



Cultural and Social History

The Journal of the Social History Society

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rfcs20>

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To cite this article: Jonas Roelens (2021) 'Those rascals chased from Holland!' Sodomy, migration and identity building in eighteenth-century Antwerp, Cultural and Social History, 18:2, 183-200, DOI: [10.1080/14780038.2021.1897925](https://doi.org/10.1080/14780038.2021.1897925)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780038.2021.1897925>



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Published online: 29 Mar 2021.



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ARTICLE



‘Those rascals chased from Holland!’ Sodomy, migration and identity building in eighteenth-century Antwerp

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ABSTRACT

Convictions for sodomy were rare in eighteenth-century Antwerp. Nevertheless, the scarce trial records offer a fascinating insight into the urban perception of sodomy as a foreign phenomenon. A sodomy trial involving several Dutch migrants infused anxieties about sodomite conspiracies across the city. Although early modern sodomy has mainly been studied from a local or national point of view, this article shows that a transregional perspective regarding the repression of sodomy can shed new light on attitudes towards early modern deviant sexuality.

KEYWORDS

Sodomy; urban history; migration history; gender history; eighteenth century

Introduction

On 26 January 1737, Petrus de Pré, a 23-year-old diamond cutter from Antwerp, decided to go for an evening walk near the stock exchange, where he got to talking with Jan Coster, a 40-year-old migrant from Amsterdam. While exchanging some snuff tobacco, Coster subtly inquired if de Pré knew any other people from Holland and mentioned some acquaintances of his who had been convicted for sodomy in the Republic.¹ Clearly, Coster brought up this specific topic to ascertain De Pré’s viewpoint on the so-called ‘sin against nature’, and to verify whether there was any sexual attraction between them. De Pré, however, must have had no idea where this conversation was going, since he – in his own words – was so appalled when Coster suddenly put his penis in de Pré’s hand, that he instantly ran away, ‘not even knowing in what direction he was running’.

Having recovered from this unwelcome surprise, however, de Pré devised a cunning plan to ambush his assailant. Accompanied by two friends, Michiel Smits and Francis Lievens, who would hide in a small gallery of the stock exchange, Petrus returned to the ‘scene of the crime’ the next evening. Apparently, Jan Coster was once again present, and believing that he and Petrus de Pré were alone, he resumed their conversation about the unmentionable vice. Coster mentioned another migrant from Amsterdam, but when de Pré indicated that he did not know this man either, Coster referred to him as ‘also one of our people’.² With this intriguing statement, Coster clearly identified himself as a sodomite and alluded to the existence of a group of like-minded people. After a disparaging remark about the women in Antwerp, he tried to kiss de Pré and again exposed his genitals. At this point, de Pré’s friends emerged, shouting, ‘We’ve seen you,

you Dutch wastrel, you sodomite!’³ Together, they overpowered Coster, dragged him from the gallery by his penis, and presented him to an angry crowd, which suggested giving him a good thrashing before taking him to the authorities.⁴

However, by the time of Coster’s encounters, the official policy regarding sodomy had undergone some profound changes. During the late medieval period, the Southern Netherlands was among Europe’s most repressive regions when it came to sodomy.⁵ Even though there was no specific legislation on sodomy in the Southern Netherlands during the late medieval period, the ‘unnatural crime’ was generally punished with death by burning. However, the prosecution of sodomites was not continuously prioritised by urban authorities. In general, sodomy was most strongly persecuted throughout the Southern Netherlands between ca. 1450 and 1525.⁶ From 1600 onwards, sodomy trials became a rarity in the region, and hardly any convictions are known for the eighteenth century. At the time, many local aldermen assumed that sodomy had been eradicated in the Southern Netherlands. On those rare occasions that the authorities were confronted with the ‘unnatural sin’, they were less inclined to prosecute sodomy and preferred to avoid public scandal. After centuries of public executions accompanied by ritual display and public deterrence, a different approach emerged. Most of the handful of recorded sodomy court cases were dismissed, either for lack of evidence or because the local authorities were forced to do so by the Privy Council, which made active use of its authority to overrule criminal sentences imposed by local bodies.⁷

Apparently, it was felt that such behaviour within the city was better regulated by discreet confessions with a local priest at regular intervals rather than by public executions.⁸ Those rare eighteenth-century accusations that did lead to an actual trial resulted in considerably milder penalties than had been the case in previous centuries. Some individuals were imprisoned in a house of correction,⁹ but most men convicted of sodomy were banished from the Southern Netherlands, often at night so that the general public would not become aware of their ‘crime against nature’. Even more so than in previous centuries, sodomy had become a vice that must not be mentioned.

Consequently, both the timing of Coster’s case and the particularly detailed trial records that resulted are intriguing. As we will see, the fact that the local authorities did not show the usual restraint regarding this crime had much to do with the involvement of Dutch migrants. Only a few years earlier, the Dutch Republic had been rocked by a massive wave of sodomy trials. Apparently, these sodomy trials had a profound impact on the perception of male newcomers who travelled from the Northern Netherlands to the Southern Netherlands during the eighteenth century.

Through a close reading of an unusually well-documented sodomy trial, this article demonstrates the importance of examining transregional dimensions when researching early modern sexuality. So far, the Dutch sodomy trials of the 1730s have been mainly analysed on a local level, but their importance transcended national borders. In their aftermath, Dutch migrants in Antwerp were often mistrusted as potential sodomites. For centuries, Europeans commonly associated sodomy with Italy, but in eighteenth-century Antwerp we can observe the emergence of another ‘national,’ sexual trope. As such, the trial records analysed in this article not only illustrate popular attitudes towards migrants in an eighteenth-century city in decline, they also demonstrate the importance of gender and sexuality in the creation of ‘national’ stereotypes.

A transregional dimension also proves useful when discussing the emergence of sodomitical subcultures during the eighteenth century. Several historians have pointed out that there was a distinctive change in the self-awareness of people attracted to others of the same sex in eighteenth-century cities such as London, Paris or Amsterdam.¹⁰ While these research results have been extrapolated to an (inter)national level, it remains necessary to examine less studied cities. Taking into account their different legal contexts and socioeconomic backgrounds will provide a welcome contribution to the historiographical debate on eighteenth-century sodomy.

The network of Jan Coster

Once the unfortunate Jan Coster had been overpowered at the Antwerp stock exchange, it seemed that bystanders did not exactly know how the matter should be resolved. For the time being, they took him to an inn called 'The King of Spain', where Petrus de Pré and his companions tried to convince Coster to take them to his home. This resulted in a sort of cat-and-mouse game in which Coster dragged them endlessly throughout the city, refusing to point out his house 'for fear of his wife'. While doing so, Coster attempted to bribe them, tried to escape, and ultimately even had a go at seducing one of de Pré's companions, albeit in a slightly subtler fashion than his failed attempts at the stock exchange. He softly caressed the face of a displeased Michiel Smits, who shouted 'do you think I am a woman?' and gave him a beating in return.¹¹ In the end, the group of men took Coster to the house of the Margrave, the city's bailiff, who was responsible for tracking down, arresting, interrogating and charging criminals.¹² Oddly, only de Pré went inside, while Michiel and Francis kept watch over the accused Coster. When de Pré left the building, he made no attempt to hand Jan over to the authorities and the search for Coster's house resumed. When Michiel and Francis asked why Coster had not been arrested by the Margrave, de Pré gave a remarkable reply: he had taken pity on Coster and consequently refused to hand him over to the authorities. But whether de Pré's sudden compassion was genuine seems questionable. Shortly afterwards, de Pré and Coster secretly split away from Michiel and Francis, and half an hour later, de Pré reappeared on his own. Coster had vanished. Apparently, de Pré was given a tidy sum of money 'on condition that he did not disclose to anyone what had happened that night'.

