

In the history of empires, there is a common theme of conquerors insinuating that the conquered would be better off as subjects of empire. Some empires suggested that the conquered would be better protected from invasion if they were a part of the empire, some insinuated that the souls of the conquered would be saved by one God or another, some empires have suggested that they were spreading superior forms of government such as democracy, and some claimed to be bringing civilization and moral uplift to a primitive culture. Regardless, conquest is often presented by the empire as beneficial to the conquered. Thus, how this idea develops within the culture of an empire can shed light on the processes that work to validate the conquest of foreign land and people.

In this paper, I will analyze the evolution of an imperial discourse within commercialized entertainment that exhibited foreign island cultures during the mid-nineteenth century. Starting in the late 1830s, showmen began to exhibit Pacific Islanders as a part of their so-called 'freak shows.' Despite being almost complete fabrications, these 'exhibits' were presented as accurate and scientific representations of so-called uncivilized cultures. Over the following decades, the foreign 'freak' became a staple of the public entertainment industry, infiltrating museums, circuses, and World's Fairs around the country.

After sixty years of exhibition in the public entertainment sector, the popular culture imagery of foreign island cultures made its way into political cartooning meant to remark upon American imperialism. Following the Spanish American War of 1898, the American media began fervently discussing whether or not America should colonize Spain's former colonies. Within this debate, the Euro-American media subsequently appropriated the images that popular entertainments had developed in an attempt to garner public support for American colonization of Hawaii, Guam, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Cuba.

This history begins with a performer named James O'Connell; a tattooed ex-sailor who was exhibited on stage as a living survivor of captivity among island peoples in the Pacific. O'Connell came to America in 1836 after living with the people of Pohnpei in Micronesia for eleven years, and he quickly made his way into New York's theater circuit in order to tell audiences about his experiences. As one could assume, tattooing was not common among white, European Americans in 1836, so his inedible markings gave him a sense of authenticity as a man who had lived among a distant, foreign culture. Though much of his performance was rife with hyperbolic storytelling and unbelievable tales of adventure, his was the first public entertainment in America to feature themes of civilization, savagery, captivity, and barbarism with regard to island cultures. The idea that foreign, non-white cultures were uncivilized savages was not a new idea; European Americans had used those terms to describe Native Americans long before O'Connell ever took the stage. However, O'Connell's show was the first commercialized entertainment to apply that language to Pacific island cultures. Further, O'Connell's performance included a discussion of the "manners and customs" of the Pohnpiean people, therein establishing his show as not only entertaining but also educational.

Soon after James O'Connell began performing in New York, he began working with a young theater owner named Phineas Taylor Barnum. Barnum is perhaps the most famous showman of the nineteenth century, and is definitely the most important figure regarding the representation of foreign island cultures as uncivilized and savage (which I will henceforth refer to as the imperial representation). Barnum is most famous for his penchant for advertisement and his influence on the development of American culture, but for our purposes his relevance lies in the way he contributed to the evolution of the imperial representation. Barnum owned and ran a popular museum in New York, the American Museum, and from the early years of his career,

the showman often exhibited foreign island peoples as a part of his freak show.¹ Over the course of his career, Barnum exhibited people who he claimed were cannibals, missing links in evolution, and living representations of the uncivilized peoples from around the world. Often the showman would exploit contemporary scientific theories and subjects, such as ethnology and evolution, to represent foreign people as scientifically inferior to his white audience. Unlike other showmen's exhibitions of foreign peoples, Barnum took advantage of the ambiguity between education and entertainment and built a narrative that foreign people were inherently unevolved, uncivilized, and inferior. Instead of presenting foreign peoples as simple 'freaks,' Barnum presented them as scientific specimens that supported scientific classification of races.

Thirty years after Barnum opened the American Museum as a place where one could view all things exotic, including human beings, exhibitions of foreign lands and people gained a sense of legitimacy as they made their way into the Centennial World's Fair in Philadelphia. World's Fairs have since disappeared from the public entertainment business, but they were once incredibly popular events in which a city would exhibit arts, science, culture, and technological advancements from around the world. These events happened in cities across the world in the second half of the nineteenth century, and they were very much considered to be informative, educational experiences that taught their audiences about the technological and cultural progress happening in the rest of the world. In 1876, Philadelphia housed a World's Fair, and for the first time, the fair included small exhibits that represented the cultures of more 'exotic' lands and peoples. These exhibitions blurred the lines "between 'scientific' ethnological displays of the world's people and sensational exploitation of the exotic for profit."² Essentially, the Centennial

¹ Footnote freakshows

² Bogdan48

Exhibition in Philadelphia provided legitimacy for the imperial representation of foreign bodies, making the practice seem legitimate and educational.

Between the 1870s and 1890s, exhibitions of foreign bodies as representatives of the uncivilized world became a staple of travelling circuses and World's Fairs. In both formats, the exhibitions would always be presented as a way for audiences to become more cosmopolitan by learning about foreign cultures, but the various exhibitions consistently emphasized the subjects' lack of 'civilization' as the reason for their display. By exhibiting foreign cultures in this way, the foreigner was turned into a stereotypical caricature of inferiority due to their lack of what showmen called civilization. By using pseudo-science and public display, these shows delivered deeply xenophobic entertainments under the pretext of educating their audience.

By 1898, Americans had been entertained by imperial representations of foreign island cultures for over sixty years. After war broke out between America and Spain in April of that year, the imperial representation of foreignness was quickly appropriated by American media sources as they began to discuss the prospects of colonizing Spain's former colonies of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines while also remarking on America's decision to annex Hawaii. The Spanish American War lasted only four months, ending with a resounding victory for the American military, and the topic of imperialism began to dominate the American news cycle. Within the imperialism debate, both pro-imperialists and anti-imperialists alike used language and imagery that had been developed in the entertainment sector over six decades of foreign exhibitions. For the pro-imperialist, the island cultures that inhabited Spain's former colonies were uncivilized and would benefit from American leadership. These arguments were largely based on the idea that the Americans would bring civilization and democracy to the islands, thereby raising their status in the world. For the anti-imperialists, the island cultures were

uncivilized and would never accept American leadership because they were too savage to ever become civilized. The anti-imperialists also argued that by colonizing island lands, Americans would be accepting uncivilized cultures as equals.

During the debate about American imperialism within the American media, political cartoonists employed imagery of foreign island peoples that had been established in the public entertainment sector. Between 1898 and 1899, cartoonists depicted people from the aforementioned countries as children, circus sideshows, blackface minstrels, animals, and base savages as a way to remark on the question of imperialism. Though the litany of political cartoons depicted the foreign nations in a variety of ways, the message of these cartoons always remarked upon the civilization, or lack thereof, of island cultures. When analyzing images, it is important to not only look at what is present, but also what is missing. In the case of the political cartoons being discussed here, it is notable that there is not much variety in the way foreign peoples were depicted. The cartoonists could have created images that made any argument they wished, that America stood for freedom not colonization, or they could have drawn the foreign peoples as regular human beings to humanize the issue, but they all chose to depict the foreign nations in the same way the circus did: as uncivilized savages. My work aims to better understand why this happened.

This work will build upon the existing scholarship that looks at the way nineteenth century concepts of civilization and manhood contributed to contemporary views of non-white races and how these views were used to validate American imperialism. The seminal work in this historiography is Gail Bederman's *Manliness and Civilization*, published in 1995. Bederman's work is a treatise on American's concept of masculinity at the turn of the century, and her work investigates how and why the concepts of masculinity and civilization changed over time. For

Bederman, “a variety of social and cultural encouraged white middle-class men to develop new explanations of why they, as men, ought to wield power and authority.”³ Bederman’s work subsequently sets out to establish “a central set of ideas that turn-of-the-century Americans frequently used to tie male power to racial dominance-the discourse of ‘civilization.’”⁴

Throughout her work, Bederman examines how white, male society conceptualized manliness as the ability to dominate other races, thereby making manliness and civilization attainable only by white men. By establishing this connection, Bederman’s work lays the framework for our understanding of how the nineteenth-century discourse regarding civilization is based on the premise of white superiority. Though Bederman does not discuss the exhibition of foreign bodies in the circus or museums, her work establishes the intellectual framework for understanding how the exploitation of foreign bodies as ‘uncivilized’ fits into the larger discourse regarding contemporary concepts of manhood and civilization.

The next book that informs my work is Bluford Adams’ *E Pluribus Barnum*, published in 1997. Adams’ work is semi-biographical in nature as the author uses the career of P.T. Barnum as a catalyst for a more general discussion of American culture during the mid-nineteenth century. Adams work discusses the various aspects of American culture that shaped, and were reflected in, P.T. Barnum’s public entertainments, however, Adams employs Bederman’s foundational ideas in his assessment of Barnum’s career as he states, “All of Barnum’s circuses and hippodromes celebrated white, bourgeois manhood under the banners of Christianity and Civilization.”⁵ The concept of civilization and race are the main topics of Adams’ fifth chapter, “A Stupendous Mirror of Departed Empires.” This chapter uses Barnum’s exhibition of foreign

³ Bederman 5

⁴ Bederman 5

⁵ Adams 165

bodies in his, “Congress of Nations,” and “Ethnological Congress” to discuss the imperial implications of Barnum’s exhibition of non-Western cultures. Adams argues that the exhibition of non-Western people was done in a way that marked them as distinctly different from their white audience. For Adams, Barnum’s show “reduced non-Westerners to ‘specimens’ in an ethnological schema.”⁶ In his assessment of Barnum’s “Ethnological Congress,” Adams states: “Like so many enterprises carried out before and since in the name of science, the Ethnological Congress couched its white male supremacy in the vocabulary of objectivity and empiricism.”⁷ Adams’ work establishes the idea that Barnum exploited contemporary ideas of civilization to create performances that played on American male fantasies of white superiority over the ‘uncivilized’ peoples of the world. While I absolutely agree with this assessment, my work will argue that Barnum began this practice much earlier than the 1870s, which is when Adams begins his discussion of this concept.

The next book that builds upon Bederman’s concept in public entertainment is Janet Davis’ *The Circus Age: Culture & Society Under the American Big Top*, published in 2002. Davis, like Adams, uses the history of the American circus to investigate myriad topics such as gender, sexuality, race, class, empire, and nationalism at the turn of the century. Basically, Davis finds that as America progressed as a country and gained more status on the global stage, the circus became more and more a reflection of that progress. Further, Davis argues that before mass media, the circus was one of the major outlets for Americans to learn about, and celebrate their country. As such, the author notes that the circus must be understood as an influential

⁶ Adams 165

⁷ Adams 180

cultural form regarding the development of America's social structures, and the growth of the American empire.

Davis directly discusses the relationship between public entertainment and American imperialism as she argues that the circus framed American imperialism as evidence of American exceptionalism, effectively turning empire building into a point of pride and patriotism among the white, American audience. Davis' work does not explicitly employ the language of *Civilization and Manliness*, but her work does exploit its themes as she argues that circuses framed American expansion as providing "moral uplift" to the people and lands the American government sought to colonize.⁸ Further, Davis argues that circuses often depicted expansion "as part of the nation's 'inevitable movement from 'savagery' to civilization.'"⁹

The Circus Age is a vital piece of scholarship for my purposes as Davis draws direct connections between popular entertainment and American imperialism, however, our opinions differ regarding the relationship between American imperialism against Native Americans and imperialism against foreign island cultures following the Spanish American War. For Davis, American conquest of Spain's former colonies grew out of American imperialism against Native Americans. Though I would agree that the two are related, this argument minimizes the long history of public entertainments presenting island cultures as dehumanized savages.

Another scholarly work that connects Bederman's ideas to imperialism is Kristin Hoganson's *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars*, published in 1998. Hoganson's work employs a feminist perspective in her analysis of the Spanish-American and Philippine-American wars as

⁸ Davis 194

⁹ Davis 203

the author argues that the many factors that caused the two wars could be traced back to American's concept of manhood. For Hoganson, scholars have developed many economic, political, and strategic arguments regarding the causes for the two wars, but the foundation of each of these arguments lies in the gender relations of the late-nineteenth century. Hoganson argues that the late-nineteenth century was a volatile time for gender relations as women were beginning to challenge the idea that they were only meant to participate in the private sphere. As society was changing due to industrialization and modernization, women were actively seeking more power in contemporary society. For Hoganson, this led many American men to become obsessive with so-called manliness. At the time, manliness was conceptualized as martial strength and the ability to dominate, so many Americans saw war and conquest as direct evidence of their own manhood. Hoganson's work is somewhat unique in the field of Spanish-American and Philippine-American War history as her book aims to contradict a spectrum of arguments regarding the causes of the war in favor of her much simpler argument; that it all came down to gender politics. Though her argument is simpler, it is also elegant and her book does a great job tracking how the idea of manliness crept into every single historical argument regarding the two wars. However, Hoganson's work neglects the public entertainment sector when discussing nineteenth-century culture surrounding the topic of manhood. Though her work is still convincing despite this fact, Hoganson's arguments would have benefited from a short discussion regarding how places like the theater and circus fit into the institutional gender politics of the late-nineteenth century.

Amy Greenberg's *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire*, builds upon Hoganson's arguments as the author investigates the role gender played in American expansion West, and eventually overseas. In her analysis, Greenberg focuses on the American concept of

Manifest Destiny, or the idea that white, male Americans were destined by God to conquer foreign lands and people. For Greenberg, almost everything about the idea of Manifest Destiny can be traced back to contemporary Americans sense of manhood. For example, women were seen as a civilizing force in nineteenth century America, and, as such, when artists created images that hailed American progress, America was always represented as a woman. Further, like Hoganson, Greenberg argues that the western frontier was presented as one of the last places where men could be men, therein tying imperialism to ideas of manliness. However, Greenberg's work is wider in scope than Hoganson's, and her work covers a longer time period. Greenberg gives more attention to explaining the way the concept of manhood changed throughout the nineteenth century and how that related to the concept of Manifest Destiny. For Greenberg, eighteenth-century manhood conceptualized a 'man' as leisurely, educated, refined, and moral. However, after industrialization, American's began exhibiting what Greenberg calls "Martial manhood;" the idea that a man was strong, dominant, able to drink to excess, and they "rejected the moral standards that guided restrained men."¹⁰ The author claims that this new kind of manhood crept up as an effect of industrialization as working men became a larger part of the economy. Overall, Greenberg argues that this new sense of martial manhood contributed greatly to public support for American imperialism on the North American continent and abroad. Where Hoganson focuses directly on the issue of manliness during the late-eighteen nineties, Greenberg goes back further linking the idea of manhood to American expansion throughout the antebellum era.

