at best loose: while it suggests that the women were defying authority, that is not the case in any meaningful sense for any of the women studied here, except possibly Van Schurman after she left the Reformed Church to join the Labadist sect. To the contrary, the book makes clear women's membership in powerful family networks, demonstrating their integration within the highest circles of Protestant religious authority in the Republic. The subtitle is arguably misleading as well, for the book makes no effort to treat Reformed women in the Republic generally. Rather, it deals with a small number of powerful women who belonged to a religious elite. How much it tells us about the role of women generally in the Further Reformation or the wider life of the Reformed Church is an open question that deserves further study. A final criticism is that the translations that appear of Dutch texts into English – for example, quotations from the women's writings – are of uneven quality.

With those minor reservations, though, this is a fine book that applies a women's history approach to an old topic, offering a refreshing new perspective on one of the most important religious phenomena of the Netherlands in the seventeenth century.

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Jonas Roelens, *Citizens and Sodomites. Persecution and Perception of Sodomy in the Southern Low Countries (1400–1700)* (Leiden: Brill, 2024). 444 pp. ISBN 9789004686175.

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In *Citizens and Sodomites*, Jonas Roelens presents a compelling and precise analysis of the largest known body of sodomy trials in northern Europe between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries. The book is based on records conserved in twenty-six archives and libraries primarily in Belgium, the Netherlands, and northern France, as well as an extensive range of published sources. The archival sources primarily consist of financial records, which document criminal proceedings against accused sodomites, and include basic information such as their name and residence, as well as any punishment ordered. Wherever possible Roelens has linked these financial records with extant interrogations and sentences. Previous studies have focused on individual cities in the region and even then not within the same

timeframe as Roelens's book, which usefully covers a period typically divided around 1500 between medievalists and early modernists. This period has its own internal logic, as an era when urban citizens in the Low Countries asserted their claims to self-governance against external and regional authorities with considerable success, as shown by the dominance of municipal courts in sodomy trials as opposed to ducal or ecclesiastical courts.

The book presents a corpus of 207 sodomy trials involving 406 individuals, concentrated in the second half of the fifteenth century and first half of the sixteenth century. The aldermen who determined penalties in these trials conducted by bailiffs took an especially punitive approach to sodomy, and in total 252 individuals were executed. The trials concentrated in Bruges, where 75 trials involving 179 individuals took place. City magistrates in Ghent, Brussels, Antwerp, and Leuven also tried a significant number of cases, but none of them on the same scale as Bruges. Another significant feature of Roelens's corpus is the presence of 13 women among the accused in 25 trials.

This raw data raises more questions than it is possible for Roelens to answer with certainty, but his analysis is assured and alert to the strengths and limits of the sources. Chapters address key issues raised by comparable studies of sodomy trials elsewhere in premodern Europe, with sometimes surprising results. Unlike in other regions, age hierarchies did not play such a significant role in determining the frequency of prosecution or severity of sentencing in sodomy trials in the Southern Low Countries, so far as it is possible to tell from the sometimes limited recorded age indicators. Where children and youths were involved in trials they were sometimes seen as culprits worthy of punishment, not the victims of older men's advances. Women appeared far more often in Roelens's corpus than elsewhere, perhaps because of women's more prominent public role in this highly urbanized region. Foreigners appear frequently in the trials, but these were primarily newcomers to the city from the wider region, and not southern Europeans from regions like Tuscany where sodomy trials were more common, and where men gained a European reputation for sodomy as a result. Ecclesiastics and nobles do not make up a significant proportion of the accused, but Roelens makes excellent use of a major and well documented incident at Ghent in 1578, in which eight mendicant friars were condemned to death for sodomy by the newly appointed Protestant city council – an incident that served Calvinist civic elites in their attempts to justify their rule through anticlerical polemic.

Drawing together these various strands of quantitative and qualitative analysis, Roelens argues persuasively that a distinctive concern with urban citizenship explains the scale and severity of sodomy prosecutions in the premodern Southern Netherlands. He finds some evidence that citizens accused of sodomy were prosecuted more harshly than non-citizens, and that same-sex acts that took place in public spaces also resulted in more heinous punishments. The low incidence of property confiscations during sentencing leads Roelens to suggest that most accused sodomites in the Southern Low Countries were not especially wealthy, but these predominantly artisans and tradesmen nevertheless were held responsible for maintaining the moral standing of their city, risking death if they infringed its norms. Nevertheless, Roelens at times oversteps the mark by suggesting that sodomy trials in the Southern Low Countries demonstrate characteristics of a persecuting society and a process of scapegoating, which is impossible to prove given the available data, as well as (I suggest) implausible given the small number of cases compared with the scale of the population and the limited visibility these trials attained.

Roelens's argument gains force through wide-ranging comparative discussions with existing studies of sodomy trials elsewhere in premodern Europe, both between northern and southern Europe, as well as within northern Europe. *Citizens and Sodomites* came out too early to take account of Noel Malcolm's major synthesis *Forbidden Desire in Early Modern Europe* (2024), but the books make for productive parallel reading, not least since Malcolm was able to use Roelens's earlier articles in his assessment. Compared with neighboring France, the number of sodomy trials preserved in Southern Low Countries is significantly larger, perhaps because of the greater degree of independence enjoyed by civic magistrates of Bruges and Ghent. When compared with Paris and Lyon – for example – in the French kingdom, sodomy trials were subject to automatic appeal to regional *parlements*. By contrast, cities in the Southern Low Countries produced a smaller number of sodomy trials than Florence or Lucca (studied by Michael Rocke and Umberto Grassi, respectively), perhaps since these cities imposed more lenient penalties to prompt prosecutions, or because the sexual culture in the Mediterranean often encouraged older men to pursue pederastic relations with male youths before puberty, in a way that does not seem to have occurred north of the Alps. Overall, this is a landmark study based on exceptional research and

essential reading for anyone interested in the history of sexuality and criminal justice in premodern Europe.

Tom Hamilton, Durham University

Marieke Smulders, *Voor het hogere bestemd. De vorming van een katholieke elite aan drie Nijmeegse jongensinternaten, 1920-1970* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2023). 376 pp. ISBN 9789048559077.

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This well-researched study of the establishment, development, and demise of three Dutch boarding schools and their seminaries – aimed at training future Jesuits, Dominicans, and Redemptorists – has relevancy beyond the local dimension of the city of Nijmegen. Apart from offering a detailed description of ecclesiastical training in this city in the years between 1920 and 1970, Marieke Smulders addresses how the organization of these schools interacted with national and international developments related to education. On a local level, the book elucidates the various differences between the missions and educational cultures of the three seminaries. Initially, only the Jesuit-led Canisius College offered seminary training for resident students as well as gymnasium education to external students, who added a worldly touch. Jesuit father N. Perquin maintained close ties with the Catholic University in Nijmegen, established in 1923. His books on educational reform were widely read among Dutch Roman Catholics in the 1950s. At the Canisius College, Perquin's ideas prompted much debate on, for instance, whether the personal development of the resident students would be boosted by allowing them more liberties. Initially, the educational regimes at the seminaries were quite strict, mirroring the hierarchical order and daily structure of monastic life. So-called prefects closely monitored student behavior, even by inspecting their incoming and outgoing letters. While some prefects became notorious for their sadistic conduct, others gained students' trust. At the end of the 1960s, these seminaries merged with nearby schools offering different levels of secondary education to boys and girls. By 1970, nearly all Dutch seminaries for training clergymen had become obsolete.