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The Lure of the City. Comparative Perspectives on Singles in Towns in the Low Countries, 1600-1900

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Abstract

This essay introduces a special issue on *The Lure of the City* which examines the attraction of towns to unmarried men and women in the Low Countries during the early modern period and the nineteenth century. The issue has the relation between singles and cities as its main focus. Singles were present in disproportionately large numbers in urban areas, but the question is why? This essay sets out the historiographical framework for the contributions in the issue, discusses the sources and methodologies used and provides a brief overview of the evolution of singleness in the Low Countries. The contributions all demonstrate the relevance of a comparative approach. It is revealed that towns and cities not only attracted, but also created singles, that they offered different opportunities for different groups of unmarried people and that they affected men and women differently. Finally, it appears that not every town and city was attractive to men and women without a spouse.

Keywords

Unmarried people, singles, Low Countries, 1600-1900.

Introduction

Singleness is often represented as a new and rapidly increasing lifestyle, in particular in the cities. Censuses show that currently about 40 per cent of men and women above the age of 18 are unmarried. In 2012, 15 per cent of the population at age 50 in Belgium had never been married, and 17 per cent in the Netherlands.¹ Yet, singles are not a recent phenomenon. The marriage pattern that emerged in Western Europe in the late middle ages and eroded during the nineteenth century was characterized by many people marrying late or remaining single. Many of these single men and women spent their lives in the urban environment.

In research on urban history, however, singleness has not always been an obvious category of analysis. The legitimation and the importance of placing singles at the centre of scholarly attention has been convincingly argued by Judith Bennett and Amy Froide in their *Singlewomen in the European Past* (1999).² Froide, moreover, has claimed that urban history is incomplete if we do not take into account the roles played by singles – and single women in particular – in urban areas.³ Indeed, since the late 1990s the increasing amount of historical literature on singleness has shed better light on the history of urban economies and societies, precisely by focusing on the numerical importance of singles, their demographic role and the economic and social contributions that singles made to early modern and nineteenth-century

towns and cities. The historical studies on single life have taught us a lot about early modern apprenticeship, about nineteenth-century domestic service, about rural to urban migration, about female (in)dependence and the experiences of women living without men... Still, most of these studies focus on England.⁴ Moreover, the urban setting as such has not often been the key focus of historians working on singles. In singles' research, cities are easily presented as interchangeable localities, as an urban decor in which many singles in history lived their lives. To fill this gap, this special issue has the relation between singles and cities as its prime focus. Singles were present in disproportionately large numbers in the city, but the question is why? Were chances on the marriage market lower in the urban environment? Or did cities rather attract singles than produce singles? What particular social and economic opportunities and drawbacks did the urban environment offer to singles? Did these differ for men and women? And how did singles cope with the hazards and hard conditions of urban life?

The five articles in this special issue offer innovative and refreshing insights into single life in towns and cities in one of the most urbanized and densely populated regions in the world since the high middle ages, the Low Countries. It includes contributions on growing towns as well as on towns in economic and/or demographic decline, on early modern towns as well as nineteenth-century cities. Specifically, it presents essays on the Belgian cities of Antwerp, Bruges and Ghent, and the towns and cities of the Netherlands. So far, only a few studies have documented the lives of urban singles in the Low Countries. As is the case for England, these studies tend to concentrate on women especially.⁵ There is also more abundant literature on widows than on not (yet) married women.⁶ In this issue we explore the living conditions of urban singles and reflect on differences and similarities between (different subtypes of) men and women alone. The essays, in fact, all share a comparative perspective. They are based either on a systematic comparison of women with men, of urban singles with rural singles, of singles in different cities or of different categories of unmarried women.

Men and Women Alone

Before we go into these issues, we need to discuss the terminology as it is frequently a source of confusion. Comparative research on singleness suffers from a lack of precise definitions of what is meant by 'single' and 'unmarried.' In legal parlance, a single person is someone who is unmarried and both words are used interchangeably.⁷ In common usage, there is a wider variety of terms that refer to singleness: never married people, men and women alone, bachelors and spinsters, celibates, singletons... For historians however these words are not necessarily synonyms. Since legal forms and statistical concepts often fail to keep pace with historical realities and experiences, some prefer to differentiate between the previously married and the not yet married, others between the young and the old, or between the lifelong and the short-term singles. Some terms moreover are misleading (singles in the past did not necessarily live alone) and others (such as spinster) have a negative connotation.⁸ A recent attempt at differentiation was made by Amy Froide in her book on celibacy in early modern England. Froide defines 'singles' as those adults who have never been or are not yet married. She uses 'unmarried' on the other hand as an overarching term to denote single (wo)men, along with all the other groups of women without husbands and men without wives (divorced and widowed people).⁹ Although Froide hereby clarifies some of the ambiguities, her terminology is not widely accepted amongst historians. In some medieval contexts, as Cordelia Beattie has observed, the term 'single women' in fact included all women without husbands.¹⁰ Moreover, Beattie shows how legal rules blurred some of the differences between single and married persons and states that marital status can be seen as a performance that had to be acted out in order to be visible (such as co-residence in the case of marriage).¹¹

Similarly, Ruth Mazo Karras claims that what we think of as traditional marriage in medieval Europe was far from the only available alternative to the single state.¹² Referring to the complexity of forms of marriage (concubinage, clerical marriage and clandestine union) she in fact uses the provocative term ‘unmarriage.’

A more obvious and established distinction made by Froide elsewhere takes into account the marital history of men and women and distinguishes between the ‘never married’ and the ‘ever married.’¹³ Indeed, by now, it is common for historians to differentiate between single people and those who were unmarried (or alone) as a consequence of separation, divorce or death. In early modern records such as probate inventories, tax records or population listings, singles were usually distinguished from their married and widowed counterparts. The work by Froide has likewise convincingly demonstrated that these different groups cannot be lumped into one. For women in particular, the living experiences and work opportunities were quite different.¹⁴

Historical demographers tend to further differentiate among the never married and make a distinction between the bachelors and spinsters who would eventually marry and those who never marry. For bachelors and spinsters in their twenties and thirties, singleness was in most cases a temporary state. They are considered to be ‘lifecycle singles.’ For older men and women, the single state was usually a permanent one. Historical demographers define ‘lifelong singles’ as men and women who died never married or were not yet married by the age of 50 (assuming that marriage chances after that age were particularly slim).¹⁵ Demographers’ estimates of celibacy have been criticized by some for underestimation, and by others for overestimation.¹⁶

UNMARRIED				(LEGALLY) MARRIED
NEVER MARRIED		EVER MARRIED		
Lifecycle singles	Lifelong singles	Widow(er)	Divorced	Grass widow(ers)

Figure 1. Categories of men and women living without a spouse

Clearly, there is a wide variety of situations that refer to men and women alone. Figure 1, based upon the categorization made by Froide, summarizes the different terms referring to singleness. Which categories are in focus is highly dependent upon the questions posed by the historian. In their contribution to this issue, Jan Kok and Kees Mandemakers want to know if nineteenth-century cities attracted or created singles. They look at life courses of singles to determine if singles lived different lives from married and widowed people, and if so, when the divergence of their life course began. The authors therefore, by definition, come closest to the traditional historical demographers’ classification and focus on the permanent celibacy of men and women. Three other articles discuss lifecycle celibacy: Hilde Greefs and Anne Winter analyse the long-distance migrant trajectories of the not yet married male and females, Sofie De Langhe examines the short-distance migration of rural single women while Christa Matthys looks at the marriage chances and extramarital fertility of single servants. Ariadne Schmidt and Manon Van der Heijden adopt a much broader perspective as it is their aim to indicate the similarities and differences in the opportunities cities offered to the various categories of women alone.