Like Davis, Greenberg makes a strong argument that American expansion following the Spanish American War had direct ties to the idea of manifest destiny and war against Native

¹⁰ Greenberg 12

Americans. Again, I do not argue with this point. There is clearly a direct influence between expansion overseas and expansion against Native Americans. However, what my work aims to do is simply add to this conversation by specifically examining the demonizing way foreign islanders were presented in some of America's most popular cultural entertainment forms.

Bonnie Miller's *From Liberation to Conquest* presents the most direct discussion between the imperialist representation in popular culture and its relationship with imperialism. Unlike the aforementioned scholarship, Miller's work is a direct analysis of imagery depicting foreign cultures in the waning years of the nineteenth century. For Miller, in the early years of Cuba's fight for independence, American newspapers depicted Cubans as helpless women who needed to be saved by manly Americans. However, after America won their war against Spain, the question of imperialism became a hot topic in American media sources. This caused the imagery of foreign nations to change from helpless women, to uncivilized savage as both sides of the imperialism debate employed long established imagery of foreign people to support their disparate stances. Miller states: "The racialized spectacle of colonialism arising from the cultural production of empire on both sides of the [imperialism] debate made use of popular imagery that circulated widely in mass entertainments, including the attractions of P.T. Barnum."¹¹ She goes on to state: "By presenting the terms of overseas imperialism through the lens of American popular culture, cultural producers embedded messages of imperialist and racial ideologies in a framework that could be widely recognized and had mass appeal."¹² Throughout her work, Miller employs Bederman's initial concept that the idea of manhood and civilization were deeply intertwined, and she applies this idea directly to her analysis of the various imagery that is

¹¹ Miller 189

¹² IBID

relevant to the imperialism debate. However, Miller is alone among the aforementioned scholars to make direct connections between P.T. Barnum, the circus, and American imperialism. Other scholars, like Davis and Adams, also make this connection, but their connections are more vague than Miller's direct assessment.

My work will add to this scholarship in two ways: first, I will argue that the point of origin of the imperialist representation of island cultures is much earlier than the aforementioned scholarship suggests, and, second, I treat the representation of island cultures as its own, distinct history rather than analyzing the topic as related to American race relations with Native Americans and African Americans. Regarding my first contribution, Miller, Davis, and Adams all make connections between popular entertainments and American imperialism, however, these works focus most heavily on the eighteen-eighties and nineties. Miller argues that Barnum's "What is it?" exhibit from 1860 was one of the earliest performances to bring "scientific authority" to imperialist representations, however, I argue that this practice actually begins with James O'Connell's Tattooed Man sideshow beginning in 1837. I agree with Miller that Barnum's "What is it?" exhibit contributed to the scientific authority that the exhibition of foreign peoples obtained throughout the late-nineteenth century, but that exhibit was a part of a long chain of exhibitions that far pre-date the 1860s.

Regarding my second contribution, the aforementioned scholars, specifically Davis, Adams, Greenberg, and Miller, have analyzed American's support for imperialism against island cultures as an evolution of American race relations with Native Americans and African Americans. This argument is absolutely justified, and their arguments are valid. However, by seeing the representation of island cultures as an offshoot of local race relations, one can easily dismiss the fact that the commercialized exhibition of foreign peoples as uncivilized savages has

its own history. There is no doubt that these histories are related, but my work will focus more on how representations of Pacific Islanders evolved throughout the nineteenth century rather than assuming that said representations were a latent function of American race relations. By analyzing imperial representations of Pacific Islanders specifically, my work will offer a new perspective that does not disregard the fact that Pacific Islanders were a distinctly different culture than Native Americans and African Americans.

Along with the many secondary sources that add to my understanding of the various topics to be discussed, this work will be based on a variety of primary sources; such as newspaper articles, political cartoons, advertisements, and pictures. I will use these sources to build a better understanding of how contemporary Americans discussed foreignness in the public entertainment sector, specifically with regard to island cultures. As my work will trace how this discussion evolved over time, this paper will be laid out in semi-chronological fashion. In the first section, I will establish the changing culture of the mid-nineteenth century that led to the creation of new types of entertainments for the masses. The second section will be a discussion of James O'Connell and his Tattooed Man sideshow. The third section will trace the career of P.T. Barnum, specifically focusing on his exploitation of foreign people. The fourth section will discuss how Barnum's "Ethnological" exhibitions gained legitimacy through Worlds Fairs. And the last section will examine the way the imperial representation of island cultures made their way into imperialist propaganda in the years following the Spanish American War.

In the end, this work is based on the premise that nineteenth-century American showmen taught the American public how to think about 'civilization' and its relationship to foreignness. Entertainment producers of the nineteenth century are some of the most important and influential figures in establishing the idea that white people are civilized and brown people are not, and so it

is this group that my work will most directly focus. Although there are many groups of people involved in spreading this narrative, it was circuses and sideshows that brought this narrative into small towns across the country. It was the imagery of the circus that image makers used to gather support for imperialism in the eighteen-nineties. Thus, an inspection of how this idea evolved within entertainment culture is necessary for our understanding of the relationship between entertainment and American imperialism.

Human Exhibition in Early American History

The commercialized exhibition of human bodies is inundated in nineteenth-century American entertainment culture, however, showmen and promoters began exhibiting humans and exotic animals as “living curiosities” as early as 1738. The first example of a human exhibition in America comes from colonial North Carolina where a newspaper advertised the exhibition of a woman from Guinea who was “about four feet tall, in every part like a woman excepting her head which nearly resembles the ape.”¹³ According to Robert Bogdan’s *Freak Show*, human exhibits or “freaks” were relatively common in eighteenth-century America. The practice of exhibiting “freaks” grew from an earlier English tradition which typically consisted of a manager and a performer who would travel around to fairs or taverns, charging a fee for people to come to look upon the “freak.” The performers themselves typically had something different about them, such as missing limbs, dwarfism, or some other physical abnormalities that made them different, or ‘other,’ than their typical Anglo-Saxon audience. Though these early exhibitions included many of the same elements of the later human exhibitions in museums and circuses, they were much different in scale as there was not a large commercial entertainment industry to facilitate

¹³ Bogdan 25

large audiences until the mid-nineteenth century. As populations in cities such as New York, Philadelphia, and Boston grew, institutions like theaters and museums were built as permanent houses of public entertainment. These new entertainment centers became important social spaces for contemporary Americans, and after theaters and museums began to specifically cater to their patron's disparate social class, middle and working-class institutions offered the "freak show" a permanent residence for entertaining audiences.

Theater was the most popular form of mass entertainment in the early nineteenth century. The early Euro-American theater was largely derivative of English theater culture as colonizers brought the traditional English theater to the Americas. Typically, these playhouses would perform the works of William Shakespeare. Theater historian Lawrence Levine's work, *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, suggests that there was not a variety of unique popular entertainments in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, but rather a consistent dedication to performing Shakespeare's work. To get a sense of just how popular Shakespeare was at this point, Levine explains that it was common for contemporary Euro-Americans to be able to recite entire Shakespearean plays. From memory. For Levine, "Shakespeare *was* popular entertainment in the nineteenth century."¹⁴ However, more important than the proliferation of Shakespearean drama is the fact that the American populace was beginning to develop a shared public entertainment culture in larger city centers.

According to Levine's work, *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, as the American working class grew, theaters became contentious spaces where social issues began to cause class conflict the public space of the local theater. During the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, people from all

¹⁴ *Highbrow Lowbrow* 21

classes went to the same local theaters (though they were separated by seating) to enjoy a play.¹⁵ As far as the experience at the theater went, Levine states, “to envision nineteenth-century theater audiences correctly, one might do well to visit a contemporary sporting event.”¹⁶ In regards to class-separated seating, for example, at a football game in 2019 the working class will typically sit in the ‘nosebleeds,’ the middle class will sit in the seats closer to the field, and the rich will sit in private, box seats. Further, much like a modern football game, the theater experience in the nineteenth century was much more interactive. Antebellum theater audiences would constantly cheer for parts of a play they liked, they would force actors to repeat lines, they would boo or hiss at parts they disliked, and they would even go as far as throwing food at an actor that they thought was doing a bad job.¹⁷ However, as America industrialized, the working-class grew and the public space of a local theater began to be populated by various groups of people that held vastly different values. Over time, some of the social class issues between rich and working-class audience members led to class conflict and violence at the local playhouse.¹⁸

One of the most famous instances of violence in the antebellum American theater is the Astor Place Riot. During the theatrical season of 1849, the Astor Place theater became the battleground in a fight about social class which was effectively projected upon two actors named William McReady and Edwin Forrest. McReady was an Englishman who was well known for his “his aristocratic demeanor, and his identification with the wealthy gentry,” making him a perfect representative of the leisure class.¹⁹ On the other hand, Forrest was known among New Yorkers for his “militant love of his country, his outspoken belief in its citizenry, and his

¹⁵ Explain seating comment

¹⁶ Levine 26

¹⁷ This is where the movie cliché of throwing food at actors comes from.

¹⁸ Astor Place Riot explain

¹⁹ Levine 63

frequent articulation of the possibilities of self-improvement and social mobility” making him a favorite among working-class New Yorkers.²⁰ On May 7th of 1849, both actors performed *Macbeth* at different theaters. Forrest’s performance received great praise and cheers from the audience while performing at the Broadway Theatre, whereas McCready was never allowed to perform after the audience silenced the actor with “boos and cries of ‘Three groans for the codfish aristocracy,’” as well as an onslaught of “eggs, apples, potatoes, lemons, and...chairs.”²¹ After this performance, McCready wanted to leave the country but was talked out of it by some of the New York elite, including Herman Melville.²² On May 10th McCready returned to the Astor Place Theater to perform *Macbeth*, however, his return incited a strong reaction from the city’s working-class audience. Approximately ten thousand people showed up outside the theater to protest, including eighteen hundred who attended the show, shouting phrases like “Burn the damned den of the aristocracy!”²³ After the show, the crowd was ordered to disperse and subsequently began throwing stones into the theater and at soldiers who arrived to restore order. After the crowd refused to disperse and continued throwing stones, the soldiers fired into the crowd. At least twenty-two people were killed and over one hundred and fifty were wounded.²⁴ Eighty-six people were arrested. Five days later, a jury found that “circumstances existing at the time justified the authorities in giving the order to fire upon the mob.”²⁵

Though the Astor Place Riot was, on the surface, a fight about two actors, the class issues that triggered the riot did not go unnoticed by journalists reporting on the event. For example, the *New York Herald* reported that the riot had caused “nothing short of a controversy and collision

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Ibid

²² Ibid 64

²³ Levine 64

²⁴ Levine 65

²⁵ “Tragedy at the Opera House.” *New York Herald*, May 15, 1849.

between those who have been styled the ‘exclusives,’ or ‘upper ten,’ and the great popular masses.”²⁶ Another article from the *Philadelphia Public Ledger* states, “It leaves behind a feeling to which this community has hitherto been a stranger – an opposition of classes – the rich and poor...a feeling that there is now in our country, in New York City, what every good patriot hitherto has considered it his duty to deny – *a high and low class.*”²⁷

Because of the growing class divisions, as exemplified by the Astor Place Riot, by the 1840s, theater managers began to cater their shows to different classes of people. High-class theaters began to institute strict rules that turned the theater into a more voyeuristic, educational experience, whereas low-class theaters continued to allow audiences to interact with the show. According to Levine, the 1840s was a period where American theater managers essentially decided what was high class and what was low class. High-class theater managers continued to put on Shakespearean melodramas, Italian operas, and symphonies. Low-class theater managers began to explore new kinds of shows, such as vaudeville, blackface minstrels, dime museums, and burlesque. Essentially, these were variety shows that offered the audience a wide range of entertainments, including comedy segments, songs, dances, and freak shows, alongside traditional dramatic plays. In creating these new kinds of shows, entrepreneurs were breaking away from the theater’s reliance on British culture and began creating content that was distinctly American.

Museums were also affected by the phenomenon of cultural stratification during the mid-nineteenth century. Like the theater, the museum was established in the mid-eighteenth century. Charles William Peale opened America’s first museums as an institution for classifying various

²⁶ *New York Herald*, May 12, 1849.

²⁷ *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, May 16, 1849.

‘curiosities.’²⁸ According to Neil Harris’ *Humbug*, “American museums were not, in the antebellum period, segregated temples of the fine arts, but repositories of information...Paintings and sculpture stood alongside mummies, mastodon bones and stuffed animals.”²⁹ Levine argues that once society began to separate high art from low, museums, like theater, changed their social function. Instead of just providing odd curiosities, some museum owners began to shape their exhibits with the intention of cultivating an educated public. In creating more educational spaces, museum curators dropped many of the more eccentric exhibits, such as freak shows, wax figures, and stuffed animals, in favor of paintings, historical artifacts, and classical sculptures.

Essentially, as popular culture began to separate from so-called high culture, theater and museum owners became gatekeepers for what was considered high art. As the more eccentric curiosities and shows left the high-class museum and theater, a market opened up for showmen to exhibit the very things that were leaving the bourgeois establishments. It is within this cultural context that we find the rise of P.T. Barnum and the popularization of exhibiting human bodies as subjects for entertainment. With the proliferation of middle and working-class entertainment, showmen specifically framed their shows to appeal to common Americans. In doing so, they created entertainments that played on their audience’s distinct sensibilities. At this time, martial masculinity was becoming common among the working class who yearned to exert power over ‘others’ as they could not exert power in their professional lives.³⁰ Thus, showmen began to exhibit exotic ‘other’ human beings to implicitly suggest the audience’s superiority over ‘other’ groups. As such, these new platforms embraced the freakshow and made the exhibition of physically deformed people and foreign peoples a major facet of their entertainment.

²⁸ Levine 147

²⁹ *Humbug* 78

³⁰ Greenberg find page



James O'Connell: The Tattooed Man

In 1837, James O'Connell took the stage for the first time, performing in a drama at the Franklin Theater based on his experiences in captivity among the people of Pohnpei. O'Connell was an Irish sailor who had been shipwrecked in Micronesia in the early 1820s, who then lived among the indigenous population for over eleven years.³¹ During his time in Pohnpei, O'Connell was tattooed, and he eventually made his way off the island and came to New York. These are the only absolute facts that we can trust regarding O'Connell's adventure story, as the only documentation of his experiences, entitled *A Residence of Eleven Years in New Holland and the Caroline Islands*, published in 1836, were written by O'Connell himself. However, O'Connell's performance, his book, and the way his show was advertised over the course of his career provide insight into how his tattooed body was used to create a narrative about life among 'uncivilized savages.'

