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The country house, chateau or rural palazzo set in extensive grounds may have been the ultimate badge of social pre-eminence but invariably their owners spent much of the year in the city. To this extent urban living was common to all elites worthy of the name, whatever their origin or source of wealth or power. Needless to say, though, how different elite groups experienced town life varied greatly. Focussing on the most basic aspect of urban living, this collection is concerned with the study of the places and types of residence of urban elites. Recently a number of historians have begun to explore the residential choices made by elites in the urban context, both as an important constituent of lifestyle and as a marker of elite identity and difference. However, whereas these studies have tended to focus on one particular elite group, a single place or one type of urban residence - such as aristocratic hotels - the current volume is original in exploring the patterns and logic of residential choices made by different elite groups in a variety of urban settings, in Britain, France and Italy, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. Each of the book's nine substantive chapters is written in either English or French (with an abstract in the other language) by a leading specialist either on elites or in the field of urban history. The volume arises out of two meetings of the specialists concerned, which gives it a degree of coherence rarely achieved in collections of this sort. A substantial essay by the editors points to similarities and contrasts between the specific cases and identifies key issues requiring further research. English and French text.

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