**Should I make this next paragraph a footnote? Balvay**

Evidence for Friedman’s claims can be found in historian Arnaud Balvay’s examination of the role that tattooing played a part in French and Native American interaction in the eighteenth century. Balvay states that tattooing among Native Americans was noted by most voyagers who visited North America in both the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.(p. 2) For example, in one correspondence letter by a French officer named Henri de Tonti in 1724, long before Cook’s voyage, the officer states, “These ornaments or marks of honor are not printed without pain; for a start they draw the pattern on the skin; then, with a needle or a small well-sharpened bone, they prick to blood, following the pattern; after which, they rub on the pricked place with a powder of the color asked by the one who gets that mark.”[[1]](#footnote-1) Tonti also seemed to have a grasp on the deeper meaning of tattoos to Native American peoples as he states, “As we here crown our heroes, there they imprint them an endless number of black, red and blue lines on the stomach.” (ibid 12) Balvay also notes that in the seventeenth century, some French colonists were tattooed as a symbol of friendship with a Native culture, and some Frenchman were tattooed after they were taken captive by a Native American culture that had a tradition of tattooing. (7) Stories of white Europeans being tattooed by indigenous cultures for various reasons were not unheard of events in America or Europe when Cook travelled to the Polynesian Islands. One could say that just because some French colonists met some people in North America with tattoos does not mean that the practice was widely known about, but voyagers would have travelled to many parts of the world, interacted with many cultures, and it is unlikely that the act of tattooing would have been a complete mystery. However, the extent to which the Polynesians tattooed themselves may have been unique.

Industrialization and manliness

The tattooed sideshow had much more success and longevity in England’s former colony in North America. Like many other countries during the early nineteenth century, America was becoming an industrialized nation with an economy that was slowly moving toward manufacturing instead of agriculture. Railroads were beginning to span the country, making it easier to move goods and people, and new machines were constantly being invented to make production of goods easier. Along with this shift in the economy, there was a population boom in the Northeast. In New York alone the population rose from 25,000 in 1776, to over 300,000 in 1830. Indeed, this monumental change in the economy gave rise to the modern American city, and with the growth of the city came myriad changes to American society.

Industrialization effectively reshaped most aspects of life for all Americans. Some scholars have suggested that the changes brought on by industrialization went as far as changing the way Americans perceived of manliness. For example, Greenberg argues that in the late eighteenth century, the idea of manliness was characterized by a learned, restrained, and sophisticated man. However, the author argues, once industrialization began, America saw the growth of a working class: a class of people who were not rich, but had enough disposable income to search for entertainment and goods in the public sphere. These people typically worked in manufacturing jobs, and expressed resentment for the previous, elitist concept of what it meant to be a man. In this period of industrialization, there was a vast inequality regarding who was benefitting economically from the changing economy with most of the wealth going to a small group of men. Indeed, many people outside of the elite now had more money than they had before in the agrarian economy, but this did not take away from the fact that there was extensive wealth inequality. As the working class began to exert agency in the public sphere, the public consciousness began to be shaped by the newcomers. What was once seen as manly, education, and restraint, was not characteristics that appealed to the working class. To a working class American this type of manliness was unobtainable, thus, the concept of manliness changed to fit this new class with Americans conceptualizing manliness as a result of power, racial superiority and the ability to dominate. This deeply influential shift in the American psyche is at the foundation of many of America’s imperialist actions, arguably, until this day.

Theater USE THIS?

The American theater was originally a transplant from England, using the platform to present the art of elocution. However, as theater historian Faye Dudden notes, “Between 1790 and 1870 entrepreneurs came to realize that entertainment could be produced and sold like other mass-consumption items.”[[2]](#footnote-2) Dudden’s work is aimed at discussing the role of women in the American theater, and how their roles changed on stage during this time period, but her statement of the way theaters were changing in order to commodify theater also holds true for this discussion. Dudden also notes the reason for this change as she states, “a mass audience for theatre was being created by urbanization and the beginnings of the transportation revolution.”[[3]](#footnote-3) Thus, like in England, industrialization created a situation where theater managers were beginning to realize the value of producing content that appealed to the masses. This is true in many of the theaters in New York, and as the city is one of the major port cities in America, it was only a matter of time before a sailor showed up from the South Seas, tattooed and ready to profit from telling tall tales of his time among the savages.

Another influential change in the newly industrialized American society was the development of a working class entertainment, specifically in the American theater.

The early nineteenth century theater can be characterized as a type of chameleon in the entertainment industry; changing to fit whatever audience was going to financially support a show. For some theater managers, this meant hiring more attractive actresses in order to appeal to the many young men that would attend the theater. In other theaters, the managers chose to expand what kind of shows they presented their audience. For example, theaters began hosting what is known as vaudeville shows in the early nineteenth century. A vaudeville, rather than a dramatic play, consisted of lighthearted songs and dances that were satirical in nature. (CITE OED?) The use of comedy, instead of only drama, appealed to the working class, as the content was not as highbrow and would have been relatable to the less educated audience. It was in the context of theater managers testing out different kinds of shows that American audiences were introduced to the first tattooed man show.

Oconnell and Manliness IMPORTANT TO PUT BACK IN

O’Connell’s fantastic tale of kidnap, torture, and tattooing among people he suspected of being cannibals is one of the first instances of American popular entertainment being used to present island cultures as savage primitives with brutal customs. For entertainment purposes the sailor concocted this story, which likely was a mixture of truth and fiction, which created a dichotomous relationship between the “civilized” white castaways and the “uncivilized” natives. O’Connell’ story also played to white working class ideas about manliness as he describes his bravery and courage while enduring his torture. Moreover, the tattooed man played on ideas of sexual domination as he included the marriage to a chief’s daughter as prize for his courage. What one can see in the story of O’Connell is the beginnings of a trope with regard to representations of island peoples. They were childlike, savage, and brutal, but they also succumbed to the manliness of the white man.

Unlike the captivity narratives involving Native Americans, O’Connell’s story represents the first stage of imperialism outside of the North American continent. Like the story of Mary Rowlandson, O’Connell’s story is one of survival, but it was survival among a brutal land in the South Pacific. With the Native American captivity narratives, the authors were validating America’s aggressive expansion into Native American lands by telling stories of the dangerous Natives kidnapping young Americans and killing their families. In O’Connell’s tale, the danger is now far away, in the South Pacific. Though his captivity narrative does not call for America to invade the foreign country, it does use the same language as Mary Rowlandson did over a hundred years previous. These stories and representations of indigenous cultures, effectively played to the American public’s ideas of civilization, and superiority, but they also laid the groundwork for American imperialism at the end of the nineteenth century.

IMPORTANT

Not understanding local customs, and punishing native peoples on their land according to western customs, led to the death of James Cook. In 1779, on his third voyage to the South Pacific, the captain had traveled to Hawaii. According to Cook’s journals, after a small ship was stolen by natives:

Cook at once decided to have recourse to his usual practice, and get either the king or some principal chief on board, as a hostage till it was returned. He at the same time gave orders to prevent any canoes from leaving the bay, in order that he might, if necessary, seize them, and sent his boats to carry this out. Guns were fired from the ships at two large canoes that attempted to pass. Cook himself landed with a small armed force, and went in search of the king, who at once consented to come on board. The conduct of Taraiopu throughout showed that he had perfect confidence in Cook, and was entirely friendly, whether he still believed in the Rono theory or not.

While walking down to the boat, the natives, who were momentarily increasing in numbers, implored the king not to go. His wife joined her entreaties. Taraiopu hesitated. At this moment a man ran up and cried, "It is war; they have killed a chief!" One of the guard boats had, in fact, fired at a canoe attempting to leave the bay, and killed a man. The natives at once ran to arms, and Cook, seeing his intentions frustrated, walked towards the boat. A native attacked him with a spear, and Cook shot him with his gun. Still, no further attack was made, but the men in the boats hearing Cook's shot, and seeing the excited crowd, commenced to fire without orders. Cook still moved to the shore, calling to his men to cease firing; but whilst so doing, and with his back to the exasperated natives, he was stabbed in the back with a dagger, and fell with his face in the water.

Cook’s journal goes on to state that Cook’s crew did not seek revenge on the natives because what happened was simply a misunderstanding. However, this altercation exemplifies one of the major inspirations, and validations, for imperialism. A ship was stolen, and instead of reaching out to the native chiefs to find out how they could get the ship back, Cook immediately seeks to dominate the local population and instill western punishment. In demanding that the natives not leave the bay, Cook was assuming that he was in a place of authority; a man to be listened to. Further, Cook’s decision to take a chief hostage until he got his ship back further implies that the captain was forcing his own rules on a population that had their own rules and customs. Cook’s journal does not imply that the people were savages for not following the captain’s rules, as the article about O’Connell does, but the altercation shows just how invasive ideas of superiority were in Western culture. With O’Connell’s show, this idea of cultural superiority shows through the presentation of Polynesian culture as savage because it did not adhere to Western customs. Though both cases are evidence of early Western imperialism, O’Connell’s show differs in that it brought the idea of island cultures as savages to the entertainment world, and turned imperialism into a spectacle to be consumed by the growing working class.

O’Connell’s REAL? Story

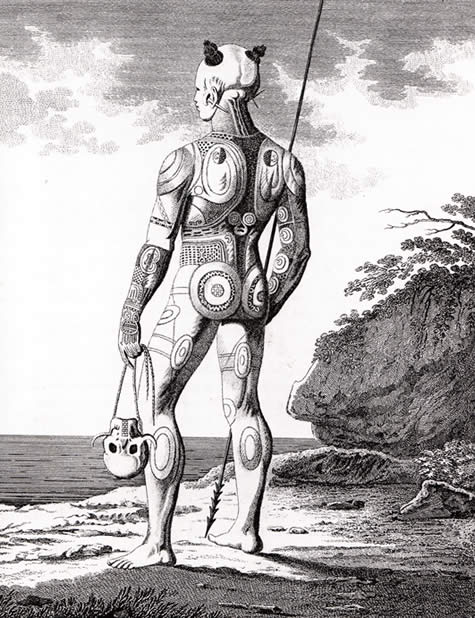
According to O’Connell’s memoirs, he was a sailor whose ship sank near the Caroline Islands in the late 1820s. After the shipwreck, O’Connell and his shipmate George Keenan lived among the Native Pohnapeian people for five years.( <https://www.neh.gov/humanities/2014/januaryfebruary/curio/marked-man-0>) During this time, likely in captivity of the Native culture, O’Connell and Keenan were tattooed on their torsos. In 1833 O’Connell and Keenan found their way off the island by way of an American ship named *Spy of Salem*, where he travelled to China. Eventually, O’Connell made his way to Canada and then into New York in 1835. However, upon returning to American in 1835, the ex-sailor’s tattoo, which had been a symbol of assimilation in Pohnpei, now projected to Americans that he had “gone native” and accepted a “savage” culture. Due to the stigma of the tattoos, O’Connell, like Rutherford, had a hard time finding work in New York, thus, he went into the entertainment industry as a way of survival.

FRIEDMAN”S ARGUMENT

Historians that specialize in tattooing have often claimed that Cook’s journals introduced, or reintroduced, tattooing into Western culture, however, recent work by Anna Friedman suggests that tattooing was a well-known practice in cultures around the world at the time of Cook’s voyages, including Europe. Friedman notes that tattooing has been a part of various cultures going back to ancient times, but throughout history the popularity of the practice has “waxed and waned.” (17) To support her claim, Friedman quotes the journals of a French explorer, named Charles Pierre Claret de Fleurieu, dated 1791: “We should be wrong to suppose the tattooing is peculiar to nations half-savage; we see it practices by civilized Europeans; time immemorial, the sailors [from around the world]…have known this custom.” (17) Where Friedman sees the confusion is in the word tattooing. For Friedman, the practice of tattooing had various names such as scratching, decorating, or marking, but Cook’s journals solidified the word tattoo as the official word used for permanently marking the skin with ink. Thus, when scholars began researching “tattooing,” it was common to see Cook as the first explorer to remark upon the custom. Friedman argues that this has created a myth in the history of tattooing that Cook was the person to “introduce” tattooing into Western society.

Friedman’s indictment of historical scholarship for missing the larger context of the practice of tattooing is important, however, Cook is still an immensely important figure regarding tattoo history because the Polynesian tattoo culture that he recorded was to become exceedingly popular in the West among sailors; the most stereotypical tattooed man in Western culture. Western Europeans, and Americans, may have been aware of the practice of tattooing, but it is not until White voyagers begin returning home with extensive Polynesian tattoos that we begin to see discussions of tattooing in popular media forms. Thus, when tattooed men eventually start performing in American theaters, it was not simply the tattoo that was of interest to the audience, but, instead, the audience must have been drawn to stories that tattooed performers told. It is the stories that present some of the first depictions of Island cultures as savage, barbarians.

EXPLAINATION OF TATTOO MEANING TO POLYNEISIAN CULTURES



The social meaning of tattoos in Polynesian cultures differed for each of the islands. For Maoris of New Zealand, tattooing (or *Moko* as the Maori called it) was connected to warfare, for Tahitians it was a mark that placed an individual in a social hierarchy, and in most Polynesian cultures a tattoo was somehow related to religious rites.(GELL 2) Anthropologist Alfred Gell’s work, *Wrapping in Images*, is the seminal scholarly work on Polynesian tattooing and its relation to social/political/religious meaning for different island cultures. For Gell, the tattoo, and lack thereof, in cultures that tattooed extensively, was a symbol that was the result of a society’s development, but it was also a symbol of belonging in a larger social context. (3) The various islands had differing degrees to which they tattooed, but each of the tattoo cultures was in some way indicative of the way larger social institutions developed on different islands. GELL When the voyagers arrived in the Polynesian islands, they had not understood the importance and meaning of tattooing in the cultures that they would soon colonize. The voyagers were, and all ways would be, outsiders. DENNING! For the white Europeans tattooing was simply an oddity practiced by a primitive culture. When the European sailors began appropriating the tattoo, they took the symbol back to Europe and left behind the cultural meaning. Thus, Polynesian tattooing came to Western shores as a symbol without a meaning; a hollow shell of what tattooing meant for the people that developed the practice.

CRAIK AND RUTHERFORD

An insightful presentation of Polynesian tattooing can also be found in adventure literature from the early-nineteenth century. One example of this is George Lillie Craik’s *The New Zealanders*, published in 1830. Craik’s work tells the story of John Rutherford, an extensively tattooed sailor who was taken captive by the Maori, but the book’s main purpose is to examine Maori customs. The facts of Rutherford’s captivity are questionable, as a later edition of the book, edited by James Drummond, states in the introduction, “Craik [did not have] sufficient means of testing the accuracy of Rutherford's story. Unfortunately there are many points on which the narrative is not only inaccurate but misleading.” (cite Drummond p.3) However, Craik’s book does present the story, accurate or not, of one of the West’s first known tattooed man sideshow.

ALSO CRAIK

Although Craik’s discussion of what a tattoo meant to Maoris is basically accurate, the author shows a clear colonial disposition with regard to how he sees the island culture. For example, in the introduction to this work, the author states: “The Mariner’s Compass has brought the remotest ends of the earth together, and, in thus giving to civilized man the possession of all that is valuable in distant climes, has ensured to every barbarous people the power of losing their barbarism, sooner or later, by contact with the all-pervading progress of civilization.” (Craik 2) This statement shows the author’s conception of island cultures as barbarous savages that need to be colonized in order to be civilized. The author also sees tattooing as evidence of a culture being uncivilized as he remarks upon the tattooing tradition of Tahiti: “The practice of tattooing, we believe, has been discontinued in Otaheite; but the progress of civilization has not yet altogether banished it at the Sandwich Islands.”(141) According to Craik, it is “civilization” that causes cultures to abstain from tattooing, thus the tattoo is a mark of the “uncivilized.” By all accounts, this narrative clearly establishes a colonial disposition in depictions of Polynesian peoples, one that was clearly tied to the tradition of tattooing when Rutherford began touring England as a tattooed performer in 1828.

O’Connell is a liar

End of O’Connell’s narrative

After leaving the South Pacific, O’Connell allegedly spent some time in China as a prisoner, and eventually found his way to America. The closing remarks of O’Connell’s book further instigates some suspicion on the part of a critical reader as the sailor plugs his work in the circus: “QUOTE ABOUT THE CIRCUS.” Now, this is not to say that O’Connell did not spend any time among indigenous cultures while in the South Pacific, he very likely did. The issue with O’Connell’s story is that there is no way to tell what was truth and what was fiction. However, we do know that the sailor spent the rest of his life telling audiences a version of his adventures that was undoubtedly exaggerated in order to attract audiences to his spectacle. Thus, O’Connell’s memoir is insightful as it presents a written account of what the Irishman likely told audiences during his time in the American theater.

Imperialism in 1836 Article

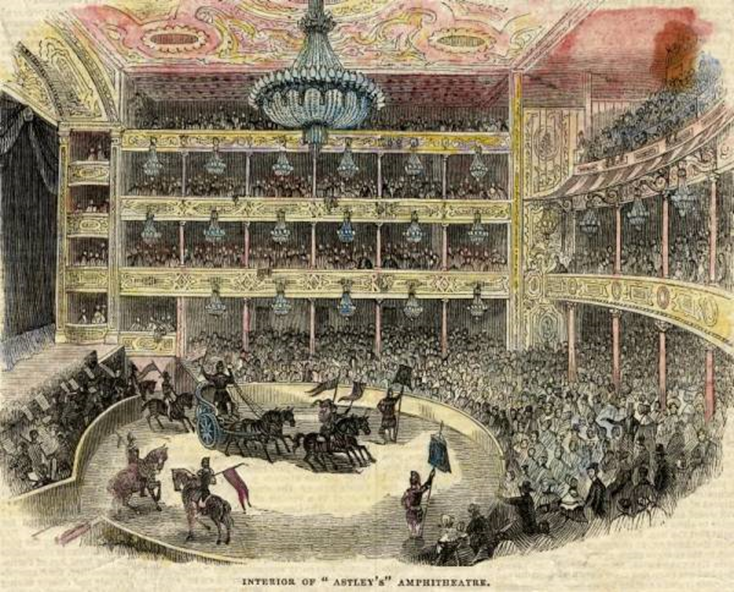
The article also exhibits early hints of imperialist representations of Island cultures as the author describes O’Connell’s experience. For example, after a discussion of what a sailor could trade with the Pohnpeians and what goods could be procured from them, the author states “The natives are very kind if well used – but will steal iron from vessels which visit them – and their revenge for the punishment of this theft has generated the idea that they are very savage.” This statement presents the heart of the problem regarding imperialist nations and their understanding of the people they hope to colonize. Clearly, the author sees the island cultures as something to be “used” in order to get useful resources from the islands. Also, the statement that “their revenge for the punishment of this theft” insinuates that when the sailors went to the islands, and the natives stole some of the iron from their boats, the sailors would “punish” the natives. One can assume this punishment meant physical violence. Punishment insinuates that someone committed a crime and, thus, brought on recourse. Revenge implies that someone is getting back at someone else for an injustice. Thus, the author’s statement that the “revenge for the punishment” implies that the civilized sailors would punish injustice, as is the civilized thing to do, and the Pohnpeians would exact revenge because of the punishment. The statement that “this…has generated the idea that they are very savage” implies that the Americans see themselves as superior because they have rules and customs that the island natives did not understand, and the Pohnpeians reaction to the civilized punishment shows that the natives are savages. This kind of thinking, that another culture is primitive and savage because they do not understand Western customs is arguably at the forefront of all validations for imperialism.

Beachcombers and Dening

Historian/anthropologist Greg Dening, who specialized in Polynesian cultures, called these men beachcombers. For Dening, contact between the European sailors and Polynesians is analogous to the meeting of an island and the sea. The island (Polynesians) is stagnant, solid, and unmoving, whereas the sea (European voyagers) is constantly moving, always bringing new objects and people to the shores of the islands. As with all islands and seas, the beach is the meeting point. Deining argues that those who came from the seas would always be outsiders, and, thus, they could never truly pass the beach to become a part of the island. With this in mind, the beachcomber refers to European voyagers who jumped ship to live among the indigenous populations of the South Seas; men who decided to leave their respective culture and attempt to live life as the natives did. Thus, these men had essentially attempted to embrace the various island cultures as their own, inevitably appropriating Native traditions; including tattooing.

American Industrialization

America did not industrialize as quickly as England for many reasons, most importantly the country’s dedication to a slave-based, agrarian economy. However, by the early nineteenth century America had begun building railroads and manufacturing businesses which led to large population booms in American cities. In New York, the population rose from 25,000 in 1776, to over 300,000 in 1830. Like England, many of these new residents were part of the newly formed working class who could afford to spend a little bit of money on popular entertainment. Inevitably, this created some changes in popular entertainment forms like the theater as theater managers sought to appeal to a new, growing audience of working-class Americans.

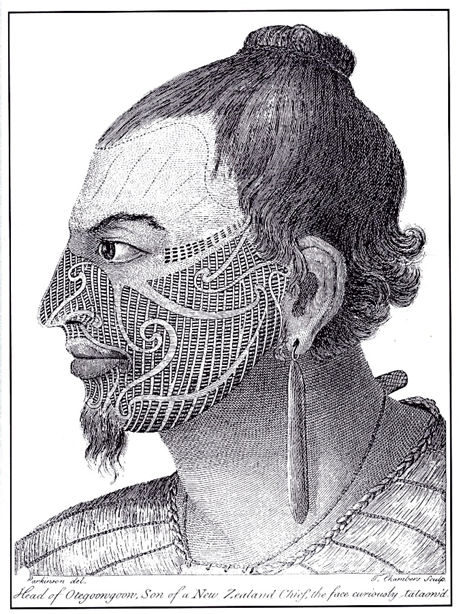


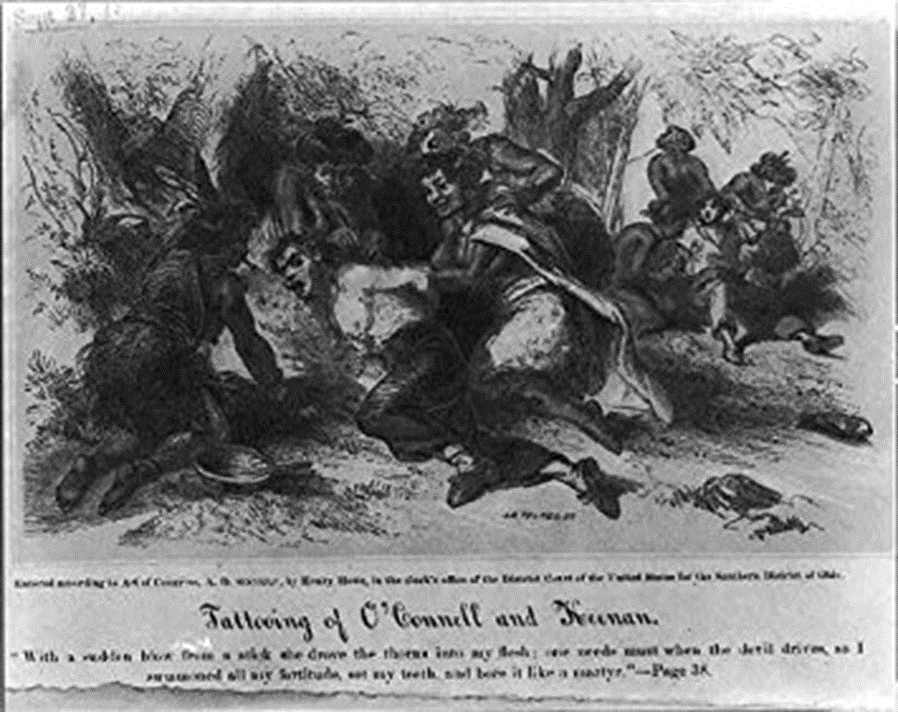


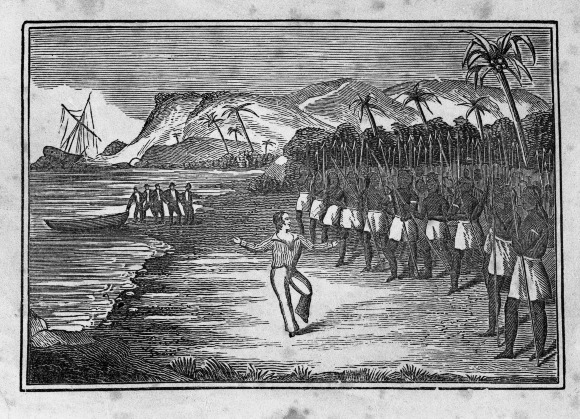














ANALYSIS PARAGRAPH OF O’CONNELL AND TATTOO IMPERIALISM

Thus, O’Connell turned his experiences in a foreign land into a trial of survival among ‘savages.’ If one reads his memoir, O’Connell’s narrative includes the sailor being accepted by the Pohnpeians, and subsequently eating meals, traveling, and engaging in intimate relationships with his ‘captors.’ O’Connell’s story, if taken at face value, is a story of Native people in the South Pacific saving two shipwrecked sailors, accepting them into their group. However, if the generosity or humanity of the Pohnpeians was emphasized, then O’Connell would have been admitting that he had essentially accepted the Native’s culture. And, as O’Connell’s language suggests, he saw himself as racially superior. Thus, publicly accepting the foreign culture would have been out of the question. The event of his tattooing is a perfect example of this. In his narrative, Native women tattooed O’Connell against his will, but he submitted to his female tattooists, who he referred to as “my beauties,” and “bore it like a martyr.”[[4]](#footnote-4) Further, according to O’Connell the event of his tattooing was a marriage ceremony, and he supposedly lived with one of his tattooists for the duration of his stay in Micronesia. However, when O’Connell took the stage to perform his jig and tell of his years of captivity, he would tell crowds of his tattooing as if it was meant as a form of torture. By explaining that he was tattooed against his will, the sailor was, thus, a victim of uncivilized savages, rather than a European who had ‘gone native.’ Like all good fiction, O’Connell’s story did have a healthy mixture of truth and fiction, but the tattooed sideshow men and women that would follow O’Connell would all have some tale of being tortured by savages in a far-away land.[[5]](#footnote-5)

SAID ORIENTALISM

Though O’Connell’s story is one of the earliest examples of popular entertainment forms in America pushing ideas of savage torture by island cultures, he was not by any means the creator of these images. Ideas of ‘savage’ Island natives, and their ‘barbaric’ cultures stems from the Age of Discovery, between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, when European voyagers traveled around the world “discovering” new lands and peoples. This initial contact is discussed in Edward Said’s revolutionary work *Orientalism*, published in 1978. Said’s theories about cultural contact during this time period have reshaped the way scholars perceive the well-established discourse of the East vs the West, as a delineating line that insinuates a fundamental difference in people from different parts of the globe. For Said, early Western cultures had the ability to travel and the power to expand their influence on the world; and in their travels, they came across cultures in the East that differed so greatly from the West that their seemingly aberrant ways of life were subsequently used as logical reasoning for colonization and domination. This phenomenon consequently served to shape the discourse about Eastern cultures in academia, politics, and Western culture, relegating the overgeneralized cultures of the East to a lower status as an unevolved, barbaric peoples who are in need of Western civilization. Thus, as European’s traveled, they conceptualized the cultures that they came into contact with as savage, and barbaric simply because their culture was highly dissimilar to what was considered normal in Europe. In this framework, the Island cultures of the South Pacific became examples of how people live when they are uncivilized. It was through this lens that tattooing was first brought into the consciousness of the working class in Western society.

Section 2

TATTOOING IN THE NEWS

Indeed, throughout the mid-nineteenth century, newspapers that discussed tattooing always included some distinction that connected tattooing to foreign primitiveness. For example, in a 1860 article, entitled “Tattooing,” the author writes about the practice of tattooing in Fiji, trivializing the tattoo as if it were a form of fashion for the Fijian people. While giving a pedantic, fictional example of “Miss Tongatea” and her young “Tongatato” the author claims that tattooing “it is a style of ornamentation everybody accords willingly to the Feejees [sic], and folly in keeping with their social manners and customs. What better could you expect in a race of savages more willing to devour the gospel messenger than the message he brings?”[[6]](#footnote-6) In another article, entitled “The Latest Folly,” the author reports on a visit he made to a woman tattooist’s house in order to find out about who was getting tattooed, and about the basic practice. The artist tells the reporter that it is mostly the “demi-monde” that are getting tattoos, but that she had patrons from “the best families.” Though the article is mostly informational, reporting on a new trend among city women, the author still references the tattoo’s ‘primitive’ reputation as he states that he was “anxious to gain all the information possible relative to this barbaric custom.”[[7]](#footnote-7) Though the articles do not make overt statements about invading foreign nations, the language they used is clearly indicative of the fact that tattooing had been conceptualized as a practice of ‘uncivilized’ cultures.

OLIVE OATMAN

In 1856 a young girl by the name of Olive Oatman made national headlines when she was returned to her brother after living five years in captivity among Native Americans. Native Americans taking white captives was not uncommon during the nineteenth century, in fact the practice of taking white captives can be seen dating back to the sixteenth century, but Olive’s case was especially newsworthy as she returned with a tattoo on her face. Newspapers around the country quickly covered Olive’s story, noting that she was “tattooed on the chin and bears the marks of hard slavery.”[[8]](#footnote-8) According to the newspapers, Olive had lived among the Mohave for two years, and then she was sold to “Yumas” (Quechan) before being ransomed to her brother in California. Olive had apparently lost the ability to speak English, and her sister had died six months before Olive was returned to white society. Obviously, Olive’s tragic story made for great headlines, and her tattoo made her a perfect example of Native American brutality for white Americans who wanted to exploit her tragedy in order to further push the narrative of Native American brutality.

Shortly after being rescued, Olive, and her brother Lonzo CHECK, were approached by a Baptist minister named Royal B. Stratton who offered to write a narrative of Olive’s captivity. Captivity narratives have a long history as an American literary form, with the first being published in 1682? by Mary Rowlandson. These were stories of Americans who had been taken captive by Native Americans and had survived to tell their story. Captivity narratives stem from the practice of many Native American nations who engaged in the practice of taking enemies captive in order gain ransom, or to adopt them.(Captives and Cousins) Most women who were taken captive survived, only about ten percent died during captivity, but the practice was commonly used as evidence of the ‘savage’ nature of Native Americans. In fact, captivity narratives, which almost all characterize Native Americans as ‘savage barbarians,’ were one of the most popular literary genres of the eighteenth century selling HOW MANY copies and landing on the best sellers list three out of four times during the WHEN. Thus, when Olive came home, tattooed and having lost a sister, Stratton saw an opportunity to exploit the young girl for financial gain. In 1857 Stratton published ‘Olive’s’ narrative, entitled *The Captivity of the Oatman Girls*.

In Stratton’s narrative, written in the first person by “Olive”, the Oatman family and their traveling party were on their way to California when they were met by a group of Apaches. The Apaches seemed cordial at first, but soon they ambushed the family, killing everyone except for Olive and her sister. (they didn’t kill the brother but he was knocked out). The two were then taken captive by the “savages,” who mocked and tormented the poor girls, forcing them to live as slaves. Eventually, the girls where traded to the Mohave, who were also incredibly cruel. In one section of the narrative, a captive was crucified for trying to escape. According to the narrative, Olive was tattooed in order to mark her as property in case she escaped. Eventually, Olive’s brother hears that she survived and he goes out in search for her, finding her in California and rescuing her. Unfortunately, Lonzo was too late to save Mary Anne as she had died a few months before Olive’s rescue. Thus, Olive’s story, much like O’Connell’s and the many captivity narratives that came before her, was a story of captivity and torture among ‘savage’ Native Americans who were in dire need of civilization. Like most captivity narratives, Olive’s story exemplifies a kind of propaganda that white Americans used in order to insinuate the dangers of the ‘savages.’ However, also like O’Connell, Olive’s narrative is mostly fiction with a little bit of truth strewn in at the seams.

