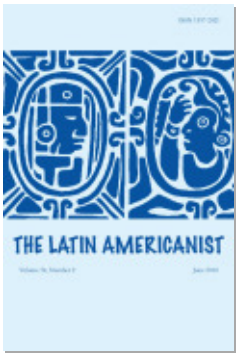
Aftershocks: Earthquakes and Popular Politics in Latin America ed. by Jürgen Buchenau and Lyman L. Johnson (review)



Nathan Clarke

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Americans' desire to gamble, drink, and buy sex to fill both Tijuana's coffers and personal bank accounts.

These essays address a broad range of issues and raise as many questions as they settle, the mark of good research in a relatively untilled field. Neither Coffey nor Pilcher consider how the consumption of Mexican folk art or food or their changing modes of production might affect consumers. Nearly all of the essays assume that "tourism" means "foreign tourism," just as the Mexican government has, but Kaselstein and, to a lesser degree, Sackett and Wood note that domestic tourism is also important.

I would have liked the authors to place their work in relationship to tourism history more consistently, for the study of Mexican tourism should loom as large among scholars of the industry as Mexico does among the world's tourists. The local and national contexts are critical, as is the United States as the main source of Mexico's tourists, but the market for tourism—and histories of tourism—is global. For example, Veracruz's carnival was only one of many to be revived for the sake of tourism during the twentieth century. Acapulco, Cancún, and the Escalera Naútica are three important moments in the gradual rise of seaside resorts from English peculiarity to global commonplace. The uses and abuses of indigenous histories and peoples are widespread in settler society tourism. But these absences will surely be addressed if, as should happen, both historians of Mexico and historians of tourism read this book.

Catherine Cocks
Historian, Writer, and Editor

Aftershocks: Earthquakes and Popular Politics in Latin America. **Eds. Jürgen Buchenau and Lyman L. Johnson**. **Albuquerque**: **U New Mexico P**, **2009**, **pp. x+236**, **$29.95**.

As the aftermath of the 2010 catastrophes in Haiti (January 12) and Chile (February 27) has shown, earthquakes represent much more than the shifting of tectonic plates. They have the ability to turn society on its head and to crack the power-laden and hierarchical crust of the social, cultural, and political structures that have dominated Latin American society, laying bare these structures to be reshaped by those who normally would not have the ability to affect them. Editors Jürgen Buchenau and Lyman Johnson have compiled seven essays on the history of earthquakes in Latin America. Based on the concept that earthquakes have a "special place in the region's consciousness" (4), the essays demonstrate how earthquakes' aftermath, beyond physical destruction, includes the popular and state responses to disaster, effects on politics, and on the region's religious identity, both in the interpretation of the reasons for the earthquakes and the response of the religious communities. Taken as a whole, this book provides the reader with an array of views on the effects of

earthquakes on Latin American society as well as many new perspectives on its history.

Earthquakes create crises that demand political reactions, in whatever form they come. Several articles scrutinize the response (or lack of response) that the state made in the areas of reconstruction, distribution of relief supplies, and attention to the injured and dead. Stuart McCook's essay on the 1812 Caracas earthquake shows how the nascent republic's inability to respond to the demands of the citizenry following the quake led to a decline in support for the patriot government, contributing to its collapse. Paul Dosal recounts the bungled response and nefarious actions of the Somoza regime following the 1972 earthquake in Managua: Tachito's kleptocratic mishandling of the relief effort delegitimized his dictatorial regime, providing fuel for the opposition which, when lit by the Chamorro assassination in 1978, led to his ouster by the Sandinistas.

