings of the other three Catalan “great chronicles” with that of Jaume I. The second one, written about fifteen years later (between 1283 and 1288) by Bernat Desclot, starts with the marriage of Ramon Berenguer IV (1136), the one who through that union obtained the royal title for the counts of Barcelona.¹⁰⁴ The chronicle of Ramon Muntaner, written around 1330, begins with the birth of Jaume I (1206), and makes reference to his father Pere el Catòlic.¹⁰⁵ And, lastly, the chronicle of King Pere el Cerimoniós, written around 1386, begins with the celebrations for the coronation of Alfons el Benigne (1327–1334), taking up the narrative where the chronicle of Ramon Muntaner ended.¹⁰⁶ This verifies the continuity and interconnection in the historiographic cycle of the four chronicles, demonstrated explicitly in a passage from the chronicle of Pere el Cerimoniós, when the king explains that he receives a piece of news precisely while he is reading the chronicle of his ancestor Jaume I: “Aquest digmenge, a hora de prim so, nós encara no érem gitats e llegiem lo llibre o *Crònica* del senyor rei En Jacme, tresavi nostre, e venc un correu dels prohòmens de Berga.”¹⁰⁷

Nonetheless, the conclusions of the chronicles do not provide precise chronological continuity with the opening of the next: some events overlap and appear on two or three occasions, like the marriage of Ramon Berenguer IV or the begetting of Jaume I. Those reiterations have a clear political function, as they stress the important events. The influence of the chronicle of Jaume I on the other is also clear, not only because it was the first one written, but also due to the force, originality, and quality of the narrative. Moreover, the difference between the four century span of the *Gesta* and the single century of the chronicle of Jaume I may also be explained by a possible influence

¹⁰¹ Abilio Barbero and Marcelo Vigil, *La formación del feudalismo en la Península Ibérica* (Barcelona 1978) 232ff. See also Peter Linehan, *History and the Historians of Medieval Spain* (Oxford 1993).

¹⁰² Spiegel, “Medieval Canon Formation” (n. 66 above) 195–196.

¹⁰³ *Les Quatre Grans Cròniques* (n. 14 above) 4.

¹⁰⁴ *Les Quatre Grans Cròniques*, “Crònica de Bernat Desclot” (n. 14 above) 405.

¹⁰⁵ *Les Quatre Grans Cròniques*, “Crònica de Ramon Muntaner” (n. 14 above) 669.

¹⁰⁶ *Les Quatre Grans Cròniques*, “Crònica de Pere el Cerimoniós” (n. 14 above) 1005.

¹⁰⁷ “That Sunday, near bedtime, we were not yet in bed and were reading the book or *Chronicle* of the Lord King Jaume, our ancestor, and a message arrived from the worthies of Berga.” *Les Quatre Grans Cròniques*, “Crònica de Pere el Cerimoniós” (n. 14 above) 1086–1087.

between the two ostensibly disconnected texts.

In this historiographic context, the political function of the *Gesta* would be to reduce the distance that separates the first count of Barcelona *and* king of Aragon (Alfons el Cast, 1162–1196) and the first count of Barcelona (Guifré I, at the end of the ninth century). Once that had been achieved, it was enough for the subsequent chronicles to recall the figure of Alfons el Cast, the first king of Aragon of the dynasty of the counts of Barcelona, and then immediately focus on the deeds of the main subject of the biography, as in the case of Jaume I, and so on. It is thus significant that the chronicles of the kings of Aragon do not recall the figure of the counts of Barcelona, their ancestors (which does happen in the *Gesta*). There is only one reference to the counts of Barcelona in the chronicles, in the legend recounted by Bernat Desclot of the “bon comte de Barcelona” Ramon Berenguer IV, the one who obtained the royal title for his successors.¹⁰⁸ This explains the replacement of the genealogical genre by the chronicles in favor of an epic and narrative style. There is, however, one interesting exception. In a passage from the chronicle of Ramon Muntaner, the chronicler pauses to offer a factual genealogy which goes back to the second king of the dynasty (Pere el Catòlic) and continues to King Ferdinand of Mallorca, spanning four generations.¹⁰⁹ But this is merely an introduction to the chronicle, which, moreover, only goes back a hundred years.