The story of Olive Oatman is the subject of literature historian Margot Mifflin, in her WHEN book *The Blue Tattoo: The Life of Olive Oatman*. According to Mifflin, Stratton’s version of Oatman’s story is almost completely fiction. The Mohave did not tattoo in order to mark slaves, they did not crucify people, and they did not torture. For Mifflin, Stratton used Olive’s story to characterize Native Americans as godless heathens who needed civilization. CHECK. Ironically, the introduction to all three editions of Stratton’s book include some statement by the author that “PUT QUOTE ABOUT It BEING true.” Further, Mifflin’s work argues that Olive was not mistreated by the Mohave, and actually referred to them as “WORD” or friends later in her life. According to Mifflin’s extensive research into Oatman’s life, young Olive had lived through a tragedy, accepted her life among the Mohave, and got tattooed as a form of assimilation. However, upon returning to white society the young girl was preyed upon by Stratton who used her to make money. Like the tattooed sideshows before and after her, Olive traveled around the country giving public speeches in order to sell her book. Thus, after O’Connell Americans had another story to validate the idea that tattooing was a torturous practice of savages. THIS WHOLE SECTION IS SHIT.

Manifest Destiny?

**The Mixture of Manifest Destiny and Tattooing**

Manifest destiny was simply the name given to the feeling among Americans that white people had a God-given right to take ‘others’ land, however, there are myriad examples of how this idea characterized the way some Americans discussed cultural practices of non-white peoples. One of the most common examples of this is the fact that all cultures that lived in lands that Americans coveted were characterized as primitive, savages, or barbarians. The suggestion that certain people were primitive inherently suggests that they are uncivilized and, thus, need ‘civilization’ that only the white man can offer. This dichotomous view of foreign cultures, as either civilized or savage, subsequently led Americas to characterize cultural practices of foreign cultures as examples of their primitiveness. This is exemplified in the way James Cook and James O’Connell discussed tattooing. Long before the idea of manifest destiny was given a name, these men were discussing life among the ‘savages’ and giving evidence of their ‘primitive’ practices; such as tattooing. Tattooing, thus, became evidence of foreign culture’s savagery.

Though manifest destiny was simply a name for an idea, the action that exemplifies the idea of manifest destiny was a constant, violent expansion of the American frontier during the nineteenth century. For years previous, European Americans engaged in murder and theft of Native American lands, but by the nineteenth century the removal and genocide of Native Americans became actual government policy. Between 1800 and 1870 the American people had engaged in HOW MANY wars with Native American nations, killed HOW MANY people, and moved the frontier from WHERE TO WHERE. Though many Native American nations fought back against this ungodly expansion west, their efforts were not enough to curtail the brutal and covetous policies of the American government. Further, the history of manifest destiny is not just government policy and wars with Native Americans, another major aspect of this history is families moving west. It is just this endeavor that we find the cross between the history of manifest destiny and the history of tattooing.

ETHNOGRAPHY

Further, Darwin’s and Lombroso’s works are only a part of a much larger body of work categorized as “ethnography.” Ethnography is a nineteenth-century term used for the systematic study and description of peoples, societies, and cultures.(OED) The field of Ethnography is now known as Anthropology. By the 1850s, the field of Ethnology was becoming immensely popular, leading to more ethnologist participating in the study of race and “natural history.”[[9]](#footnote-9) These “scientific men” were some of the first academics to begin looking at what makes one race different from another, and some of their studies inform our understanding of prehistoric man to this day. For example, in 1857, Dr. F. L. Hawks gave a series of lectures suggesting that American Indians first arrived in North America through land migration from Northeastern Asia.[[10]](#footnote-10) This theory was confirmed in the 1920’s by archeological evidence, and has since been accepted by the academic community . Further, in 1863 a book review of an Ethnological work in the *New York Times* states “By some mysterious law, all national life and motion seems connected with conquest, collision or intrusion.”[[11]](#footnote-11) The author discusses the work of Charles Brace, entitled *The Races of the Old World*, but his assessment of Brace’s work includes a deeper discussion of theories in the Ethnological community. This idea, that all human history is somehow connected to “conquest, collision or intrusion,” still informs major historical and anthropological work, such as Jared Diamond’s *Guns, Germs, and Steel,* and Alfred Crosby’s, *Ecological Imperialism*.

SOCIAL DARWINISM

MoweToday, evolution is accepted by most of the scientific community, but Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century white, Western society consistently used the th to validate oppressive, imperialistic actions toward various groups that were deemed ‘Other.’ In fact, by the 1880s the idea of “Social Darwinism” had emerged as a “scientific” explanation of inequality.(OED?) Thus, the field of ethnology obviously has a checkered history, but the study of race and culture have lasted to this day. The research and discoveries made by the early ethnologists are of vital importance to our understanding of science, but said research would never have been achieved if not for the publics insatiable interest in foreign cultures, and their insistence that science could validate bigoted ideas of racial superiority.

END PARAGRAPH COSTENTENUS

Costentenus performed in Barnum’s Museum in New York, but he also traveled around the country spreading his orientalist story of torture in China. In the 1860s? Barnum had invested in a travelling circus where the showman would pack up all of his oddities and performers and travel from city to city bringing his show to people all across America. As the showman travelled, the image of his “tattooing” were included in newspapers, thereby bringing the image of foreign women “torturing” someone into homes across the country. With James O’Connell, the showman was spreading disingenuous stories about foreign peoples, but his show was basically relegated to the stages in New York City. With Costentenus, the showman was spreading his lies across the country. Although the showmen discussed had different stories, they were similar in that they were spreading tall tales about the “savages” in foreign lands at a time when America was actively engaging in imperial practices against many Island nations and cultures. These shows were basically innocent, Barnum and other showmen were simply capitalizing on what was popular in American culture at the time. However, the stories told by tattooed men about captivity and torture further fetishized foreign lands and people, and they effectively turned the tattoo into a symbol of foreign savagery. Though they were not the first to concoct stories that validated imperialist actions, they were some of the first to publicly demonize foreign Island cultures as brutal savages. This characterization would become exceedingly popular during the late nineteenth century; America’s most significant era of imperialism.

EXPLAINATION OF DIFFERENCES

Although Costentenus’ show differs significantly from James O’Connell’s, it is important to note that the tattooed sideshow was continuing the tradition of presenting the tattoo as a ‘savage’ practice of ‘uncivilized’ foreign peoples. In both shows, the main character is stripped of his agency, and tattooed against his will, thereby representing an act of aggression by the foreign people on a Western body. These stories served to fetishize the cultures that allegedly did the tattooing, and the white men on the stage were simply walking symbols of foreign ‘savagery.’ By presenting these men as victims of ‘uncivilized’ foreign practices, the sideshow men were, therefore, providing evidence of the benefits of ‘civilized’ Western society. Essentially, these shows presented audiences with stories of what could happen if they left the confines of ‘civilized’ society.

Analysis of Japan Craze

Regarding the South Pacific, sailors and beachcombers returned to America telling fantastic stories of captivity and torture among the ‘savages.’ This, too, was a fantasy, but the idea behind the fantasy is that of going back in time, before ‘civilization,’ to live with ‘primitive’ people. With the Centennial Exposition, Americans were seeing goods from another ‘civilized’ culture from across the world. Americans also saw themselves as superior to Asian people, but the ability to bring back goods allowed for Americans to create their own fantasies about the ‘Orient’ that they were never able to do with South Pacific Islanders. In the South Pacific, America’s goals were in creating colonies. In Asia the idea was to create trade partners. This difference is apparent in many facets of America media, including the circus sideshow.

Manifest Destiny and Genocide.

It was not because they wanted to test out our government, it was because the island cultures *needed* our form of government. This kind of racist rhetoric represents an evolution of the ideas presented by James Cook and James O’Connell. Where the aforementioned men presented Pacific Islanders as childlike ‘savages,’ and only slightly suggested that they could be taken over and their land would be profitable, these authors are outright suggesting that these island cultures needed to be taken over in order spread the American way.

In 1845, Americans clearly believed it was their duty to conquer surrounding land and peoples, but by the late nineteenth century the idea of manifest destiny was being used to validate genocide. For example, in 1879 one journalist suggested for “congress to see that they [Native Americans] are exterminated with all tenderness.”[[12]](#footnote-12) In the article, the author reports that there were valuable minerals on Native American lands, so the United States would be taking the land away from them and moving them to another reservation. As the Native Americans were continuously being moved off of reservations to make way for white Americans, the author thought the best possible policy was to just exterminate an entire people. Disgusting as it is, this article shows the realities of the idea of manifest destiny. The idea was born out of the arrogant, gluttonous want to exploit foreign lands, but, eventually, it evolved into a seemingly logical reason to murder entire populations of men, women, and children. It is in this atmosphere that the tattooed man sideshow, a show predicated on stressing the barbarity of foreign people, was at the height of popularity among working-class Americans.

Narratives about captivity among Native Americans have a long literary history in America stemming from 1652 publication of *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*. Rowlandson had been taken captive in New England during King Philip’s War, and upon her return she wrote of her experience with her captors. Rowlandson presents herself as a devout, pious woman who suffered her Job-like trial among the “savage devils.” As time passed, more white Euro-Americans pushed the frontier West and captivity became more common, leading to more books being written by former captives. By the 1850s this genre of American literature had become immensely popular. Stratton’s book about Oatman sold 30,000 copies, and was reprinted in three different editions, each including a note by the author claiming the story was completely accurate. It wasn’t.

Theatre

To understand the dissimilarities between the tattooed men and the tattooed women sideshows, it is vital to first understand the changes that were happening in the mid-nineteenth century theater regarding women’s bodies, and women’s performance. Actresses during the nineteenth century, and for years prior, always had to deal with public perceptions that they were somehow involved in prostitution or other unsavory acts. Showmen, and theatre managers who attracted respectable, middle-class audiences worked to combat these assumptions by presenting their actresses as wholesome, virtuous women who adhered to heteronormative standards of the time. For example, in 1851 P.T. Barnum embarked on one of the most successful and popular entertainment endeavors of his early career when he signed a famous Swedish singer named Jenny Lind to a singing tour of America. Lind’s show, and her activities, were covered by American newspapers across the country, many of them noting the singer’s “intelligence,” and “beauty.” Examples of her sentimentality were also a point of conversation as one advertisement notes that the famous singer spent a night visiting an asylum for the blind, where she offered to sing for the unfortunate souls who lived in the asylum.(NY Herald) Lind was immensely popular among American audiences, and the way Barnum advertised the young singer shows the importance of framing female performers as sentimental, beautiful, intelligent women who did not threaten gender norms in contemporary society.

By the 1860s some women began pushing the boundaries of what was acceptable in the public sphere, creating shows that subverted masculinity and exhibited female agency. One of the best examples of this is the performances by actress Adah Issacs Menken. Menken began her career writing sentimental poetry for Jewish magazines, but she quickly made her way on to the theatrical stage to perform as an actress. Menken’s fame was in part because of her talent as an actress, but she has also been compared to Barnum regarding her astute talent for advertisement. Like Barnum, Menken had an affinity for using ambiguity to sell herself to the American public. For example, throughout her career she told some journalists that she was Jewish, and some that she was African American. She had a public spat with a pugilist NAMED in which she claimed the two were married, but he claimed that they had never met. Historians to this day cannot say confidently how old she was, or if she ever had a child. Like Barnum, Menken built a career on deception in both her public and private life.

Menken is most famous for her portrayal of a young, Tartary prince named Cassimer in the play *Mazeppa.[[13]](#footnote-13)* WHEN? The plot of *Mazeppa* included a scene where Menken’s character is condemned to be stripped naked and tied to the back of a wild horse, which was then sent wandering without direction. In earlier renditions of the play, men would be stripped of their clothes on stage, but there would be a dummy placed on the actual horse. In Menken’s performance, the actress was tied to the back of a horse wearing skin colored clothing, and then her and the horse were sent across the stage quickly, giving the allusion that she was naked. This play was popular during the early nineteenth century, so when Menken advertised the show, stating that she would perform the male part “like a man,” the insinuation was clear to contemporary audiences that the actress was going to possibly be stripped naked on stage. *Mazeppa* was not the first play to use female nudity as a draw for audiences, but it was the first play to make use of the insinuation of nudity for the pleasure of middle-class audiences.(93) Actresses during the early nineteenth century were commonly associated with prostitutes, due to the public nature of their business, and some actresses used the implication of sexuality in order to gain larger audiences.[[14]](#footnote-14) Though Mazeppa was considered unsavory by some, the play was immensely popular during the Civil War era, filling theatres at a time when myriad theatre houses were struggling. In fact, when Mazeppa was first performed in New York, only P.T. Barnum’s Museum boasted more attendance.(94)

Menken became famous for subverting male roles, and selling sexually implicit theatre to contemporary audiences. The actress is also an important figure for changing the relationship between actress and audience. In 1859, two years before the practice became popular in America, Menken began posing for *cartes de visite*, a new type of photography that allowed for the creation of cheap photographs.(232) During the mid-nineteenth century, photography was in the early stages of development with the creation of the daguerreotype; a process founded in 1839 that allowed for quickly developed images that could be mass produced. Menken understood the power of this new kind of imagery, and she began creating images of herself that could be bought by audiences, thereby allowing the audience to take the actress home with them. Historian Renee Sentilles states that, Menken’s use of this new technology made her recognizable to most Americans, “even if they had never been within a hundred miles of Menken herself.” (236) Menken posed for a multitude of cartes de visites, sometimes dressed as a character from one of her plays, and sometimes dressed in a way that portrayed the ‘real’ Menken.(234-235) Menken was, obviously, not the only person to engage in this kind of advertisement, many popular figures during the 1860s began posing for cartes de visites, leading to a popular trend of collecting images of famous people. However, Meken was one of the first theatre actresses to engage in the practice, using her image to sell herself to audiences.

Adah Issacs Menken died in 1868 at the early age of 33, leaving behind a successful, scandalous career that marked major changes for women in the American theatre business. Menken’s time on the stage shows a woman exerting her agency, using her society’s heteronormative culture as an opportunity for spectacle, and pushing boundaries concerning what a woman could do in public spaces. Menken’s career also represents one of the earliest examples of women using sexuality, ambiguity, and subversion as a catalyst for fame in the American theatre. For Renee Sentilles, Menken became famous during the most contention point in American history, and her career represents the changing of a cultural tide in which women would become a larger part of the public entertainment industry.

In 1868, the year Menken died, an English woman named Lydia Thompson arrived in New York with her theatre troupe “The British Blondes” to begin performing burlesque in American theatres. Burlesque shows of this era included women putting on well-known plays, but subverting the gender roles so that the men’s roles were played by women. The actresses also inserted puns into the plays that would bring a since of satire and comedy into the show. These shows often included women in male clothing, including pants and other articles that revealed the female figure, which was seen as “indecorous” by contemporary audiences.(CITE) A theatre review entitled “A Defense of the British Blondes,” from the *New York Times*, 1869, encapsulates the excitement and reservations that Thomason’s Blondes incited in contemporary audiences. The author of the article finds himself pleasantly surprised by the talented “charming comic actress” Lydia Thompson after prefacing his acceptance with a statement that he did not expect to enjoy such lowly entertainment. The author also notes his surprise at the kind of crowds that were showing up to enjoy Thompson’s burlesque as he states: “I was surprised, not only with the merit of the lady herself…but with the character of the audience. The latter I expected to find made up of coarse and flashy people; but, on the contrary, it was notable in the main, for simple and almost homely respectability.”[[15]](#footnote-15) The author goes on to state that he noticed “middle-aged women from the suburbs…their daughters, groups of children, a few professional men…some sober, farmer-looking folk…[and] a clergyman or two.”[[16]](#footnote-16) Although the author was clearly impressed with the audience and Thompson, but he also acknowledges the moral criticisms of contemporaries regarding the burlesque trope’s revealing costumes as he states, “it is far less, both in degree and kind, than that of the ordinary ballet dancer…alternatively concealing and revealing the attractions of her figure…without a thought of shamefulness.” This author’s sentiment signifies the changes that were happening not only on the stage, but also within the audience at the time of this publication. Theatre actresses had long been characterized as low-class, loose women with disreputable morals, and audiences for such a spectacle were assumed to be of the lowly, working class. As this theatre review shows, Thompson’s burlesque was crossing class lines, providing content that was considered scandalous but also appealing to respectable, middle-class audiences. Over the second half of the nineteenth century, women’s bodies became a larger part of the theatre industry, leading to more salacious shows that pushed the boundaries regarding what was acceptable in the public entertainment industry.[[17]](#footnote-17) During Lydia Thompson and Adah Menken’s careers, the use of costume and humor was a way for these women to exert agency, to fight back against the heteronormative gender roles and ideas of True Womanhood, and in doing so, they opened the doors for other women to use their sexuality as a way to make social remarks on contemporary society. These shows normalized theatre actresses subverting gender roles, but they also began a trend of exploitation by theatre managers. Over the decades that followed Menken and Thompson, theatre managers effectively put more and more actresses on stage with less and less clothing to appeal to larger audiences.[[18]](#footnote-18) What began as a way to exert agency was eventually employed to objectify women, reducing their contributions to the stage to simple aesthetics. This trend ostensibly led to the creation of what has been dubbed “the leg show.”[[19]](#footnote-19) Although this trend begins with the theatre, it also made its way to circuses and dime museums in many forms, including the “Tattooed Lady” sideshows.

HERE According to Hildebrandt’s story, Sitting Bull took her and her father captive, and he proceeded to force her father Martin to tattoo her for six hours a day for one year. Unlike Woodward, Nora’s story provided the audience with insinuations of rape, incest, and torture, much like more traditional captivity narratives of white women on the frontier. However, the media’s coverage of Hildebrandt’s show focused heavily on Nora’s looks, rather than the content of her show, signifying another major difference in the male and female tattooed sideshow. When the men performed, the show was advertised and covered as an adventure story. When Nora performed, critics noted that “Her face is so hard that you wonder they ever got the needles through her skin…she still thinks she’s a giddy girl, and covers her osseous, if resplendent, shins with a green cloak and great modesty.” Scholars, such as Jennifer Putzi and Margot DeMello, suggest that Hildebrandt did not have a successful career in the tattooed sideshow business because of her looks. Thus, when women began performing in these roles, the presentation of tattooing was more significantly tied to their looks and sexuality than it had been with the men. With the tattooed men, what was important was their adventurous tales of captivity and life among “savages,” but when women came on to the stage to perform as “the Tattooed Lady,” they were dealing with entirely different sets of rules. This shift marks a significant change in the tattooed sideshow in which the emphasis of the shows became the looks of the performer rather than the story they had to tell. Women’s inclusion in dime museums and sideshows, thus, marks a transition in which tattooing was losing its connection with ‘primitive torture.’ These tattooed women needed to be presented as ladies, so as not to scare away middle-class audiences, and to appeal to societies heteronormative ideas about gender. In focusing on the appearance of the performers, journalists and advertisers subsequently removed the performers from the well-established symbolism that characterized the men’s shows, and placed them in line with the other female performers of the day. Essentially, the “Tattooed Lady” sideshow took the tattoo, and left the savages.

MIX THESE LAST TWO PARAGRAPHS.

By the late 1880s there were many more tattooed women performing in circus sideshows, presenting audiences with fantastic tales of captivity and torture. However, these women, like Woodward, were much more open about the lies that they told on stage. For example, Annie Howard, “Tattooed Venus,” began performing in circus sideshows in 1885 with her husband Frank. The Howards told audiences that they were brother and sister, and told the familiar story that they had been tattooed by savages after being shipwrecked in the South Pacific.(Osterud 48) However, Frank Howard’s advertising pamphlet, much like the ones sold by O’Connell and Constentenus, presented a much different version of the couple’s tattooing. The pamphlet states, “Howard had his partner [business] tattoo him from head to foot,” and as for Annie, “she coaxed her brother to start and tattoo her person all over.”[[20]](#footnote-20) In an interview in 1882, another tattooed woman named Mary Baum openly stated, “I was tattooed a year ago…the tattooing was done publicly in the Bowery in New York.”[[21]](#footnote-21) In 1887 a Kansas paper printed an advertisement for Irene Woodward that stated, “Mrs. Woodward was tattooed by her father, Capt. Woodward…making his daughter literally a living picture.”[[22]](#footnote-22) Clearly, it was public knowledge that these women did not actually get kidnapped by “savages,” but, rather, chose to get tattoos in order to perform in sideshows and dime museums. They may have taken the stage and re-told the age-old tale of captivity, but their stories were obviously not the most important part of the show. In the same interview with Mary Baum the interviewer discusses seeing Baum’s tattoos, stating “this unusual degree of nudity was not so shocking as might be expected, for the rather shapely limbs and bosom, so freely displayed, were covered with a fine network of tattooing.” The advertisement for Woodward states, “Mrs. Woodward is a lady of refinement.” These statements suggest that there was a more sexualized nature to the tattooed lady shows than had existed with the tattooed man shows. None of the ads for Costentenus mention his bosom or lack of clothing, nor do they present him as a gentleman. These differences are significant in that they show how the tattooed sideshow was changed by contemporary heteronormative standards. When the men were performing, they were selling a fantasy of life in the “Orient,” of dangers that lay outside the civilized world. When the women began performing, they were selling bare skin. Although some of the women also used the captivity trope, their coverage in the newspapers, and their openness about the realities of their tattooing shows that the story was much less important than their unclothed bodies.

The imagery used in imperialist propaganda during the 1890s drew upon a multitude of racist imagery from American popular culture, but it most significantly mimicked the imagery established by tattooed men and women: island savages in need western civilization. It can also be argued that the imagery also makes use of images of black people and Native Americans. In many of the cartoons, natives are depicted as black people, complete with big lips, large noses, and loin cloths. This imagery was popularized during slavery to insinuate black inferiority and to validate the vile oppression of black people in America. Said imagery was familiar to Americans, and so it was also used in war propaganda during and after the Spanish American War to incite certain imperialist feelings toward island cultures. Moreover, imagery of Native Americans was often employed in captivity narratives and paintings depicting captivity, however, this imagery was typically intended to demonize the Native Americans in order to validate the imperialist actions that the American government had already begun engaging in on the Western frontier. With tattooed sideshows, millions of American audiences were introduced to ideas of island cultures as uncivilized, brutal savages in need of civilization. These were shows about places that America was not actively fighting wars, and they used tattoos as a symbol of the dangers of civilized white men traveling to the distant lands in search of adventure. ALSO A SEXUAL TONE. Thus, the imagery used in war propaganda during the late-eighteen nineties was the culmination of almost one hundred years of American audiences enjoying popular entertainment that projected ideas of Americans interacting with primitive people. The tattooed sideshow was a popular show that was seen by millions over the course of the nineteenth century, and when cartoonists began depicting the Island cultures of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and the Philippines they had a well-established trope to draw from.

Resurgence of tattooing.

The 1890s also included a resurgence of American’s interest in tattooing. For decades preceding the 1890s, tattooing had been growing in popularity among working-class men, however, the procedure was still extremely painful and time consuming. This changed in 1891 when Samuel O’Reilly reconfigured Thomas Edison’s electric pen to make a tattoo gun that ran on electricity. This invention made tattooing faster, less painful, and available to tattooists who were not trained in traditional tattooing. When America declared war against Spain seven years later, thousands of American men rushed to tattoo shops in major cities to get patriotic war tattoos. In an article from 1898, entitled “Busy Days for the Tattoo Man,” the author reports on a tattoo shop in Chatham Square, stating that “since the war broke out there has been a great rush of custom to the place and the “professor” [tattooist] has had to hire an assistant.”[[23]](#footnote-23) In another article, entitled “Dewey on their Left Arms,” a journalist interviews Samuel O’Reilly about his tattooing business in New York. In the article, the author states that “since the war began, the navy and army of the United States has been expressing its enthusiasm in the red and blue skin pictures of the tattooer to a degree hitherto unknown.”[[24]](#footnote-24) The author goes on to discuss what kind of tattoos the military men were getting, claiming that many of them were getting images of General Dewey on their arms, the word liberty, the phrase “Man behind the gun,” and other tattoos which were “almost without exception patriotic in nature.”[[25]](#footnote-25) The author also goes on to remark on the overall upward trend in the act of tattooing in New York. He states that it had become “not at all uncommon” for a man to come in to receive a tattoo of a “family crest,” to commemorate “the death of a relative or the birth of a child,” “upon reforming from a career of drunkenness, crime, or vice,” or “as a part of their growth in religious life.”[[26]](#footnote-26) The author even notes that “even women not infrequently have a single flower or initial pricked into their skin.”[[27]](#footnote-27) Basically, the author of this article was remarking on the increasing popularity of tattooing among soldiers but also the American public at large during the late-nineteenth century. The author also discusses where the practice comes from without once using the word savage or torture. This article, thus, gives insight into the transitional period in which tattooing was being separated from the imagery that had long been established by the tattooed sideshow. This article is about a trend among Americans who were showing their patriotism and tattooing their bodies with pro-American sentiments. It was not a story of savage torture, but of proud nationalism. All of this at a time when the American populace was being fed explicit propaganda that painted the Island cultures of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines as childlike savages in need of American civilization. There are many arguments to be made about why this happened. Tattooing had become popular among American men, tattooed people had been performing in America for half a century by this point, and the stigma of tattooing also made it a popular form of rebellion. These arguments and more have been found in the scholarship that focuses on tattoos. However, LAST SENTENCE SUMMING UP THE ARGUMENT!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

At first, the stories these women told on stage regarding the event of their tattooing was incredibly similar to the stories of captivity by the tattooed men that came before them, but, eventually, their stories began to differ significantly from the male tattooed sideshows. Although some may have told audiences that they had been tattooed by “savages,” this time Native American, most of the tattooed women were very open with newspapers about choosing to get tattooed by famous American tattooists. These shows were much more sexualized than the tattooed man shows, emphasizing the women’s looks and pushing boundaries regarding how much skin could be shown in public. However, the sexual component of the shows were highly implicit as shows emphasized the wholesomeness and patriotism of the “Tattooed Lady” while newspapers focused on their beauty and shape. Some argue that tattooing had become so common among men at this point in history, that men no longer satisfied the public’s need to be shocked. Thus, putting women on stage and showing audiences bare skin, marked with the many contemporary meanings of the tattoo, still caused shock and awe in audiences.

Olive and captivity

Olive Oatman’s tragic story fits into two histories; the history of captivity narratives in America, and the history of tattooed women in public entertainment. The popularity of her story was likely due to the previously established popularity of captivity narratives as an American literary genre, but her story was also familiar to the hundreds of thousands that had been to see, or read about, sailors who had returned from the Pacific with tattoos that had been ‘forcibly’ applied during captivity. Oatman’s captivity narrative took a different form than tattooed men in dime museums and sideshow performances, but the story was complete with racially charged misrepresentations of Native cultures that were strikingly similar to stories told by the likes of John Rutherford and James O’Connell. Olive was not put on display like the “tattooed man” in the dime museum, she simply promoted Stratton’s book, however, two decades after Oatman told her story, women began performing in sideshow and dime museum spectacles as the “Tattooed Lady,” complete with stories of captivity among Native Americans.

Thompson and Menken

In the 25 years between Olive Oatman and the first “Tattooed Lady” sideshow, women in the public entertainment industry began pushing boundaries of heteronormative presentation of female bodies. In the 1860s, Actresses such as Adah Issacs Menken and Lydia Thompson publicly subverted gender roles in various shows in which the actresses would perform traditionally male roles, dressed in male clothing. These shows were scandalous at the time, as it was not deemed proper for a woman to perform on stage in ‘revealing’ clothing such as pants. However, these women took the stage and used their femininity, and subversion of masculinity, as a way to satirize American society, especially regarding gender. Actresses, like Menken and Thompson, were incredibly successful, and their work served to normalize women’s bodies, and gender subversion, as a part of public performance. By the 1880s, middle-class American audiences in New York were effectively used to seeing women performing in traditionally male roles, so when the tattooed sideshow began featuring women, it was basically in line with contemporary trends in the public entertainment industry. However, as tattooed women became more popular, the stories about how they obtained their tattoos changed in significant ways, signifying a shift in American perceptions of tattooing.

Anti-imperialism newspapers

Though many media sources sought to garner support for American involvement in Cuba, many other media sources saw American involvement in Cuba as blatant imperialism. A multitude of newspapers and magazines began printing pro/anti-imperialist images to sway public opinion of what America’s role should be in the Cuban conflict. Notably, both sides of the conversation, pro and anti-imperialism, relied on previously established racist language and imagery to argue for their side.CITE MILLER In pro-imperialism imagery, Cuba was often depicted as a woman who was being victimized by dark-skinned, Spanish men, and America was depicted in the form of Uncle Sam who came to the aid of the distressed, feminine Cuba. In anti-imperialist imagery, Cuba, along with other Spanish colonies such as Puerto Rico and the Philippines, were depicted as childlike savages, and America, in the form of Uncle Sam, was often depicted in some way attempting to civilize the foreigners, often to no avail. The images suggested a common argument by anti-imperialists that if America was going to get involved in the Cuba conflict, then they would be responsible for civilizing the island nations.

**Olive Oatman**

The first instance of a woman with tattoos comes not from the sideshow but from the frontier. Ideas of manifest destiny inspired many Americans to move west during the mid-nineteenth century, leading to many instances of armed conflict with the Native American peoples. In 1850, a man by the name of Royce Oatman decided to brave the frontier and move his wife and seven children to California from their home town in Illinois.[[28]](#footnote-28) During their journey, the Oatmans and their traveling party were attacked by the Yavapais, a hunter-gatherer tribe with ties to the Apache, leaving the Oatman parents, and four of their seven children dead.[[29]](#footnote-29) The Oatman’s son, Lorenzo, was beaten over the head with a club and left for dead, but he survived and safely made his way to California. Two of the Oatman’s daughters, Olive and Mary Anne, also survived the ordeal, but they were taken captive by the Yavapais.[[30]](#footnote-30) The Oatman girls lived in captivity among the Yavapais for a little over a year before being traded to the Mohave in 1852.[[31]](#footnote-31) In 1856, after five years in captivity, Olive was returned to “civilized whites” at Fort Yuma California after her presence among the Mohave was noticed by the commander of Fort Yuma, Lieutenant Colonel Burke.[[32]](#footnote-32) Olive was reunited with her brother Lorenzo, but, only six months before returning, her sister had died.[[33]](#footnote-33)

During her captivity, Olive had been tattooed on her chin, much like Rutherford and O’Connell, as a symbol of assimilation into the Native group, but her tattoo made her instantly famous in American media as a helpless victim of native ‘savagery.’ News sources around the country reprinted stories about the “massacre of the Oatman family,” and of Olive’s “sufferings which language is too feeble to portray.”[[34]](#footnote-34) In 1857, Olive and her brother Lorenzo were approached by a Baptist Minister named Royal B. Stratton who wanted to pen the narrative of Olive’s captivity. The two Oatman’s agreed and Stratton wrote a captivity narrative entitled *The Captivity of the Oatman Girls*, published in 1857.[[35]](#footnote-35) Like Rutherford and O’Connell’s memoirs, Stratton’s book mixed fact with fiction, and clearly aimed to demonize Native American customs. For example, in one section of the book a fellow captive woman is crucified for trying to run away from the Mohave. Crucifixion is a heavily symbolic act in Christianity, thus it would have played to Stratton’s Christian audience, but there is no evidence that the Mohave ever used crucifixion as a form of punishment. Historian Margot Mifflin discusses Stratton’s book in her work *The Blue Tattoo*, arguing that Stratton used Olive and her brother to capitalize on their tragedy and project anti-Native American sentiments to his readers.

To promote the book, Stratton and Oatman went on a speaking tour where Olive would go on stage and tell her story, thereby presenting America with its first white woman to use her tattooed skin as a part of a public spectacle. Though Olive’s story shares some similarities with O’Connell and Rutherford, it is significantly different in the way that it was presented to the audience. With the tattooed men, the performers said that they had been shipwrecked and taken captive, but they were brave and smarter than the Pacific Islanders, so they escaped, but not before wedding some of the local women. With Olive, the young girl was purely a frail victim to the cruel ways of the North American ‘savages.’ This difference exemplifies the heteronormative gender roles that men and women adhered to in the public sphere during the nineteenth century. For example, in the men’s stories, there was always a statement that they “bore their marks like a martyr,” or something that shares this sentiment. It is insinuated that the men’s manliness was part of the reason that he survived. This establishes that the natives did not break the white man and that he was still civilized. With Olive, the story negates white masculinity. The native peoples killed Olive’s father, almost killed her brother, and took the young girls captive. This story is one that threatened white masculinity and was used to insinuate the dangers posed by brutal, uncivilized Native Americans. Though Olive toured the country with her face tattoo long before women began performing as “tattooed ladies,” the acts that followed Oatman would also adhere to the heteronormative characteristics found in Olive’s narrative.



