Impact of Hurricane Katrina on Popular Culture

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www.usm.edu/gcrl
A Wordle View of this Presentation

http://www.wordle.net/create
Abstract

Hurricane Katrina was a catastrophe of epic proportions which was felt in one way or another by all Americans, not just residents of the Gulf Coast region. One way society copes with and assimilates the changes created by catastrophes and disasters is through popular culture media & artifacts: novels, movies, music, art, humor, and myths. This presentation looks at popular culture media & artifacts which have incorporated Hurricane Katrina as an element or subject of the narrative.
Basic Questions

• What is the popular culture of disaster?
• Why does it exist?
• Why is it important?
Definitions

Popular Culture—all those things that “the people” do or have done. People make popular culture from the repertoire of commodities supplied by the culture industries—film, television, music, publishing, sporting, etc. Popular culture is easy to live with but hard to handle because it is based on an infinitely expanding inventory.

Definitions

Disaster—an agent which presents demands and threats to a community which can not be met by the institutionalized means that are utilized for its normal emergencies.

(from Wenger and Weller, 1973)
Defining Popular Culture of Disaster Involves Four Dimensions

• Characterization of the product
• Identity of the producer
• Timing of its production
• Means by which is it distributed and consumed

(From Webb, 2006)
Four Types of Disasters

• Natural
• Technological
• Natural Technological
• Terrorism

(From Brunsam, et al. 2007)
Social/Cultural Framework of Hurricane Katrina

- **Space/Place**: Local, regional, national, international
  → Gulf Coast (USA)
- **Time**: Immediate/chronic; slow/fast
  → Katrina’s impact was all four elements
Social/Cultural Framework of Hurricane Katrina

• *Perceived level of Human/Technological involvement:* for assigning cause, blame, meaning
  ➔ Natural disaster “Act of God”
  ➔ Levee failure (Act of Man/Technology)
  ➔ Government failure (FEMA)
Social/Cultural Framework of Hurricane Katrina

- **Social stratification**: cultural expressions of race, gender, ethnicity, political persuasion & social conflict
  - Economically disadvantaged people
  - People of color
  - Foolish people
  - Victims/survivors

(From Couch, 2000)
Cultural Media & Artifacts

Material
Novels/Fiction
Television
Cinema
Music
Art

Non-Material
Humor
Urban Legends
Polly Deschamps suspects there might be a connection between her beau and a series of decades-old murders. Two broken pasts collide in an uncertain present carrying the reader from the horrifying 1970's murder spree of a child-dubbed "Butcher Boy" by a shocked public--in Rochester, Minnesota, to Polly, the abused daughter of Mississippi "trailer trash," to post Katrina New Orleans.

http://www.nevadabarr.com/bkm04_thirteen_and_a_half.htm

Barr, Nevada. 13 ½.
Barthelme dissects middle-age malaise. His characters often seem shipwrecked, and in this off-kilter story of death and divorce, they pretty much are after Katrina transforms the modest beachfront town of Waveland into “ten miles of debris.” Barthelme offers stunning descriptions of the hurricane and its aftermath as he tracks unmoored Vaughn, an architect who has lost his passion for buildings and romance after his reliably unpredictable wife ends their marriage.

Barthelme, Fredrerick. Waveland.

http://www.amazon.com/Waveland-Frederick-Barthelme/dp/0385527292
No popular living author is more associated with New Orleans and Southern Louisiana than James Lee Burke. His Dave Robicheaux series is monumental not only as an achievement in crime writing, but as an American elegy: for the city of his youth, before it was ravaged by crack cocaine and government neglect, and for a vanishing Cajun way of life. James Lee Burke thrusts the New Iberia police department and Detective Dave Robicheaux headlong into the disaster zone. Katrina has just leveled New Orleans, and Dave Robicheaux and other relief workers are combing the flooded city for survivors.

