

Introduction: Catastrophe, Gender and Urban Experience

Deborah Simonton and Hannu Salmi

Preprint of the final chapter

As Enlightenment notions of the knowable and scientific predictability and of concepts of progress and the sense that humans could control and shape their environments became paramount in the mind set of Europe, catastrophes, and notably the Lisbon earthquake of 1755, shook much of Europe to the core and challenged the new world view with dramatic impact. This volume ends with another key catastrophe, the First World War, which similarly led to questioning many of the assumptions of progress and complacency, which had marked much of the previous century. As Gerhard Masur concluded, 'There are few spectacles in the history of civilization comparable to this picture of Europe, basking in fruitful opulence under the autumn sun of its glory, ripe for the slaughter.'¹ *Catastrophe, Gender and Urban Experience in Europe, 1648–1920* concentrates on the shift from pre-modern to modern from the perspective of the increasing presence of catastrophes in European imagination and everyday life. It specifically addresses the history of catastrophes in Europe between the mid-seventeenth century to the early twentieth from an urban point of view. Thus, the chapters in this volume extend across a dynamic period of historical change: marked personally by the emergence of individualism; socially by the shift from a society of ranks and orders to a society stratified by class; economically by commerce, industrialization and consumerism; politically by the emergence of the nation state and an uneven, jerky engagement with notions of citizenship and democracy; and, developmentally, by the rise of the town and the growing hegemony of urban life, albeit to varying degrees and at different points in time across Europe. This period was

marked by the passage from a society of scarcity to one of expenditure and accumulation, from ranks and orders to greater social mobility, from traditional village life to a new bourgeois and even individualistic urbanism.

The book explores the influence of gender on the shape of towns themselves, the gendering of catastrophes and of spaces and the significance of gender as a force for urban change. It takes the view that gender is fundamental to the ways many towns shaped themselves, and that the effects of catastrophes and responses to them are not gender neutral. The gendered dimension of urban history and the study of urban catastrophes both have long individual pedigrees. This collection reflects our interest in the way that each informs the other and proposes to bring the two together in order to illuminate questions of interest to historians, geographers and urban planners. In the chapters contained here, authors address how gender was involved in the events and cultural corollaries around catastrophes, and how gendered practices were negotiated during and in the aftermath of disastrous incidents in European towns and cities. They ask in what ways did catastrophe and gender operate to shape, reflect or facilitate the actual or imaginary experience of the town for individuals, households or groups. This approach has enabled us to ask questions that urban history has tended not to ask, since in many respects the gendered character of towns has not been central to traditional urban history, or even studies of catastrophe. For example, what does this approach add to our knowledge of the operation of gender over time and to our knowledge of the history of towns? These questions and our tentative answers have the potential to challenge current perceptions of catastrophes and to nuance the historiography of urban responses. It broadens our thinking about urban catastrophic events and their legacy in urban settings, and will help us to understand the contribution of gender to the culture of towns over time. Thus, a key objective is to bring together issues of European urban development, gendered identities and the

relationship between these and catastrophic events.

This volume focuses on how both man-made and natural disasters affected urban communities across Europe, and explores the synergy of urban development in the aftermath of disaster by articulating the significance of gender in that response. The towns and cities that we consider in this volume have been chosen as ones that have a story to tell that is significant to our overall narrative about the relationships between catastrophes, urban spaces and gender. Each of the chapters addresses explicitly the specific urban context in which it is operating and outlines the distinctive and representational aspects of its location. Ranging from Moscow in the East to London in the West, from Pori, Finland, in the North to Lisbon in the South, it embraces a number of case studies interrogating the character of these catastrophes and specifically examines their longer-term impact. It also includes a chapter exploring the relationship between European and colonial cultures in the examination of Charleston, North Carolina and its adaptation to the lessons of the Great London Fire of 1666. These studies involve large towns, like Lisbon and Copenhagen, middle-sized ones like La Rochelle and Turku, as well as smaller ones like Pori. Taking a number of approaches, largely drawing on cultural history, this volume explores emotional, spatial, political and economic responses. Dealing with a period from early modern to modern, this volume will go some way to filling what remains a gap in our knowledge, both in terms of the history of the European town and the role of gender and space in shaping its development.