Singles in Historical Sources

While the growing literature on singleness by urban and social historians has expanded our knowledge of men and woman alone, historical demographers have probably contributed the most to our understanding of singles in the European past. Still, most of what historical demographers know about single people comes from their interest – not in celibacy – but in marriage. For them, age at first marriage is of crucial importance because of the close connection between the timing of marriage and the onset of childbearing, and it is therefore considered a key determinant of marital fertility levels in the past. Scholars such as Roger Schofield and David Weir however have argued that it was the celibacy rate rather than the age at marriage that accounted for most of the variation in population growth and decline.¹⁷ Theo Engelen and Jan Kok furthermore have claimed that scholars should care about the incidence of marriage and non-marriage in its own right because it points to the “desirability of marriage” in the past.¹⁸ The article by Kok and Mandemakers in this issue certainly takes on this challenge. In fact, it is the first extensive statistical study – not only for the Netherlands but also elsewhere – examining the causes of permanent celibacy. Indeed, despite its demographic importance, celibacy has not received as much attention as age of marriage.

This lack of interest in singleness is clearly attributable to the source materials. Singles crowded into early modern and modern towns and cities, but it is not always easy to find them in historical records, whether it is to measure their numbers or to study their lives. While the availability of parish registers from the late sixteenth century onward allows for a better estimation of celibacy, it can only be detected very roughly by counting the number of men and women at the time of death. Similarly, early modern population listings and tax lists permit a crude measure (the proportion of singles in the total population), but no distinction between temporary and permanent singles as these sources rarely register the age of the population. Nineteenth-century censuses record marital status as well as age and yield the most evidence. From these sources we know, for instance, that in Amsterdam in 1830 nearly 20 per cent in the age group 40-44 had never been married.¹⁹ In the Flemish cities of Ghent and Antwerp at the start of the nineteenth century this fluctuated respectively around 26 and 25 per cent compared to an average in the countryside of 15 and 13 per cent.²⁰ The figures show thus a sharp contrast between cities and countryside. Percentages were even higher for urban women, about 31 per cent compared to 19 per cent for men. The Low Countries were in that sense not any different than the rest of Europe. Generally, female celibacy is strongly associated with the city, male celibacy with the countryside.

Belgium and the Netherlands belong to a handful countries in the world that have kept a continuous population register since the mid-nineteenth century. This is an exceptional source and, unlike cross-sectional material like the census, permits tracing individuals from the cradle to the grave within the context of the family and the locality. This allows for an original approach to the determinants of singleness in the city.²¹ De Langhe, Matthys, Kok and Mademakers all make extensive use of this unique source. Matthys, for instance, uses the registers for a cohort of women born in rural Assenede to reconstruct their life courses across geographical boundaries and detect differential nuptiality patterns between women who stayed in their home village and those who left for the city of Ghent to work as a servant. Kok and Mandemakers draw on the registers by way of the large Historical Sample of the Netherlands. This longitudinal database is clearly well suited to study the determinants of celibacy, as it allows them to follow singles through space and time, and to examine the interplay between structure (local background factors) and agency (family factors) by means of a multivariate approach. Similarly, the foreigners’ files – a complementary source to the population registers – enable Greefs and Winter to analyse gender differences in the migration trajectories of singles to the port city of Antwerp. Obviously, such demographic sources offer

more than quantitative data on nuptiality. By using some creative methodologies they also deliver information on the actual experiences of urban singles.

Since ego-documents are scarce (or are skewed towards the more wealthy), urban and social historians usually draw on a range of different sources such as court records, lists of poor relief recipients, probate records, guild regulations and workhouse documents to study singles' lives. While these materials present specific information on the position in court, the living standards or the work opportunities of urban singles, Schmidt and Van der Heijden show in this issue that the use of such sources does not automatically result in a gloomy depiction of the single state.

“An Exaggerated European Marriage Pattern”

Ever since John Hajnal's 1965 landmark paper, historians have been aware that a large proportion of West European populations during the early modern period and a large part of the modern period either married late or married not at all.²² In an impressive statistical overview from 1999, Maryanne Kowaleski showed that single men and women were already quite common by the late middle ages (roughly 30 to 40 per cent of the adult population) and that their numbers only increased during the course of the early modern period.²³

Also in the Low Countries, by the mid-sixteenth century the trend was towards later marriages and larger concentrations of singles. For instance, women in Amsterdam around 1625 did not marry until the age of 24.5. At the end of the seventeenth century they waited even longer until 26.8 years and by the end of the next century, the average age at marriage had reached nearly 28 years.²⁴ In Flanders (countryside and cities) the trend was similar. Women's average age at marriage was nearly 26 years around 1700 and increased to 27.5 years at the end of the eighteenth century. Thirty-one per cent of women between 30 and 35 at the end of the eighteenth century were single. Additional evidence can be seen in the increasing number of never married people: the percentage of lifelong singles at age 50 was 17 per cent at the beginning of the eighteenth century and 21 per cent at the end.²⁵ These values all reflect a high proportion of singles and indicate a very restrictive nuptiality pattern, as described by Hajnal.

From the middle of the nineteenth century this European Marriage Pattern however eroded throughout Western Europe. In the Low Countries, the average age at marriage fell from 28 to 26 for brides and from 31 to 28 years for grooms. The percentage of lifelong singles by the end of nineteenth century was 15 per cent in Belgium and 13 in the Netherlands.²⁶ These figures indicate (the start of) a substantial break from the marriage pattern that existed in the early modern period. This transition known as the 'modernization of nuptiality' is generally associated with increasing secularization, urbanization and industrialization (more wage labour and early independence for young adults). There were however several variations within the overall picture. In France, for instance, a more modern nuptiality behavior prevailed earlier than elsewhere. Another pattern was obvious in the Low Countries and Germany where the fall in marriage age and singles progressed in stages and continued until the 1960s. Compared to the Netherlands, the level of permanent celibacy in Belgium remained higher during the nineteenth century.

