Come and be shocked: Baltimore beyond John Waters and The Wire - Catalog - UW-Madison Libraries

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Domestic handling time. In , Waters was invited to speak to the Baltimore Chamber of Commerce. He told them that the best slogan anyone could use for Baltimore to attract tourists was, "Come to Baltimore and Be Shocked. First, Waters may be best known now for the movie Hairspray, but his earlier movies are all about queer people, crime, and degeneracy. He revelled in shocking audiences. In fact, his movies were censored by Mary Avara, the Maryland state censor, for depicting sex acts she deemed unacceptable on screen. But, by the time of this dinner, the business community was asking him for ideas on how to sell the city.

One of the arguments I make in the book is that Baltimore has sold itself as a white, quirky, eccentric city. Waters is central to having created that image, especially since the popularity of Hairspray as a musical and then movie-musical. That image of Charm City, though, is contrasted with an image of Baltimore as Bodymore, a place of death, danger and crime, particularly for African Americans. So, Waters' trajectory from Baltimore bad boy to advisor to city officials maps onto the argument I make in the book about the use of white working-class eccentricity as the image for Baltimore.

When you were researching and writing this book, was there anything that surprised you? The issues that people wrote about in Chicory in the s and s are both specific to that time period, but resonate today. The biggest surprise was finding Chicory, the forgotten poetry magazine published by the Enoch Pratt Free Library. This magazine, which ran from , basically published unedited writing by working-class black residents of Baltimore's poorest neighborhoods. These are not the voices that we usually find in archives, so it was amazing when I went to the library and they wheeled out a big cart with box after box of issues on it. In the first issue, for example, a year-old black man named Turk, wrote a poem about being harassed by the police and having to run away, fearing for his life.

Obviously, that story could be told in as easily as Seeing its importance as a source about the past, I worked with Pratt library to digitize the magazine. Since then, I've also been working with former editors of the magazine and youth writing organizations in Baltimore to use Chicory to raise issues around social justice through poetry. You put together a playlist while writing this book. What's on it and why? Did you listen to it while writing the book? Because the book is about Baltimore in culture, I wanted to put together a playlist of songs about Baltimore publicly available on Spotify. My favorite songs on the playlist have to be the two versions of the song, "Baltimore. The song has such a different feel to it depending on who sings it. Newman said he didn't know anything about Baltimore when he wrote it except that it seemed like a struggling town.

When I hear him sing it, I think of the white working-class people who lost their jobs in the factories in the s. When Simone sings it, though, because she's so associated with the civil rights movement and because she adds a reggae beat to it, it feels like she's talking from the perspective of black Baltimoreans, giving the song a different perspective. I use the two versions of this song to discuss the racial segregation of Baltimore and how culture reflects it.

Who should read this book? What do you hope they get out of it? I hope that people who know and love Baltimore and cities like it read this book. The book raises important questions about the role of arts and culture in contemporary cities. More and more cities try to sell themselves as cultural centers in order to attract upwardly mobile residents and business investment. However, this often leads to those cities becoming too expensive for working-class people who have lived there for decades.

If my book can spur conversation about this dynamic—and push cities to think of the arts as less about economic development and more about civic good—then I will be deeply satisfied.

Come and Be Shocked: Baltimore Beyond John Waters and the Wire, Hardcover by | eBay

The familiar thrill of shopping eased the unfamiliarity of a strange city. Flash forward twenty years to me writing a book that was, in part, about how Baltimore came to be a place that might convince a couple of twenty-year-olds to get on I south and spend a few dollars on a weekend getaway. As scholars like Sharon Zukin and Miriam Greenberg have brilliantly argued, urban branding was a key part of that process. Since the s,
Rust Belt cities like Baltimore responded to the gut punch of deindustrialization by crafting a careful marketing image that sold the city to tourists, corporations, and upwardly mobile residents. But real estate developers, policymakers, tourism agencies, and civic elites were only part of the story. How had artists and cultural producers represented the city in popular culture? For a city of its size, Baltimore has been the setting for and subject of an extraordinary number of cultural representations in film, television, novels, drama, poetry, and music since the s.

These representations have affected not only Baltimore but how we understand broader issues like urban governance Simon, queerness Waters, and race and ethnicity Levinson and Simon. Representations of Baltimore shape how we think about cities everywhere. Come and Be Shocked contextualizes these cultural representations within the history of urban renewal, urban crisis, and tourism and branding.

My focus in the book is the relationship between cultural representation and municipal and federal policy. Two major questions guided my research and analysis. How do the imaginary cities created by artists affect the real cities that we live in? How does public policy shape intentionally or not, the kinds of cultural representations that artists create? Examining the political economy of cultural representation allowed me to move beyond just textual analysis to understand the role of image-making in the postwar city through a case study of a fascinating city that has been underexamined.

While I drew from cultural studies in my analysis of texts and their circulation, I wanted to see if I could find more specific links between culture and policy. I tried to examine cultural representations historically, understanding how they reflected or critiqued what was happening in Baltimore at the time of their creation. In digging through archives from Baltimore to Boston, I found fascinating sources.

