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Representations of Irish Famine and Rebellion in the British Satirical Press, 1845-49

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Abstract: This paper considers the representation of the Great Irish Famine (1845-50) and the Young Ireland Rebellion of 1848 through the prism of several lesser-known British satirical periodicals of the period, principally *Joe Miller the Younger* (1845), *The Man in the Moon* (1847-8) and *The Puppet Show* (1848-9). It compares their treatment of Irish issues to that of the more successful *Punch* (to which they emerged as rival publications), and assesses the likely impact of such satirical visual outputs on British debates about the Irish crisis. The paper gives particular attention to the work of the French satirical artist Paul Gavarni in *The Puppet Show*.

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This essay is a contribution to the study of the visual culture of the Great Irish Famine of 1845-1850 and the associated "Young Ireland" Rebellion of 1848. Taken at its broadest, the visual culture of an event encompasses the ways it was and continues to be represented, both at the time it was experienced, and as subsequently "remembered", through visual media and artefacts. These can range from the "high art" of paintings, including the small, but heavily reproduced and exhibited, corpus of famine paintings (including eviction and emigration scenes) produced in the later 1840s and early 1850s, and the reflective work of more recent decades, to the commemorative monuments that mushroomed in Ireland and the diaspora from the mid-1990s. As Emily Mark-FitzGerald has observed in her study of famine memorialisation, much of the more recent visual output has drawn heavily on visual tropes first laid down in the graphic representations of the Irish crisis produced in the new illustrated weekly press of the 1840s and to a lesser extent in book illustration and more occasional publications.[1] One need only look, for example, at the 1999 famine memorial window in Belfast City Hall to see the continuing power of James Mahony's 1847 and 1849 *Illustrated London News* sketches in moulding (and perhaps constraining) the visual imagination of the event.[2] The Famine's visual culture has attracted growing scholarly interest in recent years, with an important edited volume addressing the theme appearing in 2018.[3]

This essay deals with a specific aspect of that visual culture – the commentary contained in the satirical press and caricature production in the later 1840s which addressed both the crisis and Irish resistance to British rule. Generally (although not always) tending towards hostile depictions of the plight of Ireland, these largely London-based productions have naturally tended not to be the subject of inspiration for modern Famine art, but some have become familiar to modern audiences through their reproduction as (usually uncontextualised) illustrations in or covers of historical texts,

beginning with the heavy use of *Punch* images in R.D. Edwards and T.D. Williams' volume *The Great Famine,* first published in 1956).[4] Through the consumption of such historical texts, and auxiliary media such as television documentary and static exhibitions, these have become part of our visual repertoire for envisioning the catastrophe and its political contexts. They are also, of course, deserving subjects of study in their own right for understanding how contemporaries, especially those not immediately confronted with the horrors of famine, imagined and represented what was happening in Ireland at the time, and encouraged consumers of this visual material to interpret and respond to it. British middle-class public opinions were in part informed by the satirical press's graphic representations as well as the newspaper press's reportage – and new printing technologies from the early 1840s allowed many weeklies of both descriptions to feature engraved and lithographed images at relatively affordable prices to well-to-do consumers.

The treatment of the Great Irish Famine by Britain's leading satirical journal of the period, *Punch*, has been analysed by a number of scholars, including L. Perry Curtis, Roy Foster, Leslie Williams and Peter Gray, and I will summarise this very briefly here before moving on to the less familiar territory of rival publications.[5] Founded as a weekly in London in 1841, *Punch* was by the mid-1840s moving away from its initial radical politics towards a more conservative and "patriotic" position, self-consciously independent from partisan alignments and containing a range of writers and artists with varying ideological positions, from the radical Douglas Jerrold and the liberal Catholic Richard Doyle, to the conservative satirist William Makepeace Thackeray and the increasingly xenophobic John Leech. As the latter emerged as the paper's principal cartoonist, it was his weekly "big cut" cartoons that tended to dominate *Punch's* visual representation of the Famine, augmented by Thackeray's prose satires on Ireland and the Irish, which were illustrated by his own "small cut" images. The visceral hostility of Leech to Irish nationalists from Daniel O'Connell to the Young Irelanders and later the Fenians, and towards what he regarded as an inherently violent and ungrateful Irish peasantry, and his deployment of simianizing (and thus dehumanising) visual tropes to embody both, is well established in the literature and needs little elaboration here.[6]

However, *Punch* was not the only popular satirical journal appearing in these years, spawning as it did a series of short-lived competitors produced in London and aiming (with limited durability) to emulate its success in establishing a national market for an illustrated satirical periodical. This essay is concerned principally with three pretenders to *Punch's* crown in the later 1840s – *Joe Miller the Younger* (1845), *The Man in the Moon* (1847-9) and *The Puppet Show* (1848-9) – and the extent to which they followed or deviated from its satirical representation of the themes of Irish hunger and rebellion in this period. A robust case can be made for the political importance of *Punch's* representations of the subject, given the evidence of its breadth of circulation among the political classes of the period, its consumption by policy makers, and its interrelationship with elements of the powerful metropolitan newspaper press. It was reported to be selling 40,000 copies weekly by 1845, with readership likely to be significantly higher than this given its availability in reading rooms and clubs.[7] Obviously a much weaker case for influence over public opinion holds for its unsuccessful rivals, whose circulation figures are elusive and whose termination after one to two years of operation indicates somewhat shaky business foundations and limited success in establishing a distinct "tone" that was attractive to the satirical periodical-buying public. Nevertheless, there is some evidence that these did have significant circulation in Great Britain and Ireland in their lifetimes, and, if only to place *Punch's* satirical productions on the subject into comparative perspective, these journals are worthy of some attention. Discussion of particular images is supplemented here by analyses of the periodicals' political leanings and responses to contemporary events, as evidenced by a range of textual and visual pieces they published.

Given the relative obscurity of these titles – and their neglect within Irish Famine historiography – some preliminary discussion of their origins, lifespans, and interconnections is warranted. A history of the London-based rivals to *Punch* has been sketched out by Celina Fox in her study of *Graphic Journalism in England during the 1830s and 1840s*.[8] A successor to earlier *Punch* clones such as *The Squib, Judy, Puck* and *The Great Gun,* a new production entitled *Joe Miller the Younger* started as a weekly in May 1845 and was relaunched in July that year. It followed the *Punch*

model closely, and was competitively priced at half the cost of its rival. It featured two "big cuts", one political (usually by Archibald Henning or H.G. Hine) and one social, using an experimental aquatint process and derived from the work of the well-known French graphic artist Paul Gavarni, who had previously worked in Paris for *Le Charivari*. The latter, who was later resident in London from 1847 to 1851, apparently to escape his Parisian creditors, was a frequent contributor to several of the periodicals under review and associated with their staff.[9] Gavarni's fame was not, however, enough to save *Joe Miller* from collapse. Undercapitalised and perhaps too indistinguishable from *Punch* in style, despite its overt attacks on its rival, it disappeared in December 1845.