Coster's legal file does not mention how his seduction attempts eventually came to the attention of the Margrave, nor how the authorities finally managed to track down his whereabouts. But a few days later, on 26 January 1737, Coster (who revealed that his official name was Jorri Jan Coster Davids) was arrested – just in time, as it turned out. Coster must have realised that the net was closing in, because by the evening of his arrest, he had placed all his belongings with a friend and planned to flee from the duchy of Brabant to the county of Flanders 'until the rumours that were circulating about him in Antwerp had blown over'.¹³ On the day of his arrest, both Coster and a series of witnesses were questioned. Then, on 27 January, Coster was formally identified by Petrus de Pré and his two companions. Although Coster had gone to a lot of trouble not to be recognised during that eventful night, his accusers easily identified the culprit, who apparently had a characteristic wart on his face.¹⁴ Strangely enough, the fact that de Pré had accepted Coster's hush money and was therefore prepared to let the illicit matter go held no legal consequences for him. Then again, blackmailing sodomites was not an

unusual phenomenon during the eighteenth century.¹⁵ In any case, Jan Coster was thoroughly interrogated. Finally, on 2 April, he was flogged and expelled for life from the city of Antwerp and the duchy of Brabant.¹⁶

Jan Coster's failed seduction attempt at the Antwerp stock exchange not only led to his own conviction; it also marked the start of an intensive criminal investigation into sodomy in Antwerp. One of the main motives of the authorities seemed to be uncovering 'Dutch connections'. Sodomites arrested in the wake of the Coster incident were explicitly asked whether they knew any Dutch migrants, while Dutch men suspected of sodomy were questioned as to why they had migrated to Antwerp. The judicial authorities were not the only ones suspicious of these Dutch migrants and their alleged same-sex desires. These misgivings were also widespread among ordinary city dwellers, as evidenced by various testimonies.

This direct association between sodomy and Holland stemmed from the aforementioned fact that in 1730, just a few years earlier, there had been a veritable witch hunt against sodomites in the Republic. That year, a number of men from Utrecht were arrested for having committed sodomy in the Dom Church. Shortly after their indictment, the men began to accuse numerous others of similar sexual crimes. Even though sodomy was a crime that was hardly persecuted in the Northern Netherlands until after the so-called Dutch Golden Age,¹⁷ several criminal courts in Amsterdam, Haarlem, The Hague, Rotterdam and Leiden worked together in 1730 to trace these so-called 'underground networks' of sodomites, which sparked a wave of panic. This snowballed, even reaching smaller provincial villages, resulting in a total of around 350 convictions between 1730 and 1733.¹⁸ On a slightly more modest scale, this mass persecution was repeated in the decades that followed, and a total of about 800 sodomy trials took place between 1730 and 1811.¹⁹

Eventually, news of this persecution was picked up abroad as well. While English newspapers feasted on the scandal,²⁰ it has been assumed that in the Southern Netherlands, little attention was paid to these rumours about an underground network of Dutch sodomites.²¹ However, new research into the persecution of sodomy in the eighteenth-century Southern Netherlands paints a different picture. Antwerp's citizens appeared to be well aware of the sensational wave of persecutions in the Republic. And as will be demonstrated below, the link between the Republic and sodomy persisted in the popular imagination of Antwerp's urban community for many years to come. Even when the large-scale persecutions in the Northern Netherlands had more or less subsided, these striking events continued to influence the perception of newcomers from the Republic.

Migration in eighteenth-century Antwerp

Antwerp was an attractive destination for immigrants for centuries. During the early modern period, the city steadily grew into one of the most important metropolises of the Low Countries. The growth was spectacular. In the fourteenth century, Antwerp had only about 20,000 inhabitants, but during the fifteenth century, that number climbed to 31,000 and then rose to over 100,000 city dwellers over the course of the sixteenth century.²² This enormous population growth was almost entirely due to immigration: more than half of the population at that time consisted of first- or second-generation immigrants.²³ The fact that this large-scale migration did not lead to a series of conflicts between locals

and newcomers had a lot to do with the favourable economic profile of many migrants, whose arrival in the city often meant an influx of prosperity. Foreign merchants and skilled workers from Antwerp's hinterland and other territories within the Netherlands generated a great deal of wealth in the burgeoning trade metropolis.²⁴

However, the 'Fall of Antwerp' in 1585 marked a turning point for the city. The closure of the Scheldt river, the Protestant exodus to the north, and an ailing economy caused a permanent demographic decline. By around 1750, Antwerp had been drastically reduced from a dominant commercial metropolis to a provincial centre with a population of barely 50,000 inhabitants. Mass migration had long since ceased. Harsh poverty, high unemployment and poor living conditions severely lessened the city's appeal to newcomers.²⁵ At the time, Antwerp mainly attracted low-skilled migrants from the immediate rural environment who often found employment as domestic staff. As a result, during the eighteenth century, the city council deliberately attempted to limit the influx of poor migrants and restricted their access to poor relief.²⁶

In spite of these attempts to enact a targeted migration policy, prosperous, foreign immigrants were disinclined to seek their fortune in Antwerp during the eighteenth century.²⁷ Newcomers from the Republic still moved to Antwerp, but only a minority of them originated from cities such as Amsterdam and Rotterdam. Rather, Dutch migrants generally hailed from the rural areas of Brabant. It is possible that the relative rarity of Dutch migrants and their lower economic status had an impact on the way in which they were perceived in eighteenth-century Antwerp.

As the case of Jan Coster illustrates, popular perception of these newcomers can be examined by consulting trial records from Antwerp's criminal court, the *vierschaaar*.²⁸ In the Southern Netherlands, criminal jurisdiction was the shared responsibility of two political institutions: the bailiff representing the princely level, and the college of aldermen representing the urban level.²⁹ After the bailiff arrested a suspect, a preliminary investigation was carried out by two aldermen. Witnesses and suspects were questioned separately and behind closed doors. This usually led to in an official investigation in which the statements of witnesses and suspects were taken under oath and recorded in an official report. If a suspect could not be forced to confess, interrogations could be conducted under torture, although the Antwerp *costumen* (customary rules) imposed limits on the use of the rack.³⁰

These restrictions did not apply when sodomy was concerned.³¹ Even so, the central government increasingly discouraged interrogation under torture, and the practice consequently became a rarity in the eighteenth-century Southern Netherlands.³² At the same time, it became more common for city councils dealing with sodomy accusations to explicitly ask for advice from the Privy Council in Brussels.³³ This did not happen in the case of Jan Coster, however. His trial was conducted entirely at the local level and the available sources are limited to interrogations and witness reports recorded by the *vierschaaar*.³⁴

Gerrit Verhoeven has pointed out the possibilities this particular set of judicial sources offers scholars working on social history: they allow us to map an extraordinary range of phenomena such as the perception of time, literacy rates, and even sleeping patterns in early modern Antwerp.³⁵ Moreover, these judicial sources can also be useful for migration history. Although researchers on migration history generally use 'traditional' demographic sources such as family censuses, parish registers or *poortersboeken* (lists of new

burghers who had recently acquired full citizenship status along with its associated privileges), judicial sources also offer valuable insights into the integration of newcomers. When migrants show up in trial records, we are granted the opportunity to examine how they were perceived by the local community. Were they met with suspicion, and did they suffer discrimination? Or did these migrants easily integrate into existing social networks within their new hometown?

