Introduction

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The Low Countries, a region comprising modern-day Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and parts of eastern Germany and northern France, offers a remarkable laboratory for the study of early modern religion, politics, and culture. Under the domain of the Hapsburg empire from 1482 and allocated to the Spanish crown when Holy Roman Emperor Charles V abdicated in 1555, the Low Countries were highly urbanized, literate, and cosmopolitan, and their cities were among the most important trade centers in Northern Europe. Following the publication of Luther's 98 theses in 1517 the region also proved fertile ground for the spread of Protestant ideas, which combined with local resentment of foreign rule culminated in rebellion against Spain in 1568. This marked the start of the Eighty Years War.¹ Philip II reestablished control over most of the Southern provinces around 1585 but neither he nor his successors were able to re-take the North. As war waged on for another six decades the South saw a wave of Catholic revival while Reformed evangelism flourished in the new Dutch Republic, entrenching a religious and political divide that slowly crushed the dreams of those hoping to reunite the Low Countries.² Following the War of the Spanish Succession, under the Treaty of Rastatt in 1714 the Southern provinces were transferred back to the Austrian Habsburg emperors, and both North and South underwent economic declines as they

- 1 See Jonathan Irvine Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477–1806* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Arie-Jan Gelderblom, Jan L. de Jong, and M. van Vaecck, eds., *The Low Countries as a Crossroads of Religious Beliefs* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2004); J. C. H. Blom and E. Lamberts, eds., *History of the Low Countries*. Translated by James C. Kennedy (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014); Alastair Duke and Judith Pollmann, "Reformations and Revolt in the Netherlands, 1500–1621" in *Oxford Bibliographies, Renaissance and Reformation* (<http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195399301/obo-9780195399301-0181.xml#firstMatch>); James D. Tracy, "With and Without the Counter-Reformation: The Catholic Church in the Spanish Netherlands and the Dutch Republic, 1580–1650, A Review of the Literature since 1945," in *The Low Countries in the Sixteenth Century: Erasmus, Religion and Politics, Trade and Finance*, ed. James D. Tracy (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2005), 547–575.
- 2 Judith Pollmann, *Catholic Identity and the Revolt of the Netherlands, 1520–1635* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Alastair Duke, *Reformation and Revolt in the Low Countries* (London: Hambledon, 2003); Peter J. Arnade, *Beggars, Iconoclasts, and Civic Patriots: The Political Culture of the Dutch Revolt* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

struggled with new political and economic realities.³ Yet throughout these centuries Low Countries inhabitants continued to consider themselves collectively ‘Nederlanders’ sharing common cultural roots and language (among the Dutch speakers of the Northern provinces and the two largest Southern provinces, Flanders and Brabant, at least), and they travelled easily across the border.⁴

Those cultural roots included attitudes towards women and gender that were among the more female-friendly in Western Europe and were exceptional in the degree to which they located women in the ‘masculine’ spheres of public space and business. The Italian humanist Ludovico Guicciardini, for example, remarked in 1567 on the ubiquitous presence of women in the Antwerp markets, condemning the practice of women buying and selling goods as corrupting to female virtue and recording his surprise that Antwerpians had no problem with the situation.⁵ The levels of education for girls, especially in the Duchy of Brabant, were markedly high, and legal statutes ensured that wives maintained certain property rights despite being under coverture and in Holland and Flanders gave single adult women the same contractual rights

- 3 See Israel, *The Dutch Republic*; Hervé Hasquin, *Oostenrijks België, 1713–1794: de Zuidelijke Nederlanden onder de Oostenrijkse Habsburgers* (Brussels: Gemeentekrediet, 1987); Jan Craeybeckx and F. G. Scheelings, *De Franse Revolutie en Vlaanderen: de Oostenrijkse Nederlanden tussen oud en nieuw regime/La Révolution française et la Flandre: les Pays-Bas autrichiens entre l'ancien et le nouveau régime* (Brussels: Vrije Universiteit Brussel Press, 1990).
- 4 For more details on Netherlands identities during our period, see Alastair Duke, “In Defence of the Common Fatherland. Patriotism and Liberty in the Low Countries, 1555–1576,” 217–239 and Judith Pollmann, “No Man's Land. Reinventing Netherlands Identities, 1585–1621,” 241–259 in Robert Stein and Judith Pollmann, *Networks, Regions and Nations Shaping Identities in the Low Countries, 1300–1650* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010); Andrew Pettegree, Alastair Duke, and Gillian Lewis, eds., *Calvinism in Europe, 1540–1620* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 175–197; Judith Pollmann, “‘Brabanters do fairly resemble Spaniards after all.’ Memory, Propaganda and Identity in the Twelve Years’ Truce,” in Alastair Duke, Judith Pollmann, and Andrew Spicer, *Public Opinion and Changing Identities in the Early Modern Netherlands: Essays in Honour of Alastair Duke* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 211–227; and Sarah Joan Moran, “‘The Right Hand of Pictura’s Perfection’: Cornelis de Bie’s Het Gulden Cabinet and Antwerp Art in the 1660s,” *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 64 (2014): 370–399. On mobility across the North/South boundary see Karolien de Clippel and Filip Vermeulen, “In Search of Netherlands Art: Cultural Transmission and Artistic Exchanges in the Low Countries, an Introduction,” *De zeventiende eeuw*, 31 (2015), 2–17.
- 5 Ludovico Guicciardini, *Descrittione di tutti i Paesi Bassi, altrimenti detti Germania inferiore* (Antwerp: Guglielmo Silvio, 1567), 54, 333; .Anon., *Le Mercure de la Gaule Belgique* (Cologne and Paris: 1682), 28–29; Peter Burke, “Antwerp, a Metropolis in Europe,” in *Antwerp, Story of a Metropolis: 16th–17th century*, ed. Jan van der Stock (Gent: Snoeck-Ducaju & Zoon, 1993), 61; D. Christopher Gabbard, “Gender Stereotyping in Early Modern Travel Writing on Holland,” *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 43 (2003).

and responsibilities as men.⁶ This is not to say that Low Countries women were not constricted by patriarchal norms (an issue which Howell discusses at length in her piece in this volume), but rather to point out that their range of activity was wider than historians often assume, and that their legal capacitation means that they are well-represented in Low Countries archives, where countless wills, contracts, legal proceedings, and testimonies offer traces of women's lives.

Because of its particular history, the Low Countries thus offers unique opportunities to investigate the impact of the dramatic religious and political shifts that shaped sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe while controlling – to some extent – for underlying cultural differences, as well as abundant sources for the study of early modern women. The present interdisciplinary volume

6 For education, see Eddy Put, *De cleijne scholen: Het volksonderwijs in het hertogdom Brabant tussen Katholieke Reformatie en verlichting, eind 16de eeuw – 1795* (Leuven: University of Leuven, 1990); Maurits De Vroede, *Meesters en meesteressen: Een sociale geschiedenis van de leerkrachten lager onderwijs in België*, 3 vols., vol. 1. Het Ancien Régime (Leuven: University of Leuven, 1999); Lodewijk Jozef Maria Philippen, *Het volksonderwijs in onze middeleeuwse steden inzonderheid te Antwerpen 1200–1563*, Verhandelingen van de Algemeene katholieke Vlaamsche hoogeschooluitbreiding (Antwerp: Kiliaan, 1920); De Vroede, *Religieuses et béguines enseignantes dans les Pays-Bas méridionaux et la principauté de Liège aux XVII^e–XVIII^e siècles*, vol. 20, *Studia paedagogica*, nieuwe reeks (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996); Tine de Moor and Jan Luiten Van Zanden, “Every Woman Counts: A Gender-Analysis of Numeracy in the Low Countries during the Early Modern Period,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 41, no. 2 (2010); Tine de Moor and Jan Luiten van Zanden, “Girl power: The European marriage pattern and labour markets in the North Sea region in the late medieval and early modern period,” *The Economic History Review* 63, no. 1 (2010); Marc Boone, Thérèse de Hemptinne, and Walter Prevenier, “Gender and Early Emancipation in the Low Countries in the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern Period,” in *Gender, Power and Privilege in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Jessica Munns and Penny Richards (New York: Routledge, 2014), 25; Erika Kuijpers, “Lezen en schrijven. Onderzoek naar het alfabetiseringsniveau in zeventiende eeuws Amsterdam,” *Tijdschrift voor sociale geschiedenis* 23 (1997): 490–522, see especially p. 507.