The history of catastrophes is an emerging field of research. Its interests range from natural and environmental disasters to social, industrial and technological accidents, from local hazards to global threats with a plethora of cultural ramifications. There are books on famous disasters, for example, famines, like Karen Cullen's *Famine in*

Scotland: The 'Ill Years' of the 1690s (Edinburgh University Press, 2010) or fires, like the Great Fire of London in 1666 examined in two excellent studies by Neil Hanson and Adrian Tinniswood.² The nearest to this volume in its focus on urbanity and catastrophe is Catherine J. Kudlick's study on the cultural meanings and social turmoil put forward by the cholera pandemic in the early nineteenth-century France.³ Kudlick's work concentrates on one geographical vantage point and one period in time in contrast to our volume, which aims at understanding the change across a *longue durée*, through the perspective of urban catastrophes. Similarly, in its focus on catastrophes in urban surroundings, the collection on *Cities and Catastrophes*, edited by Geneviève Massard-Guilbaud, Harold L. Platt and Dieter Schott, shares some common ground with our volume.⁴ Another 'genre' of catastrophe studies takes a comprehensive, global overview approach to their history, the most recent one being Geoffrey Parker's *Global Crisis: War, Climate Change and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century*, as well as others, like John Withington's *Disaster!* and Teofilo F. Ruiz's *The Terror of History*.⁵ Furthermore, there are important studies that concentrate on a particular period in history, for example, Chantal Thomas and Jeanne-Pierre Dupuy's *L'Invention de la catastrophe au XVIIIe Siècle* and Alessa Johns' *Dreadful Visitations*.⁶

This volume builds on this previous research, but it explicitly analyses a series of catastrophes and disasters in Europe through the prism of gender and urbanity. Dealing with well-known ones like the Lisbon earthquake of 1755, or the First World War, and lesser-known ones like flooding in Vienna and cholera in Moscow, the authors take a fresh perspective utilising the lens of gender and an expanded approach to the concept of catastrophe. Compared to many other projects, it also has the distinct benefit of analysing the role of catastrophes over a longer time span, which illuminates how perceptions of disasters, their background and consequences, have

changed from the seventeenth century to the early twentieth century. In contrast to some previous studies on disasters, the book *Catastrophe, Gender and Urban Experience in Europe* employs a broad definition of a catastrophe, by concentrating not only on external disasters and threats such as floods and earthquakes but also on internal hazards. It examines how sudden changes of circumstances influenced everyday life and led, in many cases, to an individual perception of a catastrophe. It also directs its central inquiry to how catastrophes hit urban centres and how the ramifications changed the city as well as explores their gendered implications. Chapters engage with a number of key questions, including the how disaster changed urban experience and how urban communities conceived, adapted to, and were transformed by catastrophes, both natural and human-made. To what extent were these experiences intersected and modified by other factors? What light does it throw on the changing nature and meaning of physical or psychological boundaries and conceptual spheres (public/private, male/female, licit/illicit, etc.)?

The Concept of Catastrophe

Without doubt, the history of catastrophes has deep roots in history, as far as we can see from the available source material. The Bible alone includes several references to catastrophes. Earthquakes appear numerous times in both the Old and New Testaments. In Matthew, for example, one reads an apocalyptic vision of the future: 'For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.'⁷ The history of catastrophes is bound together with the history of fear and the expectation of evil. In the fourth century BC, Aristotle wrote in his *Nicomachean Ethics* that 'he would be a sort of madman or insensible person if he feared nothing, neither earthquakes nor the

waves, as they say the Celts do not'.⁸ In the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas answered that although the threat was unavoidably present, it did not feel close and thus cause fear. The fear of death and destruction are consequences of universal nature that cannot be avoided but against whom the specific, particular nature rebels as long as possible. When the universal meets the particular in the present, there will be suffering and mourning, and when one tries to foresee its encounter, it causes fear.⁹

