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Review: Naomi Miller, Renaissance Bologna: A Study in Architectural Form and Content

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conciliar and epistolary collections, and the specialist studies of numerous leading scholars in this field.

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NAOMI MILLER, *Renaissance Bologna: A Study in Architectural Form and Content*. (University of Kansas Humanistic Studies, 56.) New York: Peter Lang, 1989. Pp. vii, 210; 63 black-and-white plates following text. \$39.95.

Bologna is a uniquely beautiful Italian city with broad, arcaded streets, richly textured brick and sandstone facades, majestic piazzas, public sculpture, high towers, and a cuisine to take time over. However, the previous historiographic emphasis upon Florence, Rome, and Venice has diverted attention from more fully preserved medieval and Renaissance cities such as Bologna, where urbanism—the urban fabric—takes precedence over individual buildings and architects, and where the urban context defines the architectural monument. Bologna is the work of art. And for this reason, one welcomes the fine book on this major, yet understudied, urban center by Naomi Miller, a distinguished architectural historian at Boston University.

Miller divides her book into two parts—the first on urban structure and the second on civic institutions—and covers three major periods of Bologna's history: the early commune during the eleventh to fifteenth centuries; the Bentivoglio family *signoria* of 1446–1506; and the papal legateship from Julius II (1503–13) through Pius IV (1559–65), leading to the commissioning of the triumphal bronze statue of Neptune by Giambologna. Miller's prologue outlines her urban historical methodology, emphasizing the formative influence of Bologna's early history as an Etruscan ("Felsina") and then a Roman settlement ("Bononia"), located strategically on the Via Emilia, the military road opened by the Roman consul Marcus Emilius Lepidus in B.C. 187, which determined the major axial plan, the *cardo* and *decumanus* of the central urban grid, and its relationship to the surrounding rich agricultural, centuriated lower Po Valley plain.

The structure of the book resembles an architectural treatise, and the divisions by urban topography and building types defining their respective civic functions seem appropriately introduced by well-chosen quotations from Leon Battista Alberti's *Ten Books on Architecture* (of 1452). There are particularly interesting sections on the connected Piazza Nettuno, with Giambologna's Neptune statue (of 1563), and the Piazza Maggiore, with the Church of San Petronio, and their rival connotations of papal and communal-republican government. The rise of papal government during the sixteenth century becomes, for Miller, a major context for the incompleteness of the communal church of San Petronio; the focus upon papal urban reforms (resisted by many merchants) is represented by Vignola's Portico dei Banchi (of 1561–65) on the east side of the Piazza Maggiore and by the rebuilding of the University of Bologna with Vignola's design for the *archiginnasio* (1561–63) as a centralized, Tridentine institution. Treatment of the development of these major urban spaces and buildings, with their building styles imposed upon changing functions, is brought together in an epilogue on the portico as metaphor of urban *concinntas*, an eloquently written tribute to the Bolognese arcades as a unifying "tissue" blending together the urban theater. Classical scenography emerges as a central theme of this book, so appropriate to Bologna as the city second in importance to Rome within the sixteenth-century papal state.

Miller presents Bologna for the first time to English-speaking scholars and the educated public as a comprehensible urban environment. Her book should be read in conjunction with Giovanni Ricci, *Le città nella storia d'Italia—Bologna* (Rome and Bari, 1985), part of a distinguished series of urban histories of major Italian cities, as a case study in differing

European and American approaches to urban history—the former, a more general study of urban form through historical time; the latter, a more particular view of individual buildings and spaces, expanded into urban history. By way of criticism, however, the typeface of Miller's book is very small and the lines crowded (the footnotes are even worse); the illustrations are very coarse in reproduction and barely legible. One also wonders whether certain *fondi* of documents in Bologna, listed in the *Guida generale degli archivi di stato italiani*, 1 (Rome, 1981), in particular those from the Reggimento, the office in charge of urban planning, should be more central to the argument. Perhaps they will be mined and cited in future urban histories of Bologna, which this book introduces.

GEORGE L. GORSE, Pomona and Scripps Colleges

CARSTEN MÜLLER-BOYSEN, *Kaufmannsschutz und Handelsrecht im frühmittelalterlichen Nord-europa*. Neumünster: Karl Wachholtz, 1990. Pp. 168; 2 facsimile plates. DM 45.

This large, nicely printed book is the author's thesis from Kiel. However, the interior does not quite match the exterior. It brings little that is new and fails to deal with relevant questions. The author has an amazing ability to sidestep important issues and concentrate on unimportant ones.

The study originated in a research project on the early Middle Ages, carried out by archaeologists and historians in Schleswig and Kiel, so one would expect an integration of written and nonwritten sources in the text. The excavations and the reconstructions of Viking ships in Roskilde Fjord and Haithabu and the sailing experiments of the last two decades have increased immensely our knowledge of how early-medieval Scandinavians got around. The results of these and of other important recent archaeological findings are carefully enumerated in the introductory discussion on sources but are most disappointingly ignored in the analysis (for example, on pages 100 and following, the fortresses, bridges, roads, and harbors constructed during the tenth century are presented without a discussion of their importance to mercantile endeavors).

The chapter dealing with the literary sources demonstrates the author's knowledge of most of the pertinent research but not all. Saga literature may reflect the commercial activities and law of an earlier period, but the author does not make a convincing case for this assumption, based on Nordal's thesis from the early 1950s. The author has missed Jenny Jochens's criticism of the family sagas as sources. Given the use of the sagas, it is a bit surprising to find described in loving detail as a prototype of an early merchant, not an Icelandic merchant, but the English St. Godric of Finchale, the old friend of economic historians. He has already been more than adequately dealt with by Walter Vogel (who is cited) and by Henri Pirenne (who is not).

When discussing the legal sources, the author avoids tackling Elsa Sjöholm's thesis that all medieval Scandinavian laws are adaptations of European feudal and Mosaic law and contain no trace of Scandinavian law prior to the period of compilation (the twelfth and thirteenth centuries). Two of Sjöholm's articles are mentioned but not her book, *Gesetze als Quellen mittelalterlicher Geschichte des Nordens* (1976; expanded version: *Sveriges Medeltidslagar*, 1988), nor the debate her thesis has aroused. It is not enough merely to state that of course one should be careful in using the laws but that Sjöholm is too strict in her total dismissal of them.

The two major chapters are headed "Kaufmannsschutz" and "Handelsrecht," but the headings do not cover the contents. The former chapter does deal with the various forms of legal, social, and physical protection that early-medieval merchants might themselves have initiated and the measures taken by rulers to protect them, but it also discusses