"BEGUILING SHENANIGANS": IRELAND AND HOLLYWOOD ANIMATION 1947-1959

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If the predominant graphic figuration of Irishness in nineteenth-century America was an ape-like brute in human clothing, with a cudgel in one hand and a bottle of whiskey in the other, then the most commonly appearing twentieth-century representation in cartoons, in both print and animation, was the far more appealing leprechaun. Given that the most pervasive form of graphic caricature and cartooning in the twentieth century was the animated short, this is where the focus of the present chapter will, for the most part, reside. The intention is to illuminate a critical space between two amply covered scholarly areas concerned with the representation of Ireland and the Irish, in twentieth-century Hollywood cinema, and in print cartoons and comic strips. In a Venn diagram of popular American visual culture, the animated cartoon could be said to share many representational strategies common to both, but, given the ubiquity and specific formal properties of classical animation, it also offers a uniquely bold and direct, albeit occasionally ambivalent, visualisation of Irishness. Cartoons such as *The Wee Men* (Bill Tytla, 1947), *Leprechaun's Gold* (Bill Tytla, 1949), and *The Emerald Isle* (Seymour Kneitel, 1949), all produced by Famous Studios in Hollywood, exemplify a specific development in the representations of the Irish in America, and can be read as graphic markers in the evolution of Irish-American assimilation. In engaging with these examples, it will also be necessary to consider the influence of the Disney studio, because as a result of its unparalleled successes it exerted a stylistic and thematic influence on all the other American studios of the period, because many of the cartoons we will be looking at involved former Disney personnel in their production, and because any discussion of the leprechaun and popular screen culture will inevitably lead us to Disney's *Darby O'Gill and the Little People* (Robert Stevenson, 1959).

Filmic representations of Ireland during the first half of the twentieth century were largely produced by American studios and filmmakers, and this has been central to all the major accounts of the development of Irish film culture. It has been noted by commentators such as Luke Gibbons and Lance Pettitt that many of these American films – the most celebrated of which is of course John Ford's *The Quiet Man* (1951) – were primarily directed at large diasporic audiences and tended to emphasise a romanticised conception of Ireland as a pastoral retreat and a primitive wonderland of unspoilt natural beauty. Although such live-action films tend towards realist filmmaking modes, the cartoon examples outlined here operate more straightforwardly as fantasy, the presence of magic, supernatural creatures, and gothic settings functioning generically as an "alternative response to our anxiety in the face of technology, ra-

tionalism and alienation" (Fowkes 12), a feature that chimes with cinematic characterisations of Ireland as the antithesis of modern industrialised society. To an even greater degree than was the case with live-action cinema, there was no indigenous animation production that might have countered the representational conventions of Hollywood during these years. Indeed, the booming and dynamic Irish animation industry that continues to grow at the time of writing did not really evolve significantly until the final years of the twentieth century.

It is useful to consider these animated shorts in relation to popular graphic representations of the Irish from earlier historical periods. The caricaturing and stereotyping of the Irish in nineteenth-century newspapers and humour periodicals has been well documented by L. Curtis Perry, John T. Appel, and others. Although the especially brutal character types first emerged in the work that English artists like John Tenniel and William Boucher contributed to *Punch* and numerous imitators, such as *Fun* and *Judy*, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, many of the visual tropes were adapted and developed by artists working in the US. Tenniel's work is usually understood as reflecting a colonialist discourse wherein the Irish were simianised or infantilised in crude drawings that presented them as a subhuman species prone to violence and insurrection, unfit for self-governance. Condescension, suspicion, and hostility towards the immigrant Irish in the US underscored the production of a similar range of images there, many appearing in the popular humour magazine *Puck*, and drawn by some of the most renowned cartoonists of the period, including Thomas Nast and Frederick Burr Opper. A cartoon by the latter, "The King of A-Shantee," which appeared in *Puck* in 1882, is, to modern eyes, a fairly extreme piece of work, emphasising backwardness, alcoholism, and violence, in the form of a grotesque Irish "Paddy," his similarly rendered wife, and their dilapidated rural dwelling (Curtis 63). Curtis makes much of the 'prognathous' jaw line applied to the protagonists in these images, a feature that, along with the rustic 'Shenandoah' or 'Lincoln' beard, would persist well into the twentieth century.