Women's property and contractual rights were set out in the inheritance, marriage and property statutes published in the *Coutumes* for various cities and provinces, many of which are now available online. In addition to the texts by De Moor and Van Zanden above, secondary sources include John Gilissen, *Le statut de la femme dans l'ancien droit belge*, vol. 12, *Recueils de la Société Jean Bodin pour l'histoire comparative des institutions* (Brussels: Éditions de la librairie encyclopédique, 1962), 255–57; Laura Van Aert, “Tussen norm en praktijk. Een terreinverkenning over het juridische statuut van vrouwen in het 16de-eeuwse Antwerpen,” *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis* 2, no. 3 (2005): 22–42; Moran, “Bringing the Counter-Reformation Home: The Domestic Use of Artworks at the Antwerp Beguinage in the Seventeenth Century,” *Simiolus* 38, no. 3 (2016): 144–158; Ariadne Schmidt, “Generous Provisions or Legitimate Shares? Widows and the Transfer of Property in 17th-century Holland,” *The History of the Family* 15, no. 1 (2010): 13–24.

aims to activate, for the first time, both of these advantages for historical research by bringing together studies that address women's experiences within social hierarchies, as family members, before the law, and as authors, artists, and patrons, as well as the formulation and shaping of gendered discourse in art and literature across the North/South divide. In addition to presenting new insights on women and gender in studies that stem from several historical sub-fields, including religious, social, art, and literary history, and highlighting the importance of the region for the international debates on women's history, the editors hope that this volume makes some headway in closing some of the current clefts that exist between researchers in the Netherlands and in Belgium so that both sides may better benefit from each other's work.

1 The Historiographical Landscape

The historical scholarship on the Low Countries before the Revolt covering the period from the rapid urbanization in the High Middle Ages through the first half of the sixteenth century constitutes a varied and dynamic body of literature, in which Dutch, Belgian, and international scholars engage in vibrant discussions. Prominent within this research are studies of women, in particular nuns, beguines and mystics, as well as laywomen and their roles in the social fabric of cities. Among the most comprehensive and impactful of these are Martha Howell's 1998 *The Marriage Exchange: Property, Social Place, and Gender in Cities of the Low Countries, 1300–1550*, Walter Simons's *Beguine Communities in the Medieval Low Countries, 1200–1565* of 2001, *The Texture of Society: Medieval Women in the Southern Low Countries* (edited by Ellen E. Kittel and Mary A. Suydam, 2004), and Shennan Hutton's recent (2016) *Women and Economic Activities in Late Medieval Ghent*.⁷ Also important within this

7 Other examples include Wybren Scheepsma, "Mystical Networks in the Middle Ages? On the First Women Writers in Dutch and their Literary Contacts, in *"I Have Heard about You": Foreign Women's Writing Crossing the Dutch Border: From Sappho to Selma Lagerlöf*, edited by Suzan van Dijk (Hilversum, The Netherlands: Verloren, 2004), Wybren Scheepsma, *Medieval Religious Women in the Low Countries. The Modern Devotion, the Canonesses of Windesheim, and Their Writings* (Woodbridge, England: Boydell Press, 2004), 2–16, Patricia Stoop, "Sermon-Writing Women Fifteenth-Century Vernacular Sermons from the Augustinian Convent of Jericho in Brussels," *Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures*, 38, no. 2 (2012), Thom Mertens, "Ghostwriting Sisters. The Preservation of Dutch Sermons of Father Confessors in the Fifteenth and the Early Sixteenth Century," in *Seeing and Knowing: Women and Learning in Medieval Europe 1200–1500*, ed. Anneke Mulder-Bakker (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), Jan Van Gerven, "Vrouwen, arbeid en sociale positie. Een voorlopig onderzoek naar

literature is work on the three women regents who governed the Low Countries under their Habsburg emperors for nearly all of the sixteenth century leading up to the Revolt: Margaret of Austria (governed 1507–1515, 1519–1530), Mary of Hungary (g. 1531–1555), and Margaret of Parma (g. 1559–1567). The first two have been celebrated in major exhibitions, with catalogues published in several languages, and all have been the subject of books and articles.⁸

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- de economische rol en maatschappelijke positie van vrouwen in de Brabantse steden in de late Middeleeuwen." *Revue belge de Philologie et d'Histoire* 73, no. 4 (1995); Ariane Tierssoone, "Vrouwen, criminaliteit en vrouwencriminaliteit in Antwerpen in de vijftiende en zestiende eeuw" (MA (licentiaat) thesis, University of Ghent, 1998); Jan van Gerven, "Vrouwen, arbeid en sociale positie. Een voorlopig onderzoek naar de economische rol en maatschappelijke positie van vrouwen in de Brabantse steden in de late middeleeuwen," *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 73 (1995): 947–966; and the voluminous literature on the poet Anna Bijns (a few examples: Kessler, Judith. *Princesse der rederijkers: Het oeuvre van Anna Bijns* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2013); Herman Pleij, *Anna Bijns, van Antwerpen* (Amsterdam: Bakker, 2011); Judith Pollmann, "'Each Should Tend His Own Garden': Anna Bijns and the Catholic Polemic against the Reformation," *Church History and Religious Culture* 87, no. 1 (2007). Also useful, though not focused on women, are studies of economic and social structure such as Bas van Bavel's, *Manors and Markets: Economy and Society in the Low Countries, 500–1600* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).
- 8 The exhibition catalogs are Dagmar Eichberger and Yvonne Bleyerveld, eds., *Women of Distinction: Margaret of York, Margaret of Austria* (Leuven: Davidsfonds, 2005); Réthelyi, Orsolya, ed. *Mary of Hungary: The Queen and her Court 1521–1531* (Budapest: Budapest History Museum, 2005); and Bertrand Federinov and Gilles Docquier, eds., *Marie de Hongrie: Politique et culture sous la Renaissance aux Pays-Bas* (Morlanwelz-Mariemont: Musée Royal de Mariemont, 2008). See also Eleanor E. Tremayne, *The First Governess of the Netherlands: Margaret of Austria*, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, and London: Methuene, 1908); Jongh, Jane de. *Mary of Hungary: Second Regent of the Netherlands* (London: Faber & Faber, 1959); Charlie R. Steen, *Margaret of Parma: A Life* (Leiden: Brill, 2013); Massimo Sargiacomo, "Accounting and the 'Art of Government': Margaret of Austria in Abruzzo (1539–86)," *European Accounting Review* 17, no. 4 (2008); Krista De Jonge, "A Model Court Architect: Mary of Hungary and Jacques Du Broeucq (1545–1556)," in *Sponsors of the Past: Flemish Art and Patronage 1550–1700*, edited by Hans Vlieghe and Katlijne Van Der Stighelen (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005); Seishiro Niwa, "'Madama' Margaret of Parma's Patronage of Music," *Early Music* 33, no. 1 (2005); Lorraine Attreed, "Gender, Patronage, and Diplomacy in the Early Career of Margaret of Austria (1480–1530)," *Mediterranean Studies* 20, no. 1 (2012); Xander van Eck, "Margaret of Parma's Gift of a Window to St John's in Gouda and the Art of the Early Counter-reformation in the Low Countries," *Simiolus* 30, no. 1 (2012); Dagmar Eichberger and Lisa Beaven, "Family Members and Political Allies: The Portrait Collection of Margaret of Austria," *The Art Bulletin* 77, no. 2 (1995); Deanna MacDonald, "Collecting a New World: The Ethnographic Collections of Margaret of Austria," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 33, no. 3 (2002); Andrea Pearson, "Personal Worship, Gender, and the Devotional Portrait Diptych," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 31, no. 1, Special Edition: Gender in Early Modern Europe (2000), and "Margaret of Austria's Devotional Portrait Diptychs," *Woman's Art Journal* 22, no. 2 (2002).