³¹ Nuance about him being a convict

As a white man with tattoos, O'Connell was a walking dichotomy. He represented both the civilized and the barbarous, the primitive and the modern, the self and the other. Though O'Connell's show is nowhere near the most famous performer that discussed the civilization of foreign island cultures, he was the first to bring this discussion into the burgeoning world of commercialized entertainment.

First, O'Connell's narrative offers insight regarding how the ex-sailor characterized his time in Pohnpei for a literary audience. According to O'Connell's *Residence*, he and his crew were on their way to Japan for trading purposes by way of the South Pacific when they were shipwrecked on the island of Pohnpei in the year 1826.³² Upon landing in Pohnpei, O'Connell and his surviving shipmates were taken captive. According to O'Connell, his shipmates had "feared the Indians were cannibals," (they weren't) but O'Connell himself had enough experience with cultures in the surrounding islands that he could tell that "they intended us no harm."³³ Two things are striking about O'Connell's language in this early interaction with the Pohnpeians; one, O'Connell calls them "Indians," and, two, he insinuates that they were "cannibals." The fact that O'Connell used the vernacular typically associated with Native Americans is quite telling as the performer was obviously associating the Pohnpeians with America's indigenous populations. In calling the Pohnpeians Indian, O'Connell implicitly suggested a commonality between the foreign island culture of Pohnpei and Native Americans who held a special place in the Euro-American imagination as an enemy.

Further, O'Connell suggests that the Pohnpeians were cannibals, despite the fact that he knew at the time of writing his narrative that they were not. The act of cannibalism is arguably

³² James O'Connell. *The Life and Adventures of James F. O'Connell, The Tattooed Man*. New York, NY: W. Applegate, 1845. p. 11

³³ Ibid 11

the most taboo act one can commit in Euro-American culture, so the writer's implication of cannibalism was likely meant to shock his audience. Within a multitude of travel literature, cannibalism is often attributed to foreign cultures who were considered uncivilized. Though cannibalism was practiced by certain cultures around the world at one time or another, the suggestion that a non-Western people practiced cannibalism was often a tool to remark upon the 'uncivilized' nature of a foreign culture. O'Connell's use of these terms within his description of his first meeting with the Pohnpeians directly suggests that the writer wanted to establish a clear and inherent difference between himself, his audience, and the people of Pohnpei

O'Connell goes on to explain that because he knew the Pohnpeians meant him no harm, he "was brave and chose to meet the natives while dancing an Irish Jig for their entertainment."³⁴ According to the story, this delighted the natives so much that they brought O'Connell and his shipmate George Keenan with them to their village, and then proceeded to tattoo the men as a ceremony of assimilation.³⁵ Although O'Connell suggests that his tattooing was against his will, he states that he accepted his fate "like a martyr."³⁶ On the other hand, his shipmate Keenan "swore and raved," when receiving his tattoo, which caused the Native women to mimic and mock him later.³⁷ Though the sailors found the tattooing to be unpleasant, O'Connell states that his captors "continued to treat us with great hospitality and kindness."³⁸ O'Connell claimed that his tattooing was a sort of marriage ceremony, and, due to his courage and bravery during the tattooing, the island chief's daughter chose him for marriage. As for his shipmate, Keenan was

³⁴ Ibid 11

³⁵ Ibid p. 12: For further reading regarding tattooing traditions of South Pacific Islanders, see GELL AND DENNING

³⁶ O'Connell p. 12

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ Ibid

wedded to a wife of “no rank” because of his “unwillingness to submit to the tattooing.”³⁹ O’Connell’s narrative goes on to describe his life among the Pohnpeians, including local customs, war tactics, his marriage, and the birth of his children. According to O’Connell, the two sailors were saved after noticing, and subsequently boarding, an American vessel called the *Spy of Salem*, never to return to the island.⁴⁰

O’Connell’s *Residence* details the sailor’s time among the Pohnpeian people, but aspects of his story clearly suggest that the sailor was worried, if not obsessed, with projecting a sense of masculinity upon his reader. For example, he was brave when the sailors first met the Pohnpeians by dancing instead of cowering, he bore his tattoos without crying out, he was married to an island princess, he claimed that his son could one day become chief of the island, and he claimed to have fought alongside the Pohnpeians against invading peoples. Overall, O’Connell painted himself as the strongest, smartest, most capable person on the island. This aspect of O’Connell’s narrative screams of hyperbolic storytelling, but is enlightening regarding how he wanted to project himself to his audience.

Though some of O’Connell’s narrative worked to paint the Pohnpeians as one-dimensional, uncivilized savages, *Residence* also provides the reader with some nuanced representation of the native population. For example, O’Connell calls his father-in-law a “practical joker,” he tells stories of his marital joys and troubles, he talks about his children’s behavior, he discusses his relationships with other members of the group; basically, part of O’Connell’s recollection of his time in the Pacific Islands effectively humanized the people that took care of him and George Keenan. In fact, O’Connell never refers to himself as a captive,

³⁹ Ibid p. 14

⁴⁰ O’Connell p. 26

rather, he paints himself as an outsider who was fully accepted by, and assimilated into, Pohnpeian culture. The sailor's only direct reference to a captive status is in one statement where he calls the Pohnpeian Chief "my new friend-or master, or owner – I do not know how exactly he considered himself."⁴¹ This statement infers some complexity regarding the relationship between the shipwrecked sailor and the Island Chief, for O'Connell sees him as a friend but also acknowledges his status as a subject of the Chief. O'Connell further complicates his relationship with the Pohnpeians as he states, "after George and I had become habituated to their customs, and learned to appreciate their character, we resigned ourselves to circumstances, and were content in the absence of almost all hope of escape, to be happy." He also states, "Some people claiming to be civilized might take a lesson from the humanity of these people to shipwrecked mariners."⁴² Most of O'Connell's work clearly paints the sailor as a masculine survivor of captivity among a 'primitive' culture, however, his humanizing language in some places complicates his narrative and presents more complex discussions of a foreign culture.

To be clear, O'Connell's narrative is also deeply problematic regarding how the sailor discussed the native population. O'Connell consistently refers to the native population as savages, but it would be anachronistic to see that as blatant racism: that is just simply how European peoples talked about indigenous populations at the time. However, early in the book O'Connell goes on an overtly racist diatribe about the people of New Holland. For example, when discussing the natives of New Holland, who lived in close proximity to Pohnpei, O'Connell states, "The connecting link between apes and men...and, particularly when old,

⁴¹ O'Connell p.12

⁴² *A Residence of Eleven Years in New Holland and the Caroline Islands*. B. B. Mussey; Boston; 1836. p.109. This quote comes from the original source of O'Connell's story. It was, notably, omitted from the shorter version in 1845.

resemble the monkey more than any other human beings do.”⁴³ Within a few pages of his narrative, O’Connell claims that in New Holland, marriage is established by forceful rape, that the people are drunk, lazy devil worshiping, promiscuous, child murdering, filthy, cannibals.⁴⁴ O’Connell further states, “Never in my life before had I seen such a complete degradation from civilization to the lowest scale of human existence...the probability is, however, that the civilization of the natives of New Holland will...be synonymous with their extinction.”⁴⁵ Though this language is shocking to a reader in the twenty-first century, it would be fair to assume that the sailor was establishing an essential difference between ‘bad’ natives and the native people that he lived among in Pohnpei. Though he does use some similar descriptions of the Pohnpeians, he is never so overtly negative about their character. In the early nineteenth century, the idea of ‘going native’ or accepting the indigenous culture, was severely looked down upon by Western peoples. By creating the fantasy of the drunk, filthy, cannibals of New Holland, O’Connell then moves on to tell about his time in Pohnpei with the more civilized, but not white-man civilized, natives.⁴⁶ This effectively allowed O’Connell to keep his whiteness, to forgo charges that he ‘went native,’ and move on to telling an adventure story of life among indigenous peoples without drawing the ire of his ‘civilized’ reader.

Where *Residence* represents the Pohnpeian people with at least some complexity, O’Connell’s stage performances diminished their culture to simple caricatures. An advertisement for O’Connell’s show in 1837 includes a woodblock print of the performer being held down and tattooed by two native women and large lettering that promised the audience that

⁴³ Residence 82

⁴⁴ Residence 82-85

⁴⁵ Residence 87

⁴⁶ Noble savage, explain

his show would include a shipwreck and performance of an “Irish Jig.”⁴⁷ O’Connell’s show was not only an entertaining adventure story but also a show that allowed his white audience to gaze upon a man who had been marked by a foreign culture. With regard to the tattooed man show, historian Albert Parry states that the audience “gazing at the tattooed man in the sideshow, relives his own past of untold centuries back. Moreover, he can now imitate the freak...and thus blissfully revert to his own distant, primitive type.”⁴⁸ Standing on stage and showing off his tattoos, O’Connell gained authority as a living example of ‘primitive’ culture who was then able to tell of his experience to his audience with a sense of authority. In doing so, the Tattooed Man became the first American theatrical performance to discuss the ‘uncivilized’ nature of foreign people in the Pacific Islands.

In 1976, Micronesian anthropologist Saul Riesenbergr published a detailed exposition on the accuracy of O’Connell’s narrative, ultimately coming to the conclusion that he was a pathological liar, and most likely an ex-convict. However, recent work by Juniper Ellis and Lars Krutak, Annie Werner, all come to the conclusion that his personal adventures were likely exaggerated, but O’Connell’s depiction of Pohnpeian customs is basically accurate.⁴⁹ Thus, O’Connell’s written work and the early years of his performances offer insight into the showman’s seminal representations of Pohnpeian people and customs. Though O’Connell likely exaggerated his own experiences, he was delivering relatively accurate information about Pohnpeian culture to his audience.

James O’Connell, “The Tattooed Man,” was performed as a stand-alone theatrical performance in 1837, but by 1840 his spectacle had been turned into a sideshow for other, larger

⁴⁷ Cite the theater bill

⁴⁸ Find in Parry

⁴⁹ CITE ELLIS DRUTAK AND WERNER

productions.⁵⁰ In August of 1840, The *New York Herald* published an advertisement for the Chatham Theater's production of the play *The Muleteer of Palermo* which included an advertisement for O'Connell's sideshow. The ad states, "O'Connell, the tattooed man, will appear in one of his peculiar parts."⁵¹ Notably, there is no description of his show, simply a statement that he is tattooed and will appear. As a sideshow, one could assume that he simply danced a jig, showed off his tattoos, and told a short story of captivity among foreign peoples.

In 1841, O'Connell was performing at a failing museum called the Scudder's American Museum on the corner of Broadway and Ann Street in New York City. That year, P.T. Barnum bought the museum and immediately got to work trying to make the museum profitable. Barnum has been credited with bringing acts like the 'freak show' into the mainstream of American popular entertainment because of his unique penchant for advertisement. An example of his advertising style can be found in his promotion of James O'Connell's show on the 22nd of November, 1842, which states, "Mr. O'Connell, The Tattooed Man, will appear in his celebrated dances, and give a historical account of his sufferings for eleven years, while a prisoner in the hands of barbarous savages."⁵² Unlike the earlier advertisement, this statement highlights O'Connell's captivity, and dramatizes his time among the "barbarous savages."⁵³ An ad for O'Connell's show at the Amphitheater in New York less than a week later mimics Barnum's dramatization as it states, "O'Connell...is to appear and exhibit the extraordinary dance that once saved his life while in captivity amongst the savages."⁵⁴ This new marketing strategy emphatically highlighted the literary tropes of adventure stories by painting O'Connell as a

⁵⁰ Explain what a sideshow is

⁵¹ *New York Herald*, August 24, 1840.

⁵² *New York Herald*, November 22, 1842.

⁵³ Ibid

⁵⁴ *New York Herald*, November 28, 1842.

masculine survivor of ‘savage’ captivity.⁵⁵ It also emphasizes an educational aspect of the show as O’Connell was going to give a “historical account,” thereby insinuating that his show was going to include informative information about the foreign cultures he lived among.

The fact that the advertisements for O’Connell’s shows, and presumably O’Connell’s performances, emphasized captivity, danger, and barbarism when the showman’s written work did not, suggests that his story was exaggerated to be more entertaining for a live audience. In a sense, his story was taken from him and retooled by show managers to appeal to a wider audience. It is also telling that the changes in his story were directly related to the barbarism and captivity aspects of his story, rather than the more nuanced discussions of culture that are present throughout *Residence*.