Kerry Soper has traced some of the ways that these images evolved over the subsequent decades as, to a great extent, the single panel cartoon gave way to the newspaper comic strip, and the sequential approach to cartooning that would achieve a mass readership during the first decades of the twentieth century. Running for many decades from 1913, George McManus's *Bringing up Father* series was a hugely popular satire on the so-called 'lace curtain Irish,' centering on the character of Jiggs, a former hod-carrier who becomes suddenly rich following a lottery win. McManus, himself the son of Irish immigrants, used the series to articulate "conflicted or ambivalent cultural attitudes towards assimilation, the Protestant work ethic, and materialist conceptions of the American dream" (Soper 176). Much of the humour derived from the conflict between his wife Maggie's social climbing aspirations, and Jiggs' desire to socialise with his rough crew of drinking buddies and to eat corned beef and cabbage. From the perspective of animation, an earlier Irish character, created by the afore-mentioned Frederick Opper – Happy Hooligan – is of interest

here, because as well as being the central protagonist in a wildly popular and influential comic strip series, appearing from 1899 in newspapers published by William Randolph Hearst, he was also the subject of an early example of comics adaptation for cinema, in a series of animated cartoons.

For the comic strips Opper had not only refined and adapted his cartooning style to suit the dynamic and snappy tone of the Hearst papers, but in Happy Hooligan, a hapless and accident-prone hobo, he had designed a far more sympathetic Irish character than those he had contributed to *Puck* in previous decades. Though he retains the prognathous jaw of earlier caricature, he is an appealing protagonist whose attempts to better himself or offer well-meaning assistance to the citizenry of New York generally backfire and result in him being hauled off by a tough cop with a billy club in the final panel. He was an early example of a transmedia character, a cartoon 'star' for whom the transition to the cinema screen was an obvious one. The series was adapted into a number of short cartoons by the Earl Bray Studio, a successful forerunner of Disney in the early 1920s. Unfortunately, only a small percentage of the cartoons, produced between 1916 and 1922, have survived. In one example, *A Trip to the Moon* (1920), the particular urban dimension that is quite central to the comic strips is de-emphasised, and the rendering of Happy himself, relying on thicker lines and a more minimalist style, contains fewer traces of the caricatural sources. The cartoon, a nod to George Méliès' science fiction spectacular *A Trip to the Moon* (1902), suggests the influence of Pat Sullivan and Otto Mesmer's surreal and anarchic *Felix the Cat* series, which had begun production the previous year, and which was by far the most popular animation of its time. There is evidence too that the Happy Hooligan cartoons were popular with contemporary audiences (Collier), who would have been very aware, at least in the US, of the specific ethnic and cultural *milieu* from which he sprung, given their familiarity with the strips.

Although Irish characters did appear in animated shorts produced during the rest of the 1920s and 30s, it was generally in supporting roles, and it was not until the immediate post-war period that Irish characters, most typically in the form of leprechauns, featured as the protagonists in a short cycle of cartoons produced by Famous Studios. In 1942 Famous succeeded the Fleischer Studio, best known for the success of their Betty Boop and Popeye cartoons, as the animation division of Paramount Pictures, and this marked a decline in the level of quality and innovation that had characterised much of their output, and which had made them Disney's only real competitor in the 1930s. Vladimir "Bill" Tytla, who directed *The Wee Men* (see Connerty Fig. 1 in Colour Supplement) in 1947 and *Leprechaun's Gold* two years later, had left Disney following the historic strike of 1941, which had resulted in the departure of many key employees. The strike, over pay and working conditions, caused enormous upset to Disney personally, and resulted in the dispersal of talent from all areas of production to the other studios operating in the US at the time, and to the foundation of an additional number, including United Productions of America (UPA), a studio that would radicalise American animation in the 1950s, and to which we will return.