An Englishman named Philip Astley was the first performer to develop staged spectacles, rather than dramatic or comedic theatrical performances. Astley was an ex-soldier who had served in the Seven Years War and had distinguished himself in war by showing his skills on a horse. After returning to England, Astley traveled around the country as a part of a touring performance troupe. In 1768 he opened up his own riding school.[[36]](#footnote-36) While running his school, Astley would give lessons in the mornings, and in the afternoon he would perform tricks on horseback.[[37]](#footnote-37) Aggravated that the weather could affect his show, in 1780 Astley built a round building with a large canvas roof so that he could maximize the size of his audience while providing a sufficient space to perform his equestrian show. Astley tried to keep the prices down to attract the largest audience, and he soon realized that more variety, such as acrobats, magicians, rope dancers, jugglers, and clowns ensured returning customers. The circus was, thus, born from showmen taking advantage of the opportunities provided by the creation of a working-class audience.[[38]](#footnote-38) It was in this environment that Cabri and Rutherford found the opportunity to perform their shows.

O’Connell in New Orleans

O’Connell as a Freak Show

He was put on stage as a ‘freak show,’ because he had been tattooed; a common practice of island cultures. Most ‘freak shows’ were made up of people with physical deformities, such as dwarfism or gigantism. ‘Freak shows’ were, essentially, the exploitation of physical handicaps, yet O’Connell was able to use this platform to talk about foreign peoples due to his tattoos. O’Connell’s tattooed body was at once an example of deformity, and foreign barbarism. His show was a mixture of spectacle and pseudo-educational anecdotes about foreign island cultures. Basically, O’Connell made a career out of exploiting working-class audience’s interest in foreignness, and he did so in a way that made it look like his show was educational. That is why O’Connell’s show is problematic, he was one of the first performers to mix exploitation of the other with pseudo-educational content that was meant to imply that foreign peoples were uncivilized and inferior. As we will see, O’Connell is a precursor to a slew of acts that were put on exhibit by P.T. Barnum and others throughout the nineteenth century. WORK ON THIS!

Introduction Paragraphs

In 1836, a man by the name of James O’Connell began performing in theaters around New York City as America’s first “Tattooed Man:” A show that consisted of O’Connell going on stage, showing off his tattoos, and dancing an Irish jig before telling his audience incredible stories of captivity, torture, and tattooing among Native peoples in the South Pacific.[[39]](#footnote-39) O’Connell was not heavily tattooed by today’s standards, but his tattooing was enough to turn the ex-sailor into a spectacle that nineteenth-century Americans would pay to see. During the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century, Americans had shown a burgeoning interest in foreign cultures. Myriad voyagers from Europe and America traveled the globe and became famous in academic circles for their revelations about the previously unknown lands and people they met during their travels. Countless books and travel journals were published during this time period, making academic exposes about foreign peoples and adventure stories in foreign lands some of the best-selling literature of the day. With Western voyagers publishing in-depth stories of ‘other’ cultures, readers began to read about how ‘uncivilized’ the outside world was, and, thus, how ‘civilized the white, Western world was in comparison. These were ideas that permeated literature, but when James O’Connell began performing in New York City, these Western ideas of foreignness, savagery, and ‘civilization’ became a form of popular entertainment. The minute that O’Connell took the stage for the first time, he brought with him generations of literature about how uncivilized the outside world was; however, O’Connell was unique in that he brought with him a symbol of the “brutal savagery” that Americans had been reading about for a generation: the tattoo. Using his tattoo as a sort of badge of authenticity, O’Connell turned what had been basically academic approaches to learning about foreign cultures, and turned it into entertainment. As with any entertainment form, as time went on the spectacle needed to be more dramatic. By the time O’Connell died his show had changed from a simple dance and short discussion of the “manners and customs of the savages in the South Pacific,” to a story of captivity and escape from brutal, uncivilized cannibals. By his death in 1854, O’Connell had enjoyed an eighteen-year career, performing in cities from New York to New Orleans.

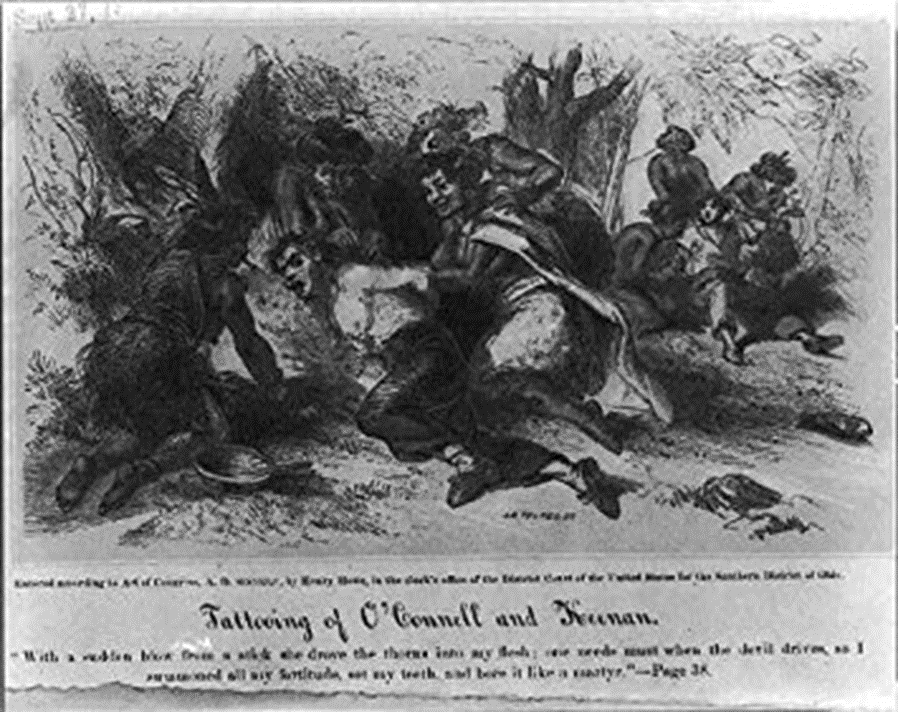
Over the course of O’Connell’s career, showmen[[40]](#footnote-40) he worked for gradually increased the fantasy of O’Connell’s show in order to emphasize the “uncivilized” and “torturous” nature of the “Savages in the South Pacific.”[[41]](#footnote-41) The sailor’s tattoos became a simple catalyst for a dramatic retelling of a xenophobic adventure story that took place in the South Pacific. This type a show, that basically fetishized a foreign island nation, made their people into caricatures of actual humans, and used their culture to create characters for a fantasy. Once entertainment venues began to mold their shows to appeal to working-class audiences, theater managers employed similar tactics by exploiting their audience’s interest in the foreign. Over the next half a century, the presentation of foreign bodies as spectacle became a staple of working-class entertainment. Showmen employed/enslaved, people from all over the world to walk out on stage as an example of the outside, uncivilized world. As time went on, the shows became more dramatic, playing to the extreme xenophobia and racism of American audiences during the nineteenth century. Americans at this time were well versed in racism against the black people they enslaved and the Native Americans against whom they committed genocide, however, these shows of foreign peoples taught Americans a vocabulary and way of seeing when it came to foreign peoples. What was barbaric was anything unamerican, what was savage was everything uncivilized, what was brutal was anything that differed from American customs. Popular entertainment was presented as bringing the outside world into American cities so that Americans could see for themselves what the rest of the world was like without having to leave their homes. This was, of course, a spectacle, a folly, humbug, but it was accepted by the people all the same. In 1898, when America declared war on Spain, it was the language of the spectacle that was used in popular newspapers in order to incite support for the war from the American people. The ‘brutal, savage’ Spanish had been attacking the ‘helpless’ Cubans who just wanted their freedom. Newspapers effectively turned the Spanish American War into a national spectacle, complete with reenactments and parades celebrating American victory. Directly after the war, the American government, and the American people, began to have a discussion of their place on the world stage. Questions of if America should also conquer the ex-Spanish colonies began to inundate the American media. Once again, the questions were framed by both sides of the argument in the language and imagery created by popular entertainment forms that depicted foreign cultures. The people of Hawaii, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines were quickly depicted in American media sources as uncivilized peoples who would need to be beaten into submission because their cultures were just not advanced enough to accept western civilization. This imagery was highly effective, and has led to many scholars claiming that the imagery and sensationalized depictions of foreign bodies was a significant factor in Americas first experience with imperialism that went beyond the North American mainland. This work finds the foundations of that imagery in the history of James O’Connell, “The Tattooed Man.”

More O’Connell Narrative

What was printed as an examination of a foreign culture, turned into a spectacle highlighting the dangers the civilized white man would face also exudes some likely hyperbole (e.g. marrying an island princess, or the whole village being encapsulated by his dancing), but it does provide the reader with some nuanced representation of native peoples and the experience of sailors in foreign lands. In Fact, although his spectacle included his story of “captivity,” O’Connell never refers to himself as a captive. 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 considered himself.”[[42]](#footnote-42) 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.” O’Connell goes on to state “Some people claiming to be civilized might take a lesson from the humanity of these people to shipwrecked mariners.”[[43]](#footnote-43) Thus, O’Connell’s memoirs present the reader with a story of a man who befell horrible circumstances (shipwreck), but was taken in by a group of native island peoples. The memoirs also suggest that, although O’Connell was used to a different lifestyle, he found the Pohnpeians to be hospitable and fair. Thus, O’Connell’s story offers complex representations of the native culture rather than one-dimensional caricatures that would become common in island adventure stories during the second half of the nineteenth century. HERE

To be clear, O’Connell’s memoir is deeply problematic regarding how the sailor discussed the native population. O’Connell constantly refers to the natives as savages, compared nearby natives of New Holland (Australia) to Apes, constantly discussed a fear that some of the natives were going to eat him and/or his crew, emphasized the native’s lack of ‘civilization’ as compared to Europeans, called his own children “demi-savages,” and implied that he was sexually involved with many of the women on the island. [[44]](#footnote-44) The sailor also took great pains to portray himself as the most clever, bravest, manliest man on the island. Thus, one cannot look at O’Connell’s memoir as some sort of enlightened document that portrays a foreign culture with a sense of objective equality, but, instead, it should be seen as a relatively honest document that depicts a man’s time within a culture that he could not fully understand. However, the complexity and nuance present in O’Connell’s memoir was slowly stripped from the sailor’s story as it was retold in American newspapers and upon the American stage.

O’Connell’s story changed over time, but what is most important is that the later version of the story was the one that was remembered and mimicked by tattooed sideshow men that followed. For example, in his memoirs, O’Connell states that he basically bit his lip and endured his tattooing “like a martyr,” but, due to the changes in his story over the course of his career, here is how his story was memorialized in print:

[[45]](#footnote-45)

As one can see in this picture, O’Connell is surrounded by bare-chested Pohnapeian women who are gazing maliciously at the sailor’s misfortunes. O’Connell’s hands are being held behind his back by one woman while another performs the tattooing, therefore implying the tattooing was physically forced. In the background, one can see the George Keenan meeting a similar fate. The look on O’Connell’s face is one of agony as he undergoes his tattooing. On Keenan, the look is one of fear. Underneath this image, Howe quotes O’Connell’s narrative, stating that he “bore it like a martyr.” This image suggests that, either by O’Connell’s choosing or by the sheer nature of fiction, by 1855 the sailor’s story had progressed far passed a tale in which he was tattooed by “beauties.”[[46]](#footnote-46) Arguably, the nature of entertainment, namely the need to constantly present audiences with more spectacular content, molded O’Connell’s show into what is being depicted here. At first, O’Connell was donning the stage, dancing, and telling the audience of the “customs and manners” of the people he lived with while abroad. By the time of O’Connell’s death in 1854, his story had obviously changed to emphasize the ‘barbarous and savage’ nature of his ‘captors.’ Where his tattoo was first a relic of life among foreign people, it later became a symbol of the dangers one might find in foreign island cultures due to the native’s ‘brutal,’ ‘savage’ practices. Unfortunately, it was this model that characterized the tattooed man sideshows in the years that followed O’Connell’s career.

Demello, O’Connell probably tattooed in new York, (Lars Krustek disagrees)

It is important to mention that scholars have questioned the validity of O’Connell’s claim that he was tattooed on Pohnpei. Tattoo historian Margo DeMello argues that he may have been tattooed in the South Pacific, but he was not likely tattooed by the people in Pohnapei. DeMello’s argument stems from the fact that O’Connell was tattooed on the legs, back, and abdomen, but the Pohnapeian people only tattooed on the hands, arms, and legs. DeMello goes on to suggest that he could have been tattooed in Fiji, as Fijian cultures did tattoo on the body parts that O’Connell had tattooed, but she also suggests that some of his tattoos could have been done in New York.[[47]](#footnote-47) Further, O’Connell’s narrative is suspicious because it included plot points that were eerily similar to tattooed men who had been performing in Europe for decades before O’Connell began performing in New York.[[48]](#footnote-48) Though it is impossible to know for sure what exactly happened to James O’Connell “The Tattooed Man,” it is possible to trace how his story disseminated into American entertainment culture.

INTRO PARAGRAPHS

In the late-eighteenth century, entrepreneurs in large urban centers began to build manufacturing businesses that used wage labor to produce goods on a large scale. Unlike farming, or artisanal work, factory work was basically monotonous and did not take much skill to learn. This made the making the manufacturing industry perfect for poor people who wanted to earn a living doing something other than farm work. As more workers moved into the urban centers, new markets opened up to accommodate the growing population. In effect, this process snowballed in some areas like New York City, Philadelphia, and Boston, leading to the creation of the nation’s first big cities with hundreds of thousands of inhabitants. The significance of industrialization has been a well-covered topic for historians dating back to the late nineteenth century with Arnold Toynbee’s publication of *Lectures on the Industrial Revolution in England* in 1884. Historians such as Toynbee, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, John and Barbara Hammond, A.L. Morton, Paul Mantoux, E.P. Thompson, Eric Hobsbawm, and countless others have examined the effects of industrialization on Western cultures, mainly focusing on whether or not industrialization improved people’s lives. Though many of the scholars disagree about the correct answer to this question, there is a basic consensus that industrialization completely changed society as it reshaped the nature of work, led to the building of major cities, and led to the creation of a new, working-class.

The root causes for industrialization in the nineteenth century are found in the proliferation of global trade during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This era is commonly known as the ‘Age of Discovery,’ and it is characterized by European voyagers traveling the world in search of new goods that could be profitable trade commodities in Western societies. HERERERERE According to Alfred Crosby’s *Ecological Imperialism*, published in 1986, European’s traveled the world in search of climates that would be good for growing crops, and raising farm animals that would sell well in European markets. Once ideal lands were found, Europeans violently established slave colonies in order to harvest goods like coffee, sugar, and tobacco. Recent work by Frank Trentman, entitled *Empire of Things* (2016), argues that European’s connected the act of consuming foreign goods to social status, thereby creating a large market for products like chocolate and tobacco. As the Europeans consumed more, then more needed to be produced, leading to a proliferation of slavery around the world. As colonies were developed, and efficient trade routes were established, Western economies began reap massive profits from the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade, which created monetary incentive for chattel slavery.

In Great Britain’s North American colony, colonists instituted slavery in the southern part of the colony which had the best land for growing tobacco and cotton. The colony revolted in 1776, thereby establishing the United States of America as a new country with an economy that was based on the agricultural production of enslaved peoples. Americans continued to grow tobacco, and sugar, but after Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin in 1793 the former colony’s most profitable crop was cotton. The cotton gin was a machine that separated cotton fibers from its seeds at a much faster rate than any human could complete the task. As cotton was much easier to cultivate, massive amounts of cotton were produced in America during the late eighteenth century. However, in order to make cotton into textiles like clothes or linen it needs to be spun into cloth. Thus, once America increased its production of cotton, a market was created for manufacturing the cloth into textiles. At the turn of the nineteenth century, American cities like New York, Boston, and Philadelphia began to see rapid growth in manufacturing businesses, and, subsequently, population. Further, the finished products from northern manufacturing businesses needed to be distributed across the country, which inspired the development of the American railroad system. A similar chain of events occurred in major European cities like London, and Paris, and as the textile industry boomed large groups of people moved into urban centers in search of work in a new, industrialized economy.

As large urban centers grew, large populations moved from agrarian economies to more complex industrial economies. In agrarian economies, wealth inequality is basically built into the system in with a rich, elite class of land owners, and a poor class of people who worked as substance farmers. With the development of the manufacturing industry, entrepreneurs began to understand the value of manufacturing a variety of goods that were previously made in the home; such as clothes, linens, or candles. As new industries grew, many people who previously worked as farmers moved into urban centers in search of work in a panoply of manufacturing industries. The changes to the way capital was distributed among the populace led to the creation of a working class: a new social status made up of people who had disposable income due to the fact that they worked in manufacturing. As the working class grew, their purchasing power began to influence their environment, effectively reshaping long established power structures that had existed in the agrarian economies. In an agrarian economy, wealth was almost always passed down through family lines, making it extremely difficult for one to work their way out of poverty. Further, the agrarian economy was largely made up of substance farms, where the farmers only grow enough to survive, or plantation farms, where the land owners exploited slave labor to grow crops for mass consumption. In this system, it was almost impossible for the impoverished to gain expendable capital. However, as industry grew, large groups of previously destitute peoples started working in factories, earning an income. The pay was not much, but unlike substance farming, it was enough to give a worker a little bit of disposable income that they could then spend in the marketplace buying manufactured goods. The symbiotic relationship between a growing population and market capitalism, provoked a population boom in Northern American cities, and subsequently a growth of manufacturing industries.

The shift from an agrarian economy to an industrial economy significantly changed the everyday lives of people in large urban centers. Of course, the types of work people were doing was completely different, but the social power structures of American society also changed in meaningful ways. As markets opened up for capitalism, small groups of previously impoverished men were able to exploit the market, build a business, and obtain wealth. Social mobility is often credited as a positive effect of capitalism, but poor people becoming rich and infiltrating middle-to-upper class society was not seen as a positive by the nineteenth-century bourgeois. The fear among the middle class was that big cities created opportunities for predatory con men and women to corrupt young, impressionable Americans by introducing them to gabling, or prostitution. They also feared the “confidence men” and “painted women” that would present themselves as middle-class in a plot to con a naïve city dweller out of money. Karen Halttunen has argued that the social anxiety of the middle-class regarding the dangers of the big city led to a culture of sentimentalism, in which specific manners and customs were adhered to by the bourgeois as a way to prove that a person was not immoral, or a con man. Further, middle-class ideals of refinement and morality served to shape the identity of the American middle class. Sentimental ideals also influenced how Americans conceptualized masculinity as established by Amy Greenberg. Greenberg argues that masculinity among the middle class was characterized by refinement, morality, and restraint, however, the working class was less educated, and more prone to activities that were seen as immoral by the bourgeois; such as gambling and excessive drinking. As a result, the working class developed a concept of manliness that was characterized by strength, and the ability to dominate. Americans had, for centuries, engaged in the wanton genocide of Native American peoples, and enslavement of African chattels. Thus, Greenberg argues, the working class adhered to the idea that a man was one who could exert his power over ‘others.’

The myriad changes happening to the social structure of Antebellum America played out in a variety of ways, but popular entertainment culture saw some of the most tangible class conflicts. In the early-nineteenth century, urban entertainment industries, specifically the theater, were spaces where rich and poor alike would go to enjoy a show. Though the crowds were separated by class through the seating arrangements, the space of a New York theater was filled by all classes of people. However, as Lawrence Levine has argued, by the mid-nineteenth century, theaters became a space where larger class conflicts played out, sometimes to a violent end. The Astor Place Riot in 1849 was the watershed moment for class conflict in the theater after the event directly influenced the social stratification of New York City theaters. In 1849, the American actor Edwin Forrest was a favorite among the working people of New York, whereas the British actor William Macready was heralded by the wealthy bourgeois. The ability of the two actors was often discussed in British and American newspapers, effectively turning each actor into a representative of a larger class of people. In early May, after some contentious previous meetings, the two actors were both performing *Macbeth* in nearby theaters in Manhattan: this was not a coincidence but, rather, a challenge by Forrest against his foreign adversary. At Macready’s show, a crowd of working-class people interrupted the performance, causing the actor to refuse finishing the play. The crowd took ire with the actor’s decision, and at Macready’s next show over ten thousand angry protesters showed up to shout down the “damned aristocracy.” The protest grew violent, over twenty people were killed, hundreds more were wounded, and the riot had to be broken up by American militia men. After the Astor Place Riot, theater managers began to see the mixing of social class as a possible threat to order so they began to cater their establishments to specific classes of people. This moment effectively created the impetus for the creation of so-called high-class entertainment, as opposed to working-class entertainment. The Astor Place Riot serves as a microcosm of the various changes happening due to industrialization; the working class was establishing its agency regarding what they wanted to see in theaters, the bourgeois was showing distain for the unrefined American workers, the juxtaposed concept of manliness played out through the two actors, and the fight took place in a large urban center with over thousand people. The riot was a major event, but it was simply a symptom of a changing social landscape that was working to find equilibrium between the old world and the post-industrialized world. The years between 1840 and 1850 effectively serve as a decade of transition in American culture as major cities acclimated to the changes caused by industrialization.

MORE INTRO PARAGRAPHS

Benedict Anderson’s work, *Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* will be an invaluable resource for this work as the author draws direct connections between nationalism and Western ideas of the ‘other.’ For Anderson, throughout the nineteenth century Anglo-Saxon peoples in America and Western Europe began to see themselves as a small part of a larger group: namely their ‘nation.’ In conceptualizing the idea of a nation, and a national identity, Western peoples were effectively creating an idea of what it meant to be a member of their nation. In the creation of this idea, they were also solidifying ideas of what it meant to be from an ‘other’ culture. Thus, Anderson argues, nationalism stems from the xenophobic concept of foreign people as something ‘other’ than ones own culture. This argument will be imperative to this work, especially as I discuss the presentation of foreign bodies in popular entertainment culture, and political cartooning during the late-nineteenth century. Anderson’s work deals mostly with literature, but the theoretical approach to Western concepts of foreign bodies will be useful for my understanding of the popular entertainment industry.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

America’s invasion of Cuba was a part of the Spanish America War in 1898, and this war is commonly considered by scholars such as Bonny Miller, Kristen Hoganson, Amy Greenberg, and others to be the first example of war as spectacle in American culture. What they mean by spectacle is that the Spanish American War was the first war to be used as a show, a popular event that was replayed in theaters and circuses around the country in order to garner feelings of nationalism and pride amongst the American people. The Spanish American War was also America’s first experience with imperialism outside the North American continent. To gain public support for this act, newspapers printed dubious stories of Spanish aggression, including an unsupported claim that Spain sunk one of the American Navy’s ships named the USS Maine. After the sinking of the Maine, American newspapers the New York Herald and the New York World, both published numerous indictments of the Spanish and aimed to sway public opinion in favor of war. America quickly routed the Spanish in Cuba and other Spanish colonies including the Philippines, and Puerto Rico. This quickly led to public discourse in America regarding whether or not America should give the colonies their freedom or whether America should take Spain’s place as colonizer. This discussion became the major topic for a variety of newspapers, with both pro and anti-imperialists publishing arguments for what America’s role should be in the world. Along with the published articles, some of the most popular contemporary news sources also published political cartoons that directly remarked on the imperialism question. Ironically, both sides of this argument used similar imagery of island natives as unclothed, barbarous, savages who were wholly uncivilized. For the pro-imperialists this imagery was used to insinuate that the people of Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines were uncivilized and, therefore, they needed America to guide them toward civilization. On the other hand, anti-imperialists used the same imagery in their cartoons to argue that the natives of said islands were so uncivilized that they would/could never accept the white man’s civilization. Thus, both sides employed the same imagery of island cultures as uncivilized savages to push their narrative. Indeed, both sides used the imagery to validate their side of the argument, however, it is inarguable that they were both appropriating a clear narrative regarding native island cultures. This begs the question, why were both sides using such similar imagery? It has been argued by Miller, Hoganson, and Greenberg that cartoonists were simply using familiar images of island cultures as savages that had been well established in popular entertainment culture; namely, the circus. This makes sense. When creating an image that is meant to quickly get a point across to an audience, it is best to use familiar imagery that promotes a specific narrative. This is an old strategy of entertainment culture. The man with a scar on his face is a villain, the woman in the white dress is pure, the bad guy is a Russian, or in modern film, a Middle-Easterner. By using imagery that has previously, well-established narratives built in to the image itself, then the artist is free to quickly employ said narrative in a way that makes their point clear. Political cartoons would not be effective if it took deep, thoughtful reading to understand them. The political cartoonists from the late-nineteenth century were aware of this after decades of practice following the in-depth, highly complex cartooning of artists like Thomas Nast. Thus, when artists wanted to draw cartoons to argue for or against American imperialism, they did so with imagery that the public would quickly understand. The way native island cultures were depicted simply mimics the narrative of native-as-savage that had been established by circuses. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, circuses often put foreign bodies on stage as entertainment for working-class audiences. These shows included the Feejee Cannibals, the Wild Men of Boreno, What is it?, Siamese twins, Armless men, and many other acts that used foreignness as entertainment. Essentially, showmen like P.T. Barnum exploited the American public’s tendency to find a sense of pride and nationalism in shows that exhibited how savage foreign people were. Basically, Americans would look on stage and feel superior because, after all, they were civilized and those people were not. It is no accident that circuses were hotbeds of American nationalism, and were, in fact, some of the first places to begin the tradition of singing a national anthem before a show. Circuses were the most popular form of public entertainment during the nineteenth century, thus, the narrative they pushed would have been quickly understood by the American public. This fact was exploited by cartoonists in the years leading up to the Spanish American War, and the years following when America was deciding whether or not to become an imperialist nation. This makes the circus, P.T. Barnum, and his exploitation of foreign bodies and essential part of the discussion regarding the Spanish American War and American imperialism. As with all things, Barnum’s exploitation of foreignness has a beginning, and this is the point where my work differs from other scholars. Whereas most scholars find the foundations of racist imagery that led to the Spanish American War in Barnum’s “What is it?” exhibit from 1860, I find the foundations of this imagery twenty years earlier in James O’Connell’s “Tattooed Man” exhibit. It is my contention that O’Connell’s show provided Barnum with his first foray into exploiting foreignness, and turning outside cultures into spectacular fantasy as a way to entertain the masses. Unlike later shows, O’Connell was a white man, however, his story of ‘captivity’ and ‘torture’ among the ‘savages’ was a vast exaggeration of his experience that villainized a foreign culture. O’Connell’s story was, essentially, a fantasy. Thus, before Barnum began exploiting actual foreign bodies, he first used a white man whose tattoos insinuated foreignness. This makes O’Connell’s show highly important to understand in the context of historical understanding of American imperialism and the Spanish American War.

This argument, admittedly, makes a serious indictment of circus culture as it relates to American imperialism. I do not argue that showmen, such as Barnum, were aware of what they were doing and its importance to American society. Barnum and others were simply providing the American public with content that would appeal to the most people and, therefore, sell the most tickets. It would be inaccurate to claim that there was some sinister plot by showmen to incite hate of foreign cultures through popular entertainment. However, this happened all the same. To understand why these shows were so effective it is imperative to consider the social context of entertainment culture during the nineteenth century.

MASCULINITY

Another aspect of this stratification is nineteenth-century concepts of masculinity. WHO argues in her work Manliness and Civilization, that before industrialization Americans conceptualized masculinity in relatively elitist terms. A “man” was refined, reserved, well read, and moral. However, after industrialization, and the creation of the working class, these characteristics were not appealing to a large portion of the American population. Thus, during the early-nineteenth century there is a shift in American ideas about masculinity to characteristics such as strength, and the ability to dominate. What was considered masculine during the enlightenment period did not appeal to a poor, working class as they were not able or interested in being refined, reserved, or well-read. They were, however, able to dominate. For the past century, white Americans had engaged in genocide against Native Americans, and had supported an economy based on chattel slavery. The idea that these Americans were masculine because of their ability to dominate, thus, took hold during the nineteenth century. Amy Greenberg AND OTHERS finds the concept of masculinity as the ability to dominate to be directly tied to American’s sense of identity which significantly influenced American policy during the Mexican American War, violent aggression towards Native Americans, the Civil War, and, eventually, the Spanish American War.

The concept of masculinity as domination also played out in American entertainment culture. Whereas high-class theaters focused on educating the public, low-class theaters focused on exploiting American’s sense of self. Minstrel shows were created to lampoon black culture. Circuses began including acts that exhibited foreign bodies as examples of primitiveness. Burlesques were performed by women in men’s clothing and often used this platform to satirize American’s ideas about masculinity. Essentially, the mid-nineteenth century can be characterized as the generation where American’s accepted the idea that they were better than other cultures because they had the ability to dominate other cultures. As a culture without a history, they found pride in the fact that they could violently take what they wanted. A clear example of this concept is found in the fact that the term Manifest Destiny, the idea that Americans were ordained by God to occupy all the land from the Atlantic to the Pacific, became a part of the American lexicon in 1845.

Furthermore, the nineteenth century was also a period of classification in Western countries, including America. After the enlightenment and the advancement of scientific thinking, Western society began classifying many segments of the natural world and society in order to increase human knowledge. For example, in the nineteenth century alone, one finds the separation of “high” culture from “low” culture in the theater and museums. In 1842, we get the world’s first classification system for libraries through the Paris Booksellers Classification. In 1848, Karl Marx published the Communist Manifesto which classified the class systems of the world. In 1852, Charles Darwin published the Origins of Species which effectively classified the various species of the natural world. In the late 1840s, American society became obsessed with what was then called Ethnology, or the scientific study of race (known today as Anthropology). The first attempt to gather information on the insane was undertaken in 1841 through the American census. In 1876, Caesar Lombroso published Criminal Man, which used pseudo-science to claim that criminals had certain genetic similarities to “savages,” including the size of their heads. In

This work will not go in to every aspect of nineteenth century culture as many scholars have done great work illuminating the many factors that make up the American experience in the nineteenth century. It is important to note these various aspects of the nineteenth century, however, because they are all relevant to the popularization of James O’Connell and the trend of exhibiting foreign bodies for the purpose of spectacle. As American’s identified with domination as a form of masculinity, shows that exhibited foreign bodies essentially provided validation for their ideas about the outside world. By putting foreign people on stage as examples of primitiveness, showmen were basically exploiting the American sense of self. When they put people on stage as representatives of “other” cultures, showmen were essentially providing audiences with examples of what they were not. They were civilized because look at how the savages live. Although this trend can be found throughout the mid to late-nineteenth century, it is vital to the development of American nationalism that still exists today. This era essentially created a sense of nationalism, and pride in America by showing mass audiences what they were not. It is not surprise that circuses were some of the first industries to start playing a national anthem before shows. In essence, every part of popular entertainment culture during the nineteenth century can be traced to American’s search for identity. As this trend took hold, language and ideas about foreign cultures became solidified among the American populace. Thus, when America decided to get involved in the Cuban revolution in 1898, newspapers that wanted to support American involvement had over fifty years of content to exploit. In creating propaganda for the war, cartoonists and journalists simply employed all the language and imagery that had been popularized, commodified, and inundated into the American public’s concepts of foreignness. Though this phenomenon has been traced back to P.T. Barnum in 1860, my work will trace the beginning of exploitation of foreignness for entertainment to James O’Connell and the tattooed man sideshow. ADD SOURCES!