Throughout medieval and early modern periods, it seems obvious that disasters were seen to be instigated by the hand of God and through irreversible expressions of His will. In his book *Sin and Fear: The Emergence of the Western Guilt Culture, 13th–18th Centuries*, the French historian Jean Delumeau explores the rich history of guilt in Western Europe. People feared many kinds of things, from Black Death to Islam. During those centuries, Delumeau concludes, the introspection of fears materialized. In the case of external hazards, the attention was directed at the self, to the deeds of an individual, from which the problems were seen to stem. Delumeau thus writes about the birth of a guilt culture: the turn to the inner self that characterized Western culture, particularly during the seventeenth century.¹⁰

In the history of catastrophes, the eighteenth century deserves particular attention, primarily because of emergent industrialization and its ramifications. Industrial culture led to an increasing manipulation of nature and exploitation of natural resources. Structural changes in production were connected with the turmoil of social order and ways of life, and technology started to play an ever-increasing role in maintaining everyday practices. Simultaneously, risks in society increased in a rising curve. The German sociologist Ulrich Beck has argued that this process included a profound element for change. In pre-industrialized societies, hazards were not essentially based on economic or technological decisions, they were “strokes of fate” raining down on

mankind from “outside” and attributable to an “other” – gods, demons, or Nature’.¹¹ In an industrialized society, however, there were risks that depended on human choice. Obviously, industrial modernity has not succeeded in eradicating disasters, either natural or human-made, but it has developed different kinds of strategies in managing these threats, for example warning and evacuation systems and more alert disaster preparedness.¹² Many of the chapters in this book will address these tactics; they illuminate the ways they changed over time, and demonstrate an increasing risk potential in Western cultures. It is important to note however that there were also many similarities between pre-modern and modern disasters, in how they changed both personal lives and social communities.

This volume draws especially on the concept of ‘catastrophe’. Inevitably, the use of the word ‘catastrophe’ became saturated in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century publicity. Its etymological background is the Greek word *καταστροφή*, which means an overturning, a sudden turn or a conclusion.¹³ It appeared as early as in the thirteenth book of Aristotle’s *Poetics* as part of a tragedy. In Aristotle, ‘catastrophe’ did not however refer only to a misfortune, a negative turn. It could also be a turn to the better. Aristotle notes that, in some works like the *Odyssey*, there is ‘a double thread of plot, and also an opposite catastrophe for the good and for the bad’.¹⁴ ‘Catastrophe’ was used for centuries as a dramatic concept. In the 1779 edition of Diderot and d’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie* one reads that catastrophe is ‘la changement ou la révolution qui arrive à la fin de l’action d’un poème dramatique’ [the change or revolution that happens at the end of the action of a dramatic poem].¹⁵

It is difficult to estimate when exactly the concept of ‘catastrophe’ widened outside of dramatic theory to describe a disaster in the life of an individual or a community and to include both natural and human-made disasters. Most probably this kind of a

conception emerged quite early on; when life was perceived as a drama, it became natural to interpret everyday life in dramatic terms. Through studying German encyclopaedias of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it appears that the change in the concept of 'catastrophe' took place in the early years of the nineteenth century. The Brockhaus encyclopaedia from 1820 states that a catastrophe is 'a specific, decisive change in the events, especially in plays and stories, a surprising turn that the story takes'.¹⁶ By the 1835 edition, however, the concept clearly departed from its connection with the theory of drama: 'Catastrophe is a turning point and refers to that particular moment in a life of an individual or a community of individuals, where its destiny suddenly take a turns to either good or bad, into happiness or unhappiness.'¹⁷ In the latter definition, the influence of Aristotle's *Poetics* is still visible in the way that catastrophe is presented as a change either into good or bad, but it is not a decisive turn in a drama but in the lives of an individual or a community.