Tytla had been a key member of the animation team that worked on *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (Disney, 1937), assigned specifically to work on the dwarfs themselves (a photograph of the picket line features a banner that reads 'Snow White and the 700 Dwarfs'). *Snow White* was one of the highest grossing Hollywood films of the 1930s, and its impact on the American animation industry proved to be profound and lasting. The influence on these cartoons of *Snow White*, and the Disney style in general, is immediately evident in the graphic look, the comedic tone, and of course the character design – albeit with less sophisticated execution. So, though not produced at the Disney studio, The Wee Men does offer a powerful example of the process that Jack Zipes argues is characteristic of Disney's adaptations – the dilution, distortion, and ultimately the commodification, of folkloric tradition, very often based on European source material, for a global cinema audience (Zipes 351-52). For example, in *Snow White*, an adaptation from the German folk tradition, via the Brothers Grimm, the dwarfs do not make a particularly substantial contribution to the original tale, but in the film function as a vehicle for Disney's key criteria of cuteness and mass appeal – qualities very much evident in the design of the leprechaun characters in *The Wee Men.* Curtis's simian qualities are still there too but are softened – more rounded – as part of an altogether more benign rendering, reflecting changing attitudes towards the increasingly assimilated American Irish. It is important to note that this was against the backdrop of an increased visibility of Irish Americans in live-action cinema, a number of whom, like James Cagney and Spencer Tracy, were among the most popular stars of the period. Like the New Deal-era dwarfs, these leprechauns embody admirable qualities of community-based industriousness, a striking advance on earlier graphic images of the work-shy Irish. In another lift from *Snow White*, the leprechauns sing while they work, expressing a cheerful stoicism with the words, "you will find that you won't mind your daily grind if you sing a pretty little ditty."

The Wee Men opens, as does *Leprechaun's Gold*, on a night scene, and an unseen narrator with a rich brogue tells us that, "This is Ireland – the Emerald Isle, set like a gem in the deep blue sea ... where the curling peat smoke around the thatched cottages blends with the mists of the hills and the damp wind from the sea." This is certainly of a piece with the emphasis on the rural, and specifically the rural West, that would have been familiar to American movie audiences from the template established three decades earlier by the Kalem Company, an American operation which based itself in Ireland to exploit the authentic locations that would be one of its films' chief selling points. The use of narration also echoes the way that similar voices function in the kind of contemporary travelogues and promotional films that emphasised Ireland as a tourist destination. In *The Wee Men* the mist-shrouded woods and moonlit sky evoke a gothic atmosphere that also echoes recurring visual tropes in Disney, best exemplified by one of the studio's early successes, the graveyard-set *Skeleton Dance* (Ub Iwerks, 1929), the narrator continuing, "where since time immemorial, elves and fairies have haunted the hills and wild places, and long deep valleys where leprechauns have made their home."

This mixing of touristic and fantastical registers might suggest a satirical intent to the modern viewer and were this a Warner Brothers cartoon, one would be inclined towards this view, the output of that studio tending more towards a knowing brand of ironic reflexivity. However, the humour here is playful rather than barbed, and the pastiche is more likely working in the service of cartoon exaggeration and the establishment of a hokey accessibility than a critique of representational convention. There are also elements, particularly in *Leprechaun's Gold*, of the kind of popular stage melodrama that would have provided entertainment to the diasporic audiences in the years before cinema. In this instance the brutal stereotype of nineteenth-century caricature is projected onto the figure of Mr. Gombeen, the landlord threatening eviction for Mrs O'Shea and her daughter, a return of the repressed repurposed as antagonist to the leprechaun heroes. This set-up is recycled almost frame-for-frame in a Casper the Friendly Ghost cartoon, *Spooking with a Brogue* (Seymour Kneitel, 1955) (see Connerty Fig. 2 in Colour Supplement), a later Famous Studios production that featured a number of the same creative personnel as the earlier cartoon. Kneitel was clearly attracted to this territory, revisiting it again in a Popeye cartoon for television, *The Leprechaun* (Seymour Kneitel, 1961), in which the role of antagonist is played by that series' regular villain, the Sea Hag.