Literature Review

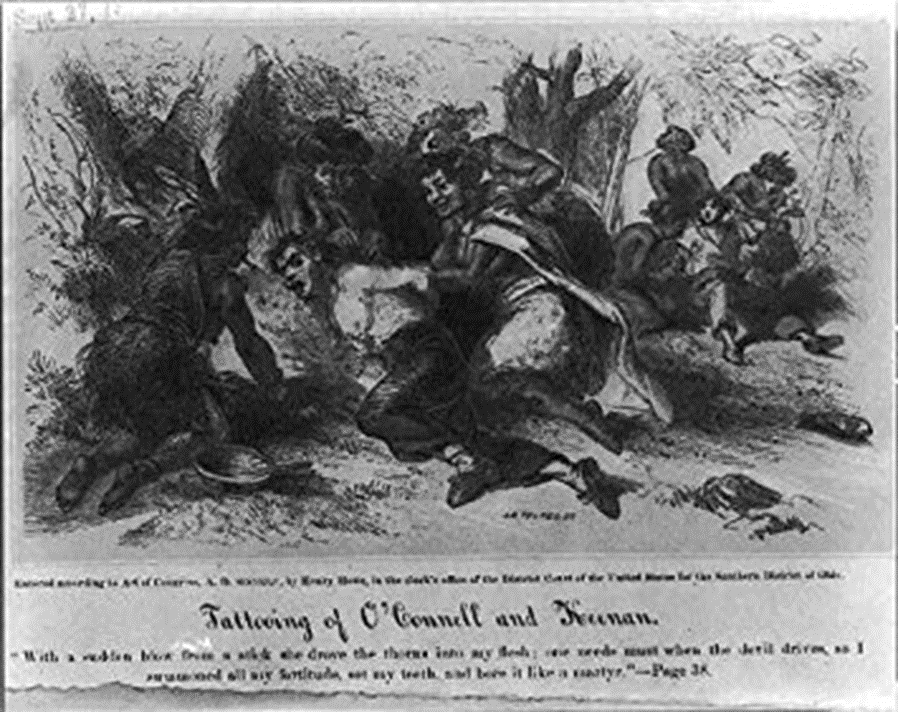
Methodology

Upon O’Connell’s arrival in New York in 1836, the *Boston Galaxy* published an article about his experience, entitled “Adventures on the South Seas,” which gave details about the Irishman’s time among the Pohnpeians. The article begins by prefacing O’Connell’s experience, claiming that the sailor had been “shipwrecked and made captive.”[[49]](#footnote-49) The author goes on to state, “he was seized, with such of his companions that survived the wreck, by the Islanders, and all expected to be immediately slain. O’Connell, in this dilemma…commenced an Irish dance, which amused the people mightily. He, thus, saved himself and his friends.”[[50]](#footnote-50) This depiction of O’Connell’s experience was clearly included to inspire a sense of danger and drama, but it does not match O’Connell’s statement that he knew the Pohnpeians “meant us no harm.”[[51]](#footnote-51) Here, from the outset of O’Connell’s story being told to the public, the events were dramatized to create a dichotomous relationship between the civilized sailor, and his savage captors. As to O’Connell’s tattooing, the author states, “[after the shipwreck], He was soon made a chief – and then it was necessary to give him *caste* by the process of *tattooing,* which is not a useless proceeding, but is a *history of the various chiefs of the nation*.”[[52]](#footnote-52) The author’s claim that O’Connell was “made a chief” is found nowhere in O’Connell’s memoir, and was likely an inclusion by the newspaper to make the story more interesting. This is the earliest mention of O’Connell in American newspapers, and it is clear that some creative license was given to the article’s author, but the changes made in this article are mild compared to how O’Connell’s story changed over the course of his career as a sideshow performer. What was originally a story of shipwreck and life among a foreign island culture became a story of captivity and torture at the hands of brutal savages.

OCONNELLS LATER CAREER

This version of O’Connell’s story exemplifies how his narrative changed over the course of his career. According to his own memoirs, O’Connell was shipwrecked and taken in by the native peoples who took him captive, but treated him with hospitality. He even mentions being happily married, and becoming a father. O’Connell’s narrative hardly mentions captivity, torture, or the Pohnpeians eating anyone (though the narrative does consistently infer other native groups were cannibals). However, by 1852, this story had become a horrific tale of survival among childlike, inhuman, uncivilized, barbarous, savages. Early advertisements for O’Connell’s spectacle clearly show that he discussed his experience among the Pohnpeians as a part of his performance, but they also show that his dance was the main attraction. This article from the end of his career, in 1852, paints a much different picture of a man taking the stage and telling of the dangers that await anyone who meets the terrible fate of being stranded on an island with “savages.” If the ‘barbarous savages” don’t eat you, they will definitely torture you by applying a tattoo. Clearly, by the end of O’Connell’s career, showmen had turned his relatively hyperbolic adventure story of shipwreck and life among the Pohnpeians into a full-blown exaggeration that emphasized xenophobic implications about foreign island cultures.

O’Connell’s story changed over time, but what is most important is that the later version of the story was the one that was remembered and mimicked by tattooed sideshow men that followed. For example, in his memoirs, O’Connell states that he basically bit his lip and endured his tattooing “like a martyr,” but, due to the changes in his story over the course of his career, here is how his story was memorialized in print:

[[53]](#footnote-53)

As one can see in this picture, O’Connell is surrounded by bare-chested Pohnapeian women who are gazing maliciously at the sailor’s misfortunes. O’Connell’s hands are being held behind his back by one woman while another performs the tattooing, therefore implying the tattooing was physically forced. In the background, one can see the George Keenan meeting a similar fate. The look on O’Connell’s face is one of agony as he undergoes his tattooing. On Keenan, the look is one of fear. Underneath this image, Howe quotes O’Connell’s narrative, stating that he “bore it like a martyr.” This image suggests that, either by O’Connell’s choosing or by the sheer nature of fiction, by 1855 the sailor’s story had progressed far passed a tale in which he was tattooed by “beauties.”[[54]](#footnote-54) Arguably, the nature of entertainment, namely the need to constantly present audiences with more spectacular content, molded O’Connell’s show into what is being depicted here. At first, O’Connell was donning the stage, dancing, and telling the audience of the “customs and manners” of the people he lived with while abroad. By the time of O’Connell’s death in 1854, his story had obviously changed to emphasize the ‘barbarous and savage’ nature of his ‘captors.’ Where his tattoo was first a relic of life among foreign people, it later became a symbol of the dangers one might find in foreign island cultures due to the native’s ‘brutal,’ ‘savage’ practices. Unfortunately, it was this model that characterized the tattooed man sideshows in the years that followed O’Connell’s career.

THE THEATER

First and foremost, the nineteenth century was a time of transition in American history. The American Revolution took place at the tail end of the eighteenth century, taking away white American’s ability to look to their history for guidance and pride. The white American of the late-eighteenth century was essentially a person without a history. The vast majority of the newly formed United States of America were of English birth, but due to the revolution they were now considered Americans. Americans did not have hundreds of years of experience doing anything. They had no history of government, social policy, or culture. The American of the late-eighteenth century and early-nineteenth century was, essentially, a person without an identity. In search of that identity Americans turned not to history, but what made them different from “other” cultures, after all, the former colonists did have one long history that gave them a sense of superiority: slavery. No country on earth had a system of slavery that was so inundated into a culture as that of the American chattel system. Slavery for countries like England was something that happened on a foreign land, in a colony. That was what America originally was. For the Americans, slavery was a part of life, it was a part of government, it was the major feature of the American economy, and, thus, slavery was a part of the American identity. As slavery was the subjugation of foreign people, the lived experience of dominating foreign bodies was one of the only histories that was purely American. The subjugation of foreign bodies also included the genocide of the Native American people. Again, European countries like Spain, France, Portugal, and England all had experience in the Americas with killing off Native Americans, but unlike the Europeans, the Americans experienced this directly. Killing Native Americans was not something that they did in a far-off colony, it was something they did from home. The expansion of America, a source of pride for the Americans, was directly related to the dominance of an “other” culture. Thus, the domination of foreign bodies, and the need to validate a sense of racial superiority was directly tied to American’s sense of identity.

The role of domination in American identity was exacerbated by the industrial revolution that took place in the beginning of the nineteenth century. After Eli Whitney patented the cotton gin, and advancements in metallurgy, cotton became much easier to turn into textiles leading to expansive industry and capitalism in major northern cities like New York City, Boston, and Philadelphia. With more opportunity for capitalist business there was a need for more workers to labor in factories that produced goods. This led to the creation of a new class of people in America; the working class. In the previous centuries, there was the gentry class, typically made up of inherited wealth, and then poor farmers, typically made up of inherited poverty. In this system there was not much room for social mobility as there were not a lot of avenues for a poor person to fill voids in the American economy. When the country began to industrialize, many businesses needed to be created, such as the railroad industry, the banking industry, textiles, etc. This offered opportunities for previously impoverished Americans to exploit the economy’s need for new kinds of business. It also offered opportunities for Americans to move into major cities and find work that was not farming. This created a system in which inherited wealth was not the only form of wealth in America. It also created a situation where workers had a little bit of capital that could be used however they deemed fit. A major group of Americans with spending money simply did not exist in America before industrialization. As this group was established, and began to participate in the public sphere, major industries were established to accommodate the new tastes of the working class.

Arguably, the public entertainment industry was most affected by the burgeoning working class. Theater was the most popular form of public entertainment during the early-nineteenth century, and theater houses accommodated patrons of all classes. Though separated by seating arrangements, rich and poor alike attended theatrical plays in urban cities and, thus, shared the public space. Nineteenth century theater culture is the topic of Lawrence Levine’s illuminating work, *Highbrow Lowbrow*, published in 1988. Levine explains that during the early-nineteenth century, theater audiences would commonly interact with the theatrical performances. When an actor performed dialogue that the crowd liked, the audience would call for them to repeat the line, when an actor was not particularly talented, the audience may throw food, basically, a theatrical play during the antebellum period was an interactive experience for the audience. Moreover, theater was incredibly popular during the antebellum period. Levine explains that during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century Shakespeare was well known by Americans of all stations. Shakespeare was so well-known that audiences could often recite Shakespearean dramas from memory. However, Levine argues that once the working class grew, the theater became a contested space where social issues began to creep into public entertainment forms. After a riot at the Astor Place theater house in 1849, Levine argues that theater houses began to institute rules that were meant to draw specific social groups. In high-class theaters, the audience was expected to sit quietly and enjoy the show. This turned the theater into a detached experience rather than the interactive experience that was common before the nineteenth century. For middle and working-class theaters, the managers continued to encourage interaction. Further, this time period included a major stratification of content in the public entertainment sphere. Levine argues that Americans began to conceptualize entertainment culture in significantly different ways that led to major changes in the content of high-class and low-class theaters. For high-class theaters, managers began to think of their content as educating the public. These theaters took Shakespeare, operas, and symphonies. For low-class theaters, managers intended to entertain. This allowed for the popularization of a variety of new entertainment forms during the mid-nineteenth century, including the circus, vaudeville, burlesque, and minstrel shows. Effectively, the mid-nineteenth century was a watershed moment that led to the creation of “popular” entertainment versus “educational” entertainment.

USE THIS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

James O’Connell is, essentially, the transitional figure in the act of displaying foreignness for entertainment purposes. By donning the stage and showing off his tattoos, O’Connell presented audiences with what would have been perceived as a physical deformity. O’Connell was, in part, a ‘freak show.’ However, the tattooed man also emphasized the fact that he was going to tell his audience about the people of the South Pacific. Thus, O’Connell was part ‘freak’ and part ‘expert.’ After O’Connell’s seminal performance at the American Museum, Barnum appropriated this aesthetic and began exhibiting foreign people as authoritative examples of foreign culture, but the display of humans for entertainment purposes absolutely harkened back to ‘freak shows’ which displayed human deformities. In fact, for the next few decades Barnum would display foreign people in the same shows as acts that exploited Siamese Twins, men and women who were missing limbs, morbidly obese children, bearded ladies, dwarfs, and other more traditional “freak shows.” Essentially, Barnum’s presentation of foreign people beside people with physical deformities insinuated that their foreignness was a deformity worthy of display. With James O’Connell, the deformity was a tattoo that marked him as a white man who had spent time among ‘savages,’ but the acts that Barnum would employ after O’Connell were presented as “specimens” from the “East.” Their “deformity” was that they were not white.

SAID

Marco Polo’s account of his travels through Asia in the thirteenth century is one of the earlier well-known travelogues, but travel writing really came into vogue during the eighteenth century. According to Said, during the eighteenth century Western concepts of “the Orient” began to expand beyond Islamic lands due to “continuing, and expanding, European exploration of the rest of the world.” He goes on to state, “The increasing influence of travel literature…and scientific reporting brought the Orient into sharper and more extended focus.”[[55]](#footnote-55) Said refers to the travel journals of James Cook and Louis Antoine de Bougainville as some of the most influential travelogues of the late-eighteenth century.

ROBINSON CRUSOE

The editor also establishes a connection to Robinson Crusoe as he states, “Had it been the mere object of the narrator [O’Connell] to make himself famous, the editor had in his story a succession of adventures at which De Foe might have leaped for joy.”[[56]](#footnote-56) In context, he is saying that he is being truthful about everything because if he wanted to just write a fiction based on O’Connell’s life then he could have, rather, he was only including O’Connell to provide the reader with a narrative structure while offering insight into the foreign people of the South Pacific. Thus, he invokes Defoe, and the writings of Captain James Cook in order to validate his work as an evolution in the literature that focused on foreign cultures.

The editor of Residence clearly sought to establish a link between O’Connell’s story and earlier literary traditions, but what makes his work problematic is that he presents the sailor’s narrative as a sort of mixture of Cook and Defoe; a beachcomber story that is based on actual events. By presenting O’Connell’s story in this way, the reader is lead to assume that what they are reading is truthful, when in fact much of the story is extremely exaggerated to be more dramatic. Moreover, O’Connell was the first to take the beachcomber/captivity/travel tales further by bringing his story into the realm of popular entertainment through the theatrical stage. Thus, when O’Connell took the stage in 1837, he was drawing upon over a century of well-established tropes and orientalist representations of island peoples. Instead of going on stage and telling the story of how he was adopted by a foreign island culture (which is the tone of the book), he, instead, created a spectacle about captivity and torture that demonized peoples in lands far from the US.

THEATERS AND MUSEUMS

Some of the working-class museums, notably PT Barnum’s American Museum, began to cater to the working class by collecting the more eccentric exhibits that were disappearing from the high-class museum. Early in his tutelage as proprietor of the American Museum, Barnum began filling his museum with wax figures, stuffed animals, and items from the ‘east’ that were of questionable authenticity, while also presenting audiences with scientific lectures and showing off new technologies. This mixture of well-established, educational exhibits and more questionable, eccentric exhibits would come to characterize Barnum’s genius in show business. Unlike the high-class museum, the fun of a Barnum show was trying to guess what was real and what was humbug. While much of Barnum’s exploitation of audience’s curiosity was relatively innocent, he also made a business of exhibiting and dehumanizing foreign, and disabled peoples. Some of the earliest examples of human exploitation in Barnum’s shows played to the same sentiments as James O’Connell’s tattooed sideshow; the interest in the South Pacific and ‘savages.’

In the scientific community, the mid-nineteenth century saw an explosion of academic papers that were meant to classify human beings. This included subjects like ethnology, physiology, and criminology. All of these subjects attempted to find exactly what it was that made races of people different from one another. The scholarship from this time period is deeply problematic, and inherently racist, but the fact that the scientific community was also obsessed with ‘the other’ shows just how inundated the American obsession with ‘other’ cultures was. Where the objectification of foreign cultures could have been relegated to spectacle, academics began trying to find objective evidence that people from other parts of the world were scientifically inferior to Western white people. All of these dissimilar histories play out in James O’Connell’s tattooed man show. He often played in working-class theaters during the period of stratification, he told a story of captivity in a foreign land by foreign peoples, and his story was advertised as an educational depictions of the “manners and customs” of the people in the South Pacific. Understanding the intersectionality of these histories provides a deeper understanding of how mid-nineteenth century culture at large effectively shaped the popular entertainment industry.

As one of the more popular forms of American literature, captivity narratives provided white Americans with a sense of adventure while at the same time, they provided validation for American’s genocide of indigenous populations. The victims in captivity narratives were often young, white women, and the villains were often Adonis-like Native Americans. According to Namias, these character tropes were employed by writers to exhibit the dangers that the Native Americans posed to white women. Thus, the idea that the Native Americans needed to be exterminated was seen as necessary for the safety of women, rather than needless genocide. The image of the dangerous Native American and the helpless white victim often made its way into contemporary artwork, especially paintings. Popular artists like Junius Brutus Stearns, NAME MORE, and others all painted depictions of popular captivity stories, but all of the paintings in one way or another, supported the white dominance of Native Americans.

In a sense, Barnum put scantily clad natives on stage for exhibition, but he always did so in a way to emphasize their lack of western ‘civilization.’ In Barnum’s exhibits, the barely clothed native from the South Pacific did not pose a threat to white people in the same way as a Native American did; they were presented as inferior due to their lack of clothing and foreign ways. Pacific Islanders were presented as a weak. There is a lot to gain from looking at this slight, but vastly important distinction. By presenting Native Americans as strong, the artists and authors were essentially excusing inexcusable genocide, but by presenting the Pacific Islanders as weak, Barnum was presenting a culture that was ripe for domination by America.

PUT BACK IN SOMEWHERE?

By the end of the nineteenth century, after decades of growth in the public entertainment industry, America engaged in its first act of imperialism beyond the North American mainland. In 1898, the American government declared war on Spain, and immediately attacked the Spanish colonies of Cuba, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico. Historians such as Bonnie Miller, Kristen Hoganson, and Amy Greenberg all agree that this was America’s first war of spectacle; in which American citizen’s support for the war was garnered through sensational news coverage, political cartoonists employed imagery that had been popularized by the public entertainment industry to sway public opinions about American imperialism, and institutions like the circus and other traveling shows recreated battles from the war as a form of public entertainment. All in all, the war was turned into a form of entertainment for the public. Though one cannot claim one single person or institution is to blame for these phenomenon, it is clear that all of these characteristics of the Spanish American War, and the public’s engagement with foreign policy, can be traced back to Phineas Taylor Barnum.

Conflict between America and Spain began in Cuba in 1895 after the Spanish government failed to institute some reforms that were agreed upon after Cuba’s Ten Years War against Spain. General Máximo Gómez, the leader of the Cuban resistance, promptly called for all-out war against the Spanish until Cubans won their freedom. Part of Cuba’s military strategy for resistance was to burn many of the plantations and other symbols of colonization. This left many Cubans without food or shelter. Spain’s reaction to Cuba’s cries for independence was dually harsh and swift. General Valeriano Weyler was appointed to suppress the Cuban insurrection. Weyler instituted what he called the Reconcentración policy, separating the island into war zones and housing Cubans in fortified camps. Weyler did not have the means to feed or properly house the mass of Cubans who were forced into the Spanish camps, which led to the starvation and death of thousands. The dire situation in Cuba provided the American press with an opportunity to frame Cuba’s resistance as an honorable fight for freedom, similar to America’s Revolutionary War.

Beginning in the early years of the Cuban revolt, American media sources began printing sensationalized articles and political cartoons that were meant to incite support for American involvement in Cuba. Key among the progenitors of sensationalistic coverage of the Cuban conflict was William Randolph Hearst’s *New York Journal*, and Joseph Pulitzer’s *New York World*. These men were not the only influential newspaper owners to participate in this era of “yellow journalism,”[[57]](#footnote-57) as many newspapers and magazines across the country took a stance either for or against the conflict, however, these newspapers were some of the most influential in garnering support for the war by turning events in Cuba into a public spectacle.[[58]](#footnote-58)

For two years, Americans were bombarded with imagery and news that presented audiences with arguments for and against American involvement in Cuba, but Americans were not overly swayed one way or another. However, in February of 1898, an American ship named the *USS Maine* was sunk in Havana while protecting American interests in Cuba, thereby giving pro-war journalists a watershed moment that garnered public support for American military action against Spain. The *USS Maine* was apparently sunk after an explosion on the boat, but newspaper men like Hearst and Pulitzer used the event to blame Spain and inspire American support for war. Americans were told that the Spanish had torpedoed the boat, leading to the infamous American war slogan “Remember the Maine, to hell with Spain!” America promptly declared war against Spain in April of 1898. Though many, including the Spanish, believed the American military would first focus on Cuba, the leader of the American navy, General Dewy, decided to launch a sneak attack on the Philippines, another one of Spain’s colonies. Due to the surprise of the attack, America quickly routed the Spanish in Manilla, taking control of the island. The U.S. Navy subsequently attacked the Spanish military in Puerto Rico and Cuba. In its entirety, the Spanish American War lasted less than a year, but America’s “splendid little war” became a popular event that incited strong feelings of American nationalism.

For years leading up to the Spanish American War, American war propaganda used imagery that played to American’s sense of masculinity. America was often portrayed as the Uncle Sam figure coming to the rescue of a female embodiment of Cuba. When America quickly won the war against the Spanish, the event was used as an example of the exceptional strength of the American people. In the months leading up to the war, events that projected feelings of American nationalism and masculine strength were a major draw for American audiences. In March of 1898, less than a month before war was officially declared, New York held a military parade that included a “wall-scaling exhibition, a rough-riding exhibition…sword contest”[[59]](#footnote-59) and a presentation of artillery used by the American military.[[60]](#footnote-60) This event also included a rendition of “The Star-Spangled Banner,” which had not yet become the nation’s national anthem.[[61]](#footnote-61)

Even after the war, the famous events, people, and battles of the war were used by media and entertainment sources to incite feelings of American pride, patriotism, and nationalism. For example, after the war, General George Dewey, who had been a major part of the successful war campaign against Spain, was lionized in American media sources. According to a New York Times article from 1899, upon Dewey’s return from the war, serving Governor of New York, Theodore Roosevelt, declared a state-wide holiday in New York for “General Thanksgiving.”[[62]](#footnote-62) News sources around the country also wrote stories of the heroic actions of General Dewey during the war, turning the General into a national celebrity. In fact, according to an article from December of 1898, entitled “Dewey on their Left Arms,” the General had become so famous that his face became a popular tattoo design for patriotic Americans.[[63]](#footnote-63)

According to Miller, after America’s victory over the Spanish, news sources began engaging in a public discourse about American imperialism. For Miller, the public was swayed to enter war against Spain through a message of liberation, but after the war the conversation shifted toward a discussion of conquest. FIND A QUOTE. For decades American newspapers insinuated the many advantages America would gain from colonizing islands in the South Pacific. FOR EXAMPLE ARTICLE. Thus, the argument for American imperialism was not something new, it was simply projected by a much larger number of media sources and it was a conversation that was no longer hypothetical.

Now, one could ask the question, “What does this have to do with PT Barnum, or the entertainment industry?” And the answer to that question would be: everything. As previously discussed, PT Barnum had built a successful business in New York City, objectifying foreign, non-white bodies as pseudo-scientific exhibits of ‘otherness.’ Though Barnum’s ‘exhibits’ were meant to ‘educate’ his audience, there was a consistent, underlying racism that characterized these shows. From the “What is it?” exhibit, to the “Feejee Cannibals,” Barnum had solidified a certain lens for his audience to see foreign cultures. They were less than because they were not civilized like the white Americans. These shows played to the working-class audience’s sense of masculinity by essentially fetishizing the domination of foreign bodies, and it also exploited the audiences’ racism by providing ‘proof’ of white superiority. Basically, during the mid-nineteenth century, after American popular entertainment strayed from Shakespeare and other European artforms, a new type of entertainment popped up that was based on validating American’s fantasy of the outside world. This spectacle proved profitable as Barnum continued the practice of exhibiting ‘other’ cultures throughout the duration of his career. Millions of Americans attended a plethora of Barnum’s shows at the *American Museum* between 1842 and 1865, however, after a fire in 1865 Barnum chose to take his show on the road.

On DATE, a fire at Barnum’s American Museum destroyed the showman’s building and much of the exhibits that had been included in the six story monstrosity in New York City. From an article entitled TITLE, after the fire, elephants WHAT ELSE could be seen roaming the streets of New York, OTHER HAVOC. This was a disaster for Barnum, as he was not insured, but the event caused the savvy business man to take his show on the road, creating the largest travelling circus that had existed up until that point. HOW BIG. Not only did Barnum’s circus bring his particular style of show to small towns across America, it also established the logistics for large travelling public entertainment businesses. EXPLAIN.

SCIENCE BITCH!

**Pseudoscience and Public Entertainment**

The late 1840s and early 1850s were also an important time for the development of “science based” ideas about foreign cultures. According to Said, the early-nineteenth century is marked by attempts by Western society to highlight the ‘otherness’ of foreign cultures based on biology.[[64]](#footnote-64) Scholars and entertainers alike engaged in discussions and exhibits that connected ‘other’ cultures to backwardness and degeneracy. Some of the strongest examples of this are found in the works of the famous naturalist Charles Darwin and the rise of ‘Ethnology’ as a scientific subject.

Charles Darwin staked his claim to fame with his revolutionary theory of evolution found in the 1859 publication *On the Origin of Species.* Darwin’s work was the first academic work to theorize that plants and animals evolve over time through processes of natural selection, and adaption to their environment. In Darwin’s work, the author claims that the animals who were best fit to survive in their environment would be the most likely to survive and, thus, procreate, passing their genes on to future generations of animal species. Though Darwin does not necessarily discuss humans in this seminal work, he does insinuate that the theory also applies to humans as his concluding remarks include the statement, “In the future I see open fields for far more important research…Much light will be thrown on the origin of Man and his history.”[[65]](#footnote-65) The explicit idea that humans also evolved from “lower” beings would be the topic of Darwin’s *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex,* published in 1871.

In *The Descent of Man*, Darwin takes his theory of evolution further by applying the theory of natural selection to the history of humanity. Darwin’s entire work is a discussion of how humans evolved over thousands of years, specifically supporting his arguments by comparing “civilized” Westerners to “savages” of the American West, Africa, and the South Pacific. Throughout this work, Darwin bases his theory on the idea that the “savages” were more representative of primitive man, and “civilized” Westerners were evidence of an evolved state of humanity.[[66]](#footnote-66) Darwin’s opinion on the relationship between the ‘civilized’ and the ‘savages’ is apparent as he states, “All that we know about savages…show that from the remotest of times successful tribes have supplanted other tribes...and they succeed mainly…through their arts, which are the products of the intellect. It is, therefore, highly probable that with mankind the intellectual facilities have been mainly and gradually perfected through natural selection.”[[67]](#footnote-67) This statement is indicative of Darwin’s overall argument, suggesting that the Anglo-Saxon Westerner was more evolved than the “savages” found around the world because the former were smarter than the latter.

Darwin’s work was revolutionary, but *On the Origins of Species* must be understood as a mere piece of a larger trend of scientific classification in academic scholarship during the mid-nineteenth century. During the Antebellum period, academics began building upon eighteenth-century ideas and created new subjects 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.”[[68]](#footnote-68) By the 1860s, Ethnology had become an extremely popular science as exemplified by this statement from a *New York Times* book review published in 1863: “The prominent place occupied in the public mind by inquiries relating to the subjects constituting the science of Ethnology is one of the most notable features of the time.”[[69]](#footnote-69) Ethnology was defined by the author as “a descriptive science, whose province consists in a knowledge of the Races of Men.”[[70]](#footnote-70) However, the underlying assumption of ethnologists can be derived by the author’s statement that “We are yet unacquainted with the fact whether or no structural peculiarities exist answering to the great ruling characteristic of the leading unmixed races of man.”[[71]](#footnote-71) Here, and throughout the rest of the article, we get an enlightening statement regarding the goals of nineteenth-century ethnologists; they were trying to scientifically prove that the “unmixed” races of the world were scientifically superior to the “unhistoric races,” such as the people in the South Pacific and Africa.[[72]](#footnote-72) Under the guise of science, these scholars were attempting to find a concrete excuse for the domination of foreign bodies by descendants of white Europeans. By investigating the ‘primitive’ ways of foreign cultures, ethnologists were, effectively, presenting their readers with validation for racism, oppression, and domination.

The pseudo-educational argument that human some human beings were more evolved than others quickly made its way into the public entertainment sector through P.T. Barnum’s “What is it?” exhibit. In doing so, Barnum created a spectacle that taught his audiences a language and a way of thinking about foreignness that dehumanized entire cultures.

By the 1860s, Barnum had established his American Museum as a vastly successful enterprise with millions of ticket-paying customers from around the world. However, in 1865 the museum burned to the ground.

MANIFEST DESTINY

**Manifest Destiny and American Expansionist Discourse**

Although the author of the aforementioned article attempted to claim that it was the Anglo-Saxon people’s duty to spread their way of life, the article also includes an illuminating argument as to what benefits expansion would bring. For example, after discussing the reasons why America should colonize Cuba and some of the Islands in the South Pacific, the author states, “Japan must abandon old fashions in our favor, that we may unbar the obscure chambers of her fabulous wealth, and share the contents.”[[73]](#footnote-73) Thus, the author was using patriotism to sell the idea of colonizing foreign lands, but there was clearly another goal of using the islands to open trade with Asian countries. This statement is indicative of actual American policy toward Asian countries during the mid-nineteenth century as America signed trade treaties with China and Japan in 1844 and 1854, respectively.[[74]](#footnote-74)

The history of American imperialism, especially with regards to the turn of the twentieth century, must include an assessment of influential pop culture of the nineteenth century. Popular culture is obviously not the sole cause for American imperialism as that subject is too complex to point to a single catalyst, however, it is illogical to completely ignore its influence with regard to the way Americans saw the outside world. Native Americans, and foreign island peoples had been dehumanized in American entertainment sectors for decades before the American government decided to expand overseas. Showmen like P.T. Barnum and Bill Cody had spent years turning non-white ‘other’ cultures into dehumanized caricatures whose only purpose was to exemplify the superiority of white men and their ‘civilization.’ Thus, when the Spanish American War began, and newspapers began to employ similar imagery in creating imperialist and anti-imperialist propaganda, they were employing long established tropes and characterizations that Americans quickly understood.

As previously discussed, O’Connell was a sailor (also most likely a convict) who lived among the Ponpeian people in the South Pacific for numerous years. He was taken in by the people, and likely tattooed as a form of assimilation. After escaping the island, O’Connell happened to come to America at a time when the popular entertainment sector was beginning to shift in order to accommodate a growing working class. For decades, theaters in America performed Euro-centric, Shakespearian plays that were well known by rich and poor alike. However, as the working-class grew, social class issues began to play out in public theater houses. The theaters themselves then began the stratification of theater culture with high class theaters continuing to put on Shakespeare, operas, and other European style entertainments, while lower class theaters began to create their own new types of entertainment. James O’Connell, and his story of adventure among the ‘savages,’ came into the entertainment business as this phenomenon was beginning to play out in New York theaters. O’Connell began traveling around New York, telling his story and lecturing the audience about the manners and customs of the people in the South Pacific. According to the relevant scholarship, O’Connell exaggerated much of his story, mixing fact with fiction for the purposes of entertainment. He presented himself as a victim, but throughout his tale he includes the sexual domination of an island princess, physical domination of rival men, and a rise to power within the ranks of Ponpeian hierarchy. In sum, his story is one of superiority and conquest. Though America was not embarking on conquest in the South Pacific during the 1840s, O’Connell’s tale was full of imperialist implications. O’Connell was not the cause for Pacific Islander’s popularity in public entertainment, but his history is one that includes misrepresenting lived experiences in order to dehumanize island peoples and imply the superiority of white civilization. O’Connell was the proverbial canary in the cave for what was to come in the following decades in the American public entertainment business.

O’Connell worked in a variety of theaters during his career, but his work with P.T. Barnum was likely the most influential. O’Connell worked with Barnum in the early 1840s and his show’s popularity showed a young Barnum that audiences were eager to listen to adventure stories about foreign ‘savages.’ Barnum would go on to spend what would amount to hundreds of millions of dollars in today’s money to bring foreign peoples and animals to America in order to essentially bring the foreign world into his New York museum. Barnum sold the exotic, and like O’Connell did so in a way that projected a sense of educational value. He was not just showing people artifacts and people from lands across the Pacific, he was telling his audience that they were learning about what those people are like and how they live. This business strategy proved lucrative and once he created a traveling circus he brought his version of reality into small towns across the country. From New York to New Orleans, Americans could go see what cannibals looked like, they could gawk at ‘unevolved’ missing links in evolution, they could see all the humans and animals that lived in exotic lands around the world. Barnum provided a show that the audience believed to be an accurate representation of all things foreign.

Years late, in the 1880s, Bill Cody was inspired by Barnum’s success and created his own spectacle of white dominance. However, instead of animalizing foreign cultures, Cody decided to recreate the myth of the American west. Using actual Sioux and Pawnee peoples, Cody put on extravagant recreations of how Americans took over western lands. These shows, like Barnum’s, were presented as educational histories of American dominance. Because Cody’s show dealt directly with America, his Wild West also brought with it a sense of patriotism and national pride. Audiences flocked to see famous stories of Deadwood and that last stand of General Custer. Cody had effectively turned the American fantasy of the West into an spectacle for public consumption.

