

BOSTON UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Dissertation

**PATRIOTISM, RACE, AND GENDER BENDING  
THROUGH AMERICAN SONG:  
COVER ILLUSTRATIONS OF POPULAR MUSIC  
FROM THE CIVIL WAR TO WORLD WAR I**

by

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**ABSTRACT**

This dissertation engages America's illustrated sheet music through topical analyses of political and social ruptures from the Civil War to World War I. In so doing, it demonstrates that music illustrations fit into larger networks of American picture making, participating in the recording and redirecting of contemporary American anxieties.

Chapter 1: Bloody Banner, Silent Drum: The Material Wounded on Civil War Sheet Music argues that violated flags and drums in music illustrations transcended their martial functionality to signify loss of innocence and life. Chapter 2: Banjos, Rifles, and Razors: Picturing American Blackness investigates the transition from black-face minstrel songs to the "coon song craze" of the 1880s and 1890s, arguing that the stock character's razor, a weapon frequently figured in the songs, was not only a symbol of violence but of white fears of black social mobility. Chapter 3: Hoopskirts and Handlebars: Gender Construction and Transgression in Victorian America offers two

case studies, one of cross-dressing pictures after the Civil War, the other of gendered bicycle images, arguing that the American public between the war and the turn of the century enjoyed contemplating the flexibility of gender roles and boundaries. Chapter 4: “There Were Giants in the Earth”: Monsters of the First World War argues that popular pictures of American giants and monstrous war machines engaged in symbolic battle with monstrous Huns, who symbolized German atrocity for a Euro-American public uncomfortable with the idea of war with European peoples. At the same time, giants represented the common belief of America’s special role in international peace, as neutrality gave way to declared war.

Sheet music illustration was a vibrant part of American visual culture. By assessing the layered meanings of these often ignored pictures, my dissertation seeks to recover and restore lost memories of America’s usual but fraught visual romance with popular song.