The escalation of xenophobic rhetoric in O’Connell’s show can further be exemplified by an advertisement for his performance in Louisiana in September of 1852. O’Connell had traveled to New Orleans as a part of the Star Spangled Circus, and upon their arrival, a local newspaper wrote an article depicting O’Connell’s captivity story. The article states: “He found the Island inhabited by a set of heathen Indians, and ‘salvage [*sic*] men,’ unacquainted with the common decencies and amenities of civilized life, and as apt to gobble him up without basting or roasting, as they would a lizard or snail.”⁵⁶ The article goes on to suggest that to escape being eaten by the “cannibal islanders,” O’Connell “devised a plan to cheat the barbarians.”⁵⁷ After seeing the “inhuman antics of the savages waiting to receive him,” O’Connell decided to dance a jig to save his own life.⁵⁸ According to this article, the natives loved the dance so much that they accepted

⁵⁵ Expand on literary tropes

⁵⁶ *Daily Crescent* (New Orleans), September 13, 1852.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*

⁵⁸ *Ibid*

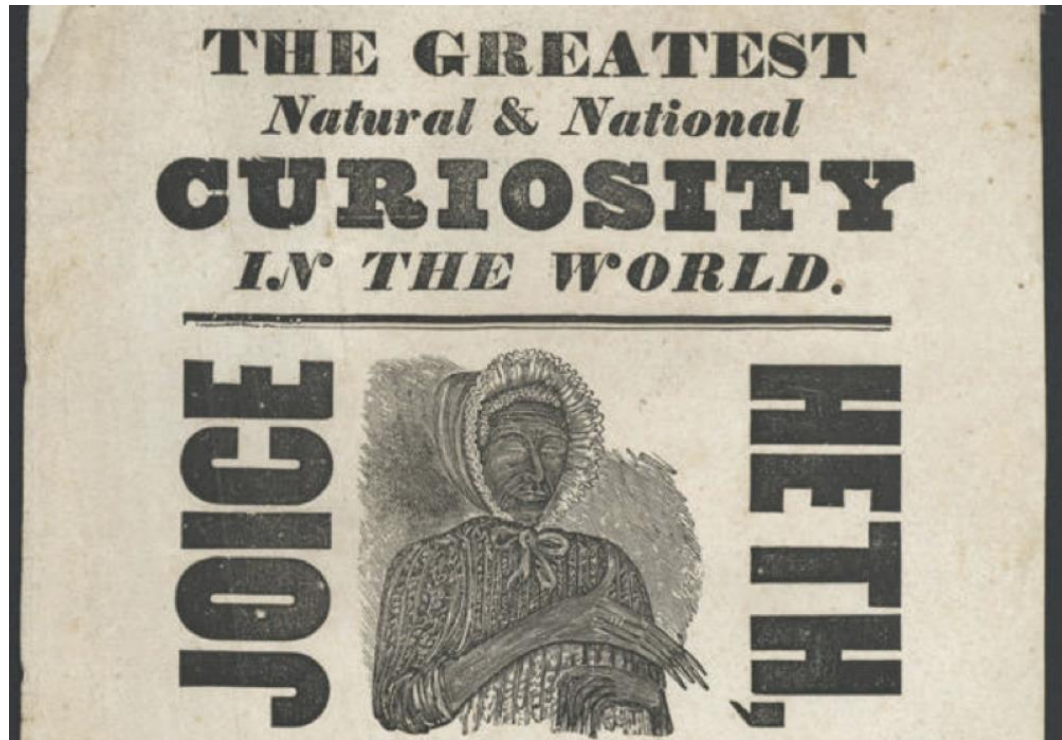
the shipwrecked O'Connell, but "His companions, as a matter of course, were eaten."⁵⁹ Further, O'Connell was subsequently married to "the King's favorite daughter," but not before they "made O'Connell 'one of em' by 'tattooing' him after the style of the 'salvages' [*sic*]... [which] made the sailor look "very much like the zebra." O'Connell escaped after living with "these 'people'" for so long that their lifestyle became unbearable, and visions of his "quiet cottage beyond the billowy deep" became so strong that he chose to leave the island. Apparently, O'Connell escaped after he found a "white settlement" on the island and returned to America to perform in the circus.

This incredibly xenophobic, overly-dramatized version of O'Connell's story perfectly exemplifies how his narrative was appropriated and subsequently used as evidence of the uncivilized and barbaric practices of foreign island cultures. When O'Connell first came to the New York stage in the late 1830s, he was a tattooed white man who was going to dance and tell of his adventures on the South Seas. By the 1850s, his show had become a full-on spectacle, complete with a white protagonist who survived captivity by outsmarting the "savage cannibals," but not before sexually dominating the "King's favorite daughter." Further, the author's suggestion that the "heathen Indians" were "unacquainted...with civilized life" establishes that the author was remarking upon the lack of civilization of the Pohnpeians, while also establishing O'Connell as a masculine protagonist. Clearly, by the early-1850s, O'Connell's show had gone from showing his tattoos off and telling of the manners and customs of foreign people, to outright xenophobic explorations of the white man's interaction with so-called uncivilized

⁵⁹ Ibid

peoples. As such, the sailor's real-life adventures, although likely hyperbolic, had taken a back seat to a message of white superiority over uncivilized, heathen cannibals.

James O'Connell died in 1854 while he was traveling the country with Dan Rice's circus. O'Connell enjoyed an eighteen-year career and performed for millions. Though the showman had a penchant for exaggeration, his performance offers insight to a different path performers could have taken within popular entertainment. When O'Connell arrived, he wrote a book about his travels, he performed reenactments of his time in Pohnpei, and he taught his white audience various aspects of a foreign culture. By the time he died, his performance was one that played on American's imagination of the exotic, uncivilized cultures of the outside world. The subjects of O'Connell's adventure story no longer presented any nuance; they were simply uncivilized cannibals. As such, O'Connell's career serves as a microcosm of human exhibition in the nineteenth century, for by the late nineteenth-century American entertainment culture became inundated with using non-white bodies as caricatures of foreignness that suggested a superiority of Western culture. These shows would go on to become a major part of the American entertainment industry for generations.



Theater and Museums: Americans Obsessed with 'The Other'

In 1841, Phineas Taylor Barnum opened the American Museum. As museums were becoming more refined spaces for high-class education, Barnum believed that the public wanted a museum where they could still interact with the museum's exhibits, so the showman set out to curate a museum that could be educational, and entertaining. However, in curating his museum, Barnum would often rely on trickery and force his audience to decide for themselves what was real and what was not. Barnum learned early in his career that his American audience was susceptible to humbug, and that the ambiguity of truth could be profitable. For example, Barnum's first exploit into popular entertainment was in 1835 when he exhibited an eighty-year old slave by the name of Joice Heth who Barnum said was the 161-year-old former "mammy" of George Washington. Audiences were encouraged to ask her questions about her life, and she

would give details that supported the farce. Barnum travelled around New York with Heth for seven months, until her death in 1836.⁶⁰ Upon her death, Barnum had her autopsy performed in front of fifteen hundred paying customers to prove how old Heth was.⁶¹ When the coroner proclaimed that Heth was approximately HOW OLD, Barnum simply claimed that the body was an imposter and the real Heth was in Europe travelling.⁶² This early endeavor in the entertainment business showed the young Barnum that trickery was profitable. The Joice Heth exhibit also establishes the fact that Barnum had no qualms about exploiting working-class audience's lack of humanity towards non-white people in order to turn a profit. When he opened his American Museum in 1841, 'humbug' and racial exploitation of 'other' cultures was deeply ingrained into the showman's business plan.



⁶⁰ cite

⁶¹ cite

⁶² Cite and check accuracy

Essentially, Barnum's museum was a mixture of educational content and fantastic entertainment. According to Neil Harris, Barnum's American Museum was a place where the showman could "mount dramatic entertainments or present variety acts under the guise of education and public enlightenment."⁶³ For Harris, Barnum exploited the educational aspect of the museum by presenting his audience with legitimate educational content, but then exploited that authority by including shows that were presented as educational but were, in fact, complete fabrications for the purpose of entertainment. For example, in 1842 Barnum exhibited what he called the Feejee Mermaid, which he advertised as a real mermaid found in the South Pacific. In reality, it was a dead fish's tail sewn to the top half of a monkey. An advertisement for Barnum's exhibit states, "That it is a real inhabitant of the sea...none doubt who have seen it. All attempts to be witty and overwise at the expense of so extraordinary a curiosity only serve to bring it into notice."⁶⁴ This aspect of Barnum's advertising, is what made his exhibits so successful. In the ad, Barnum (who likely wrote it) acknowledges that some people were calling the mermaid a fake, but he uses that doubt to sell more tickets to his show. False advertisement and would come to define Barnum's career over the following four decades.

Although Barnum's museum exhibited mostly animals, the showman also exploited humans as 'curiosities' for the public to look at. Alongside the Feejee Mermaid, Barnum exhibited James O'Connell and his story of 'captivity' in the South Pacific. Like the mermaid, when O'Connell took the stage, he was presented as an educational exhibit where people could learn about "the manners and customs of the Savages," however, his story was mostly fabricated

⁶³ Humbug 36

⁶⁴ **The New York herald., November 14, 1842, Image 2**

and meant to entertain. The issue with O'Connell's show versus the Feejee Mermaid, is that people could look at the mermaid and know they had been fooled. With O'Connell, his tattoos gave him a sense of legitimacy and his audience likely thought they were truly learning about the people of Pohnpei.

Soon after Barnum employed James O'Connell the showman sought out more foreign peoples to put on display at his museum in order to exploit American fantasies about the Pacific Islands. Cannibalism was a particularly hot topic in America at the time, as missionaries in Fiji were reporting back to the states that the Fijians engaged in consuming human flesh.⁶⁵ Cannibals had been exhibited in smaller museums during the early 1830s, and, according to Bogdan, "With his keen business acumen, Barnum sensed the appeal cannibals might have."⁶⁶ In June of 1842, Barnum attempted to exhibit a Fijian cannibal named Vendovi, but was ultimately unsuccessful.⁶⁷ James O'Connell was employed by Barnum in November of 1842, likely serving as the next best thing: a white man who had lived among cannibals and 'savages.' However, in 1845, Barnum did acquire a supposed cannibal who he exhibited as the "New Zealand Canibal [sic] chief."⁶⁸ With these shows, Barnum was attempting to shock his audience with 'uncivilized' acts of a foreign people. The acts of cannibalism and tattooing are violent and would have appropriately shocked his audience, allowing them to view the 'exhibits' as evidence of foreign 'primitiveness.'

⁶⁵ Bogdan 178

⁶⁶ Bogdan 179

⁶⁷ Bogdan p.179 Vendovi was a native of Fiji who had been 'arrested' (read: kidnapped without due process) by Charles Wilkes during the United States Exploring Expedition 1838-1842 for the murder of two American sailors, including Wilkes' nephew Henry, a few years prior.⁶⁷ An American schooner had been shipwrecked and the some of the crew had, allegedly, been killed and eaten by Fijian natives. This story was watched closely by Americans and served to support a common characterization of Fijian people as cannibals.⁶⁷ Vendovi died upon arrival to New York, likely due to tuberculosis, so he was never actually exhibited by Barnum, however, this experience did not stop the showman from attempting to bring foreign bodies into America for display in his museum.

⁶⁸ Adams 166

After the success of the Fejee Mermaid, James O'Connell and the 'New Zealand Cannibal,' Barnum began to seek out foreign people to exhibit as representatives of entire racial groups, rather than examples of specific acts like cannibalism or tattooing. According to Adams, the aforementioned acts were presented as 'curiosities' in and of themselves, however, by the mid-1840s, Barnum began showing a "growing interest in racial displays."⁶⁹ For Adams, Barnum was beginning to understand the value of exploiting American fantasies of the East. This feeling is directly addressed by Barnum's autobiography, *Struggles and Triumphs*, published in 1872, as Barnum recollects: "For a long time I had been incubating a plan for an extraordinary exhibition... This was nothing less than a "Congress of Nations"—an assemblage of representatives of all the nations that could be reached by land or sea. I meant to secure a man and woman, as perfect as could be procured, from every accessible people, civilized and barbarous, on the face of the globe... I can conceive of no exhibition which would be more interesting and which would appeal more generally to all classes of patrons."⁷⁰ Clearly, Barnum understood his audience's interest in foreign cultures and sought to create a show that would appeal to these sensibilities. Though Barnum conceived of this "Congress of Nations" in 1849, he was not able to act on the idea until the 1870s. However, this did not mean that he did not begin investing in all things foreign.

⁶⁹ Adams 166

⁷⁰ *Struggles* 271

EDFORD. TUESDAY EVENING, JULY 15, 1851.

**GRAND ENTRANCE OF THE ASIATIC CARAVAN,
MUSEUM AND MENAGERIE,
OF P. T. BARNUM,
BEING THE LARGEST EXHIBITION IN THE WORLD AND DOUBLE THE SIZE OF
ALL OTHER TRAVELING MENAGERIES IN THE U. S. PUT TOGETHER.**

A TEAM OF TEN ELEPHANTS will draw the Great CAR OF JUGGERNAUT. **A YOUNG CALF ELEPHANT** only six months old, and 31 feet in height, will carry upon his back around the interior of the colossal pavilion, the Lilliputian TOM THUMB. The magnificent cortege comprises 110

style. Following this monster vehicle is a long procession of costly cages and carriages, the whole forming a spectacle of more than Oriental splendor. The exhibition will take place within a magnificent Variegated Pavilion composed of American Flags of water-proof fabric. The real, genuine, original **GEN. TOM THUMB**

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Barnum's first real monetary investment into recreating the foreign 'other' came in 1851 after he spent \$109,000 developing what he called "Barnum's Great Asiatic Caravan Museum and Menagerie."⁷¹ According to Barnum's autobiography, he sent two men to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) to purchase some elephants, but they could not buy enough in town so his employees "took one hundred and sixty natives and plunged into the jungles, where, after many most exciting adventures, they succeeded in securing thirteen elephants."⁷² In 1851, Barnum's associates arrived in New York with ten elephants and a native "Cingalese" man who handled the unfortunate animals. Barnum subsequently "added a caravan of wild animals and many museum curiosities...including horses, vans, carriages, tent, etc...and commenced operations."⁷³ Barnum touted the elephant handler as a "Cingalese Chief," dressed him up in an "Oriental

⁷¹ Struggles- Barnum, - 357 Also, \$109,000 is around \$3.5 million today.

⁷² Struggles Barnum 356

⁷³ Ibid struggles 357

costume,” and exhibited him as a representative of his people.⁷⁴ Barnum travelled “all sections of the country” with this caravan, effectively presenting the elephants and the “Chief” as representatives of the ‘Orient.’ For Adams, this exhibition was a textbook example of Edward Said’s theory of Orientalism as Barnum took specific artifacts from a foreign culture and presented them as an accurate representation of an entire people. In so doing, Barnum created a fantasy that his audience viewed as true representations of the people and culture in Ceylon.

Civilization and Pseudo-Science

As Barnum began to monetize foreignness in his American Museum, he was engaging in a contemporary ‘Western’ discourse about race and what it meant to be civilized. During the 1850s, academics began to create new fields of study that aimed to find a scientific basis for differences between the races of the world. Ethnology, a precursor for Cultural Anthropology, was a burgeoning subject during the mid-nineteenth century that looked at the quantifiable differences between the various races of the world. In 1852, the *New York Times* published a review of a contemporary Ethnological publication that states, “the study of Ethnology is becoming yearly more and more attractive to scholars and scientific men.”⁷⁵ Ethnology was defined by contemporary academics as “a descriptive science, whose province consists in a knowledge of the Races of Men.”⁷⁶ However, the underlying assumption of ethnologists can be derived from a this statement by a New York Times reporter in 1863: “We are yet unacquainted

⁷⁴ *ibid*

⁷⁵ “man’s migration” **NOTICES OF NEW PUBLICATIONS.**

New York Daily Times (1851-1857); Jan 10, 1852;
ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times with Index
pg. 1

⁷⁶ **MR. BRACE ON THE RACES OF THE OLD WORLD.: THE RACES OF THE OLD WORLD: ...**
New York Times (1857-1922); Jun 22, 1863;
ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times with Index
pg. 2

with the fact whether or no structural peculiarities exist answering to the great ruling characteristic of the leading unmixed races of man.”⁷⁷ Here we get an enlightening statement regarding the goals of nineteenth-century ethnologists; they were trying to find a scientific basis to prove that the “unmixed” races of the world naturally supposed to rule over the “unhistoric races,” such as the people in the South Pacific and Africa.⁷⁸ By putting foreign people on stage as examples of said ‘primitive,’ ‘uncivilized’ cultures, Barnum was engaging with this discourse and turning the idea of science-based, racial inferiority into a form of entertainment.