Just over a year later, in January 1847, *The Man in the Moon* was started under the editorship of Alfred Smith (himself formerly a founder of *Punch*) and Angus B. Reach, and was printed by William Clark, who had previously brought out *Joe Miller*.[10] This new paper was to be distinguished from its rival by appearing monthly, in duodecimo format, but was also produced by a number of writers including some former and future *Punch* contributors, and with cartoons drawn by, amongst others, Hablot Browne ("Phiz"), Kenny Meadows, Hine and Thomas Mayhew. Fox observes that it adopted the tone of "the plain speaking man about town", mocked *Punch* for its cautiousness and limited humorous range, and adopted a more robustly and consistently conservative political stance. The paper was later purchased by Herbert Ingram, owner of the liberal *Illustrated London News,* who attempted a transition to weekly issues in June 1849, but folded before this could be implemented after some changes in editorship.[11]

It overlapped in production with a new weekly, *The Puppet Show*, which was launched in March 1848 by the Vizetelly brothers, who had previously started the *Pictorial Times* in 1843 as a more conservative rival to the *London Illustrated News*.[12] John Bridgeman was appointed editor and a range of contributors including the conservative writers James Hannay and Sutherland Edwards and the later *Punch* editor Shirley Brooks, who had previously written for *The Man in the Moon*.[13] Paul Gavarni was employed by the new publication to provide both its frontispiece and a number of

both the social and political big cuts, some (but not all) of which were signed by him. The paper offered its eight pages initially at 1d., later raised to 1 1/2d., but was unable to evade the business failures that had plagued its predecessors, and after a sharp decline in the quality of its output (especially following Gavarni's departure) ceased publication in late June 1849.[14]

Before assessing the Irish coverage of these periodicals, they should be put into some context. Ireland itself proved incapable of supporting a satirical publications market in the decades surrounding the Famine. Several satirical titles appeared briefly in Dublin the early 1830s but it was not until 1870 that these were succeeded by the next serious attempt, which appeared under the title *Zozimus,* published and edited by the nationalist politician A.M. Sullivan.[15] The closest Ireland came to print satire in the 1840s appears to have been a series of twelve pro-Daniel O'Connell caricatures entitled "Hints and Hits", produced anonymously under the pseudonym "William Tell" and published in pairs by James McCormick in Dublin during the O'Connell sedition trial in the early months of 1844.[16] Apart from these and several anonymous anti-O'Connellite images featured in the Belfast-published book *The Repealer Repulsed* in 1841, Irish graphic caricature in the 1840s was thin on the ground. However, given the high profile Irish affairs had attained in British politics from the late 1820s with the Catholic emancipation campaign, followed by O'Connell's repeal movement, his alliance with the Whigs from 1835 and confrontations with Peel in the early 1840s, Irish subjects were popular in the English satirical market. The high end of the London political print market continued to be dominated in these years by the conservative Irish Catholic émigré John Doyle, who had produced his "Political Sketches" since 1829 under the pen (or perhaps pencil) name "HB", and which were published as single sheets and as folios by Thomas McLean in Haymarket. Doyle's personal antagonism towards O'Connell was evident throughout his work after 1830, but he appears to have struggled to articulate a coherent response to the challenge of representing the Famine, a problem he shared with his son Richard, by this time a cartoonist for *Punch*.[17] While the elder Doyle remained active as "HB" until 1849, his prominence in the caricature market was declining, principally as a consequence of the success of the weekly periodical format successfully developed

by *Punch* and imitated by its rivals. Nevertheless, his work remained a point of reference for graphic

artists – in September 1845 *Joe Miller* printed newspaper puffs for itself claiming, inter alia, that

"some of its illustrations were fully equal to those of HB".[18]

Apart from the later "Political Sketches", non-periodical caricatures produced during the

Great Famine and commenting on it appear rare. Once exception, catalogued as dating from 1847 in

the British Museum prints collection, but with no independent verification or publication

information available, is a sheet entitled "Servants of the Lord, rendering an account of their

stewardship during the Famine of 1847". This image offers a savage attack on the continuing fiscal

privileges of the established Church of Ireland, whose wigged and cassocked clergy feast below the

altar of Mammon (with its associated vices of drunkenness, debauchery and hunting), presided over

by Satan, who is depicted riding a fat bullock suspended from a candelabra of illuminated skulls,

clutching the livestock and breadstuffs produced by Irish land, while beneath the floor lie a mass of

emaciated corpses, labelled as "deaths by starvation". While this print may date from a later period

and refer retrospectively to 1847 (it was purchased by the British Museum in 1868), it is unusual in

British productions of the period for the visceral anger it displays over the theme of "starvation in

the midst of plenty", a common trope of Irish nationalist famine narrative at the time and

subsequently. Its intense anti-establishmentarianism might suggest an Irish Catholic origin, but is

perhaps as likely to be a product of an English radical nonconformist anti-clericalism, possibly

connected with the Chartist revival in the later 1840s (indeed, its survival in the British Museum and

not in any Irish repository may be circumstantial evidence for this).[19]

The commentaries on Ireland in the rivals to *Punch* of the period lack anything of the

Swiftian savage indignation displayed in this lone print. This is perhaps understandable in the case of

Joe Miller, whose run straddled the first manifestation of the potato blight in autumn 1845 but

which folded before the Famine's full effects were manifest. Like its model, *Punch*, antagonism

towards the Irish nationalism represented by Daniel O'Connell was a stock in trade of the journal

and also of the bourgeois metropolitan public audience it targeted. *Joe Miller's* big cut of 7 June 1845, for example, celebrated (but not without some ambiguity) the victory apparently won by the Peel administration over their Irish opponent through the passage of the Maynooth Act, which greatly increased state subvention to the Catholic seminary. The cartoonist portrayed the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel, pinioning O'Connell against a tree with a pitchfork labelled "Maynooth Grant", while the Duke of Wellington attempts to cut off his "tail" with an outsize pair of shears; the cartoon suggests the parliamentary grant to the seminary would at least temporarily incapacitate the Irish popular leader through depriving him of respectable Catholic support, although at the same time Wellington is given an aside that O'Connell's Irish "tail" (a common device for the Repeal party in parliament) was still too tough to cut off. The Latin tag in the cartoon's title, "Naturam expellas furca" ("Drive nature out with a pitchfork") was taken from Horace; the cartoonist assumed his classically-educated audience would know that the next line from the *Epistles* warned that the force of nature would return as soon as efforts to restrain it were relaxed. Ministerial attempts to curb O'Connell's threat, while laudable, could only be part of a long-term struggle with Irish nationalism.