In German encyclopaedias, it became common to clearly separate these meanings from each other. In the *Universal-Lexikon* (1843), edited by H. A. Pierer, the catastrophe is defined as follows:

Catastrophe, 1) a sudden swift of things, esp. in social life, for example an unexpected death, a bankruptcy, a discharge from an office; 2) a part of a drama, i.e. kathastasis.¹⁸

This differs from the 1835 edition of Brockhaus in the sense that by this time, obviously, catastrophe took a negative turn, such as an unexpected death, a bankruptcy or a discharge from an office. The *Universal-Lexikon* furthermore

suggested that most often it was a turn in social life. Evidently, encyclopaedias reveal the conceptual change only partially. It is probable that the notion of 'catastrophe' had already changed in everyday use. In his chapter, Jarkko Keskinen shows how a single (male) death and subsequent bankruptcy could mark not only a personal and familial turning point, but also an impact that spread throughout the community. Challenging and building on a common sense of credit and reputation, he demonstrates the impact on family and community of a personal disaster. In terms of defining catastrophe, similarly accounts of drowning in early modern Westminster, as discussed by Imtiaz Habib and Michan Myer, reveal a rupture in personal lives and a situation in which women were more vulnerable. Catastrophes were not only external hazards but intrinsically bound into the social fabric.

Gender and Towns

Even though women appear to be everywhere in towns, and frequently are the majority, many urban historians have failed to see them or relegated them to 'women's history', as though it had no real relevance for urban research. Moreover, whereas women and gender historians have produced a wide literature of research studies on women in towns, even here the 'urban variable' is often not articulated. In other words, the research is set within an urban space and there is acknowledgement that town rules and customs affect women's participation. What is often missing, however, is an articulation of the relationship between the town and gender. Increasingly, however, a number of publications have begun to examine these questions, especially in northern Europe. Publications from the Gender in the European Town Network, of which this is one, have focused on issues of economy, political identities and space and place whilst interrogating the relationship between gender and towns.¹⁹ Researchers in the

Netherlands also have added significantly to our understanding of the relationship of women to towns, with individual studies such as Danielle Van den Heuvel's research on Dutch women, and the collection *Single Life and the City*, while for Britain, Rosemary Sweet's collection *Women in Towns* still stands as an important landmark publication.²⁰

Importantly however, gender is not only about women. Rather than concentrate on women or men as victims or perpetrators, this book articulates gender through the lens of the town and the process of catastrophes and their impacts and aftermaths.²¹

Doreen Massey argues that 'Particular ways of thinking about space and place are tied up with, both directly and indirectly, particular social constructions of gender relations ... [and] since social relations are inevitably and everywhere imbued with power and meaning and symbolism, this view of the spatial is as an ever-shifting social geometry of power and signification.'²² Furthermore, she insists on the

intricacy and profundity of the connection of space and place with gender and the construction of gender relations. Some of this connection works through the actual construction of, on the one hand, real-world geographies and, on the other, the cultural specificity of definitions of gender.²³

Thus, another important factor relates to gender norms and how a given society considered what was and was not acceptable for men and women to do. In early modern London, as Habib and Myer argue, women's 'perceived bodily and psychic defectiveness was a social pathology more in need of toleration than amelioration. Their drowning in water, as much as their demise from the plague or the pox or childbirth, was to be expected.' Ideas about femininity could therefore constrain women, either covertly or overtly, while a conception of 'men in charge' empowered men.

Towns are situated in national cultures, so that local and national regulations, legal practices and religious differences contribute to the ways towns developed and to the ways that gender was understood. Yet norms were not rigid and during the period of this book, re-codification of the law as well as changes in commercial and capitalist culture increasing broke down some of the corporate protection that men had felt, replacing the meanings attributed to expertise, skill and 'brotherhood' with individual identity, class and status. In this context, masculinity and femininity became areas for dispute and renegotiation. For example, the Lisbon earthquake, discussed by Helena Murtiera, while embedding Enlightenment views of womanhood, showed signs of promoting limited but important changes in the worlds of middling and elite women. Both in educational reforms and the creation of open spaces of sociability separate from the church and court 'hinted at a society where an enterprising middle class had an important role to perform. ... and as such was an instrumental element for the social, political and cultural changes ahead.' Reflecting changes in economic and political institutions, the urban landscape shifted in terms of how towns operated and were perceived, in what activities were seen as important and who should carry them out. Their self-identity was significant because it shaped how towns developed physically, often leading to continual rebuilding and construction of urban spaces. These transitions had important implications for gender. Gender relations are played out through the structures, systems and fabric of the city, in space, time and experience. At the same time, masculinities and femininities contributed to shaping urban culture. Urban history reminds us that the relationship between actions and the urban environment is not a one-way process. As some chapters show, political activities within towns and cities can shape the environments in which they occur. Post-earthquake Lisbon stands as a particular example, and the resilience of La Rochelle suggests how significant a well-established infrastructure can be in promoting recovery.

