

to the arsenal of resources we can make use of in teaching but also in our research. We owe the Vrieses a dept of gratitude for doing this.

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Lotte Jensen (ed.), *Crisis en catastrofie. De Nederlandse omgang met rampen in de lange negentiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021). 282 p. ISBN 9463722564.

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Culture occupies a liminal space in Low Countries historical disaster studies. Social-economic analyses have generally stood centre stage, prompted in part by social science-driven trends in disaster studies more broadly. These social-economic approaches have lent robust new interpretations of historical disaster causation and deepened their relevance as they tackled themes of ongoing relevance, such as disaster vulnerability, resilience, and adaptation. As the contributing authors to *Crisis en catastrofie* demonstrate, however, disasters were equally products of culture and no less connected to the concerns of the present.¹ Its eleven case studies from the long nineteenth century reveal that disasters intersected with communal identities, they reflected and refashioned shared values, and they were communicated through an array of mediated channels. The book also covers a wide variety of disasters in the Netherlands and abroad, largely eschewing the emphasis in Dutch literature on river and coastal flooding. Case studies range from little known fires in Brabant to the well-known gunpowder disaster in Leiden in 1807. In the process, they encourage readers to reflect on the role of language, genre, and memory in shaping the meaning of calamity and response.

The editor, Lotte Jensen, divides the book into three thematic clusters, which lends coherence to an impressively diverse selection of subjects and approaches. The first three chapters tackle the significance of scale in the cultural translation of local events into regional or national contexts. The next four emphasize the role of media and genre in evolving interpretations of calamity. The final three place disaster interpre-

1 Recently, cultural historical approaches have made significant inroads, due in no small part to the production of Lotte Jensen and her NWO-Vici funded 'Dealing with Disasters' research group at Radboud University. The present volume adds to this impressive output.

tations in global and multilingual contexts, encouraging comparative analyses of disaster narratives during an era when Dutch activity on the world stage was rapidly changing.

The shared interests of the authors oftentimes transcend these thematic clusters, however. The subject of solidarity, for instance, appears in several chapters. In their comparative study of Indonesian disasters, Alicia Schrikker and Sander Tetteroo argue that paternalist impulses in Dutch disaster publications, as well as religious and racial constructions of need and assistance, belied narratives of imperial unity. Other crises, meanwhile, encouraged solidarity. Erica Boersma's chapter demonstrates that provincial and sometimes national authorities provided emergency assistance following urban fires, in part based on local communities' ability to frame their need in appropriate terms. This challenges the notion, long established in water management scholarship, that the decentralized Dutch Republic was incapable of providing disaster relief. Belying characterizations of crippling inefficiency, institutions in the Republic promoted a supra-regional solidarity that would later evolve and expand through more centralized state structures.

Boersma's chapter and others highlight the power of disasters to reveal insights into broader historical changes. This is an important contribution of historical disaster studies, and one demonstrated in this volume's strongest contributions. Jan Wim Buisman's chapter on thunderstorms argues that Benjamin Franklin's invention of the lightning rod dampened fears of lightning-induced blazes, which permitted people to find value and beauty in the now tamed violence of nature. Enlightened innovation underpinned this new confidence in the human capacity to control nature and provoked a new romantic aesthetic that found wonder in the sublime. Fons Meijer, meanwhile, tracks the shifting alignment of the House of Orange with political ideologies during the rise of Dutch nationalism. Dutch royalty frequently featured in disaster publications, often including politically tinged messages of unity, hierarchy, and moderation. It was only after the 1880s, when liberals began cultivating an association with the House of Orange, that nationalism and Dutch royalty grew inextricably intertwined. Judith Bosnak and Rick Honings's comparative work on the eruption of Krakatau reveals an increasingly polarized religious landscape in Indonesian sources, while Dutch publications reflected the emerging interest in an 'ethical', yet intractably paternalist colonialism. Disasters provide ideal vantages to survey and interrogate these and other historical changes during the long nineteenth century.

National and imperial identity formation is strongly represented in these chapters, yet other important changes that likely influenced disasters are not. Nineteenth-century industrialization, for instance, makes little impression in the book despite its likely influence on modes of communication, new forms of calamity, and the way disaster narratives filtered through communities stratified by class. Environmental changes also scarcely appear in the work. The most notable exception is Hans Beelen's chapter on whaling disasters, which he frames in the context of climate-induced sea ice dynamics. In fact, environmental factors rarely appear outside of non-European chapters. This may reflect the boundary between different 'schools' of historical disaster scholarship, which Jensen divides between social-economic, water history, and cultural historical approaches. Social-economic and water history often incorporate environmental change into their analyses, yet this remains largely untrammelled terrain in cultural historical scholarship.

The collective strengths of this volume, however, outweigh these critiques and demand close appraisal, particularly among social-economic historians. The book's attention to language and genre introduces new source material and techniques of source criticism less commonly employed in social-economic approaches. While most chapters employ close reading of select sources, several rely on large-scale corpora available in digital format. Ruben Ros's chapter on the construction of the 'national disaster', for instance, uses computational analysis to mine the *Koninklijke Bibliotheek's* digital newspaper archive Delpher. Jensen, meanwhile, relies on the Meertens Institute's *Nederlandse Liederenbank*. Others probe relatively unstudied genres, from charity publications to the Indonesian long-form poem (*syair*). These chapters reveal that both close readings and big data techniques afford unique and valuable perspectives to disaster studies.

Perhaps most importantly, Jensen's thematic clusters seem ideally suited to facilitate greater dialogue between scholarly 'schools.' Social-economic disaster research also relies on comparative and transnational studies attentive to variations in scale, though often to uncover causal variables or evaluate long term changes in social response. This volume may encourage new scholarship to explore the non-material motivations for these responses, their intersection with memory and value systems, and the ways cultural production transformed the meaning of calamity.

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