Spooking with a Brogue is also one of a number of cartoons that positions a popular Irish-subject cartoon character as a tourist, with Casper inspired to visit Ireland after seeing a poster in the window of a travel agency depicting a castle and declaring Ireland to be "the land of the friendly people." A later film, produced by the MGM studio, has the character Droopy (*Droopy Leprechaun*, Michael Lah, 1958) engage in that most touristic of acts, the purchasing of a leprechaun's hat from a street vendor, on what is clearly recognisable as O'Connell Street. The Droopy cartoon is also notable for offering a more advanced and progressive vision of Ireland through its rendering, in some architectural detail, of Dublin Airport, an example of the international style and a visualisation of modernity that was all but absent from cinematic representations at that time. It is not made clear what the purpose of Porky Pig's trip is in *Wearing of the Grin* (Chuck Jones, 1951), but both here and in *Droopy Leprechaun*, much of the action takes place in the kinds of castle setting that were a key component of the promotion of Ireland as a tourist destination, one well-known example, Ashford Castle, featuring prominently in the title sequence of *The Quiet Man* the following year. Porky Pig, ever the hapless victim, encounters two sinister leprechauns named Pat and Mike, the spooky *mise-en-scène* a reminder that the leprechaun is an ambivalent character type, and can be presented as a grotesquely villainous figure as much as a quaintly mischievous one – witness the *Leprechaun* horror franchise which, at the time of writing, has had eight iterations since the first film was produced in 1993. Having addressed one of his tormentors with an ethnic slur ("you picturesque peasant caretaker of the old sod you!"), Porky is tried in a kangaroo court for apparently attempting to steal their pot of gold and sentenced to the 'wearing of the green shoes,' which, when buckled onto his feet, cause him to dance uncontrollably.

The scene that follows pastiches *The Red Shoes* (Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger, 1948), an international hit three years earlier, and mirrors that film in its bizarre transition from the 'real' world to a fantasy landscape – a nightmarish wasteland in the style of Salvador Dalí, replete with giant clay pipes, harps, and other signifiers of Irishness. The cartoon pushes the ethnic imagery and stereotyping to extremes, particularly in the exaggeratedly theatrical voice characterisations of the leprechauns, to the point where the caricaturing process itself is part of the joke.

In *The Emerald Isle*, director Seymour Kneitel operates more explicitly within these touristic discourses, taking the viewer from one site to the next in the manner of a musical travelogue, unmotivated by any narrative thread. The cartoon was part of a series of thirty-eight *Screen Songs*, released between 1947 and 1951, a revival of a successful series of the 1930s, in which audience participation in a sing-along was encouraged by the inclusion of the complete lyrics, which were picked out by a 'bouncing ball.' This device (still in common use in Karaoke machines), having been made popular in the earlier Fleischer cartoons, was adapted in this case as a bouncing shamrock, another example of the kitsch iconography of Irishness as a source of comedy. The narrator warmly claims that "the Irish are great lovers of music, and 'tis said that even the hidden creatures of the woodlands hurry out to listen when an Irish band strikes up a native tune," the tune in this case being "McNamara's Band," performed by an assembly of leprechauns. "McNamara's Band" was originally written in London and subsequently popularised by Bing Crosby, another keenly celebrated figure within Irish American culture, who had a huge hit with it in 1945. Music, often in the form of songs which were themselves highly marketable, was central to all of these cartoons, as it had been for Disney with the Silly Symphonies series of the 1930s – *The Band Concert* (Wilfred Jackson, 1935), starring Mickey Mouse, was another direct influence here. The use of music as a shorthand to help establish national character is a commonplace in cartoons set in many locations, but it is also important to recognise the key role that music, both popular and traditional, played in the self-identification of Irish Americans specifically during this period. Tin Pan Alley composers like Chauncey Olcott and Albert and Harry Von Tilzer had numerous hits during the early years of the twentieth century with songs like "My Wild Irish Rose", "Just Sing a Song for Ireland," and "A Little Bunch of Shamrocks," respectively (Moloney 395-96).