Barnum’s appropriation of Ethnology marks the American Museum, and the exploitation of foreign bodies, as a cultural manifestation of contemporary scientific theory. As previously stated, Barnum was constantly mixing humbug and trickery in with actual educational content in his museum in order to effectively muddy the line between fact and fiction. Turning contemporary scientific ideas into an entertaining exhibit was simply good marketing. However, by exhibiting foreign “specimens” as representatives of uncivilized cultures, Barnum effectively appropriated pseudo-scientific ideas and applied them to ‘other’ cultures.

⁷⁷ Ibid

⁷⁸ Ibid



Barnum's use of popular science for the purpose of entertainment is best exemplified by his "What is it?" exhibit in 1860. In 1859, Charles Darwin published *On the Origins of Species* which laid out the theory of evolution. Darwin's work found that different species of plants and animals changed over time in order to best fit their environment. This idea was revolutionary at the time, and developed a deeper understanding of the world's flora and fauna. However, Darwin did not apply the theory of evolution to human beings in *On the Origins of Species*, his original work only applied his theory to plants and non-human animals.⁷⁹ Regardless, Barnum clearly understood the implication of Darwin's theory, for a mere three months after its publication Barnum created an exhibit that he advertised as the "Connecting link between the wild African and the brute creation."⁸⁰ Barnum called this exhibit "What is it?" and it featured a caged black man named William Henry Johnson dressed in a furry suit. Johnson was the child of

⁷⁹ Darwin did publish a book that claimed humans were evolved from apes in 1871, entitled *The Decent of Man*.

⁸⁰ Life of the Living Aztec Children, 1860, found in Bogdan 137 the "brute creation" refers to non-human species.

former slaves and likely had microcephaly; a condition in which the skull does not develop properly, leading to a smaller, misshaped head and mental disabilities.⁸¹ Barnum exploited Johnson's misshaped head in the show's advertisement as it states: "the formation of the head and face combines that of the native African and the Orang Outang."⁸² Barnum's audience was, essentially, presented with a mentally handicapped black man in furry clothes as a representative of unevolved humans. Thus, Barnum's "What is it?" employed contemporary scientific theories about evolution and human development and applied it to non-white peoples. Unlike scientific papers, with complex ideas and academic jargon, Barnum presented his 'exhibits' as living examples of contemporary scientific theories that were well-suited for mass consumption. In doing so, Barnum presented his white, working-class audience with scientific 'proof' that they were, in fact, superior to the non-white people of the world.

⁸¹ Ibid

⁸² Ibid



Blackface Minstrels

Barnum's "What is it?" was an unabashed attempt to use pseudo-scientific evidence to suggest that black people were unevolved and inferior to white people, however, Barnum had been exploiting 'blackness' as an amusement long before William Henry Johnson ever took the stage. From the earliest years of his career, Barnum's museum included blackface minstrel shows that served to lampoon black culture. Blackface minstrels were a cultural form that developed in the 1830s, primarily in the Northeast, but they became a common form of entertainment in the early 1840s along with the various other entertainment forms that developed after the stratification high class and low class theater.⁸³ They typically included white men who painted their faces black with greasepaint, who would then go on stage and perform a show with

⁸³ Lott Intro

musical performances, satire, and a comical narrative.⁸⁴ According to Eric Lott's work, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrels and the American Working Class*, historians have often considered these shows to be an example of outright racism, however, Lott finds that these shows were a way for white men to try on 'blackness' and enjoy black culture. For Lott, blackface minstrel was the first American cultural form that presented white audiences with black culture. Now, this is not to say that these shows were not racist. Essentially, the actors dressed up as a caricature of black people with extremely dark skin, large lips, and ragged clothing and then went on stage and put on performances that represented black people as comically lazy and unintelligent. The shows also presented slavery as natural and inevitable. However, they also performed songs and dances that were derived from black culture in order to entertain their white audiences. Blackface minstrel became exceedingly popular during the mid-nineteenth century and left a lasting mark on American popular culture. Lott states, "from circus clowns to Saturday morning cartoons, blackface acts and words have figured significantly in the white Imaginary of the United States."⁸⁵

Barnum included blackface minstrel shows in his American Museum as soon as he took it over, and the showman would sometimes even perform in blackface. Barnum's inclusion of blackface minstrel shows in his American Museum exhibits a juxtaposition in the way the showman presented non-white bodies. In the case of James O'Connell, William Henry Johnson, Cannibals, and the "Cingalese" Chief, Barnum was exploiting non-white people as curiosities. Granted, O'Connell was a white man, but his tattoos served to mark him as a transitional figure that represented a white man who had been permanently marked by non-white peoples who he

⁸⁴ Lott intro

⁸⁵ Lott intro

then claimed authority over with his story of ‘captivity.’ With these ‘exhibits’ Barnum was presenting non-white people as authoritative representations of the ‘other.’ When he put O’Connell on stage, he served as an authority on foreign culture from a white man’s perspective, Johnson was presented as scientific proof that white men were more evolved than Africans, cannibals served as representatives of a base culture, and the “Cingalese Chief” was supposedly a living example of exotic, foreign peoples. These were all shows that were presented as legitimate examples of ‘otherness.’ With minstrel shows, the purpose was to lampoon blackness and condescend black culture. The audience was well aware that the people on stage were not black, and indeed would have been very upset if any of the performers actually were black. Thus, with ‘curiosities’ the audience was presented with ‘exhibits’ that were supposed to be educational regarding non-white bodies, with minstrels the audience was presented with shows that turned a culture into a caricature that was meant to entertain. Both types of shows were meant to affirm white superiority, but the dissimilar way that they represented racial superiority suggests a vital difference in the way American black people were viewed compared to non-white people from distant lands. With minstrel shows, the audience was meant to laugh at a culture. With foreign non-whites, the audience was intended to learn. Barnum was not the creator of either of these entertainment forms, but his American Museum included both types of racial presentations and was one of the most successful public entertainment venues of the mid-nineteenth century. In reference to Barnum’s influence, Lott states, “Barnum was helping this popular sphere define itself...A new public was being won over in every sense by the same culture-industry it was beckoning into existence.”⁸⁶ Basically, Lott argues that Barnum was creating new entertainments that appealed to working-class audiences, while at the same time the

⁸⁶ Lott find page #

entertainments he exhibited served to define how his audience saw the world. Included in this sense of identity was undoubtedly the question of how his white audience perceived of themselves compared with the non-white ‘other’ cultures that Barnum exploited.

Barnum Takes His Show on the Road

On July 13th, 1865, P.T. Barnum’s American Museum burned to the ground after more than two decades of success in the New York entertainment business. According to the *New York Times*, approximately one hundred people were injured, and the fire caused around one million dollars in damage. Luckily, the fire happened outside of business hours, so there were no deaths, but the American Museum was completely destroyed leaving Barnum with nothing to salvage from his eccentric collection of ‘curiosities.’ Barnum quickly invested in procuring a new collection of exotic curiosities, and opened the New American Museum in November of 1865. However, three years later, that museum also burned down.

Following the destruction of the New American Museum, Barnum spent a few years trying to get into politics, and was elected mayor of Bridgeport, Connecticut, but he eventually decided to return to the public entertainment business and dedicate his time to the circus industry. Barnum, along with his business partner C. W. Coup, set out to create one of the most extravagant travelling circuses in the country, entitled the *Greatest Show on Earth*. According to Harris, Barnum and Coup revolutionized the way circuses travelled from city to city, likening the travelling circus to military mobilization.⁸⁷ Barnum’s circus eventually evolved to include the various types of entertainment that the showman had developed throughout his career. The

⁸⁷ Harris 242 Davis agrees with this assessment and claims that the military actually sent people to watch the circus move from city to city to gather ideas for more efficient military mobilization.

Greatest Show on Earth included a hippodrome (theater), a menagerie (collection of animals), and a museum of ‘curiosities’.

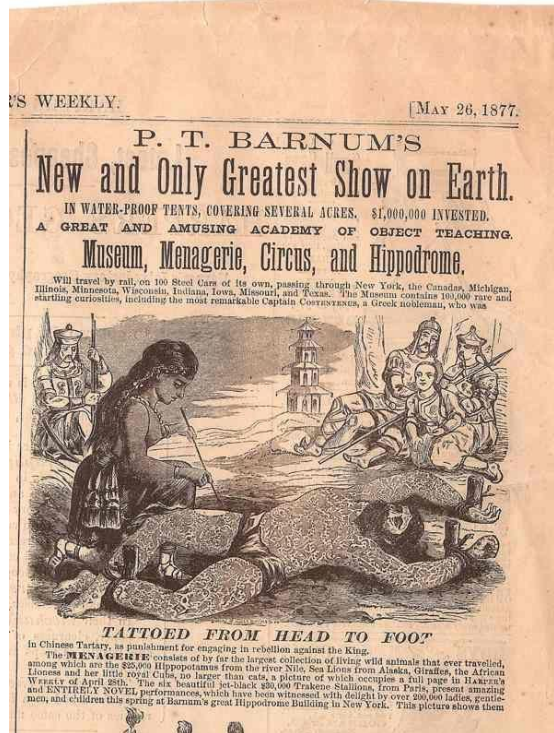


Much like the American Museum, the exotic and foreign continued to be a major facet of Barnum’s circus. In 1872, at the beginning of his career in the circus business, Barnum once again sought to exploit his audiences’ fear of cannibalism. According to an advertisement for an exhibit titled “The Fiji Cannibals,” Barnum had brought four cannibals to the United States to exhibit in his travelling circus. The backstory for the four “Fijians” was that there was a rebellion in Fiji, in which two Christian missionaries were taken to be eaten by their captors. However, the Fijian king had converted to Christianity, so he sent out warriors to rescue the missionaries. The four Fijians in question were presented as war prisoners from that rebellion. According to Barnum’s sixteen page advertisement for the Fiji Cannibals, the captives were “to have their tongues cut out, their brains eaten and their skulls converted into drinking cups, while the bones

of their bodies were to be made into ornaments to be worn by the vanquishers.”⁸⁸ However, the missionaries saved the four by suggesting that they be sent to the United States to be introduced to the “modes and customs of civilization.” After arriving in America, Barnum had the famous Mathew Brady take pictures of the “cannibals” and began advertising for their exhibition in upcoming shows. Unfortunately, one of the Fijians died right before they were to be exhibited, and Barnum used his death to suggest that he had gotten sick and the others ate him. Though all of this was entertaining, none of it was true. The “Fiji Princess” was actually from Virginia, and the men, though born in Fiji, were raised in California by missionaries. None of the four were cannibals.⁸⁹ In true Barnum fashion, the “Fiji Cannibals” served as an entertaining exploitation of white-American’s fears of the outside world. They were not cannibals, their dark skin simply made them believable cannibals to a white audience.

⁸⁸ History of P.T. Barnum’s Fiji Cannibals 1872, cited in Bogdan 180

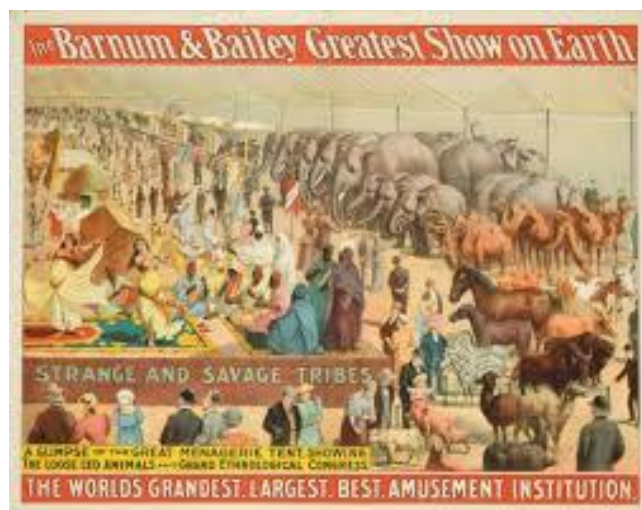
⁸⁹ Bogdan 180



In 1773, Barnum began exhibiting another tattooed man, George Costentenus, as a victim of captivity and torture. Like O'Connell, Costentenus claimed to have been tattooed in the 'East,' Burma to be exact, and his tattoos served as a symbol of his time among a 'primitive' culture. Costentenus was the most elaborately tattooed man to ever be exhibited at the time with 338 unique designs covering almost every inch of skin on his body. Captain Constantine, as Barnum called him, claimed to have started a rebellion in Chinese Tartar and was tattooed as a form of punishment after being captured. This was, of course, a lie, as established by an article in 1884 in which a fellow tattooed performer told a reporter that Constantine's story was "made up to make him more interesting."⁹⁰ The veracity of his account is irrelevant, but the fact that Barnum had returned to exhibiting a tattooed man in his freak show is telling. Clearly, the showman believed that his audience would be entertained by a white body, marked by the

⁹⁰ *Evening Star* (Washington D.C.), "The Tattooed Lady," October 11, 1884. www.loc.gov (accessed October 9, 2013).

traditions of a foreign culture. Further, over the course of his career, Costentenus' was presented as a womanizing criminal. Bogdan suggests that this was a reflection of the way tattooing was being approached in the scientific community. Scientists like Charles Darwin and Cesare Lombroso had published scientific works that claimed that tattooing was an act of primitive men. Lombroso's work, *Criminal Man*, states: "Tattooing is, in fact, one of the essential characteristics of primitive man, and of men who still live in the savage state."⁹¹ Thus, when Barnum returned to exhibiting a tattooed man in his entertainment, he did so with updated language that tied the practice to primitiveness and savagery. Unlike O'Connell, and his lecture on the "manners and customs of the savages," Costentenus' fully tattooed body simply served as evidence of foreign 'primitiveness.'