Within the countries there was considerable variation in the proportion of singles for whom the economic features of the towns and cities played a key role. In late nineteenth-century cities where labourers constituted a large share of the population (as in port cities such as Rotterdam and Antwerp) marriage ages and the proportion of singles were considerably lower than the national average. Also, in industrial towns such as the Walloon city of Charleroi which specialized in heavy industry, a modern marriage pattern prevailed. But not

only was the occupational structure important, also the type of urban industry mattered. For instance, in provincial towns with 'light' industries (the Belgian textile cities of Kortrijk and Aalst, or the Dutch cities of Tilburg and Nijmegen) there was in contrast a large presence of single women.²⁷

Although Hajnal did not explain how he thought this European Marriage Pattern had come into existence, and while it is generally associated with a peasant economy, he was inclined to situate the origins of this distinctive pattern in the towns of Western Europe.²⁸ There is in fact ample evidence that men and women in towns and cities married at a higher age and that there were more singles than in the countryside. These higher figures explain why Katherine Lynch identified the urban pattern as an "exaggerated version of the European Marriage Pattern."²⁹ Lynch argues that this had to do with the large number of migrants in Western European cities. Indeed, it is well known that migration lengthened the period during which men and women remained single. In late eighteenth-century Amsterdam, for example, immigrant brides married two to four years later than local women.³⁰ Christa Matthys notes in this issue that when servants migrated to the city of Ghent, they remained single longer than rural native-born women.

Many scholars have tried to explain why urban people and migrants in particular took longer to marry or married not at all, and furthermore why this was more the case for women than for men. In the literature this is often explained by the surplus of women on the local marriage market. In early modern towns in the Low Countries, for instance, women outnumbered men by 20 to 25 per cent, and in mid-eighteenth-century Delft even by 50 per cent.³¹ While the distorted sex composition of the urban populations is partly due to the high proportion of widows and the outmigration of males for military or overseas expeditions (cf. the VOC towns in the contribution by Schmidt and Van der Heijden), the large number of young female migrants in the towns, and of servants in particular, clearly unbalanced the sex ratios. There are furthermore good reasons to believe, as Kowaleski has observed, that the impact of migration on nuptiality behaviour also operated through economic mechanisms.³² Although employment opportunities are one of the main reasons why men and especially women migrated to towns, it can be argued that becoming financially independent was a great challenge for migrants. They often started in unskilled and low-paid jobs like domestic service which required them to work for several years before they had accumulated sufficient means to establish a new household. It has also been suggested that some servants preferred to remain single because a life in service offered them more independence.³³ Migrants furthermore had to adjust to their new surroundings and needed time to build up networks to meet potential spouses. Research on nineteenth-century Amsterdam and some Belgian cities has in fact shown that newcomers were not very popular marriage partners among natives.³⁴ Other scholars have pointed to more formal constraints on early marriage, such as a minimum age to marriage, institutional barriers by craft guilds or specific marriage laws by city governments. In Germany such restrictions continued to exist until well into the nineteenth century. In fact, city governments regulated access to marriage just as they regulated access to urban citizenship. By linking both to financial resources, there was in many towns, according to Lynch, a strong compatibility between the values underlying the European Marriage Pattern and those of urban life.³⁵

It has always been difficult to single out which of these factors in particular affected the proportions of single men and single women in early modern and modern towns in the Low Countries. Kok and Mandemakers in their contribution on nineteenth-century Dutch cities tackle the issue with a quantitative approach and try to indicate whether certain urban conditions triggered celibacy. Their systematic comparison of women with men, and of urban singles with rural singles reveals in fact a strong gender effect. While the excess of women on

the marriage market did increase their risk of remaining single, for men, the marriage market and employment opportunities had an even larger effect on the timing and incidence of marriage. Yet, the high rate of celibacy of urban women also had a lot to do with compositional effects, meaning that some celibacy-prone groups were concentrated in the cities, or in the words of Lynch, that some groups “conformed to the constraints of the European Marriage Pattern in heterogeneous ways.”³⁶ As a result, Kok and Mandemakers claim that cities not only attracted single men and women, but also created large populations of unmarried people.

Still, while not all urban singles were newcomers, migrants accounted for a large share of the singles’ pool. Young singles have often been attributed a pioneer role in migration. As has been amply demonstrated, they were for the most part men and women from the surrounding countryside or from smaller towns further away who travelled (permanently or temporarily) to the nearby city in search of better prospects. This constant influx of migrants enlarged the pool of singles in cities substantially. Although it is often assumed that it was mostly poor and young women who migrated to towns and cities,³⁷ the articles in this issue by Kok and Mandemakers, and Greefs and Winter clearly indicate that single men also frequently migrated to towns – sometimes for different reasons and following other trajectories than their female counterparts – and that men and women migrated during all stages of their lives. De Langhe, and Greefs and Winter moreover show that migrant men and women were not passively drawn to the nearest city. Different cities had different recruitment areas, and had times during which the movement of migrants intensified or contracted. The lure of the city thus differed for different groups of singles and changed over time.

The Lure of Urban Institutions

The lives of single women and widows have often been described in dichotomous terms – and this is what set women apart from men. Women without a husband were perceived as an anomaly in a society that expected all women to marry, a victimized minority, disadvantaged, vulnerable, pitiful, but they were also independent and therefore often perceived as dangerous, suspicious and a threat to the social order in a patriarchal society. This dichotomy can not only be found in the contemporary representation of singles, but also dominates the historiography. The headings of publications are indicative in this respect. *Winners or Losers?*, *Blessed or Not?*, *Independent Sisters*, *Dependent Aunts? Never Married but Not Alone* are the titles with which historians refer to the dual position of single women.³⁸ Women without men were deprived of the social and economic support of a husband, had a hard time to make ends meet and often were overrepresented in the lowest social layers of society. Yet, it was precisely the absence of men that in the Low Countries granted these women autonomy, unknown to other women. Contrary to wives who were legally subordinated to their husbands, women without husbands enjoyed an independent legal status and, at least to a certain degree, were free to make their own choices.³⁹ This dichotomy of vulnerability versus independence was most prominent in the lives of single women in the urban setting.

In their recent publication, *Living in the City*, Leo Lucassen and Wim Willems emphasized that it was the wide variety of urban institutions that attracted people to the city. Next to economic factors, like a well-developed local labour market, also the civil society, with its churches, guilds and other organizations played a role. It was precisely the combination of the urban political, economic, social, and cultural institutions that provided the facilities to urban dwellers and that attracted people or motivated them to stay: employment, education, legal protection, social support, but also a larger degree of tolerance of behaviour that deviated from the norm. This widening of the interpretative framework is also very relevant for understanding the lure of cities to singles. Urban institutions replaced – or at least

supplemented – family networks. This disconnection of provisions from the family advantaged newcomers because it provided them direct access to various forms of support, as Lucassen and Willems pointed out.⁴⁰ And this aspect may have been even more advantageous for single women and single men who, by definition, whether they lived alone or not, lived in a family constellation that differed from that of their married counterparts – without a spouse and usually without children.