But from the mid-sixteenth century onwards the scholarship begins to diverge, with work on the early modern Northern Low Countries typically done by Dutch scholars and work on the South by Belgians. They tend to operate within separate scholarly spheres (though there are important exceptions), and trends in early modern studies, and of women within that framework, have thus evolved fairly independently on either side of the border. Furthermore, among the foreign early modernists who study the region – and have the language skills to both research in Dutch sources and publish in English for a broader audience – far more gravitate towards the independent, Protestant Northern United Provinces than the Spanish-controlled Catholic South. The North is thus better known internationally, while a language barrier has reduced opportunities for methodological cross-pollination in the study of the South. We here sketch out the broad trends and lacunae in the scholarship as it relates to women and gender on each side of the border.

2 Studying Early Modern Women and Gender in the Northern Low Countries

On the Northern side scholarship on women has taken off in the last twenty years among both Dutch and American scholars, who have highlighted women's ability to engage in the public sphere in skilled economic production and trade, as wives of regents and as regentesses of institutions that helped take care of the sick, needy, and elderly, and by circulating their literary and artistic works.⁹ Much research has also been dedicated to Dutch women's legal status

9 For women in production and trades see Martha Howell, *Women, Production, and Patriarchy in Late Medieval Cities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); Els Kloek, "Vrouwenarbeide aan banden gelegd? De arbeidsdeling naar sekse volgens de keurboeken van de oude draperie, ca. 1380–1580" in *Wie hij zij, man of wijf. Vrouwengeschiedenis en de vroegmoderne tijd: Drie Leidse studies* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1990), 48–77; Ariadne Schmidt, "Zelfstandig en bevoogd: speelruimte van vrouwen rond 1650," *Tijdschrift Voor Sociale Geschiedenis* 29 (2003): 28–34; Van den Heuvel, *Women and Entrepreneurship*; Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk, *De draad in eigen handen: vrouwen en loonarbeid in de Nederlandse textielnijverheid, 1581–1810* (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2007); Schmidt, "Gilden en de toegang van vrouwen tot de arbeidsmarkt in Holland in de vroegmoderne tijd" *De zeventiende eeuw* 23 (2007): 161–178.

For regents' wives and regentesses see: Judith Hokke, "Mijn Alderliefste Jantielief," *Vrouw En Gezin in de Republiek: Regentenvrouwen En Hun Relaties*," in *Vrouwenlevens 1500–1850*, edited by Ulla Jansz, Annemarie de Wildt, Mirjam de Baar, Francisca de Haan, Dineke Stam, Lilian de Bruijn, and Fia Dieteren (Nijmegen: SUN, 1987), 45–73; Michiel Jonker, "Public or

and position within marriage,¹⁰ and women and their labor have been highlighted within broader popular historical narratives about Dutch identity as rooted in the emergence of capitalism.¹¹ We know that poorer Dutch women struggled to provide for their households, some times turning to prostitution,

Private Portraits: Group Portraits of Amsterdam Regents and Regentesses,” in *The Public and Private in Dutch Culture of the Golden Age*. Ed. by Arthur K. Wheelock and Adele Seeff, 206–226; Petrus Cornelis Spierenburg, *The Prison Experience: Disciplinary Institutions and Their Inmates in Early Modern Europe* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007).

For an overview of literary women see: Riet Schenkeveld-van der Dussen and K. Porteman, *Met en zonder lauwerkrans: schrijvende vrouwen uit de vroegmoderne tijd 1550–1850: van Anna Bijns tot Elise van Calcar: teksten met inleiding en commentaar* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1997); Lia van Gemert, Myra J. Heerspink Scholz, and Paul Vincent, *Women's writing from the Low Countries 1200–1875: a bilingual anthology* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010); Annelies de Jeu, *'t spoor der dichters: netwerken en publicatiemogelijkheden van schrijvende vrouwen in de Republiek (1600–1750)* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2000). See also the Digitaal Vrouwenlexicon van Nederland (<http://resources.huuygens.knaw.nl/bwm1880-2000/DVN>) and Women Writers' Networks (http://www.womenwriters.nl/index.php/Women_writers%27_networks). Martine van Elk, *Early Modern Women's Writing: Domesticity, Privacy, and the Public Sphere in England and the Dutch Republic* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, Springer International Publishing AG, 2017).

- 10 Alice Clare Carter, “Marriage Counseling in the Early Seventeenth Century: England and the Netherlands Compared,” in *Ten Studies in Anglo-Dutch Relations*, ed. Jan A. van Dorsten (Leiden; London: Oxford University Press, 1974); Donald Haks, *Huwelijk en Gezin in Holland in de 17de en 18de eeuw* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1982); Manon van der Heijden, *Huwelijk in Holland: stedelijk rechtspraak en kerkelijk tucht, 1550–1700* (Amsterdam: B. Bakker, 1998); Sherrin Marshall, *The Dutch Gentry, 1500–1650: Family, Faith, and Fortune* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987); Julia Adams, *The Familial State: Ruling Families and Merchant Capitalism in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005); Ariadne Schmidt, “Gelijk hebben, gelijk krijgen? Vrouwen en vertrouwen in het recht in Holland in de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw,” in *Het Gelijk van de Gouden Eeuw. Recht, onrecht en reputatie in de vroegmoderne Nederlanden*, eds. Michiel van Groesen, Pollmann, and Hans Cools (Hilversum: Verloren, 2014); Manon Van der Heijden, “Marriage formation: law and custom in the Low Countries, 1500–1700” in Silvana Seidel Menchi and Emlyn Eisenach, eds., *Marriage in Europe, 1400–1800* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016).
- 11 See Tine de Moor and Jan. L. van Zanden, *Vrouwen en de geboorte van het kapitalisme in West-Europa* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2006); Marjolein van Dekken, *Brouwen, branden en bedienen: productie en verkoop van drank door vrouwen in de Noordelijke Nederlanden, circa 1500–1800* (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2010); Danielle van den Heuvel, *Women and Entrepreneurship. Female Traders in the Northern Netherlands, c. 1580–1815* (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2007).