When the Spanish American War began, most scholars agree that the newspaper industries all turned the conflict into a similar spectacle. Articles were written that misrepresented facts in order to demonize the Spanish, and deify American soldiers. Battles were recreated in pictures that ignored realities and painted the picture that the artists wanted people to see. Like Barnum and Cody, the American press was engaging in spectacle for the purpose of public entertainment. In her scholarly review of war propaganda during the Spanish American War, Miller outright states that the artists used imagery created by Barnum in order to get their message across quickly. Further, famous battles of the war were reenacted in Bill Cody’s show for the purpose of entertaining the audience with examples of American dominance.

Essentially, Barnum and Cody turned the fantasy of white/American dominance into a common trope in public entertainment forms aimed at middle and working-class whites. Over time, patriotism/nationalism became heavily associated with the sensationalized content to the point in which audiences were literally cheering on reenactments of American war efforts from the comfort of outdoor theaters in their home town. This mixture of fantasy and patriotism was subsequently used by propagandists during the turn of the twentieth century to garner support for American conquest of foreign lands far away from the American mainland.

The connection between expansionist politics and public entertainment in the late-eighteen nineties is quite plain, however, this connection did not cease after the turn of the twentieth century. Public entertainment became of America’s largest industries during the early twentieth century as technological advancements led to the development of film and television. Since the 1920s America has been the largest producer of feature films, an industry that relies on fantasy for the entertainment of its audience. It is arguable that this connection between American entertainment and fantasy has colored most of the content created by American film makers, comic book writers, videogame makers, and novelists. America continues to sell fantasy. And Barnum’s exploitation of foreign bodies and Cody’s war as spectacle themes never left the practice. During times of conflict on the geopolitical level, the struggle is often played out through our film and entertainment industry. During WWII films and cartoons featured Japanese and German villains. During the Cold War the enemies became Russian. In the years following 9/11, villains have been middle-eastern. In all of these eras, the white hero has persisted to overcome those who threaten America, and films have been used as a medium to project fantasies of American dominance. Thus, when one talks about the creation of P.T. Barnum, and his exploitation of foreign bodies, one is talking about the creation of white, American culture. His strategies of narrative building, his ‘othering’ of foreign peoples, and his fantasy of white domination all persist in our popular entertainment culture. Understanding this is vital to understanding how much influence our culture has on our politics. And until American society can clearly see how our entertainment industry pushes pro-military, pro-expansionist politics we will be at the mercy of film makers who want to make a quick buck by appealing to white men’s basest nature. The world does not exist to be dominated by white men, but in the world of American popular entertainment it cannot logically serve any other purpose. The starting point for this phenomenon was not P.T. Barnum, however, it was James O’Connell and his story of capture and torture among the ‘savages.’

INTRO STUFF

In recounting his adventures on the island of Pohnpei, O’Connell dramatized his experience in ways that emphasized the foreign island culture’s lack of ‘civilization,’ and implied the superiority of ‘western’ civilization. His stories included cannibalism, torture, and murder while he presented himself as a captive whose cunning and bravery led to him becoming a high ranking member of Pohnpeian society. These were most likely complete falsehoods, making him one of the first showmen in America to create a stage performance out of supposed captivity among a foreign island culture. In O’Connell’s show, his ‘captors’ were presented as barbaric cannibals who represented the basest form of civilization, whereas he presented himself as a helpless victim in a strange land. Eventually, shows that exhibited the ‘uncivilized’ nature of foreign people became a staple of America’s burgeoning pubic entertainment industry. People from foreign places around the world were brought for exhibition on American stages following O’Connell’s tattooed man farce, making the ex-sailor an important figure in the creation of an American imagination of foreignness during the mid-nineteenth century. He serves as a sort of transitional figure who played the white victim with a story of survival, which eventually led to actual foreign people being put on stage as examples of uncivilized cultures. Men like Phineas Taylor Barnum made a lucrative career out of exhibiting foreign people as ‘scientific specimens’ for These shows were seen by millions around the country, and essentially dehumanized foreign peoples by turning their lived experiences into a spectacle for white consumption. These shows arguably shaped the way American audiences perceived the outside world; especially island cultures. The shows were presented as accurate exhibits of foreign culture, but in truth they were simply entertaining caricatures of what the showmen thought the audience wanted to see. The language and imagery employed by these ‘exhibits’ quickly made their way into American discourse with regards to foreign island cultures. Thus, the public entertainment sector essentially created a way of talking about foreign peoples that dehumanized them, and insinuated the superiority of white civilization. When this imagery and language was appropriated by newspapers and cartoonists in the late eighteen nineties during the Spanish American War, they were simply employing long established tropes of American entertainment to quickly get across a specific message regarding the people of Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Hawaii. This war was the first step in American imperialism outside the American mainland, but the imagery and language used to discuss the war finds its foundations fifty years earlier with the story of James O’Connell and his kidnapping and torture among ‘the savages.’

HISTORIOGRAPHY \*\*\*

Within almost all of the scholarly works that deal with P.T. Barnum or Bill Cody, the authors often mention American concepts of masculinity and imperialism. This connection may seem odd at first, but the work on Barnum and Cody belongs in a larger historiography of the way American manhood shaped American’s views of foreign cultures. Amy Kaplan is one of the leading scholars to make the connection between American manhood, imperialism, and popular culture. In an essay, entitled “Black and Blue on San Juan Hill,” published in 1993, Kaplan argues that “the foundations for the construction of the white male body as a figure for American nationhood lie in the subjugation of black bodies.”[[75]](#footnote-75) Kaplan expands on this idea by investigating how the Battle of San Juan Hill was reimagined in popular entertainment culture in a way that emphasized imagery of dominate white males. By using the Spanish American War as an example, Kaplan argues that American’s support for imperialism was directly tied to their concept of manliness.

Kristen Hoganson expands upon Kaplan’s arguments in her 1998 book, *Fighting for American Manhood*. Hoganson employs a feminist approach to reimagine the causes for the Spanish American War and the Philippine-American War. For Hoganson, historians have found a variety of economic, political, and strategic causes for the Spanish American War, but the relevant scholarship had overlooked the cultural implications of American manhood with regard to the conversation about American imperialism. Hoganson expands on this idea by considering some of the more popular explanations for the war, but she then shows how each argument can be better understood if one considers how contemporary American’s conceptualized masculinity. Though Hoganson does connect American manhood to popular culture, she focuses so closely on the eighteen-nineties that she ignores the long history of American manhood and imperialism in popular culture.

Amy Greenberg also connects American concepts of manhood to imperialist actions in her 2005 book, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire,* however, Greenberg provides a more comprehensive history of this connection. Greenberg argues that during the mid-nineteenth century, there was a shift in the way Americans conceptualized masculinity. Industrialization had created a larger working-class and larger urban centers, leading to more temptations like drinking, gambling, and prostitution. For Greenberg, this caused upper-class Americans to adhere to a concept of “refined masculinity;” or the idea that a man was refined, moral, restrained, and temperate. On the other hand, working-class Americans had no interest in being refined and they adhered to what Greenberg calls “martial manhood;” or the idea that manhood is found in a man’s strength and ability to dominate. Greenberg argues that the latter of these two types of masculinity was a major factor in aggressive expansionism that led to the Mexican-American War during the mid-nineteenth century.

Greenberg, Kaplan, and Hoganson’s arguments provide a framework for understanding why nineteenth-century Americas were entertained by foreign ‘others’ in popular culture forms such as Barnum’s *American Museum*, and Bill Cody’s Wild West. By watching the exhibition of foreign bodies, audiences were basically gaining validation for their own ideas of American strength and masculinity. Applying the concepts established by the aforementioned authors allows for a deeper understanding of popular entertainment culture that sought to turn manhood into a spectacle. Though most of these authors only mention Barnum, Cody, and popular entertainment culture in passing, if at all, the theoretical concepts they establish belong in the larger history of imperialism in popular culture.

LITERARY BASIS OF O’CONNELLS STORY

O’Connell’s “Tattooed Man” show was first and foremost a performance that mixed a variety of literary genres that were popular in early-American culture; namely, captivity narratives, travelogues, and beachcomber adventure stories. Captivity narratives refers to a genre of literature that involves a first-hand account of an author’s time as a captive, typically at the hands of a foreign peoples. These types of stories predate the colonization of North America, but captivity narratives are typically considered an American form of literature because of their proliferation in American literary culture.[[76]](#footnote-76) Between 1680 and 1720, three out of four best-selling books in colonial America were captivity narratives, and two thousand American captivity narratives were published before 1880.[[77]](#footnote-77) Common themes in American captivity narratives were female victims, discussions of ‘savage’ customs, and white male saviors. According to historian June Namias, captivity narratives were commonly written in a way that “helped the Euro-American culture struggle through questions of cultural and gender identity during periods of extreme change and uncertainty.”[[78]](#footnote-78) For Namias, captivity narratives used female victims to symbolize Euro-American colonizers, and presented Native Americans as a threat to American masculinity. In the end, captivity narratives were basically anti-Native American propaganda. Though the experiences were based on real events, Euro-Americans were the ones publishing the stories, therefore giving them the power to control the narrative. Through the early years of North American colonization, Americans used captivity narratives to validate the genocide of Native American peoples by presenting them as a threat to ‘civilization.’

Travelogues are Another major literary form during the turn of the nineteenth century that share themes with James O’Connell’s “Tattooed Man” performance. Travelogues, or travel journals, have been written by thousands of travelers over the course of human history whenever one culture has traveled unknown land. According to Said, travel journals present a significant power dynamic as the culture with the power and technology to travel subsequently controls the narrative regarding the customs and manners of foreign people. This power dynamic is central to Said’s theory of Orientalism, as the author argues that it was world travelers who first engaged in creating fantasies of the “East.”[[79]](#footnote-79) Though eighteenth century travel writers, such as James Cook[[80]](#footnote-80) and Louis Antoine de Bougainville, were typically European, their work was commonly read by educated Americans. As Said states, the journals were presented as “scientific reporting” on lands and peoples around the world, so the texts would have been read as non-fictional accounts of foreign people.

James O’Connell published his beachcomber narrative in 1836, entitled *A Residence of Eleven Years in New Holland and the Caroline Islands,* and in the preface of the book the editor acknowledges the close relationship with O’Connell’s story and the aforementioned literary traditions. For example, the editor begins his preface with a discussion about the interest that the civilized have in stories of encountering the “wonderful and strange.”[[81]](#footnote-81) He goes on to state that travel narratives have “supplanted Captain Cook,” and that “lighter magazine literature…libraries of useful knowledge, scientific magazines, and lectures…have in a measure, superseded books of voyage.”[[82]](#footnote-82) The editor goes on to argue that many voyagers have written of their travels in a novel, non-narrative format, but that “still there is in the public mind a fondness for the narratives of those who have travelled and suffered much.”[[83]](#footnote-83) These statements place O’Connell’s narrative within the literary culture of the time as the editor directly acknowledges that his story is yet another invocation of the traveler-in-foreign-lands narrative. Thus, when James O’Connell took the stage in 1837, his show was but an extension of a well-established literary tradition that used foreign cultures as mere characters in a story of a white person’s perseverance and survival. The point of these stories was never to examine a foreign culture, but simply to imply that the foreign was something of an obstacle for the protagonist to overcome.

Throughout the 1840’s, O’Connell enjoyed a successful career as a performer who danced for the crowd, then told the audience about his time in the South Pacific. Like the ads from 1842, an ad for the Franklin Theater from 1849 states that, “O’Connell, the wonderful ‘Tattooed Man,’…will go through a variety of performances peculiar to himself…He will also give an account of the manners and customs of the Savages, and their mode of tattooing.”[[84]](#footnote-84) Thus, for over seven years the tattooed man’s show did not change much. He was paid to go on stage, dance, and give a lecture about the manners and customs of ‘the savages.’ However, advertisements from O’Connell’s performance in the early 1850s suggests that, late in his career, the showman began to ditch the pseudo-educational tone of his show, and went directly into a xenophobic, over-the-top version of his captivity/adventure story.

Through an analysis of an article in the *Daily Crescent* from September 13th, 1852 one can glean the dramatic shift in tone in O’Connell’s performance.[[85]](#footnote-85) The article gives an illuminating description of O’Connell’s experience in Pohnpei that is radically different from his early advertisements. For example, the article states, “He found the Island inhabited by a set of Hethen 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.”[[86]](#footnote-86) The article goes on to suggest that to escape being eaten by the “cannibal islanders,” O’Connell “devised a plan to cheat the barbarians.”[[87]](#footnote-87) After seeing the “inhuman antics of the savages waiting to receive him,” O’Connell decided to dance a jig.[[88]](#footnote-88) According to this version of the story, the natives loved the dance so much that they accepted the shipwrecked O’Connell, but “His companions, as a matter of course, were eaten.”[[89]](#footnote-89) 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*] To do this, they in a manner flayed Jemmy alive, pricked holes in his body with sharp thorns,” and added liquids that made the sailor look “very much like the zebra.” According to the article, “Jemmy” 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.

The way that the *Daily Crescent* article presents the story of James F. O’Connell is illuminating because of the way the author creates a juxtaposition of Americanness vs. Otherness. The author calls the Pohnpeians “Heathens,” thereby insinuating that they weren’t Christians like the American people. He says that they are “unacquainted with…civilized life,” as if to say the life that Americans were accustomed to. He says that the Pohnpeians ate O’Connell’s companions, thus insinuating that they were cannibals: a common identifier of ‘savage’ peoples during the nineteenth century. He says that O’Connell married a “King’s favorite daughter,” thereby putting the domination of an island woman in Western vernacular; specifically the title king. The author then claims that O’Connell got tired of ‘savage’ life and sought to return to a “quiet cottage.” This statement is not as direct but it clearly insinuates a juxtaposition between island life and life on the American frontier. He then animalizes island culture by claiming that tattoos made one look “like a zebra.” None of this information was included in O’Connell’s narrative, though some of the language is somewhat similar. However, the way this author dramatized O’Connell’s already dramatic tale

Academic Analysis

Undoubtedly, there were a variety of reasons that Americans supported military action against foreign island nations. For Kristen Hoganson, most aspects of lead up to American imperialism can find roots in a fragile sense of masculinity. Hoganson argues that war with Spain was sold to the American people in gendered terms that forced the people to see the war as an extension of their manhood. Amy Greenberg comes to a similar conclusion in her work, arguing that many contemporary Americans took an aggressive stance against foreign peoples because they associated domination with their own sense of masculinity. Military historian Graham Cosmas finds the Spanish American War to be a result of America’s burgeoning power on the world stage, and years of trade disputes with Old World powers that led to overseas conflict between America and Spain.[[90]](#footnote-90) In his history of the Yellow Press, David Spencer argues that, though the sensationalized news did play a role in getting Americans to support war overseas, the real cause was the growth of American industry and the jingoistic sense that they needed to expand to continue growing as a country.[[91]](#footnote-91) All of these works take slightly different approaches, but come to similar conclusions regarding the causes of American imperialism. However, mostly absent from these works is an assessment of the popular imagery of the time that was produced to provide commentary on the ever-so-important topic of American imperialism. Text analysis, analysis of speeches by legislators, military analysis, all have their merits, but image analysis is different. With all other forms of analysis, the reader is presented with direct statements that pertain to their specific topic. With images, the artist must create a picture that alludes to a variety of topics without outright saying what they are trying to get at. An image that must be explained is bad practice for a cartoonist. Thus, images provide the historian with an invaluable tool to understand the overarching cultural understanding of certain issues. If a cartoon was published with certain imagery, it was done so because the artist assumed the audience would understand the various topics they are trying to address. The aforementioned scholars have done exemplary work regarding the Spanish American War, but they are remiss for leaving out an analysis of the popular images of war in political cartooning.

SPANISH American WAR

**The Spanish American War and Public Entertainment**

By the late-1890s, the American government began considering war against Spain due to their treatment of citizens in the Spanish colony of Cuba. As public discourse about Spain and Cuba began to infiltrate American media sources, newspaper publishers began to print sensationalized news stories that turned the conflict into a sort of spectacle for mass consumption. These media sources relied on similar narrative structures, language, and imagery that had been popularized by P.T. Barnum and Bill Cody in their coverage of the situation in Cuba, and as time went on Barnum and Cody’s influence became ever more apparent.

The Spanish American War was effectively the US’s first act of war against a country that laid outside the American mainland. The catalyst for the 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 Cuban citizens.[[92]](#footnote-92) These events did not capture the attention of the American public, but in 1896 there were several instances of American congressmen delivering speeches about the inhumane treatment of Cuban citizens and the need for American intervention in Cuba’s struggle for independence. For example, on December 16, 1896 *The San Francisco Call* published an article, entitled “Open War on Spain,” in which the author recounted 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.”[[93]](#footnote-93) Though there was clearly some acknowledgement within the American government about the war in Cuba, there was not an outpouring of public support for war. Even within the *Call’s* article the author states, “the speech attracted very little attention on the floor or in the galleries.”[[94]](#footnote-94)

By 1897, the events in Cuba started to become a popular topic in certain newspapers that saw the conflict as an opportunity to sell more papers. Most newspapers stuck to typical journalistic standards and published relatively accurate articles about what was happening in Cuba, however a few publishers began publishing sensationalized, blatantly inaccurate stories and political cartoons that turned the Spanish into caricatures of villainy. For example, in February of 1897 the *Denver Post* published a cartoon entitled “Butcher Weyler” that included a depiction of the Spanish General 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.”[[95]](#footnote-95) 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.”[[96]](#footnote-96) Though the depictions of the Spanish were undoubtedly dramatic, the practice became much more common in American newspapers after an American battleship named the *U.S.S Maine* was destroyed in the Havana harbor on February 15, 1898, 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. Newspapers such as Joseph Pulitzer’s *New York World* and William Randolph Hearst’s *New York Journal* quickly blamed the Spanish for the destruction of the *Maine* despite having zero evidence to support their claims.[[97]](#footnote-97) The headline for Hearst’s Journal on February 16, read “CRISIS AT HAND…GROWING BELIEF IN SPANISH TREACHERY!”[[98]](#footnote-98) 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 engagement with events in Cuba.”[[99]](#footnote-99) Within weeks, propaganda posters were created with the phrase “Remember the Maine, to Hell With Spain!,” and the American public quickly voiced outright support for American military intervention in Cuba’s war against the Spanish.

On April 20,, 1898, U.S. Congress and President William McKinley signed a resolution that demanded Spain withdraw from Cuba. After their demand was not met, the United States declared war on Cuba on April 25, 1898. The war lasted ten weeks, ending with the Treaty of Paris, signed on August 13, 1898, in which Spain ceded control of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines to the United States of America.

In general, scholars such as Bonnie Miller, Kristen Hoganson, Amy Greenberg suggest that the propaganda regarding the Spanish American War played on Americans’ sense of masculinity and turned the events of the war into a spectacle for mass consumption. According to Miller, newspapers framed “U.S. actions as a riveting tale of dashing heroes, dark villains, and alluring damsels in distress.”[[100]](#footnote-100) For Hoganson, “The key to Cubans’ appeal can be found in the numerous press accounts…that treated them in chivalric terms.”[[101]](#footnote-101) Hoganson’s work argues that the conflict in Cuba was framed by jingoists as a duty for American men to stand up to a threat against a feminized, weak nation (Cuba). Greenberg states, “By representing Cuba as an endangered woman, jingoes mobilized the ideal of male chivalry to build public support for the Spanish American War.”[[102]](#footnote-102) In sum, these authors are in agreement that popular media of the time purposely framed this conflict in melodramatic, romanticized ways that employed similar narrative structures to contemporary popular entertainment.

After war began, American media continued to dramatize events in Cuba in a way that painted the American military as melodramatic, heroic saviors. One of the best examples of this is the media’s coverage of the Battle of San Juan Hill.

**The Imperialist vs the Anti-Imperialists in American Media**

The Spanish American War was a watershed event in the history of American imperialism as the war was the first step in American expansion beyond the country’s natural borders. After American victories at Manila in the Philippines, and San Juan Hill and Santiago de Cuba in Cuba, American victory against the Spanish was all but assured. However, as the exceptionally short war was coming to a close, American newspaper publishers began to question what America’s role should be with regards to Spain’s former colonies. For some, the colonies should be granted freedom, others argued that America should take up the role of colonizer and bring ‘civilization’ to the foreign island cultures.

On top of the discussion about what to do with Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines, another debate started within American newspapers about whether or not America should annex Hawaii. The shift in public discourse from America as liberator to America as colonizer is the main subject of Bonnie Miller’s book *From Liberation to Conquest*. Miller argues that before, and in the early years of, the Spanish American War, American newspapers and political cartoonists presented America as the savior of helpless, feminized Cubans. However, as the war was coming to a close, the topic of American imperialism began to take hold in American newspapers. As newspapers and cartoonists began weighing in on what America should do with the former Spanish colonies, the imagery and language used to discuss the situation changed dramatically. In the early years of the war, Americans depicted Cuba as a helpless woman, often with white skin.[[103]](#footnote-103) This imagery was used to create sympathy for the Cubans by depicting Cubans in a way that Americans understood from romance novels and popular entertainment. However, as the question of American imperialism began to infiltrate American media, depictions of Cubans, Filipinos, Puerto Ricans, and Hawaiians began to change dramatically with artists using racialized, non-white imagery to demarcate the difference between the American people and people they sought to colonize. According to Miller, both imperialists and anti-imperialists alike began “marking the colonies with visual distinctions of ‘race’- skin color, facial features, and hair type-[which] became a delivery system for imperial ideologies.”[[104]](#footnote-104) Imperialists used this delivery system to create cartoons that suggested that the island nations were in need of American ‘civilization,’ as well as projecting a sense of weakness. For anti-imperialists said imagery was used in a way to suggest that the former Spanish colonies were too uncivilized and savage to ever accept American civilization. Anti-imperialists used racialized images that implied the dangers of race mixing that would ultimately result from colonization. Both sides also depicted the island peoples as ‘child-like;’ an age old tradition that implied a social hierarchy of ‘civilized’ nations compared to ‘uncivilized’ nations.

Miller’s from *Liberation to Conquest* is arguably the leading academic work that assesses the way depictions of island cultures changed as Americans began discussing the idea of imperialism. For Miller, “The racialized spectacle of colonialism rising 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...Relying on established visual and popular conventions enabled artists to produce cartoons quickly.”[[105]](#footnote-105) Thus, Miller presents the idea that during the late-eighteen nineties political cartoonists that were commenting on America’s imperial aspirations were relying on imagery and language that had been long established by popular entertainment culture. To be fair, Spencer also finds this connection in his assessment of Yellow Journalism as he states, “There is plenty of evidence that suggests that Hearst’s approach to selling newspapers was not significantly different than P.T. Barnum’s approach to entertainment.”[[106]](#footnote-106) Basically, both of these authors focus on the spectacle of war that pervaded American media, and both find roots in P.T. Barnum’s influential style of entertainment. It was this same style that inspired a young Bill Cody to create his Wild West in an attempt to provide audiences with an ‘authentic’ version of the American west. The main theme of Barnum’s circus, Cody’s Wild West, Yellow Journalism, and pro and anti-imperialist cartooning is a dramatization of truth in the service of entertainment.

These images offer a direct example of the way political cartoonists framed the imperialism question with regard to popular culture. The imagery of COUNTRIES as black men with large lips is a clear reference to blackface minstrelsy that had been popular in America during the mid to late-nineteenth century. By making the Hawaiians, Filipinos, WHO ELSE, black, the artists clearly denoted that they were not white. The use of minstrel imagery suggests that the artist intended to get across the point that the foreign people were not white, and therefore not intelligent. Further, the imagery foreign cultures in grass skirts, nose piercings, and their infantilism suggests a mixture of imagery. These artists were not only turning foreign island cultures into black people, they were also employing Barnumesque implications about civilization. The cartoons that include the word ‘civilization’ EXPAND. With the cartoons that depict the island cultures as children, the artists were infantilizing the ‘other’ in a way that suggests that they had not matured the way that western culture had. The emphasis on civilization and demarcation of foreign people as less civilized is a direct reference to the way that foreign cultures had been presented in popular culture forms for over fifty years. The cartoonists relied on images that suggested the foreign peoples were one dimensional, savages that needed western culture to evolve. These images essentially sever as the zenith of popular culture as imperialism. The artists mixed blackface minstrelsy, exotic exhibitionism, and spectacle to create images that validated imperialism. Like Bill Cody’s Wild West, these images turned war and invasion into a narrative of Manifest Destiny and American exceptionalism.

**Conclusion**

By the time the Spanish American War had begun, Americans had been subjected to over fifty years of entertainment that was sold as truth. Entertainment that was grounded in the idea that Anglo-Saxon people were inherently more ‘civilized’ and ‘evolved’ than their darker-skinned counterparts. Entertainment that gave middle and working-class audiences a sense of pride in their whiteness. Entertainment that played to its audiences’ sense of masculinity by showing how dominant their countrymen were over ‘other’ cultures. Entertainment that showed how heroic the Americans were when they fought against Native Americans and secured white interests in the west. In sum, these people had been subjected to pro-imperialist, pro-white, pro-male propaganda for half a century before the Spanish American War began. Essentially, they were all repeating long established tropes of American entertainment culture. To ignore this connection is to ignore the cultural foundation of war propaganda and the xenophobic representation of foreignness that pervaded American media at the turn of the twentieth century.

The early-nineteenth century presents us with a watershed moment in the history of American culture. As the country industrialized, cities like New York, Boston, and Philadelphia began to grow into metropolises that grew exponentially compared to pre-industrial societies. The development of manufacturing and other industries created a new class of people, the working class, that could exert agency over their environment. These were people dealing with a new world in which working people had power in numbers in a way they never did before. However, they were a people without their own culture. For a few decades the colonists continued to rely on European culture for entertainment, but that could not last forever. As Levin established, theaters began to stratify on cultural lines and public spaces that accommodated the working class began to move away from European entertainment forms such as Shakespeare and opera, and began creating new entertainment forms like dime museums, blackface minstrel shows, burlesque, and vaudeville. As Neil Harris suggests, this moment essentially serves as the formation of a distinct American culture.

In the early years of the American theater, melodrama’s continued to dominate the stage, but soon other types of shows began to infiltrate the traditional theater. James O’Connell’s tale of shipwreck and ‘captivity’ among the ‘savages’ was one of those shows. Soon after arriving in America, permanently marked with the symbols of a foreign culture, O’Connell used the stage to spread his fantastic story of life in a far away land. The performer’s narrative and dance was enough to earn him an audience, and he became a success on the New York theater circuit. In the early 1840s, O’Connell worked for an up-and-coming museum owner named P.T. Barnum who quickly turned his story of captivity into an ‘educational’ examination of the foreign culture that O’Connell had lived among. As Neil Harris argues, Barnum had a penchant for business and soon understood that his audience would be amused by all things exotic. Barnum went on to exhibit animals, artifacts, and people from all over the world in his American Museum, effectively bringing the fantasy of the ‘exotic’ into one of Americas largest growing cities. Barnum was extremely successful, and his shows adapted to new scientific subjects and ideas as they were developed among the educated. Barnum was a showman, but he wanted to present his shows as educational, thereby giving his performers a sense of authenticity. His American Museum serves as one of the most successful popular entertainments in antebellum America, and throughout his time in New York, Barnum exhibited men and women from all over the world alongside so-called freaks (people who typically had some type of physical deformity). Barnum’s show was an exploration of the exotic, but in presenting his audience with entertaining amusements, Barnum turned foreign peoples into objects. According to Bluford Adams, Barnum specialized in turning his performers into exhibits, thereby dehumanizing the people and the cultures they came from. After Barnum’s American Museum burnt down, the showman eventually invested in a circus and took his ‘exotic’ fantasy of the outside world on the road. Over the course of his career, millions of people saw Barnum’s entertainments, and cultural historians that study him all consider him to be one of the most influential characters of the nineteenth century. For example, WHO states, BARNUM WAS POPULAR CULTURE.

Barnum’s unique form of entertainment was exceedingly popular, inspiring other performers to seek fame and fortune in the public entertainment business. William Cody was one of those performers, as Louis Warren states that his decision to create his Wild West show was influenced by Barnum’s circus. Cody, like Barnum, created a show that turned reality into fantasy, but instead of recreating the ‘exotic’ from around the world, Cody created the myth of the American west. Cody’s show turned the genocide of the Native Americans into a popular entertainment for his white audience, thereby conflating imperialism with patriotism. Cody’s show travelled around the country, and, like Barnum, was presented as a patriotic history of the American people rather than an entertaining spectacle. The mixture of fact and fiction in Cody and Barnum’s shows gave their representations of foreign people authority as their audiences were under the perception that they were learning about non-white, uncivilized people. These shows were based on creating a sense of white-superiority as they both highlighted greatness of white ‘civilization’ in juxtaposition with ‘other’ culture’s backwardness.

By the 1890s, Americans had been subjected to entertainment forms that dehumanized non-white cultures for over fifty years. Thus, when the Spanish American War broke out, newspapers and political cartoonists used the language and imagery created by public entertainment forms in order to frame the conflict with foreign cultures. After the war, the idea of imperialism began to inundate American discourse, and both sides of the argument relied on ideas of civilization, savagery, and whether or not it was America’s duty to expand into foreign lands. Now, the idea of imperialism and expansion was directly influenced by a multitude of factors as established by Amy Greenberg and Kristen Hoganson, however, the influence of popular culture should receive more attention. As Bonnie Miller’s work shows, the imagery of imperialism directly influenced much of the public regarding whether or not America should engage in imperialism beyond its natural boarders. Thus, an examination of where those images came from is necessary for our understanding of America’s first foray into imperialism. As my work has shown, there is a direct link from the creation of popular culture for the working class, to the inclusion of fantasies about foreign island cultures, to the exposition of foreign bodies, to the presentation of imperialism against ‘other’ cultures as a patriotic spectacle, to the creation of imagery used in American discourse about imperialism. I do not argue that this process begins with James O’Connell, but his tattooed sideshow serves as a microcosm of the types of entertainment that did effect the imperialism discourse in the 1890s. His show was not the beginning of this discourse, but it did lay the foundation for the pseudo-educational presentation of foreign bodies as examples of inferior culture.

SAW

Further, there were several instances in which contemporary Americans framed the war in ways that alluded to Buffalo Bill’s Wild West. First and foremost, Theodore Roosevelt called his volunteer regiment the “Rough Riders,” which was a direct appropriation of the name Cody gave his equestrian performers. Cody’s Rough Riders were a feature of the Wild West show for a decade before the Spanish American War, so it is unlikely that the use of the name for one of the most well-known Calvary regiments in the most famous battle of the war was a coincidence. Another example of Americans confusing spectacle with the realities of war comes from an article entitled “Wild Western Warriors” in the *Salt Lake Herald*, on May 8, 1898. This article, published less than a month after the United States declared war on Spain, claimed that if Bill Cody along with Now, this article does not establish that the whole country believed Bill Cody should go fight the Spanish, but it does show that Cody had turned battle into such as spectacle that some Americans genuinely believed that Cody could successfully lead his performers into battle and defeat a major world power.

Further, during the Spanish American War and the years that followed Bill Cody used his spectacle to validate American intervention in Cuba and deify the American military. For example, Like his reenactments of war against Native Americans, this show was clearly an attempt to exploit his audiences distain for a perceived enemy. However, unlike the reenactments of General Custer’s Last Stand that had entertained audiences for years, the war Cody was reenacting was happening at the same time as his public performance. Thus, the showman was using his platform to induce support for the American military.

MUSEUMS AND THEATER

James O’Connell’s enigmatic history is an eccentric story of a mid-nineteenth century performer and his fantasy of adventures in the South Pacific. However, his story did not develop in a vacuum. A variety of seemingly disconnected histories are necessary to understand if we are to learn why O’Connell was successful for almost two decades on the American entertainment circuit. The most important of these histories are the history of the American theater and museums as forms of public entertainment. In the mid-nineteenth century, the American theater became deeply stratified along class lines, with upper-class theaters presenting their content as educational and culturally refined. This opened up a market for entertainments that appealed to working-class Americans that kept some of the more interactive styles of entertainment that had been a part of the theater for previous decades. It is this phase of American entertainment when American theater managers shifted from Euro-centric Shakespearean plays to new, original variety shows.

