From pulp hero to superhero: Culture, race, and identity in American popular culture, 1900-1940.

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Abstract
Adventure characters in the pulp magazines and comic books of the early twentieth century reflected development in the ongoing American fascination with heroic figures. As established figures such as the cowboy became disconnected from everyday experiences of Americans, new popular fantasies emerged, providing readers with essentialist action heroes whose adventures stylized the struggle of the American everyman with a modern, industrialized, heterogeneous world. Popular characters such as Tarzan, Conan, the Shadow, and Doc Savage perpetuated the individualistic archetype Americans associated with the frontier cowboy and the struggles of manifest destiny while offering the fantastic adventure, exoticism, and escapism that modernity demanded.
developed further with the advent of Superman and other superheroes, as confrontations with otherness transformed to struggles internalized within the American city. Despite essential models of white male power provided by America and continued to assert the racial and civil superiority of the tradition. This paper explores the racial and civil ideas America sought to promote in early twentieth century and their evolution in the popular entertainment press.

Comments


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