Of all institutions, it was the magnet of the urban labour market that has received most attention in the historiography on singles. Cities offered unmarried women and men often a wider range of employment opportunities than were available in rural areas. Young men could receive technical training in one of the many artisan workshops or make some money as a day labourer.⁴¹ The possibility of finding a job as a domestic servant was the prime incentive for young single women to move from rural regions to the city, from Italy to England, from Sweden to Spain, and throughout the ages, for either a temporary stay or for permanent residence.⁴² Domestic service was in most cities the largest employer of single women. In the Low Countries, the process of feminization of domestic service started earlier than elsewhere, probably precisely because of the urbanized character of this part of Europe. But cities also offered single women alternatives to a job as a servant.

In many early modern towns corporate structures posed barriers that limited work opportunities for never married women within traditional craft production and sales. Guilds in German cities tended to place restrictions on single women from at least the sixteenth century on.⁴³ Single women were excluded from apprenticeships and the freedom of trades in English towns.⁴⁴ Similar tendencies can be observed for the Low Countries where often daughters, wives and widows could benefit from corporate structures, but single women without a familial relation to the master were denied access not only to many crafts but also to some retail trades.⁴⁵ Less is known about singleness as a category of exclusion for males. In several parts of Europe the position of servants and apprentices was strictly intertwined with singleness, as Sarti has shown.⁴⁶ In many German guilds the corporate status of men was directly related to their marital status, as journeymen were required to be single, and master craftsmanship was reserved for married men.⁴⁷ Single barber-surgeons in early modern Turin, on the other hand, had no fewer prospects than married men, were able to manage shops, and often fulfilled important functions of leadership.⁴⁸ Which of both extremes, or what variations in between, could be found in cities in the Low Countries remains subjects for further research. What is clear though is that for women alone marital status was “a category of difference,” as phrased by Froide. Whereas either urban authorities or guilds restricted never married women’s work, ever married women benefitted from these urban institutions. They were often allowed to continue in their husbands’ work, not only in the craft or trade sector, but also in public services as Schmidt and Van der Heijden have shown.⁴⁹

The commercialized economy in cities with the presence of markets, of goods and financial institutions may have been particularly attractive to single women who, contrary to wives, enjoyed an independent legal status that allowed them to administer goods, to make contracts, to be active in (retail) trade or on the credit market independently. Unmarried women played an important role as moneylenders. They provided loans to individuals but were also important credit suppliers to towns.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the process of proletarianization and the spread of wage labour created ample opportunities both for women and for single men to engage in paid labour outside the family context. The urban labour market was highly segmented and thus work options for women were more restricted than for men. Yet, the urban labour market was more specialized and diversified than in the countryside. Women thus found niches, or access to jobs that enabled them to support themselves, in the often low skilled and poorly paid phases of the production process of goods, in various kinds of

personal services that had become commercialized in the urban economy, either as 'regularly' employed, working at piece rate, in odd jobs or as day labourers.⁵¹

Recently, Froide has shown that the economic options for single women improved in the eighteenth century due to changes in the urban economy. Bans on single women's work were lifted. They benefitted from the growing demand for labour in the booming economy as there was no longer a need to stifle their competition. Moreover, the transformation of the economic basis of the city resulted in the emergence of new trades that were considered appropriate to gentlewomen.⁵² Froide's conclusions for eighteenth-century English towns concur with the findings of Schmidt and Van der Heijden who show for early modern Dutch cities that profound changes in the economy, like economic specialization, ongoing proletarianization as well as the expansion of public services with its accompanying bureaucratization increased both the diversification of the range as well as the number of jobs that were accessible to women alone. These developments affected the opportunities of single women (as well as many men) in almost all sectors of the economy.

Variations and temporal shifts in the economic orientation and development of cities were responsible for variations in the appeal of different types of cities to singles and resulted in changes in migration patterns. Before the low-skilled and poorly paid phases of the production process were displaced to the countryside, the growing importance of the textile industry had increased the appeal of early modern cities to singles who found work in the production of cloths, in Holland and elsewhere.⁵³ Other local industries took over and provided employment to women in the eighteenth century. The maritime orientation in early modern Amsterdam attracted female single migrants many of whom may have left home to aim for a job in service, but ended up in prostitution.⁵⁴ Greefs and Winter show that the number of single immigrants moving to the expanding port city of Antwerp in the nineteenth century increased. It was the specificities of the commercial port town's dual labour market that kept attracting highly skilled male migrants and female migrants with a relatively unspecialized occupational profile: servants and prostitutes. But whereas patterns for single male migrants intensified, but remained more or less the same in character, female migration patterns changed as single women increasingly migrated from more distant areas than before. This shift was the result of a dynamic process in which not only employer preferences in Antwerp, and changing transport facilities, but also the situation in the home area played a role.

When looking at which categories of singles were attracted to towns, we find it important to take into account migration channels and the situation in the home area. Wiesner already pointed out that by the seventeenth century rural areas in Germany offered more wage labour for women than for men and that especially single women were hired to carry out this work.⁵⁵ Similarly, the range of jobs in cities may have been wider than in the countryside, but employment opportunities in cities were not necessarily better as De Langhe convincingly demonstrates in her contribution to this issue. Only few single women migrated to Bruges at the start of the nineteenth century. Her observation that that city had lost its appeal for single women due to economic deterioration in the course of the second half of the eighteenth century, whereas rural single women still migrated to Ghent, underlines the argument made by Lucassen and Willems that cities cannot be treated as interchangeable localities.⁵⁶ But as important is De Langhe's observation that the attraction of cities can only be understood in relation to developments in the countryside and that the socio-economic diversity of rural areas should be taken into account as well. In those regions where the linen industry was dominant, young single women had no incentive to depart. De Langhe corrects the general view that urban centres attracted young single women from the countryside in search of work. For some, work opportunities in the countryside were more favourable. Other single women

departed, but not necessarily in search of work. Older single women were attracted by Bruges' help on offer.

The wide and diversified network of urban institutions providing poor relief or help made cities attractive for singles. Early modern poor relief systems were far from inclusive but the overall outreach of all institutions together was broad. Outdoor relief for burghers and inhabitants, orphanages, hospitals, plague houses, almshouses, elderly houses, guild- or trade-based mutual benefit associations provided support to many people who could not count on support of family relatives. In some cases specialized initiatives were set up as in Leiden where (especially) single men benefitted from journeymen's boxes and mutual benefit associations for migrants.