cross-dressing as men, or other criminal activity.¹² Some of those marginalized faced accusations of witchcraft and prior to 1609 possibly execution.¹³

Representations of women have also featured prominently in Dutch art history, owing in part to the seventeenth-century popularity of the painted domestic interiors and satirical genre scenes that prominently feature wives and female servants at work and at leisure. It is now a commonplace in the field that the women in these images played moralizing roles, standing either for the virtue of a well-run household and orderly Dutch society in general, or the dangers of moral corruption.¹⁴ Art historians including our contributors Diane Wolfthal and Martha Moffitt Peacock have further examined the impacts that violent or heroic images of women had on women's and men's everyday lives.¹⁵

- 12 Marybeth Carlson, "Domestic Service in a Changing City Economy: Rotterdam, 1680–1780," (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 1993); Manon Van der Heijden and Danielle van den Heuvel, "Sailors' Families and the Urban Institutional Framework in Early Modern Holland," *The History of the Family* 12 (2007), and "Broken Families: Economic Resources and Social Networks of Women Who Head Families," *The History of the Family* 12 (2007): 223–32; Lotte van de Pol, *Het Amsterdams hoerdom: prostitutie in de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 1996); Rudolf Dekker and Van de Pol, *Daar was laatst een meisje loos: Nederlandse vrouwen als matrozen en soldaten: een historisch onderzoek* (Baarn: Ambo, 1981); Kloek, "Criminaliteit en sekse in de confessieboeken, 1678–1794" in *Wie hij zij, man of wijf, 122–158*; Peacock, "The Amsterdam Spinhuis and the 'Art' of Correction" in *Crime and Punishment in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age: Mental-Historical Investigations of Basic Human Problems and Social Responses*, eds., Albrecht Classen and Connie L. Scarborough (Berlin; Boston: de Gruyter, 2012); Van der Heijden, *Misdadige vrouwen: criminaliteit en rechtspraak in Holland 1600–1800* (Amsterdam: Prometheus Bert Bakker, 2014).
- 13 Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra and Willem Frijhoff, *Witchcraft in the Netherlands: From the Fourteenth to the Twentieth Century* (Rotterdam: Universitaire Pers, 1991); Brian P. Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2013), 280. For depictions of witches in Dutch art see: Claudia Swan, *Art, Science, and Witchcraft in Early Modern Holland: Jacques de Gheyn II (1565–1629)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Linda C. Hults, *The Witch as Muse: Art, Gender, and Power in Early Modern Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).
- 14 See for example Mariët Westermann, *A Worldly Art: The Dutch Republic, 1585–1718* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), and Wayne E. Franits, *Paragons of Virtue: Women and Domesticity in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). For the depiction of wives in portraiture see Eddy de Jongh, *Portretten van echt en trouw: huwelijk en gezin in de Nederlandse kunst van de zeventiende eeuw* (Zwolle; Haarlem: Waanders; Frans Halsmuseum, 1986).
- 15 Martha Moffitt Peacock, "Out of the Kitchen and into the Fire: The Dutch Heroine Tradition," in *War and Peace Critical Issues in European Societies and Literature 800–1800*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011); Diane Wolfthal, *Images of Rape: The Heroic Tradition and Its Alternatives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Marike Meijer Drees, "Vaderlandse heldinnen in belegeringstoneelstukken," *De nieuwe taalguides*

Women artists also figure in the Dutch art-historiography, and a good overview is offered in three volumes from the late 1990s: *Vrouwen en kunst in de republiek* (1998, edited by Els Kloek, Catherine Peters Sengers, and Esther Tobé), which focuses on Northern women, and two anthology-style catalogs that include both women artists from both North and South (*Oude meesteressen: Vrouwelijke kunstnaars in de Nederlanden*, edited by Leen Huet and Jan Grieten, 1998, and *Elck zijn waerom. Vrouwelijke kunstenaars in België en Nederland 1500–1950/À chacun sa grâce: femmes artistes en Belgique et aux Pays-Bas 1500–1950*, edited by Katlijne Van der Stighelen, Mirjam Westen, and Maaïke Meijer, 1999). Exhibitions have also been dedicated to the portrait and genre painter Judith Leyster and to Maria Sibylla Merian, the most important producer of entomological illustrations in the seventeenth century.¹⁶ Literary historians have also highlighted women writers, most prominently the illustrious Anna Maria van Schurman,¹⁷ and some, including our volume's contributor Martine van Elk, have also underscored Dutch women's international connections throughout the supra-national Republic of Letters.¹⁸ Others have

85, no. 1 (1992), 71–82; Elizabeth Alice Honig, "Desire and Domestic Economy," *The Art Bulletin* 83 (2001).

- 16 For artists see Frima Fox Hofrichter *Judith Leyster: A Woman Painter in Holland's Golden Age* (Doornspijk, The Netherlands: Davaco, 1989); James A. Welu and P. Biesboer, *Judith Leyster: A Dutch Master and her World* (Zwolle; New Haven: Waanders Publishers; Yale University Press, 1993); Kim Todd, *Chrysalis: Maria Sibylla Merian and the Secrets of Metamorphosis* (London; New York: I. B. Tauris, 2007); Ella Reitsma, and Sandrine A. Ulenberg, *Maria Sibylla Merian & Daughters: Women of Art and Science* (Amsterdam; Los Angeles; Zwolle: Rembrandt House Museum; J. Paul Getty Museum; Waanders, 2008); as well as Martha Moffitt Peacock, "Geertruydt Roghman and the Female Perspective in 17th-Century Dutch Genre Imagery," *Woman's Art Journal* 14 (1993): 3–10; and "Paper as Power. Carving a Niche for the Female Artist in the Work of Joanna Koerten," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 62 (2012): 238–65.
- 17 Two books focused on Van Schurman's intellectual networks are Pieta van Beek, *The First Female University Student: Anna Maria van Schurman (1636)* (Utrecht: Igitur, 2010) and Anne R. Larsen, *Anna Maria van Schurman, "The Star of Utrecht: The Educational Vision and Reception of a Savante"* (New York: Routledge, 2016).
- 18 Martine Van Elk, "Courtliness, piety, and politics: emblem books by Georgette de Montenay, Anna Roemers Visscher, and Esther Inglis" in Julie D. Campbell and Anne R. Larsen, eds., *Early Modern Women and Transnational Communities of Letters* (Farnham, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009); See also Suzanna van Dijk and Jo Nesbitt, eds., *I Have Heard about You: Foreign Women's Writing Crossing the Dutch Border: From Sappho to Selma Lagerlöf* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2004); Annemarie Armbrust, Marguërite Corporaal, and Marjolein van Dekken, eds., *"Dat gy mij niet vergeet": correspondentie van vrouwen in de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2006); Nina Geerdink, "The Appropriation of the Genre of Nuptial Poetry by Katharina Lescailje (1649–1711)" in Anke Gilleir, Alicia Montoya, and Suzanna van Dijk, eds., *Women Writing Back/Transnational Perspectives from the Late Middle Ages to the Dawn of the Modern Era* (Leiden; Boston: Brill,

noted that cultural understandings of gender and influencing contemporaries to disproportionately blame and punish women for unchastity, adultery, and even rape.¹⁹

In spite of these many important studies, large clefts remain. As is also true for the South, we know little about Northern women's cultural activities and patronage, which are often attributed to husbands, fathers, and sons. Historian Susan Broomhall has made important first steps by studying the roles of Orange-Nassau women in dynastic expansion, in architectural and horticultural design, curiosity cabinets, gift-giving, letter exchange, art, and ritual, and some work has been done on Amalia van Solms as a patron, but women of the social strata below the court have been largely ignored.²⁰ In addition women's historians, energized by the opportunity to demonstrate women's expanded roles in a Dutch Republic renowned for its tolerant and secular outlook, have proved less interested in the study of women's religious activities there.²¹ Although many recognize that there were far more women

2010); Martine Van Elk, "True Fire, Noble Flame: Friendship Poetry by Katharina Lescaijle, Cornelia van der Veer, and Katherine Philips," *Early Modern Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 7 (2012).