On the Internet Archive, an educational film called The Baltimore Plan used images of rats, dirty alleys, and outdoor toilets just like the pamphlets to make the case for redevelopment. Archival research and political history grounded the textual analysis. But as even that cursory list of popular culture texts suggests, white people seemed to have a monopoly on representing Baltimore, despite the decades long demographic majority of African American. Of course, this is not true. Some of my most rewarding research experiences were uncovering forgotten texts by people of color. Chicory magazine, a poetry magazine published with War on Poverty funds by the Enoch Pratt Free Library, the library system of Baltimore, was one of these finds. Again, policy and culture intersected. The liberal reformers fighting the War on Poverty, including city officials and library administrators, expressed concern regarding inner city Baltimore.

While these neighborhoods had been damaged by disinvestment and urban renewal, these officials believed that human renewal was the solution to poverty. They hoped that poor people of color would use art and creative expression rather than Molotov cocktails to make their opinions known. The writers and editors of Chicory, including founding editor and former poet laureate of Boston, Sam Cornish; longest-serving editor, poet and educator, Melvin Brown; and, last editor, poet and educator Everett Adam Jackson, had other ideas. They drew from the Black Arts Movement to create a magazine that gave a mostly unedited voice to working-class Black people. In this way, Chicory was an extraordinary historical source that captured a turbulent time period from the point of view of people often ignored in the historical record.

Recognizing this historical significance, Pratt library digitized Chicory as part of the Maryland digital repository, with funding and support from Rutgers University-Newark and me. While acts of recovery are important, a cultural studies lens encourages us to also ask questions about why certain texts are famous and others are forgotten. Played by and for Black people in the city starting in the s, producers and DJs from outside Baltimore caught on to its raucous energy in the early s.

Within a global circuit of fans, Baltimore club had cultural capital, but for the city leaders it was too raunchy, raw and, yes, Black, to serve as branding for the city despite being truly a Baltimore creation. In most instances, the information will be from sources that have not been peer reviewed by scholarly or research communities. Please report cases in which the information is inaccurate through the Contact Us link below. Subjects A limited number of items are shown. Click to view More Baltimore Md. Baltimore Md. Summary "The author examines cultural representations of Baltimore from the early s to the early 21st century. Baltimore has been the setting for and subject of many works of film, television, fiction, drama, poetry, and music.

It has become an emblem of urbanism despite its modest size. This book contextualizes these cultural representations within the history of urban renewal, urban crisis, and tourism and branding, connecting them with municipal and federal policy. Specifically, the author analyzes two opposing representations of Baltimore: eccentric, white, working-class Charm City and black, dangerous Bodymore" Notes Includes bibliographical references and index.

Come and Be Shocked | Johns Hopkins University Press Books

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What do you hope they get out of it? I hope that people who know and love Baltimore and cities like it read this book. The book raises important questions about the role of arts and culture in contemporary cities. More and more cities try to sell themselves as cultural centers in order to attract upwardly mobile residents and business investment. However, this often leads to those cities becoming too expensive for working-class people who have lived there for decades. If my book can spur conversation about this dynamic--and push cities to think of the arts as less about economic development and more about civic good--then I will be deeply satisfied.
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Whistle while you work: uncovering forgotten stories of African American culture in Baltimore

While I drew from cultural studies in my analysis of texts and their circulation, I wanted to see if I could find more specific links between culture and policy. I tried to examine cultural representations historically, understanding how they reflected or criticized what was happening in Baltimore at the time of their creation. In digging through archives from Baltimore to Boston, I found fascinating sources. On the Internet Archive, an educational film called The Baltimore Plan used images of rats, dirty alleys, and outdoor toilets just like the pamphlets to make the case for redevelopment. Archival research and political history grounded the textual analysis.

But as even that cursory list of popular culture texts suggests, white people seemed to have a monopoly on representing Baltimore, despite the decades long demographic majority of African American. Of course, this is not true. Some of my most rewarding research experiences were uncovering forgotten texts by people of color. Chicory magazine, a poetry magazine published with War on Poverty funds by the Enoch Pratt Free Library, served as branding for the city despite being truly a Baltimore creation. Instead, I show how a different image came to the fore in the early 1970s. The Baltimore Hon, a stereotype of a gum-snapping, beehive-hairdo-wearing, sassy white working-class woman of the 1950s, became one powerful image. Played by and for Black people in the city starting in the 1950s, producers and DJs from outside Baltimore caught on to its raucous energy in the 1960s. While acts of recovery are important, a cultural studies lens encourages us to also ask questions about why certain texts are famous and others are forgotten. Played by and for Black people in the city starting in the 1950s, producers and DJs from outside Baltimore caught on to its raucous energy in the early 1970s. Within a global circuit of fans, Baltimore club had cultural capital, but for the city leaders it was too raunchy, raw and, yes, Black, to serve as branding for the city despite being truly a Baltimore creation. Instead, I show how a different image came to the fore in the early 1970s. The Baltimore Hon, a stereotype of a gum-snapping, beehive-hairdo-wearing, sassy white working-class woman of the 1950s, became one powerful image of the city spread through an annual heritage festival and articles in the travel and tourism pages of publications from the New York Times to The Guardian.

