

neoliberal; extractive; and war capitalism. Khalili avoids typologizing, but her book could provide an opportunity to reassess these categories from the ground up. By focusing on the continuities and disruptions of space, the book shows that war capitalism continued to suffuse industrial capitalism, and that merchant capitalism remained an important force throughout. It stands as an important reminder, accessible to readers beyond academia, of how the legacy of empire is materialized in the logistics landscapes of twenty-first-century capitalism.

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SCHMIDT, ARIADNE. *Prosecuting Women. A Comparative Perspective on Crime and Gender before the Dutch Criminal Courts, c.1600–1810*. [Crime and City in History, Vol. 4.] Brill, Leiden 2020. 285 pp. Ill. € 105.00; \$126.00. (E-book: € 105.00; \$126.00.)

When I received Ariadne Schmidt's *Prosecuting Women* to review, I genuinely wondered how innovative this study would be. Given that, in recent years, the research team "Crime and Gender, 1600–1900: A comparative perspective" at Leiden University, to which the author was also affiliated, had already published several fascinating monographs and articles on female criminality in the early modern Dutch Republic, I expected a sort of synthesis of past research. And yet, *Prosecuting Women* is more than a simple resumé, since Schmidt looks at crime and gender in the early modern Low Countries from an explicitly comparative point of view. By taking into account the different socio-economic contexts, demographic backgrounds, and judicial norms of a number of cities, she aims to examine whether a stereotypical female criminal can be observed throughout the highly urbanized Republic, or whether patterns of female criminality in the Republic were influenced by local contexts and the type of town in which the crime took place.

Such a comparative approach has proven to be very fruitful in Marion Pluskota's study of early modern prostitution in Nantes and Bristol.¹ On the one hand, Schmidt limits the scope of her research by not opting for a transnational comparison but instead restricting herself to an analysis of the Republic itself. On the other hand, she expands her scope by not limiting herself to one type of criminality (instead, focusing on all types of criminality prosecuted by the criminal courts) and by comparing several types of city with one another. For this reason, Schmidt selected two port cities, Amsterdam and Rotterdam, and two industrial cities, Leiden and Gouda. To counterbalance the all-too exclusive focus on cities in Holland in research on the history of criminality, she also included some localities in "peripheral areas", such as the rural region of Waterland, the garrison city of Zwolle, and two jurisdictions in the south: the bailiwick of Heusden, Breda, and the Barony of Breda. Such a comparison could nuance the general claim that the high level of participation of women in

1. Marion Pluskota, *Prostitution and Social Control in Eighteenth-Century Ports* (London, 2016).

recorded crime can be linked to the high level of urbanization in the region, and might result in a more differentiated picture of female criminality in the early modern Dutch Republic.

Although the cities studied did indeed differ greatly in terms of size and economic importance, the everyday life of many early modern women living in these cities was often quite similar: many prosecuted women across the Republic were unmarried, highly mobile, and had to survive with poor jobs and on low wages. Men were often absent: this was true in Amsterdam, where the seafaring character of the city resulted in high celibacy rates and the overrepresentation of women, but also in the garrison town of Zwolle, where only one third of female defendants between 1641 and 1800 were married (p. 77). Consequently, some general characteristics in the pattern of female crime can be discerned across these cities, especially since the judicial framework for prosecuting crimes was also remarkably uniform, according to Schmidt (p. 59). In general, women were overrepresented among the moral offenders and underrepresented among the offenders of violent crimes. On average, women were responsible for thirty to forty-five per cent of property crimes, which implied that the gender gap among the defendants for this type of crime was quite small (p. 251). Should we therefore conclude that an urban comparison in the highly urbanized network nowadays known as the Randstad contributes little to our knowledge of early modern criminality? Not quite, as Schmidt demonstrates in Chapters Four, Five, and Six of her book.