- 19 See for instance Els Kloek, Nicole Teeuwen, and Marijke Huisman, eds., *Women of the Golden Age: An International Debate on Women in Seventeenth-Century Holland, England and Italy* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1994), and *Wie hij zij, man of wijf*, cited above; Manon van der Heijden, "Women as Victims of Sexual and Domestic Violence in Seventeenth-Century Holland: Criminal Cases of Rape, Incest, and Maltreatment in Rotterdam and Delft," *Journal of Social History* 33 (2000), 623–44; Amanda Pipkin, *Rape in the Republic, 1609–1725: Formulating Dutch Identity* (Leiden: Brill, 2013); A. Agnes Sneller, *Met man en macht: analyse en interpretatie van teksten van en over vrouwen in de vroegmoderne tijd* (Kampen: Kok Agora, 1996).
- 20 Susan Broomhall and Jacqueline van Gent, *Dynastic Colonialism: Gender, Materiality and the Early Modern House of Orange-Nassau*, 2016; Susan Broomhall, "Letters Make the Family: Nassau Family Correspondence at the Turn of the Seventeenth Century" in *Early Modern Women and Transnational Communities of Letters*, Campbell and Larsen, eds. (Farnham, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 25–44, and "Memorializing Grief in Familial and national narratives of Dutch identity (73–98)" in *Early Modern Women in the Low Countries: Feminizing Sources and Interpretations of the Past*, eds. Broomhall and Jennifer Spinks (Farnham, Surrey; Burlington, VT.: Ashgate, 2011); Keblusek, Marika, and Jori Zijlmans, eds. *Princely Display: The Court of Frederik Hendrik of Orange and Amalia van Solms* (The Hague; Zwolle: Historical Museum; Waanders, 1997); Beranek, Saskia. "Power of the Portrait: Production, Consumption and Display of Portraits of Amalia van Solms in the Dutch Republic," PhD dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 2013.
- 21 For an overview of women's involvement in a variety of faiths in the Northern Netherlands see: Carlson, "In and Out of the Public Church in the Dutch Republic" in *Women and Religion in Old and New Worlds* eds. Susan E. Dinan and Debra Meyers (New York: Routledge, 2001), 115–134. For Reformed women see Liesbeth Geudeke, "Positie van vrouwen in de gereformeerde kerk, 1566–1650," in *Vrome vrouwen: betekenissen van geloof voor vrouwen*

members of the Dutch Reformed Church than men, there is no overview of its female members for the period after 1572.²² The few scholars engaged with the history of religious Dutch women have tended to focus attention on Van Schurman and other women who joined sectarian Protestant movements that seemed to have offered women greater opportunities for leadership than the Reformed Church.²³ And although the Catholic Spiritual virgins living in the Dutch Republic have been the subject of a monograph more research on

in de geschiedenis. Mirjam Cornelis and Fred van Lieburg (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 1996), 67–86; for Pietists, Elizabeth Bouldin, “‘A Good Martha?’ Female Leadership and Domestic Life in Radical Pietistic Communities,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 22 (2018): 28–48. See also the work of religious historians Van Lieburg and W. J. op ‘t Hof including Van Lieburg, *Living for God*, (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2006); Op ‘t Hof, “De Sluise Dienstmaagd Barbara Jobs in Het Licht van Haar Testamenten,” *Bijdragen Tot De Geschiedenis van West-Zeeuws-Vlaanderen* 30 (2002): 79–104; Op ‘t Hof, “Martha Greendon, de vrouw van Willem Teellinck en zijn visie op de vrouw,” *Documentatieblad Nadere Reformatie* 31 (2007): 131–143.

22 See for instance, Arie Theodorus Van Deursen, *Plain Lives in a Golden Age: Popular Culture, Religion and Society in Seventeenth-Century Holland*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 262–3, and Maarten Roy Prak, *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century*. Translated by Diane Webb (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 209–210.

23 For a consideration of Van Schurman's choice to reject the public Church of the Netherlands for the separatist community of Jean de Labadie see: S. van der Linde, “Anna Maria van Schurman En Haar Eucleria,” *Theologia Reformata* 21 (1978): 117–44; Anne-Marie Korte, *Een gemeenschap waarin te geloven valt* (University of Nijmegen, 1985); Miriam de Baar, “‘En onder ‘t haantje zoekt te blijven.’ De betrokkenheid van vrouwen bij het huisgezin van Jean de Labadie (1669–1732),” in *Vrouwenlevens 1500–1850*, ed. Ulla Jansz, Annemarie de Wildt, De Baar, Francisca de Haan, Dineke Stam, Lilian de Bruijn, and Fia Dieteren (Nijmegen: SUN, 1987), 11–43; Van Beek, *The First Female University Student*; Van Beek and Joris Bürmann, *Ex libris: de bibliotheek van Anna Maria van Schurman en de catalogi van de Labadistenbibliotheek* (Ridderkerk: Provily Pers, 2016). For a comparison of Van Schurman with the orthodox Sara Nevius, “heretic” Grietje van Dijk, and Gent native and separatist, Antoinette de Bourignon see: De Baar, “t en is geen vrouwenwerck te spreken in de kerck. Vrouwen En Religie in de Zeventiende-Eeuwse Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden,” *DinaMiek: Vrouwengeschiedenis Krant* 5 (1988); De Baar, “Van kerk naar sekte: Sara Nevius, Grietje van Dijk en Anna Maria van Schurman,” *De zeventiende eeuw* 7 (1991). For other, non-Reformed, Protestant women see: Joke Spaans, “Negenenveertig Haarlemse Mirjams. Over het aandeel van vrouwen in de moeilijkheden rondom de lutherse predikant Conrad Vieter,” *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis* 67 (1987); De Baar, *Ik moet spreken: het spiritueel leiderschap van Antoinette Bourignon (1616–1680)* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2004); H. Joldersma, H. and L. P. Grijp, *Elisabeth's Manly Courage. Testimonials and Songs of Martyred Anabaptist Women in the Low Countries* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2001).

them is needed, and the experiences of other lay Catholic women in the Dutch Republic are much less well studied.²⁴

Scholarship on early modern English women provides a model for expanding in this area. For instance, since many early modern women circulated their works in manuscript rather than as printed publications, there is a dire need for research identifying and studying women's works among Low Countries examples as has been done for the English scene.²⁵ We also need to rethink the audience for books, especially considering the high rate of literacy among women. Is it possible to demonstrate that many books once thought to have been written for men were for women, as Margaret Ezell has shown is true for many popular English advice books?²⁶ Dutch literary scholars have furthermore identified a handful of political commentaries by women, but due to a traditional understanding of what constitutes political power and the fact that women's political texts often took untraditional forms, these have been undervalued these as 'merely' devotional works or poetry.²⁷ We therefore lack a