Even though the system privileged burghers, poor relief institutions contributed to the lure of the city. Van de Pol and Kuijpers claimed that the health care and social assistance system of the seventeenth century attracted poor women to Amsterdam. The reputation of its poor relief system as generous functioned both as push and pull factors to single women. Poor relief administrators in the German village of Husum paid travelling money and sent poor orphans, women with children, old, disabled and sick persons to Amsterdam. Burghers, those who enjoyed citizenship, were privileged as were widows, who were, as elsewhere, considered as 'deserving poor.' Yet various Amsterdam institutions, like the Almonershouse, the hospital, the large orphanage, the plague house, provided help indiscriminately.⁵⁷ Even prostitutes were not wholly deprived of help and the knowledge that in Amsterdam it was possible to deliver illegitimate babies and return to one's home town was even widespread.⁵⁸ Amsterdam was not completely unique in this respect. Froide demonstrated for England that sickness, infirmity and old age could qualify single women for (temporary) help, yet that, intriguingly, one of the most common times that they receive aid was after giving birth to illegitimate children. With giving birth to illegitimate children, single women made the authorities' greatest fears come true. But apparently, paternalistic town fathers could not leave children in need, even when they were illegitimate.⁵⁹

This leads us back to the dichotomy that dominates the description of single women's lives. Single women were vulnerable and independent. It was, according to criminal historian John Beattie, the combination of both that explained why female crime rates were so high in early modern towns. In the urban context women alone were less protected and less sheltered (and thus more vulnerable) but they were also thrown into direct contact with the wider society, less dependent, less restricted and not subjected to the same mechanisms of (patriarchal) control as in the countryside.⁶⁰ That independence in comparison to contemporaries implied that the risk of immorality was a constant throughout time. Barbara Henkes described how the transition to Dutch cities during the interbellum gave young girls from Germany new perspectives, but also fuelled the efforts of women's organizations to protect young 'innocent' girls from the dangers of the urban environment.⁶¹

Was the city indeed so dangerous and harsh for women alone? Two of the contributions to this issue address this question and try to overcome the dichotomy. Schmidt and Van der Heijden make a plea for a revision of the gloomy depiction of women alone. They follow the line set out by Lucassen and Willems and systematically discuss what the various urban institutions had to offer and how these were employed by women alone, thereby showing that it is crucial to differentiate between the various categories of women without men, and between legal norms and daily practice.

Matthys, focussing on the sexuality of servants, is even more radical and challenges the dichotomous use of the concepts of vulnerability versus sexual emancipation. She argues that the strong parallel between the terms used in contemporary and historical debates suggest that some contemporary explanations have been too easily accepted by researchers. She uses life-course analysis and compares the experiences of rural with urban servants to test the

assumptions about the extramarital sexuality of the young unmarried women who migrated to the city. Her findings warrant the fundamental revision of the interpretation of the relation between domestic service, sexuality and urban life. Neither the city nor service was as 'dangerous' for single women as is often believed.

Living arrangements and social capital

Since these men and women – regardless of whether they were born in or outside the city walls – lived and worked within the urban environment, they needed a place to sleep, cook and eat their meals. But the actual living situations of single people are not that easy to discern in historical sources. Apart from the pioneering work of David Hussey and Margaret Ponsonby and some sections in other volumes predominantly about the English case,⁶² our knowledge about how unmarried people actually lived, is still very limited, especially for the Low Countries.⁶³ Furthermore, single men and women did not have a spouse and were therefore alone – according to the legal definition. The question is, however, did they also *live* alone? Were they able to manage an independent household or did they have to cohabit with relatives or others to make ends meet? For the most part, when considering the living conditions of city dwellers, most scholars take the nuclear family to be the norm. Still several studies have focused on co-residence, implying rent sharing and income pooling as a survival strategy for unmarried people. Besides material benefits, such arrangements undoubtedly offered social and emotional benefits.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, at least a portion of them were able to manage to create a home of their own, as is attested by the probate inventories left by unmarried persons.⁶⁵

Apart from financial possibilities, the living arrangements of the unmarried were determined by marital status, gender and age. Many of the not yet married, for instance, worked as servants and lived in the house of their employers. Board and lodging provided these young singles in the city with surrogate family arrangements, but most of them remained in contact with their parents and next of kin who often lived outside the city walls.⁶⁶ After the years of servanthood, they moved back to their home village or stayed in the city where they most likely had built up a new social network. If they did not marry, they reached another stage of singleness.⁶⁷ As Froide made clear, the residential situation of never married women was very different from that of widows, since the latter had more options.⁶⁸ Widows were more likely to head their own households, with or without their living-in children, or when poorer, to move in with (older) children or other family members.⁶⁹ Furthermore, they could rely on a more extended social network created during their late husband's life. But although we know that some single women and many widows lived in their own separate dwelling, documents such as probate inventories rarely reveal who else lived with them, apart from their young children. The living arrangements of lifelong singles are far from clear, but certainly varied considerably according to wealth. Better-off singles could afford to rent or even buy a dwelling, but poorer women had to find other options in order keep a roof over their head. Possibly, they shared housing with other unmarried women and formed a 'spinster cluster.'⁷⁰ Or they lived together in larger female-only communities such as court *beguinages*, a phenomenon unique to the cities of Low Countries since the late middle ages.⁷¹ And what about the residential preferences and possibilities of bachelors and widowers? Were there similar 'bachelor clusters'? Indeed, when considering the living conditions of singles, the single man is cast into a rather liminal position.⁷² Yet, it is imperative to consider the gender differences, as Kok and Mandemakers claim in their article. An important finding in this respect is that with age, celibates increasingly lived alone, and men were more likely to live alone than women.

Peter Laslett already pointed to the implications of the nuclear family system for the residential isolation of singles, and the elderly in particular.⁷³ His nuclear hardship hypothesis, which refers to the difficulties imposed upon individuals when social rules required them to live with nuclear families, suggests that since the late middle ages the gradual dissolution of kinship, as the main organizing societal principle, made town dwellers increasingly vulnerable to poverty and social isolation. According to Laslett, this stimulated individuals to participate in networks of support which were not primarily based on blood ties, such as neighbourhoods, guilds and other forms of formal associations. During the last two decades this hypothesis has been highly debated by a whole range of scholars. Some have stated that kin outside the household proved more helpful than Laslett assumed, others discussed the importance of friends and neighbours, or the community at large, and still others continued to emphasize the role of the family.⁷⁴ Recent research on the early modern city of Lier and Mechelen for instance shows how parents, siblings, nieces and nephews formed a family safety net that enabled singles to survive the exigencies and contingencies of urban life.⁷⁵ Similarly, research for the nineteenth-century Netherlands has demonstrated that spinsters and bachelors were not necessarily “victims of nuclear hardship.” In fact, nuclear families were particularly flexible when it came to accommodating vulnerable kin such as singles. Widows were less welcome; nonetheless also this group could count on the help of a sufficient number of family members.⁷⁶

So, although unmarried men and women did not enjoy the company of a spouse (any longer), this did not automatically mean that they also lived their lives in solitude. In a society in which the nuclear family was dominant, family ties were shaped differently than in an extended family system. When “we look at the family through the prism of singleness,” as Froide put it, we can shift the focus away from the nuclear family, to the meaning of siblings and female kin.⁷⁷ Urban institutions, as already mentioned, took on tasks that were performed elsewhere by the family. Families fulfilled functions in a different way, but the family remained important, perhaps even more so for unmarried individuals in and going to the city.

A number of studies have already undermined the self-evident assumption that urban migrants were lone, solitary and passive creatures, detached from their home villages, family and friends. Tamara Hareven in her work on nineteenth-century French-Canadian immigrants, for example, was one of the first to document the central role of kinship in organizing migration from the countryside to the city, in facilitating settlement in urban communities and in helping migrants adapt to new living conditions.⁷⁸ Greefs and Winter in this issue make another important contribution by highlighting gender differences. While female migrants have been traditionally considered as highly engaged in short-distance mobility and dependent on family decisions, these authors – by focusing on long-distance migration to the port city of Antwerp – demonstrate the autonomy with which some women made their migration decisions. Information was conveyed not only by family and friends, but also via less personal information channels. The networks that mediated the information stream were moreover very different for men and women alike and were also highly connected to the occupational profiles.