Come and Be Shocked: Baltimore Beyond John Waters and the Wire by Mary Rizzo

First, Rizzo doesn't seem to understand that fictional depictions are, in fact, fictional. The constant refrain throughout this book is that various depictions don't accurately depict real life Baltimore because they don't represent the Baltimore she's constructed as a scholar and are therefore inaccurate and often problematic. Second, the Baltimore Rizzo constructs doesn't seem to capture the complexity that is the actual city. I read an interview with the author who states she's never actually lived in Baltimore, and I think that shows in her understanding of Baltimore as a place. Despite the in depth research and obvious time and care spent on the subject, in some ways she is as much as an outsider and tourist showing up for a fictional depiction of Baltimore as the ones she criticizes in the book.

She correctly identifies racism and the marginalization of African-American residents of Baltimore as the central problem in the city. However she then focuses solely on a specific subset of Black Baltimoreans to represent the entire city and any fictional representation not representing their view is presented as part of the larger issue of racism in Baltimore.

Other issues, often interrelated—economic issues, shifts in industrial production, government corruption, crime, etc.—are only viewed as aspects of racial issues and are never really understood as broader, stand alone problems impacting all of Baltimore's residents. Central to Baltimore's fictional appeal are some of the quirks that, positive or negative, make the city unique and set it apart from other aging industrial urban centers—ethnic and religious enclaves, the crumbling urban landscape beyond most other cities, the geographical position of the city on the East Coast.
Yet instead of exploring how these issues are central to Baltimore's appeal these issues become more examples of racial disparities and a lack of representation. Examples of homophobia and anti-Semitism are presented without comment or discussion about the role of other marginalized Baltimorean's experiences. This book is very well researched, engaging, and can teach even people who think they know fictional Baltimore or Baltimore history quite a bit. It is well written and easy to read. Certainly the experiences and voices within Black Baltimore Rizzo highlights are an important and sometimes overlooked part of fiction although given she cites numerous fictional depictions presenting this viewpoint, making up the majority of properties she examines in the book, it seems the issue is more one of widespread popularity vs existence but Rizzo seems to miss the fact that a chorus of different voices with different experiences make up the totality of the Baltimore experience. Just as a lack of one 'voice' would make the wider representation of Baltimore inaccurate, pushing an idea that one 'voice' is the true Baltimore experience while criticizing all others is also inaccurate. Strangely, in the final chapters Rizzo both discusses that things in the context of the word Hon that might represent one group of Baltimoreans has no meaning or even a negative meaning to other groups of Baltimoreans, and in the context of rap music that fiction isn't reporting and doesn't represent lived reality so much as a creative representation of it. These are both pretty basic concepts within cultural studies. While explicitly stating both these things, and making arguments focused on various groups' viewpoints and the need for a holistic, diverse representation of Baltimore in fiction, Rizzo seems to have overlooked these two key points in most of this book or become so focused on proving a specific point she missed the larger argument she was trying to make. Had Come and Be Shocked set out to argue that certain fictional depictions didn't represent an accurate depiction of the lived experiences of specific African American neighborhoods in Baltimore, I think it would have been quite successful. However a pretty fundamental misunderstanding of the role of fiction and the reality of Baltimore means the argument of this book failed to explore the complexity that allows Baltimore to punch above its weight culturally, and instead presents a flawed and one note view of the city and the fiction representing it. It's an interesting book, and I really wish the first two thirds could have matched the final third. This is an important topic and I, as someone living just outside Baltimore, a librarian, and someone who has extensively studied problematic cultural heritage issues, would have liked to see this issue more completely explored and documented. Jun 14, Leigh added it. More academic than I expected. Jul 09, Vanessa rated it it was amazing. Excellent book! Scott McKay rated it it was amazing Oct 28, Priya rated it it was amazing Jul 08, Douglas rated it really liked it Sep 12, Laura rated it it was amazing Jul 27, Kate Drabinski rated it really liked it Sep 07, Joey Reisberg rated it it was amazing Jan 13, Nadia Tivis marked it as to-read Oct 27, Katie marked it as to-read Nov 21, YoBunnyBunny marked it as to-read Jan 02, Jeff marked it as to-read Feb 01, Vanessa added it Feb 24, Jake Bos marked it as to-read Mar 31, Lindsay marked it as to-read Apr 17, Tori marked it as to-read Apr 18, Ruth marked it as to-read Apr 19, Subjects A limited number of items are shown. Click to view More Baltimore Md. Baltimore Md. Summary "The author examines cultural representations of Baltimore from the early s to the early 21st century. Baltimore has been the setting for and subject of many works of film, television, fiction, drama, poetry, and music. It has become an emblem of urbanism despite its modest size. 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