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- 24 See Maurit Monteiro, *Geestelijke maagden: leven tussen klooster en wereld in Noord-Nederland gedurende de zeventiende eeuw* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1996); Paul P. W. M. Dirkse, *Begijnen, pastoors en predikanten: religie en kunst in de Gouden Eeuw* (Leiden: Primavera, 2001); Carlson, "In and Out of the Public Church in the Dutch Republic, 125–128; Pollmann, "The Low Countries," 80–101 in *Palgrave Advances in the European Reformations* ed. Alec Ryrie (Basingstoke, England; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). Charles H. Parker, *Faith on the Margins: Catholics and Catholicism in the Dutch Golden Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008).
- 25 For the study of English women's manuscripts, scholars can access Elizabeth Clark's Perdita Project, which contains information about 230 digitized manuscripts, and two anthologies of manuscripts edited by Jill Seal Millman and Gilliam Wright and by Helen Ostovich and Elizabeth Sauer. There are also books on manuscript culture and circulation including: Victoria Burke and Jonathan Gibson, *Early Modern Women's Manuscript Writing* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004) and Margaret Ezell, *Social Authorship and the Advent of Print* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999). For more on this see Mihoko Suzuki, *The History of British Women's Writing. Volume 3* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 13–14.
- 26 Ezell, "Never Boring, or Imagine My Surprise: Interregnum Women and the Culture of Reading" in *Imagining Selves: Essays in Honor of Patricia Meyer Spacks* eds. Rivka Swenson, Elise Lauterbach, and Patricia Meyer Spacks (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008), 155–169. For more examples of literacy studies see Suzuki, 13–14.
- 27 See Schenkenveld-van der Dussen's anthology. See also: Van Gemert, "Vijf Vrouwen over Oorlog En Vrede," *Historica* 21 (1998): 7–9; Nina Geerdink, "Lijkdichten bij de dood van Maria Stuart (1695) door mannen en vrouwen: rouw om een 'cieraat groter vrouwen,'" *Historica* 32, no. 1 (2009): 3–5; Geerdink, "Cultural Marketing of William III: A Religious Turn in Katharina Lescailje's Political Poetry," *Dutch Crossing: Journal of Low Countries Studies* 34, no. 1 (2010): 25–41.

comprehensive investigation of Dutch women's political writings.²⁸ There is a wealth of as yet untapped material for further study on these topics in the archives and libraries of the Low Countries.

3 Studying Early Modern Women and Gender in the Southern Low Countries

Within the international debates on early modern women and gender the Southern Low Countries are far less well-represented than are the Northern – at least for the period beginning with the Dutch Revolt in the 1560s. This is due in part to the language issues and relative lack of interest from foreign scholars mentioned above but also to the fact that much of the Belgian research on early modern women has been published in small runs and local journals that can be difficult to access outside of the country.

In contrast to the Dutch situation, the largest subset of scholarship on Southern women deals with their religious participation. This stems largely from a long-standing tradition of Catholic institutional history (now largely continued by archivists) that counts comprehensive studies of monastic orders and individual communities, as well as local congregations, as fundamental.²⁹ These texts often span the entire lifespan of the order or religious house in question, and thus provide a wealth of valuable information on the lives of early modern nuns, lay sisters, Beguines, and 'spiritual daughters,' and they are excellent sources for researchers, but again have had low visibility and are largely unreferenced in the vibrant international debates around early modern Catholic women. Foreign scholars instead tend to be familiar with Craig Harline's *The Burdens*

28 Useful models are Hilda L. Smith, Mihoko Suzuki, and Susan Wiseman, *Women's Political Writings, 1610–1725* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2007); Jacqueline Broad and Karen Green, *A History of Women's Political Thought in Europe, 1400–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

29 The studies are far too numerous to name here, but the most comprehensive are the *Monasticon* volumes published by the State Archives in Brussels, which are organized both geographically and by order and congregation, and Pascal Majérus, *Ces femmes qu'on dit béguines ... Guide des béguinages de Belgique. Bibliographie et sources d'archives*. Introduction bibliographique à l'histoire des couvents belges antérieure à 1796, 9 (Brussels: Archives générales du royaume et archives de l'État dans les provinces, 1997); Maurits de Vroede, *Religieuses et béguines enseignantes dans les Pays-Bas méridionaux et la principauté de Liège aux XVII^e–XVIII^e siècles*. Studia paedagogica, nieuwe reeks, 20 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996), and 'Kwezels' en 'zusters.' *De geestelijke dochters in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden* (Brussels: Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België, 1994).

of *Sister Margaret* (1994) and several studies of the English 'exile' convents who settled in the Low Countries in the wake of the Reformation; just a few well-circulated articles in English have addressed other monastic and semi-monastic communities.³⁰ More impactful have been Paul Vandenbroeck's 1994 exhibition catalog on artworks made for monastic and semi-monastic women (*Hooglied. De beeldwereld van religieuze vrouwen in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden vanaf de 13e eeuw/Le Jardin clos de l'âme: l'imaginaire des religieuses dans les Pays-Bas du Sud, depuis le 13e siècle*) and the volume published in 2001 to mark the occasion of thirteen of the Belgian Court Beguinages being named UNESCO World Heritage sites (*Vlaamse begijnhoven: werelderfgoed/Les Béguinages de Flandre: un patrimoine mondial*, edited by Suzanne van Aerschot and Michiel Heirman).

The archduchess Infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia, who governed the Southern Low Countries from 1598 to 1631 (jointly with her husband Albert until his death in 1621) is, like her Hapsburg women predecessors, certainly the most well-studied individual woman of her age in this region, though quite a bit of work on her remains to be done.³¹ Other laywomen have received very little attention. We lack the kinds of monographs on their experiences of marriage, economic activities, and social roles that we see for the pre-Revolt period and for the Dutch Republic. This is rather curious, for the history departments of the universities of Antwerp, Leuven, and Ghent all have multiple senior early modern scholars whose work currently drives a remarkably strong tradition of local economic and social history. But while a number of these researchers

30 On the English nuns see Laurence Lux-Sterritt, *English Benedictine Nuns in Exile in the Seventeenth Century: Living Spirituality* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017); Claire Walker, *Gender and Politics in Early Modern Europe: English Convents in France and the Low Countries* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003); Caroline Bowden, *The Chronicles of Nazareth (The English Convent), Bruges. 1629–1793* (London: Catholic Record Society, 2017). For other communities see Cordula van Wyhe, "Piety and Politics in the Royal Convent of Discalced Carmelite Nuns in Brussels 1607–1646," *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 100, no. 1 (2005): 457–87, and several articles by Moran on the Beguines as well as her forthcoming *Visual Culture at the Court Beguinages of the Hapsburg Low Countries: Unconventional Women, 1585–1794* (Amsterdam University Press, expected for late 2018).