Generally speaking, the judicial integration of migrants in Antwerp seemed to run smoothly. Even though the sources indicate that migrants were summoned as ‘neutral’ eyewitnesses less often than local residents, and were more often mentioned as victims or criminal suspects, Gerrit Verhoeven has shown that there was no systematic discrimination against immigrants in the Antwerp criminal court during this period.³⁶ However, these findings do not apply to cases involving migrants questioned about sodomy.

During the 1730s sodomy trials, dozens of suspects fled the Republic rather than stand trial. Some of them settled in Antwerp. Although the city near the Scheldt river had lost much of its baroque splendour, Antwerp, as one of the largest cities in the Southern Netherlands, apparently continued to be a destination of choice for these fugitive sodomites. And a close reading of case files such as Coster’s shows that many of these migrants were indeed treated with suspicion. The attitudes of Antwerp’s urban community show that age-old stereotypes about sodomy being a ‘foreign’ phenomenon were still very much alive in the eighteenth century.

Sodomy trials and their international aftermath

In the early modern period, sodomy was described as a kind of infectious disease that originated abroad and was capable of infecting local communities, which were viewed as inherently pure.³⁷ As a result, foreigners, who were often seen as outsiders within the urban community, were particularly vulnerable to accusations of sodomy.³⁸ In previous centuries, it was thought that Italians were especially given to the crime against nature. Indeed, the deviant sexual reputation of Florentine men was so widespread that in contemporary German, a sodomite was popularly called *ein Florenzer*.³⁹ The belief that Italians systematically engaged in sodomitical relationships was also common in the Southern Netherlands.⁴⁰ However, it seems that the sodomy trials of 1730 had a profound and lasting influence on how sodomy was perceived as a foreign vice in the Southern Netherlands. From the eighteenth century onwards, the Republic had replaced Italy as the new, contemporary Sodom.

The emergence of this cultural trope is an interesting phenomenon given the fact that the masculinity of the Dutch was a much discussed topic at the time, both within and outside the Republic. Beginning in the Golden Age, the (self-)representation of a heroic, freedom-loving and martial population resisting Spanish oppression was increasingly replaced by the image of ‘soft’ merchants, unwilling to fight because war was bad for business.⁴¹ Then, as the eighteenth century progressed, the Republic lost its international monopoly on trade. According to many contemporaries, the massive accumulation of wealth and excessive liberty had corrupted the nation’s masculine nature and introduced decadence, weakness and even effeminacy. Contact with foreigners, especially the French, supposedly further stimulated this decline and turned virile Dutchmen into sodomites.⁴²

To my knowledge, no eighteenth-century author in the Southern Netherlands explicitly stated that the Republic produced sodomites because of its religious and political culture, former prosperity, or contact with 'depraved' people around the globe. However, this does not mean that the 1730 trials had a negligible effect on the Southern Netherlands. That same year, the city council of Mechelen and the local clergy conducted an investigation to determine whether or not sodomites were living in the city, although their investigation did not lead to any arrests.⁴³ Supposedly, many other city councils decided to give the Republic's executions as little publicity as possible. The Southern Netherlands, under Austrian rule at the time, did not have a free press, and it is assumed that the authorities did succeed in suppressing rumours about these ongoing events.⁴⁴ However, the legal investigation following the arrest of Jan Coster shows that the general public at least had indirect access to newspapers discussing the sodomy trials in the Northern Netherlands.

In February 1737, a servant named Matthijs Roeckhout described Coster as 'one of those rascals chased from Holland, some of whom have been put in a bag and thrown into the sea because of their evil'.⁴⁵ This method of execution by which individuals were dumped overboard in weighted sacks was indeed a common punishment for sodomites during the 1730–33 persecution wave. This death penalty was depicted in various printed execution ballads, that were sold at the execution and sometimes also found their way abroad.⁴⁶ Roeckhout was aware of this type of capital punishment because he had heard someone read this aloud from the newspapers. Thanks to these *gazettes*, Roeckhout appears to have been well informed about the persecution policy in the Republic. This type of news item probably contributed to the negativity towards Dutch migrants who sought refuge in Antwerp at the time. Perhaps it is no coincidence that these stereotypes surfaced at a time when Antwerp too was struggling with a sense of decline. Facing poverty and poor living conditions, sodomy proved to be a continuous source of anxiety not only in the Republic, but in Antwerp too.⁴⁷

Apart from newspapers, the informal gossip circuit also aroused a great deal of suspicion in the city.⁴⁸ When Jan Coster's landlord heard rumours about the difficulties his tenant had encountered at the stock exchange, Coster's lease was promptly terminated and he was thrown out on the street.⁴⁹ Some witnesses explicitly stated that they eyed Dutch migrants with suspicion, as many of them allegedly belonged to 'those people who had fled from Holland because of the evil crime of sodomy'.⁵⁰ Apparently, the authorities had also noticed that a large number of 'rascals' had recently been driven out of the Dutch Republic. When Coster was questioned about his same-sex crimes, one of the first questions he had to answer was whether he knew other people from Amsterdam in the city of Antwerp. Coster named a number of boys and men, some of whom could be traced by the authorities. In turn, each of these suspects was asked if they could add to the list of people who had been driven out of Holland because of 'the aforementioned evil of sodomy'.⁵¹

Ultimately, this legal investigation uncovered a 'network' of ten Dutch migrants. Some of them had managed to slip through the cracks and had already left Antwerp, but a number of them were arrested and interrogated by the bailiff and aldermen. Although these suspects came from various cities in the Northern Netherlands, they had one important characteristic in common: all of them had fled the Republic because of sodomy accusations. The fact that they originated from different locales possibly further

stimulated the belief in an 'underground network' of sodomites scattered throughout the Northern Netherlands, a fear that was well established in the Republic itself. Some of those involved had been summoned by their hometown's local court to answer for their alleged crimes. However, none of them had responded to these summons, a point on which they were questioned in detail by the Antwerp aldermen, who were well aware of the sexual pasts of the suspects concerned.

One such individual was Dirk Bom, a 38-year-old man from The Hague who, after a stopover in Nijmegen, had come to Antwerp. He had assumed a false name (Dierck van Leusden) and opened a china shop. Bom claimed that he had left the Republic 'following a heated argument with his parents', although he obviously realised that this was an unlikely excuse. He admitted that the timing of his migration, the year 1730, was suspicious and that as a result, the aldermen probably suspected him of fleeing his country because he had been accused of sodomy. This suspicion proved to be correct: Bom had been summoned three times to appear before the court in The Hague. Somewhat cynically, the Antwerp aldermen wondered 'why Bom had not returned to his hometown in order to plead his innocence?'⁵² In the end, Dirk Bom was exiled from The Hague in absentia.⁵³

However, Bom was not the only interrogated suspect who had already been convicted for sodomy.⁵⁴ This was also the case for Jan Coster. The aldermen were surprised that Coster was 'so audacious as to make the same mistake again, well knowing that he had already been accused of the same crime in Amsterdam'.⁵⁵ Even though Coster vehemently denied this, his interrogators confronted him with correspondence from their Amsterdam counterparts. This showed that Coster, who was better known in his hometown as Jurriaan Davids, had indeed been exiled in absentia in 1730.⁵⁶ Strikingly, the Antwerp aldermen not only relied upon their own, official correspondence to gather evidence, they also thoroughly analysed Coster's private letters.