Furthermore, not only the family as such was important for the future plans of young men and women, but also the composition of the family household. De Langhe observes that the death of a parent stimulated the migration of certain rural women to the city. Kok and Mandemakers moreover notice that also the presence of siblings had a strong impact on the likelihood of young people leaving the parental household or becoming a lifelong single. Often, one child would remain in the household to take care of elderly parents.

Conclusions

In 1999, Judith Bennett and Amy Froide concluded their work by stating that their “volume was just a beginning.”⁷⁹ Since then historical studies on singleness have increasingly gained popularity. Recent scholarship has shifted the focus away from “the conjugal family as the essential familial unit of the European past” and has pointed to the importance of marital status in a man’s and a woman’s life in particular.⁸⁰ Unmarried women and men may have deviated from the norm, but they represented such an influential minority that they cannot be overlooked when we draw the picture of city dwellers. To fully understand the relation between singles and the city, it is, however, necessary to go beyond the distinction between those who were married and those who were not.

This introduction and the articles in this issue examine the lure of the city for different groups of women and men alone. The contributors all introduce innovative approaches to singleness by using a variety of sources, some of which are virtually unique to the Low Countries. Some authors make use of a longitudinal perspective, others engage in a cross-sectional analysis, but they all, in one way or another, adopt a comparative stance either by studying and contrasting different groups of unmarried people, different genders, different cities or by taking into account different rural contexts.

This issue, in the first place, compares different categories of unmarried people, or – to be more precise – of women and men living without a spouse, hereby taking up the invitation of Froide, Holden and Hannam.⁸¹ This exercise immediately prompts the need to be precise when it comes to terminology. Differences between terms are meaningful as they refer to different categories of women and men living without a spouse whose experiences could vary considerably. As a result, the comparison among never married women, grass widows, widows and divorced women gives us a clearer picture of what the city actually had to offer to the various groups of women alone (Schmidt and Van der Heyden). Likewise, the comparison of the experiences of urban servants with their rural counterparts reveals the actual effect of living in an urban environment on the lives of servants and nuances the common assumption that the city represented a dangerous environment for young single women (Matthys). By comparing male and female singles, some authors pay attention to a topic that so far has largely been ignored by historians, as single women hitherto attracted far more attention than single men. They also are able to carefully assess which of the individual experiences was a consequence of singleness and which should be attributed to gender (Kok and Mandemakers). When looking at which groups of singles were attracted to towns, we see that it is moreover important to take into account the migration channels and the situation in the home area. Differences in the economic features of the towns were responsible for the diverse appeal of the city to singles and resulted, for instance, in distinct and gendered migration patterns (Greefs and Winter). The ways in which rural economies created an impact on migration to the city also require further reflection. In fact, the attraction of urban areas can only be understood in relation to developments in and socio-economic diversity of the countryside. However, it became obvious that such a local approach becomes also more effective when it is combined with information on family background (De Langhe).

Notes

This special issue is based on revised versions of papers presented at the conference *Singles in the Cities of North-West Europe, c.1000-2000* which took place in Antwerp in March 2013. This conference was a sequel to the triple sessions *Singles in the City* at the European Social Science History Conference in Glasgow in April 2012. The conference and the three sessions were organized by a five-member committee: Bruno Blondé, Julie

De Groot, Hilde Greefs (all University of Antwerp), Isabelle Devos (Ghent University) and Ariadne Schmidt (Leiden University).

¹ “Totale bevolking per leeftijd, geslacht en burgerlijke staat.” Statistics Belgium, last accessed November, 15 2013, http://statbel.fgov.be/nl/statistiek/cijfers/bevolking/structuur/burgerlijke_staat/geslacht-leeftijd-burgerlijke-staat-gewest/ and Statistics Netherlands, <http://www.cbs.nl/nl-NL/menu/themas/bevolking/cijfers/default.htm>.

² Judith Bennett and Amy Froide, ed., *Singlewomen in the European Past, 1250-1800* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999).

³ Amy Froide, *Never Married. Singlewomen in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 8.

⁴ Froide, *Never Married*; Bridget Hill, *Women alone. Spinsters in England, 1660-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); Pamela Sharpe, “Dealing with Love: The Ambiguous Independence of the Singlewoman in Early Modern England,” *Gender and History* 11,2 (1999): 202-32; Christine Peters, “Singlewomen in Early Modern England: Attitudes and Expectations,” *Continuity and Change* 12,3 (1997): 325-45; Olwen Hufton “Women Without Men: Widows and Spinsters in Britain and France in the Eighteenth Century,” *Journal of Family History* 9 (1981): 355-76; Katherine Holden, Amy Froide and June Hannam, ed., “Special Issue: Winners or Losers? Single Women in History 1000–2000,” *Women's History Review* 17,3 (2008) includes contributions on England, Germany and the United States. American studies have mainly documented the lives of the singles in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century: Betsy Israel, *Bachelor Girl: The Secret History of Single Women in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harper Collins, 2002); Lee Virginia Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, a Better Husband. Single Women in America: The Generations of 1780-1840* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women. Work and Community for Single Women 1850-1920* (London: Virago Press, 1985). Two recent works however focus on Southern Europe. There is a special issue on unmarried lives in *European History Quarterly* (2008) by Silvia Evangelisti, Margareth Lanzinger and Raffaella Sarti, and an edited volume by Lanzinger and Sarti, *Nubili e celibi tra scelta e costrizione (secoli XVI–XIX)* (Udine: Forum, 2006). Another recent example is for France: Jean Claude Bologne, *Histoire du célibat et des célibataires* (Paris: Fayard, 2004).

⁵ Theo Engelen and Jan Kok, “Permanent Celibacy and Late Marriage in the Netherlands, 1890-1960,” *Population-E* 58,1 (2003): 67-96; Lenie de Zwaan, ed., *Alleenstaanden. Leven en werken door de geschiedenis heen*, (Den Haag: SDU, 1995); Jeannette Dorsman and Monique Stavenuiter, *Nooit gehuwd, maar niet alleen: vrijgezelle vrouwen uit de arbeidende klasse in de tweede helft van de negentiende eeuw* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1993); Francisca de Haan and Dineke Stam, *Jonge dochters en oude vrijsters. Ongehuwde vrouwen in Haarlem in de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw* (Haarlem: Haerlem Reeks, 1985). The recent dissertation by Sofie De Langhe on single women in the Flemish countryside is in that sense an exception: “Oude vrijsters. Bestaansstrategieën van ongehuwde vrouwen op het Brugse platteland, late achttiende-begin negentiende eeuw,” (PhD diss., Ghent University, 2013).