The paper returned to O'Connell frequently in the following months in squibs, verses and as a walk-on character in a range of political cartoons. As with *Punch,* the principal persona through which he was represented was "The Jolly Old Beggarman", humbugging the impoverished Irish poor for money levied in the form of the "Repeal rent" to support his campaigns. At the same time, the literary pretensions of the Young Ireland romantic nationalists and atavistic prejudices of Irish Orangemen were also mocked in squibs in the paper.[20] *Joe Miller* had little to say on the subject of the first appearance of the potato blight in autumn 1845, apart from a punning account of a "Frightful increase of the endemic among the potatoes in London" in mid-November, and big cut depicting "The Pilgrimage of the People to Downing-St. for Bread" (Fig. 1). In this, a suppliant O'Connell appears before Peel, who sits in the guise of as an Egyptian pharaoh, the former's begging entreaties supported by a crowd featuring the Whig leader Lord John Russell (by now a convert to full free trade in corn) and a figure who may represent the Anti-Corn Law League leader Richard

Cobden. This image might be compared thematically to "The Minister's Dream", an unusual editorial cartoon published in the *Pictorial Times* of 22 November 1845, depicting the Prime Minister as enduring a nightmare over corn law repeal under threats posed by a spectral O'Connell (depicted as protecting his Repeal rent loot), Catholic clerical and agrarian unrest in Ireland and Chartist radical subversion in Britain.[21] In *Joe Millar's* version, however, it is the pensive and beneficent Peel who commands respect and has the power to unbind the tied stook of corn by his side, while O'Connell is now a humiliated beggar, holding out his emblematic "Milesian cap" for British alms.[22] *Punch's* more forthright cartoon "'Rint' v. Potatoes" of 15 November 1845 (drawn by John Leech) offered a moralising critique of O'Connell's alleged avarice and pride as the root causes of the incipient Irish hunger crisis and destitution of the peasantry; it centred on the image of an impoverished woman surrounded by five emaciated children and a despairing husband, begging from an embarrassed O'Connell, who is characterized as "The Irish Jeremy Diddler". The poor woman's appeal refers ironically to the "penny a month" subscriptions instituted by O'Connell to finance his political campaigns for Catholic Emancipation and Repeal of the Union: "You haven't got such a thing as a twelve-pence about you? – a farthing a week? – a penny a month? – a shilling a year?".[23] Although *Joe Miller's* closure in 1845 limits its utility as a source for Famine visual culture, these examples demonstrate a derivative anti-O'Connellite approach that drew on a repertoire long established by HB and *Punch,* and would find similar (though more numerous and diverse) expression subsequently in *The Man in the Moon* and *The Puppet Show*.

The launch of the *Man in the Moon* in January 1847 coincided with the nadir of the Irish Famine crisis. More prosy and less overtly party-political in its preoccupations than *Punch* or *Joe Miller¸* the new paper nevertheless took up some stock themes in its construction of the "Irish Problem". A illustrated narrative series featured in its early issues offered a counterfactual "History of Ireland After the Repeal", with O'Connell now crowned as a ludicrous would-be king, "conducted home in his State Coach, vamped up from an old sheriff's carriage, bought cheap, out of the rent, and emblazoned with the New Royal Irish Arms – consisting of a harp, gules; a dudeen, or; a lumper,

couchant; and a shillelagh, rampant."[24] The heraldic terms offered wordplay on the "couchant" or lazy lumper (the most common and poor quality variety of potato) and the "rampant" shillelagh (a symbol of brute violence), juxtaposing perceived Irish improvidence with unchecked peasant aggression. A small cut in the same issue mocked public alarm over the theory proposed by the botanist Alfred Smee that potato blight was the product of an aggressive microscopic insect, the "aphis vastator", but without making reference to the horrific social consequences of blight in the neighbouring island. Smee's theory was not taken seriously by most professional scientists at the time, but nevertheless appears to have provided some amusement to metropolitan wits.[25] The crude reduction of the Irish crisis to the shorthand of potato symbolism in these two examples (whether parlayed through the mockery of O'Connellite pretensions, or in seeking amusement from the blight itself) was a trope common to other satirical weeklies; in this sense *Man in the Moon* offered an unoriginal approach. Indeed William Newman had already combined both themes in *Punch* in late 1845 through his big cut "The Real Potato Blight of Ireland", which depicting a bloated O'Connell monstrously transformed into a rotting potato, enthroned and crowned as an Irish "king" and presiding over a plate of extorted "Repeal rent" pennies.[26]

A subsequent narrative instalment of the *Man in the Moon's* "History" in early 1847 likewise worked through a bundle of anti-Irish prejudices, imagining an O'Connellite parliament deporting all "Saxons" to England, levying tariffs on working tools, promoting squalor, and ultimately declaring an ineffectual war on England in consequence of the latter's refusal to meet O'Connell's demand for subsidies: "His majesty wrote a polite and modest address to the people of England, in which he inquired whether than magnanimous nation would contemplate, unmoved, a sister people, dying of hunger, -- concluding, by stating in interrogative form – 'He supposed that Great Britain didn't happen to have such a thing as Ten Million about her?'". This heavy-handed revival of the "Big Beggarman" trope and the implied criticism of government grants or subsidies for Irish famine relief as concessions to imposture coincided with national appeals for British charitable assistance to Ireland in the form of the Queen's Letter and the British Association appeal, and had potentially

negative consequences for both.[27] The squib also appeared in the context of the collapse of

O'Connell's health in early 1847 (following significant expenditure on private relief on his own west

Kerry estate), and just before his impassioned final speech in parliament in February 1847, in which

he pleaded for further aid to prevent the deaths of what he anticipated to be at least a million in

Ireland.[28]

It is no surprise that, unlike such journals as the *Illustrated London News*, which addressed

the Irish crisis more sympathetically, but in parallel with that heavyweight critic of "extravagant"

Irish relief spending *The Times,* the *Man in the Moon* adopted a negative stance towards the

"National Fast Day", which was sponsored by the government, the monarch and the established

churches to raise money for Irish famine relief on 24 March 1847. On that day, a Wednesday, shops

and businesses were expected to close to allow the population to fast and attend charity sermons at

their places of worship. An article on "How the Fast Day was Spent" irreverently suggested the

people of London had instead seized the opportunity of the impromptu holiday to amuse

themselves. It described, with some comedic exaggeration, the behaviour of what it represented as

a typical London bank clerk:

> Mr Straggles. Is a regular brick and no mistake: Has been called a Gent: Wasn't offended: Why
>
> should he be? Didn't observe the Fast; although he looked for it; doesn't know anybody that
>
> did. Had a breakfast party that day, and kept it up until the next morning; believed them – he
>
> did eat. Bought up all the kidneys he could get, the night before. No end of half-and-half. Bank
>
> shut up. Never has such as Fast-day in his life, and doesn't care how soon he has another.
>
> Thinks the Ministers are jolly bricks, and hopes they may never go out. Politics and Ireland be
>
> blowed.[29]

Straggles and his fictional companions in this squib may be comic types of the Dickensian mode, but

the final quip placed in his mouth echoed the editorial line of the journal. Alexis Soyer, the French

chef at the London Reform Club who travelled to Dublin in March 1847 to establish a model soup

kitchen to feed the starving, was also mercilessly mocked for his hubris in the *Man in the Moon*.[30]

If there was any doubt about the paper's cynical hostility to Irish relief or further charity, it

was made explicit in an early 1848 small cut, depicting a foolishly benevolent elderly British lady

offering an Irish street boy (labelled pejoratively as "Young Ireland") a shilling in alms – with which

the child cheerfully announces he would buy a pike to "stick the Saxon" (Fig. 2).[31] This was a less

accomplished but similarly jaundiced image on the theme of Irish ingratitude previously worked by

Leech in his December 1846 big cut for *Punch* "Height of Impudence", in which a subhuman "Paddy"

abuses John Bull's charity with the intention of buying a blunderbuss with the proceeds.[32] The

repetition of this subject and joke again demonstrates the derivative approach of artists

commissioned for *Man in the Moon* (who were clearly looking to *Punch* for visual inspiration), and

the wider preoccupation with Irish violence in the midst of what was a horrifying subsistence crisis.