These contained incriminating information that seemed all the more suspicious in light of his evening 'outings' at the Antwerp stock exchange. In 1735, friends in Amsterdam had warned Coster not to return to his hometown. The sodomite Abraham de Leeuw had recently been hanged there and two of his companions had been flogged and exiled, meaning that the coast was anything but clear for a fugitive sodomite.⁵⁷ Coster's wife, who had left for Amsterdam some three months before his arrest in 1737, also wrote, and warned him not to become too close with a questionable servant.⁵⁸ These efforts to uncover the Dutch 'network' in Antwerp paid off when it became clear that the individuals involved had not only committed sodomy in the Republic, but also in their new abode. For despite the warning of Coster's wife, the servant had visited Coster several times in his bedroom, as had many other men from Coster's circle of Dutch migrant friends. Apparently, these individuals often visited each other to have sexual intercourse.⁵⁹

Among the popular meeting places for such encounters were the homes of a man called Van Oudthuijn and an anonymous 50-year-old bachelor from Maastricht who could not be interrogated because he had passed away by the time of the investigation. The latter had engaged in sexual relationships with several local youths, which must have increased the fear of an external contagion among Antwerp's citizenry. He had lured in at least two young servants, including the aforementioned Matthijs Roeckhout – who had

previously worked for Dirk Bom – and Nicolaes Schreder, to his room with an offer of tea and beer. After which, the anonymous bachelor forced Matthijs to masturbate him.⁶⁰

Dutch subcultures abroad?

The testimonies of these servants are particularly interesting because they are a valuable addition to the historiographical debate concerning the evolution in attitudes towards same-sex relationships, and the growing awareness of a common identity among sodomites, from the eighteenth century onwards. Government policies towards sodomy certainly flipped during the period. This is especially true for the Low Countries. After centuries of publicly condemning sodomites to the stake, the authorities in the south decided to conduct trials for the unspeakable sin with as much secrecy possible. In the north, on the other hand, the seal of silence was abruptly broken and public executions were organised in order to create a deterrent effect.

In other European regions too, the persecution of sodomy in the eighteenth century was at a turning point. In Austria and Prussia, for example, the death penalty for sodomy was abolished and replaced by imprisonment, flogging, and exile in 1787 and 1794 respectively.⁶¹ In 1791, revolutionary France officially decriminalised sodomy. In previous decades, the Paris police had tried to control this ‘social problem’ by recruiting undercover agents to arrest cruising men in public places such as the Luxembourg and Tuileries Gardens.⁶² Once sodomites’ crimes were no longer considered a capital offence, they were henceforth simply imprisoned to prevent them from corrupting young males.⁶³ Consequently, ‘only’ seven Parisians were burned at the stake for sodomy in the eighteenth century.⁶⁴ In other regions of Europe, however, the number of executions for sodomy increased dramatically during the eighteenth century. Although few sodomy trials had taken place on English soil before the 1700s, public opinion underwent an about-face around the turn of the century.⁶⁵ Numerous citizens’ initiatives were set up to actively identify sodomites and hand them over to the authorities.⁶⁶ And while several English sodomites were ‘merely’ pilloried, many of them died after being stoned to death by an angry mob.⁶⁷

Historical research has shown that as official attitudes towards sodomy changed, the self-awareness among sodomites also evolved during the eighteenth century. The majority of late medieval and early modern same-sex encounters were hierarchically organised on the basis of age. In most cases, the older man was the penetrator while the passive partner was very often an underage boy or a young man.⁶⁸ Although this hierarchical model was particularly dominant in the Mediterranean world, it was also common in north-western Europe. Some scholars have identified a major shift in these practices around 1700. From then onwards, sexual relations based on equality between men of similar age and social background prevailed.⁶⁹ In a number of western European cities, this evolution was accompanied by the emergence of a prominent ‘homosexual’ subculture that became increasingly visible in society.

However, arguments concerning this shift in same-sex practices around 1700 are largely based on findings for a limited number of metropolises, namely Paris, London and Amsterdam. In the field of queer studies, these cities have come to represent eighteenth-century Europe as a whole. Recent research has highlighted that more attention needs to be paid to chronological and geographical diversity regarding the emergence of

self-aware 'homosexual' subcultures.⁷⁰ New source material has also called into question the sudden emergence of identity and community within the sodomitical subculture of eighteenth-century Paris.⁷¹ Case studies such as that of Jan Coster further illustrate how general assumptions about a swiftly shifting paradigm need to be nuanced. On the one hand, in his conversations at the Antwerp stock exchange, Coster identified other sodomites as belonging to 'our people'. Furthermore, fellow sodomite migrants from the Republic quite easily contacted each other, which seems to illustrate the growing group consciousness among sodomites, resulting in a burgeoning subculture. On the other hand, we must bear in mind that the emphasis on this group consciousness may be due to the wording of the legal sources. After all, it was customary to present one's own community as free from unnatural sins. When confronted with sodomy, many authorities chose to point the finger at foreigners.

This is exactly what happened at the end of the eighteenth century in Antwerp during the trial of Peter Stocker.⁷² In 1781, the college of aldermen asked the Privy Council in Brussels for legal advice concerning Stocker's punishment. In their letter to the Privy Council, they stressed their lack of experience in this matter, claiming that Antwerp had reportedly known 'only two cases of sodomy in recent years'. In the aftermath of these cases, two Dutchmen had been expelled from the country, which was considered discreet enough punishment to leave the innocent locals unaware of the crime.⁷³

A similar reaction can be observed in the investigation following Jan Coster's arrest. The testimonies of servants Matthijs Roeckhout and Nicolaes Schreder are interesting because they tie in with the early modern conviction that sodomy was a sexual act that was mostly committed by older men with younger boys. After all, in his testimony Matthijs strongly emphasised that he was the victim of sexual harassment by an older, foreign sodomite: he was thrown on the bed of the anonymous bachelor and 'dishonestly touched against his will'.⁷⁴ If we are to believe his companion Nicolaes, however, the sexual interaction between Matthijs and the Dutch bachelor was consensual. Nicolaes noticed a lot of flirting, kissing and caressing between the two.⁷⁵ Matthijs even alluded to sexual favours granted to his admirer in exchange for a new pair of trousers.⁷⁶

Nevertheless, this information was largely ignored by the aldermen, whose questioning at other moments proved them to be thorough interrogators. Matthijs and Nicolaes probably profited from the fact that they were locals. In many sodomy cases throughout early modern Europe, we find a greater willingness to prosecute if migrants were involved, rather than local residents.⁷⁷ Then too, the aldermen's verdict may have been influenced by the fact that these two youths had engaged in unnatural acts in a more discreet location than Coster, who had tried to seduce men at the Antwerp stock exchange, which was the commercial heart of the city.

