

## Historical Advertising Language Change on the Example of BARNUM'S AMERICAN MUSEUM and THE GREATEST SHOWMAN

This presentation aims to focus on the history of language and modality of advertising from the 1850s until today, using examples of advertisements for the original *Barnum's American Museum* (the origin of *circus* as we know it today) and its adaptations. These examples are meant to sketch the development from traditional advertising strategies towards current and upcoming language use and the according media variety for commercial purposes.

In 1850, mainly posters were used to advertise the *Barnum* US tour with Swedish singer *Jenny Lind*. Text-image-compositions (posters, flyers, caricatures) were used to draw attention utilizing typical stylistics from the *semiotic word and image field* 'circus' (Bouissac: 2010). Emphasis was put on imagery in order to augment oral delivery across language areas (Europe, North America).

Print advertisements for the later *Barnum Circus* remained in the rhetoric style of classic announcement posters for more than a century, while changing their language and imagery continuously (Hagner: 1959), which is shown based on a selection of posters from that period. In addition, print and newspaper outtakes demonstrate the creation of a linguistic sub-genre around the advertisement of the circus (Borbé: 1981).

1970's Broadway musical *Barnum* was advertised with print, radio and TV commercials mainly featuring outtakes of the upcoming show – as oppose to the original version, which kept relying on spreading rumors without concrete references or examples of the upcoming production.

The 2017 biographic film-musical *The Greatest Showman* retells the history of the *Barnum Circus* using contemporary media methods. The advertising strategy does no longer rely on print advertisements, but mainly focusses on digital online media such as webpages, social media platforms (including a dance tutorial on *YouTube*) to excite the discourse (Baumgarten: 2013).

The presentation demonstrates the advertising language change with regard to media development throughout a period of around 170 years. Special emphasis is put on the comparison of the development of text and imagery within this setting.

### Literature

- Baumgarten, Dominik (2013): *Ästhetische Transfers zwischen Literatur und Werbung*. Marburg: Tectum.
- Borbé, Tasso: „Zur funktionalen Typologie des Plakats“. In: Bentele, Günter (ed.) (1981): *Semiotik und Massenmedien*. München: Ölschläger.
- Bouissac, Paul (2010): *Semiotics at the Circus*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Hagner, Annemarie: „Plakat“. In: Seling, Hartmut (ed.) (1959): *Jugendstil. Der Weg ins 20. Jahrhundert*. Heidelberg: Keyserische.