In a variation the 1846 *Punch* cut which simianizes the threatening peasant, here the threat of Irish

male violence is mocked with through use of a figure, the street urchin, which de-masculinises its

subject and construes him as utterly dependent on the benefaction of others, while remaining

infantilely malevolent to the core.

The *Man in the Moon* shared the combination of anxiety and contempt for the radical

nationalist Young Ireland movement (more accurately by 1847, the Irish Confederation) that

characterised much of the British press in 1848. Despite continuing famine distress on the island, it

was the pronouncements and agitation of this political faction, followed by its failed rising in July

and the subsequent trials and convictions, that virtually monopolised British press coverage of

Ireland for much of the year. For the *Man in the Moon*, Young Ireland was essentially an ultraviolent

cult, as set out in the squib "Young Ireland's Primer", which took the form of a blood-thirsty

alphabetical verse.[33] The collapse of the Ballingarry rising in late July 1848 gave rise to a prose series

on "Irish Promise v. Irish Performance", which heaped triumphant scorn on the abortive revolution,

and a rather puerile small cut "Unpleasant Consequences of Sedition", depicting the convicted

radical John Mitchel imprisoned on Spike Island (the transit prison for transportees in Cork harbour)

with the latter literally a spike about to impale him.[34] Close attention was paid to outspoken

manifestations of radical nationalism, including parodies of Thomas Davis's romanticising patriotic

verse, as well as James Fintan Lalor's and John Martin's *Irish Felon* newspaper, which lasted for only

a few issues in May-June 1848.[35]

If *The Man in the Moon's* attitude towards the Young Irelanders was on a par with its equally

visceral hostility to both British Chartism and the leaders of the 1848 French Revolution, it chose to

ignore the human cost of the social crisis in Ireland, which from 1848 became one dominated by a

massive upsurge in clearances of estates of what landowners regarded as their "surplus population"

and the collapse of the Irish poor law system under the weight of massive overcrowding and union

bankruptcies. Its commentary on the social situation in the neighbouring island was to viciously

attack as barbarity any agrarian resistance to landed impositions. In late 1847 a song was placed in

the mouths of a party of Ribbonmen about to shoot their landlord while he attempted to collect

rent: "Starving Erin can't afford / To throw away a shot, boys." An accompanying cut depicted the

would-be assassins as siminianised monsters (fig. 3).[36] The journal satirised the abortive October

1847 appeal for additional funds for the British Association, claiming that all the Irish hungered for

was gunpowder and ammunition.[37] Another cynical small cut in autumn 1848, entitled "Rent Day in

Ireland", which insinuated that the diffusion of Young Ireland principles had seduced the tenantry

into a state of indolent oriental languor, represented by a lounging (and seemingly well fed) tenant

farmer insolently refusing his landlord's just demands for rent with casual threats of violence: "Was

it the rint you was axing for? – Here, Tim, hand me the blunderbuss!"[38] Rather than a site of social

catastrophe, rural Ireland was presented as a location of moral inversion, where the rights of

property were slighted, and the peasantry had brought their sufferings upon themselves through

idleness, ingratitude and violence. A subsequent cartoon, in early 1849, mocker the alleged workshy

attitudes of "able-bodied" labourers put to breaking stones in the workhouse yards on outdoor relief.[39]

The Puppet Show emerged in March 1848 as a weekly rival to both *Punch* and *The Man in the Moon.* Seeking to assert its artistic superiority, in its second issue it boasted that claims of other London printers to drawings produced by Paul Gavarni were false, as the only work he was doing in England at that time was for the *Puppet Show* and the *Illustrated London News*.[40] Much higher in graphic quality than the *Man in the Moon,* it nevertheless shared much of the latter's political perspectives. From the outset it also identified the Young Irelanders as a prime target for both squibs and caricatures; its second issue demanded that the Irish peasantry renounce John Mitchel's treason and their own fecklessness and "arm themselves immediately – with the spade, the rake, or the plough; and that they will commence a most tremendous attack on all the dunghills within their reach. Let every man procure ammunition – such as soap and water – and repudiate the union with the family hog".[41] This patronising sermon on self-improvement was reprinted verbatim and without comment in the Irish Tory newspaper the *Clare Journal*, whose editor appears to have subscribed to the new weekly.[42] In addition to filth and idleness, ingratitude was, according to the *Puppet Show*, a third Irish characteristic that had been promoted by the nationalist movement, which had taught the people "to curse / The kindly hand that fed - / The Saxon hand that, when millions starved, / Provided them with bread."[43] It followed that, for all the paper's many criticisms of Lord John Russell's Whig government, its Irish representative Lord Lieutenant Clarendon must be supported in his efforts to repress such sedition: he was depicted by its cartoonist in "The War Organ" as the embodiment of British authority in Ireland in the guise of a policeman (interestingly, this was in the uniform of the Metropolitan and not of the Irish Constabulary), arresting the seditious organ-grinder John Mitchel.[44] Internal divisions within Irish nationalism (manifested in the Old Ireland – Young Ireland riot in Limerick in May 1848), would be soundly pilloried in mock heroic form. The paper's big cut of 13 May 1848 on the subject was conveniently labelled as a parody of William Mulready's (1786-1863) painting *The Convalescent from Waterloo* (first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1822)

– employing a satirical form of parodying fine artworks widely used by John Doyle among others.[45] A blunderbuss-holding and simianized peasant (replacing a child in the original painting), sitting at the Young Ireland leader William Smith O'Brien's feet, is a reminder that this trope of depicting Irish racial inferiority was by no means restricted to Leech's work in *Punch*,[46] and of how satirical artists often drew liberally from well-known academic paintings to construct a further "joke" perceptible to erudite viewers. Smith O'Brien's black eye and the replacement of the convalescent's wife in the original with O'Brien's opponent, the Liberator's son John O'Connell (replete with a 'Milesian cap' inherited from his father), mock the internecine feuding within the Irish nationalist camp.