It is likely that the production of these Irish-subject cartoons with leprechaun protagonists was at least partly prompted by the success of the Broadway musical *Finian's Rainbow*, which ran for two years following its first appearance in 1947. In the story, written by Yip Harburg – who had penned the lyrics for the songs in *The Wizard of Oz* (Victor Fleming, 1939) – and playwright Fred Saidy, the leprechaun comes to America from Ireland, and brings an outsider's perspective to a narrative that unfolds in the fictitious southern state of "Missitucky." A similar case of the leprechaun-as-migrant informs *The Luck of the Irish* (Henry Koster, 1948), in which a New York reporter, played by Tyrone Power, is followed back to America by a leprechaun he en-

counters while holidaying in Ireland. The satirical thrust of *Finian's Rainbow* sees the leprechaun, whose crock of gold is buried close to Fort Knox in the hope that it will multiply, cast as "the capitalist's bogeyman" (Taaffe 12), and the film is far from being a merely superficial fantasy. James Silas Rogers has argued that during the volatile post-war period, which saw an embrace of conservative values and the framing of socialist ideas in terms of the communist menace, "leprechauns and Irish figures functioned as innocents in America, whose naïveté allowed them to comment on contemporary life, and to give voice to misgivings about what the nation was becoming" (Rogers 148). The potentially controversial way the narrative deals with the dynamics of southern plantation politics, and with race in particular (the skin of a bigoted Senator is accidentally turned black by a curse, only for it to be returned to its original white as a 'reward' when he mends his ways) may have been what stalled any interest in the property on the part of the Hollywood studios, and it was not adapted as a film until the Francis Ford Coppola version reached the screen in 1968, at a time when these elements might have been more palatable.

Production sketches and script notes for an earlier unfinished film of *Finian's Rainbow*, to have been directed by John Hubley, suggest that this could have been one of the most important animated features of the 1950s, certainly one of the most ambitious (Canemaker). The production had advanced far enough for soundtrack recordings to have been made, featuring Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald, and other top tier musical stars of the period. At the time that preproduction work on it began, Disney was the only studio still producing feature length animation, a field in which it had dominated since *Snow White*. Only Fleischer Studios, with *Gulliver's Travels* (1939) and *Mr. Bug goes to Town* (1941), had produced anything other than seven-minute shorts, and Hubley, with a track record of innovation and experiment as a director and founder of UPA in 1943, and to whom the political and social subtexts of the narrative would have been appealing, was commissioned to work on an animated version. Like other directors we have looked at, Hubley began work at the Disney studio, but was dissatisfied with the limited creative options available to him in such a stylistically rigid environment, and, following his departure, established UPA with the specific ambition of pushing animation into more progressive territory, thematically and stylistically. It is possible to get some sense of the visual design of the film from the several hundred surviving pre-production sketches, which suggest the expressively modernist style of Hubley's earlier work, and an atmosphere that would have been entirely different from many of the cartoons discussed here. There is no certainty as to the precise reasons why the project was abruptly cancelled in 1955, though animation historian John Canemaker suggests that it was related to investor nervousness following John Hubley's coming to the attention of the House Un-American Activities Committee, and his refusal to testify before them (Canemaker 121).