The changes in theater and museum culture during the mid-nineteenth century is the subject of the book *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, by Lawrence Levine, published in 1988. In this groundbreaking work, Levine finds that there was a stratification of culture during the mid-nineteenth century because of violent, social-class conflicts. As industrialization created a larger working class in major cities like New York City, Boston, and Philadelphia, conflict between the working class and the leisure class became more common.[[107]](#footnote-107) The theater was a space that was patronized by both classes, so playhouses became a battleground for power in the public sphere.

The Astor Place Riot was a tragedy in and of itself, however, the riot was also a watershed event for class divisions in American popular entertainment forms during the nineteenth century. After the events at Astor Place, theater managers began seeing the typical reactive theater audience as a possible threat to order. Thus, managers began instituting rules for the theater regarding audience behavior, most importantly, requiring that the audiences were to quietly observe the production. These new rules effectively led to a chain of events in which certain types of public entertainment, such as Shakespearean plays or Opera, were relegated to theaters that appealed to a more docile, leisure-class audience, and new types of shows, such as vaudeville, dime museums, burlesque, minstrels, and the circus, became popular among the middle and working classes. This break essentially represents the creation of distinct high and low-class culture in American entertainment.

Museums were also fundamentally changed during the mid-nineteenth century. During the antebellum period, museums were effectively collections of ‘curiosities,’ such as paintings, stuffed animals, wax figures, sculptures, weapons, and other eclectic pieces which were free to compete for the public’s attention.[[108]](#footnote-108) These museums had no focus on public education, rather, they were simply repositories of interesting objects. However, once theaters began to cater to high-class audiences, so too did certain museums. In the mid-nineteenth century, some museums, such as the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, began to see themselves as an important institution for public education.[[109]](#footnote-109) Thus, museum curators started making decisions regarding what should be considered high art, necessary for the enlightenment of the public. During this era, “high-art” museums dropped the wax figures, stuffed animals, freak shows, and other more eccentric exhibits and began to feature copies of art from Ancient Greece, paintings from medieval artists, and other art that curators considered valuable to public education. Just as in the theater, museum visitors were expected to attend the museum to observe, take in, and learn from their experience. The high-class theater and museum’s emphasis on voyeuristic entertainment essentially solidified a market for stage acts and museum style entertainments that focused more on interaction between the audience and the show’s content that had been common before the 1840s. This is best exemplified by the rise of P.T. Barnum’s American Museum.

CANNIBALISM

Like O’Connell and the mermaid, Barnum’s cannibals were a farce. They were sensationalized exhibits that sought to shock Barnum’s white, working-class audience. These shows were not intended to teach people about foreign customs, they were entirely meant to disgust the audience with ‘evidence’ of how backward foreign cultures could be in comparison to western culture.

Expansionist quote

Though Cody’s show was first and foremost a recreation of the West, when the Spanish American War began in 1898, he used his platform to recreate battles between the Americans and the Spanish, thereby drawing a direct connection between popular entertainment and American imperialism. According to one of his many biographers, Louis Warren, “At no point was the flow between entertainment and expansionist politics more obvious than in 1898.”[[110]](#footnote-110)

INTRO

On December 26th, 1848, a newspaper in New Orleans named the *Daily Crescent* published an article about a circus act that was coming into town the following day. The act was James O’Connell, the Tattooed Man: an ex-sailor who would go on stage, show off his tattoos, and then tell the audience about his time among ‘savage’ Pacific islanders. Directly below this article was another article that reported on a rumor that America was considering invading the Spanish colony of Cuba. This article was accurately reporting that the rumor was unfounded and that America was not planning on invading Spain’s colony. However, this small portion of the *Daily Crescent* serves as a serendipitous moment in American history because, fifty years later, America would invade Cuba after a concentrated propaganda campaign that appropriated language and imagery that was popularized by public entertainments such as James O’Connell’s. O’Connell’s spectacular stories of the culture and traditions of a foreign island culture would eventually evolve into popular style of entertainment under the guidance of America’s most influential showman, Phineas Taylor Barnum. In 1898, after America’s war against Spain, media sources began questioning whether or not America should expand and become an imperialist state. During the discussion of American imperialism in the late-eighteen nineties, political cartoonists and newspaper publishers appropriated the imagery and language regarding foreign island cultures that had been popularized in the public entertainment industry under the guise of education.

DIFFERENCE WITH NA’S

It would be fair to suggest that the concept of foreign island peoples as savage barbarians who needed civilization was derivative of the way Americans conceptualized Native Americans, however, these two discourses developed in dissimilar fashions. Euro-Americans engaged in imperialist conquest of Native American lands as soon as they established a British colony in Jamestown. As the European colonizers established towns and consistently pushed their borders westward, they often argued that they were civilizing the land and peoples of America. They also called the Native Americans uncivilized and savage. However, to support these ideas, the Euro-Americans relied on lived experiences and interactions with Native Americans, especially the act of captivity. In fact, captivity narratives, typically including a story of white women who were taken captive by Native Americans, was one of the most popular forms of American literature until the nineteenth century. These stories were often highly dramatized versions of actual lived events, and they were used to demonize Native Americans and validate the rape and genocide of Native American peoples. Thus, when Euro-Americans developed a commentary about Native Americans, they relied on lived histories of the interactions between Native Americans and European Americans, despite the fact that these histories were highly inaccurate. When it came to the Spanish American War, European Americans had no lived history of experience with people in lands thousands of miles away, so they relied on representations of foreign island peoples that had been developed in the popular entertainment industry. Undoubtedly, the concept of foreign people as savage has connections to Euro-American’s concepts of Native Americans, but the evolution of ideas specific to island cultures is more clearly traceable through the way foreign island peoples were represented in popular entertainments throughout the second half of the nineteenth century.

The imagery of foreign island people as uncivilized savages in need of civilization finds its roots in James O’Connell’s “Tattooed Man” sideshow, first debuted 1837.

Lawrence Levine’s *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, published in 1988. Levine’s work is a foundational piece of scholarship regarding American culture as the author lays out the how and why regarding the way American entertainment culture developed during the mid-nineteenth century. For Levine, before the mid-nineteenth century, American entertainment culture was homogenous among rich and poor. The most popular form of public entertainment was the theater, and the most popular plays that were performed were often Shakespearian. Levin states: “Shakespeare *was* popular entertainment in the nineteenth century.”[[111]](#footnote-111) However, *Highbrow/Lowbrow* moves past this foundational point and investigates how public entertainment culture began to change as cities industrialized. For Levine, industrialization created a working class, and as this new class of American began to exert agency in the public sphere, i.e. the theater. As class conflicts began to infiltrate theater houses in New York, Philadelphia, and Boston, theater managers began to cater to different social classes. In high-class theaters, managers continued to put on performances of Shakespeare and other European based entertainments, but in low-class theaters, managers began to create new, uniquely American, forms of entertainment. For Levine, this moment in American theater history is directly responsible for the stratification of American culture into high-class and low-class. Levine’s relevance to my work lies in the fact that *Highbrow/Lowbrow* explains how working-class entertainments, like the dime museum or circus, became popular. By

BOGDAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

The first book that informs my study is Robert Bogdan’s *Freak Show*, published in 1988. Bogdan’s work is first and foremost a history of human exhibition for public entertainment between 1840 and 1940. *Freak Show* grew out of Bogdan’s interest in the exhibition of people with physical deformities for public entertainment, and he argues that the negative reaction people have toward so-called ‘freaks’ is a social construct, rather than a natural reaction. For Bogdan, the Freak Shows of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries created “a perspective, a set of practices” that taught audiences to see their exhibitions as something inherently different than themselves. While researching this topic, Bogdan also found myriad examples of ‘freaks’ that were not physically deformed but simply foreign, non-Western people who were exhibited for their foreignness or because of some attribute, such as a tattoo, that made them different from their Western audience. Bogdan’s work is invaluable as a collection of information about sideshow entertainers, but *Freak Show* also goes to great lengths to uncover how these shows were tailored to entertain their working class audiences. Throughout Bogdan’s work, one can gain an understanding of how human exhibition became a staple of public entertainment, while at the same time, the reader can learn how showmen related foreignness with ‘freaks.’ This connection makes Bogdan’s *Freak Show* vital to my work as he is one of the first scholars to remark upon the similar processes that sideshow managers used to present physically deformed people and foreign people under the title ‘freak.’ Bogdan’s concept of ‘us’ and ‘them’ regarding sideshow entertainments is foundational to my assessment of the exhibition of foreign people in various public entertainments throughout the late-nineteenth century.

NATIVE American AND BLACK PEOPLE

My work will add to this scholarship by building upon Miller’s work, and establishing a different point of origin for the imperialist representation. For Miller, this representation started with P.T. Barnum. My work will argue that it is James O’Connell’s tattooed man show that truly lays the foundation for this concept in American popular entertainment culture. Barnum is undoubtedly the most important figure in this conversation, but it is important to note that he was not the first to put performers on stage to discuss the “manners and customs” of island “savages.” James O’Connell’s Tattooed Man sideshow serves as the first iteration of this narrative in American commercial entertainment, but the narrative quickly grew far beyond the ex-sailor. Throughout my work, I will establish that James O’Connell was the first to ‘introduce’ Americans to island culture, Barnum quickly capitalized on American’s interest in Pacific islanders and began filling his shows with ‘representatives’ from island nations, and as scientists began creating theories of evolution and subjects like Ethnology, the idea of foreign islander as unevolved, uncivilized savages became a staple of the American entertainment industry. It was this very concept that artists then used to depict island cultures in the years when the public was discussing whether or not America should become an overseas empire

A quick note is necessary here to explain what is clearly missing from my analysis. First, this work will not discuss how representations of foreign island cultures relates to the representation of Native American cultures. This has been done much more thoroughly and adequately by the aforementioned scholars, and what my work aims to do is add to that conversation by focusing on island cultures specifically. I am consciously making this decision because the current scholarship overlooks the fact that there was a major difference in the relationship between Euro-Americans and Native Americans as opposed to Pacific Islanders. Euro-Americans had a long history of interaction with Native Americans; most of it abhorrent. An European American in the nineteenth century would have had a distinct opinion of Native Americans due to long-standing conflicts between the European colonizers and the Native Americans. This relationship did not exist between the Euro-Americans and the Pacific Islanders. The former had no reason to engage with ideas about character of the latter until they started showing up in public entertainments in the mid-nineteenth century. Thus, it is easy to mix these two cultures when discussing white, American’s views of so-called ‘uncivilized’ races, but the two groups can also be separated as they are in no way homogenous.

Second, this study does not include an in-depth discussion of the ways European America’s race relations with African Americans influenced public exhibitions of foreign peoples. In commercial entertainment, black American culture was lampooned through blackface minstrels and blackface theatrical productions. However, these acts were often done to condescend, and insinuate a lack of intelligence among black people. In sideshows and the circus, black people were most often used to relate to the audience that the people they represent were unevolved and uncivilized. For example, when P.T. Barnum put a black man on stage as the missing link in evolution, or when he employed ex-slaves to play Fijian cannibals on stage, these acts were not meant to make fun of black people the way that blackface minstrels were. These shows played on the white, American audience’s racism to suggest that foreign people were scientifically inferior. When the country began discussing imperialism, cartoonists often drew foreign people in the style of the minstrel, but the message of the cartoons were always about the civilization, or lack thereof, of their intended subject. The artists simply coded their subjects black because the imagery would have been quickly understood as non-white and uncivilized by their audience. The representation of blackness in public entertainment is an important subject, and historians like Eric Lott have done a much better job exploring this topic than I could ever do. Adding this discussion to my work would only serve to derail my argument as the subject of black and white race relations in America is a massive topic that has already been covered extensively.

INTRO STUFF

is study is first and foremost an analysis of the way foreignness was represented in American popular entertainment culture during the mid-nineteenth century. Specifically, this work will establish that the changing culture of popular entertainment opened up the opportunity for showmen to present foreignness as an example of racial inferiority. The culture of the foreign ‘other’ was presented as so different and uncivilized compared to ‘western’ culture that white, working-class Americans began to conceptualize the idea of American imperialism and conquest of foreign land as beneficial to the civilization of foreign people.

OTHER INTRO STUFF

The antebellum period is most important to this discussion because it was during this period that America developed its own, distinct popular culture. Unique American colonial art is basically nonexistent during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries because American popular culture was still heavily reliant on British culture. As cultural historian Neil Harris suggests, “American art, like American Independence, awaited the Revolution.”[[112]](#footnote-112) British theater was the most influential cultural form to make it across the pond. Beginning in the early eighteenth century, English actors began to perform traditional British, Shakespearean dramas in cities across the colonies.[[113]](#footnote-113) According to theater historian Lawrence Levine, As American cities grew, theaters began to become a more popular form of public entertainment, thereby providing a catalyst for a shared entertainment culture among American audiences.[[114]](#footnote-114)

P.T. Barnum is arguably the most influential person of the nineteenth century due to the showman’s cultural impact. As some theaters and museums sought to appeal to the upper-class, Barnum saw an opening for the creation of popular entertainment for the masses. Early in his career, Barnum realized that “the public would be more excited by controversy than by conclusiveness,” and so he began to specialize in exhibiting ambiguous ‘curiosities’ that were leaving high-class institutions.[[115]](#footnote-115) In 1841, Barnum opened the American Museum and quickly filled the museum with a variety of exhibits; some educational, some exotic, and some were outright fabrications that were meant to trick his audience.[[116]](#footnote-116) Neil Harris’ work, *Humbug*, establishes that Barnum was first and foremost a businessman who understood that there was a market for new kinds of entertainment that would appeal to the middle and working-class public. For Harris, as the high-class museum became a space for education, Barnum created a space where the audience had to engage with the exhibits and decide for themselves what was true and what was humbug.

Barnum’s over-the-top mixture of truth and reality was the showman’s specialty, so when he included human beings in his shows they were also often presented with a healthy dose of fantasy. Many of Barnum’s human exhibits were simple ‘curiosities’ like jugglers, magicians, acrobats, other acts one would associate with a circus, but Barnum also made a business of exhibiting people with disabilities, and foreign people. Barnum’s exploitation of people with disabilities is well covered in Robert Bogdan’s *Freak Show*. Bogdan’s work focuses on the more general topic of freak shows, but, according to Bogdan, Barnum took the freak show out of obscurity and brought the practice into the mainstream. [[117]](#footnote-117) Bogdan states that “Barnum transformed the museum into an entertainment center” by presenting audiences with a vastly diverse group of “human oddities,” including dwarfs, giants, fat men, bearded ladies, Siamese twins, people missing limbs, tattooed men, and foreign peoples.[[118]](#footnote-118) With each ‘exhibit,’ Barnum would concoct some fantastic backstory, turning people’s disabilities or foreignness into a spectacle for popular entertainment. Further, by exhibiting foreign people alongside people with disabilities, Barnum created the idea that their foreignness made them inferior, or freakish.

Bluford Adams’ work *E Pluribus Barnum,* explores Barnum’s career as an entertainer, and argues that Barnum’s brand of entertainment shaped the way middle-class Americans thought about themselves and the outside world. For Adams, Barnum “taught the middle class what it meant to be a class.”[[119]](#footnote-119) Adams’ work is biographical in nature, but the author presents a more focused account of the ways Barnum exploited the foreign ‘other.’ In the countless biographies of P.T. Barnum, authors deeply investigate the showman’s influence and business practices, but Adams adds to this scholarship by showing how Barnum influenced the concept of the “orient” among the American populace. Adams’ chapter, “The Stupendous Mirror of Departed Empires,” directly examines how Barnum exploited foreign peoples in the name of entertainment, and shows how Barnum reconstructed the “Oriental” in his shows. For Adams, that the showman’s exploitation of non-Western peoples in his human exhibits dehumanized foreign people and turned them into “specimens” for his white audience to examine.[[120]](#footnote-120)

Barnum’s success eventually inspired other entrepreneurs to create traveling exhibitions that appealed to working-class audiences. One such entrepreneur was a man named William Cody. Cody was a veteran of the Civil War and had fought Native Americans on the Western Frontier. Where Barnum’s show emphasized the exotic foreignness of far-away lands, Cody’s show was a mythical recreation of the American West. In 1883, Cody put together a band of equestrian performers, called the Rough Riders, who performed extravagant recreations of famous stories from the western frontier. Much like Barnum’s exhibits, Cody’s show was presented as an educational, however, where Barnum presented foreign ‘others’ as dehumanized specimens, Cody presented his audience with recreations of the white man’s ‘civilization’ of the west. Although their content was different, both shows effectively presented their audience with a foreign, ‘other’ culture in a way that insinuated that they were inferior and would benefit from western ‘civilization.’ Cody’s show was a celebration of European’s ‘civilizing’ the west and establishing control over the Native Americans, but Barnum’s show presented foreigners from lands that had yet to be ‘civilized.’ Both of these shows created an imperialist image of foreignness by representing the ‘other’ as a caricature of savage cultures that would benefit from ‘western civilization.’

Cultural historian Janet Davis discusses both Cody and Barnum, in her book *The Circus Age: Culture & Society Under the American Big Top*. Davis’ study investigates the ways the circus influenced American society throughout the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. For Davis, the circus and Cody’s Wild West shows were not just forms of entertainment but spaces where showmen exploited racial and gendered hierarchies in an attempt to project America’s place in the civilized world. Davis states, “The evolutionary notion of ‘vanishing races’ was another facet of masculine racial representation at the circus and the Wild West.”[[121]](#footnote-121) The author argues that the circus and the Wild West show used ‘primitiveness’ as a catalyst to represent both the civilization of western society and as an example of a kind of masculinity that was ‘disappearing’ from industrialized society. By putting foreign bodies on stage, the showmen were presenting the audience with an example of a ‘primitive’ culture that had not progressed to the point of industrialized America, but they were also using the ‘other’ as an example of masculine men that still lived off the land. This juxtaposition, Davis argues, was present in most of the exhibitions of non-white cultures.

Davis discusses a variety of topics with regard to Barnum’s circus and Cody’s Wild West, but the author suggests that both entertainment forms were important for framing American imperialism after the Spanish American War. Davis states, “Circus and Wild West spectacles framed the new empire within the American exceptionalism tradition. However inaccurately, these amusements defined U.S. expansion as a distinct counterpoint to European formulations of formal empire solely characterized by colonization and military domination, because the nation’s acquisition of noncontiguous territory was predicated on an abiding sense of moral ‘uplift’ through economic intervention.”[[122]](#footnote-122) This is to say that these entertainments framed conquest in a way that suggested the people who were being conquered would live better lives because of American intervention. Further, Davis suggests that the circus and Wild West shows would only perform war reenactments of wars that supported a narrative of American exceptionalism.[[123]](#footnote-123) Effectively, Davis’ work claims that Cody and Barnum turned war into a spectacle and developed a discourse that the conquered would be better off under American control. It is exactly this discourse that would become prevalent in political cartooning in the years following the Spanish American War.

Recent scholarship by Bonnie Miller, *From Liberation to Conquest*, also discusses the Spanish American War and American imperialism, but Miller’s work presents a direct focus on the influence that print media and political cartooning had in the American public’s opinion of imperialism. For Miller, the Spanish American War was the first war of spectacle, where journalists lied about events to sell papers, showmen replayed romanticized events for public entertainment, and the American media created caricatures of foreign cultures to validate the public’s opinion of imperialism. Miller argues that during the lead up to the Spanish American War, newspapers were selling the story that America should help liberate Cuba from their Spanish oppressors. However, after the war was over there was a question of whether America should free Spain’s former colonies of Cuba, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico, or if America should become the new colonizers. Miller’s work tracks how the imagery of foreign cultures changed during the transition from liberation to conquest, arguing that imagery of Cuba in the prewar years was that of a female victim, but after the war foreign cultures were depicted as uncivilized savages. For Miller, this transition represents a change in the narrative, and as American’s began discussing empire, they began relying on imagery that had been popularized by public entertainments such as P.T. Barnum’s circus and William Cody’s Wild West.

My work will add to this scholarship by building upon Miller’s work and establishing an earlier foundation for the imagery of foreign island cultures as uncivilized savages in need of western ‘civilization.’ Instead of seeing popular culture forms like the circus as a fringe element in the discussion of imperialism, my work will emphasize the connection between so-called lowbrow entertainments and American concepts of imperialism and identity. Like Miller, I will argue that P.T. Barnum’s public exploitation of foreign bodies provided the foundations for the imagery that was used by political cartoonists to support or reject imperialism, however, my work finds a completely different origin for this practice. For Miller, the earliest examples of popular entertainment exploiting foreign bodies was Barnum’s “What is it?” exhibit from 1860; a show that consisted of a black man with mental disabilities, named William Henry Johnson, taking the stage and being presented as the missing link in evolution. My work will argue that the first iteration of damaging caricatures of foreign cultures comes from 1837 when James O’Connell first took the stage, showed off his tattoos, and told of his adventures among the Pohnpeian people.

Because of the broad topics that this work will discuss, I have chosen to organize my work thematically. The first section will be a discussion of James O’Connell and how his show approached foreignness throughout his career. The next section will be a discussion of P.T. Barnum with an emphasis on how the social climate allowed for Barnum’s style of entertainment to thrive. Along with a direct assessment of Barnum as a businessman, this section will include a discussion the way Barnum exploited foreignness and created a myth of the ‘orient’ in his public entertainments over the course of his career. The next section will be an examination of how Bill Cody built upon the practices of P.T. Barnum and exploited the myth of the American West. The last section will cover the way the development of popular culture during the nineteenth century relates to the way the American media created validation for American imperialism. Included in this section will be a discussion of political cartooning and print media in New York that used the imagery of foreign cultures that Barnum and Cody popularized. In the end, I plan on creating a clear picture of how American imperialism was influenced by the formative years of American popular culture.

O’Connell also took great pains to portray himself as clever, brave, and, most importantly, masculine in the face of an unfortunate circumstance. When approached by the Pohnpeians, he claims that he danced a jig to entertain his captors while his fellow captives were afraid of being eaten. When discussing his tattooing at the hands of native women he uses possessive language; e.g. “my beauties.”[[124]](#footnote-124) Throughout the narrative, O’Connell establishes himself as an important figure on the island, going as far as stating that his child may become the island’s chief when he grows older.[[125]](#footnote-125) All of this served to protect the sailor’s masculinity for, although he was a captive, he still dominated the people due to his bravery and his superior, western civilization. By establishing this theme in his story, O’Connell creates the fantasy that his whiteness, and his masculinity allowed him to control his situation. For a nineteenth-century reader, O’Connell’s story was not just an adventure story, it was a story of white superiority over foreign cultures.

O’Connell’s sideshow has been categorized as a “freak show:” a kind of performance that exhibited a deformed body for entertainment purposes. “Freak shows” have been a common practice in human history dating back to ancient history. Typically, a showman would present an audience with ‘deformed’ bodies, such as people with dwarfism, people missing limbs, people with gigantism, et cetera, and charge a fee for a crowd to look at the exhibited body. However, instead of having a physical deformity that he was born with, or that he had succumbed to at some point in his life, O’Connell’s deformity was that he bore the marks of a foreign culture. His tattoo was his deformity. Unlike a typical ‘freak show,’ O’Connell was once a person, just like every person in the audience, but his adventures in a far-away land had left a permanent mark upon his body. To his audience, O’Connell was, thus, a link between the ‘civilized’ and the ‘uncivilized.’ He was a man who could go on stage and tell of a foreign ‘savage’ culture with a sense of authenticity and authority. By taking his farce onto the stage, O’Connell was engaging in one of the first stage acts in America to emphasize the dangers of so-called uncivilized people in the Pacific Islands.

To be clear, the claim that non-white, foreign cultures were ‘savages,’ ‘cannibals,’ and ‘uncivilized’ was not something new to the Anglo-Saxon lexicon. So called ‘Western’ peoples had been claiming that ‘other’ cultures were uncivilized savages for hundreds of years before James O’Connell took the stage in New York. Thus, it was not James O’Connell who created these ideas, he was simply a man that appropriated long-established, xenophobic tropes when discussing a foreign, non-western culture. As Edward Said established in his groundbreaking theory of Orientalism, the idea of ‘Us’ and ‘Them’, ‘East’ and ‘West’, stems from an unsound argument that there was something inherently different between white ‘western’ peoples and people of color from around the world. This concept was arbitrary and typically employed with imperialist undertones to insinuate that a culture was inferior to the ‘civilization’ created by white, Anglo-Saxon men. Therefore, when James O’Connell took the stage, and used the language of orientalism, he was merely taking the next step in the evolution of xenophobic discourse by bringing the language and imagery of imperialism on to the American stage.

CONCLUSION STUFF

Over the following thirteen years, O’Connell performed mostly in theaters around New York City but also in theaters around the country. O’Connell’s “Tattooed Man” sideshow was seen by millions and established the first public exhibition of foreign tattoos in American popular entertainment culture. In 1854, James O’Connell died while travelling with Dan Rice’s circus. It is said that even in death, O’Connell was an entertainer and his funeral included some of his closest friends dancing a jig on his grave, at the ex-sailors postmortem request. Since his death, O’Connell has been studied by historians and anthropologists in relatively niche fields such as tattooing, or Micronesian culture. However, as we shall see, the practice of exhibiting foreign ‘others’ became a staple of the popular entertainment industry following O’Connell’s seminal performances. The tattooed ex-sailor was not likely the cause of this phenomenon, but he still serves as the earliest example of showmen exploiting foreign island culture as a form of popular entertainment. As such, O’Connell belongs in the much larger historiography of American popular entertainment and its relationship with imperialism. The same imperialist undertones that existed within James O’Connell’s “Tattooed Man” show, such as discussions of civilization and savagery, would eventually become a staple of America’s popular entertainment industry.



**Buffalo Bill Cody and the Creation of Patriotic Entertainment**

According to Janet Davis “The railroad circus of Barnum…was a blueprint for the gargantuan railroad exhibitions at the turn of the century.”[[126]](#footnote-126) One such showman was William Cody, and his Wild West show. According to his autobiography, Cody worked for the pony express at the age of 11, befriended the legendary Wild Bill Hickock, raided Native American lands alongside Wild Bill, fought in the Civil War as a scout for the Union army, fought for the US army against various Indian Nations, and eventually got into show business to reenact the fantastic story of his life. Buffalo Bill’s story is veritably the story of the ‘hero’ of the Western Frontier that has since been established in American public memory of the nineteenth century. According to an article from the *Daily Evening Bulletin*, written in 1882, “it is probable that William F. Cody is as well acquainted with all that pertains to the west as any other living man.”[[127]](#footnote-127)

The veracity of Bill Cody’s life story has been called into question by myriad historical works, however, his relevance to this work lies in his Barnumesque theatrics in the showman’s recreation of the West. Buffalo Bill’s Wild West debuted in 1883 and was first and foremost an equestrian show. Cody and other performers would recreate famous events of the American West such as a Cody’s experience with the Pony Express, a duel he had with a Native American man named Yellow Hand, Indians attacking settler’s cabins, a live model of the famous city of Deadwood, and General Custer’s last stand.[[128]](#footnote-128) The show would also feature tricks on horseback, and marksmanship. Cody’s show also included actual Pawnee and Sioux peoples as actors in his spectacle. His shows served to vilify Native American cultures, and deify the Euro-Americans who had settled in the west during the nineteenth century. In short, Buffalo Bill brought the American imagination of the West to life and then brought that show to cities across the country. According to David Murdoch’s *American West: The Invention of a Myth*, “he [Cody] did more than any other individual…to recreate the image of the Wild West in the mind of the American public.”[[129]](#footnote-129) Murdoch’s statement here derives from the fact that millions of Americans attended one of Bill Cody’s shows and the imagery of cowboys, Indians, and outlaws that Cody created still permeate the American imagination of the Wild West.

Much like P.T. Barnum’s exploitation of American’s fascination with ‘exotic’ cultures, Cody used fantasy and spectacle to create the myth of the American West. The link between these two shows was not lost on scholars as a biography of William Cody by Louis Warren, entitled *Buffalo Bill’s America*, states: “the most artful of the deceivers was P.T. Barnum…his entertainments so shaped the era that…Cody could not help but fall under their influence.”[[130]](#footnote-130) Like Barnum, Buffalo Bill’s Wild West show also developed its fantasy of the American West by blurring the lines between fact and fiction. Murdoch states “Cody consistently claimed that he was presenting not a mere outdoor spectacular entertainment, but an authentic encapsulation of life in the west.”[[131]](#footnote-131) The similarities between Barnum’s and Cody’s spectacles is further exemplified by an article published in the *Wichita Daily Eagle* that states, “When Barnum gathered wild beasts from the dark corners of the earth wise men applauded, for they declared that he had brought home to every child the truths of natural history. And what has Buffalo Bill done? He has opened up a great school of anthropology.”[[132]](#footnote-132) Obviously, contemporaries understood the connection between Barnum and Cody, and they believed that the shows were insightful entertainments that revealed truths about their intended subjects.

The main difference between Barnum’s exploitation of foreign peoples and Cody’s exploitation of Native Americans was that Native Americans held a distinct identity as a danger to the American people. By 1883, Euro-Americans had been fighting against various Native American nations for over two hundred years. As Euro-Americans invaded western lands they were actively occupying land that was already populated by various Native peoples. Obviously, this created conflict and made Native Americans an enemy in the eyes of the European American settlers. Thus, when Bill Cody created his Wild West, he turned the genocide of an entire group of people into a story of us vs them with Native Americans serving as the prototypical villain. Every time Cody’s performers reenacted an Indian attack on a prairie town, or General Custer’s last stand, his audience was given another example of why white Americans needed to civilize the brutal, dangerous ‘savages.’ His show was essentially the personification of Manifest Destiny. It was not so much a reenactment of the West, rather, it was a voyeuristic pretext for white domination. How much audiences wanted celebrate genocide is illustrated by Murdoch’s statement, “the publicity men shaped the [Wild West] show around what experience taught them the public liked, and what the public like were violence and fights with the Indians.”[[133]](#footnote-133)

Cody’s show also tapped into American patriotism by reenacting events that were seen as quintessentially American: the defeat of Native Americans and the establishment of ‘civilization’ in the west. Though Cody’s show was indeed racially charged, it would be anachronistic to argue that this was his intended purpose. What the showman was trying to do was provide a live, entertaining history of life in the west. In so doing, Cody was mixing patriotism with a history of dominating another culture, thereby tying the two ideas together. As Franklin Jackson Turner would suggest a little over a decade after Cody’s first show, the history of the American West is deeply wedded to the American identity as the place where quintessential American ideals were developed. With Buffalo Bill’s Wild West, Americans were able to access that history for the price of admission and ultimately consume the myth of the American west.

**Popular Entertainment and the Spanish American War**

P.T. Barnum’s circus, and Buffalo Bill’s Wild West were undoubtedly the most popular public entertainment forms for middle and working-class Americans during the late-nineteenth century. Their shows were attended by millions of Americans, and have since left an indelible mark on the cultural history of the United States. Both shows used fantasy and spectacle in an attempt to make sense of the world they lived in. With Barnum, his circus was a fantastic celebration of the exotic parts of the world that his audience would likely never see. With Cody, his show was a celebration of the American West and, thus, the American people. Both shows were undeniably racist and xenophobic, but that was not their intended purpose. They were simply trying to entertain their white, American audience by reenacting the fantasy of white domination. P.T. Barnum did this by objectifying foreign cultures and presenting his audience with living examples of how foreign and curious non-white civilizations could be. In doing so, he was teaching his audience what it meant to be ‘civilized.’ Bill Cody played on this idea by creating a fantastic reenactment of how white Americans won the west. Both shows effectively monetized American audience’s sense of pride in their race, and turned the domination of foreign cultures into a point of pride. As such, patriotism became a significant characteristic in both the circus and the Wild West show. Americans took pride in watching the reenactment of Native Americans attacking a prairie town in Bill Cody’s Wild West show because they knew how that story ended: the white settlers got their revenge. They took pride in their own culture every time they watched the ‘uncivilized’ people in Barnum’s Ethnological Congress. These shows played on this pride thereby directly tying domination to patriotism. In 1898, Americas would engage in their first war outside the North American mainland, and the American media quickly appropriated the xenophobic language and imagery of public entertainment when framing that war for the American public.

