

This book shows a wide range of opportunities for potential research into conceptions of privacy in the early modern Low Countries. However, it also shows the need for further exploration of ways to analyze and categorize notions of privacy without being too much at risk of introducing anachronisms. Notions of privacy depend very much on context, which makes the study of privacy complicated. The case studies in this book show in an insightful manner how the methodologies – in particular, the zones of privacy and the terminological approaches – can be applied to different types of sources. Yet a broader exploration of their benefits and potential for future development would have been helpful. A general conclusion to the book in which these aspects could have been addressed is missing.

This book successfully shows how privacy and private life can be found in early modern sources, which offers possibilities for the incorporation of this topic in future research and encourages historians to further extend the ways in which they research privacy and private life in the early modern period.

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Catriona Macleod, Alexandra Shepard, and Maria Ågren (eds),
The Whole Economy. Work and Gender in Early Modern Europe
(Cambridge [etc.]: Cambridge University Press, 2023). 259 pp.
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In *The Whole Economy. Work and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Catriona Macleod, Alexandra Shepard, and Maria Ågren, an international group of scholars collaborates to explore the evolution of the intricate relationship between gender dynamics and labor structures in the early modern period. Published in 2023, the book offers a diverse range of perspectives on this underexplored topic, challenging existing theories and stereotypes while providing valuable conceptual, methodological, and empirical insights.

The work is organized into seven chapters, each delving into different aspects that influenced life and work during the early modern period. Chapter 1, authored by Maria Ågren, challenges the conventional view of households as static, closed units. Her exploration

reveals their dynamic nature and reliance on multiple income sources, prompting a reevaluation of notions of agency and authority within households. Chapter 2 by Alexandra Shepard explores the economic significance of care work, both paid and unpaid. Emphasizing its central role in sustaining productive populations, the chapter challenges the historical undervaluation of this crucial form of work. Chapter 3, a collaboration of Jane Whittle and Hilde Sandvik, analyzes the role of women in agriculture through a comparative study and case studies on Norway and southwest England. This chapter highlights the diversity of women's work in agriculture, underscoring how scholarship has oversimplified and ignored their contributions, despite the importance of the agricultural sector for early modern European societies. Chapter 4, by Carmen Sarasua, examines rural manufactures across different regions in Europe, highlighting the high demand for women's labor and their resulting high participation rates. The chapter emphasizes the necessity for a systematic examination of gender labor division in proto-industrialization. Chapter 5, written by Anna Bellavitis, provides an overview of existing research on urban markets. It emphasizes the gendered reality of urban economies and sheds light on the opportunities urban markets offered women, while also illuminating the complexities and dynamics of processes and change over time. Chapter 6, a collaborative effort of Amy Louise Erickson and Ariadne Schmidt, explores the intersection of gender, labor, and migration. Through this approach, they challenge stereotypical representations of the female migrant and stress the importance of systematically including gender as a category of analysis to understand the structures of early modern society. Chapter 7, authored by Margaret R. Hunt, focuses on the intricate relationship between the economy, politics, and society during times of war in early modern Europe. Moving beyond merely including women's work in its analysis, it provides a holistic understanding of human societies in times of crisis.

As a whole, the book offers a fresh perspective on the social and economic dynamics of early modern European society by adopting a gender-inclusive approach to the study of work in the early modern period. It confronts stereotypes, exposes biases within historical studies, and emphasizes the need to incorporate a gendered lens in our analytical frameworks to grasp the nature of early modern society.

Still, it remains important to be cautious in drawing broad conclusions for the entire European continent. Despite the focus on varied regions of different chapters in the book, the current state of

historiography easily results in an overrepresentation of regions like northwestern Europe that have demanded more attention in historical research than others. Nevertheless, by recognizing these constraints, the book provides a perspective that strives to be “as Europe-wide as possible”, as stated by Anna Bellavitis in chapter 5 of the book (p.137). Given the inherent challenges of this historical research, it’s reasonable that this book was unable to fully resolve these issues within its scope.

The book excels in its sections that actively explore gender dynamics rather than merely incorporating women’s work into the narrative. Distinguished by its focus on an unfortunately underexplored subject, the book challenges existing theories rooted in oversimplifications and stereotypes. For instance, the reflections on households dispel the myth that women predominantly spent their time at home – an image likely cultivated by the male breadwinner model emerging in the nineteenth century. Similarly, assumptions attributing agriculture solely to men’s work are suggested to be rooted in later ethnographic studies rather than solid historical evidence. This collection deviates from patterns overlooking existing evidence, addressing ideologically driven statements that masquerade as reality. It illuminates women as active agents, enriching our comprehension of the intricate dynamics and complexities of early modern society. In doing so, the book goes beyond testing existing theories on early modern society and challenges broader economic theories.

It is worth noting that some chapters could benefit from more extensive reflections on the nature of gender dynamics, rather than merely inserting women’s work into their analyses. A mere juxtaposition of women’s work within existing analyses oversimplifies the intricate power dynamics within society which shape gender roles and labor divisions. Given the focus of this book on work and gender in early modern Europe, the act of simply incorporating women’s labor into pre-existing knowledge about men’s work in society falls short of capturing the nuanced complexities of gender dynamics and their historical development. The invisibility of women in sources, exemplified by the frequent focus on heads of households (often men), complicates endeavors to broaden our understanding beyond male-centric perspectives. This underscores the urgent need for further research and source exploration to address this gap.

More than anything, *The Whole Economy* embarks on a profound reflection on the influence of contemporary views and gender biases on our interpretations of the past. By emphasizing the need for a

meticulous examination of work through a gender-inclusive lens, the book champions the use of new sources and insights to enrich our understanding of the nuanced evolution of both work and society during the early modern period. Beyond merely highlighting the active role women played in early modern economies, it recognizes the intricate dynamics and complexities between work, gender, and society. As we navigate the historical landscape, *The Whole Economy* challenges us to continually refine our perspectives and methodologies, beckoning us toward a more comprehensive and enlightened understanding of the past.

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Sjoerd Levelt, Esther van Raamsdonk, and Michael D. Rose (eds), *Anglo-Dutch Connections in the Early Modern World* (London: Routledge, 2023). 358 pp. ISBN 9780367502331.

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This self-professed ground-breaking collection navigates the complex relations and networks between early modern England and the Dutch Republic. As Sjoerd Levelt, Esther van Raamsdonk, and Michael D. Rose argue, “Anglo-Dutch relations shaped all aspects of life, with profound implications still relevant today”. This kaleidoscopic compendium, divided into seven parts, comprises of an ambitious twenty-three essays, showcasing work from a diverse range of interdisciplinary scholars who – taken together – offer a series of new explorations into early modern Anglo-Dutch connections. The authors certainly achieve their aim for this collection to be both accessible and innovative.

The subject of Anglo-Dutch rivalries has continued to receive significant scholarly attention, with many previous studies following Douglas Irwin’s school of thought, focusing on the tensions between the British East India and the Dutch East India companies. This book, however, provides a refreshing approach to looking at Anglo-Dutch relations beyond the realm of revolt and rivalries. While the collection is not wholly exhaustive in looking at all aspects of Anglo-Dutch connections, neither is it an overview for a general audience. For those wanting their first foray into Anglo-Dutch relations and cultural exchange, one might be better placed looking at Lisa Jardine’s 2008