Burke, James Lee.
*The Tin Roof Blowdown.*

http://www.jamesleeburke.com/bibliography/40.php
Claire DeWitt returns to New Orleans, a city haunted by the recent memory of Hurricane Katrina and the ghosts of Claire’s past. Was Missing prosecutor Vic Willing done in by criminals or did he use the storm as a means of escape?

http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/catalog/titledetail.cfm?titleNumber=1431982

Sara Gran
Claire DeWitt and the City of the Dead.
Barely six months after leaving New Orleans, history professor Max Corbett is returning to a place he hardly recognizes. The girl he'd loved - and lost - is dead, and the once-enchanted city has been devastated by Hurricane Katrina. Max has not thought much beyond Gabrielle's funeral - until a strange old man offers him a map, and an insane proposition . . .

http://www.christophergolden.com/cities.html
Novels/Fiction

Greg Iles, a Natchez, MS, author often using his hometown as the setting for his novels. The action in this book takes place after Hurricane Katrina and uses the storm as a reason some people have come into the area.

http://www.gregiles.com

Iles, Greg. The Devil’s Punchbowl.
Neufeld provides a graphic portrait of a city under siege and shows the human side to the chaos. It is the “people’s history of life just before and following Hurricane Katrina.

Tom Piazza knows New Orleans—its culture, history, people, and life. He tells the story of family and place in pre- and post-Katrina New Orleans. He dramatized the hurricane’s shocking aftermath following his characters into the Katrina Diaspora. The full tragedy of Hurricane Katrina will not be forgotten by readers of this book.

http://www.tompiazza.com/books/City_of_Refuge.htm

Piazza, Tom. City of Refuge.
Novels/Fiction

Eve, a location scout, watches her family fall apart among the misery, destruction, and inept relief efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The struggles of post-Katrina New Orleans are present throughout the novel. Robinson tells efficient vignettes that create haunting images.

Robison, Mary. One D.O.A on the Way.
Thor, Norse God of Thunder who commands the lightning and the storm, visits New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina and called to task by a local resident “…if you were gonna DO something, you shoulda done it when we needed you. Where were you then?”

Novels/Fiction

Set in a fictional Mississippi coast town, the story is written in 12 chapters—10 days before Hurricane Katrina, the day of the storm, and the day after.

Television

K-Ville

Filmed on location in New Orleans, K-Ville was a standard police drama with a little voodoo magic, a dead insurance adjuster, and story lines involving the French Quarter and damaged neighborhoods. The writer saw graffiti “K-ville” during a New Orleans visit which inspired the name of the series.
Television

Treme
HBO/4/2010
A drama series focusing on a working class neighborhood trying to rebuild a few months after Hurricane Katrina.

http://www.hbo.com/treme
Television

Bones
Fox 5/19/2006
“Man in the Morgue”
Brennan takes a vacation down to New Orleans to help identify victims of Hurricane Katrina.

http://www.fox.com/bones/
Television

Boston Legal
ABC 12/6/05, 1/10/06, 1/9/07
Criminal Minds
CBS 2/27/07

A case involving a serial killer believed to be copying Jack the Ripper takes Gideon to New Orleans after three victims are found with their throats cut. Once thought to have been killed in Hurricane Katrina, the discovery of a fourth victim in the French Quarter confirms the murderer is still alive. All the evidence and files had been lost in the flood.
Television

Curb Your Enthusiasm
HBO 9/9/2007
“Meet the Blacks”

Cheryl talks Larry into adopting the Blacks, a New Orleans family displaced by a hurricane.

http://www.hbo.com/curb-your-enthusiasm/index.html
Television

Law & Order: SVU
(2005) STORM
Season 7, Episode 10

Three young girls are discovered to have been abducted from New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. The SVU detectives capture the kidnapper, a known pedophile. While in custody he dies from exposure to anthrax.

http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0629741/
New York fire fighters have their own disaster—9/11, but a firehouse conversation in 2010 reference is made to the “greater good” in New Orleans with one young fire fighter saying “Hurricane What’s her name, man, that was like 10 years ago!” And the other saying, “No, bro, it was 3.”

http://www.fxnetworks.com/shows/originals/rescuemehome/
Cinema

Déjà vu – (2006)
This movie was scheduled to begin filming in New Orleans in October 2005. When filming continued in 2006, the script was rewritten to include Hurricane Katrina in the story.