Contemporary research has increasingly asked questions about how men and women have access to employment, housing, shops, green space and essential services such as health care and education. These have an impact on health, wellbeing and life chances and such considerations form the basic of research agendas like the European Research Programme Horizon 2020 and the United Nations sustainable development goal, 'Sustainable Cities and Communities' in 'Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'.²⁴ As Rasmus Dahlberg and colleagues point out, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, from the United Nations, has called for increased gender-sensitive national disaster management plans and policies.²⁵ Similarly Oxfam argues that lack of access to education, basic skills training and legal rights are some of the main root causes and dynamic pressures that result in unsafe conditions for women during disasters today.²⁶ The most recent European research shows that, compared to men, women are more likely to be materially deprived and the analysis of towns in the context of spatial concerns has a high priority. In many societies, women are today more at risk from dangerous events such as floods, earthquakes and storms because they are marginalized socially, culturally, economically, politically and legally.²⁷ So, we ask questions about how the European urban past fashioned ideas about what it meant to be male or female; we look at how concepts of masculinity and femininity shaped the ways people of the past understood and constructed their society. As the authors demonstrate, gender is not an unchanging feature of the past, rather relations between the sexes 'varied appreciably, along with political, economic or cultural changes'.²⁸ Throughout it engages with the gendered context of society.

Gender and Catastrophe

On the one hand, catastrophes have the potential to be equalizers: men and women might be equally vulnerable to flooding, earthquakes, epidemics and fires. On the other hand, we could assume that some catastrophes are likely to affect men more, such as warfare, sieges and bankruptcies. Yet, this picture is far too black and white. As the chapters show, 'traditional' roles both contribute to men and women's vulnerability in the face of disaster, and provide them with mechanisms to challenge and face catastrophe. Anna Mazanik, discussing cholera in Moscow, shows that despite men outnumbering women significantly, women were 'disproportionally affected by cholera and show higher morbidity and mortality rates which could be connected to their gender roles and domestic or occupational responsibilities of cleaning, cooking, laundering and care-giving that increase the risk of coming into contact with cholera.' Emma Hart also notes that 'As well as being determined by race, ... assistance was extremely gendered in its character' with free white women seen as deserving of help, over black women and all men. As Nicolas Vidoni argues, selective treatment of women, and negative views depicting them as having a treacherous and malicious nature together with their economic and social position justified seeing them as a dangerous category of undisciplined persons operated in seventeenth-century Montpellier to make women vulnerable to much more condemnation as policy became stronger and more established. Perceptions of gender also played an important role in the use of language that shaped understandings of disasters. David Hensley argues that in addition to the invasion of Belgium famously depicted as the 'rape of Belgium', gendered language infused the debate over the University of Ghent drawing distinctions between the 'mother tongue' and the domestic as opposed to the language of the modern and public sphere.

The fact that men were often 'in charge' had implications for how gender was understood in towns, and how it operated as catastrophe struck. As we see throughout the chapters, issues of masculinity and power are equally present. Emma Hart argues that in the eighteenth-century English-speaking town, 'Improvement ... was therefore a fundamentally gendered process in which men mostly acted and women were affected'. In disasters, men often became rescuers putting themselves at risk, while women were not always passive, often taking action as Dahlberg and colleagues show during the Baltic storm of 1872. Similarly, women's perceived roles as mothers, wives and housekeepers, could define how women took action — or not — in situations of disaster. In La Rochelle, discussed by Deborah Simonton, women's household role helped cast them as 'defenders', while men's more pronounced role in power helped them become 'heroes'. In Vienna, Heidi Hakkarainen shows how narratives highlighted the role of the emperor Franz Joseph as a masculine and brave rescuer of his subjects, and constructed a story of masculine heroism and survival of the empire. At the same time, the literature depicted women as victims requiring saving by men who defied danger.