Another factor that may have inspired the Famous cartoons and may indeed have been a contributary motivator for Hubley, was Walt Disney's ambition to make the

film based on leprechaun mythology that would eventually materialise as *Darby O'Gill and the Little People*, a concept that was under consideration for some time, something that would have been well known within the industry. Disney had in fact been planning the film, which he originally envisaged as an animated feature, since at least 1946, when he sent a number of artists to Ireland on a research trip (Maltin 416). Tony Tracy has written in detail about how, during this lengthy pre-production period, Disney engaged directly with the Irish Folklore Commission, and particularly with Dr. Seamus Delargy, who offered Disney a rich variety of potential source material, which was ultimately set aside in favour of the focus on the leprechaun character (Tracy 55). Intriguingly, records also indicate that Delargy was approached in 1947 by a representative from Paramount, the studio to which Famous was attached, again with a view to discussing the possibility of a film based on leprechaun mythology, and though this was indeed the year that *The Wee Men* was produced, it would have been without the assistance of the Folklore Commission as it was decided that first-comer Disney had a right to a degree of exclusivity (Tracy 51). *Darby O'Gill* itself was shot entirely on the Albertson and Rowland Lee ranches and on two sound stages at the Disney studio in California, meaning that many of the landscapes presented in the film are in fact matte shots created by special effects designer Peter Ellenshaw, and thus share the hand-rendered artificiality of the landscapes in the animated cartoons discussed earlier.

In a 1959 episode of his ABC television show, *Disneyland*, entitled "I Met the King of the Leprechauns," essentially an extended promotional film for *Darby O'Gill*, which was released later that year, Walt meets various people posing as experts, ostensibly as part of the pre-production process for the film. The series of books by Herminie Templeton Kavanagh on which the film is based are not alluded to, and instead the TV show presents Disney himself as the source of the narrative, appearing as a serious-minded researcher, notebook in hand. A recurring theme of Disney's research is his desire to capture the actual appearance of the leprechauns, and the quest is framed as a piece of investigative reporting or documentary, rather than as the creative *Disney-fication* of folkloric sources, and indeed Templeton Kavanagh's book. Later in the episode Disney travels to Ireland, and, as a stock exterior shot of College Green implies, into the Trinity College library, to meet another expert. This library custodian produces a (cartoonishly) large and dusty illustrated book, and relates a version of the leprechauns' origin story, "a kind of Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained rolled into one." The engraved pictures are in the style of the well-known illustrations for *Paradise Lost* by Gustave Doré, a noted influence, with other French Romantic illustrators of the mid-nineteenth century, on the style of Disney's background artists during the 1930s and 40s. The apparent authenticity of these images is underscored by the anachronistic incorporation of texts and page layouts based on the *Book of Kells*. Disney's insertion of himself into the diegesis of the film itself, with the signed note that opens *Darby O'Gill*, thanking King Brian and the other leprechauns for their co-operation, is of a piece with the self-figuration that was a key component of earlier

cartoons in which the artist/creator is revealed in front of the camera, and suggests in this case the emphatic placing of a proprietary stamp on the narrative. The television episode might also be regarded in this manner, his trip to Ireland in search of the leprechaun perhaps deliberately intended to mirror the genealogically investigative journeys of many Irish American tourists in search of roots, and the kind of promotional films, such as *O'Hara's Holiday* (1950), discussed by Stephanie Rains with regard to the touristic discourses that structure so many Irish-subject films (Rains 209). Disney himself had Irish roots, though he exaggerates these in describing himself as "*half*-Irish" during the chat with actor Pat O'Brien that opens the episode.