JOICE HETH

SECTION 4 INTRO STUFF

As established by Levine, the 1840s were a time of social stratification in American popular entertainment venues. High-class theaters and museums began curating their public spaces to be refined and educational, thereby opening up a market for public venues that intended to entertain their audience. This moment effectively begins what theater historian Neil Harris calls the “formative years” of American entertainment culture. It is during this period that entertainment for middle and working-class audiences, such as burlesque, vaudeville, blackface minstrel shows, and dime museums, became a major facet of American popular entertainment culture. Each of these entertainment forms has been influential in American popular culture, but most importantly for our purposes is the dime museum; particularly P.T. Barnum’s American Museum.

ASIATIC CARAVAN



Barnum’s first real monetary investment into recreating the foreign came in 1851 after he spent $109,000 developing what he called “Barnum’s Great Asiatic Caravan Museum and Menagerie.”[[134]](#footnote-134) According to Barnum’s autobiography, he sent two men to Ceylon (Siri 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…they succeeded in securing thirteen elephants.”[[135]](#footnote-135) 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…and commenced operations.”[[136]](#footnote-136) Barnum touted the elephant handler as a “Cingalese Chief,” dressed him up in an “Oriental costume,” and exhibited him as a representative of his people.[[137]](#footnote-137) Barnum travelled “all sections of the country” with this caravan, effectively presenting the elephants and the “Chief” as representatives of the ‘Orient.’ In so doing, Barnum created a fantasy of the East that his audience viewed as true representations of the people and culture in Ceylon.

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ETHNOLOGY STUFF

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.

BLACKFACE

**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.[[138]](#footnote-138) They typically included white men who painted their faces black with greasepaint, who would then go on stage and perform a show with musical performances, satire, and a comical narrative.[[139]](#footnote-139) 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 minstrels 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 minstrels 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.”[[140]](#footnote-140)

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 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.”[[141]](#footnote-141) Basically, Lott argues that Barnum was creating new entertainments that appealed to working-class audiences, while at the same time the 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.

ETHNOLOGY

**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.”[[142]](#footnote-142) Ethnology was defined by contemporary academics as “a descriptive science, whose province consists in a knowledge of the Races of Men.”[[143]](#footnote-143) 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 with the fact whether or no structural peculiarities exist answering to the great ruling characteristic of the leading unmixed races of man.”[[144]](#footnote-144) 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, South America, and Africa.[[145]](#footnote-145) 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.

WHAT IS IT

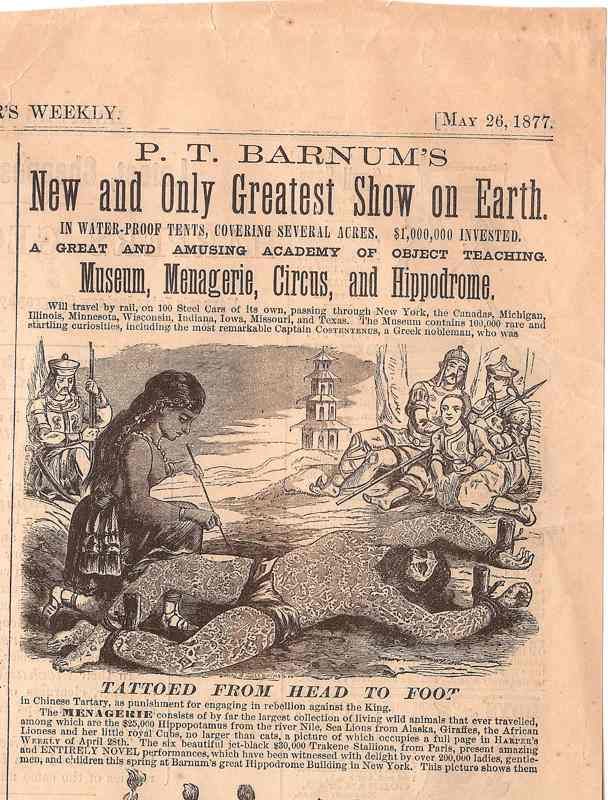


Barnum’s use of popular science for the purpose of entertainment is best exemplified by his “What is it?” exhibit in 1860. In 1859, Charles Darwin published *On the Origins of Species* which laid out the theory of evolution. Darwin’s work found that different species of plants and animals changed over 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.[[146]](#footnote-146) Regardless, Barnum clearly understood the implication of Darwin’s theory, for 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.

Much like the South Pacific islanders, Barnum curated his exhibits in a way that mixed race with more traditional features of the freakshow. For example, in this poster for Barnum’s museum, published in 1860, we have the advertisement of three shows; Siamese Twins, 2 Albino Girls, and What is it. With the Siamese Twins, Cheng and Eng Bunker, the poster shows two men who were conjoined at the hip, getting married while wearing traditional Western clothing. Cheng and Eng were Chinese, but their clothing in this advertisement, and the fact that they are being married by a priest, suggests that the two men had accepted Western civilization. Early in their career, Cheng and Eng were exhibited “in native dress, barefoot, with their hair in long queues” states Bogdan. However, later in their career, by the time they began working with Barnum, the two men had taken control of their image and had chosen to present themselves as having accepted American culture. Though the two men did exhibit agency in their exhibition, the image of the men in Western clothing suggests that they had become civilized by accepting Western culture.

The next advertisement is for “2 Albino Girls;” who were apparently white skinned daughters of a black woman. What made these girls ‘freaks’ was the fact that they had nothing but “pure African blood, though their skin and hair are white as the purest snow.” We now know that albinism is caused by a lack of skin and hair pigmentation, causing those with the genetic disorder to appear white, no matter their race. However, this genetic disorder made these girls ‘freaks’ as they were living examples of black women with white skin, which complicated the contemporary discourse about skin color. Many of the contemporary arguments regarding the superiority of civilized Anglo-Saxons over ‘Other’ races was based on skin color as a defining characteristic. The “Albino Girls” were, thus, exploited as ‘freakish’ evidence that black women could have white babies.

In 1851, Barnum invested heavily in a travelling show he called the “Asiatic Caravan,” which included exotic animals, an orientalist parade, and a man Barnum claimed was a Celyon Chief. By 1860, two of Barnum’s main attractions at the *American Museum* were “the living Aztec children,” and the “What is it?” exhibit. The “Living Aztec Children” exhibited two children from El Salvador, Maximo and Bartola, who were presented to audiences as the last living descendants of the ancient Aztec civilization. Both entertainers had microcephaly, causing their heads to be misshaped and caused severe cognitive disabilities. Barnum’s “What is it?” exhibit is perhaps the showman’s most infamous racial displays. A mere three months after Darwin’s publication of *On the Origins of Species*, Barnum misappropriated the concept of evolution and created an exhibit that he advertised as the “Connecting link between the wild African and the brute creation.”[[147]](#footnote-147) On stage, “What is it?” featured a mentally handicapped black man named William Henry Johnson dressed in a furry suit. Johnson also had microcephaly.[[148]](#footnote-148) In another advertisement for “What is it?,” Barnum used Johnson’s misshaped head as evidence of his ‘unevolved’ status as he states: “the formation of the head and face combines that of the native African and the Orang Outang [*sic*].”[[149]](#footnote-149) Essentially, during the mid-nineteenth century Barnum was beginning to understand the monetary value of exhibiting foreign peoples as freaks.



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.”[[150]](#footnote-150) 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 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. Lomboro’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.”[[151]](#footnote-151) 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.’

HETH

One of Barnum’s first exploits in the entertainment business came in 1835 when he began working with an ex-slave named Joice Heth, who he exhibited as the 161 year old “mammy” of George Washington. Barnum exhibited Heth in taverns, inns, town halls, and museums around New York, always advertising her as “unquestionably the most astonishing and interesting curiosity in the World!”[[152]](#footnote-152) Barnum traveled with Heth until 1836 when she died of natural causes, however, even after death Barnum found a way to profit off the poor woman, for after Heth died, he had a public autopsy done on Heth’s body to prove that she was indeed 161 years old. This autopsy was performed for over 1,500 paying audience members. When experts claimed that she could not be over eighty, Barnum claimed that the body was not the real Heth, for she was off in Connecticut performing.

The Heth affair establishes certain characteristics that would come to define the way Barnum approached human exhibition: namely, using non-white bodies as supporting ‘evidence’ for some completely fabricated story, using said people to ‘educate’ his audience about a topic, and establishing validity of their stories through the use of science and so-called ‘experts.’ By the time Barnum’s career ended, the showman had exhibited hundreds of individuals with stories that were equally ridiculous, and far more racist as that of Joice Heth.

Mermaid

One of Barnum’s first exhibitions that relied on trickery was his “Fejee Mermaid” exhibited in 1842. Barnum advertised his exhibit as a real mermaid found in the South Pacific. An advertisement for the 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.”[[153]](#footnote-153) In reality, it was a dead fish’s tail sewn to the top half of a monkey. The exhibit did not offer refunds.

The point of O’Sullivan’s article was to argue for the annexation of Texas, but his predictions for how far Americans would take expansionist policies were prescient. O’Sullivan states that it was America’s “manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions.”[[154]](#footnote-154) The American government would obtain the lands in the Mississippi Valley, California, Oregon, and Washington, within a decade after O’Sullivan’s statement, solidifying American land from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

YELLOW JOURNALISM

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 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.”[[155]](#footnote-155) 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.”[[156]](#footnote-156) This iconography was significantly religious and melodramatic, intended to demonize the Spanish and create sympathy for the often feminized version of Cuba.

BILL CODY AND THE SAW

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.[[157]](#footnote-157) Apparently, he actually offered to do this, but President McKinley denied his offer.[[158]](#footnote-158) 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.”[[159]](#footnote-159)



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 heroic struggle…each one on leave for honorable war wounds.”[[160]](#footnote-160) This performance included actual Cuban soldiers, “mounted and armed as charging in the field.”[[161]](#footnote-161) 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.”[[162]](#footnote-162) 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 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.”[[163]](#footnote-163) Clearly, by the end of the nineteenth century, the politics of imperialist expansion had become a form of entertainment for the American public.

CONCLUSION

**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.

YELLOW JOURNALISM AND TEDDY

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 Cuban citizens.[[164]](#footnote-164) 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.”[[165]](#footnote-165) Though there was 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.”[[166]](#footnote-166)

The atrocities in Cuba had not gained much national attention by 1896, but two newspaper publishers in New York City, Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst, began to see the events as a perfect chance 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.”[[167]](#footnote-167) 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 evidence that suggests that Hearst’s approach to selling newspapers was not significantly different than P.T. Barnum’s approach to entertainment.”[[168]](#footnote-168) 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.



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.[[169]](#footnote-169) The headline for Hearst’s Journal on February 16, read “CRISIS AT HAND…GROWING BELIEF IN SPANISH TREACHERY!”[[170]](#footnote-170) 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 engagement with events in Cuba.”[[171]](#footnote-171) 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.”[[172]](#footnote-172) According to Davis, “Circus and Wild West spectacles framed the new empire within the American exceptionalist tradition.”[[173]](#footnote-173) 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 Calvary Unit, led by Theodore Roosevelt, along with a unit of Buffalo Soldiers, charged up Kettle Hill, 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.[[174]](#footnote-174) 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.”[[175]](#footnote-175) 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.”[[176]](#footnote-176) 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.



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.”[[177]](#footnote-177) 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.

CARTOON

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.

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, Siri 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. 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.”[[178]](#footnote-178) 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.

. For example, an article from the *Pacific Commercial Advisor* (Honolulu) published in November of 1898, argues for “the retention of the Philippines as a trust for civilization…the Philippines are stepping stones for the civilization of Asia with American ideas.”[[179]](#footnote-179) Another article, published in the *San Francisco Call* in April of 1899 states, “It is [our] duty to civilization. To surrender the islands to the natives would be absurd…as they are not fitted to maintain a government and could not organize one.”[[180]](#footnote-180) These statements are indicative of the overarching public discourse about the benefits of American imperialism during the late-eighteen nineties, and they clearly suggest that pro-imperialists held pedantic views of the foreign nations. However, there were some newspapers that took a more aggressive stance regarding imperialism and civilization. An article printed in *The Argonaut* in June of 1898 states: “Spain has been fruitlessly endeavoring for hundreds of years to civilize these natives…Under the rule of Uncle Sam, civilization can be more rapid…There are machine guns now…three thousand shots per minute will bring about a tolerably rapid state of civilization.”[[181]](#footnote-181) This is a particularly colorful version of the pro-imperialist argument, but it contains the same sentiments as the others. All of these arguments effectively built upon the idea that the native people of Puerto Rico, Cuba, Hawaii, and the Philippines were not civilized enough to make use of their land, and, therefore, it was America’s duty to colonize them.

Anti-imperialists also invoked the concept of civilization when discussing American expansion, however, they relied on the same racial stereotypes as the pro-imperialists, arguing that the foreign peoples were too uncivilized to ever accept Western civilization.[[182]](#footnote-182) This gave the pro-imperialists the moral high ground as their message was one of acceptance and parental guidance, rather than abandonment based on racial inferiority. Miller argues that the anti-imperialists could have appropriated the public support for the Cuba Libre movement and depicted the foreign nations as able, self-governing peoples who did not need America’s help. Instead, they chose to employ the same message as the pro-imperialists, making their argument much harder to defend

Ethnology was defined by contemporary academics as “a descriptive science, whose province consists in a knowledge of the Races of Men.”[[183]](#footnote-183) However, the underlying assumption of ethnologists can be derived from a this statement by a *New York Times* reporter in 1863 as they discussed the field of Ethnology: “We are yet unacquainted with the fact whether or no structural peculiarities exist answering to the great ruling characteristic of the leading unmixed races of man.”[[184]](#footnote-184) 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.”[[185]](#footnote-185)

In previous exhibitions, Barnum had used specific characteristics of his performers to imply their lack of civilization, however, with the ethnological congress, the showman implied that the simple fact that they were not white made them ‘scientifically’ unevolved, and inferior.

World Centennial Fair

INTRO STUFF, MAY BE IMPORTANT

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. Undoubtedly, 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 longer chain of exhibitions that far pre-date the 1860s.

Davis, Adams, Greenberg, and Miller, understand American’s support for imperialism against island cultures as an evolution of American race relations with Native Americans and African Americans.

OCONNELL

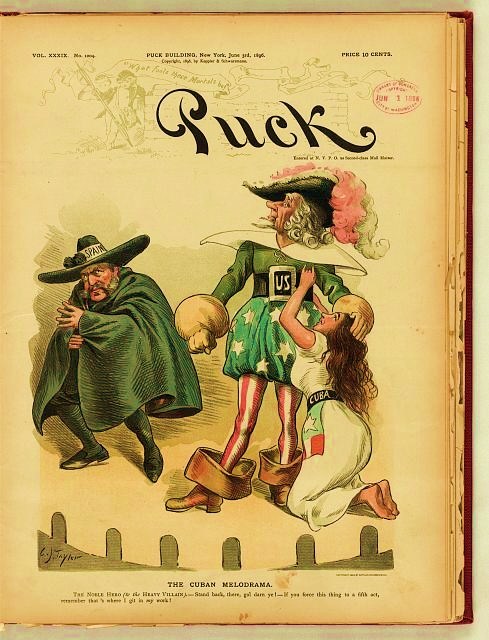
As a white man with tattoos, O’Connell was a walking dichotomy. He represented both the civilized and the barbarous, the primitive and the modern, the self and the other. Though O’Connell’s show is nowhere near the most famous performer that discussed the civilization of foreign island cultures, he was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

CONTEXT STUFF MAYBE PUT BACK IN

According to Miller, between 1896 and 1898, the American discourse regarding the conflict in Cuba shifted from supporting Cuba’s liberation to calling for the conquest of all of Spain’s former colonies.[[186]](#footnote-186) 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 increased in 1896 after the Spanish General Valeriano Weyler began instituting policies to combat the rebellion that ultimately led to the deaths of over four hundred thousand Cuban citizens.[[187]](#footnote-187) As atrocious as Weyler’s “Reconcentration Policy” was, these events did not wholly capture the attention of the American public. This is not to say that the American press was ignorant of the situation-there were journalists covering the events in Cuba at the time- just that there was not an outpouring of support for military intervention directly following the mass deaths of Cuban citizens.

Although 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 chance to sell more papers.[[188]](#footnote-188) By 1896, Pulitzer’s *New York World* and Hearst’s *New York Journal* began covering the events in Cuba extensively, often remarking on the brutal policies of the Spanish military. However, regarding the media’s coverage of the Cuban conflict, media historians David and Judith Spencer state: “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.”[[189]](#footnote-189) 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.

Hearst and Pulitzer are unequivocally the most famous people regarding the sensationalized coverage of the events in Cuba, however, “they did not hold a monopoly on the sensationalistic conventions of the ‘yellow’ brand” states Miller.[[190]](#footnote-190) Hundreds of newspapers across the country began discussing the conflict, often presenting Cubans as patriotic people who were in search of freedom and liberty. For example, the *San Francisco Call* published an article in 1897, entitled “Thousands Came at Freedom’s Call,” states that the American people need to realize their “duty in helping by their moral support and by material aid the patriots of Cuba to regain their freedom and their liberty.”[[191]](#footnote-191) Further, the author claimed that during the meeting, the band played the “Star Spangled Banner,” “America,” and “Marching Through Georgia” which “recall the names of patriots and the acts of heroes.”[[192]](#footnote-192) Many other newspapers covered the topic of “Cuba Libre;” all with patriotic language that exploited American nationalism through the invocation of language reminiscent to the American Revolution. In short, the American media painted the Cuban’s as similar to themselves in their fight against the English.

[[193]](#footnote-193)

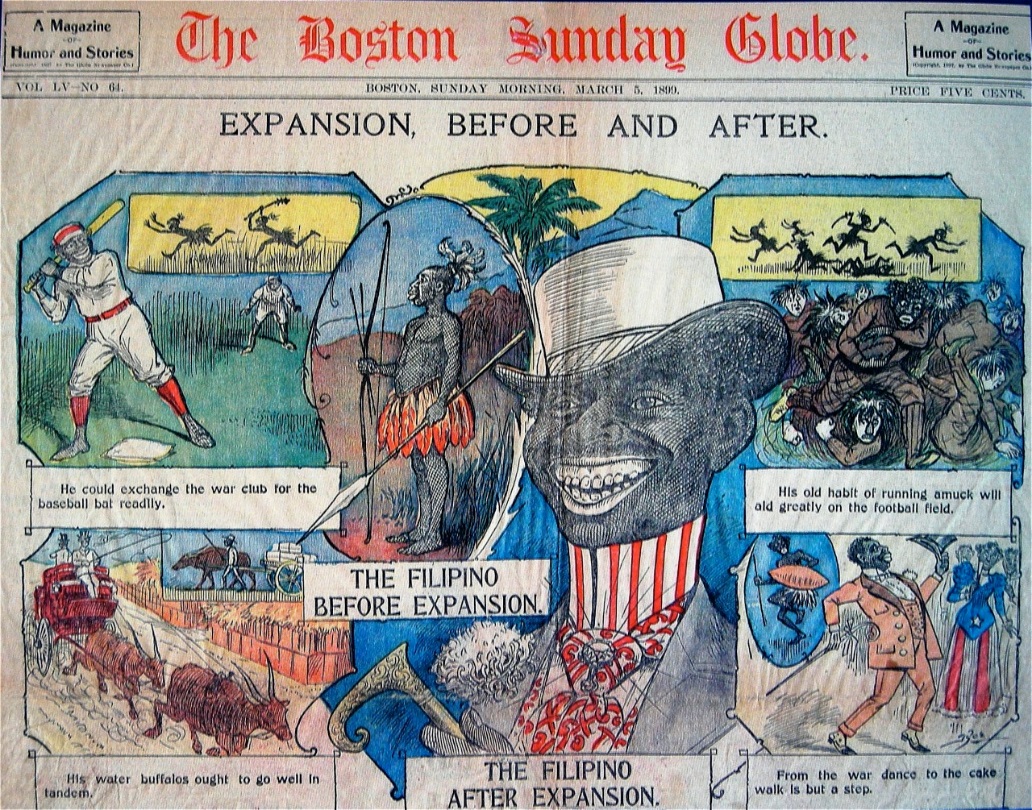
Political cartoonists also covered the events in Cuba with a similar message as the newspapers: it was America’s duty to help Cubans in their struggle for independence. According to Miller, newspapers, and cartoonists framed “U.S. actions as a riveting tale of dashing heroes, dark villains, and alluring damsels in distress.”[[194]](#footnote-194) This cartoon from *Puck* magazine, entitled “The Cuban Melodrama,” perfectly exemplifies Miller’s assessment. In the cartoon, Cuba is represented as a helpless woman who is being protected by Uncle Sam (America) from the sinister looking representation of Spain. “Cuba” is on her knees as if she is begging for protection, and Uncle Sam is standing tall with his chest puffed and his fist clenched, clearly ready to protect the fallen woman. The man representing Spain is dressed in all black, implying that he is evil, and he is hunched over, effectively suggesting that he is scared of Uncle Sam. Essentially, this cartoon projects a message of Cuban, feminized weakness, juxtaposed against masculine, American strength. Just like the various newspaper articles covering the subject, this cartoon presents the viewer with a call to action; to help the Cubans gain their freedom from the oppressive Spanish.

American newspapers and political cartoonists were clearly calling for intervention into the Cuban conflict by 1896, but the American government did not declare war on Spain until 1898. There may have been some public support for intervention, but not enough to get Congress to declare war. However, on February 15, 1898, the *U.S.S Maine* was destroyed in the Havana harbor, killing 266 American sailors. The *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.[[195]](#footnote-195) The headline for Hearst’s Journal on February 16, read “CRISIS AT HAND…GROWING BELIEF IN SPANISH TREACHERY!”[[196]](#footnote-196) 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 Spanish-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 engagement with events in Cuba.”[[197]](#footnote-197) Less than three months after the sinking of the *Maine*, the United States government officially declared war against Spain.

The destruction of the *Maine* and the media’s dramatic representation of the Cuban conflict led to almost unanimous support for intervention 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.[[198]](#footnote-198) The message was simply that it was America’s duty to help the Cubans gain their freedom. This changed in what Miller calls the “Last Phase” of the war. 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? After the United States’ Congress passed a resolution for the annexation of Hawaii on July 12, 1898, the imperialism question was all but answered.[[199]](#footnote-199) 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. Newspapers around the country soon began discussing whether or not America should become an imperialist nation.

IMPORTANT?

By choosing to build their argument upon the foundational idea that island cultures were uncivilized and inferior, the anti-imperialists effectively gave their opposition the moral high ground.[[200]](#footnote-200) Both sides were claiming that the people in Cuba, Hawaii, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico were uncivilized, but it was only the pro-imperialists who were claiming that America should shoulder the burden of bringing them into Western civilization. Notably, these people were arguing that the only way to bring the ‘uncivilized’ into civilization was through conquest and domination, but this was seen by contemporaries as more moral and good than abandoning people who “could not govern themselves.”[[201]](#footnote-201) For Miller, had the anti-imperialists argued that the foreign nations were fully capable of self-governance, then they may have been able to encapsulate many of the same people who viewed Cuba’s rebellion positively as a patriotic fight for liberty. Instead, they chose to accept the racist premise that the foreign nations were uncivilized and helpless, so the only way that they could support their argument was by framing colonization as a waste of time, or as a danger to American civilization. In a way, the anti-imperialists accepted the pro-imperialists’ racist foundation, and the only way they could combat the pro-imperialist argument was with a more dramatic form of racism.



Miller 220

This cartoon also presents the reader with a pro-imperialist message, but it does so by exploiting the island savage imagery that was popularized by Barnum’s island cannibal exhibits. Throughout his career, Barnum consistently exhibited black men and women as cannibals. Barnum’s performers in these shows were always dressed in grass skirts and holding primitive weapons. The imagery of these shows was meant to exhibit a clear lack of civilization among the cannibals and establish the fact that they were distinctly ‘other’ compared to the white audience. As one can see in this cartoon, the imagery of the grass skirt wearing, spear wielding, primitive islander was also used to represent native Filipinos during the late-eighteen nineties. In the cartoon, the artist creates a “Before Expansion” version of Filipinos; a black body wearing a grass skirt, holding a spear and bow. The cartoon then offers visual examples of how the Filipino’s primitiveness could translate into civilized society after expansion. Instead of “running amok” they could use their athleticism to become baseball or football players. The cartoon also suggests that the native “war dance



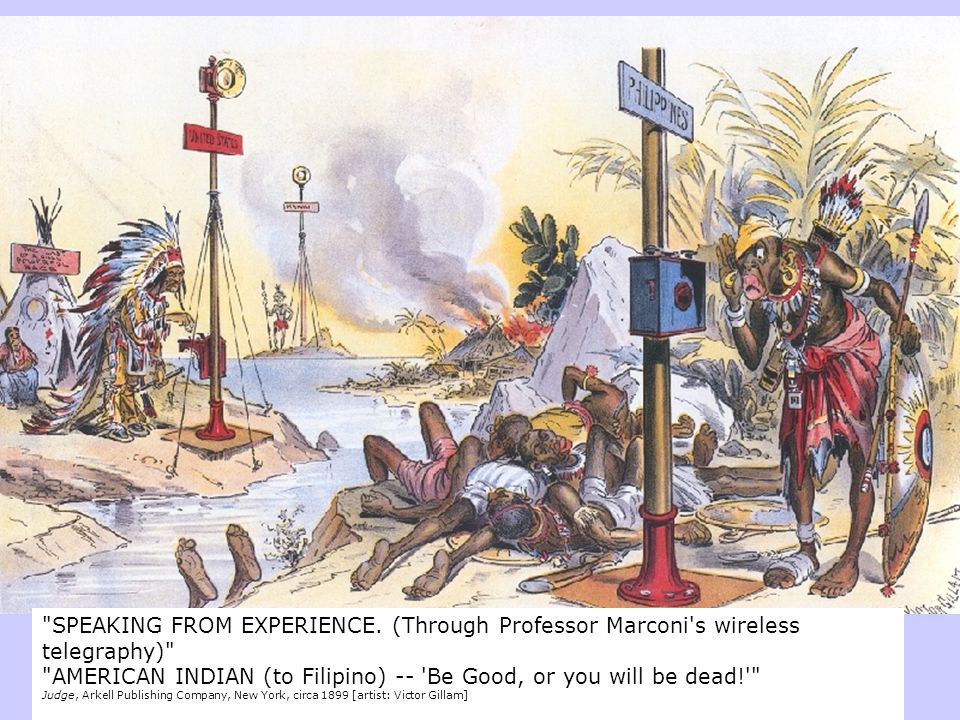
This Charles Bartholomew cartoon illustrates the racialized nature of American imperialism that led to the conquest of Cuba, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico in 1898. In this image, Bartholomew imagines these conquered peoples as quick to adopt American customs and celebrate Independence Day, despite their subordinate status. “Hurrah for the Fourth of July,” Charles L. Bartholomew, The Minneapolis Journal’s Cartoons of the Spanish American War by Bart 1898 (Minneapolis: The Journal Printing Company, 1899), 82. Courtesy of [Archive.org](https://archive.org/stream/cartoonsofspanis00bart#page/81/mode/2up/search/hurrah).





<https://www.loc.gov/item/2012647459/>

This cartoon, entitled “School Begins,” was published in January of 1899 and it represents America’s duty to ‘civilize’ the people of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and the Philippines. The foreign nations are represented as children, and America is represented as the adult teacher in the form of Uncle Sam. The artist’s use of small children for the foreign nations implies that they were not as developed as the civilized Americans. Though there are white children in the back of the class that represent white Americans and their ‘superior’ civilization, they are merely included in this cartoon to juxtapose the ‘uncivilized’ children. On the chalkboard behind the children, their lesson is written: “England has governed her colonies whether they consented or not. By not waiting for their consent she has greatly advanced the world’s civilization. The U.S. must govern its new territories with or without their consent until they can govern themselves.” In the background, a black child is in the background washing windows, a Native American child is sitting by the door reading a book upside down, and a Chinese child is outside the door waiting to come in. The inclusion of the black and Native American children serves as an implicit warning of what will come of America’s new territories if they do not accept Uncle Sam’s teachings: they will become servants, or they will fail to become educated and, thus, be shunned. The Chinese child waiting outside implies that the artist believed that the American government would soon expand into China, so the Chinese child is simply waiting for a seat in the classroom.

[[202]](#footnote-202)

This pro-imperialist cartoon also employs some of the aspects of the Ethnological Congress with its clear caricatures of foreign culture, but the depiction of the Filipino warrior also relies heavily on the island savage caricature that Barnum had curated through his cannibal exhibitions. Throughout his career, Barnum exhibited many different black-skinned, island “cannibals” as a part of his freak show. The “cannibals” in these shows were always dressed in grass or animal hide skirts and holding primitive weapons. These characteristics of the cannibal became a staple of the island savage troupe in Barnum’s exhibitions, effectively creating imagery that audiences would quickly associate with cannibalism and a lack of civilization. In this cartoon, the Filipino is black, dressed in a skirt, and holding a primitive spear and shield.[[203]](#footnote-203) The subjects of the cartoon are clearly on an island that is in disarray, and many of the Filipino’s countrymen have been killed. According to Miller, the artist, Victor Gillam, likely drew the Filipino as black because it related the Filipino people to a racial group that white Americans had dominated in the past, therefore implying that the Filipinos could easily be dominated.[[204]](#footnote-204) While I would agree with this assessment to a certain extent, I do not consider it an irrelevant coincidence that black men and women had been put on stage as savage island cannibals for decades before this cartoon was published. By using the same imagery of the black islander that was popular in the public entertainment sector, Gillam was able to quickly exploit the various racial assumptions about civilization and savagery that were established by Barnum’s human exhibitions.

IMAGE MILLER 205

In this cartoon, published in *Life* magazine in April of 1899, the artist depicts an American who has essentially forgone Western civilization and started living as an island native. Instead of Western clothes, the man is dressed in a grass skirt. Instead of a rifle, the man is holding a shield and spear. To his left is an island woman, and what can only be assumed to be the man’s child. Behind the family is a small hut and some farm animals, suggesting that the American man has completely ‘gone native’ and chose to live among the native islanders. *Life* magazine was ardently anti-imperialist, and this cartoon, much like the others, serves as a warning of what may happen if America continued colonizing ‘inferior’ cultures. In this version, the artist is suggesting that if Americans send their people over to colonize island nations, they will instead be seduced by ‘uncivilized’ life.

FIX THE CONCLUSION

Within all of the political cartoons provided here, there is a clear and obvious message about the uncivilized, and, thus, the inferior nature of Cubans, Filipinos, Hawaiians, and Puerto Ricans. Despite their disparate opinions on imperialism, all of the artists basically use the same foundational ideas about foreigner’s lack of civilization to get their point across. It would seem, as Miller has suggested, that using the same kind of imagery that P.T. Barnum developed in his entertainments made the process quicker and easier for the artist to disseminate their message. They did not need to spend a lot of time figuring out how to depict their subjects as inferior, they simply needed to put them in grass skirts, or clothes that coded the figures as foreign, thereby invoking the assumptions about the savages in the Ethnological Congress: that white people were more civilized and, thus, superior to the multitude of non-white citizens from underdeveloped nations.

Obviously, there was a multitude of reasons why the American government ultimately decided to wage are against Spain, and then subsequently colonize Spain’s former colonies. As such, there is a litany of work discussing the various causes for the Spanish American and Philippine American Wars. It has not been my intention to add to that scholarship by arguing that the representation of foreign peoples in commercialized entertainments *caused* American imperialism. Instead, this work serves to draw connections between how foreign island cultures were represented in late-nineteenth-century political cartooning, and how that representation draws upon a much older tradition of human exhibition in the public entertainment industry. Though it was a war that facilitated this connection, the act of imperialism actually serves as a side note to what I have been attempting to uncover.

By understanding America’s sordid history of human exhibition and how that relates to common concepts of ‘other’ cultures, we can better understand how popular culture has contributed to American’s fantasy of the outside world. This is an important aspect to understand about any culture, but it is especially important in America as our entertainment industry is inarguably the most influential distributor of fantasy in the world. Hollywood films are viewed by billions, and have inundated the popular entertainment industry in countries around the world. In order to properly understand the tendency of Americans to create fantasies of foreign people in their popular culture, it is vital to look at the way fantasy and spectacle became a part of the popular entertainment industry. As Neil Harris has argued, the 1840s were really the “formative years” of American popular culture, and the exploitation of foreignness started to inundate performances around this time period. Thus, creating fantasies of the uncivilized ‘other’ has been a part of American entertainment culture since its inception. And the practice is still alive today. Whatever country America is currently at war with, or will be soon, is often quickly included in new movies as the dangerous villain, ready to destroy everything America stands for.