What I propose to demonstrate with these comparisons is a reality of great interest and is not exclusive to Catalan historiography. The chronicle of Jaume I ushers in a new style of making history in a Catalonia that needed to legitimize the expansion of the crown, rather than validate the county or monarchical institution. This latter task had already been achieved by the *Gesta*. From this text on, the chroniclers enacted the same strategy, more or less unconsciously, until the end of the fourteenth century. This is a phenomenon that was also taking place in France at the end of the thirteenth century when the doctrine technically known as *reditus regni ad stirpem Karoli Magni* was being spread. That doctrine was used by French chroniclers more for its efficacy in confirming the political and military expansion from the reign of Philip Augustus at the beginning of the thirteenth century than because it validated the reigning dynasty.¹¹⁰ Some images in the early versions of the *Grandes Chroniques* express the desire of the French kings to assert their independence of and equality with the Holy Roman emperor.¹¹¹ The application of the *reditus* doctrine to French historiography would thus influence both territorial conquest and intellectual convictions.

The aspirations to expansion of the thirteenth century monarchs such as Philip Augustus and St. Louis in France, Ferdinand III in Castile and Jaume I the Conqueror in

¹⁰⁸ For this legend and its political and ideological scope, see Martin Aurell, “L’honneur sauvé de l’impératrice,” *Les noces* (n. 7 above) 513–520.

¹⁰⁹ *Les Quatre Grans Cròniques*, “Crònica de Ramon Muntaner” (n. 14 above) 668–669.

¹¹⁰ Gabrielle M. Spiegel, “The Reditus Regni ad Stirpem Karoli Magni. A New Look,” *French Historical Studies* 7 (1971) 145–146. See also her *The Chronicle Tradition of Saint-Denis: A Survey* (Brookline 1978); and, from a different point of view, Andrew W. Lewis, “Dynastic Structures and Capetian Throne Right: the Views of Giles of Paris,” *Traditio* 33 (1977) 225–252; and Elisabeth Brown, “La notion de la légitimité et la prophétie à la cour de Philippe-Auguste,” *La France de Philippe-Auguste: le temps des mutations*, ed. Robert-Henri Bautier (Paris 1982) 77–117.

¹¹¹ Hedeman, *The Royal Image* (n. 33 above) 99.

Aragon are clearly manifested in the design of their respective national historiographies. In that context the parallels between the French *Grandes Chroniques* and the Catalan *Quatre Grans Cròniques* are more than evident. However, just as the French chronicles generate a deep-rooted feeling of legitimation of an entire dynasty, the Catalan chronicles make more of an effort to consolidate the historical memory which alludes to outstanding monarchs. The legitimizing function of the dynasty of the counts of Barcelona, which would give rise to the dynasty of the monarchs of Aragon, has more to do with the *Gesta Comitum Barcinonensium*, as demonstrated by the additions made to the text over the course of the thirteenth century to recount the deeds of the monarchs who succeeded them.¹¹²

The enthusiastic reception given to the *reditus regni ad stirpem Karoli* doctrine shows its close relation with the legitimizing aspirations of the Capetian dynasty. Their aspirations to establish direct ties with the Carolingian dynasty is a vital political phenomenon, which had enormous influence on the consolidation of government practices in tune with that association. At the same time, the aspiration of the counts of Barcelona to link their dynasty to a glorious past is the outcome of a political ambition to endorse an ambitious territorial expansion policy, but most of all to definitively consolidate the dynasty of the counts of Barcelona as founders of a prestigious monarchy. That is shown by the invention of the story of the first count, Guifré el Pelós.

