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Inventing the Tramp: The Early Tramp Comic on the Variety Stage

This article examines the 'tramp' on the variety stage at the moment of its cultural invention. Immediately after the Panic of 1873, variety actors performed the comic tramp in both blackface and whiteface. However, as the decade continued, the comic tramp in variety transformed into primarily a whiteface, typically Irish-American, figure. Considering the comic tramp as one enduring "dramaturgy of mobility," the author suggests that this transformation was less a whitening of the comic tramp and more an erasure of black mobility. The Irish-American tramp may have reflected many of the negative characteristics of the tramp, including his wandering nature, his unemployment, and his drinking, but he also showed that the Irish-American comic tramp, unlike the earlier black counterpart, could be part of a community and in some instances, even a hero. Michelle Granshaw is an Assistant Professor of Theatre Arts at the University of Pittsburgh. Her research interests include American and Irish theatre and popular entertainment, diaspora and global performance histories, performance and the working class, and historiography. Her articles have appeared in Theatre Survey, Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film, Journal of American Drama and Theatre, Theatre Topics, and the New England Theatre Journal.

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Triggered by the Panic of 1873, the economic depression of the 1870s instigated the movement of millions of unemployed workers on a previously unseen scale in the United States.¹ Until the 1870s, "tramp" existed primarily as a verb in the American lexicon and referred to a long walk or march. When "tramp" emerged as a noun to describe these masses of mobile workers in the wake of the depression, it differed from previous conceptions of beggars, vagrants, and the poor in its inference of excessive mobility. The nation's railroads gave unemployed workers the option of traveling faster and farther than ever before. When mobile, unemployed strangers wandered through towns and cities

across the country, people grew anxious over their inability to distinguish between who was unemployed and genuinely searching for work and who was idle and potentially a threat to people and property. Reformers conceived of the mobile unemployed not as victims of the industrial economy, but as criminals. This classification did not result from any specific acts but from individual, moral faults, with reformers claiming that charity only emboldened and enabled them to continue to refuse work and afford alcohol. Without a systematic study of tramps, many reformers assumed most tramps were male, white immigrants. As historian Todd DePastino notes, “the Irish wayfarer became a common Gilded Age stereotype...Indeed, as new waves of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe poured into the country, the equation of Irishness and tramping became even more pronounced as the newcomers failed to take their places in the tramp army.”² Small towns and villages viewed tramps as urban menaces who invaded their tranquil rural lives. As the result of middle-class cultural productions surrounding the tramp such as dime novels, newspapers, literature, speeches, pamphlets, cartoons, and theatre, the tramp figure reflected views, held by middle-class reformers for decades, that equated poverty with criminality.³

This article examines the tramp’s cultural invention within a working-class context, the variety theatre, and questions how popular entertainment participated in the production of meanings surrounding these masses of mobile, unemployed men.⁴ Cultural geographer Tim Cresswell offers a useful distinction between movement and mobility. While movement is “an act of displacement that allows people to move between locations” or “mobility abstracted from contexts of power,” mobility is “socially produced motion” contingent on power and understood through relations.⁵ Mobility involves a consideration of meaning and how it is produced, including the “type, strategies, and social implications” of movement.⁶ Cresswell notes how “mobility seems self-evidently central to Western modernity.”⁷ Shifts in mobility resulted from accelerating industrialization, advances in transportation, a growing population of immigrants, and the migration of recently freed black Americans, and led to increasing anxieties over *who moved and how*. The anxieties surrounding the tramp were rooted in how he disrupted the spatial ordering and discipline that was closely linked to modernity.⁸ Popular entertainment became one way these shifting meanings surrounding mobility were produced, contested, and propagated.