Even though the stereotype of the Republic as a country inhabited by men who were prone to unnatural sexual acts was a direct consequence of the persecution wave of the 1730s, Dutch men were still closely associated with sodomy in Antwerp decades after this first wave of trials. Clearly, the perception of sodomy as a foreign phenomenon was deeply rooted in the city. When Christiaan Bel, a migrant from Amsterdam, got involved in a dispute over money which he refused to repay in 1768, his creditor yelled at him: 'If you were in Amsterdam right now, you would never see the sun or the moon, because you're a fugitive sodomite'.⁷⁸ His slur repeated the prevailing stereotype that equated Dutch men with sodomites. In this case, almost 40 years after the great persecution wave

of the 1730s, the Antwerp city council still showed no leniency when foreign sodomites were concerned. The aldermen asked their colleagues in Amsterdam for an excerpt from their legal archives which proved that Bel had indeed fled the Republic in 1764 after being accused of sodomy.⁷⁹ Although Bel had come to the attention of the aldermen during a financial dispute, and direct evidence that he had committed sodomy in Antwerp was lacking, he was still exiled from the city.⁸⁰

Two years later, the Antwerp city council once more investigated a sodomy case with a clear Dutch connection. In November 1770, two inhabitants in their twenties, Jan-Jozef Sechel  and Jan-Baptiste Claessens, were questioned about same-sex acts they had allegedly committed with Carel Claessens the Elder. Jan-Baptiste, who was not related to Carel, had not only masturbated Carel several times, he had demanded hush money afterwards.⁸¹ The outcome of this investigation is unclear as neither Jean-Baptiste Claessens nor Carel Claessens makes a further appearance in the legal records of the *vierschuur*. However, it is intriguing that the file containing their testimonies also includes the correspondence between the Antwerp college of alderman and their Dordrecht counterparts about a certain Herman de Bruijn who, like many of the migrants during the wave of the 1730s, had fled from his home city of Dordrecht in July 1770 after being accused of sodomy. The mayor of Dordrecht even provided the city council of Antwerp with a printed copy of de Bruijn's verdict. As the legal file is incomplete, it is difficult to determine why this information was added to the testimonies of the two Claessens. Did Herman de Bruijn, upon his arrival in Antwerp, befriend Jan-Baptiste and Carel and commit sodomy with them? The available source material is too limited to provide an answer, but the continuation of this Dutch connection in these eighteenth-century Antwerp sodomy cases is highly intriguing.⁸²

Only a handful of criminal investigations for sodomy are known for eighteenth-century Antwerp.⁸³ In the majority of these cases, the authorities were looking for a link with the Dutch Republic. This link was confirmed when Dutch migrants were involved. And assuming that same-sex acts in eighteenth-century Antwerp were not committed exclusively by migrants from the Northern Netherlands – unlikely – it seems that there was a greater willingness on the part of the local authorities to refrain from the usual discretion regarding sodomy when migrants were involved. At the same time, the Dutch connection was amplified through rhetorical references to the Republic's reputation regarding the 'unmentionable vice.'

In both instances a discourse was cultivated that distanced Antwerp and its inhabitants as much as possible from sodomy and stressed the fact that sodomy was a typically Dutch phenomenon. Hence, the age-old rhetoric of presenting sodomy as a foreign concept remained alive and kicking in eighteenth-century Antwerp, as evidenced by the criminal investigations of Jan Coster and other Dutch migrants in Antwerp, which are full of sodomitical stereotypes about the Dutch. Such accounts demonstrate the longstanding international significance of the 1730s sodomy trials in the Dutch Republic. Consequently, this analysis illustrates how research on deviant sexuality in the early modern period can benefit from a transregional perspective: sudden peaks in prosecution rates within a given region could have disruptive consequences elsewhere. Similarly, particular early modern urban attitudes regarding same-sex acts cannot be fully understood without positioning them in an international context.

Conclusion

Sodomy, or the unmentionable vice, was a crime that appealed to the imagination in early modern urban society. The idea of sodomy as a foreign vice was well embedded throughout Europe, but the example of Antwerp shows that this concept was subject to change during the eighteenth century. After the tumultuous sodomy trials conducted in the Dutch Republic from 1730 onwards, the stereotype of the Dutch sodomite influenced both the general public and the authorities in Antwerp. As a result, Dutch migrants were arrested and questioned about their alleged same-sex desires more frequently than local citizens. This is remarkable, as most authorities assumed that sodomy had been eradicated. And if not, they seemed to agree that the best strategy was to pretend as though it were. The threshold for punishing interlopers from the Northern Netherlands may have been lower than for the local population. Moreover, the punishment of migrants could be used to confirm the belief that sodomy was a crime unknown to the local urban community. In light of the small number of sodomy trials in the eighteenth-century Southern Netherlands, the resoluteness with which the Antwerp aldermen dealt with Dutch sodomites in their city is illustrative for the persistent perception of sodomy as a foreign phenomenon in early modern Europe.

These attitudes become all the more clear by moving beyond the strictures of these local communities and opting for a transregional perspective. Consequently, this article nuances the extent to which the perception of sodomy was determined by a single cultural framework. By examining the effect of the Dutch sodomy trials of 1730 in the city of Antwerp, the ways in which the discontent with the presence of migrants in early modern cities was channelled through sexual accusations is illustrated. Furthermore, this transregional dimension brings out the ways in which xenophobic sentiments and contemporary fears across borders framed and infused anxieties about sodomite conspiracies during the eighteenth century, especially in times of -supposed- civic decay. As such, the importance of the well-documented case of Jan Coster and his accomplices transcends that of local, urban historiography and invites us to re-evaluate the relationship between early modern microhistory and the cultural roots of sexual stereotypes and their meanings.

Notes

1. '(...) welcken broeder hij seyde dat tot Amsterdam opgehangen was om die saeken (...),' Antwerp, City Archives Antwerp (hereafter Felixarchief), Hoge Vierschaar (HV), V#96 (Interrogations and witness reports 1736–1737), 26 January 1737, non-foliated.
2. '(...) dat is oock eenen van ons volck', idem.
3. 'dat sien ick, zyt gy dien Hollandtschen vogel, dien sodomiet', idem.
4. '(...) waer op hij deponent ende du Pré tot het volck riepen dat het eenen sodomitter was, die hun seyde, wel geeft hem dan een goede vracht slagen (...)', idem.
5. During the Middle Ages, the concept, derived from the biblical story of Sodom and Gomorrah, had evolved into an umbrella term referring to a series of prohibited sexual acts ranging from masturbation, bestiality, non-vaginal sex between a man and a woman and child abuse. Nevertheless, sodomy was first and foremost associated with male same-sex acts. Mark Jordan, *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology* (Chicago, 1997), p. 29; Harry Cocks, *Visions of Sodomy: Religion, Homoerotic Desire, and the End of the World in England, c. 1550–1850* (Chicago, 2017), pp. 1–2.