In this context, the chivalric narratives of the chronicle of Jaume I are the clearest demonstration of the legitimizing function of that historical text, which reflects the ambitious policy of expansion of the Catalan-Aragonese monarchy and its assault on the Mediterranean. The monarch brings together all the forces of Catalonia to lead such an ambitious venture. One of the longest and most brilliant passages of the *Crònica* is devoted to the conquest of Mallorca by the king, with the participation of knights and burghers. This also manifests a fundamental element of this Catalan policy of expansion: the concordance between political and economic motivations, between territorial aspirations and the search for new markets in Catalonia in the late Middle Ages, of the “islands road” and the “spice road.”¹¹³

The *Llibre dels Fets* carefully describes numerous military actions and the figure of the king emerges strengthened. Among the three main subjects of the chronicle (religious feeling, military prowess, and everyday scenes), the second is undoubtedly the one that prevails in the text. Jaume I is engaged in a providential mission and places all the means at his disposal to accomplish it. If we read the chronicle closely, we observe his talent as a strategist and knight in detail. The narrative becomes most dramatic in the lists of the countless battles, storming of castles, and conquest of strongholds led by the king in person. In the heat of battle, Jaume I demands heroic behavior from even his closest friends. In one of the skirmishes in the Mallorca

¹¹² Barrau-Dihigo and Torrents' edition of the *Gesta Comitum* (n. 12 above) offers two different Latin versions: the “primitive” (3–20) and the “definitive” (21–116). It is particularly interesting to compare the “primitive” version with the Catalan translation, which also appears in this edition, to which different passages have been added over time (the Catalan text are to be found in *Gesta Comitum* 119–144).

¹¹³ Mario del Treppo, “Ruta de las islas/ruta de las especies,” *Els mercaders catalans i l'expansió de la corona catalano-aragonesa* (Barcelona 1976); Jaume Vicens Vives, *Notícia de Catalunya* (Barcelona 1982) 122–124.

campaign, the king runs into a knight, Guillem de Mediona, said to be the finest knight in the whole of Catalonia. Guillem is bleeding profusely from the mouth and the king asks him why he is leaving the battlefield. The knight replies that he has been wounded by a stone, to which Jaume answers angrily that any good knight, after receiving a blow, must not retreat but become even more enraged and take up the combat with renewed force. The king accompanies his impassioned speech with the gesture of seizing the reins of Guillem's horse, which undoubtedly helps to heighten the expressiveness of the scene.¹¹⁴ With that simple but dramatic narration, the king's prestige is placed above that of the "best knight in Catalonia." However, the rhythm of the narrative is so fast and furious that the transcendental encounter ends with a laconic phrase, "and in a moment, as we have seen, he had disappeared,"¹¹⁵ to continue with the exciting narration of the events of the battle.

The king plays an active part on the battlefield, constantly encouraging and spurring his knights on. He humiliates one of them at the height of the combat, in the Valencia campaign, when he sees that he has left his lord at the mercy of the enemy. There on the spot, on the battlefield, that king makes the knight dismount from his horse and hand over his crossbow and armor, leaving him in his shirt. The humiliation is great because the knight has to fight on foot when his horse remains with the king.¹¹⁶ On other occasions, when the need arises, the king intervenes personally in the battle, incurring the reproof of his finest knights for his rashness. Ramon de Montcada respectfully reproaches him for having placed his own life, and those of his knights, in jeopardy; but the noble Guillem de Montcada intervenes, in the course of that aristocratic and unforgettable dialogue, to defend the king's action because, despite having committed an act of madness, he has shown that it is worth losing one's life for such a great lord.¹¹⁷

The chronicle of Jaume I, and the *Quatre Grans Cròniques* in general, base their effectiveness on the constant and almost exclusive narration of the deeds of the monarchs. In contrast, the *Gesta* had based theirs on the force of the genealogical succession rather than the narration of the deeds of the counts. The coincidence of terms—*Gesta* in the title and the *gestes* or deeds recounted—is simply formal, because the content of the text rejects that identification with the semantic content. That is clear from the moment when the compiler of the *Gesta* sets out the purpose of the text: "This book recounts the true deeds of the first count of Barcelona, and of all those that came after him. It further shows the establishment of all the counties that find themselves in Catalonia, and the names and the times of all those who in succession ruled over them, and first in what way the kingdom of Aragon arrived, and in what way it was joined to the county of Barcelona. In addition, the noble facts and deeds wrought by the kings of Aragon during their time and by the noble counts of Barcelona are similarly included."¹¹⁸ In other words, there are two basic motivations:

¹¹⁴ *Llibre dels Fets* (n. 13 above) 2.77: "E prenguem-lo per la regnas e dixem-li: "tornats a la batayla, que bon cavaller per aytal colp con aquel enfelonir-se'n deu, que no deu exir de batayla."