Variety theatre produced one example of what I am calling “dramaturgies of mobility,” repeated narratives, types, images, strategies, and performative practices that transformed shifts in mobility into systems of meaning to be received, resisted, and reformed. There is debate over the use of the term “dramaturgy” and whether it is intentionally deployed or produced by the performance itself (or both). I draw on Eugenio Barba’s definition of dramaturgy as “the work of the actions’ in performance” that “interweaves events and characters, informing the spectators on the meaning of what they are watching.”⁹ In this sense, the dramaturgy emerges from the performance itself and contributes to the production of meaning, whether or not it is intentional.¹⁰ This article focuses on the comic tramp as one enduring dramaturgy of mobility and traces its emergence and transformation on the variety stage. Scholars have studied the tramp comic in vaudeville, a form with a different structure, business model, and

audience starting around the mid-to-late 1880s. By the time variety transformed into vaudeville, the tramp had existed for over a decade. To date, the variety theatre's distinctive role in the tramp's performance history remains unrecognized. Examining variety theatre offers an opportunity to explore the dramaturgies created by the comic tramp for working-class audiences as well as during the tramp's initial creation. Variety performance existed roughly from the 1840s through the mid-1880s in saloons and theatres. It preceded the development of vaudeville, which developed out of managers' efforts to make variety more respectable and to expand their audiences to include women and the middle class. Unlike family-friendly vaudeville with its mixed class and gender audiences, variety typically featured acts with rougher and more explicit humor that appealed to its primarily male working-class audiences.¹¹ This article focuses on the variety's later years from 1873 to 1883.

The dramaturgies of mobility performed by the comic tramp illustrate how the figure participated in the complicated racial dynamics of the late-nineteenth century. Although early whiteness studies theorists such as Noel Ignatiev argued that the Irish "became" white, subsequent whiteness studies scholarship and critiques by Eric Arsem, Thomas Guglielmo, and Cian McMahon among others have highlighted how white immigrants were legally considered white upon arrival in the US, in spite of Anglo-Protestant prejudice and discrimination. Contemporary whiteness studies and immigration scholars have analyzed how white immigrants also brought their own racial beliefs about color and nation from their home countries, which envisioned their identity as white.¹² Through a close analysis of John Wild's performances of the comic tramp at the Theatre Comique in New York City, it is possible to trace the racial transformation of the comic tramp in the 1870s. Immediately after the Panic and during the early years of the tramp menace, variety actors performed the comic tramp in both blackface and whiteface. They defined the figure and its role in the sketches' action through primarily non-verbal, physical performances. Other than their face paint, few differences between blackface and whiteface tramps are apparent from the figure's remaining performance traces. In both iterations, they exhibited lack of coordination, a penchant for drinking and fighting, and inability to hold a job. However, as the decade continued, the comic tramp in variety transformed into primarily a whiteface, typically Irish-American, figure. Since the comic tramp could be performed as white, even during its early years, this transformation is less a whitening of the comic tramp as opposed to an erasure of black mobility. The increasing popularity of the Irish comic tramp demonstrated the limits of the north to imagine the freedom of mobility for black Americans. The Irish-American tramp may have reflected many of the negative characteristics of the tramp, including his wandering nature, his unemployment, and his drinking, but he also showed that the Irish-American comic tramp, unlike earlier black counterparts, could be part of a community and in some instances, even a hero.

Variety theatre in the 1870s

As the effects of the Panic of 1873 rippled throughout New York City, variety managers developed different performance and economic strategies to navigate the crisis. With its acrobats, dancers, singers, and comic duos, variety

offered escapist entertainment, but it did not ignore recent events and relied on novelty to appeal to its working-class audiences. Local scams and scandals, national events and tragedies, and popular cultural trends provided vital material that variety incorporated into formulaic sketches and songs.¹³ With the variety theatres' tendency to appeal to novelty and topical references, it is not surprising that the comic tramp appeared on variety stages only a few months into the depression.