Barnum continued to exhibit foreign bodies as sideshow "freaks" throughout the 1870s, but in 1883, Barnum finally fulfilled his wish to create a show that featured foreign peoples as representatives of the many races of man from around the world. The performance was called the "Ethnological Congress" and it included "representatives of noble and peculiar tribes...types

⁹¹ Find in Lombroso

which otherwise he [viewer] would never see, as they can only be sought in their native countries.”⁹² The “Ethnological Congress” grew out of the “freakshow” tradition by exhibiting foreign people as representatives of their race, but continuing to seek out people with ‘freakish’ characteristics to serve as said representatives. Barnum states that he wanted to form “a collection, in pairs or otherwise, of all the uncivilized races in existence...My aim is to exhibit to the American public not only human beings from different races, but also, when practicable, those who express extraordinary peculiarities, such as giants, dwarfs, singular disfigurements of the person, dexterity in the use of weapons, dancing, singing, juggling, unusual feats of strength or agility. &c.”⁹³ Thus, by the mid-eighteen eighties, Barnum was actively seeking “uncivilized” people to include in his “Ethnological Congress” which exhibited the same characteristics of a “freakshow.” According to Bluford Adams, in the late-nineteenth century Ethnologists were searching for proof that Anglo-Saxon peoples had evolved from darker skinned races that still inhabited Africa and Asia.⁹⁴ They had tried measuring facial features, brain, hair, intelligence and other factors to try and prove their theories but none of those studies found any conclusive evidence of white superiority.⁹⁵ However, Adams states, “where ethnology failed, the Ethnological Congress succeeded...the bodily Otherness of the Congress’s freaks was beyond dispute.”⁹⁶ Adams’ statement here is completely tongue-in-cheek, as the historian’s point is that Barnum succeeded where ethnological “scientists” had failed. Barnum exploited the otherness of foreign bodies to validate xenophobic ideas of his white audience. By creating a spectacle of ‘uncivilized’ cultures, Adams suggests that Barnum “exhibits the classic tendency of Orientalism

⁹² Struggles, Barnum 349.

⁹³ SL 226, LOOK UP CITATION IN E Pluribus Barnum p. 181

⁹⁴ Adams 183

⁹⁵ ibid

⁹⁶ Ibid

to treat non-westerners as almost everywhere nearly the same.”⁹⁷ Barnum’s exploitation of foreignness as a signifier of white-superiority was not new to his show, but in the late-nineteenth century it had become the major feature of his travelling circus.⁹⁸

On April 25, 1898, President William McKinley, with the approval of the U.S. Congress, declared war on Spain. The war lasted ten weeks, ending with the Treaty of Paris, signed on August 13, 1898, in which Spain ceded control of their former colonies Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines to the United States of America. This war is an incredibly important moment in the history of the United States, and, as such, it has been well covered by myriad historians interested in everything from geopolitical implications to minute military movements during the war. It is not my intention to disregard the war itself, but the relevance of the Spanish American War to this study lies in the way newspaper publishers and political cartoonists appropriated marketing strategies of public entertainment forms to sell the war to the American people, and said imagery was further exploited when the country began discussing the idea of American imperialism after the war had ended.

The catalyst for the Spanish American War was the Cuban War of Independence in which Cuban revolutionaries were fighting for freedom against their Spanish colonizers. The war began in 1895 when rebel groups around the country fighting against the Spanish, but American interest in the struggle heightened after the Spanish General Valeriano Weyler began instituting policies to combat the rebellion that ultimately led to the deaths of over four hundred thousand

⁹⁷ Adams 181

⁹⁸ Barnum was not the only showman to do this. During the late-nineteenth century, hundreds of circuses were travelling around America and Europe, and all of them featured some group of ‘uncivilized’ peoples to exhibit for their largely white audiences. In fact, during the World’s Fairs held in the late-nineteenth century, the fairs included exhibits of foreign people in their ‘natural’ habitats. Barnum’s inclusion of foreignness as a form of entertainment had successfully penetrated even the more serious forms of public spectacle.

Cuban citizens.⁹⁹ These events did not capture the attention of the American public, but in 1896 there was acknowledgement of the situation in Cuba by American legislators. For example, on December 16, 1896 *The San Francisco Call* published an article, entitled “Open War on Spain,” in which the paper transcribed Alabama Congressman John Tyler Morgan’s “arguments to show why the United States should at once intervene to put an end to the war in Cuba.”¹⁰⁰ Though there was clearly some acknowledgement within the American government about the war in Cuba, there was not an outpouring of public support for American intervention. Even within the *Call’s* article the author states, “the speech attracted very little attention on the floor or in the galleries.”¹⁰¹

Though the atrocities in Cuba had not gained much national attention by 1896, two newspaper publishers in New York City, Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst, began to see the events as a perfect catalyst to sell more papers. By 1896, Pulitzer’s *New York World* and Hearst’s *New York Journal* began covering the events in Cuba extensively, however, according to media historian David Spencer, “The fine line between fantasy and fact has more than once been blurred in the pursuit of material gain. Nowhere was this more evident than in the New York press wars that broke out in the closing years of the nineteenth century.”¹⁰² Spencer goes on to discuss Hearst and Pulitzer, arguing that the two publishers engaged in a campaign of sensationalized news coverage of the events in Cuba as a way to increase profits. Further, Spencer’s scholarship on what has been named the “Yellow Press” includes a connection between sensationalized news coverage and P.T. Barnum: Spencer states, “There is plenty of

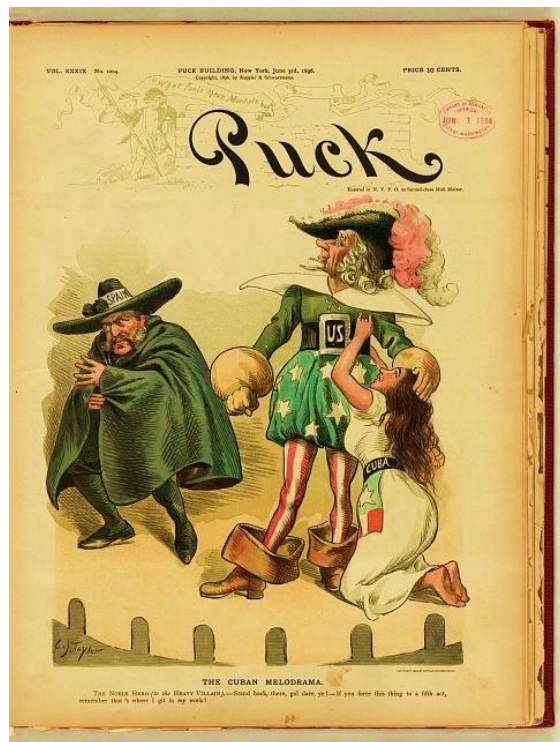
⁹⁹ Reconcentration Policy of General Weyler

¹⁰⁰ **The San Francisco call., December 16, 1896, Image 1**
About [The San Francisco call. \(San Francisco \[Calif.\]\) 1895-1913](#)

¹⁰¹ Ibid

¹⁰² Spencer, Yellow Press

evidence that suggests that Hearst's approach to selling newspapers was not significantly different than P.T. Barnum's approach to entertainment."¹⁰³ Now, Spencer's casual allusion to P.T. Barnum and circus advertisements does not implicate the showman as the reason for Yellow Journalism, however, it does imply that scholars have made this connection.



Sensationalized news coverage, and publisher's blasé attitude toward respectable journalistic standards could be related to P.T. Barnum and his approach to advertisement, however, the images of the Cuban crisis created by political cartoonists in the years leading up to

¹⁰³ Spencer 117

war were distinctly not Barnumesque. For example, in this image from the cover of Puck magazine in June of 1896, we find a white skinned, female anthropomorphic representation of Cuba, who is being saved by the equally white skinned, male representative of the United States. This image, named the “The Cuban Melodrama” is a clear allusion to American romance novels, complete with a white savior, an evil villain, and a damsel in distress. Thus, the artist was playing to Americans senses of masculinity by framing American intervention as a masculine duty to protect the weak.

[BUTCHER WEYLER] DENVER POST

In this cartoon, published in the *Denver Post* on February 19, 1897, entitled “Butcher Weyler,” we find an image of the Spanish General Valeriano Weyler holding a comically large butcher knife with a caption that read “He still continues to slaughter the innocents, setting at naught the provisions of treaties, trampling under foot the rights of American citizens and flying in the face of humanity.”¹⁰⁴ Again, this imagery is an allusion to romance literature, turning the Spanish General into a comical villain. Further, Miller states that between 1897 and 1898 “Image makers most typically pictured Spain as a pirate or demon, surrounded by symbols of gothic horror such as skeletons, bloody knives, and skulls.”¹⁰⁵ This iconography was significantly religious and melodramatic, intended to demonize the Spanish and create sympathy for the often feminized version of Cuba.

¹⁰⁴ “Butcher General Weyler.” *Denver Post*, Feb 19 1897.

¹⁰⁵ Miller 33



In February of 1898, American newspapers were finally given an event that they could sell as an act of war. On February 15, 1898, the *U.S.S. Maine* was destroyed in the Havana harbor, killing 266 American sailors. The *U.S.S. Maine* was deployed to protect American interests in Cuba during the conflict between Spain and Cuban rebels, and its destruction was immediately used by newspaper publishers to garner public support for American intervention in Cuba's rebellion. Pulitzer and Hearst quickly blamed the Spanish for the destruction of the *Maine* despite having zero evidence to support their claims.¹⁰⁶ The headline for Hearst's Journal on February 16, read "CRISIS AT HAND...GROWING BELIEF IN SPANISH TREACHERY!"¹⁰⁷ No hard evidence was ever found to link the sinking of the *Maine* to the Spanish, but the explosion of the American battleship proved to be the perfect catalyst for burgeoning American interest in the Cuban conflict. After the *Maine*'s explosion, the jingoistic, sensational style of coverage popularized by Hearst and Pulitzer spread to newspapers across the country. According to Miller, "The *Maine* explosion set in motion a consolidation of support for the Cuban cause across American print, visual, and popular media that transformed audience

¹⁰⁶ Yellow Journalism

¹⁰⁷ "Crisis at Hand" New York Journal. Feb 16, 1898 p1.

engagement with events in Cuba.”¹⁰⁸ Within weeks of the *Maine*’s explosion, the American public voiced outright support for American military intervention in Cuba’s war against the Spanish.

The Spanish American War lasted a mere four months, ending in a lightning fast victory for the United States’ military. As the American media framed the conflict in melodramatic terms, the quick defeat of the Spanish only served to support a narrative of American exceptionalism. American newspapers quickly began dramatizing various aspects of the war creating heroes out of significant figures, and fantasies out of significant battles. For Miller, “Framing U.S. actions as a riveting tale of dashing heroes, dark villains, and alluring damsels in distress transformed intervention into a dramatic rescue.”¹⁰⁹ According to Davis, “Circus and Wild West spectacles framed the new empire within the American exceptionalist tradition.”¹¹⁰ One of the best examples of the media turning battle into fantasy of American exceptionalism is the Battle of San Juan Hill.

On July 1, 1898 the American infantry attacked an area called the San Juan Heights at the southernmost tip of Cuba. The area had two hills that the Americans called San Juan Hill and Kettle Hill which were heavily protected by Spanish troops. The area was seen as paramount to U.S. control of the island so on July 1st Major Generals William Shafter and Joseph Wheeler ordered an attack on the hills. The American troops outnumbered the Spanish, but due to their fortified position on top of the hills the Spanish delivered mass casualties to the attacking American forces. However, at a decisive point in the battle, the US’s 1st Volunteer Cavalry Unit, led by Theodore Roosevelt, along with a unit of Buffalo Soldiers, charged up Kettle Hill,

¹⁰⁸ Miller 55

¹⁰⁹ Miller 20

¹¹⁰ Davis 194

successfully beating the Spanish back and delivering a victory for the U.S. troops. This battle was undeniably important for the American forces, but it also came at a great cost. According to Miller, one tenth of all the American troops at the Battle of San Juan Hill died.¹¹¹ According to war correspondent Richard Davis who was present at the battle, it “felt like someone had blundered and that these few men were blindly following out some madman’s mad order...it was not heroic then, it seemed merely terribly pathetic.”¹¹² Military historian Graham Cosmas gives a detailed account of the Battle of San Juan Hill in his 1994 work, *An Army for Empire*, which paints the battle as a chaotic, deadly battle by ill-equipped soldiers which “depressed many American officers.”¹¹³ Despite the sobering facts of this battle, the Battle of San Juan Hill was heralded in American mass media as a heroic victory of superior American forces, led almost single handedly by Teddy Roosevelt and his Rough Riders.