The state was not the only entity to respond to the effects of earthquakes; civil society also reacted to their challenges. Mark Healey chronicles the relief efforts led by Juan Perón and his government in Argentina after an earthquake leveled the city of San Juan in 1944. Healey shows how civil society—in this case the powerful wine growers, the conservative political and economic elite, and the Catholic Church—banded together to challenge the state's plans of rebuilding San Juan in a more seismologically stable location and to agitate for a rigorous building code. After the 1985 Mexico City earthquake, according to Louise E. Walker, the middle class of the Tlatelolco neighborhood drew upon its extensive experience of protest and organization emerging from 1968 to deal with the effects of the earthquake, to supplement the relief effort, and to assure that their demands, including rebuilding fallen buildings, would be met. Samuel Martland also scrutinizes the role of class in the rebuilding of Valparaíso, Chile. The elite neighborhood of El Almendral was the hardest-hit section of the booming port, as the "solid" buildings of the elite neighborhoods did not hold up to the force of the earthquake. The port's poor neighborhoods built on the stable hills saw less damage; the earthquake thus turned society's assumptions about class on their head (86). Earthquakes, these authors show, have the ability to affect politics like little else.

Another key theme in *Aftershocks* is religion. Earthquakes have traditionally been interpreted as God's wrath for society straying from His commandments. In his essay on the 1746 Lima earthquake, Charles Walker shows how the event was just one of several (along with popular revolts and epidemics) that were interpreted as 'divine wrath.' Walker makes effective use of the voices of nuns and other religious figures to demonstrate how earthquakes and other evidence of divine wrath speak to the decline of Lima after 1650 and the general despair of the late colonial period. Likewise, many in Venezuela interpreted the Caracas earthquake of Holy Thursday, 1812 as divine wrath. The interpretation of its origin, however, differed: royalists thought it was God's way of expressing displeasure with Venezuela's "religious and political apostasy" and as a call for Venezuela

to return to the crown and the church (48-9), while among the citizenry, the earthquake was interpreted as a condemnation of their individual sins. Patriots rejected the idea of divine punishment, interpreting the earthquake instead as a natural catastrophe with no theological meaning. The Caracas quake occurred at a crucial point in history, with the emergence of the Enlightenment and the dawning of independence throughout Latin America; McCook demonstrates how different parties interpreted the event in such diverse ways. Virginia Garrard-Burnett's essay on the effects of the 1976 Guatemala "class-quake" argues that the role of churches during the relief effort led to a decline in popularity of the Catholic Church and a rise in Protestantism (from 4 percent to 25 percent by 1980). The growth in Protestantism was due to many factors, but the efforts of the Protestants in the relief effort drew many into their Church. These essays demonstrate that natural disasters and religion go hand-in-hand.

The articles range from the eighteenth to the twentieth century, covering every region of Latin America. The volume can serve as an exciting addition to a class on natural disasters or Latin American history. In short, this is a compilation replete with new ideas about history that often challenges what we know about the interplay between politics and nature. This book shows us how Latin America really works by scrutinizing the region when the political, social, and economic structure has been thrown into extreme disarray.

Nathan Clarke
Department of History
Minnesota State University Moorhead

THE ECUADOR READER. **Eds. Carlos de la Torre and Steve Striffler**. **Durham**: **Duke UP**, **2008**, **pp 480**, **41 illus.**, **$24.95**.

Carlos de la Torre and Steve Striffler contribute a much needed volume to the Duke University Press Latin American Reader Series since the small Andean nation of Ecuador is a country often overlooked by scholars. The perception is somewhat dispelled by this anthology of histories, essays, stories, poems, travel accounts and even recipes. The editors' stated purpose is to provide a "deeper understanding of Ecuador" through a sampling of perspectives from a wide variety of Ecuadorian voices from all levels of society. The reader is exposed to the views of politicians, artists, musicians, and intellectuals as well as ordinary and even anonymous Ecuadorians. In addition to Ecuadorian voices, the anthology includes the musings of several outside observers. This refreshing approach will appeal to the multidisciplinary reader but could prove frustrating to one seeking more depth in a particular topic.

De la Torre and Striffler acknowledge that several themes emerge throughout the work. The most important, in their view, is the