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 Dr. Devine
 History 579

*The Soul of Pleasure:
 Sentiment and Sensation in Nineteenth-Century American Mass Entertainment*
 By David Monod

1. Monod states in his introduction, “I identify two significant transitions in the broader change in culture, morals, and taste: first the new valuation of compassion that the Enlightenment inspired; and second the retreat from sentimentality that the Civil War precipitated” (p.4). How did these two events shape American’s perceptions towards live theatrical entertainment?
2. Monod states, “Before the 1830s, all American gardens catered to a well-to-do clientele. Many parents felt comfortable enough to bring their children to the garden theaters” (p.25). How did the garden theatres contribute to the revolution of sentimentality that was helping to shape America’s appetite for entertainment? (Chapter 1, p. 41)
3. Why did the sentimental comedies resonate with the middling class in the 1840s? (p.43) “Why would stereotypical characters and absurd humor, even if they were not vulgar, appeal to patrons discovering the theatre for the first time” (p.45)?
4. “As tastes changed in the 1840s, the difference between real and authentic acting became a marker of class distinction” (p.91). How did the middling-class and the working-class audiences experience the theatre? Do you believe that the theatre experience represented hope and prosperity to the working class?
5. “The saloon theatres did, however, naturalize the behavior of the streetwalker” (p.130). Variety was a theatre of forward propulsion, not contemplation, and the fun of a concert salon involved immersing oneself in its utter artificiality” (p.135). How did the employees interact with their patrons at these different types of saloons? Why does Monod label the saloon theatre more risqué? Do you consider Monod’s comments on the saloon judgmental and stereotypical of women?
6. After the Civil War, “The demise of sympathetic spectatorship and the ascendance of sensationalism” (p.170) would steer cultural entertainment to vaudeville and burlesque. How did Americans’ attitude towards performers like Jenny Hughes (p 205) shift from sentimental to compassion?

7. The saloon's influence and boundary pushing vices gave way to new forms of entertainment during the mid- to late-1800s. How did the ballet stage production of *The Black Crook* resonate with female audiences and young people? Why did "moral guardians" denounce it? Can laws enforce morality?
8. Monod states in his conclusion, "The repudiation of sentimentality by the nation's intellectual and cultural elite was as much a sign of the narrowing division in tastes as it was of the widening income divide and the frightening concentration of wealth and power in the gilded Age" (p.245). How did the theatre's transformation over time help loosen moral values and drive cultural trends? Compare the similarities and differences of Lawrence Levine and David Monod's assessment of how entertainment in the United States influenced culture and class distinction.