¹¹¹ Miller 101

¹¹² Miller 96

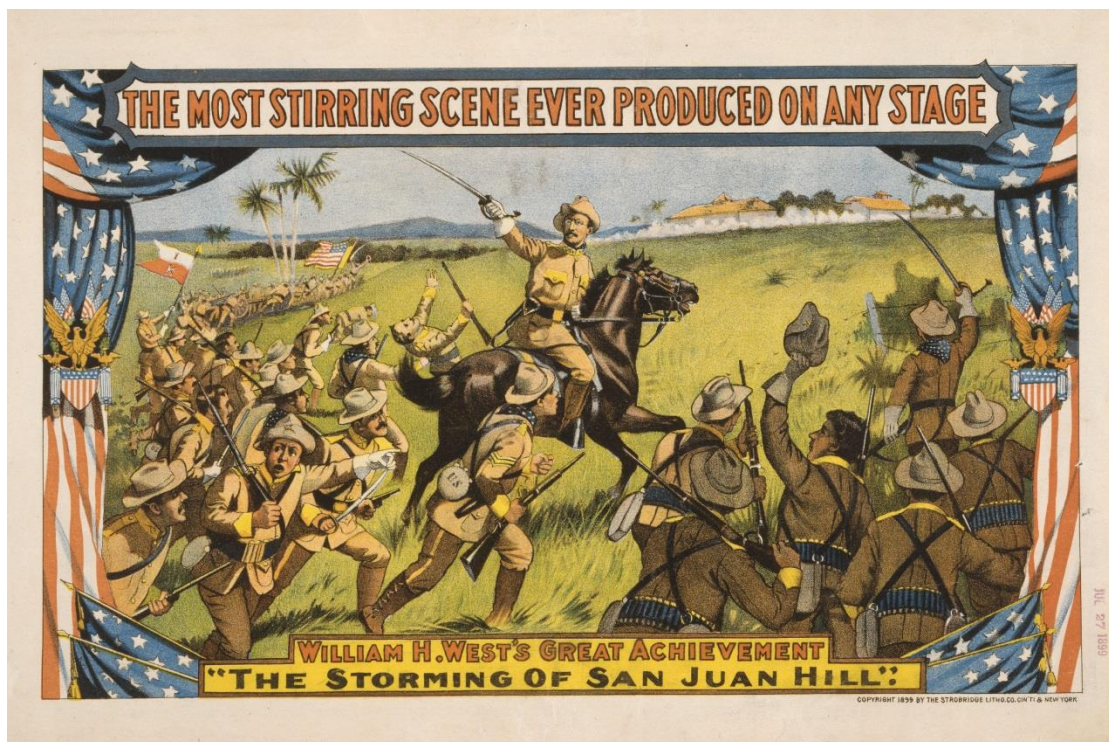
¹¹³ *An Army for Empire: The United States Army in the Spanish-American War*
By Graham A. Cosmas 218



In American mass media, the Battle of San Juan Hill became the shining example of American exceptionalism and military superiority. According to Miller, “Nothing stands out more in the public memory of the Spanish American War than Theodore Roosevelt’s troop of Rough Riders on San Juan Hill.”¹¹⁴ Almost immediately after the battle, graphic artists began creating images of Teddy Roosevelt leading a cavalry charge of white soldiers up the hill, saber in hand, amongst many a bullet and cannon fire, despite the fact that most of the men at San Juan Hill were not on horseback, the battle was exceedingly chaotic, and the attacking force included a regiment of black soldiers. This dramatized, white-washed version of battle was distinctly similar to the way Bill Cody had turned historic battles into public spectacle in his Wild West show, and Cody himself became a significant figure in the dramatization of the war.

¹¹⁴ Miller 95

Bill Cody's relationship to the Spanish American War is complicated, but it exemplifies the way war and fantasy were intertwined in closing years of the nineteenth century. Before the war began, Cody penned an article in Pulitzer's *New York World*, in which he described how he could lead an army of 30,000 Native Americans into battle and defeat the Spanish in Cuba.¹¹⁵ Apparently, he actually offered to do this, but President McKinley denied his offer.¹¹⁶ Indeed, Cody was not the only one who thought he could single-handedly win a war against the Spanish as newspapers published stories claiming that Cody, along with "2,000 to 3,000 Indian braves...and the cowboys off of the range...would make short work of the Spanish."¹¹⁷



Cody did not go to war, but that did not stop him from bringing war to the entertainment business. On July 6, 1898 Cody's Wild West show included "True representatives of Cuba's

¹¹⁵ *New York World* April 3, 1898, 27

¹¹⁶ Miller 100

¹¹⁷ "Wild West Warriors" *Salt Lake Herald*, May 8, 1898.

heroic struggle...each one on leave for honorable war wounds.”¹¹⁸ This performance included actual Cuban soldiers, “mounted and armed as charging in the field.”¹¹⁹ By the time the Spanish American War began, Cody had made a career turning war into a spectacle, so it makes sense that he would use the Spanish American War in his show. However, it is telling that the opposite was also true. As previously mentioned, one of the most famous moments of the Spanish American War was Theodore Roosevelt leading his “Rough Riders” in a valiant charge against the Spanish forces at the Battle of San Juan Hill. Roosevelt called his volunteer regiment the Rough Riders, which was the same name Bill Cody used for his equestrian performers in the Wild West show. Roosevelt claimed that he did not get the name from Cody, but Cody’s Rough Riders had been performing in America for over a decade before Theodore Roosevelt stepped foot in Cuba. Clearly, a part of Cody’s western fantasy had made its way into the Spanish American War, thereby intertwining the fantasy of war and actual, real-life battle.

Further, Cody was a major figure in the dissemination of the sensationalized version of the Battle of San Juan Hill among the American populace. By 1899, a reenactment of the Battle of San Juan Hill became a staple of Cody’s Wild West show. According to Miller, “over 10 million Americans in almost three hundred cities saw Buffalo Bill and his Congress of Rough Riders’ spectacular production of the Battle of San Juan Hill in the Wild West Show tours of 1899 and 1900.”¹²⁰ The exploitation of the Spanish American War was clearly a part of Cody’s show late in his career, and the sheer number of people who attended the Wild West show establishes a strong connection between entertainment and the creation of public memory about the war. For two decades, Cody used his show to glorify American expansion on the western

¹¹⁸ The Citizen, June 23, 1898

¹¹⁹ *ibid*

¹²⁰ Miller 99

frontier, but by the end of the nineteenth century, the showman had clearly retooled his show to exploit American's interest in expansion overseas. Miller states, "Cody certainly capitalized on the war, but his framework also helped transform popular understanding of the war as an extension of the Wild West."¹²¹ Clearly, by the end of the nineteenth century, the politics of imperialist expansion had become a form of entertainment for the American public.

Barnum and the Imagery of Imperialism

During the early years of the war, Americans were basically united in support of military intervention in Cuba. The destruction of the *Maine* and the media's dramatic representation of the Cuban conflict led to almost unanimous support from the American media and populace. However, in the rush to show support for liberating Cuba, newspapers did not explicitly question the imperialist implications of military intervention.¹²² This changed in what Miller calls the "Last Phase" of the war. According to Miller, after two months of war, it became clear that victory for the Americans was all but assured, causing Americans to question what America's role would be with regard to Spain's colonies. Would they free the Filipinos, Cubans, and Puerto Ricans, or would they become colonizers? Further, on July 12, 1898 the United States' congress passed a resolution for the annexation of Hawaii.¹²³ This move by congress showed that the United States government was interested in obtaining land overseas, thereby providing stark evidence of imperialist intentions with regard to Spain's colonies. By July of 1898, newspapers began publishing accounts of wounded warriors, and military mismanagement. These reports shattered the rose-colored spectacle of war that had been created in the early years of the war, and caused Americans to start questioning America's military engagements overseas. Lastly, the

¹²¹ Miller 100

¹²² Miller 154

¹²³ <https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/hawaii-petition>

Spanish American War ended in August of 1898 after both countries signed the Treaty of Paris, an agreement that ceded control of Spain's former colonies to the government of the United States. The various reasons Americans began discussing the pros and cons of imperialism is well covered in Miller's work, however, what is most important for this study is the way the imagery of foreign peoples changed in political cartooning as a result of the imperialism debate.

In the years leading up to the Spanish American War, political cartoonists often played upon the American concept of masculinity by depicting Cuba as a woman, and America as her masculine savior. Historians Kristen Hoganson and Amy Greenberg find that during the late-nineteenth century, the American concept of masculinity had become synonymous with martial strength and the ability to dominate.¹²⁴ This ideal was successfully appropriated in the creation of pro-war imagery as image makers feminized Cuba and presented American intervention as a duty for American men. However, as the war went on and Americans began questioning the idea of imperialism, the humanized image of Cuba in political cartoons changed from helpless, light-skinned woman to a dark-skinned, man or child. Both pro-imperialists and anti-imperialists alike used said imagery. After the war, the imperialism debate began to dominate news cycles. In December of 1898, *The New York Herald* did a national survey of 470 newspapers that all included arguments about imperialism, finding that 288 (mostly from the mid-west and western states) supported colonial rule of Spain's former colonies, and 182 (mostly from the east coast) opposed imperialism.¹²⁵ As the imperialism debate infiltrated newspapers around the country, the image of Cuba as a black man or child was also applied to the image of Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Hawaii.

¹²⁴ Footnote greenbergs argument

¹²⁵ Miller 139

[SENTENCE LIKE THIS SHOULD BE IN THE INTRO] The imagery of foreign peoples during the debate about American imperialism clearly draws from the entertainment culture that had been developing for over fifty years by the time the Spanish American War started. Artists began depicting Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Hawaii in two distinct ways. In one version the foreign nations were drawn as black, with big lips, curly hair, and disheveled clothing, in the other they were depicted as black children. The depiction of the island cultures as black with exaggerated features was a clear appropriation of blackface minstrelsy, however the purpose of the imagery served a slightly different, but notable purpose. In minstrel shows, the performers were dressing up as caricatures of black men in order to entertain a white audience by making fun of black culture. When artists appropriated the same imagery and applied it to the foreign nations, they were insinuating that the subjects of the cartoons were inferior, but often times the message of the cartoon was that the foreigners lacked civilization. Thus, like minstrelsy, cartoonists were using their audience's racism as a way to quickly get across a message about a non-white culture. However, with minstrels the idea was to make fun of black people, and in imperialist cartooning the message was that the foreigners would not fit into American culture. The following cartoons exemplify the way cartoonists used blackness as a vehicle to remark on their subject's lack of civilization.

[FILIPINOS GOLFING CARTOON]

In this cartoon, entitled "Society in Our New Possessions," we can see Filipinos depicted as black men with large lips, curly hair, and literally black skin.¹²⁶ Their clothes are ill fitting and unmatching, and most of the golfing 'Filipinos' do not have shoes on. The subjects are

¹²⁶ Gardner, "Society in our New Possessions, No. 7." Boston Herald, December 10, 1898, 3.

playing golf on a golf course, but nobody in the image is playing it correctly. There is a man about to shoot, while another man stands directly in his way, and in the background a man is using his club to strike another man in the head. Golf was likely chosen because it was a sport mostly played by white men, thus the Filipino's failure to even comprehend how to play the game was an implication that they were intellectually inferior. Further, the artist's depiction of Filipinos failing to play golf was intended to imply that they did not fit in. Their lack of 'civilization' inhibited them from even playing a simple game the right way. This cartoon is anti-imperialist in nature as the artist was clearly trying to argue that the United States was attempting to colonize a place inhabited by people who they would not be able to civilize. Imperialism was, thus, a fool's errand. [HIJAR SAID I CAN CUT THIS IMAGE ANALYSIS, BE MORE STRAIGHT UP IN THE DISCUSSION OF IMPERIALISM IN CARTOONS, MILLER HAS ALREADY ESTABLISHED THIS.]

IMAGE MILLER 226

This cartoon, published in September of 1898, presents another anti-imperialist argument as the artist was clearly suggesting that if America continued "Annexing Islands" then congress would be taken over by non-white animals. The cartoon includes ape-like "men" in congress calling to "abolish all work," and "investigate cannibalism." According to Miller, this cartoon "echoed one of Barnum's well-known exhibits in the late-nineteenth century, the 'Ethnological Congress of Savage and Barbarous Tribes.'"¹²⁷ This cartoon is another example of minstrelsy making its way into the imperialism debate, but the artist was clearly drawing from the depiction

¹²⁷ Miller 225

of foreign people in Barnum's circus. This mixture of imagery and message implicates the direct appropriation of the imagery created by public entertainment.

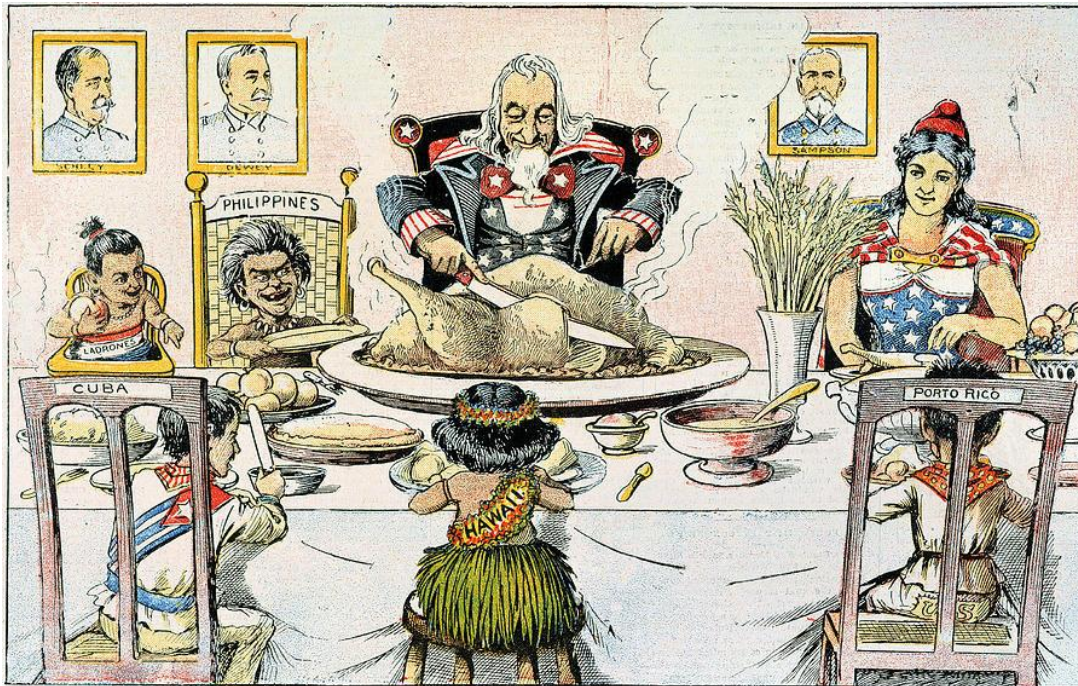
IMAGE MILLER 227

This cartoon, published in the *Boston Herald* on December 4, 1898, also explicitly mixes the imagery of minstrelsy with allusions to the circus. In the cartoon, Uncle Sam is depicted as a circus entertainer who was exhibiting a "Monstrous Aggregation," a minstrel version of a Filipino woman. The title "Monstrous Aggregation" is an allusion to pseudo-scientific ideas about race as aggregate is defined as "a whole formed by combining several (typically disparate) elements." Thus, the title suggests that the Filipino race was a mixture of various different races and the end result, the Filipino woman, was "Monstrous." Further, next to the exhibition of "Phillipina" the artist included another circus advertisement for "Tropical Beauties" with the words Cuba, Hawaii, and Guam at the bottom of the ad. This image is a direct allusion to the exploitation of foreign island cultures in public entertainments, especially the circus sideshow.

