

the grain” of American society, not as it “was becoming” (p. 254) but as it had long been.

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ALTER, GEORGE. *Family and the Female Life Course. The Women of Verviers, Belgium, 1849–1880.* The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison (WI) 1988. xiv, 226 pp. \$ 39.50. (Paper: \$ 24.25.)

In this scholarly monograph, George Alter presents the results of several years of work with the nineteenth-century population registers of the Belgian textile city of Verviers. In conducting this research, Alter encountered a number of the problems associated with true longitudinal, continuous event history data. While many of the standard measures and methods in demography are based on combinations of stock data (e.g., censuses, one-time surveys) or basic vital registration (of births, deaths, marriages), population registers pose a challenge, since the population stock is enumerated once when the register is opened and the vital events, including both internal and external migrations, are registered on a continuous basis. Alter does a fine job in coping with these issues, particularly by introducing life-table-type analysis and proportional hazards models.

Verviers is a city in Francophone eastern Belgium which specialized in the production of woolen textiles. Its population grew from about 20,000 inhabitants in 1830 to about 50,000 in 1890. It was selected because of its interesting economic structure, providing employment opportunities for women, and its size, large enough to give adequate socio-economic variation and not so large that the registration mechanism would have been overstrained. The dates circumscribing the analysis were determined by the availability of the register data. Population registers were opened in 1846 and again in 1849, 1856, and 1866. The more recent data (post-1880) were evidently not available for public or scholarly use. The analysis begins with 1849 (and not 1846) because of the short span of the first, relatively less successful 1846 register.

The book’s introductory chapter provides a good overview, setting up the debate, describing Verviers, justifying the life-course approach (as opposed to the life-cycle approach), briefly describing methods and giving (on pp. 20–24) an excellent summary of findings. The book is well supplied with such summaries, with one following each chapter and a concise set again in the final chapter. A good deal is made in the book of the life-course approach, which emphasizes the individual’s perspective in contrast to the life-cycle approach which uses the household or family as the unit of analysis. One implication is that the tabulations and analyses focus on individual women. Another is that descriptions of family types (for analytical purposes) eschew such categories as nuclear, expanded, extended, etc. in favor of such categories as family of birth and procreative family (after marriage). This perspective has a good deal to recommend it, especially when actions and decisions of family members are of interest rather than phenomena associated with the family or household overall.

Chapter 2 gives a description of the methods and data. The availability of register data presents challenges. Alter quite correctly uses true “person years” at risk as the denominators for rates. He also resorts to the use of life-table-type analysis to study such things as propensity to migrate, marry, and bear a child. This procedure avoids problems created by “censoring” in the data. Censoring results because complete life histories are not observed. Consequent biases to rates are avoided by using age-specific rates, for which life-table analysis is very appropriate. This creates, however, a further difficulty for multivariate analysis which Alter solves by utilizing recent developments in the demographic literature on proportional hazards models. Such models are employed in chapters 6 and 7, for analysis of marriage and fertility, respectively. Given the size of Verviers, Alter avoids sampling the entire population over this 31-year period by taking four separate subsamples. They include a random sample of 651 adult women (born during 1826–35) linked from 1849 to 1880 (across three different registers), an unlinked random sample of 709 adult women from the 1866–80 register, an “elite” sample of 175 adult women who were selected on the basis of an 1849 tax list, and a random sample of older women (born during 1806–19) from the 1849–55 register. Evaluation of the population registers suggests good quality. Some use was also made of marriage registers and, as mentioned, tax data.

The substantive analysis is presented in four chapters. The first (chapter 3) explores the issues of the joint roles of marriage, migration, and household composition in the life course of adult women. One major conclusion is that unmarried women remained in their families of origin (with parents and siblings) for a relatively long period, resulting in late ages at marriage and also economic benefits to the family from the earning or labor of these daughters. Young women born in Verviers did not tend to move out to work as servants. Young migrant women generally did that. The young Vervierois lived at home and contributed to the family or to their own dowries. Once married, however, they left their natal families and set up separate neolocal households, rarely then taking in kin.

Chapter 4 examines the relationship of these women to the labor market. Most unmarried women beyond their early teens worked, many in textile mills, the needle trades, or in retail shops. Once married, most left the wage labor force (not an unusual pattern in the nineteenth century), but many did continue part time in petty commerce, in running cabarets, or in domestic manufactures. Much of this latter employment is, however, hard to trace, as is unpaid family labor. Indeed, one of the weaknesses of register data is that occupational (as opposed to geographic) mobility is not recorded. Occupation was usually recorded only when an individual entered the register for the first time. Hence the conclusions about occupation and labor force status, which are important to many of the conclusions, are based on less reliable information than other demographic data. The range of female wages was quite compressed; there was significant occupational segregation by sex; and women tended to pursue the same general lines of work as their fathers, i.e., there was persistent occupational stratification across generations.