After discussing issues such as urbanization and economy, the administration of justice and the typology of prosecuted crimes, and the life cycle and demographic context of early modern women in the Republic, Schmidt analyses the trial records of the port cities, industrial cities, and the peripheral towns referred to, while highlighting the differences between them. The persecution of prostitution, for instance, clearly illustrates how local authorities developed different strategies for dealing with moral offences. The majority of female defendants in Amsterdam and Rotterdam were prosecuted for moral offences, mostly prostitution. In the last quarter of the seventeenth century, when *speelhuizen* were on the rise in the ever-growing city, the authorities responded with a more severe policy of persecution. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, prosecutions for prostitution decreased, which coincided with the deteriorating economic climate in Amsterdam (pp. 125–26). In Zwolle, on the other hand, it seems that prostitution was in principle not prosecuted by the criminal court (p. 220). Both strategies were, in their own context, the most efficient way of preserving the social order within both towns.

The diverse urban contexts and their impact on prosecution policies is also evident when looking at property crimes. In Leiden and Gouda, the majority of prosecutions among women were for theft. Surprisingly, however, no statistical relationship between prices and property crimes could be established. Moreover, personal consumption was not the main reason for women to start stealing. Instead, they sold what they stole in highly developed trade networks (p. 191). This market-oriented nature of theft is somewhat intertwined with the industrial character of cities such as Leiden and Gouda. In more rural areas, such as Waterland, Breda, and the Barony, theft was more closely linked to beggars and vagrants in criminal gangs, including female members (p. 236).

Even though the focus on local socio-economic contexts as an explanation for gendered differences in early modern crime patterns is a compelling one, this book is not without flaws. At times, Schmidt heavily depends on the work of a limited number of predecessors and colleagues, such as Pieter Spierenburg, Sjoerd Faber, and Manon van der Heijden. When discussing the link between property crimes and poverty, the study of Anita Boele on changing perceptions of poor relief in the northern Netherlands could have been a valuable addition. When analysing prostitution in medium-sized cities such as Leiden and Gouda,

the dissertation by Maja Mechant on eighteenth-century Bruges could have made a fascinating comparison.² Moreover, some of the partial conclusions are rather obvious: for instance, that female criminals were more socially diverse in Amsterdam than in other localities should not come as a surprise (p. 112).

While reading this book, I sometimes wondered whether the differences observed between the cities analysed are not actually the result of the wide variety of sources used. The Amsterdam dataset is compiled mostly from information from interrogation records, whereas for Rotterdam sentence registers were used. In Rotterdam, another type of source, records of street brawls, were used, which may have caused an overrepresentation of violent women in that city compared to other cities (p. 145). The Leiden dataset comprises only criminal sentences, whereas that for Gouda contains all cases brought before the court (albeit with temporal lacunas). For larger cities, such as Amsterdam and Rotterdam, sample years were used, whereas all recorded cases are included in the datasets of smaller localities. Some datasets are based on archival research, others are drawn from the literature (p. 8, Appendix). Consequently, it is notoriously difficult to quantify the number of prosecutions and identify long-term changes. Though the author is aware of this (many conclusions and statements are accompanied by disclaimers relating to the pitfalls of quantifying and comparing these judicial sources), this methodology sometimes undermines the effectiveness of certain analyses. For instance, when the author states that the number of prosecutions for prostitution in Rotterdam was almost negligible in the first half of the eighteenth century: “this does not mean that prostitution did not occur. Possibly the arrests [...] took place outside the sample years” (p. 127).

Be that as it may, Schmidt should be praised for undertaking the daunting task of tackling these diverse sources and analysing them from a long-term perspective. It is to her credit that, despite the many difficulties of comparing this source material (with its different degree of detail on the social background of the female defendants), this book makes a convincing case for the importance of the socio-economic context of localities in the study of early modern criminality. Although the book could be useful as a general introduction to crime and gender in the Dutch Republic, *Prosecuting Women* is an innovative study in itself. For instance, Schmidt manages to nuance the general “vanishing female thesis” (which argues that women disappeared from the courtroom from the eighteenth century onwards) by demonstrating that prosecution patterns varied over time. As Schmidt shows throughout her book, this is just one of the many advantages of examining the specific dynamic of local prosecution patterns in light of varying socio-economic contexts.

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2. Anita Boele, *Leden van één lichaam. Denkbeelden over armen, armenzorg en liefdadigheid in de Noordelijke Nederlanden 1300–1650* (Hilversum, 2013); Maja Mechant, *Hoeren, pauwen ende ondeughende doghters. De levenslopen van vrouwen in de Brugse prostitutie (1750–1790)* (Ph.D., Ghent University, 2018).