



Flood of Images: Media, Memory, and Hurricane Katrina

By Bernie Cook

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Anyone who was not in New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina and the subsequent flooding of the city experienced the disaster as a media event, a flood of images pouring across television and computer screens. The twenty-four-hour news cycle created a surplus of representation that overwhelmed viewers and complicated understandings of the storm, the flood, and the aftermath. As time passed, documentary and fictional filmmakers took up the challenge of explaining what had happened in New Orleans, reaching beyond news reports to portray the lived experiences of survivors of Katrina. But while these narratives presented alternative understandings and more opportunities for empathy than TV news, Katrina remained a mediated experience.

In *Flood of Images*, Bernie Cook offers the most in-depth, wide-ranging, and carefully argued analysis of the mediation and meanings of Katrina. He engages in innovative, close, and comparative visual readings of news coverage on CNN, Fox News, and NBC; documentaries including Spike Lee's *When the Levees Broke* and *If God Is Willing and Da Creek Don't Rise*, Tia Lessin and Carl Deal's *Trouble the Water*, and Dawn Logsdon and Lolis Elie's *Faubourg Treme*; and the HBO drama *Treme*. Cook examines the production practices that shaped Katrina-as-media-event, exploring how those choices structured the possible memories and meanings of Katrina and how the media's memory-making has been contested. In *Flood of Images*, Cook intervenes in the ongoing process of remembering and understanding Katrina.

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Editorial Review

Review

"This book is a brilliant accomplishment in every respect, and one that certainly deserves the widest possible audience. . . . It seems likely to become the standard history of Katrina as documented by the media, both as an event and as a shared national memory of disaster." (Wheeler Winston Dixon, Ryan Professor of Film Studies, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, and author of *Film and Television after 9/11* and *Visions of the Apocalypse: Spectacles of Destruction in American Cinema*)

About the Author

A native of New Orleans, Bernie Cook is Associate Dean of Georgetown College, Georgetown University, and founding director of the Film and Media Studies Program at Georgetown University. He is the editor of *Thelma & Louise Live! The Cultural Afterlife of an American Film* and has produced short documentary films focused on social justice.

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