


Whipple
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Appel, John J. "From Shanties to Lace Curtains: The Irish Image in Puck, 1876–1910." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 13.04 (1971): 365. Web. 10 Feb. 2017.

In his article, “From Shanties to Lace Curtains: The Irish Image in *Puck*, 1876-1910” Michigan State University Professor John Appel analyzes the evolution of Irish stereotypes during the Gilded Age by evaluating the image of the Irish-American immigrant in *Puck* Magazine. Appel emphasizes *Puck*’s initial characterization of the typical Irish man as a violent, belligerent, strongly Catholic, lazy, common laborer who holds a strong sentiment of nationalism for their home country and the Irish woman as a hardworking, unintelligent, disorderly, and selfish maid¹. As the social and economic status of Irish immigrants changed, Appel brings to attention how the outward image of the Irish immigrant that was found within *Puck* and other humorous magazines tended to remain the same, but the meanings and inward significance of these depictions changed. Appel claims that the nature of stereotypes evolve as social norms and society change throughout time, and that it’s not always about the image itself, but the interpretation that comes from it and how history is portrayed through it. Appel defends his claim well, but only focuses on a certain generalized group of Irish-Americans, but his facts are historically inaccurate as seen in Fraser’s *By The People* socioeconomic description of the ethnic group.


¹ Appel, John J. "From Shanties to Lace Curtains: The Irish Image in Puck, 1876–1910." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 13.04 (1971): 365. Web. 10 Feb. 2017.



Appel supports his claim with several pieces of evidence within the article. The first being *Puck's* depiction of Irish immigrants: Paddy and Bridgette, who were perceived as lazy, aggressive, and inferior lower class citizens who made a living off of substandard occupations such as servant girls, gardeners, factory workers, miners, and other common laborers.¹ Irish-Americans were represented by this characterization even after the turn of the nineteenth century, when cartoons of the Irish became less frequent and more focused on more prominent issues such as the “money hungry Jew,” (Appel 374). This consistency in depiction creates a problem when referring to it as historical evidence because it is an inaccurate and outdated representation of the Irish-American. According to Appel the, “depiction of the Irish as the most unruly element in the nation reflected a then common American resentment against the inflamed temper of certain Irish,” (Appel 368). This prejudiced perspective of the Irish, caused by the animosity of the public, reinforces his claim that stereotypes resemble the opinions of society.

In contrast to Appel's article depicting the “majority of... Irish types [as] ignorant,” Fraser's *By The People* depicts Irish as a developed and intelligent group of people found across lower, middle, and upper class America (Appel 367). Many upper class Irish-Americans were powerful influences in politics and society during the second half of the nineteenth century. These Irish politicians controlled New York City through the political machine Tammany Hall². While both Appel's article and *By The People* mention that the Irish were disliked by the public, Appel claims that this was because of their believed inferiority and aggressiveness while *By The People* cites that the resentment surfaced from their strong control of the political system. There are some aspects to consider to account for this difference in representation. For instance, *Puck* was anti-Catholic and located in New York City, and most likely depicted the Irish as they did in

² James Fraser, *By The People*, 573-574



Appel's article in order to sabotage and dissuade citizens from supporting Tammany Hall.

Appel's article fails to acknowledge the majority of Irish-Americans that became prosperous and well-adjusted as the Gilded Age progressed, only recognizing the "stereotype [that] was faintly reminiscent of Irish-Americans' sometimes painful struggle for jobs and adjustment, and their presence in large numbers in unskilled occupations, labor and domestic service," (Appel 373).

The use of an outdated depiction of the Irish immigrant creates a false image in the reader's mind that the Irish-American was continually unqualified for dignified work, when in reality they were unable to get socially acceptable occupations due to the prejudice that characterized their ethnicity.

In respect to his thesis, Appel successfully supplied enough convincing evidence to support his argument. Not only did he provide appropriate evidence during the Gilded Age, but he also provided evidence from other periods of time that support his argument- that stereotypes evolve as social norms and society change throughout time- to solidify the credibility of his findings. Appel was not however, successful in aiding the reader in better understanding the Gilded Age due to the fact that he only focused on one aspect of the Gilded Age rather than it as a whole. Appel's article also fails to explain a historically accurate characterization of the Irish-American, falsely leading the reader to believe that the characterization in *Puck* resembles an accurate depiction during the Gilded Age. The article is only useful to the reader in understanding how Americans viewed immigrants and certain ethnic groups during the Gilded Age; the article fails to go any more in depth on the subject of politics, trade, or industrialization during that time period, all of which are major characteristics of the Gilded Age. A college level history student would find this article useful in analyzing how satirical and humorous magazines



depicted certain ethnic groups over time, and how much influence they had on the opinion of the American public towards immigrants.



Works Cited

Appel, John J. "From Shanties to Lace Curtains: The Irish Image in Puck, 1876–1910." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 13.04 (1971): 365. Web. 10 Feb. 2017.

Fraser, James. *By The People: A History of the United States*. AP ed., Pearson Education, 2015, [file:///Users/victoria/Downloads/Part%206%20Without%20Test%20Questions%20\(1\).pdf](file:///Users/victoria/Downloads/Part%206%20Without%20Test%20Questions%20(1).pdf)

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