6. Jonas Roelens, *Citizens & Sodomites. Perception and Persecution of Sodomy in the Southern Low Countries (1400–1700)*, unpublished PhD, Ghent University, 2018, pp. 67–71.
7. Elwin Hofman, 'The End of Sodomy: Law, Prosecution Patterns, and the Evanescent Will to Knowledge in Belgium, France and the Netherlands, 1770–1830', *Journal of Social History*, 54:2 (2020), p. 5.
8. Elwin Hofman, 'Achter gesloten deuren', in Wannes Dupont, Elwin Hofman, and Jonas Roelens (eds), *Verzwegen verlangen. Een geschiedenis van homoseksualiteit in België* (Antwerp, 2017) p. 90.
9. Jonas Roelens, 'Spaensche pepers', en een 'schrickelyck quaet'. Sodomie in 18^{de}-eeuws Brugge', *Historica* 39:2 (2016), p. 6.
10. See among others: Randolph Trumbach, 'The transformation of Sodomy from the Renaissance to the Modern World and its General Sexual Consequences', *Signs*, 37:4 (2012), pp. 832–38; Randolph Trumbach, 'Modern Sodomy: The Origins of Homosexuality, 1700–1800', in Matt Cook (ed), *A Gay History of Britain: Love and Sex Between Men in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2007), p. 77; Rictor Norton, *Mother Clap's Molly House: The Gay Subculture in England, 1700–1830* (London, 1992); Michel Rey, 'Parisian Homosexuals Create a Lifestyle, 1700–1750: The Police Archives', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 9:3 (1985), pp. 179–90; and Theo van der Meer 'Sodomy and its Discontents: Discourse, Desire and the Rise of a Same-Sex Proto Something in the Early Modern Dutch Republic', *Historical Reflections*, 33:1 (2007), pp. 41–67.
11. '(...) waer op desen persoon syne handt onder des deponents kinne toegebracht heeft al streelende over het aensicht, ende den deponent hem daerover eenen slagh ofte twee gegeven hebbende, seggende gij sodomiter, gij schelm, meynt gij dat ick een vrouwmensch ben?' idem.
12. Wim Meewis, *De vierschaar. De criminele rechtspraak in het oude Antwerpen* (Kappellen, 1992), pp. 43–44.
13. Antwerp, Felixarchief, HV, #V96, 4 February 1737, non-foliated.
14. Antwerp, Felixarchief, HV, #V96, 27 January 1737, non-foliated.
15. See below the example of Christiaan Bel in 1768. For foreign examples: Theo van der Meer, *Sodoms zaad in Nederland. Het ontstaan van homoseksualiteit in de vroegmoderne tijd* (Nijmegen, 1995), pp. 342–345; Randolph Trumbach, 'Blackmail for Sodomy in Eighteenth-Century London', *Historical Reflections*, 33:1 (2007), pp. 23–39; and Gary Dyer, 'The Arrest of Caleb Williams: Unnatural Crime, Constructive Violence, and Overwhelming Terror in Late Eighteenth-Century England', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 36:3 (2012), p. 31. For an example from the Southern Netherlands in which the blackmailers were punished: Marc Boone, 'State Power and Illicit Sexuality: The Persecution of Sodomy in Late Medieval Bruges', *Journal of Medieval History*, 22:2 (1996), p. 147.
16. Antwerp, Felixarchief, HV, V#96, 2 April 1737, non-foliated.
17. See among others: Dirk Berents, *Het werk van de vos. Samenleving en criminaliteit in de Late Middeleeuwen* (Zutphen, 1985), p. 196; Johannes Boomgaard, *Misdaad en straf in Amsterdam. Een onderzoek naar de strafrechtspleging van de Amsterdamse schepenbank 1490–1552* (Zwolle, 1992), p. 123; Maarten Müller, *Misdaad en straf in een Hollandse stad: Haarlem, 1264–1615* (Hilversum, 2017), p. 84; Dirk-Jan Noordam, 'Homosexualiteit en sodomie in Leiden, 1533–1811', *Leids Jaarboekje*, 45 (1983), pp. 98–99; and Dirk-Jan Noordam, 'Strafrechtspleging en criminaliteit in Delft in de vroeg-moderne tijd', *Tijdschrift voor sociale geschiedenis*, 15 (1989), pp. 233–35.
18. Leo Boon, 'Dien godlosen hoop van menschen'. *Vervolging van sodomie in de Republiek in de jaren dertig van de achttiende eeuw* (Amsterdam, 1997), p. 37; and Dirk-Jan Noordam, *Riskante relaties. Vijf eeuwen homoseksualiteit in Nederland, 1233–1733* (Hilversum, 1995), p. 212.
19. van der Meer, *Sodoms zaad*, pp. 83–89.

20. Rictor Norton (ed.), 'Newspaper Reports: The Dutch Purge of Homosexuals, 1730'. Available at <http://www.rictornorton.co.uk/eighteen/1730news.htm> (accessed 16 February 2021).
21. Hofman, 'Achter gesloten deuren', p. 91.
22. Gustaaf Asaert, 'Het stadsbeeld in de middeleeuwen', in Karel Van Isacker and Raymond van Uytven (eds), *Antwerpen: twaalf eeuwen geschiedenis en cultuur* (Antwerp, 1986), p. 49; and Inge Bertels, Tom Bisschops and Bruno Blondé, 'Stadslandschap. Ontwikkelingen en verwikkelingen van een stedelijke ruimte', in Inge Bertels, Bert De Munck and Herman Van Goethem (eds), *Antwerpen. Biografie van een stad* (Antwerp, 2010), p. 23.
23. Bert De Munck, Hilde Greefs, and Anne Winter, 'Poorten en papieren. Diversiteit en integratie in historisch perspectief', in Inge Bertels, Bert De Munck and Herman Van Goethem (eds), *Antwerpen. Biografie van een stad* (Antwerp, 2010), p. 214.
24. Jeroen Puttevils, *Merchants Merchants and Trading in the Sixteenth Century: The Golden Age of Antwerp* (London, 2016), p. 57; Oscar Gelderblom, *Cities of Commerce: The Institutional Foundations of International Trade in the Low Countries, 1250–1650* (Princeton, 2013), p. 29; and Jan Lampo, *Gelukkige stad. De gouden jaren van Amsterdam (1485–1585)* (Amsterdam, 2017), p. 16.
25. Catharina Lis, *Social Change and the Labouring Poor. Antwerp, 1770–1860* (New Haven, 1985), pp. 74–84; and Bruno Blondé and Ilja Van Damme, 'Retail Growth and Consumer Changes in a Declining Urban Economy: Antwerp (1650–1750)', *Economic History Review*, 63:3 (2010), pp. 638–63.
26. Anne Winter, 'Migratiebeleid en economische verandering. Nieuwkomers en armenzorg in Antwerpen, 1750–1900', *Noordbrabants Historisch Jaarboek*, 26 (2009), p. 106.
27. Anne Winter, 'Circuits de migration vers un port en formation: Anvers, 1760–1860', *Revue du Nord*, 95:399 (2013), p. 137; and Anne Winter, *Migrants and Urban Change: Newcomers to Antwerp, 1760–1860* (London, 2009), pp. 71–72.
28. Jos Monballyu, *Six Centuries of Criminal Law. History of Criminal Law in the Southern Netherlands and Belgium (1400–2000)* (Leiden, 2014), pp. 351–63.
29. Jos Van den Nieuwenhuizen, 'Bestuursinstellingen van de stad Antwerpen', in Raymond Van Uytven, Claude Bruneel, and Herman Coppens (eds), *De gewestelijke en lokale overheidsinstellingen in Brabant en Mechelen tot 1795* (Brussel, 2000), pp. 464–66.
30. Meewis, *De vierschaar*, 79.
31. Antwerp, Erfgoedbibliotheek Hendrik Conscience, no. 2927 (Rechten, ende costumen van Antwerpen 1582), 34.
32. Edmond Poulet, *Histoire du droit pénal dans le duché de Brabant* (Brussels, 1870), p. 478.
33. Hofman, 'Achter gesloten deuren', 95.
34. During a sodomy trial in 1781, the Privy Council did advise the Antwerp aldermen: Fernand Vanhemelryck, *De Criminaliteit in de ammanie van de stad Brussel van de late middeleeuwen tot het einde van het ancien régime (1404–1789)* (Brussels, 1981), pp. 160–62; and Hofman, 'Achter gesloten deuren', 94.
35. Gerrit Verhoeven, "'Omtrent het Quart na den Sessen". Het tijdsbewustzijn van getuigen voor de Antwerpse vierschaar (1585–1789)', in Harald Deceulaer and Laetizia Puccio (eds), *Het pleit is in den zak! Procesdossiers uit het ancien régime en hun perspectieven voor historisch onderzoek* (Brussels, 2014), pp. 197–208; Gerrit Verhoeven, 'Le pays où on ne sait pas lire', Literacy, Numeracy and Human Capital in the Commercial Hub of the Austrian Netherlands (1715–75)', *European History Quarterly*, 44:2 (2014), pp. 223–243; and Gerrit Verhoeven '(Pre)Modern Sleep. New Evidence from the Antwerp Criminal Court (1715–1795)', *Journal of Sleep Research*, 30:1 (2020), pp. 1–7.
36. Gerrit Verhoeven, 'How do these Foreigners Blend in? Migration and Integration in Late Eighteenth-Century Antwerp (1715–92)', *Cultural and Social History*, 13:2 (2016), pp. 163, 174.
37. Cristian Berco, 'Social Control and Its Limits: Sodomy, Local Sexual Economies, and Inquisitors during Spain's Golden Age', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 36:2 (2005), p. 345; Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (London, 1982), p. 75; and