Like much of the rest of western Europe in this era, women in Verviers tended to marry late with a significant number never marrying at all. There was also considerable illegitimacy and bridal pregnancy. These are the questions addressed in chapters 5 and 6. Alter takes on the debate over whether the increase in illegitimacy in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Europe originated in greater

female independence associated with urbanization and more pervasive wage labor (a position supported by Edward Shorter) or whether it was caused by a breakdown in rural courtship and social sanction mechanisms also associated with urbanization and wage labor (a view held by, for example, Louise Tilly and Joan Scott). Alter comes down for a modified version of the latter. He concludes, for mid-nineteenth century Verviers at least, that there was still a good deal of parental control, and that bridal pregnancies and some illegitimacy were a tolerated part of the courtship pattern. Unwed mothers were not isolated from the community, were more likely to have been migrants or orphans, and simply had less bargaining power in the marriage market. In terms of nuptiality (chapter 6), it is clear that Verviers was an example of the European female marriage pattern of later age at marriage and relatively high proportions never marrying. Parents often indeed consciously tried to delay the marriages of daughters for the economic advantage of the family. A proportional hazard analysis of the decision to marry found little effect of occupation of either the woman or her father on marriage probabilities. Brothers may have helped their sisters marry. The death of a mother may have increased the likelihood of marriage while the death of a father had the opposite effect (because of the conflicting factors of reduced family cohesion and increased need by the widow for the daughter's earnings). But, the interesting conclusion is that "the marriage patterns of women in nineteenth-century Verviers did not evolve primarily from the balancing of needs and services among parents and children. Rather, the moral obligations within the family often overshadowed its economic functions" (p. 160). The problem with this conclusion is that the dismissal of the importance of economic factors is based largely on the absence of the significance of the occupational variables in the hazard analysis, despite the fact that these occupational variables are not the only, or the best, measures of economic conditions in the household.

The final substantive chapter (ch. 7) deals with fertility and also employs life-table and proportional hazards analysis, as well as the Coale–Trussell model of marital fertility. Period fertility rates did not commence their decline in Verviers until the 1870's, but this phenomenon concealed some complex countercurrents. Fertility control among older women via "stopping" behavior at older ages of childbearing was offset by rising fertility among younger-age cohorts of women, possibly associated with changes in breastfeeding practices. Infant mortality had demonstrable effects on fertility, both through interrupted lactation and also through deliberate "replacement" behavior of parents. Incidentally, such event history data and methods are excellent for teasing out such results. Finally, the socio-economic variables of occupation and literacy (as measured by ability to sign the marriage register) seemed to have had little power to explain the Coale–Trussell fertility parameters, while migrant status did well. Alter interprets this as evidence that cultural factors, in this case rural origins, seem to have had much more to do with fertility decline than socio-economic factors. Aside from earlier fertility declines among the elite, the other socio-economic groups experienced fertility decline at roughly the same time. This fits in with current thinking in the debates over the historical demographic transition, although, again, the shortcoming of Alter's measures of socio-economic status must be noted.

Overall, this is an imaginative work in social and demographic history. It introduces new applications of life-table analysis and hazards models to the historical

literature. With the ample summaries provided, the book is readable and accessible, despite the large numbers of tables (sixty-one) and the technical nature of the subject. Alter demonstrates that event-history data, though difficult at times, are not intractable. Many important questions can be approached with them. Although the generality of results for one Belgian industrial city for a circumscribed time period may be a concern, this work is nonetheless a must for libraries and for scholars interested in the economic, family, and demographic history.

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BARRIO ALONSO, ANGELES. *Anarquismo y anarcosindicalismo en Asturias (1890–1936)*. Siglo veintiuno editores, Madrid 1988. xx, 460 pp. Ptas 1887.

From the last years of the 19th-century anarchism and anarchosyndicalism gained a considerable degree of support in the Iberian peninsula. The industrial centres of Cataluña, in particular, came to be connected with a libertarian, rather than authoritarian, form of socialism. When in 1910–11 a permanent anarchosyndicalist trade-union organisation, the CNT, was established, support, as much for its creation as for its maintenance, came principally from that region and at the II National Congress in 1919 the Catalan regional confederation still represented some 60% of the CNT's membership.

However, the reasons why the Spanish anarchosyndicalist movement has continued to interest and excite is not because of its expansion at the end of the second decade of the 20th century but for its development during the fourth decade, because it was precisely then that the organisation expanded to become genuinely nationwide. The dominance of the Catalan region declined steadily: from some 60% in 1919 to 55% in 1931 and to less than 30% in 1936. The events of the Republican period increased the importance of other regional confederations – Andalucía, Aragón and Asturias.

Asturias resounds in the accounts of the Second Republic for what took place there in 1934, namely the insurrection against the newly formed right-wing coalition government. A key factor behind the insurrection was the formation in the region of a “workers alliance”, essentially between the two trade-union organisations, the socialists of the UGT and the anarchosyndicalists of the CNT (the independent communists were also included but were few in number with no union organisation, while the official communists, who did have a union organisation, only joined on the very eve of the uprising).

The presence of the CNT in this alliance was, and is, a point of singular importance as it ran counter to the opinions of most of the other regional confederations and was opposed at national plenums both before and after it was signed. Why did the Asturian confederation enter the alliance? Was there something different or special about the libertarian movement in the region, and if so, what? These are the questions which have been repeatedly asked and which any book dealing with the subject of anarchism and anarchosyndicalism in Asturias should be looking to answer.