Given the levels of political anxiety suggested by the *Puppet Show's* almost obsessive coverage of Young Ireland activities in spring 1848, it is hardly surprising that it should have welcomed (in the high profile form of its weekly big cut) the deployment of state coercion, first through the conviction of John Mitchel by a special commission in May, and then, in the shape of the Treason Felony Act, passed by parliament as a weapon to be wielded against the Irish Confederacy as a whole. On 12 August, the brief rebellion in Tipperary now safely crushed, Clarendon and Russell were depicted by the cartoonist as doctor and nurse, successful in having first sedated and then restrained the simianized and murderous patient "Paddy": "He's been much better since I put on the straight-jacket, as you told me", opines Clarendon; "Ah! I knew that would quiet him", replies Russell.[47]

The *Puppet Show* was less impressed by the prime minister's September 1848 visit to Dublin, a vain attempt to restore Russell's sullied political reputation as a "friend of Ireland" and to identify potential "ameliorative measures" as counterweights to coercion, social distress and the overwhelming pressure placed by Famine on the Irish poor law.[48] To the *Puppet Show*, in its cut "Paddy will you now, take me while I'm in the humour", this amounted to a counterproductive demonstration of British political weakness in the face of resurgent and atavistic Irish peasant violence. "Little Jack" Russell's appeasement of the now revived, rearmed and looming "Paddy" was

depicted as undermining his previous good work, and was emphasised by the prime minister's

exaggeratedly diminutive stature (he was under five feet five inches tall, a limitation beloved by

satirists); association with the bawdy ballad of the title also suggested a degree of effeminacy on

Russell's part.[49] An accompanying squib predicted that, rather than discovering the real state of

Ireland, Russell would return having learnt "nothing but the state of Lord Clarendon's kitchen", while

a later report suggested he might even be conniving with the rebels through his political weakness.[50]

The prolonged trials of the Young Ireland rebels kept the issue at the forefront of press

attention until late 1848, and hence it continued to be heavily represented in *Puppet Show*

caricatures. The gentlemanly Protestant leader of the rising, William Smith O'Brien, was a favourite

target. In "Will O' The Wisp" (19 August 1848) he is depicted in the comic-opera uniform of the "King

of Munster" as having blundered into the swamp of rebellion, lured by a spirit of ambition and

ancestral pride. Utilising the metaphor of a magic lantern slide show's "Dissolving Views", the paper

on 30 September juxtaposed on opposite pages two big cuts of the cabinet observing sequential

images projected by the paper's eponymous "Puppet Master" – one the rebel camp on the morning

of the "Great Irish Rebellion", the second of the evening, with the would-be rebels fleeing in disarray

at the arrival of the Irish Constabulary. A final big cut on the subject, this one signed by Gavarni

(although stylistic similarities suggests he also drew the other *Puppet Show* cartoons discussed here),

on 14 October used a different metaphorical mode to mock the ineffectuality of Irish rebellion. In

'An Easterly Wind Blighting the Irish Pike Crop' (Fig. 4), the disembodied head of a stylised "bobby"

(again wearing the headgear of the Metropolitan Police rather than that of the Irish Constabulary),

lays low through a blast of breath the growing weaponry of Ireland – a simple conceit, but one

drawing on a rather cynical use of the association of blight with Ireland – recently reinforced by yet

another outbreak of the devastating potato disease in autumn 1848 that would consign western

counties to a further winter and spring of starvation and distress. This graphic image, as visually

powerful as anything *Punch* produced during the crisis, encapsulates the increasing elision of

rebellion with famine in much of the British metropolitan press in 1848, and which contributed to the acute collapse of sympathy for Ireland's continuing plight.[51]

Despite this evidence it would be wrong to conclude that the *Puppet Show* was wholly or consistently indifferent to famine suffering in Ireland. In July 1848 it had carried a poem mocking the government's proposal of a royal visit to Ireland as a ruse to evade responsibility for that country's suffering. The text stated: "If your grey-headed fathers by ditch-sides be starving, / And children beside their dead mothers are laid, / At least will not men at the Castle be carving, / And Clarendon's servants have plenty of bread? / Come, patch up your rags, and put on your best smiles, / And cheer for the Queen of the Great British Isles!". This would not have been out of place in the *Nation*, and indeed it was reprinted in full by two Irish nationalist papers *The Pilot* and the *Kilkenny Journal,* indicating that at least their editors were also reading the *Puppet Show.*[52] A month later "The Devil and the Potatoes" imagined in verse the introduction of the potato as a satanic curse that had reduced Ireland to misery, which could not be redressed until alternative foodstuffs were introduced there.[53] However, this strand of social commentary found a graphic expression only once in the paper's run, in a big cut of 12 May 1849, unsigned, but probably again by Gavarni, entitled "While the Crop Grows, Ireland Starves". The cartoon acknowledged the continuing famine conditions in Ireland (mortality rates remained appallingly high through winter and spring 1849) as represented by a despairing Hibernia (denominated by her abandoned angel harp and crested helmet) with her four ragged and emaciated children, probably drawing on Mahony's *Illustrated London News* sketches from Skibbereen of 1847 – a feminised image of suffering contrasting with the masculine threat posed by the armed peasant.[54] While Russell sows his Rate in Aid scheme for funding additional aid to the west in return for an enhanced rate on northern and eastern Irish poor law unions, and the opposition leader Robert Peel does the same with his Plantation Scheme for western Ireland announced in speeches in spring 1849 (which the paper had criticised elsewhere), the viewer is being prompted to make an emotive response to the immediacy of suffering. This image may owe something to the model of Richard Doyle's big cut "Union is Strength" of October 1846 – also an

atypically sympathetic (if moralistically loaded) image from *Punch,* in which a paternalistic John Bull

offers food and a spade to his distressed Irish "brother" and his hungry family.[55] It is unusually

arresting, especially in 1849, but represented only a shallow and ephemeral element in the *Puppet*

Show's thinking on Ireland. If the image was intended to provoke further charity for Ireland in

England, it was largely unsuccessful, although the former agent of the British Relief Association, Paul

Strzelecki, did manage to raise a limited sum for distribution in Ireland in spring 1849.[56]

If the *Puppet Show* had a consistent political position at all, it was to support the financial

reform proposals proposed by the middle-class radical Richard Cobden and to demand an immediate

curb to the "beggary" pursued by vested interests in British society – in essence acting as a

mouthpiece for bourgeois tax-cutting populism. Cuts in taxation in 1848 and 1849 suggested that

Cobden's "moral force" reformism would bring relief to a John Bull grossly overburdened with

unnecessary taxation, and finally end the "begging nuisance" indulged aristocratic politicians such as

Russell. Noticeably, a cartoon associated with the latter, published in January 1849, included with

the financial burdens of Prince Albert, aristocratic sinecurists and episcopal whingers, the

unmistakeable physique of a simianized "Paddy". At the same time, the paper was pouring out

squibs, widely reprinted in the newspaper press, such as that concerning an escaped lunatic whose

insanity was demonstrated by his belief that "the funds voted for Ireland went to the poor".[57]

Following on directly from this, it joined the bandwagon of public opinion denouncing Russell's

government's belated and inadequate grant of an additional £50,000 aid to the bankrupt western

Irish unions in early 1849. In a cartoon that bore uncanny resemblance to one by Leech in *Punch* on

the same subject which appeared on exactly the same day, "The Modern Sinbad and the Old Man of

the Sea" represented "Paddy" now as a demonic encumbrance clamped on the shoulders of the

overburdened John Bull, a malevolent free rider on misplaced English benevolence.[58] Russell's

attempts to oblige the Irish MPs to agree a plan of self-taxation as a condition to further assistance

was likened by a later cartoon to attempting to assuage a pack of wild dogs.[59] Ultimately, it was

Ireland's failure to help itself that lay at the root of its malaise, a failure based on a culture of idleness and easy resort to the seduction of unprincipled and violent demagogues.