- Federico Garza Carvajal, *Butterflies Will Burn. Prosecuting Sodomites in Early Modern Spain and Mexico* (Austin, 2003), p. 60.
38. For a broad overview of these discursive constructions: Jonas Roelens, 'Fornicating Foreigners: Sodomy, Migration, and Urban Society in the Southern Low Countries (1400--1700)', *Dutch Crossing*, 41:3 (2017), pp. 230--33. Interestingly enough, the practice of describing foreigners as sodomites persisted well into the 19th century when Irish nationalists often associated the English rule with sexual immorality. Averill Earls, 'Unnatural Offenses of English Import: The Political Association of Englishness and Same-Sex Desire in Nineteenth-Century Nationalist Media', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 28:3 (2019), p. 397.
 39. Michael Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships. Homosexuality and Male Culture in Renaissance Florence* (Oxford, 1998), p. 3.
 40. Roelens, 'Fornicating Foreigners', p. 232.
 41. Dorothee Sturkenboom, *De ballen van de koopman. Mannelijkheid en Nederlandse identiteit in de tijd van de Republiek* (Gorredijk, 2019), pp. 59--60.
 42. Sturkenboom, *De ballen van de koopman*, pp. 350--60; and Leo Boon, 'Those "Damned Sodomites": Public Images of Sodomy in the Eighteenth-Century Netherlands', in Kent Gerard and Gert Hekma (eds), *The Pursuit of Sodomy. Male Homosexuality in Renaissance and Enlightenment Europe* (New York, 1989), p. 241.
 43. Fernand Vanhemelryck, *Marginalen in de geschiedenis. Over beulen, joden, hoeren, zigeuners en andere zondebokken* (Leuven, 2005), p. 207.
 44. On the distribution of newspapers in the Southern Netherlands: Paul Arblaster, *From Ghent to Aix From Ghent to Aix: How They Brought the News in the Habsburg Netherlands, 1550--1700* (Leiden, 2014); Arthur der Weduwen, *Dutch and Flemish Newspapers Dutch and Flemish Newspapers of the Seventeenth Century* (Leiden, 2017); and Steven Van Impe, 'The business and Profit of Newspapers in the Southern Netherlands', *Early Modern Low Countries*, 2:1 (2018), pp. 88--102.
 45. '(...) eenen capoen van dat volck dat uijt Hollant ghejaeght is ende van de welcke men sommige om hun quaet in sacken heeft gesteken ende int water heeft geworpen ghelijck hij oock heeft hoeren lesen uijt de gazetten', Antwerp, Felixarchief, HV, V#96, 8 February 1737, non-foliated.
 46. Jonas Roelens, 'Songs of Sodom: Singing About the Unmentionable Vice in the Early Modern Low Countries', *Journal of Homosexuality*, 66:8 (2019), p. 1132.
 47. On sodomy as a source of anxiety: Cocks, *Visions of Sodom*, especially 73--106.
 48. On the importance of gossip in late medieval and early modern sodomy trials: Jonas Roelens, 'Gossip, Defamation and Sodomy in the Early Modern Southern Netherlands', *Renaissance Studies*, 32:2 (2018), pp. 236--52.
 49. Antwerp, Felixarchief, HV, V#96, 6 February 1737, non-foliated.
 50. '(...) die volckeren, de welcke uijt hollant, om het quaet van sodomie gevlught waeren', Antwerp, Felixarchief, HV, V#96, 8 February 1737, non-foliated.
 51. '(...) oft hij niet en kent eenighe andere Hollanders die uijt Hollant gejaeght sijn om het voorseijt quaet ofte de sonde van sodomie', idem.
 52. Antwerp, Felixarchief, HV, V#96, 23 February 1737, non-foliated.
 53. van der Meer, *Sodoms zaad*, p. 462; and Boon, '*Dien godlosen hoop*', p. 393.
 54. In the investigation of 1737, the following individuals who had fled to Antwerp after absentia exile from the Republic appear: Dirk Bom (The Hague, 1730), Huijbert van Briesack (The Hague, 1730), Coopman (Utrecht, 1730), Jan Coster (Amsterdam, 1730), Adriaan Cousebant (Haarlem, 1730), Pieter van Egmont (The Hague, 1730), Hendrik van Oort (Amsterdam (1730). See the indexes of sodomy convictions in the Republic in van der Meer, *Sodoms Zaad*, pp. 459--86 and Boon '*Dien godlosen hoop*', pp. 390--93. Other Dutch migrants who were mentioned during the examination, but for whom no previous conviction could be established are: Van Dort (possibly Anthony van Waart, summoned to the Amsterdam court in 1732), Van Thol (Rotterdam), Van Oudthuijn ('Holland'), 'a certain bachelor' (Maastricht). Mentioned individuals for whom it could not be established whether

they were Antwerp citizens or immigrants: Snoeck, Thijsmans. Mentioned citizens from Antwerp: Matthijs Roeckhout, Nicolaes Schreder.