Baby Mama (2008)

Successful, single business woman, Kate, can not get pregnant so hires a surrogate in this comedy. In a scene where Kate runs into an old boyfriend who is happily married with a family, the former beau & wife list their many charitable accomplishments including adopting a “Katrina dog”.
The Curious Case of Benjamin Button (2008)

Fantasy-drama of a man aging backwards. In a New Orleans hospital room, a daughter listens to her mother read from her diary as the radio broadcasts weather alerts of Hurricane Katrina’s approach. The film ends with water filling what appears to be a basement. Curious because New Orleans, with a few rare exceptions, has no basements…it is below sea level.
Bad Lieutenant—Port of Call New Orleans (2009)
A police officer promoted after Katrina for saving a Drowning prisoner’s life, travels the road of drug Addiction while investigating the murder of Senegalese immigrants.
Just Go With It (2011)

A light romantic comedy, a plastic surgeon hires his divorced single mom office manager to pretend to be his soon-to-be ex-wife. In a scene with a hair stylist, Jennifer Anniston, the office manager, is told Hurricane Katrina could not help her hair.
Top Ten Songs in honor of Hurricane Katrina:

- Going Nowhere – Andrea Parker (dedicated to those stuck in gridlock trying to evacuate)
- You Could Feel The Sky – Boards Of Canada
- Breakin’ Up The House – Colin James and the Little Big Band
- Look Happy, It’s The End Of The World – Matthew Good Band
- A Common Disaster – Cowboy Junkies
- It Can’t Rain All The Time – Jane Siberry
- Alert Status Red – Matthew Good
- Evacuation – Pearl Jam
- When The Levee Breaks – Led Zeppelin
- New Orleans Is Sinking – The Tragically Hip

Music

Pascagoula (Mississippi) High School
Boy’s Impact Chorus
Downtown Got Run Over By Katrina
December 2005

Downtown got run over by Katrina...By a tidal surge you wouldn't believe...You can say there's no such thing as FEMA...But as for us in trailers, we believe... We just bought that brand new sofa...Now it's floating down the street...We lost all our big screen TVs...Now we can walk into the store with bare feet...
Music

Breath In, Breath Out (Jimmy Buffet)

I bought a cheap watch from the crazy man
Floating down Canal
It doesn't use numbers or moving hands
It always just says "now"
Now you may be thinking that I was had
But this watch is never wrong
And if I
had trouble the warranty said:
Breathe in, breathe out, move on
(Chorus)
And it rained
It was nothing really new
And it blew
Seen all that before
And it poured
The earth began to strain
Pontchartrain leaking through the door, tides at war
If a hurricane doesn't leave you dead
It will make you strong
Don't try to explain it just nod your head
Breathe in, breathe out, move on
And it rained
It was nothing really new
And it blew
Seen all that before
And it poured
The earth began to strain
Pontchartrain buried the 9th ward to the 2nd floor
According to my watch, the time is now
The past is dead and gone
Don't try to shake it, just nod your head
Breathe in, breathe out, move on

Don't try to explain it, just bow your head
Breathe in, Breathe Out, Move on....

2006 “Take the Weather With You”
Music

RAP

Public Enemy
*Hell No, We Ain’t Alright*,
Rebirth of a Nation Album, 2006.

OutKast ft. Lil Wayne and Snoop Dogg,
*Hollywood Divorce*,
Idlewild Album, 2006.

Mos Def
*Dollar Day*,

Legendary K.O.
*George Bush Doesn’t Care About Black People*

Juvenile
*Get Ya Hustle On*,
Reality Check Album, 2006.
A requiem commissioned to memorialize the victims of Hurricane Katrina & performed at the University of Southern Mississippi on April 8, 2010

"I did not want to write a traditional requiem mass. Instead, I chose these fragments as the basis of the work. 1) Parts of the Latin Requiem Mass, but with simple, unornamented English translations, in order to communicate the meaning of the Latin text. 2) I asked my friend Cathleen MacColl to provide poems that recognize the victims of Hurricane Katrina, the tragedy of 9-11, and the anger and anxiety that took the lives of two music students at Indiana University. All these pieces, as they are preludes to a series of songs, include songs and the psalms have much to say to us as a people.