31 See Werner Thomas and Luc Duerloo, eds., *Albert & Isabella, 1598–1621*, 2 vols. (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998); Cordula van Wyhe, ed., *Isabel Clara Eugenia: Female Sovereignty in the Courts of Madrid and Brussels* (Madrid; London: Centro de Estudios Europa Hispanica; Paul Holberton, 2011), and "Piety and Politics in the Royal Convent of Discalced Carmelite Nuns in Brussels 1607–1646" (cited above); Birgit Houben and Dries Raeymaekers, "Women and the Politics of Access at the Court of Brussels: The Infanta Isabella's Camareras Mayores (1598–1633)," in *The Politics of Female Households: Ladies-in-Waiting Across Early Modern Europe*, edited by Birgit Houben and Nadine Akkerman (Leiden: Brill, 2014). Among the aspects of Isabella's life that merit further study are her period as a widowed governor and her cultural patronage.

do include women in their work when they come up, none maintains a focus on women or on gender history as a practice.³² Instead, studies within these subfields that are relevant for us have been almost exclusively written by their graduate students and postdocs. Many of their texts are excellent, but as they have tended to be published in less prominent venues (or not at all) it is only very recently, with the increasing access offered by digitization and greater emphasis on publishing in English, that they have started to enter the broader conversations on early modern women.³³

Women also remain underrepresented in Belgian art history, which is largely conservative in its adherence to traditional questions around artistic practice and ‘genius’ (inherently coded as male). The anthologies of 1998 and 1999 mentioned above represent important efforts to break this ontological glass ceiling, but have only very recently, in the context of a new wave of public interest in feminism and gender, been followed up with new work on Flemish women artists. 2016 saw twin exhibitions in Madrid and Antwerp on the Antwerp painter Clara Peeters, organized by Alejandro Vergara, Senior Curator at the Prado.³⁴ The impact of these shows was immediate, as demonstrated in the focus on

32 We are thinking here especially of the work produced by Bruno Blondé, Guido Marnef, Isabelle de Vos, Violet Soen, and Anne-Laure Van Bruaene and their research teams.

33 For example Lisa Van Rysselberghe, “Oude vrijsters in het 18de-eeuwse Brugse Vrije. Een levensloopbenadering van 29 nooit gehuwde vrouwen uit Brugge en het Brugse Vrije tussen 1760–1798” (MA, University of Ghent 2010); Laura van Aert, “Tussen norm en praktijk,” cited above, *Winkeldochters: Vrouwen in de handel en als consument van textiel 1600–2000* (Wageningen: Stichting Textielgeschiedenis, 2007), “The legal possibilities of Antwerp widows in the late sixteenth century,” *History of the Family* 12 (2007), and “Trade and Gender Emancipation: Retailing Women in Sixteenth-century Antwerp,” in *Buyers & Sellers: Retail Circuits and Practices in Mediaeval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Bruno Blondé, et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006); Ellen Decraene, “Grenzen voorbij: vrouwelijk lidmaatschap van religieuze broederschappen in een vroegmoderne kleine stad in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden” (PhD dissertation, University of Antwerp, 2014), and “Sisters of Early Modern Confraternities in a Small Town in the Southern Netherlands (Aalst),” *Urban History* 40, no. 02 (2013); Kim Overlaet, “To Be or Not to Be a Beguine in an Early Modern Town: Piety or Pragmatism? The Great Beguinage of St Catherine in Sixteenth-Century Mechelen,” in *Single Life and the City 1200–1900*, eds. Julie De Groot, Isabelle Devos, and Ariadne Schmidt (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Maja Mechant, “Dishonest and Unruly Daughters: The Combined Efforts of Families and Courts in Handling Prostitution in Eighteenth-Century Bruges,” *Popolazione e Storia*, no. 1 (2013); Jonas Roelens, “Visible Women. Female Sodomy in the Late Medieval and Early Modern Southern Netherlands (1400–1550),” *Low Countries Historical Review* 130, no. 3 (2015), 3–24, Hadewich Cailliau, *Soo geluckigh als een beggijn: het begijnhof Onze-Lieve-Vrouw-ter-Hooie 1584–1792*. Verhandeligen der Maatschappij voor geschiedenis en oudheidkunde te Gent (Ghent: Maatschappij voor geschiedenis en oudheidkunde, 1995).

34 Alejandro Vergara, ed. *The Art of Clara Peeters* (Madrid: Museo Nacional del Prado, 2016).

Peeters' works in the spring 2017 *Slow Food* exhibition at the Mauritshuis in The Hague. At the time of writing (August 2018) the second monographic exhibition on an early modern Flemish woman artist, Michaelina Wautier, is currently on show at the MAS in Antwerp. Organized by Katlijne Van der Stighelen, whose essay on the painter Anna Francisca de Bruyns appears in the present volume, the exhibition is receiving rave reviews and its catalogue (to which our authors Martha Howell and Martine van Elk also contributed) is a truly groundbreaking, interdisciplinary examination of Wautiers' life and work as well as of the conditions for early modern women's creative production more broadly.

We hope that this momentum will continue to build and that we will see more work on female artists in the South, and that these women will be integrated into the wider narratives of Flemish Art History. At the same time we would also push for an expansion of methodological approaches beyond the focus on the creative side. In terms of dealing with femininity and gender as formed, reflected, and negotiated by images, very little work has been done for the South. The most important texts remain Paul Vandebroek's above-mentioned exhibition catalog and *Painting and the Market in Early Modern Antwerp* (1998) by Elizabeth Honig, which addresses the tensions around women working in the public spaces and participating in economic transactions as expressed in the popular genre of market scenes.³⁵ As we also see with the scholarship on the North, Southern women's patronage and consumption of art is just beginning to be addressed (for example in Moran's essay in the present volume); it is, however, clear that women were crucial actors in this sphere and that the sources for future research are plentiful.³⁶

35 See also Cordula van Wyhe, "The Fabric of Female Rule in Leone Leoni's Statue of Mary of Hungary, c. 1549–1556," in *Cambridge and the Study of Netherlandish Art*, edited by Meredith Hale (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), and "The *Idea Vitae Teresiana* (1687): The Teresian Mystic Life and its Visual Representation in the Low Countries," in *Female monasticism in Early Modern Europe: An Interdisciplinary View*, edited by Cordula van Wyhe (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008); Margit Thøfner, "Marrying the City, Mothering the Country: Gender and Visual Conventions in Johannes Bochius's Account of the Joyous Entry of the Archduke Albert and the Infanta Isabella into Antwerp," *Oxford Art Journal* 22, no. 1 (1999): 3–27.

36 Moran, "Of Locked Doors and Open Windows: Architectural Strategies at the Court Beguinages in the Seventeenth Century," *Chicago Art Journal* 20 (2010); "A cui ne fece dono: Art, Exchange, and Affective Prayer in Anthony van Dyck's Lamentation for Antwerp Beguines," in *Sensing the Divine: Religion and the Senses in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Christine Göttler and Wietse de Boer (Leiden: Brill, 2013); Xander van Eck, "Between Restraint and Excess: The Decoration of the Church of the Great Beguinage at Mechelen in the Seventeenth Century," *Simiolus*, 28, no. 3 (2000), 129–162. There are, certainly, excellent studies of patronage that include women – and offer a glimpse into just how

4 Our Contributions

The present volume begins to close some of these gaps and to showcase the enormous potential for new research on early modern Low Countries women. Across our essays a number of themes emerge, both as key elements of our authors' arguments and as the historical and/or theoretical background for their approaches. Here we trace what we see as the most prominent of these themes: women's actions and experiences within religious struggles; their actions as cultural creators; representations of women and femininity as shaped by and shaping historical mindsets; and the question of action and agency, or of the degree of choice early modern Low Countries women had within patriarchal structures as well as how their actions impacted those structures to effect change.

