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Contact: Emily K. Grandstaff
434.982.2932 / egrandstaff@virginia.edu

“A highly intelligent and quite fascinating study of the way in which natural disaster has been handled in a specific range of Latin American writing. Well researched, documented, and organized, and superbly written.”

—David William Foster, Arizona State University,
author of *Mexico City in Contemporary Mexican Cinema*

DISASTER WRITING

The Cultural Politics of Catastrophe in Latin America

In the aftermath of disaster, literary and other cultural representations of the event can play a distinct role in the renegotiation of political power. In **DISASTER WRITING (October 2011; UVA Press)**, Mark D. Anderson analyzes four natural disasters in Latin America that acquired national significance and symbolism through literary mediation: the 1930 cyclone in the Dominican Republic, volcanic eruptions in Central America, the 1985 earthquake in Mexico City, and recurring drought in northeastern Brazil. Offering an analysis of how these disasters not only became iconic as well as paradigmatic in their national contexts, Anderson shows how they also precipitated cultural and political shifts.

Taking a comparative and interdisciplinary approach to the disaster narratives, Anderson explores concepts such as the social construction of risk, landscape as political and cultural geography, vulnerability as the convergence of natural hazard and social marginalization, and the cultural mediation of trauma and loss. He shows how the political and historical contexts suggest a systematic link between natural disaster and cultural politics. In the process, he shows how meaning, blame, cultural identity, and political legitimacy get assigned.

Mark D. Anderson is Assistant Professor of Latin American Literature and Culture at the University of Georgia.

October 2011

256 pages, 6 x 9

\$49.50 S Cloth ISBN 978-0-8139-3196-8

\$22.50 S Paperback ISBN 978-0-8139-3197-5

\$49.50 S E-book ISBN 978-0-8139-3203-3