Myth, Memory and Mediation

Notably, many of these catastrophes are memorialized either overtly in plaques, statues and the arts or in enduring memory. Inevitably, however, these tragedies are mediated by myth and memory.²⁹ They are not neutral events whose retelling is a simple narrative. Sometimes they take on a new life symbolic of nation or religion. For example, in Ghent, memory of the *Vlaamsche Hoogeschool* became a potent reminder of Belgium's martyrdom during the First World War. Franz Mauelshagen has argued that patterns for perceiving and interpreting disasters is based on cultural memory, a

pre-existing framework of shared knowledge that help to comprehend the experience of catastrophe.³⁰ This framework also shapes what is included and what is excluded in the memory of a catastrophe. The memory of the siege and famine of La Rochelle has been kept alive in the statue of mayor Guiton and the Protestant Museum of La Rochelle. Indeed Duc de Rohan's contemporary observation that La Rochelle gained a longer life in memory because of the famine and siege than other larger and more prosperous places speaks to the role of memory creation.³¹ Manipulation of memory began immediately in the case of La Rochelle, but the story rapidly developed a mythology as it was played and replayed in literature. In the case of the Viennese flood, the creation of a narrative through the press and popular accounts was indeed part of the strategy for understanding and dealing with the floods.

The discourse on the fire of Turku, again maintained by history books, newspapers and popular memories emphasizes the role of gender in these urban tragedies. Hannu Salmi argues that the memory of fire of Turku has had a persistent gendered emphasis that has continued to the present day. In the discourse on the fire, the role of a maid, a female servant is consistently central. Competing views of gender figure in the telling and retelling of most of these analyses: women as scapegoat, as vulnerable, as victims, even as cannibals or conversely as defenders, organisers of assistance, inspirers of men. And men appear in varied guises as protectors, as governors and police, as heroes, as leaders, negotiators, as honourable. Gender is also deployed in language to feminise activities or even countries, like Belgium, or to undermine masculinity.

In several of these histories, the political uses of catastrophe and memory are palpable. The Viennese flood of 1862 was part of a larger historical continuum as it became absorbed in the nineteenth-century Habsburg mythos that sustained the

political power of Franz Joseph. La Rochelle figured large in the conceptualisation of the image of Louis XIII and the solidification of the French state and French absolutism. In Vidoni's discussion of plague in Montpellier and Mazanik's study of cholera in Moscow disease represented a challenge to authority, and indeed the impact was to strengthen arbitrary political powers. In this way, mythologies of fear and risk played an important role in reshaping political action. In contrast, the Baltic storm subtly exposed a political shift, which gained momentum in the decades following: the move towards greater political and legal equality between the sexes. Notably towns developed different security mechanisms and coping strategies, like in the case of the Baltic storm that helped to deal with the risk of catastrophe and to manage the fear of the disaster. Indeed, Vidoni's chapter shows how Montpellier instigated thorough procedures for disease prevention, even though plague never came to the city. Hakkarainen also argues that humour was in itself a coping strategy, to help people manage and control their feelings and fears of the flooding disaster.