Ed Pasieka Wood
Music

August 25th, 2010 ~ (broadcast)
“It has been five years since Hurricane Katrina and the failure of the Federal levee system in New Orleans, and we speak with local activists, musicians and residents to gauge the progress of recovery in the city and region. Rebirth Brass Band's Derrick Tabb talks about his after-school program "The Roots of Music;" we visit the Musician's Village in the 9th Ward to meet drummer Smokey Johnson; then head out into the bayous with blues guitarist Tab Benoit to talk about his work to save the wetlands. Also, conversation with Eric Overmyer and Lolis Eric Elie from HBO's “Treme” and commentary from New Orleanian James Carville on the importance of the culture of the city.”

http://americanroutes.publicradio.org/
24 ft. sculpture by Marlin Miller

Tree Carvings from Dead Oak Trees

http://www.melodygolding.com/katrina.html

Ken Caruthers “found art”

YOU ARE INVITED TO THE PREMIERE OF THE

KATRINA COLLECTION: Rebirth and Renewal

A 3-D MIXED MEDIA ART SHOW BY BAY ST. LOUIS ARTIST

LORI K. GORDON

TO INCLUDE AN UNVEILING OF DONATED ARTWORK TO
THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI GULF COAST
KATRINA RESEARCH CENTER

on

FRIDAY, JUNE 5, 2009
5-7 P.M.

at

THE KATRINA RESEARCH CENTER
THIRD FLOOR, GULF COAST LIBRARY, GULF PARK CAMPUS
LONG BEACH, MISSISSIPPI

EXHIBITION WILL RUN THROUGH JULY 31, 2009.

PLEASE R.S.V.P. BY MAY 29 TO KRC@USM.EDU OR 228.214.3423.
BACKYARDS & BEYOND IS A MISSISSIPPI NONPROFIT ARTS ORGANIZATION ...
dedicated to creating and managing art exhibitions that celebrate, enhance, and encourage the strength, resiliency and hope of the human spirit. These exhibitions serve to educate, motivate, and promote public awareness of how people's lives are affected by the events and social situations of the day.

Following the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, there was recognition of the need to document and present in an historic and meaningful way the personal stories of those affected in our home state, Mississippi. The organization Backyards and Beyond grew out of this recognition and works to organize and tour fine art exhibitions through museums, art centers, and universities across the South and the nation.

http://www.backyardsandbeyond.org/
Art

Tim Waldrop
“Adapting to Katrina & Beyond: Images of the Resilient MS Gulf Coast”
An exhibition of recent paintings and sculptures by Gulf Coast native and mixed media artist- Tim Waldrop
www.timwaldrop.com

Aug 28th - Dec 4th, 2010
Opening Reception:
Sat, August 28th, 6-8pm
Open to Public

The Duckett Gallery
Mary C. O’Keefe Cultural Center
1600 Government Street
Ocean Springs, MS 39564
228.818.2878
www.TheMaryC.org

*Front, "3-D work in progress"
Humor

The Function of Humor in Disasters

• Puts disasters back where they are usually seen—in fiction & popular culture
• Helps people cope with anxieties
• Creates a way to deal with and adjust to situations of un-speakability
• Are a rebellion against a world defined by the media
• Is part of the battle for control of the discourse
• IF YOU DON’T LAUGH, YOU CRY!
Humor

Several Mardi Gras krewes in south Mississippi and New Orleans used “blue roofs” as their theme in Feb. 2006.
Humor

Q: How is hurricane Katrina like a typical woman?
A: She shows up all warm, wild and wet then the next thing you know, she’s taken the house & the car and left you devastated.

Q: What is the New Orleans Anthem?
A: "Under the Sea" from the Disney Movie "The Little Mermaid"
Humor

Q. What does FEMA stand for?
A. Federal Employees Missing in Action
B. Fix Everything My A**

Q. Why was the first baby born in New Orleans after Katrina named FEMA?
A. It showed up 9 months later
Humor

The Bush response to Hurricane Katrina was selected as #1 of the “20 Dumbest People, Events & Things 2005” by MAD Magazine.
Humor

• List of the top wanted Barbie dolls (Xmas 2005)

Evacuee Barbie - Comes in a suitcase with three changes of old clothes, a box of photographs, and pets.

