

Thesis: The popular entertainment industry established during the mid-nineteenth century effectively shaped working-class American's concept of foreign, non-white cultures. The imagery and language popularized in public entertainment forms, like the circus, was later appropriated by cartoonists and journalists as validation for American imperialism following the Spanish American War.

Outline:

This will be a study of popular entertainment culture during the mid-nineteenth century, specifically focusing on how masculinity and 'otherness' shaped American popular entertainment. It is necessary to illuminate the most important social changes that influenced the foundation of the American popular entertainment industry.

Enlightenment thinking leads to the industrial revolution

Mantoux, Paul. *The Industrial Revolution in the Eighteenth Century: An Outline of the Beginnings of the Modern Factory System in England* (1928). – Argument important for establishing a connection between enlightenment thinking and the industrial revolution.

Industrialization and the creation of the working/middle class

Blumin, Stuart. *The Emergence of the Middle-Class* (1989).

Bederman, Gail. *Manliness and Civilization*

Halttunen, Karen. *Confidence Men and Painted Women*.

(These works will establish the connection between the creation of a working/middle class and the changing ideas about masculinity. This will be necessary to establish before discussing masculinity and its influence in popular entertainment.)

The birth of popular entertainment culture.

Entrepreneurs and theater managers take advantage of the growing middle/working class and create entertainment to appeal to the new class of people.

- Levin, *Highbrow Lowbrow*.
- Allen, *Beautiful Prettiness*.
- Lott, *Love & Theft*.
- Harris, *Humbug*.

Barnum creates popular entertainment industry for the American family

Unlike the many other popular entertainment forms, P.T. Barnum established 'family friendly' entertainment that provided the many exhibits that were disappearing from more highbrow

museums and theaters (such as wax figures, stuffed animals, and sideshows). Where other entertainment forms provided new types of shows, Barnum provided pseudo-educational entertainment that objectified foreign people, and disabled people in an attempt to present audiences with ‘human curiosities.’

- Adams, *E Pluribus Barnum*.
- Harris, *Humbug*.
- Levin, *Highbrow Lowbrow*.
- Bogdan, *Freak Show*.

Barnum focuses on the ‘exotic’ in developing shows to cater to working class audiences.

Barnum’s first experience with objectifying foreignness as ‘freak shows’ comes with James O’Connell’s tattooed man sideshow. O’Connell serves as a transitional figure; a white man with a marked body that validated his experience with a foreign ‘savage’ culture. O’Connell is the first to establish a profitable show that played to American xenophobia about foreign cultures that was directly related to the American working-class concept of manliness. For years, captivity narratives were popular in American literary culture, but captivity narratives served a different purpose; to validate aggressive action toward Native Americans. O’Connell’s story is more in line with adventure stories in the Robinsonade fashion. Further, academia was beginning to develop ideas of classifying races, and the idea of Manifest Destiny was beginning to proliferate around the time O’Connell becomes popular. Thus, O’Connell came on to the scene as American literary culture, classification culture, and pseudo-science were all coming to fruition, thereby making him the perfect personification of what Americans were learning about foreignness.

- DeMello, *Inked*.
- Namias, *White Captives*.
- Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood*.
- Glazener, *Literature in the Making*.

Barnum subsequently dedicates much of his show to bringing the ‘orient’ into small towns across America. Barnum’s presentation of foreign bodies as ‘specimens’ establishes the pseudo-scientific influence on Barnum’s show. It also establishes the language and imagery that would be associated with foreign island cultures for decades to come.

- Wier, *American Orient*.
- Said, *Orientalism*.
- Harris, *Humbug*.
- Adams, *E Pluribus Barnum*.

Propogandists use imagery established by Barnum as a way to gain support for imperialism.

By the time the Spanish American War begins, the American working class had experienced decades of foreign cultures being presented in a certain way. Journalists and political cartoonists employed this language and imagery as a way to gain support for the Spanish American War. The war becomes the first 'war as spectacle' in the united states further establishing a connection between popular entertainment and the Spanish American War. Once the war is over, journalists and cartoonists continue to use said imagery to remark on American imperialism. Both pro and anti-imperialists use the same imagery to depict foreign cultures.

- Miller, *From Liberty to Conquest*.
- Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood*.
- Brody, *Visualizing Empire*.

Conclusion.