The studio's reworking of the leprechaun character is also exemplified in a book that appeared in 1955 as part of the Disney Little Golden Book series. The book, illustrated by Disney animator Richmond Kelsey, was titled *Little Man of Disneyland* and was part of a cross-promotional strategy in which every element of studio output that year was mobilised in the service of promoting the first theme park, which opened in Anaheim California on 17 July. The story, written by Golden Book regular Jane Werner, has "Patrick Begorah" play a role in the construction of the Disneyland theme park (note again the industriousness), and establish a home for himself in a secret place within its boundaries. Beyond his ethnic name and his self-evident status as a leprechaun (though the term is not used), there is no direct allusion to the character's Irishness, indeed it is implied that his 'home' is the Californian site on which the park is to be built. There is a self-reflexive tone to the tale, which has Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse surprised by Patrick's failure to recognise them, given their status as stars of film and television, though this meta-narrative quality is not extended to a recognition of Begorah's origins as a figure transposed from a specific folkloric tradition. As he moves his belongings into the theme park under cover of night on the final page, it is to take his place as a character in the Disney universe with no suggestion of any other context in which he might exist.

Pigs is Pigs (1954), a Disney cartoon produced during this period, based on a short story originally written by Ellis Parker Butler in 1905 and directed by Irish American Jack Kinney, centres on a human, rather than a supernatural, character. The design of its Irish protagonist, the over-scrupulous railway agent Flannery, owes much, even at this late stage, to the simianised type that prevailed during the nineteenth century, and he is endowed with a pronounced Stage Irish accent, though is otherwise not especially stereotypical in the traditional manner. Like the leprechauns of the Famous cartoons he is a diligent employee, though his over-zealous attentiveness to his job, and pathological desire to be an effective 'company man,' perhaps speaks to the insecurities Timothy Meagher has in mind when he outlines a particular mid-century perception of the American Irish as "handicapped by a backward Catholic culture that made them fatalistic, communal, suspicious of ambition and individualism, obsessed with conformity and security, and fearful of risk" (Meagher 131). The action takes place in a railway depot that could be anywhere (although we take it to be some-

where in America), the geographical abstractness compounded by the entry at one point of a stage Scotsman, with whom Flannery can only engage following careful consultation of a conversational rule book. The film's highly stylised look, which is striking, and earned it an Oscar nomination, owes something to the fact that Disney, like many other studios, was absorbing the modernist approach to design typical of John Hubley and UPA, who had recently enjoyed critical and commercial success with shorts like *Gerald McBoing Boing* (Robert Cannon, 1950) and *Rooty Toot Toot* (John Hubley, 1951). When Irish characters appear in human form in cartoons of this period, they tend to occupy peripheral roles, often appearing as officers of the law. A typical example is *What's Sweepin'?* (Don Patterson, 1953), a *Woody Woodpecker* cartoon set in the late 1800s that features Walter the Walrus as a dishonest Irish cop stealing bananas from the neighbourhood fruit stand. Bugs Bunny, in his characteristically vaudevillian style, briefly impersonates one in *Bowery Bugs* (Arthur Davis, 1949), also a period tale. Perhaps the most notable employment of this particular ethnic stereotype occurs in a Fleischer Studio cartoon titled *The Fresh Vegetable Mystery* (Dave Fleischer, 1939), in which the Irish cops appear in anthropomorphised form as drunken potatoes.

In *Finnegan's Flea* (1958), directed by Izzy Sparber (see Connerty Fig. 3 in Colour Supplement), again for Famous Studios, despite being a musical comedy, whose narrative owes a great deal to Chuck Jones' *One Froggy Evening* (1955), the Finnegan of the title is presented as a remarkably desperate character in the context of the theatrical cartoon of the time, and the narrative, related by a barman who is also Irish, is effectively offered as an explanation for the protagonist's chronic alcoholism. Finnegan's story begins with him awaiting release from prison, where he first encounters the singing flea who he becomes convinced will earn him his fortune. All such ambitions are dashed when, following his release, Finnegan visits a tavern to celebrate the signing of a big contract and the narrator barman casually kills the flea. We learn that the barman subsequently feels compelled to supply Finnegan with a steady diet of pretzels and beer in perpetuity, a set-up that Finnegan has accepted in grim silence for thirteen years, never leaving the bar. This is essentially another magical fantasy tale, albeit one that takes place in prison cells and homeless shelters, and is oriented around guilt, failure, and alcohol abuse, Finnegan's misfortunes being the very antithesis of the leprechaun's bright-eyed optimism. As a metaphor for the crushed dreams of the Irish American experience it is uncharacteristically strong stuff relative to the earlier examples from Famous.