⁶ Ariadne Schmidt, *Overleven na de dood: weduwen in Leiden in de Gouden Eeuw* (Amsterdam: Prometheus-Bert Bakker, 2001); Anne McCants, “The not-so-merry widows of Amsterdam, 1740-1782,” *Journal of Family History* 24 (1999): 441-67. We are however quite well informed on single servants: Hilde Bras, *Zeeuwse Meiden. Dienen in de levensloop van vrouwen, 1850-1950* (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2002); Barbara Henkes, *Heimat in Holland. Duitse dienstmeisjes 1920-1950* (Amsterdam: Babylon-De Geus, 1995); Valérie Piette, *Domestiques et servantes. Des vies sous condition. Essai sur le travail domestique en Belgique au 19^e siècle* (Bruxelles: Académie Royale de Belgique, 2000); Christa Matthys, “Sex and the City. Servants and the Diffusion of Fertility Control in Flanders, 1830-1930” (PhD diss., Ghent University, 2012).

⁷ The legality is established by civil or religious laws and customs of the country or region.

⁸ Historians writing in English for instance refer to single women as spinsters. Apart from an occupational term, a spinster in early modern and modern sources is a legal term to describe an unmarried female. Contrary to popular belief, she is not necessarily an elderly woman. She is any woman above the age of majority who has never been married. Dutch vocabulary tends to be more precise. Early modern contemporaries spoke of a singlewoman as a *jongedochter* (young daughter). For older women who remained single, in the Southern Netherlands the adjective *oude* or *bejaarde* (old daughter) was added. The term ‘daughter’ nevertheless is not unbiased and clearly indicates that the woman was not considered as an adult or independent person. For men, in contrast, *jonkman* or *jongeman* (young man) was used, even at an elderly age. Such indications of marital status were nonetheless often lacking.

⁹ Froide, *Never Married*.

¹⁰ Cordelia Beattie, *Medieval Single Women: The Politics of Social Classification in Late Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

¹¹ Cordelia Beattie, “‘Living as a Single Person’: Marital Status, Performance and the Law in Late Medieval England,” *Women's History Review* 17,3 (2008): 327-40.

¹² Ruth Mazo Karras, *Unmarriages: Women, Men, and Sexual Unions in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

¹³ Judith Bennett and Amy Froide, "A Singular Past," in *Singlewomen in the European Past, 1250-1800*, ed. Bennett and Froide, 2; Amy Froide, "Marital Status as a Category of Difference. Singlewomen and Widows in Early Modern England," in *Singlewomen in the European Past, 1250-1800*, ed. Bennett and Froide, 236-69.

¹⁴ Froide, *Never Married*.

¹⁵ Although some authors use other age categories. Wrigley and Schofield, for instance, use ages 40-44 to demarcate lifelong spinster and bachelorhood while Susan Cotts Watkins refers to the age of 35. She argues that at that age, men and women had surpassed the mean age at marriage. Susan Cotts Watkins, "Spinsters," *Journal of Family History* 9,4 (1984): 310; Edward Wrigley and Roger Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541-1871: a Reconstruction*, (London: Edward Arnold, 1981), 255-65.

¹⁶ For Olwen Hufton and Maryanne Kowaleski this definition is too limited since it excludes the large number of women who died before the age of 50. David Weir on the other hand has argued that clandestine marriages and cohabitation may have inflated celibacy estimates. Maryanne Kowaleski, "Singlewomen in Medieval and Early Modern Europe," in *Singlewomen in the European Past, 1250-1800*, ed. Bennett and Froide, 40; Hufton, "Women Without Men," 357; David Weir, "Rather Never Than Late: Celibacy and Age at Marriage in English Cohort Fertility, 1541-1781," *Journal of Family History* 9 (1994): 346.

¹⁷ Roger Schofield, "English Marriage Patterns Revisited," *Journal of Family History* 10 (1985): 2-20; Weir, "Rather Never Than Late."

¹⁸ Engelen and Kok, "Permanent Celibacy and Late Marriage."

¹⁹ Jan de Vries and Ad van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy. Success, Failure, and Perseverance of the Dutch Economy, 1500-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 75.

²⁰ Claire Gyssels and Lieve Van der Straeten, *Bevolking, arbeid en tewerkstelling in Antwerpen op het einde van het Ancien Regime* (unpublished manuscript, Ghent University, 1990), 39; Lieve Jaspers and Carine Stevens, *Arbeid en tewerkstelling in Oost-Vlaanderen op het einde van het Ancien Regime* (Gent: Provincie Oost-Vlaanderen, 1985), 61; Claire Gyssels and Lieve Van der Straeten, *Bevolking, arbeid en tewerkstelling in West-Vlaanderen (1796-1815)* (Gent: Belgisch Centrum voor Landelijke Geschiedenis, 1986), 56.

²¹ These registers contain not only the vital statistics of each individual (births, marriages, deaths), but also for the members of the household they were living in.

²² John Hajnal, "European Marriage Patterns in Perspective," in *Population in History: Essays in Historical Demography*, ed. D.V. Glass and D.E.C. Eversley (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1965), 101-43.

²³ Kowaleski, "Singlewomen," 64.

²⁴ Ad Van der Woude, "Population Developments in the Northern Netherlands (1500-1800) and the Validity of the 'Urban Graveyard' Effect," *Annales de Démographie Historique* (1982): 63.

²⁵ Isabelle Devos, "Marriage and Economic Conditions since 1700: the Belgian Case," in *Marriage and Rural Economy: Western Europe since 1400*, ed. Isabelle Devos and Liam Kennedy (Turnhout: Brepols), 101-35; Isabelle Devos, Thijs Lambrecht and Richard Paping, "The Low Countries, 1000-1750," in *Making a Living: Family, Labour and Income*, ed. Eric Vanhaute, Isabelle Devos and Thijs Lambrecht (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 157-84.

²⁶ Paul Deprez, "The Low Countries, 1784-1950," in *European Demography and Economic Growth*, ed. W.R. Lee (London: Croom Helm, 1979), 236-84; Erwin Karel, Eric Vanhaute, Richard Paping, "The Low Countries, 1750-2000," in *Making a Living: Family, Labour and Income*, ed. Vanhaute, Devos and Lambrecht (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 185-207.

²⁷ Ron Lesthaeghe, *The Decline of Belgian Fertility* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 76-87; Paul Klep, *Bevolking en arbeid in transformatie, Een onderzoek naar de ontwikkelingen in Brabant, 1700-1900* (Nijmegen: SUN, 1981); Angélique Janssens, *Family and Social Change. The Household as a Process in an Industrializing Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

²⁸ Richard Smith, "Some Reflections on the Evidence for the Origins of the 'European Marriage Pattern' in England," in *The Sociology of the Family: New Directions for Britain*, ed. Chris Harris (Keele: Sociological Review Monographs, 1979), 79.

²⁹ Katherine Lynch, "The European Marriage Pattern in the Cities: Variations on a Theme by Hajnal," *Journal of Family History* 16,1 (1991): 79-96.

³⁰ Jan de Vries, *European Urbanization, 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 190-92.