The Reformation and Counter Reformation fundamentally structured life and identities in the Low Countries in our period, and this religious strife forms the backdrop for all of our studies but is more directly addressed by some authors than by others. Two emphasize women's active roles in spreading post-Tridentine Catholicism: Margit Thøfner's essay reveals Southern Low Countries nuns' portraits as tools that their communities could use to demonstrate their fervor, convince unbelievers of the value of their calling, and strengthen their positions when faced with Protestant attacks; in contrast to Thøfner's expansive view, Sarah Joan Moran's text zooms in on the sisters Maria, Anna, and Christina Houtappel, and their cousin Anna Sgrevens, who strategically dedicated their fortunes to advancing the Counter Reformation by partnering with the Antwerp Jesuits in the building and decoration of the city's most opulent baroque memorial chapel. On the Protestant side, Amanda Pipkin highlights Cornelia Teellinck's production of Reformed devotional texts that taught proper doctrine and prophesied God's destruction of the Spanish forces as a result of her first-hand experiences of persecution and warfare in the early years of the Revolt.

The juxtaposition of these essays detailing Reformed and Catholic women's religious evangelism reveals the passion both sides brought to fight for their beliefs, particularly during the period of intense religious warfare in Europe prior to 1648. Taken together these essays also offer a window onto the

active female patrons were – but do not explore the gendered circumstances of their actions. See for example Christine Göttler, "Securing Space in a Foreign Place: Peter Paul Rubens's "Saint Teresa" for the Portuguese Merchant-Bankers in Antwerp" *The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 57 (1999); Bert Timmermans, *Patronen van patronage in het zeventiende-eeuwse Antwerpen: Een elite als actor binnen een kunstwereld*, Studies stadsgeschiedenis (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2008).

experiences of both Catholic and Protestant women – and men – forced to flee during the Revolt religious persecution and settle abroad (the Houtappels fled to Italy and Germany while the Teellinck family members moved to the Northern provinces and to England). They further allow us to see the spread of religious ideas across national boundaries as Teellinck modeled her work on the French confession of faith adopted by the Dutch Reformed Church in Emden, Germany, and as the Jesuits in the Southern Low Countries negotiated with Roman authorities over notions of decorum and luxury in the decoration of devotional spaces. By closely analyzing women's writing and art and architectural patronage, these three studies highlight the vital roles that less well-known Protestant and Catholic women played in confessionalist polemics and reveal the extent to which many inhabitants of the Low Countries valued women as allies in the struggle to spread religious beliefs and vilify those who dissented.

Many of our authors address the theme of women as cultural creators and interrogate how their gendered social positions, as well as their political contexts, shaped their output. Pipkin is certainly among them, as she demonstrates how the Teellinck women authored new religious literature in the service of Reformed evangelism, and we might think of the female patrons discussed by Thøfner and Moran as creators as well. For Martine van Elk in "Publicizing Female Virtue on the Dutch Stage: Verwers, Questiers, and Lescaillje," it is not just two female playwrights' participation in and contributions to the male world of the stage that are of interest, but also how each deals with gendered tropes within her text and how these relate to the broader transition from a traditional to a modern understanding of public and private in the Dutch Republic. Katlijne van der Stighelen's essay on the Brussels painter Anna Francisca de Bruyns restores this forgotten artist to her rightful place in the history of art, locating her in the complex family/professional networks that defined the Flemish painting scene in the seventeenth century and underlining her commissions for the archducal court.

The representation of women and gender, in text and in image, is also a major theme across our contributions. For Van Elk, Thøfner, and Moran, female authors' and patrons' impulse to defend themselves against negative stereotypes of women resulted in plays and artworks that argued implicitly for the virtue of the female sex. Martha Moffitt Peacock makes positive representations of women and femaleness, and specifically their *impact* on women viewers, the topic of her essay on the 'Maid of Holland' figure in the Dutch Republic. Peacock draws on a wide range of material culture, including stained glass, coins, and firebacks, in addition to prints and paintings, to argue that the allegorical 'Maid' was an inspiration for Dutch women and helps to explain

why the seventeenth-century United Provinces produced so many famous female writers, artists, and scientists. Diane Wolfthal, by contrast, deals with artistic depictions of servants. Wolfthal traces shifting patterns in these portrayals in the Low Countries and questions how gender and servitude intersect through them, offering a broad and nuanced overview of these depictions. Like Peacock, Wolfthal takes historiographical issues head-on, pointing out that while the cumulative effects of classism and ageism over time have effectively rendered painted servants invisible to modern-day researchers, in the early modern period their status both in society and in visual culture was complex and deserves our attention.

Finally, a major theme touched upon by our authors is the issue of early modern women's ability to make choices, pursue their own goals, and take actions within and against the constricts of patriarchal culture. Some, like Reformed evangelist Cornelia Teellinck, painter Anna Francisca de Bruyns, and playwrights Catharina Questiers and Catharina Verwers, stepped into the normally masculine-coded, public spheres of religious evangelism and the creative professions. Others, like the Houtappel sisters and Anna Sgrevens, rejected marriage to use their fortunes to construct highly visible monuments to themselves while promoting Catholic doctrine. Peacock argues that positive and androgenized female imagery inspired early modern Dutch women to cross the boundaries between domestic and public to take on new roles, while for Wolfthal, visual imagery of lower-class and older women often reinscribed their marginalization both in historical and historiographical terms. In all of these contributions our authors are dealing, either explicitly or implicitly, with the notion of historical women's agency as it has been popularized in various subfields over the last few decades. And in "The Problem of Women's Agency in late Medieval and Early Modern Europe" Martha Howell asks what exactly we mean by this term, how we use it, and to what effect. Her theoretical inquiry challenges us to differentiate between types of women's historical actions and grapple with the fact that female 'agency', despite notionally operating against or outside of patriarchal structures, is in fact produced by shifting contexts within those structures. In so doing, Howell raises valuable questions for the early modern Low Countries women under investigation in this volume. Do women disrupt the patriarchy by fulfilling important roles within religious communities whose doctrines require the subordination of women to men, or are they simply finding the spaces in which patriarchy gives them more room to operate? Can female playwrights effectively challenge male domination when they publicly display examples of women exercising political power? Does a painter like Anna de Bruyns belie cracks in the foundations of male privilege in artistic

production, or is she an exception that confirms the rule? And to what extent is the asking of these questions appropriate to the historical subjects under consideration? Howell pushes future researchers, both of the Low Countries and beyond, to consider more carefully how we parse notions of agency for early modern women and, in particular, their capacity to effect lasting social change.

The essays in this volume thus detail various aspects of early modern Low Countries women's lives and their roles in shaping the course of history. As was argued by second-wave feminist scholars in the 1970s, the study of women's history is inherently interdisciplinary, and our essays indeed take various approaches to access their subjects. Together they demonstrate the enormous potential of the Low Countries for the study of early modern women. By highlighting the histories of women and gender in the region we hope to inspire more scholars, and especially those senior scholars whose work most influences the distribution of research funding in Belgium and the Netherlands, to take up these topics and show that such work is crucial for gaining a fuller and more accurate picture of early modern Flemish and Dutch culture. We also hope that our work encourages researchers engaged with a range of historical topics to consider the perspectives, experiences, and impacts of female actors, viewers, readers, and makers, bringing us closer to a time when women and gender are no longer routinely overlooked but rather considered as vital elements in our understanding of the past.