Rooftop Barbie - Comes with an ax for chopping a hole in her roof, a flashlight to signal helicopters, and a blue tarp to patch the hole when she returns.

Red Cross Barbie - Comes with Red Cross uniform her own Red Cross truck capable of serving 1,000 meals per day.

FEMA Barbie - Comes with laptop computer, cell phone, and plain white trailer. (Trailer not delivered until 90 days after purchase.)

• Going Home Barbie - Comes with haz-mat suit, boots, gloves, respirator mask, shovel, and bin for holding recovered items.

Looter Barbie - Comes with shotgun, hundreds of gold chains, and shopping cart filled with electronic equipment. (NOPD Ken, equally outfitted, can be purchased separately.)

Food Stamp Barbie - Comes with Louisiana Purchase card and pin number.

U.S. Army Corp of Engineers Barbie - Comes with blinders on and credit card for lunch.

Levee Board Barbie - Comes with unused hard hat and pockets lined with cash.
Humor--Cartoons

ROBOT CHICKEN: Smurf-tastrophe!
When a dam breaks during a hurricane, the Smurfs face their greatest tragedy.

Humor--Cartoons

The Boondocks
Season 2,
Episode 9:
Invasion of the Katrinians
Granddad's cousin and his family take up residence in the Freeman home after being displaced by Hurricane Katrina

http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0373732/episodes
Urban Legends

An urban legend first of all tells a story—it is a narrative with a background, plot, climax, and conclusion. Urban legends are often entertaining and tell a morality tale. They are a type of folklore along with myths, fairy tales, tall tales, etc.

Most important features of an urban legend→ a strong basic story-appeal, a foundation in actual belief, and a meaningful message or 'moral'. Jan Harold Brunvand

http://www.janbrunvand.com/faq.html
Urban Legends

As of April 2010, there were links to 72 urban legends (true and false) on Snopes
Urban Legends

These friends of a friend returned to their house in Lakeview (New Orleans neighborhood) to find it looted. Their silverware and the wife's jewelry were just gone. Then after the mucky water was pumped out of their swimming pool, they recovered their lost treasures. They were in a sack at the bottom of the pool, and the looter who took them was still attached, clutching the bag in his dead hand. Evidently he had been making his way with the loot through the world of water that covered everything, was unaware of the existence of the pool, plunged into its depths when he reached the edge; unable to swim, he drowned and stayed under water, held down by the bag of silver and gems he couldn't let go of. (from de Caro, 2008)
Armed and dangerous - Flipper the firing dolphin let loose by Katrina

Mark Townsend in Houston for The Observer, Sunday 25 September 2005

It may be the oddest tale to emerge from the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Armed dolphins, trained by the US military to shoot terrorists and pinpoint spies underwater, may be missing in the Gulf of Mexico.

Experts who have studied the US navy's cetacean training exercises claim the 36 mammals could be carrying 'toxic dart' guns. Divers and surfers risk attack, they claim, from a species considered to be among the planet's smartest. The US navy admits it has been training dolphins for military purposes, but has refused to confirm that any are missing. http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2005/sep/25/usa.theobserver
Among the many rumors circulating in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina is the claim that sharks have been seen prowling the flooded byways of New Orleans. "Sharks were reported swimming in the streets," declared an overseas newspaper account credited to AP and Reuters.

While I wouldn't want to chalk these reports up entirely to hysteria, I think we can safely say they're a tad exaggerated. Sifting through earlier news accounts in an effort to track the rumor back to its origin, I found repeated references to unnamed "authorities" and "officials" reporting one "3-foot shark cruising the city." Which authorities? Which officials? Digging further, I could only find mention of one by name: Mayor Aaron Broussard of Jefferson Parish (a New Orleans suburb), who, according to the August 30 issue of the Palm Beach Post, "told residents Tuesday that at least one 3-foot shark had been spotted."

Again, that's one small shark reportedly sighted — exactly where and by whom, we don't know — and as far as we know he hadn't eaten anybody.
Bibliography


http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Articles_Essays/LFMKatrinaUrban.html viewed on April 24, 2010


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  http://lexacatscovers.blogspot.com

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  • Jimmy Buffett-> http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xP0C5Jbmd9k