The leprechaun type has continued to feature in various graphic contexts, for example as the pugilistic mascot for the Notre Dame University football team, designed by Theodore Drake in 1964, and in the promotional material for the Lucky Charms breakfast cereal, which includes a long-running animated incarnation. The first of the Lucky Charms television commercials to feature the character Lucky the Leprechaun was produced by another ex-Disney animator, Bill Melendez. For over fifty years, the

character has featured in dozens of animated advertisements that range in style from traditional cel animation through to digital 3D, making him by far one of American television's most enduring cartoon characters. The action in the advertisements is abstracted from any recognisably Irish context, often taking place in the kind of generic European fairy tale woodlands familiar from the Disney films of the 30s and 40s. Lucky's chirpy, playful *persona* has remained undeveloped over the decades, unsurprising given the extreme brevity and consumerist imperatives of television commercials. Diane Negra singles out Lucky's diminutive height as offering not only a particular appeal for the child consumers who are its target audience, but also as suggestive of a reduced "cultural stature," a factor that harks back to nineteenth century colonialist discourses around infantilism and paternalist condescension in relation to Ireland (Negra 80). This representation of the Irish as children also recalls the vogue in American greeting card and postcard art from earlier in the twentieth century, best exemplified in the work of Ellen Clapsaddle, who produced numerous cards, many celebrating St. Patrick's Day, featuring young children and infants in green bonnets, hats and britches, above legends like "and what color [sic] should be seen, where our father's homes have been, but our own immortal green."

The cartoons produced by Famous Studios in the middle of the twentieth century, though they combine elements of both parody and sentimentality, do powerfully render, in the bold visual style of classical animation, a technicolour world of magic, the supernatural, and touristic appeal. These short films speak to the conception of Ireland as a kind of fantasy, a place not entirely real, reflecting the experience of second and third generation Irish Americans, accessing, via a nostalgic silver screen imaginary, a place they had never known. Perhaps this resort to pure fantasy also suggests a failure on the part of the diasporic audience to reconcile the dramatic changes wrought by the real events of the Rising, the Civil War, and the new-found independence that preceded the release of these cartoons by only a short number of decades. The leprechaun figure has persisted in American popular culture since the 1960s, and there is rich potential for further research in this area. Ruth Barton has suggested that the grotesque characterisation at the centre of the *Leprechaun* horror franchise mentioned earlier was part of a "wider, and seemingly, conservative backlash against political correctness and the politics of assimilation and multiculturalism" (Barton 30). Until recently, one of the biggest stars of professional wrestling (a cartoon-like entertainment form if ever there was one) was a volatile 'leprechaun' with the *nom de guerre* 'Hornswoggle,' a word meaning to hoodwink or swindle, and whose tag team partner, 'Finlay,' regularly brandished a shillelagh in the ring. Unashamedly retrogressive leprechaun characters appeared in numerous episodes of both *Family Guy* and *The Simpsons*. In fact, the ironic take on ethnic humour employed by the writers of *The Simpsons* was regularly directed at Irish and Irish American targets, one episode, "The Day the Violence Died," specifically dealing with animation history itself ("Look out Itchy – he's Irish!"). In terms of the range of ethnically informed caricatures and cartoon characters that once proliferated in the graphic arts,

two decades into the twenty-first century the leprechaun is something of a last man standing.

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