³¹ De Vries and Van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy*, 75.

³² Kowaleski, "Singlewomen," 58.

³³ Marybeth Carlson, "A Trojan Horse of Worldliness? Maidservants in the Burgher Households in Rotterdam at the End of the Seventeenth Century," in *Women of the Golden Age: an International Debate on Women in Seventeenth-Century Holland, England and Italy*, ed. Els Kloek, Nicole Teeuwen, and Marijke Huisman (Hilversum: Verloren, 1994), 86-96.

- ³⁴ de Vries, *European Urbanization*, 189; Bart Van de Putte, *Partnerkeuze in de 19de eeuw: klasse, geografische afkomst, romantiek en de vorming van sociale groepen op de huwelijksmarkt* (Leuven: Universitaire Pers Leuven, 2005); Paul Puschmann, Per-Olof Grönberg, Reto Schumacher and Koen Matthijs, "Access to Marriage and Reproduction Among Migrants in Antwerp and Stockholm. A Longitudinal Approach to Processes of Social Inclusion and Exclusion, 1846-1926," *History of the Family* (forthcoming).
- ³⁵ Lynch, "The European Marriage Pattern," 81.
- ³⁶ Lynch, "The European Marriage Pattern," 86.
- ³⁷ Lotte van de Pol and Erika Kuijpers, "Poor Women's Migration to the City. The Attraction of Amsterdam Health Care and Social Assistance in Early Modern Times," *Journal of Urban History* 32,44 (2005): 44-60.
- ³⁸ Holden, Froide and Hannam, ed., "*Special Issue: Winners or Losers?*"; Ruth Freeman and Patricia Klaus, "Blessed or Not? The New Spinster in England and the United States in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," *Journal of Family History* 9,4 (1984): 394-414; Francisca de Haan en Dineke Stam, "Zelfstandige zusters of afhankelijke tantes. Aspecten uit het leven van ongehuwde vrouwen in de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw," *Vrouwenlevens 1500-1850. Jaarboek voor Vrouwengeschiedenis* 8 (1987): 99-124; Jeannette Dorsman and Monique Stavenuiter, *Nooit gehuwd, maar niet alleen: vrijgezelle vrouwen uit de arbeidende klasse in de tweede helft van de negentiende eeuw* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1993).
- ³⁹ Ariadne Schmidt, "Vrouwen en het recht. De juridische status van vrouwen in Holland in de vroegmoderne tijd," *Jaarboek van het Centraal Bureau voor Genealogie* 58 (2004): 28-33; Laura Van Aert, "Tussen norm en praktijk. Een terreinverkenning over het juridische statuut van vrouwen in het zestiende-eeuwse Antwerpen," *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis* 2,3 (2005): 22-42.
- ⁴⁰ Leo Lucassen and Wim Willems, ed., *Living in the City. Urban Institutions in the Low Countries, 1200-2010* (London: Routledge, 2012); Leo Lucassen and Wim Willems, ed., *Waarom mensen in de stad willen wonen* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2009), 10.
- ⁴¹ Bert De Munck, Steven Kaplan and Hugo Soly, ed., *Learning on the Shop Floor: Historical Perspectives on Apprenticeship* (New York: Berghahn, 2007).
- ⁴² Leslie Page Moch, *Moving Europeans: Migration in Western Europe Since 1650* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2003), 47, 49.
- ⁴³ Merry Wiesner, "Having Her Own Smoke. Employment and Independence for Singlewomen in Germany, 1400-1750," in *Singlewomen in the European Past, 1250-1800*, ed. Bennett and Froide, 206-207.
- ⁴⁴ Froide, *Never Married*, 25.
- ⁴⁵ Ariadne Schmidt, "Women and Guilds: Corporations and Female Labour Market Participation in Early Modern Holland," *Gender and History* 21,1 (2009): 170-89; Daniëlle van den Heuvel, "Guilds, Gender Policies and Economic Opportunities for Women in Early Modern Dutch Towns," in *Female Agency in the Urban Economy. Gender in European Towns, 1640-1830*, ed. Deborah Simonton and Anne Montenach (New York/London: Routledge, 2013), 129.
- ⁴⁶ Rafaëlla Sarti, "'All masters discourage the marrying of their male servants, and admit not by any means the marriage of the female': Domestic Service and Celibacy in Western Europe from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century," *European History Quarterly* 38,3 (2008): 417-49.
- ⁴⁷ Silvia Evangelisti, Margareth Lanzinger and Rafaëlla Sarti, "Introduction," *European History Quarterly* 38,3 (2008): 365-74, 368.
- ⁴⁸ Sandra Cavallo, "Bachelorhood and Masculinity in Renaissance and Early Modern Italy," *European History Quarterly* 38,3 (2008): 375-97, 388, 392.
- ⁴⁹ Froide, *Never Married*, 25-34; Manon van der Heijden and Ariadne Schmidt "Public Services and Women's Work in Early Modern Dutch Towns," *Journal of Urban History* 36,3 (2010): 368-86.
- ⁵⁰ Froide, *Never Married*, 128-41, esp. 136; Judith Spicksley, "Fly with a duck in thy mouth': Single Women as Sources of Credit in Seventeenth-Century England," *Social History* 32,2 (2007): 187-207.
- ⁵¹ Wiesner, "Having Her Own Smoke," 203-206; Froide, *Never Married*, 87-116; Monica Chojnacka, "Single Women in Early Modern Venice. Communities and Opportunities," in *Singlewomen in the European Past, 1250-1800*, ed. Bennett and Froide, 217-35; Van der Heijden and Schmidt, "Public Services and Women's Work in Early Modern Dutch Towns," 368-86.
- ⁵² Froide, *Never Married*, 114.
- ⁵³ Wiesner, "Having Her Own Smoke," 204; Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk, *Draad in eigen handen. Vrouwen en loonarbeid in de Nederlandse textielnijverheid, 1581-1810* (Amsterdam: Aksant Academic Publishers, 2007), 191-96.
- ⁵⁴ Lotte van de Pol, *Het Amsterdams hoerdom. Prostitutie in de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 1996), 102.
- ⁵⁵ Wiesner, "Having Her Own Smoke," 203.
- ⁵⁶ Lucassen and Willems, *Waarom mensen in de stad willen wonen*, 14.
- ⁵⁷ Van de Pol and Kuijpers, "Poor women's migration," 52, 54.

- ⁵⁸ Van de Pol and Kuijpers, "Poor women's migration," 56-57.
- ⁵⁹ Froide, *Never married*, 38-40.
- ⁶⁰ John Beattie, "The Criminality of Women in Eighteenth-Century England," *Journal of Social History*, 8 (1975):109.
- ⁶¹ Barbara Henkes, "Gedreven door nood of avonturenlust. Mobiliteit en respectabiliteit van jonge, ongehuwde vrouwen in de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw," *Gaan en Staan. Jaarboek voor Vrouwengeschiedenis* 21 (Amsterdam: Stichting Beheer IISG, 2001): 123-54, 243-44.
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