What can be said about the impact of these short-lived rivals to *Punch* beyond the dismissive comment of one historian of that journal that they quickly "died o'laughing"?[60] Despite their short lifespans, they seem to have had some influence on the wider public culture. *The Puppet Show*, for example, was praised, especially for the quality of its images, by a number of British and Irish provincial papers, and many more extracted short extracts or satirical verse for inclusion in their own columns. The *Tuam Herald*, a conservative paper in one of the counties worst-hit by famine, commented in April 1848 that it offered "a few hours pleasant reading for one penny".[61] Even nationalist papers such as the *Pilot* and *Tipperary Vindicator* carried copy from it. In essence, however, the coverage of Ireland in the *Puppet Show* and its predecessors differed little from that in *Punch,* catering as all did to the presumed prejudices of a metropolitan middle-class market. Differences in tone were marginal, at best, and given the marked overlap in personnel between the metropolitan satirical publications this is hardly surprising. Despite occasional flashes of sympathy (usually accompanied by some overt or implied criticism of British ministers), the dominant line was xenophobic, moralistic and distancing. Although the spectre of rebellion persistently preoccupied their authors and illustrators, such titles themselves ultimately proved firmly conformist in content and approach.

Unlike *Punch* and the *Illustrated London News* the periodicals featured here slipped out of the cultural memory of the Famine for many decades, a consequence of their relative inaccessibility in in small print-run collections in a few academic libraries. This is begun to change, with some modern publications reprinting images drawn from the three titles from the later 1990s, and more recently the digitisation and opening to universal access of at least parts of their runs.[62] The images discussed were unquestionably part of the visual culture of Irish Famine in the 1840s, and deserve critical attention.

Fig. 1.

Anon., "The Pilgrimage of the People to Downing-St. for Bread", *Joe Miller the Younger,* vol. I, p. 213 (Nov. 1845).
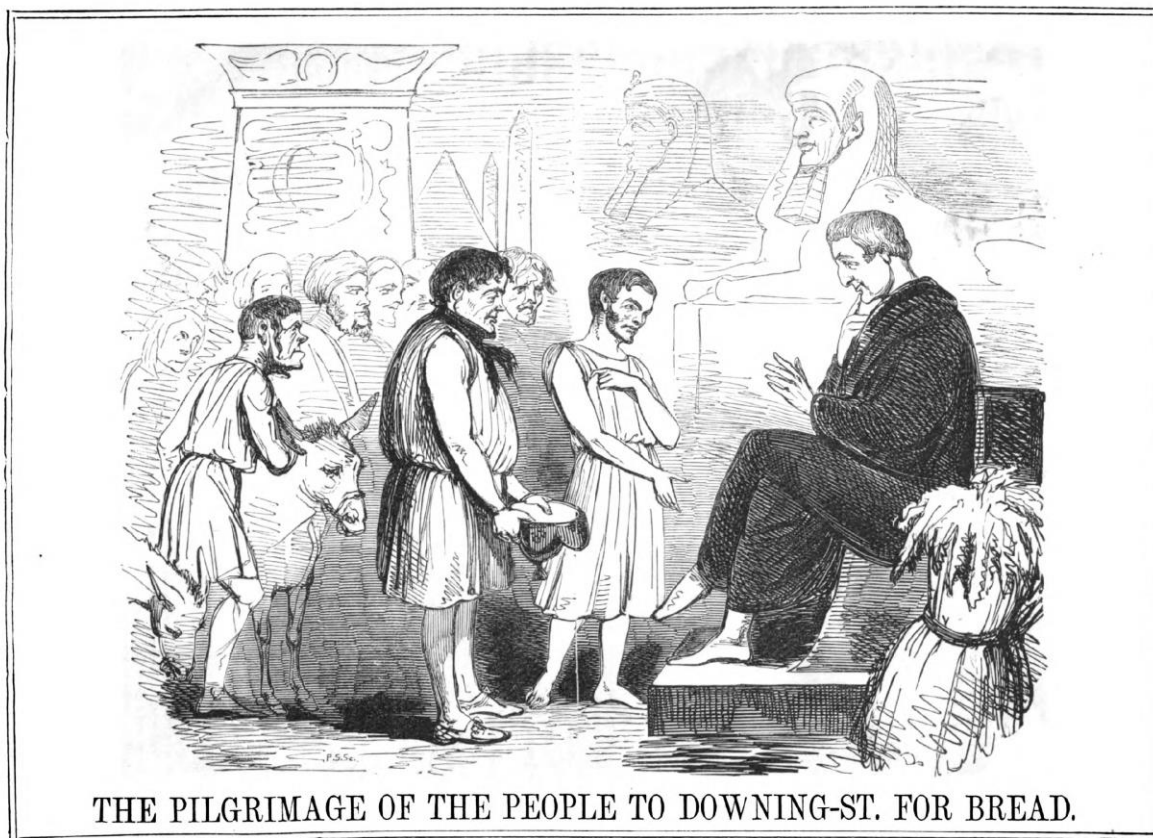

THE PILGRIMAGE OF THE PEOPLE TO DOWNING-ST. FOR BREAD.

Fig. 2.

Anon., "Irish Gratitude", *Man In The Moon,* vol. III, p. 304 (1848)

IRISH GRATITUDE.

Benevolent English Lady.—NOW, MY BOY, IF I WERE TO GIVE YOU A SHILLING, WHAT WOULD YOU DO WITH IT?
Young Ireland.—ARRAH! BUY A PIKE TO STICK THE SAXON.

Fig. 3

Anon., 'The Irish Rent Day: A National Song', *Man in the Moon*, III, 338-40 (1847).