¹¹⁵ *Llibre dels Fets* (n. 13 above) 2.77: "E, a cap d'una peça que nós lo gardam, no.l vim."

¹¹⁶ Riquer, *Història de la Literatura* (n. 10 above) 1.413.

¹¹⁷ *Llibre dels Fets* (n. 13 above) 2.73: "... e, si moriets, per lo meylor hom del món morriets."

¹¹⁸ "Iste liber ostendit veritatem primi comitis Barchinonae et omnium aliorum qui post eum venerunt, et de ordinatione omnium comitatum qui sunt in Catalonia, et nomina et tempora illorum qui tenuerunt unus

first, to recount “the true deeds” of the first count of Barcelona and his successors, as well as the ordination of all the counties of Catalonia and the “joining” of the kingdom of Aragon and the county of Barcelona, and second, to tell the noble actions and deeds performed by the kings of Aragon and the counts of Barcelona.

The French vernacular chronicles of the thirteenth century (the *Chroniques des Rois de France*, by Anonymous of Béthune, written between 1220 and 1223, and the also anonymous *Chronique des Rois de France*, and the well-known *Grandes Chroniques de France*) share “a community of Latin sources, a concern with royal history, and the employment of history as a series of accounts of French kings, in which French medieval history is constituted as the narrations of *gestes* performed by successive kings whose personal characteristics and deeds, extensively chronicled in essentially biographical modes, bespeak the enduring meaning of history as the collective action of royal lineages in relation to those values to which their *gestes* have life.”¹¹⁹ In this context of political legitimation, the Catalan chronicles reveal striking parallels with their French contemporaries. The Capetians had manipulated their history through historiographic fabrication of the Carolingian *reditus*, which at the same time was a response to the myth of the Germanic *traslatio imperii*. The French monarchy may have been more pressed than the Catalan-Aragonese because they had to legitimize their conquests in Normandy, which had belonged to the king of England.¹²⁰ The “Carolingianization” of the Capetians not only legitimized their territorial expansion but also their hegemony over the other European monarchies, especially the English Plantagenets and the German empire. The culmination of that process at the beginning of the thirteenth century came on the great stage of Bouvines, where so many main lines of European politics of the time converge.¹²¹

On the other hand, Jaume I was not strictly required to justify his conquests of Valencia and Mallorca, because they came under the general program of the war of the *Universitas Christiana* against Islam. However, it is clear that a consolidation of his public image would have aided later projects of expansion in the Mediterranean, which was then fully entering the Christian world. At the same time, Jaume was attentive to the fact that the Aragonese world had become one of the fronts opened up by the aggressive policy of the Capetians, who were confronting the Plantagenets in the west, the Holy Roman empire in the east and the Catalan-Aragonese monarchy in the south through the Albigensian Crusade. The Capetians’ striking ambition involves them in a greater political aspiration: to root their memory in the emperor Charlemagne. Further, the medium-sized Aragonese monarchy needed to confirm its monarchic identity, because it had risen to that degree from its status as counts of Barcelona. In any case, these strategies highlight the mythicizing power of the past, which the medieval chronicles deploy with a skill unparalleled in the historiography of other periods.

post alium comitatus, et qualiter regnum Aragoniae primo venit, et qualiter fuit unitum comitatui Barchinonae. Item ponuntur in eo facta et gesta nobilia quae fuerunt facta per reges Aragoniae suis temporibus et per nobiles comites Barchinonae” (*Gesta Comitum* 22–23).