The character of catastrophes, their perception by those who lived through them and the longer-term effect of memory demonstrate the potential of a single localised catastrophe on perceptions of towns and their links to the wider community. In this the 1755 Lisbon earthquake stands as an iconic catastrophe. It had a dramatic impact on Lisbon, mentally and physically, but it was its impact on European mentality and understanding of their world that has figured in how it is remembered. Enlightenment thought generated a certain complacency and belief in the potential for improvement. As Murtiera argues, 'the dimension of the catastrophe and helplessness of the "civilized world" in face of such devastating occurrences frightened Enlightenment Europe'. The debate it generated was also part of the quest for a rational understanding of Nature, so violently expressed in occurrences as these and it challenged the emergent belief that this was 'the best of all possible worlds'. The

Lisbon earthquake, like the siege of La Rochelle and the fire of Turku, became a mediated catastrophe, not only through newspapers and books but also through broadsheets and other popular prints, peep shows and magic lantern shows. Thus, the city of Lisbon became a powerful representation of a catastrophe that made readers and listeners around Europe 'victims' of the tragic disaster. During the nineteenth century, catastrophe news, circulated by the expanding press, started to arouse feelings of pity and sympathy for those who had suffered.

Emma Hart shows the strength of Enlightenment thought and 'improvement' and their apparently triumphant role in overcoming catastrophe. In Charleston and London, like in Turku, an urban catastrophe, fire, was in the service of modernization, making room for a new city to rise. As Hart writes, 'the eighteenth century saw a "coming together" of British and early American views about the urban built environment as a tool of rational modernization in the face of catastrophe'. And yet, she is rightly wary of accepting such a narrative at face value, calling it a 'British Atlantic history of urban catastrophe that imagines the built environment as a universal bulwark against the forces of disorder'. The word 'imagines' is important here, because neither 'improvement' nor 'modernization' are straightforward concepts, and they disguise often deeper anxieties about the worlds in which these towns were embedded. In La Rochelle the 'new' town was not so very different and other factors shaped the town of today. In Ghent the issue of language teaching was also tied up with competing notions of the future and modernizing the Belgian state in ways that were clearly not uncomplicated. These issues were also tangled up with contested ideas of gender, class, race and national identities, which permeate the chapters in this volume. Thus, through a varied array of urban catastrophes, this book therefore provides a nuanced account that physically and metaphorically maps men and women into the urban landscape and into the worlds of catastrophe.

Notes

¹ Gerhard Masur, *Prophets of Yesterday: Studies in European Culture 1890–1914* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), 36.

² Karen Cullen, *Famine in Scotland: The 'Ill Years' of the 1690s* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), Neil Hanson, *The Great Fire of London: In That Apocalyptic Year, 1666* (New York: Wiley, 2010) and Adrian Tinniswood, *By Permission of Heaven: The Story of the Great Fire of London* (London: Vintage, 2011).

³ Catherine J. Kudlick, *Cholera in Post-Revolutionary Paris: A Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

⁴ Geneviève Massard-Guilbaud, Harold L. Platt and Dieter Schott, eds, *Cities and Catastrophes; Villes et catastrophes, Coping with Emergency in European History/Réactions face à l'urgence dans l'histoire européenne* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2002).

⁵ Geoffrey Parker, *Global Crisis: War, Climate Change and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), John Withington, *Disaster!: A History of Earthquakes, Floods, Plagues, and Other Catastrophes* (Skyhorse Publishing, 2010) and Teofilo F. Ruiz's *The Terror of History: On the Uncertainties of Life in Western Civilization* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

⁶ Chantal Thomas and Jeanne-Pierre Dupuy, *L'Invention de la catastrophe au XVIIIe Siècle: du châtement divin au désastre naturel* (Paris: Librairie Droz S.A, 2008), Alessa Johns, *Dreadful Visitations: Confronting Natural Catastrophe in the Age of Enlightenment* (London: Routledge, 1999).

⁷ Matthew 24:7.

⁸ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* III, 7, 1115b25–30.

- ⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/aquinas/summa/>, accessed 1 April 2016.
- ¹⁰ Jean Delumeau, *Sin and Fear: The Emergence of a Western Guilt Culture, 13th–18th Centuries*, trans. Eric Nicholson (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990).
- ¹¹ Ulrich Beck, 'From Industrial Society to the Risk Society: Questions of Survival, Social Structure and Ecological Enlightenment', *Theory, Culture and Society* 9 (1992): 97–98.
- ¹² Darryl S. L. Jarvis, 'Theorizing Risk: Ulrich Beck, Globalization and the Rise of the Risk Society', <http://arsiv.setav.org/ups/dosya/17647.pdf>, accessed 2 April 2016.
- ¹³ *Oxford English Dictionary*, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/28794?redirectedFrom=catastrophe#eid>, accessed 2 April 2016.
- ¹⁴ Aristotle, *Poetics*, <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/poetics.2.2.html>, accessed 2 April 2016.
- ¹⁵ *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, Vol. 6 (Lausanne: La Société Typographique, 1779), 533.
- ¹⁶ *Allgemeine deutsche Real-Encyclopädie für die gebildeten Stände. Conversations-Lexicon in zwölf Bänden*, vol. 5, fifth edition (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1820), 381.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 6, eighth edition (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1835), 135.
- ¹⁸ *Universal-Lexikon der Gegenwart und Vergangenheit oder neuestes encyclopädisches Wörterbuch der Wissenschaften, Künste und Gewerbe, bearbeitet von mehr als 300 Gelehrten*, ed. H. A. Pierer, second edition, vol. 16 (Altenburg: H. A. Pierer, 1843), 58.
- ¹⁹ Deborah Simonton and Anne Montenach, eds, *Female Agency in the Urban Economy, Gender in European Towns, 1640–1830* (New York: Routledge, 2013);

Deborah Simonton, Anne Montenach and Marjo Kaartinen, eds, *Luxury and Gender in the Modern Urban Economy: A European Perspective, c.1700–1914* (New York: Routledge, 2014); Nina Koefoed, Åsa Karlsson-Sjögren and Krista Cowman, eds, *Gender in Urban Europe: Sites of Political Activity and Citizenship 1750–1900* (New York: Routledge, 2014); Elaine Chalus and Marjo Kaartinen, eds, *Conceived, Constructed & Contested Spaces: Gender in the European Town, c.1500–1914* (New York: Routledge, 2016) and Deborah Simonton, et al., eds, *Routledge History Handbook of Gender and the Urban Experience* (London: Routledge, 2016).

²⁰ Danielle van den Heuvel, *Women and Entrepreneurship. Female Traders in the Northern Netherlands c. 1580–1815* (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2007); Julie de Groot, Isabelle Devos and Ariadne Schmidt, eds, *Single Life and the City, 1200–1900* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Rosemary Sweet and Penelope Lane eds, *Women and Urban Life in Eighteenth Century England: 'On the Town'* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003). See also Janine Lanza, *From Wives to Widows in Early Modern Paris: Gender, Economy and Law* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

²¹ See the landmark book by Ronit Lentin, ed., *Gender and Catastrophe* (London: Zed Books, 1997), which examines war crimes and violence against women.

²² Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 2–3.

²³ *Ibid.*, 2

²⁴ See for example, GenderSTE, http://www.genderste.eu/i_cities01.html; United Nations, Sustainable Development Goals, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>, accessed 9 April 2016.

²⁵ UNISDR (United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction). 2015. Sendai framework for disaster risk reduction 2015–2030, 21,

http://www.wcdrr.org/uploads/Sendai_Framework_for_Disaster_Risk_Reduction_2015-2030.pdf, accessed January 2016.

²⁶ Vu Minh Hai and Ines Smyth, *The Disaster Crunch Model: Guidelines for a Gendered Approach* (Oxford: Oxfam, 2012), 8.

²⁷ Sarah Bradshaw, 'Gender, Development and Disasters', in *Gender, Development and Disasters* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing 2013), 41–60.

²⁸ Natalie Zemon Davis, 'Women's History in Transition', in Joan Wallach Scott, *Feminism and History*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 81.

²⁹ Peter Gray, Kendrick Oliver, *The Memory of Catastrophe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

³⁰ Franz Mauelshagen, 'Disaster and Political Culture in Germany since 1500', in Christoph Mauch and Christian Pfister, eds., *Natural Disasters, Cultural Responses: A World History* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), 62.

³¹ Duc de Henri Rohan, *Mémoires*, Vol. 1 (Paris: Petiot, 1822), 396.