This type of imagery was common in political cartooning during imperialism debate, however, it was much more common for Cuba, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Hawaii to be represented as babies. The infantilized imagery of the foreign nations was less derivative of minstrelsy, though artists still drew the babies as black most of the time, but the messaging was the same: the foreign people were uncivilized. Both pro and anti-imperialists used the image of foreign nations as babies to get their point across, arguably because the image of a baby implies a lack of maturity. Drawing the foreign cultures as babies implied that they, as a culture, had not matured to the level of the white-European Americans. The infantile imagery also implied that

America was going to need to ‘raise’ the countries into adulthood. In one cartoon, entitled “Who Said Peace with these Two Kickers,” depicts Uncle Sam holding two crying children with the words Cuba and Philippines on the children’s clothing. Another, entitled “A Trifle Embarrassed,” shows a basket of crying children being dropped off by “destiny” to an unsure Uncle Sam and Columbia. In yet another cartoon, entitled “Uncle Sam’s Kindergarten for the Propagation of Liberty,” the artist depicts Uncle Sam teaching children, each child serving as a representative of one of Spain’s former colonies. Though the message in these cartoons vary, the underlying theme in all of the cartoons was that Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Hawaii were immature cultures that lacked civilization. This common theme exemplifies the pervasiveness of the ‘civilization’ argument within the imperialist discourse.





NEW FACES AT THE THANKSGIVING DINNER.
 UNCLE SAM (to Himself)—These Little Shavers Seem to Like it Here. I Wonder Had I Better Keep 'em All in the Family!



[INTRO/HISTORIOGRAPHY SECTION IS MORE APPROPRIATE] All of these images, in one way or another, appropriated imagery created in the public entertainment sector. Miller states: Thus, Miller is arguing that when Americans began to discuss imperialism and colonization of foreign countries, graphic artists simply appropriated the imagery that had been entertaining Americans for decades. Though it was likely not his intention, P.T. Barnum had taught the American middle-class how to think about foreign people. When cartoonists began developing images that remarked upon the pros and cons of imperialism, it was in the language of P.T. Barnum's museum and circus that had turned 'otherness' into a commodity that could be exploited for profits. By turning human beings into pseudo-scientific 'exhibits' he had seemingly provided a validation for American racism, and a 'scientific' basis for American's belief in cultural superiority.

Bonnie Miller finds the earliest iteration of this pseudo-scientific, imperialist discourse to be the “What is it?” exhibit from 1860. This argument has merit as Johnson was the first person Barnum put on stage as an example of an unevolved, animalistic human. This kind of imagery was inarguably influential when the imperialism debate started as there are myriad images that animalized the Spanish and the various foreign island cultures. However, I would argue that the Johnson and the “What is it?” exhibit serves as a step in the evolution of this imagery which started with James O’Connell. In the political cartoons of the late-1890s, civilization, or lack thereof, was the most common theme in imperialist cartooning. Johnson was no doubt represented as uncivilized, but Barnum had been putting non-white bodies on stage as representatives of uncivilized savages for almost two decades before Johnson’s performance. Throughout the 1840s, Barnum exhibited men and women from Fiji, New Zealand, China, Sri Lanka, and various other nations, all as representatives of the uncivilized races of the world. These people were presented in the same fashion as sideshow freaks. They were intended to entertain the audience with their ‘otherness.’ However, all of those people were exhibited after Barnum’s first ‘uncivilized’ island themed performances: James O’Connell, the Tattooed Man.

James O’Connell serves as the transitional figure of otherness from literature to public entertainment in America. Travelogues about travelers who had been to ‘strange’ lands had been popular in western society from the earliest years of marine expeditions. Travelers like Marco Polo, James Cook, Alexander de Boganville FIND, wrote books about the people they encountered in far away lands. Stories of white people in captivity also far predated James O’Connell. Captivity narratives had been a popular American form of literature from the beginning of colonization. However, O’Connell serves as the first person to go on stage and turn his adventures among an ‘other’ culture into a public spectacle for an American audience. He

was a sailor who had been permanently marked by a foreign culture. He walked around with the evidence of his torture prominently displayed on his skin. When he took the stage to tell of the “manners and customs of the savages,” he was taking the first step in exploiting American’s assumptions about foreign ‘civility’ and the perceived superiority of western civilization. After O’Connell’s seminal performances, Barnum sought to take the next step and began exhibiting actual human beings from the lands that O’Connell had claimed to have visited. Thirty years later, Barnum was exhibiting “specimens” from “barbarous” lands around the world.

O’Connell’s fantastic stories of survival and adventure turned into pseudo-scientific exploitation of ‘others’ that sought to prove that foreign cultures were less evolved, less civilized than the American public. [MENTION IN INTRO] By 1898, sixty years after O’Connell’s first performance, artists and newspaper publishers were telling their own story of the “Manners and customs” of ‘savages,’ but instead of wild adventure and hyperbolic storytelling, the cartoonists and writers were telling American’s that it was ok to colonize foreign people because they were going to bring civilization. According to Davis, “the Circus and Wild West portrayed the Spanish-American War not in terms of colonial conquest but as evidence of liberal progress and democratic equality.”¹²⁸ Pro-imperialism cartoons did much of the same by insinuating that America would lead the foreign nations into civilization. Anti-imperialist cartoons suggested that such a task would be impossible. However, both types of cartoons presented the foreign as uncivilized and America as the civilizer. In O’Connell’s show, the basic theme was a ‘civilized’ man surviving in an ‘uncivil’ land. In 1898, the same allusion to ‘uncivilized land’ was being used to validate America’s conquest of imperialism.

¹²⁸ Davis 207

Conclusion

[I hate this part. I don't want to summarize in my conclusion. I would rather analyze the intersectionality of class, race, and gender within the confines of this history. However, that might be too much to try to do in a conclusion. If I were to add those themes into my overall paper, it will end up being WAY too long. Please let me know what you think.]

As a white man with tattoos, O'Connell radiated 'otherness' and quickly found work in the New York theater circuit. By 1841, O'Connell was working with what was to become the most influential cultural producer in the history of American popular entertainment: P.T. Barnum. Barnum's "Fejee Mermaid" and "Tattooed Man" were successful exhibits and the showman quickly began finding new, more exotic people to put on stage as representatives of the 'uncivilized.' Cannibals and exotic tribesmen were the first to follow the seminal exploitation of the foreign South Pacific, but Barnum quickly began conceptualizing a huge exhibition with all "uncivilized and barbarous" people from around the world. For Barnum, his museum was a place of learning, so exhibiting the 'uncivilized' in his museum was likely meant to educate his middle and working-class American audience about far-away lands and people. It is no coincidence that, around the same time as Barnum's exploitation of foreign peoples, scholars began studying what was known as "Ethnology," or the scientific study of race. Scientists, like Barnum, conceptualized non-white, non-western cultures as genetically and scientifically inferior to white westerners. Thus, when Darwin published his theory of evolution, Barnum quickly used the idea and applied it to human beings in his show. Barnum's "What is it?" exhibit was the first public entertainment to exploit Darwin's theory (despite the fact that Darwin's seminal work did not mention humans) as the showman put a black man on stage as a representative of the missing link between apes and man. The platform that Barnum had created over the years through

exploitation of foreignness offered a logical space for this type of pseudo-scientific presentation of race to succeed. After his museum burnt down in 1865 and 1868, Barnum invested in a travelling circus and began bringing his exploitation of the exotic into cities across America and Europe. Barnum was incredibly successful, creating the largest circus the world had ever seen at the time, and his success inspired other showmen to create their own travelling exhibitions. William Cody was one of those showmen inspired by Barnum's circus. Where Barnum exploited the American fantasy of the exotic East, Cody sought to exploit the American fantasy of the western frontier. Cody's show was the embodiment of manifest destiny as his show featured the entertaining reenactment of how white American's 'won' the west. Cody effectively turned the theft of Native American lands and genocide of Native American people into an entertaining spectacle of patriotism. When going to see Buffalo Bill's Wild West, audiences were engaging with the history of America through the rose-colored lens of those who conquered the many Native American peoples. Cody's show turned war into spectacle, and exploited a feeling of pride that Americans had with regard to the conquest of the west. When actual war came in 1898, Cody immediately included pro-war elements in his spectacle to garner public support for war against the Spanish. After the war, Cody began reenacting famous battles from the Spanish American War thereby using his fantasy of manifest destiny to recreate the contemporary conquest of foreign lands. Many Americans conceptualized the Spanish American War as an extension of America's westward expansion, but as the countries America was occupying in their fight against the Spanish were all far away and not connected to the American mainland, some Americans began to question the imperialist implications of the war against Spain. In the early years of the war, the Spanish conflict was sold to Americans through popular media that imagined Spain's colony, Cuba, as a feminized, helpless neighbor that needed

America's protection. However, as the war went on, the American media began to question whether or not America was becoming an empire. As the discourse about American intervention shifted from "liberation to conquest," the imagery of foreign cultures changed from helpless victim to uncivilized savages. In creating content related to the question of imperialism, political cartoonists appropriated imagery of foreignness from America's popular entertainment culture. Cartoonists applied heavily racialized imagery from blackface minstrels to the people of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and the Philippines, while the messages of their cartoons all involved a theme of civilization. The idea that the people of said countries were uncivilized savages who did not fit into western, American culture was a direct allusion to P.T. Barnum and his "Ethnological Congress." Thus, in remarking on American imperialism, popular media sources were applying a concept of race that had been popularized by the public entertainment business. The theme of race and civilization had been a part of Barnum's show since the 1840s, and the first performer to characterize those themes was James O'Connell.

This study is wide in scope and covers over sixty years of American cultural history. As such there are, obviously, some generalizations and omissions that need to be addressed. First of all, P.T. Barnum was not the only person in New York using museums to exploit American's xenophobic obsession with foreign cultures. He is, however, accepted by acclaimed scholars, such as Neil Harris, as the most famous and influential of the New York entertainers. Second, Barnum was not the first to exploit human beings for the purpose of entertainment. That practice is centuries old, and is well covered in Robert Bogdan's *Freak Show*. Third, O'Connell is not the world's first Tattooed Man sideshow. John Rutherford and James Cabri predate O'Connell in taking the stage to tell stories of captivity and torture among 'savages.' O'Connell was the first person to do this in America, and he worked with P.T. Barnum. Therefore, a discussion of

the other two performers was not relevant to this work. Fourth, blackface minstrelsy was heavily influential regarding the images of imperialism, but this work does not provide a deep discussion of the practice. This was a cognizant choice as the use of minstrelsy in imperialist cartooning was really just meant to code the foreign people as non-white. Studies by Bonnie Miller and Eric Lott do a much better job of explaining what blackface symbolized in contemporary America, but an in-depth exploration of minstrelsy in nineteenth century America would involve an extensive discussion of the relationship white Americans had with blackness. This discussion, though fruitful and important, would have derailed this work from the overall thesis. Fifth, this study does not include a discussion of World's Fairs from the relevant time period. World's Fairs were absolutely important to the imperialist discourse, but they took place in two, stationary cities, making them much less influential than P.T. Barnum, or Bill Cody's travelling exhibitions. Finally, a discussion regarding American's representations of Native Americans could have added to this work, however, like minstrelsy, that is a complex discussion that would have taken this work away from the central thesis.

It is also important to acknowledge what this study is not. This is not an argument that James O'Connell, P.T. Barnum, or Bill Cody caused the creation of the imperialist imagery, the Spanish American War, or American imperialism. These men were simply involved in exploiting their contemporary American audiences' xenophobia. The ideas and imagery that they used in their shows existed long before they went into the entertainment business. These men are relevant for disseminating said imagery and imperialist language among the American public under the guise of education. Each of these men presented their show as a true, real-life, accurate representation of foreign people despite the fact that their representations of foreign cultures were heavily distorted to be more entertaining. Thus, they popularized hyperbolic

versions of foreign people in a way that they thought would be most appealing to their crowd. Apparently, what was most appealing was presenting foreignness as a characteristic of inferior culture. If this was not the case, then shows like Barnum's museum and circus, and Cody's Wild West would not have been particularly popular and would not be remembered as the most influential entertainments of the nineteenth century.

The popularity of P.T. Barnum, and later Bill Cody, is significant not only because their particular style of entertainment produced xenophobic ideas about foreign cultures, it is important because they represent some of the earliest forms of uniquely American culture. Before P.T. Barnum, American audiences were still going to see Shakespearean plays and Italian operas; traditionally, European entertainment forms. Barnum rose to fame during what theatrical historian Neil Harris calls "the formative years of American culture." During the eighteen thirties and forties, American cities like New York, Boston, and Philadelphia were beginning to grow into what we would recognize as a city. This led to large, dense populations that made up a new class of people: the working class. Barnum's entertainment, along with blackface minstrels, vaudeville, and burlesque, essentially formed a distinct American culture that was not based on European traditions. Thus, it is clear that from the earliest stages of American pop culture, content creators have exploited non-white peoples in order to entertain white audiences. Vaudeville, minstrels, and Barnumesque museums all had racist content that projected a sense of white superiority, therein tying the formulation of American pop culture to the exploitation of xenophobic ideas about race. Imperialism was not somehow influenced by popular culture, it was baked into the creative process of popular culture from the very beginning.

What this study has shown is simple: representations of people in popular entertainment matters. It may seem harmless to turn foreign cultures into one-dimensional caricatures, but this

act dehumanizes those who do not look like the audience. What's more, it is clear that the creation of popular stereotypes of foreign people provides political commentators a quick vehicle to use when remarking upon various topics related to that culture. Political cartoonists in the late-eighteen nineties were not trying to create an image of foreign people, they just used the image that was already popular so that they could make cartoons quickly. By using images that their audience would understand without explanation, they could get across their message more effectively. In order to demonize foreign people as uncivilized savages, they drew them as the spectacle of uncivilized savages that entertained people at the circus. And this is why representation matters. Nobody is going to try and validate the conquest of a foreign culture because of one show that presents the people from that culture as savages. But if you spend years creating thousands of shows that present that culture as uncivilized then the public may begin to believe it. If the powerful forces in society decide that they want to eventually conquer those people, it is not the powerful that need to provide arguments as to why. The media, using the pop culture imagery, will do that for them. For this reason, we must be vigilant about how our culture represents foreignness. America has, perhaps, the most successful engine for the creation of fantasy in the entire world sitting right in a small corner of Los Angeles, California. And every time a new movie comes out about far away lands or people, we must ask ourselves if that is an accurate representation of those people. Because as we have seen, xenophobic, inaccurate representation can have long lasting, negative effects.