¹¹⁹ Spiegel, “Medieval Canon Formation” (n. 66 above) 197.

¹²⁰ John W. Baldwin, *The Government of Philip Augustus: Foundations of French Royal Power in the Middle Ages* (Berkeley 1986).

¹²¹ Georges Duby, *Le Dimanche de Bouvines, 27 juillet 1214* (Paris 1973).

POLITICS AND THE POETIC:
HISTORICAL AND LITERARY TRANSFORMATIONS¹²²

Contemporary ethnographers have demonstrated to us the links between the poetic and the political, by stressing the formal processes that reflect mutating social and political realities. The new methodologies connected with the cultural turn stress the relation between text and context.¹²³ There is no place for what George Steinmetz calls “foundationalist decontextualization.”¹²⁴ Rather than making some ahistorical and essentialist assumptions about human nature or positing transhistorical institutions as fundamental to human society, new culturalism and historicism argue that there are no timeless, decontextualized, ahistorical characteristics or institutions.¹²⁵ As such, a comparative analysis of the historical texts of Catalonia in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries shows that the apparently formal changes (in language, literary form, and genre) become expressive representations of changes in the historical context. In that way the formal changes in the text represent *content* changes in the context.

Those considerations confirm the idea that formal changes in manners of inscription depict more than a change in style. The historical text is produced by its historical context, even as it acts upon it. Gabrielle M. Spiegel defines that process as the social logic of the text.¹²⁶ Thus, the consolidation of vernacular historical prose in Catalonia in the first half of the thirteenth century is far more than a simple literary phenomenon. When the texts are analyzed from a historiographic perspective, we uncover the social world that structured them, illuminating an entire social dimension. There is thus a specific interconnection between text and context, which relates linguistic reality to the social structures, as Carroll Smith-Rosenberg succinctly explains: “while linguistic differences structure society, social differences structure language.”¹²⁷

A poststructuralist and postmodernist reading of medieval texts allows us to contemplate a third hermeneutic level. As a result of the influence of historians, anthropologists or philosophers like Hayden White, Clifford Geertz, or Jacques Derrida, positivist approaches to reading human experience have been rejected as these critics insist on the centrality of language as the medium through which to comprehend the historically and culturally specific construction of understanding and feeling.¹²⁸ A renewed interpretation of the texts of the chronicles is the result not only of considering them as “literary artifacts” or “historical narratives” but also as a valuable source of

¹²² For the concepts of *poetics* and *politics* of the title, see James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley 1986); and Pierre Carrard, *Poetics of the New History. French Historical Discourse from Braudel to Chartier* (Baltimore 1992).

¹²³ *Text and Context in Functional Linguistics*, ed. Mohsen Ghadessy (Amsterdam 1999) XI–XVII; Andrew Taylor, *Textual Situations. Three Medieval Manuscripts and Their Readers* (Philadelphia 2002); Keith Busby, *Codex and Context. Reading Old French Verse Narrative in Manuscript* (Amsterdam 2002).

¹²⁴ Steinmetz, *State/Culture* (n. 23 above) 20.

¹²⁵ Suny, “Back and Beyond” (n. 3 above) 1484.

¹²⁶ For the meaning of the “Social Logic of the Text” concept, see Gabrielle M. Spiegel, “History, Historicism and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages,” *Speculum* 65 (1990) 59–86.

¹²⁷ Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, “The Body Politic,” *Coming to Terms: Feminism, Theory, Politics*, ed. Elizabeth Weed (New York 1989) 101.

¹²⁸ I’m alluding to the influence in historians of such works as Hayden White’s *Metahistory. The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore 1973); Geertz’s *The Interpretation of Cultures*; and Jacques Derrida’s *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore 1976). See also Suny’s “Back and Beyond” (n. 3 above) 1483.

issues of convergence between text and context, between content and form. The texts reveal both a passive function and an active function, depending on whether they are regarded as *mirrors* of social realities or as *generative* of social realities.¹²⁹ Here the close relations between the different national traditions of medieval historiography are highly significant.

