

Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

vii

INTRODUCTION

The Golden Age as Catastrophe

I

I. THE PEOPLE OF CALAMITY

Catastrophic Optimism in Early America

31

INTERLUDE

The San Francisco Earthquake and Fire of 1906

67

2. WHAT COMES DOWN MUST GO UP

Disasters and the Making of American Capitalism

75

3. "THAT ENCHANTED MORNING"

Or, How Americans Learned to Love Disasters

101

4. THE MODERN WAY OF DISASTER

The Nuclear Age and the Origins of Federal Emergency Management

135

5. THE ENDS OF DISASTER

The Culture of Calamity in the Age of Terror

175

EPILOGUE

A Reckoning: Hurricane Katrina and the "Murder" of New Orleans

209

NOTES

219

INDEX

297