Further, it was not James O’Connell who created the interest in the ‘uncivilized’ nature of peoples around the world. People have always called ‘other’ people uncivilized. O’Connell was just a man who took advantage of the public’s interest in the foreign and brought the exploitation of that interest into the burgeoning industry of commercialized entertainment. With his tattoos and his story of captivity, O’Connell was a living adventure story, ready to tell white Americans about life in a far-away land. However, following his seminal performances, other showmen, like P.T. Barnum, understood that it wasn’t just James O’Connell that the audience wanted to see, but anything or anyone that could reveal the mysteries of exotic lands. Following O’Connell’s performance, Barnum basically made a career out of exploiting this interest, turning what was originally considered a sideshow for ‘freaks’ into a mainstream entertainment for the masses. When it came time for America to engage in military conquest of exotic, distant lands, image makers simply adapted what Barnum had built and sold to his white, working-class audience: a need to feel superior.

Further, it is inarguable that the indigenous people in the Philippines, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and Cuba did lead hard lives that could have benefitted from technological developments that were being made in so-called Western countries at the time. However, the idea that they needed to be brought into civilization, whether they consented or not, is a completely Western concept. Islanders were people who were simply living their lives according to the traditions of their culture, and it is irrelevant that white-Western peoples believed that they should be living a different way. This is why for the majority of this paper I have put the verb civilization in single quotation marks, in order to reflect that this was contemporary Americans’ views of what it meant to civilize people and not my own understanding of the word. The concept of civilization, and how one becomes civilized, is entirely culturally relative. Therefore, it would mean very different things for a white Westerner to attempt to civilize someone as opposed to, say, an ex-slave from the deep south. For the latter, they might argue that the American’s treatment of African Americans was uncivil and proved that their culture was barbaric. For an island nation, the indigenous people would probably consider an outsider uncivilized for not knowing the proper customs of the island. Thus, it is necessary to take the idea of ‘civilization’ into account when reading any sort of argument for imperialism or conquest. It is often not about actually ‘civilizing’ anything, but rather wiping away a traditional culture and instilling something different.

It is important to note that this work is not built on the idea that Western civilization is full of evil people, and the foreign cultures discussed here lived utopian lives. It is anachronistic to look at the imperialist, Christian, Americans as cartoonish, evil people who just wanted to take everyone else’s land. These were deeply religious people who saw indigenous peoples as savage heathens who needed to be brought into civilization so that their souls could be saved by God. They also thought that they were destined by God to overtake lands and bring it into ‘civilization.’ Looking back, these ideas were clearly predicated on deeply flawed presumptions about race and culture, but it what else were they supposed to believe? All of their institutions and contemporary knowledge was built upon the idea that they were spiritually, scientifically, racially, and culturally, and, in every other way, superior to the people who did not live under the benefits of capitalism and Western civilization. Luckily, over time these ideas have dissipated, but they are nowhere near eradicated from American society. The last American to die while trying to convert a foreign island culture to Christianity was in November of 2018.[[205]](#footnote-205)

Theater Culture

According to Levine, 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 classes went to the same local theaters to enjoy a play, though they were segregated by seating area.[[206]](#footnote-206) 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.”[[207]](#footnote-207) Much like a modern football game, the theater experience in the nineteenth century was deeply 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.[[208]](#footnote-208) 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.

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.[[209]](#footnote-209) 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 frequent articulation of the possibilities of self-improvement and social mobility” making him a favorite among working-class New Yorkers.[[210]](#footnote-210) 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.”[[211]](#footnote-211) 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.[[212]](#footnote-212)

On May 10, 1849, McCready returned to the Astor Place Theater to perform *Macbeth*, however, his return incited a strong reaction from the city’s working class. 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!”[[213]](#footnote-213) 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.[[214]](#footnote-214) 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.”[[215]](#footnote-215)

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 from multiple American cities who were reporting on the event. The riot had caused “nothing short of a controversy and collision between those who have been styled the “exclusives,” or “upper ten,” and the great popular masses,” wrote the *New York Herald*.[[216]](#footnote-216) “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*,” claimed the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*.[[217]](#footnote-217)

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. Typically, these playhouses would perform the works of William Shakespeare. Theater historian Lawrence Levine 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.”[[218]](#footnote-218) 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 large city centers.

Because of the growing class divisions during the 1840s, as exemplified by the Astor Place Riot, 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.[[219]](#footnote-219) 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.

Theater and Museums

, By the 1840s, dime museums were the most common institutions to exhibit people in “freak shows,” therein turning human beings into specimens to be looked at by a white, working-class audience. Dime museums were essentially derivative of the public museum that was established in the late-eighteenth century by Charles Willson Peale. During the early years of the American republic, these institutions fulfilled a social function as entertainment for the growing mass population, but they were not necessarily commercial entertainments intent on making money. According to theater historian Faye Dudden, in the early American theater “capitalist motives were rare,” and plays were typically performed by traveling acting troupes who only made enough money to continue performing.[[220]](#footnote-220) Theater was often performed by traveling acting troupes who only made enough money to keep performing, and museums were curated as “repositories of knowledge.” The early nineteenth century can be described as the time period when American entertainment became heavily commercialized to 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-class institutions offered the “freak show” a permanent residence for entertaining audiences.[[221]](#footnote-221)

According to cultural historian Neil Harris, “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.”[[222]](#footnote-222) 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 emphasizing museums as a more educational space, 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.

The article expresses a clear, and explicit claim that white-Western men were superior to everyone else as the author states, “Everywhere beyond our own borders, on this Western hemisphere, do we see the need of the steady, ballasting traits of Anglo-Saxonism.” [[223]](#footnote-223) The author then states, “It will never do to argue the practicability of our system beyond the confines of the race until the experiment is abundantly tried,” which suggests that the author believes that white, Westerners needed to test whether or not it was practical to attempt instilling Western style governments in non-white nations.[[224]](#footnote-224)

Barnum’s racial displays reflect the emerging field of Ethnology in the nineteenth century, but it is likely that the showman did not agree with its main premise: that some races were sub-human. In his autobiography, *Struggles and Triumphs*, Barnum the idea that non-white races were scientifically inferior to Anglo-Saxons. Barnum states, “You may take a dozen specimens of both sexes from the lowest type of man found in Africa; their race has been buried for ages in ignorance and barbarism, and you can scarcely perceive that they have any more of manhood or womanhood than so many orang-outangs or gorillas. You look at their low foreheads, their thick skulls and lips, their woolly heads, their flat noses, their dull, lazy eyes, and you may be tempted to adopt the language of this minority committee [of ethnologists] and exclaim: Surely these people have “no inventive faculties, no genius for the arts, or for any of those occupations requiring intellect and wisdom.” But bring them out into the light of civilization…and the human soul will begin to develop itself.”[[225]](#footnote-225) Despite the fact that Barnum may have disagreed with ethnologists regarding the scientific basis of their racial assumptions, it is also clear that he believed that bringing Western civilization to foreign peoples was the only way for them to become civilized. Thus, the Ethnological Congress was created by a man who did not necessarily believe that foreign people were scientifically inferior, but did believe that they were culturally inferior because of their lack of influence from Western civilization. By creating a spectacle out of race in his Ethnological Congress, Barnum was attempting to exemplify the many ways foreign people differed from his white audience in an attempt to suggest that, though they are uncivilized and savage now, they could become civilized if given the chance. This, mixed with the contemporary concept of Manifest Destiny, made Barnum’s Ethnological Congress a spectacle of Western imperialism. For, according to the main tenet of Manifest Destiny, if the subjects on stage were uncivilized, then it was only a matter of time before Western powers brought civilization to their shores through conquest.

but this was likely only done to signify that the islanders were not white and, therefore, inferior. The blackface minstrel in American popular entertainment culture was an extremely popular entertainment form with its own coded racism. By drawing island people in this fashion, the artists were able to apply much of the racist characterizations of black Americans to the people in far-away island nations. However, the purpose of blackface in this context was much different than the purpose of blackface minstrels in the entertainment industry. Blackface minstrels were shows that meant to lampoon black culture and mock black people. Blackface in these cartoons had nothing to do with black people other than using the long-established racism towards black Americans to appropriate ideas of racial inferiority and non-verbally apply these ideas to island peoples.

Some cartoons, like. Cartoons like, “New Faces at the Thanksgiving Dinner,” “If They’ll Be Good,” and “The Filipino’s First Bath” The cartoons “Speaking from Experience,” “He Wouldn’t Take it Any Other Way,” and all play on the contemporary argument that the U.S. was going to “civilize” foreign island peoples through force. Finally, cartoons like “Troubles Which May Follow an Imperial Policy,” and “A Glimpse into the Halls of Congress a Few Years Hence” represent the anti-imperialist argument that colonizing foreign lands would lead to chaos and the decline of American civilization.

Three types of arguments that political cartoonists used for their cartoons,

Paternalism - [..\A Primary Sources\1898 Filipinos are savages.pdf](../A%20Primary%20Sources/1898%20Filipinos%20are%20savages.pdf)

White Man’s Burden

Violent Civilization - [..\A Primary Sources\1898 We will Civilize Hawaii with guns.pdf](../A%20Primary%20Sources/1898%20We%20will%20Civilize%20Hawaii%20with%20guns.pdf)

(Acknowledging the imagery is wrong!) - [..\A Primary Sources\1899 Filipinos not savages.pdf](../A%20Primary%20Sources/1899%20Filipinos%20not%20savages.pdf)

All of the countries are drawn as children, therein implying that they were not equal to their American guardians. However, the disparate cultures are drawn at different developmental stages of their childhood. Cuba and Puerto Rico are drawn as prepubescent children who are fully clothed, implying that they were not quite as civilized as the Americans but they were not completely uncivilized savages. Though Hawaii is drawn with its back to the viewer, they are clearly a younger child who is dressed in a grass skirt and no shirt. The Philippines are also drawn as a young child without a shirt, and they are marked as distinctly different from Hawaii by the jewelry they are wearing and the messy hair. The Ladrones are depicted as an infant sitting in a high chair. These depictions suggest that the artist was remarking upon the various levels of civilization among the various countries, with the Ladrones being in their infancy of civilization, Hawaii and the Philippines just barely exhibiting any sort of civilization, and Puerto Rico and Cuba being well on their way to becoming civilized people of the world. The artist here is clearly celebrating the idea that the U.S. was going to “civilize” the people in the various countries that it obtained through conquest. Like Barnum’s Ethnological Congress, this cartoon creates a spectacle out of foreign peoples that reduces their disparate cultures down to the clothes they wear.

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.””[[226]](#footnote-226) The cartoon also exploits the taboo subject of cannibalism; a characteristic that Barnum consistently worked to connect to foreign island peoples through the many iterations of his “cannibals from the South Pacific” exhibitions. This cartoon also exploits American’s racism as the ape-like creatures who have taken over congress are derivative from the way black people were represented in contemporary cartooning and public entertainment. However, instead of remarking upon black culture, this image was created to directly imply that if the United States were to colonize foreign lands, then the foreign people would bring chaos, cannibalism, and savagery to the United States. The message of this cartoon, entitled “A Glimpse into the Halls of Congress a Few Years Hence (If we go on annexing islands),” is an explicit warning against what may come to pass if America continued to colonize “uncivilized” lands and people.

Obviously, there is a multitude of reasons why the United States engaged in the Spanish American and Philippine American wars. Kristen Hoganson argues that the wars were a result of the work-class male population’s need to feel manly and dominant toward foreign cultures. Amy Greenberg Argues that the conflicts were an extension of the United States” expansion west, and the contemporary concept of manhood and Manifest Destiny. Bonnie Miller suggests that the wars were popular among the American public due to effective messaging campaigns by U.S. newspapers and political cartoonists. Janet Davis argues that the circus industry turned imperialism into a spectacle and garnered public support for conquest because it became deeply linked to nationalism. These wars were the first instance of the U.S. expanding beyond the borders of North America, and, as such, the topic has been covered by hundreds of historians, each with their own arguments as to what caused the conflicts. My work does not add to the major arguments as to what caused the wars, it simply reveals a new point of origin regarding the imagery that was used to sell the wars to the American people. While some of the aforementioned authors mention P.T. Barnum, none of them mention James O’Connell. Barnum is clearly the most important character in this history, but it is important to note that he was not the first to exploit the fantasy of the island savage in the American popular entertainment industry.

Further, these historians, when they do mention Barnum or the influence of the entertainment industry, typically conflate the histories of black Americans and Native Americans with the history of island peoples within the entertainment industry. Instead of providing analysis of how island cultures were represented, most often, authors tend to discuss their exhibition in the context of how black Americans and Native Americans were viewed in contemporary society. Though this is entirely warranted as there is clearly a connection between the way these groups were presented in the entertainment business, analyzing their exhibition in this way takes away from the fact that they were each distinctly different cultures. By focusing specifically on the way island cultures were exhibited in the popular entertainment industry, I hope to add to the scholarship by providing a more clear examination of how pro and anti-imperialist cartoonists appropriated imagery that had been established in commercialized spectacles for decades before it ever made its way into political cartoons.

The establishment of a popular culture within American society has inarguably lead to the dissemination of ideas about the foreign cultures that is shared among a mass populace. The fascination with the “other,” the stranger, the foreigner, has been of interest to scholars throughout the history of the world, however, popular entertainment has done a much better job of influencing society’s ideas about the outside world. Academic fields such as Cultural Anthropology, History, Philosophy, Psychology, and Political Science all analyze the foundational differences between human beings in order to better understand the human condition. However, intellectual analysis, and respectful, accurate assessment of foreign cultures, regardless of the academic field, is often only consumed by a small percentage of any population. Millions of people a year do not go out and read the grand academic works of Edward Said or Michel Foucault. What they do is watch television, movies, and some still go to the theater for a play. Thus, even in today’s age with the internet and endless amounts of scholarly knowledge at our fingertips, popular culture succeeds where academia fails. Popular culture reaches the masses in numbers that academics could only dream of. And that is why entertainment culture is so important. It is through entertainment that millions of people are introduced to the world outside their own. As such, we must better understand how our popular culture and entertainment industries have influenced the way Americans view people they perceive to be different or “other.”

As American museums and circuses discussed “civilization” throughout the late-nineteenth century, they were effectively implying that foreign, non-white nations were unlike the West, and so they were inferior. Using this method of representation, show managers turned foreignness into a spectacle that effectively dehumanized foreign people to the point where American citizens, who claimed to love liberty, were calling for the wanton domination of foreign lands. This dehumanization happened through the process of image making. When men like Barnum were curating their shows, they were not attempting to accurately and respectively exhibit people from another culture, they were intent upon exhibiting what made the foreign people different than the white audience. In essence, they were creating a caricature of foreignness that implied inferiority among foreign people. As such, the imagery of island cultures within the theater, museum, circus, world fair, and political cartooning was inherently similar in that it played upon its audiences” sense of superiority. Every time Barnum put a “cannibal” on stage, the masses were “learning” about the savage and primitive nature of the outside world. It is unsurprising that, when the opportunity arose to “civilize” the foreigner through violent conquest, political cartoonists relied upon imagery that had been specifically developed to exemplify the uncivilized nature of non-white cultures.

OCONNELL CALLSEM INDIANS

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 might be “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 the preface of *Residence*, this association is made clear by statement by the editor that “this will be the first published, circumstantial history of a community of Oceanic Indians.”[[227]](#footnote-227) The author here is not attempting to properly assign the Pohnpeians to a larger racial group such as South Asian Indians, but rather using the term Indian as a blanket word to signify the inferior, primitive nature of their culture.

Ethnological congress lead in

until he created a new type of racial exhibition which displayed foreign peoples simply for the fact that they were foreign. However, before Barnum developed his Ethnological Congress, the showman continued to exhibit performers in freak shows in the same tradition as he did in the *American Museum*.

1. [Henri de Tonti], “Relation de la Louisianne ou Mississipi Ecrite à une Dame par unOfficier de Marine,” in Jean-Frédéric Bernard,

   Recueil des voyages au Nord contenantdivers mémoires très utiles au commerce et à la navigation

   , tome 5,

   Relation de la Louisianeet du Mississippi

   (Amsterdam, 1724), 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Dudden p. 57 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. O’Connell p. 13 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. O’Connell’s narrative does have some accurate information about tattooing among Pohnpeian people. According to DeMello, they tattooed the hands as a marriage ceremony, and they also tattooed on the arms and legs. O’Connell also accurately describes the tools and techniques of Pohnpeian tattooists. However, the sailor’s exaggerations, outright inaccuracies, and the fact that he also had tattoos from other Micronesian cultures, suggests that there is a high likelihood that much of his narrative is fiction. Tattoo scholars such as DeMello, Bogdan, Dening, Gell, and Nickell all agree on this assessment. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. “Tattooing.” The Press Tribune; Chicago; October 22, 1860. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The Latest Folly, Philadelphia 1873 FIND IT [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. *New York Times*. “Six Years’ Captivity Among the Indians.” May 4, 1858; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2009) with Index (1851-1993) Also: *Nashville union and American,* (Nashville, Tenn.), May 02, 1856. Also: *The Bedford Gazette,* (Bedford, Pa.), June 27, 1856. Also: *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer*, (Wheeling, Va.), April 28, 1856. Also: *The Ottawa Free Trader*, (Ottawa, Ill.), May 10, 1856. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. **NOTICES OF NEW PUBLICATIONS.**

   *New York Daily Times (1851-1857);* Jan 10, 1852;

   ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times with Index

   pg. 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. **NEW-YORK CITY.: Lectures on "Ethnology." The Engines of the Adriatic. ...**

    *New York Daily Times (1851-1857);* Feb 4, 1857;

    ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times with Index [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. 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 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. **EXTERMINATION WITH TENDERNESS.**

    *New York Times (1857-1922);* Oct 13, 1879;

    ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times with Index p.4 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Footnote Mazeppa, popular in the 1830s, pre war p.91 sentilles. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Footnote cross dressing 98-100 sentilles [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Defense of the Blondes [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Footnote dudden, allen, and note the use of female bodies. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Dudden [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Footnote a bunch of theatre historians [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Frank Howard p. 9 [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Tattooed lady [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Woodward ad [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Tattoos of war 1898 [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Tattooing and SAW [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. IBID [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Mifflin p.9 [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Ibid p.16 [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Women being taken captive by Native Americans was common on the frontier during the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Various tribes used captivity to replace dead members, grow their numbers, and as a way to extract ransom. This was seen by whites as a brutal form of warfare, but the captives were often assimilated into the tribe. For more about captivity and the frontier see: James Brooks. *Captives and Cousins: Violence, Kinship, and Community in the New Mexico Borderlands, 1680-1880*, Wilmington North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press, 1995. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Mifflin p. 51 [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. “Six Year’s Captivity Among the Indians-Narrative of Miss Olive Oatman.” *The New York Times*, May 4, 1858. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Mifflin p.51 [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. “Six Year’s Captivity.” [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Stratton, R. B. *Captivity of the Oatman Girls.* San Francisco: Whitton, Towne & Co.s Excelsior Steam Power Presses, 1857. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Nickell, Joe. *Secrets of the Sideshows*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2008. p. 5-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Nickell p. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. O’Connell lived with the people of Pohnpei; a small Micronesian Island in the Western Pacific. However, advertisements for his show claim that he lived with people in the South Pacific. For nineteenth century American entertainers, this nuance was not necessary, so, all of the acts from island cultures in the Pacific Ocean were simply advertised as being from the South Pacific. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Showmen refers to the people who managed the theaters and shows that O’Connell worked for. O’Connell worked for numerous people over the course of his career, and mentioning them all here seems antiquarian. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Cite [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. O’Connell p.12 [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. *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. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Ibid p. 8 [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Henry Howe. Tattooing of O’Connell and Keenan, Block Print, c.1855. It is not clear where this print was originally published, but Henry Howe was an author who specialized in histories of Americans at home and abroad. One can assume this print was intended to be a part of one of his books, but it was never actually published. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Memoir Find Page [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. DeMello Inked, 472 [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Rutherford and Cabri [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Adventures on the south seas [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. O’Connell find page [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. “Adventures on the South Seas.” *Charlotte Journal (Charlotte N.C.)*, December 2, 1836. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Henry Howe. Tattooing of O’Connell and Keenan, Block Print, c.1855. It is not clear where this print was originally published, but Henry Howe was an author who specialized in histories of Americans at home and abroad. One can assume this print was intended to be a part of one of his books, but it was never actually published. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Memoir Find Page [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Said 116-17 [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Ibid Vii [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Explain Yellow Journalism and list some books for further reference [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Miller 11 [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Rough-riding refers to exhibitions of skill on horseback. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. “The Garden Tournament.” *New York Times,* Mar 19, 1898. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. “The Garden Tournament.” [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Theodore Roosevelt. “Sept. 29 and 30 Holidays.” *New York Times,* Sep 19, 1899. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. “Dewey on their Left Arms.” *The Omaha Daily Bee*, December 2, 1898. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Said p. 206-207 [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Origins of Species p. 527 [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Footnote about Galton publishing these ideas first. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Descent of man p. 128 [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. “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 [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. **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 [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. In 1844, after the *First Opium War*, China and the U.S. signed the Treaty of Wanghia, opening up Chinese ports to American ships, and ten years later, Commodore Mathew Perry landed in Japan and established a trade relationship with the U.S.-Japan Treaty of Peace and Amity, signed in March of 1854. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Cultures of us imperialism p 233 [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Captivity narratives were so common in North America because being taken captive by Native Americans was a real, quantifiable threat in colonial America into the nineteenth century. Indeed, what the European colonizers called captivity, Native Americans would have called adoption, but this nuance was not present in most of the narratives. Surviving captivity was also exceedingly common, especially among women as less than ten percent of captive women died in captivity. This created a situation where white women were commonly taken captive, and they would return to white society with a story to tell about their time among the ‘savages.’ However, their published accounts of captivity were often written in a way that demonized Native Americans, and sought to validate violence against Native American peoples. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Ebersole, Gary. *Captured by Texts: Puritan to Postmodern Images of Indian Captivity*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995. p.9 [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Namias, June. White Captives: Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995. p. 25 [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Said find page [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Captain James Cook’s *A Journal of a voyage round the world in HMS Endeavour 1768-1771*, is particularly relevant to James O’Connell because Cook’s work is heralded as reintroducing the practice of tattooing into the Western consciousness. Cook traveled to the South Pacific, and during his travels he ‘discovered’ New Zealand and other Polynesian cultures that had no previous contact with Western peoples. Some of these cultures engaged in tattooing, and Cook’s work is one of the first pieces of western literature to describe the process of Polynesian tattooing. Further, Cook’s discussion of the Polynesian cultures was accurate at times, and completely fabricated at others, but his journals stood as a shining example of how to write about foreign cultures in a ‘scientific’ way. Though the journals were intended to be scientific, the language Cook uses is wholly imperial, a characteristic that would be present in much of the discussions of foreign cultures in travel literature during the nineteenth century. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Page? [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. O’Connell Residence p. V [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. *New York Herald*, October 21, 1849. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. *Daily Crescent* (New Orleans), September 13, 1852. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. **An Army for Empire: The United States Army in the Spanish-American War**

    By Graham A. Cosmas. P30 [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. **The Yellow Journalism: The Press and America's Emergence as a World Power**

    By David Ralph Spencer, Judith Spencer p130 [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Reconcentration Policy of General Weyler [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. **The San Francisco call., December 16, 1896, Image 1  
    About** [**The San Francisco call. (San Francisco [Calif.]) 1895-1913**](https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85066387/) [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. “Butcher General Weyler.” Denver Post, Feb 19 1897. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Miller 33 [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Yellow Journalism [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. “Crisis at Hand” New York Journal. Feb 16, 1898 p1. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Miller 55 [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Miller 20 [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Hoganson 44 [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Greenberg 280 [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Miller find [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Miller 189 [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Miler 189 [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Spencer 117 [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Cite levine and Dudden [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Levine 147 see also Harris [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Levine 149 [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. . Warren.464. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Highbrow Lowbrow 21 [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Neil Harris. *The Artist in American Society*. (University of Chicago Press, Chicago). 1966. 3 [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. In the Northern colonies, theaters met strong condemnation from religious groups who saw the theater as a corrupting force that inspired laziness and immorality. Theaters were actually banned in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island during the mid-eighteenth century, and most colonies banned theaters during the Revolutionary War at the request of the Continental Congress. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. The growth of the theater industry is directly tied to the industrialization of the American economy during the turn of the nineteenth century. In the years following the Revolutionary War, some parts of the country began to move from an agrarian economy, which was characterized by sustenance farming, to an industrial economy, made up of businesses that manufactured goods. This shift led to population booms in urban centers like New York City, Boston, and Philadelphia. As more people moved into the city centers, markets opened up for businesses to provide entertainment for an ever-growing population. The turn of the nineteenth century has been described by Harris as “the formative years” of the American theater industry as theater houses were built in large urban centers for the sole purpose of public entertainment. There were theater houses around the country before this time period, but it is really the turn of the century when the theater became a profitable business. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Humbug 23 [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. Levine p. 23 [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Freak shows were not a nineteenth-century phenomenon; people have been putting people with disabilities on display for hundreds of years. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. Bogdan 32 [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Adams 2 [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. Adams 165 [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. Davis 184 [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. Davis 194 [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. Davis 200 [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. Page? [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. PAGE? [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. Davis 21 [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. Buffalo Bill. Daily Evening Bulletin. Maysville KY. Oct. 13, 1882 [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. The American West: The Invention of a Myth-David Murdoch P40 [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. Murdoch 40 [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. Warren 69 [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. Murdoch 41 [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. Time Turns Back. Witchita Daily Eagle. Sept 11 1898. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. Murdoch 42 [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. Struggles- Barnum, - 357 Also, $109,000 is around $3.5 million today. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. Struggles Barnum 356 [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. Ibid struggles 357 [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. Lott Intro [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. Lott intro [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. Lott intro [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. Lott find page # [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. “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 [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. **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 [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. Darwin did publish a book that claimed humans were evolved from apes in 1871, entitled *The Decent of Man*. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. Life of the Living Aztec Children, 1860, found in Bogdan 137 the “brute creation” refers to non-human species. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. *Evening Star (Washington D.C.)*, "The Tattooed Lady," October 11, 1884. www.loc.gov (accessed October 9, 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. Find in Lombroso [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. <https://lostmuseum.cuny.edu/archive/exhibit/heth> [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. **The New York herald., November 14, 1842, Image 2** [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. “Butcher General Weyler.” Denver Post, Feb 19 1897. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. Miller 33 [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. New York World April 3, 1898, 27 [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. Miller 100 [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. “Wild West Warriors” Salt Lake Herald, May 8, 1898. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
160. The Citizen, June 23, 1898 [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
161. ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
162. Miller 99 [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
163. Miller 100 [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
164. Reconcentration Policy of General Weyler [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
165. **The San Francisco call., December 16, 1896, Image 1  
     About** [**The San Francisco call. (San Francisco [Calif.]) 1895-1913**](https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85066387/) [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
166. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
167. Spencer, Yellow Press [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
168. Spencer 117 [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
169. Yellow Journalism [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
170. “Crisis at Hand” New York Journal. Feb 16, 1898 p1. [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
171. Miller 55 [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
172. Miller 20 [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
173. Davis 194 [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
174. Miller 101 [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
175. Miller 96 [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
176. An Army for Empire: The United States Army in the Spanish-American War

     By Graham A. Cosmas 218 [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
177. Miller 95 [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
178. Davis 207 [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
179. “For Retention” **The Pacific commercial advertiser., November 02, 1898, Page 3, Image 3  
     About** [**The Pacific commercial advertiser. (Honolulu, Hawaiian Islands) 1885-1921**](https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85047084/) [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
180. “Debaters from Berkley Win from Stanford” **The San Francisco call., April 23, 1899, Page 10, Image 10** [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
181. “Hawaii and the Philippines” The argonaut June 6, 1898. [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
182. Miller 216 [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
183. **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 [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
184. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-184)
185. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-185)
186. Miller, 156. [↑](#footnote-ref-186)
187. General Weyler’s “Reconcentration Policy,” refers to military tactics by the Spanish general in which he declared that all Cuban citizens leave their homes and live in what were effectively concentration camps. He instituted this policy to combat guerilla warfare in the country, however, he did not plan for how to feed or house the hundreds of thousands of people that would be populating the camps. As a result, hundreds of thousands died from disease and hunger. [↑](#footnote-ref-187)
188. Miller, “Spectacle of Endangered Bodies,” 19-55. [↑](#footnote-ref-188)
189. David Ralph Spencer, Judith Spencer, *The Yellow Journalism: The Press and America's Emergence as a World Power*, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 123: Hearst and Pulitzer are most often referred to as the founders of ‘Yellow journalism.’ The term ‘yellow journalism’ or ‘yellow press’ is an adage given to sensationalized newspapers who overstated facts in order to rile up the public and garner support for war. Yellow journalism was a latent function of technological advancement in printing, for during the late nineteenth century it became much cheaper to print a paper or magazine, leading to an explosion in the amount of periodicals that were available to the public. Some of the newly established penny papers would print sensational content in order to sell more papers. Hearst and Pulitzer both owned penny papers. [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
190. Miller, 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
191. “Thousands came at freedoms call,” *The San Francisco Call*. March 21, 1897. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-191)
192. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-192)
193. Charles Taylor Jay. “The Cuban Melodrama.” Print. NYC: Keppler and Shwarzmann. *Puck Magazine*. June 3, 1898. From Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
194. Miller 20 [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
195. Yellow Journalism [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
196. “Crisis at Hand” New York Journal. Feb 16, 1898 p1. [↑](#footnote-ref-196)
197. Miller 55 [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
198. Miller 154 [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
199. https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/hawaii-petition [↑](#footnote-ref-199)
200. Miller find [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
201. Newspaper article about Philippines 1899 [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
202. Victor Gillam, ‘speaking from Experience.” *Judge*, April 22, 1899. Courtesy New York State Library, Manuscripts and Special Collections. [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
203. The image of the Filipino is also drawn in the style of the blackface minstrel, but, as I have mentioned before, this was likely done in order to establish the fact that the Filipinos were not white rather than remarking on black culture. [↑](#footnote-ref-203)
204. Miller, 195. [↑](#footnote-ref-204)
205. https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/john-allen-chau-killed-tribe-north-sentinel-island-andaman-christian-missionary-a8646201.html [↑](#footnote-ref-205)
206. Similar to a theatrical performance in 2019, tickets to a theater were different depending on where the seat was. However, tickets to a play in the early-nineteenth century were still affordable for pretty much everyone. This inevitably led to class segregation among a three tiered seating system, including seats in the boxes, the pit, and the gallery. The rich sat in the box seats, the middle-class sat in the pit (in front of the stage), and the poor sat in the gallery (balcony seating). Levine, 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
207. Ibid, 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
208. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
209. Levine, 63. [↑](#footnote-ref-209)
210. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-210)
211. Ibid, 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-211)
212. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-212)
213. Levine, 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
214. Ibid, 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-214)
215. “Tragedy at the Opera House.” *New York Herald*, May 15, 1849. [↑](#footnote-ref-215)
216. *New York Herald,* May 12, 1849. [↑](#footnote-ref-216)
217. *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, May 16, 1849. [↑](#footnote-ref-217)
218. Ibid, 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-218)
219. Lawrence Levine, “Order, Hierarchy, and Culture,” in *Highbrow Lowbrow.* [↑](#footnote-ref-219)
220. Faye Dudden, *Women in the American Theatre: Actresses and Audiences, 1790-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 12-13. [↑](#footnote-ref-220)
221. Lawrence Levine, “William Shakespeare in America,” in *Highbrow Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 11-82. [↑](#footnote-ref-221)
222. Neil Harris, *Humbug* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 78. [↑](#footnote-ref-222)
223. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-223)
224. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-224)
225. Barnum, *Struggles*, 627. [↑](#footnote-ref-225)
226. Miller, 225. [↑](#footnote-ref-226)
227. O’Connell, X. [↑](#footnote-ref-227)