In this article I have centered on the connections between French, Flemish and Catalan historiographies, whose mutual influences are evident, both in the *genealogies* phase in the second half of the twelfth century and the *chronicles* of the thirteenth. The connections between those three national historiographic traditions seem obvious. It is difficult to launch a hypothesis about which of the three had the greatest influence on the other two. The scope of the political aspirations of the French monarchy seems to give them priority, but the tremendous cultural vitality of the Flemish world accounts for the quality of its historical texts. The originality and brilliance of medieval Catalan historiography is truly striking, although it did not generate new models like the French and the Flemish did. The influence of the Flemish genealogies of the twelfth century is noted in the Catalan text of the *Gesta Comitum Barcinonensium*; the influence of the *Grandes Chroniques de France* of the thirteenth century in the *Quatre Grans Cròniques* of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. All those interconnections show that historiography is a field highly sensitive to intellectual novelties, in both medieval and recent historical production.

The transformation of the historiographic practices in Catalonia in the first half of the thirteenth century consistently refers to the social and political conditions of the context from which they were drafted. The reign of Jaume I el Conqueridor marked a real turning point in medieval Catalan history and historiography. The earlier political fragmentation had prevented the consolidation of a historiographic culture. In the thirteenth century, Catalan historiography developed from being a compiled history to a composed history, from an officious history to an official history, from a monastic history to a courtly history, from an anonymous history to an author's history, from a schematic history to a narrative history, from a poetic history to a narrative history, from a Latin history to a vernacular history, from a genealogical history to a chronicle history.¹³⁰

In short, political interest generated historiographic transformation, reflected in both the form and the content of the historical texts. But perhaps the strength of the historical text is based more on its form than on its content. This is something that we can apply to both medieval and modern historiography: "Narratives ... not only convey information but serve epistemological purposes. They do so by establishing veracity through the integrity of their storied form. This suggests that in the first instance the success or failure of truth claims embedded in narratives depends less on empirical verification and more on the logic and rhetorical persuasiveness of the narrative."¹³¹ If, as Dominick LaCapra posits, no absolute boundaries can be drawn

¹²⁹ Gabrielle M. Spiegel, *Romancing the Past. The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth Century France* (Berkeley 1993) 10.

¹³⁰ Bisson, "Unheroed Past" (n. 8 above) 308; and Guenée, *Histoire et culture historique* (n. 61 above) 337.

¹³¹ Margaret R. Somers, "The Privatization of Citizenship: How to Unthink a Knowledge Culture," *Beyond the Cultural Turn* (n. 2 above) 129.

between a text and its interpretations, or between society, culture and modes of discourse, then it is difficult to deny the real function of the historical text as, simultaneously, representation and event.¹³² The gap between the text and the context disappears.

In the new epistemological context, “if an entire culture is regarded as a text, then everything is at least potentially in play both at the level of representation and at the level of event. Indeed, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain a clear, unambiguous boundary between what is representation and what is event. At the very least, the drawing or maintaining of that boundary is itself an event.”¹³³ We have to conclude that the historical text—both medieval and modern—must be considered as, simultaneously, a historical and literary artifact, fact and fiction, real and imaginary, concept and metaphor, an event and a representation.¹³⁴

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¹³² Patrick Brantlinger, “A Response to Beyond the Cultural Turn,” *American Historical Review* 107 (2002) 1508–1509.

¹³³ Catherine Gallagher, Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago 2000) 15.

¹³⁴ Through these parallels I do not intend to deny that the social scientist must have access to historical texts without worrying too much about their degree of truthfulness. I simply want to show that when analyzing these texts it is necessary to overcome an excessive dependence on the rigid “reality-fiction” dialectic. For the epistemological scope of these concepts and their application to the analysis of historiography, I refer to White, *The Content of the Form* (n. 18 above), esp. the chapters “The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory” (26–57) and “The Politics of Historical Interpretation: Discipline and De-Sublimation” (58–82).