55. '(...) gemerckt dat hij uijt hollandt vluchtig is geweest om de faiten door hem aldaer bedreven, emmers daer hij van betight is geweest te weten de sonde tegen nature, hoe hij soor vermeten is van de selven faute binnen dese landen alsnoch voorts te gaen', Antwerp, Felixarchief, HV, V#96, 26 January 1737, non-foliated.
56. van der Meer, *Sodoms zaad*, p. 463; Boon, 'Dien godlosen hoop', p. 390.
57. Antwerp, Felixarchief, HV, V#96, non-foliated correspondence in attachment; van der Meer, *Sodoms zaad*, p. 469.
58. '(...) ik versoek tog dat gy de vrindschap niet al te hoog laat werden, hout u tog maar liever alleenig (...)', Antwerp, Felixarchief, HV, V#96, non-foliated correspondence in attachment.
59. '(...) by welcken heer verscheijde Hollanders dickwils bij malcanderen waeren comende (...)', Antwerp, Felixarchief, HV, V#96, 8 February, non-foliated.
60. Before Matthijs was forced to masturbate the 'bachelor', he assaulted Matthijs: 'seggende dat ditto heere hem Matthijs (...) oneerlijck heeft aengeraeckt ende aen sijns Matthijs mannelijckheijt heeft verweckt so verre dat de natuerlijcke voeghtigheijt daeruijt is gevloijt', idem.
61. James Steakley, 'Sodomy in Enlightenment Prussia: From Execution to Suicide', *Journal of Homosexuality*, 16:1–2 (1989), p. 166; and Jakob Michelsen, 'Die Verfolgung des Delikts Sodomie im 18. Jahrhundert in Brandenburg-Preußen', in Norbert Finzsch and Marcus Velke (eds), *Queer, Gender, Historiographie. Aktuelle Tendenzen und Projekte* (Berlin, 2016), p. 230.
62. Jeffrey Merrick, 'Sodomites and Police in Paris, 1715', *Journal of Homosexuality*, 42:3 (2002), p. 108; Jeffrey Merrick, 'Commissioner Foucault, Inspector Noël, and the 'Pederasts' of Paris, 1780–3', *Journal of Social History*, 32:2 (1998), p. 287–307; Michel Rey, 'Police and Sodomy in Eighteenth-Century Paris: From Sin to Disorder', in Kent Gerard and Gert Hekma (eds), *The Pursuit of Sodomy. Male Homosexuality in Renaissance and Enlightenment Europe* (New York, 1989), p. 143; and Thierry Pastorello, *Sodome à Paris à Paris. Fin XVIII^e-milieu XIX^e siècle: l'homosexualité masculine en construction* (Grâne, 2011), p. 81–102.
63. Jeffrey Merrick, "'A Fabric of Infamy": The Sodomitical Life of Jean François de Rougemont', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 26:1 (2017), p. 4.
64. Michael Sibalis, 'Paris' in David Higgs (ed), *Queer Sites. Gay Urban Histories since 1600* (London, 1999), p. 13.
65. Steve Poole, 'Bringing great shame upon this city": Sodomy, the Courts and the Civic Idiom in Eighteenth-Century Bristol', *Urban History*, 34:1 (2007), p. 117; and George Haggerty, *Men in Love: Masculinity and Sexuality in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1999), p. 82.
66. Randolph Trumbach, *Sex and the Gender Revolution. Volume 1: Heterosexuality and the Third Gender in Enlightenment London* (Chicago, 1998), p. 91.
67. Jody Greene, 'Public Secrets: Sodomy and the Pillory in the Eighteenth Century and Beyond', *The Eighteenth Century*, 44:2–3 (2003), pp. 203–32; and Netta Goldsmith, *The Worst of Crimes: Homosexuality and the Law in Eighteenth-Century London* (Aldershot, 1998), p. 41. However, some individuals were indeed sentenced to death: Farid Azfar, 'Genealogy of an Execution: the Sodomite, the Bishop, and the Anomaly of 1726', *Journal of British Studies*, 51:3 (2012), pp. 568–93.
68. Ruth Karras, *From Boys to Men: Formation of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia, 2003) pp. 147–48; Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships*, pp. 94–118; and Cristian Berco, *Sexual Hierarchies, Public Status. Men, Sodomy and Society in Spain's Golden Age* (Toronto, 2007), pp. 91–92.
69. Trumbach, 'The Transformation of Sodomy', p. 833.

70. Michelsen, 'Wider die Natur'. Gleichgeschlechtliche Sexualität im frühneuzeitlichen Hamburg', in Johan Anselm Steiger and Sandra Richter (eds), *Hamburg. Eine Metropolregion zwischen Früher Neuzeit und Aufklärung* (Berlin, 2012), p. 809.
71. Jeffrey Merrick, 'Patterns and Concepts in the Sodomitical Subculture of Eighteenth-Century Paris', *Journal of Social History*, 50:3 (2016), pp. 273–306; and Jeffrey Merrick, 'New Sources and Questions for Research on Sexual Relationships between Men in Eighteenth-Century France', *Gender & History*, 30:1 (2018), p. 21. In fact, traditional patterns of age-related hierarchical relations persisted into the 20th century, as George Chauncey has demonstrated for New York. George Chauncey, *Gay New York. Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940* (New York, 1997), pp. 88–89.
72. Hofman, 'Achter gesloten deuren', pp. 87–117.
73. 'Depuis quelques années nous avons eû encore des exemples de ce crime, dont le gouvernement alors trouva à propos de faire cesser les recherches à charge d'un de nos habitans et à l'égard de deux Hollandois ou fit sortir les deux derniers hors du pais et l'on crût devoir dérober au vulgaire la pensée d'un crime alors si peu connu dans ces pais (...)', Brussels, National Archives of Belgium, Privy Council: Austrian Period. 576/B (Theft of sacred objects, sodomy, polygamy, seduction, elopement, rape 1765–1792), mémoire on the Stocker trial 1781.
74. '(...) dat hij den geïnterroegeerde met sijne handen oneerlijck heeft aengeraeckt tegen sijns geïnterroegeerdes danck', Antwerp, Felixarchief, HV, V#96, 8 February, non-foliated.
75. '(...) dat hij den selven Matthijs aen het aensight gekust heeft, streelende ende vrijvende over deselfs matthijs aensight', idem.
76. This sort of gifts was fairly common in early modern sodomy cases: Helmut Puff, 'The Sodomites Clothes. Gift-Giving and Sexual Excess in Early Modern Germany and Switzerland', in Karen Encarnacion and Anne McClanan (eds), *The Material Culture of Sex, Procreation and Marriage in Pre-Modern Europe* (New York, 2002), pp. 251–72.
77. Roelens, *Citizens & Sodomites*, p. 187.
78. 'Waert dat gij tot Amsterdam quaemt gij saght noijt son noch maen, want gij eenen gevluchten sodomiter sijt', Antwerp, Felixarchief, 731#1514 (File on 'pederasty'), 26 February 1767, non-foliated.
79. Antwerp, Felixarchief, 731#1514, 'extract uijt de schoutenrolle der Stad Amsterdam': '(...) schuldig gemaakt, aan de execrable misdaad van sodomie en verregaande schandelijke vuijligheeden (...)', non-foliated.
80. Hofman, 'Achter gesloten deuren', p. 93.
81. '(...) om dieswille hij gevangen den voornoemde Claessens dregde van sijnen handel aen sijne huisvrouw ende familie kenbaer te maecken', Antwerp, Felixarchief, V#107 (Interrogations and witness reports 1768–1770), 19 November 1770, non-foliated.
82. This was also the case during the nineteenth century: about half of the men arrested for homosexual acts between 1875 and 1900 were no local citizens. Although the majority consisted of Belgians from outside the city, the remaining men originated mainly from Germany and, remarkably enough, the Netherlands. Anke De Cock, 'L'ignoble affaire de la Pinte Rouge. Een verkenning van de homoseksuele stad in de late 19de eeuw', *Historica*, 43:3 (2020), pp. 34–40.
83. 1737: Coster and fellow suspects; 1768: Bel; 1770: Sechelé and Claessens; 1776: Masso and Carnou (Hofman, 'achter gesloten deuren', p. 100); 1781: Stocker and fellow suspects; 1781: Cauchois (Jozef De Brouwer, *De kerkelijke rechtspraak en haar evolutie in de bisdommen Antwerpen, Gent en Mechelen tussen 1570 en 1795* (Tielt, 1972), vol. 1, p. 632); 1782: Janssens and Allecourt (Elwin Hofman, 'The Internalization of Man. Stigma, Criminal Justice and Self in the Southern Netherlands, 1750–1830', Unpublished PhD, KU Leuven, 2017, p. 339).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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