Fig. 4

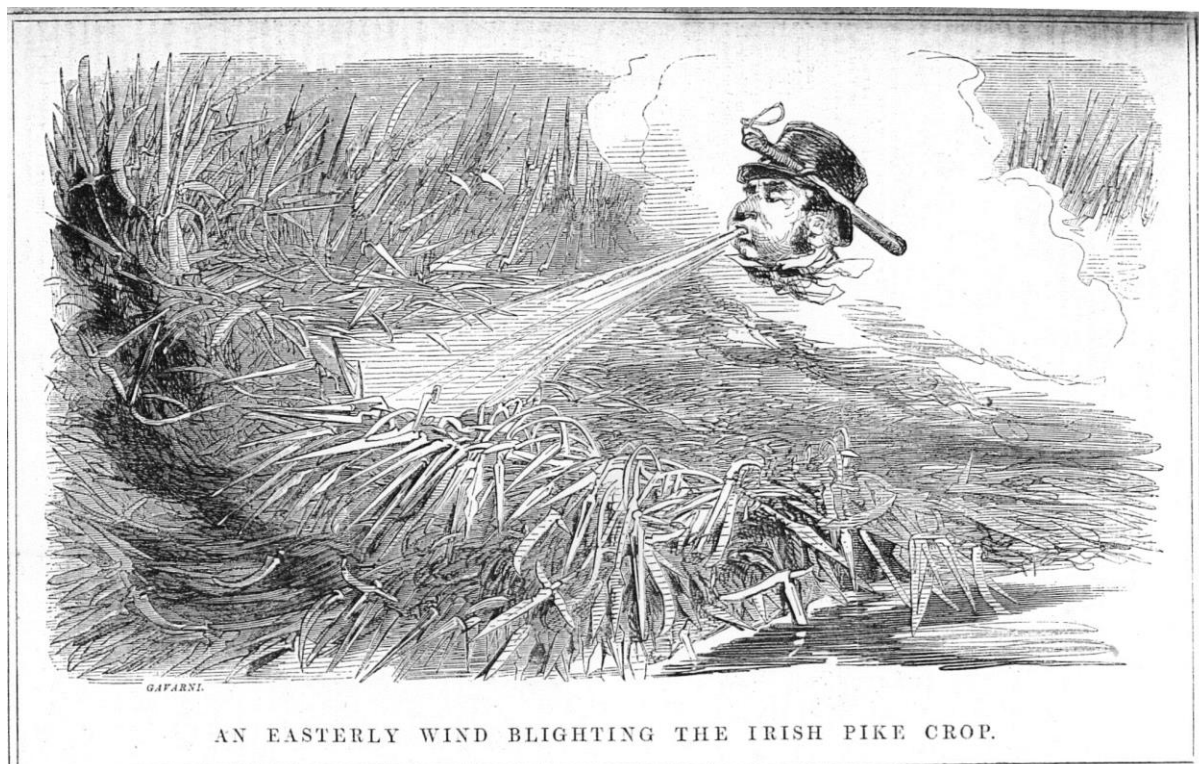Paul Gavarni, "An Easterly Wind Blighting the Irish Pike Crop", *The Puppet Show,* II:32, p. 57 (14 Oct. 1848).

AN EASTERLY WIND BLIGHTING THE IRISH PIKE CROP.

Fig. 5 [Paul Gavarni], "While the Crop Grows, Ireland Starves', *The Puppet Show,* III: 62 (12 May 1849)

"WHILE THE CROP GROWS IRELAND STARVES."

OLD PROVERB ADAPTED TO MODERN TIMES.

[1] Emily Mark-FitzGerald, *Commemorating the Irish Famine: Memory and the Monument* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013).

[2] Belfast City Council, 'The Famine Window', http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/tourism-venues/cityhall/stainglasswindows.aspx (accessed 30 Sept. 2018).

[3] *The Great Irish Famine: Visual and Material Culture,* ed. Marguerite Corporaal, Oona Frawley and Emily Mark-Fitzgerald (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2018).

[4] *The Great Famine: Studies in Irish History,* ed. R.D. Edwards and T.D. Williams (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1956). For some of the earliest modern reproduction of the images addressed in this chapter, see Peter Gray, *The Irish Famine* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995).

[5] L. Perry Curtis, *Apes and Angels: the Irishman in Victorian Caricature* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1971), R.F. Foster, *Paddy and Mr Punch: Connections in Irish and English History* (London: Allen Lane, 1993), pp 171-94, Leslie A. Williams, *Daniel O'Connell, The British Press and The Irish Famine: Killing Remarks* (London: Routledge, 2003); Peter Gray, "*Punch* and the Great Famine", *History Ireland,* 1, 2 (1993), 26-33.

[6] For a summary, see Gray, "*Punch* and the Great Famine".

[7] Ibid.

[8] Celina Fox, *Graphic Journalism in England during the 1830s and 1840s* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1988).

[9] Paul Gavarni was a pseudonym of Sulpice Guillaume Chevalier (1804-66). He used his time in London to illustrate both the city's high society and its street life, and while rejecting offers from *Punch¸* worked for the *Illustrated London News* and other publications, see Simon Houfe, *The Dictionary of British Book Illustrators and Caricaturists, 1800-1914* (Woodbridge: Antique Collectors' Club, 1978), pp 149-51; *Gavarni in London: Sketches of Life and Character, with Illustrative Essays by Popular Writers*, ed. Albert Smith (London: David Bogue, 1849).

[10] Albert Smith (1816-60) was an English journalist and humorous writer who had contributed to *Punch* in 1842; Angus Reach (1821-56) was a Scottish journalist and novelist who contributed to both the *Morning Chronicle* and the *Illustrated London News,* and later joined the staff of *Punch*.

[11] Fox, *Graphic Journalism,* 252-9; see also M.H. Spielman, "The rivals of *Punch*", *The National Review,* 25, 149 (July 1895), 654-66.

[12] Henry Vizetelly (1820-94) was a wood engraver, author and publisher, his brother James (1817-97) a publisher, and their younger brother Frank (1830-83) an artist and war correspondent. Their father James Henry Vizetelly (1790-1838) had published George Cruikshank's *Comic Almanack*.

[13] Brooks (1816-74) was a parliamentary correspondent and leader writer for the *Illustrated London News,* turned dramatist and novelist. Following some literary collaborations with Smith and Reach he joined the staff of *Punch* in 1851, and he succeeded Lemon as editor in 1870.

[14] Fox, *Graphic Journalism*, 259-64.

[15] B.P. Bowen, "Dublin Humorous Periodicals of the Nineteenth Century", *Dublin Historical Record,* 13 (1952-4), 2-11; Emily Mark-FitzGerald, "An Alien in Wexford: Harry Furniss, *Punch*, and *Zozimus* (The 'Irish Punch')", *Visual Culture in Britain,* 20, 2 (2019), 135-51.

[16] Peter Gray, "Hints and Hits: Irish Caricature and the Trial of Daniel O'Connell, 1843-44", *History Ireland* 12, 4 (2004), 45-51.

[17] Peter Gray, "HB's Famine Cartoons: Satirical Art in a Time of Catastrophe", in Corporaal, Frawley and Mark-FitzGerald, 35-52.

[18] *Joe Miller the Younger (JMTY)*I (13 Sept. 1845), 2.

