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The common death and resurrection trope serves as the vehicle through which Stephen Jacobson presents his history of the Barcelona bar between the reign of Charles III when a few dozen litigators discretely went about their business while longing for the better days past of their guild and the beginning of the twentieth century when the number of lawyers swelled and they exploited opportunities in the rapidly burgeoning and industrializing city. Although the aftermath of the War of Spanish Succession (1700-14) and Philip V’s 1716 *Nueva Planta* resulted in the shrinking of the number of lawyers and made the legal profession an unattractive one, none of the Bourbon centralizing reforms in the peninsula could erase the long established legal traditions and the expertise of Catalan jurists, litigants, and advocates who had for generations elaborated a discrete regional legal system. By the turn of the 20th Century, however, the legal profession in Barcelona enjoyed a “silver age” marked not only by the proliferation of lawyers but also their very dynamic adaptation to overcrowded conditions as they branched out beyond law to the realms of politics, education, and the shaping of Catalan nationalism. Along the way, the Catalan legal profession progressed in way that mirrored Western Europe bars as Catalan lawyers moved from espousing liberal values to conservative ones, and ultimately consolidating a corporatist culture. In Barcelona as in other industrializing communities or regions the accumulation of capital, the sophistication of the economy, and the growth of state bureaucracy among other factors resulted in an increase in litigation opportunities for lawyers as well as increasing the prestige of the profession and the prominence of lawyers in society. While Jacobson does a capable job of comparing Barcelona’s lawyers to those throughout Western Europe one of the book’s main thrusts is the argument that Barcelona’s lawyers’ nationalism, that is to say their Catalan nationalism, set them apart from their counterparts in England, France, and Germany.

After a useful context-setting introduction, Jacobson begins the narrative of his book with an exploration of the Catalan legal profession’s eighteenth-century crisis marked by an ebb in litigations and the prestige, influence, and numbers of lawyers. Philip V’s absolutism and his efforts to centralize government and administration throughout the Kingdom are identified as the motors behind this crisis. As the members of the profession abandoned their
attachment to the urban nobility, integrated tenets of the Enlightenment into their
legal reasoning, and shifted the lineaments of their practice to meet the needs of
private practitioners who represented middle-class clients in a competitive
environment, the Catalan legal profession began to make its comeback. This was
accomplished through the modernization of the profession and gone were the days
when one Joseph Matas could fail his bar exam in 1790 and try to manipulate the
examining magistrates to pass him anyway because his seven-months pregnant
wife ran the risk of a miscarriage if he informed her of the disappointing result
(41). With the onset of the Napoleonic occupation and the age of revolution
against the French and the Old Regime many lawyers took advantage of
opportunities presented to become spokesmen of the people and technocrats of the
state. Lawyers, most of them swept up in their enthusiasm for Liberalism,
reshaped their profession and their legal codes in order to give them greater
latitude to make their cases and interact within the courts, government, and the
public. They drafted laws that abolished the tithe and other feudal dues as well as
promoting the disentailment of Church properties. Liberal judges, militias, and
the army then executed these enactments in the name of legality. Again, this also
occurred elsewhere in Europe, but much less frequent was the phenomenon of
young, educated lawyers taking up arms against the French and in the process
becoming liberal through their military or militia service. Over the course of the
nineteenth century the industrialization and the consolidation of the constitutional
state served as backdrop for the rise of a shift to conservatism not just in
Catalonia but throughout Western Europe as lawyers worked to reinvent a historic
image of the bar as a beacon of order and the guardian of justice and liberty. As
the law itself was seen as fostering social harmony, economic development, and
being a potentially lucrative career path, a legal career appealed to children of the
growing middle classes, and the profession became saturated. Perhaps the most
interesting of chapters is Jacobson’s fifth, “The Corporate Profession,” which
focuses not only on the training and practice of the profession in the late 19th
century, but also how legal associations in Barcelona shifted toward defending
and promoting the corporate interests of the members of the bar. Jacobson
suggests one of the reasons Catalan lawyers were so nationalistic came from the
professional overcrowding. Legal elites saw their chances of mobility blocked by
the glut of lawyers, which in turn politicized them as Catalan nationalists.
Whereas nationalism elsewhere was shaped and promulgated by the literati, the
upholding and defending Catalan law and legal traditions were essential to the
founding of Catalan nationalism.

Jacobson is to be applauded for a well-written, sophisticated, and
important contribution to the history of the Catalan legal profession but also the
rise and spread of Catalan nationalism. The study is makes the link between law
and nationalism in Catalonia compelling, and his emphasis on comparing the Catalan case with those of other Western European contexts is a testament to his erudition and skill as a legal historian. If there is one failing of the book it comes in outlining the relationship between Barcelona’s lawyers and other important and dynamic actors (such as doctors, university professors, journalists, and small business men) and their corporate bodies (such as a Chamber of Commerce). Philip Nord, for example has done a particularly exciting job of not only fleshing out the culture of the Paris bar, but also demonstrating that corporate interests and republican values were diffused beyond a body of a specific profession within the bourgeoisie during the French Third Republic.¹ International comparisons are present in Jacobson’s book; however, we would have gained a great deal of knowledge about the diffusion of Catalan nationalism among the professional classes in nineteenth-century Barcelona if he included material that spoke to lawyers interacting with other professionals rather than describing lawyers in a vacuum. Nonetheless, this is an excellent and useful book that is highly recommended.

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Far from being mere curators of static law, Barcelona's lawyers were at the center of social conflict and political and economic change, mediating between state, family, and society. Beginning with the resurrection of a decadent bar during the Enlightenment, Jacobson traces the historical evolution of lawyers throughout the long nineteenth century. From the vantage point of a city with a distinguished legal tradition, Catalonia's Advocates provides fresh insight into European social and legal history; the origins of liberal professionalism; the education, training, and practice of law in the nineteenth century; the expansion of continental bureaucracies; and the corporatist aspects of modern nationalism. A vivid picture of the variety of social circumstances and professional opportunities that conditioned the life of lawyers in Barcelona.—American Historical Review. Catalonia's Advocates is an impressive piece of scholarship argued with intellectual sophistication; it is meticulously researched, well organized and clearly written. Jacobson has written an innovative and challenging book that will change the way we think about the historical function of professional groups in `modern history.—Social History. Meticulously researched. . . . As the first social history of a continental Catalonia's Advocates provides fresh insight into European social and legal history; the origins of liberal professionalism; education, training, and the practice of law in the nineteenth century; the expansion of continental bureaucracies; and the corporatist aspects of modern nationalism. eISBN: 978-1-4696-0549-4. Looking back on the history of Barcelona lawyers over the long nineteenth century, even the most skeptical cannot help but take notice. When Charles III ascended to the throne in 1759, the bar was a shadow of its old self: a few dozen litigators discretely went about their business, representing clients in court, conscious that better days lay in the past. A century later, lawyers had regained much of their lost power, prestige, and influence. Catalonia's advocates: lawyers, society, and politics in Barcelona, 1759-1900. S Jacobson. Univ of North Carolina Press, 2009. 29. 2002. Book Review: Red Barcelona: Social Protest and Labour Mobilization in the Twentieth Century. S Jacobson. European History Quarterly 35 (2), 384-386, 2005. 2. 2005. Collective Bargaining in Undemocratic Regimes: Francoist Spain and Contemporary South Africa. SH Jacobson. Comp.