[19] The British Museum: Collections Online. "Servants of the Lord, rendering an Account of their Stewardship during the Famine of 1847. Deaths by Starvation." https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=3317545&partId=1&images=true (accessed 1 Aug. 2018).

[20] *JMTY,* v. 1 (1845), 10, 138, 156, 199.

[21] *JMTY*, v. 1 (Nov. 1845), 213 ; Anon., "The Minister's Dream", *Pictorial Times*, 22 Nov. 1845.

[22] For the symbolic use of the "Milesian cap" in O'Connell's self-representation, and its mockery by his opponents, see Gary Owens, "Visualizing the Liberator: Self-fashioning, Dramaturgy, and the Construction of Daniel O'Connell", *Eire-Ireland,* 33/34, 3-4 (1998-9), 103-30.

[23] *Punch,* 15 Nov. 1845. "Jeremy Diddler" was an artful swindler in James Kenney's farce *Raising the Wind* (1803), and by the 1840s a by-word for any cynical confidence man.

[24] *The Man in the Moon (MITM),* 1, 2 (Feb. 1847), 66.

[25] "The Aphis Vastator; or Potato Blight; as seen through Smee's Microscope", ibid., p. 105; Alfred Smee, *The Potatoe Plant, its Uses and Properties: together with, the Cause of the Present Malady* (London: Longman, 1846). For scientific dismissal of his theory, see Anon., "Mr Smee and his Aphis Vastator", and John O. Westwood, "The Cholera versus the Vastator, or an Entomologist in the Potato Field, to the editor of *The Times*", in *The Phytologist: A Popular Botanical Miscellany*, 2 (1847), 831-3, 889-91. There is also a sarcastic reference to the "Aphis Vastator" in Leech's cartoon "Consolation for the Million: The Loaf and the Potato", *Punch,* 11 Sept. 1847.

[26] *Punch,* 13 Dec. 1845.

[27] For this context, see Peter Gray, "National Humiliation and the Great Hunger: Fast and Famine in 1847", *Irish Historical Studies,* 32, 126 (2000), 193-216.

[28] *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates,* 3rd ser., 89, cc 943-5 (8 Feb. 1847).

[29] *MITM*, 1, 4 (April 1847), 196-7.

[30] Ibid. 214-15.

[31] *MITM,* 3, 18 (June 1848), 304.

[32] *Punch,* 19 Dec. 1846.

[33] *MITM,* 3, 16 (April 1848), 200.

[34] *MITM,* 4, 19 (July 1848), 31-3.

[35] Ibid., 47-8.

[36] 'The Irish Rent Day: A National Song', *MITM,* 2, 12 (December 1847), 338-40; see also 'A Banshee to the Man in the Moon', ibid., 301-3.

[37] 'Help for the Irish', *MITM,* 2, 12 (December 1847), 351.

[38] *MITM,* 4, 24 (December 1848), 318.

[39] 'Mineralogical', *MITM,* 5, 27 (March 1849), 153.

[40] *The Puppet Show (PS),* 1, 2 (25 March 1848), 9.

[41] Ibid., 11.

[42] *Clare Journal,* 30 Mar. 1848; the Ennis-based paper was edited by John Busteed Knox and took a "staunch Tory" line against British governments and local interest groups, see Ciarán Ó Murchadha, *The Great Famine: Ireland's Agony 1845-1852* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), 32.

[43] "Cruel attempt at Murder, by Three 'United Irishmen'", *PS,* 1, 5 (15 April 1848), 33.

[44] [Paul Gavarni], "The War Organ", *PS,* 1, 5 (15 April 1848), 37.

[45] [Paul Gavarni], "The Convalescent from Limerick", *PS*, 1, 9 (13 May 1848), 66. The Mulready painting is in the collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

[46] See for example, John Leech, "'My Lord Assassin' Clarendon murdering the Irish", *Punch,* 8 July 1848.

[47] [Paul Gavarni], "A Marvelous Cure", *PS,* 1, 22 (12 August 1848), 173.

[48] Peter Gray, *Famine, Land and Politics: British Government and Irish Society 1843-50* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1999), 209-10.

[49] [Paul Gavarni], "Paddy will you Now", *PS*, 1, 27 (9 September 1848), 7. The title is taken from a bawdy stage-Irish song which would have been familiar to London audiences. There is a broadside version on the Irish Traditional Music Archive website at: https://www.itma.ie/digital-library/text/2062-bs (accessed 25 June 2019).

[50] "The Premier's' visit to Ireland", *PS*, 1, 27 (9 September 1848), 4.

[51] [Paul Gavarni], "Will O'The Wisp and the King of Munster", ibid., 1, 23 (19 August 1848), 181; "The Showman's Dissolving Views", ibid., 2, 30 (30 September 1848), 36-7; "An Easterly Wind Blighting the Irish Pike Crop", ibid., 2, 32 (14 October 1848), 57. For growing British public resistance to further Irish aid in 1848, see Gray, *Famine, Land and Politics,* pp. 302-4.

[52] *Pilot,* 21 July, *Kilkenny Journal,* 26 July 1848.

[53] *PS,* 1, 24 (26 August 1848), 185; repr. in *Northern Whig,* 26 August 1848.

[54] [Paul Gavarni], 'While the Crop Grows, Ireland Starves', *PS,* 3, 62 (13 May 1849), 195. For the broader use of "feminised" tropes in representations of the Irish and other famines, see Margaret Kelleher, *The Feminization of Famine: Expressions of the Inexpressible?* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1997).

[55] *Punch,* 17 October 1846.

[56] "Expenditure in the Relief of Irish Distress", *Nation,* 27 October 1849.

[57] "John Bull and the Begging Nuisance", *PS,* 3, 47 (27 January 1849), 31; "An Escaped Lunatic", ibid., 2, 30 (30 September 1848), 39; *Oxford Chronicle,* 30 September 1848.

[58] [Paul Gavarni], "The Modern Sinbad and the Old Man of the Sea; or, John Bull and Paddy', *PS,* 3, 51 (24 February 1849), 73. Early editions of Edward William Lane's translation of the Arabian Nights, which was first published in London in 1839-41, carried an engraved illustration of "The Old Man of the Sea on Sindbad's Shoulders" by William Harvey, a possible inspiration; see E.W. Lane, *The Thousand and One Nights,* 2 (3 vols, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1848), 155.

[59] "Popular Irish Amusement – Baiting a Minister", *PS,* 3, 60 (5 May 1849), 183.

[60] Spielmann, "Rivals of 'Punch'", 654.

[61] *Tuam Herald,* 15 April 1848; see also *Coleraine Chronicle,* 1 April, *Dundee Courier,* 14 June, *John O' Groats Journal,* 30 June 1848.

[62] Hathi Trust hosts a run of *Joe Miller the Younger* at: https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100633831, an incomplete run of *The Man in the Moon* available at https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/009020149, and an incomplete run of the *Puppet Show* at https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/008919723