By mid-century, variety shows were starting to be recognized as an entertainment form distinct from minstrelsy and by the end of the Civil War they customarily had a two-act structure and often lasted around four hours. The olio featured singers, dancers, acrobatics, sketches, and novelty acts. A comic, melodramatic, burlesque, or pantomime afterpiece filled the second act. There typically was no narrative connecting the acts.¹⁴ Variety theatre mostly operated on a stock company model that allowed performers to gain familiarity with each other and draw on individuals' strengths throughout the program, as opposed to vaudeville's later tendency to feature performers in only one act. It was not unusual in variety to have a performer do her specialty and then perform in a sketch or afterpiece as well. Variety entertainments appeared in a range of performance spaces from saloons and theatres to church halls and basements. The existence of variety stock companies allowed performers not only to develop a relationship with each other, but also with their audiences, many of whom lived in the surrounding neighborhoods. Variety theatres had some success attracting more respectable female and middle-class audiences as it increasingly split between sexualized and respectable, first-class houses. Sexualized variety typically appeared in low-class theatres and saloons. It featured acts with lewder humor and more scantily clad women. Reformers frequently accused sexualized variety of enabling prostitution, selling alcohol, and targeting young men with their unrespectable entertainments. In the 1870s, first-class variety appeared in theatres run by managers who wanted to clean up the entertainment to expand their audience beyond the male working class to women and the middle class. These managers' efforts eventually led to the development of vaudeville in the mid-1880s. Promising respectable entertainment free of bad language and alcohol, first-class variety managers offered less crude entertainment and enticements to women, such as food and sewing machines, to draw them to performances. However, evidence suggests that even first-class variety theatres like Tony Pastor's Opera House or the Theatre Comique in New York continued to draw primarily working-class men during the 1870s.¹⁵ With the high numbers of Irish-American working-class men in many cities and the placement of variety theatres near neighborhoods with large numbers of Irish-American residents, scholars have argued that Irish Americans comprised a large number of the audience, especially in cities such as New York, Boston, and Chicago, as well as in mining and logging camps where variety companies toured.¹⁶

As theatre historian Don Wilmeth details, variety entertainment "is almost invisible in the historical record because working-class entertainments received little press and left few archives."¹⁷ Other than brief descriptions, the occasional review, and advertisements in the *New York Clipper*, few New York newspapers noted, let alone reviewed variety performances which were not considered

respectable entertainment during the 1870s. The few remaining scripts for afterpieces and sketches, together with songsters and sheet music, provide a fragmentary record of variety performance. As a strategy for examining these performances in spite of the evidentiary gaps, this article analyzes the comic tramp at one of the few variety theatres to leave behind a comparatively fair-sized performance record, the Theatre Comique, at 514 Broadway. Managed by actor-manager Josh Hart at the start of the Panic in 1873 and then from 1876 by the comic duo Edward Harrigan and Tony Hart, the Theatre Comique competed with Tony Pastor's Opera House on the Bowery only a few blocks away to offer working-class audiences respectable variety entertainment. The archival record of performance remains, in part, because of Edward Harrigan's success and fame during his years at the Comique and later at the New Theatre Comique, which he established with Hart in the early 1880s. His children collected his early variety sketches, thus preserving essential evidence for understanding and analyzing variety during the 1870s. Through its analysis of the tramp at the Theatre Comique, this article continues the conversation started by theatre historian Brooks McNamara in his work on New York concert saloons, theatre historian Susan Kattwinkel in her work on the Irish and Tony Pastor's theatres, and ethnomusicologist Gillian Rodger in her seminal monographs on the history of variety entertainments. It traces transformations in the performance form as well as argues for how it functioned within the broader cultural imagination.¹⁸

At a time when many variety theatres changed sketches and afterpieces after only a week in an appeal to novelty, the comic tramp appeared in songs, sketches, and afterpieces for weeks at a time. For example, at the Theatre Comique, Edward Harrigan's *The Terrible Example* premiered five months after the economic crash and ran from March 1874 until the end of the season in May. The Comique revived the sketch again, typically for several week runs, in October 1874, March, April, and May 1875, October 1876, April 1877, and May 1879.¹⁹ The comic tramp's success at the Comique rested on Harrigan and comic John Wild. Whether in Harrigan's sketches or his own, Wild prominently performed the comic tramp on the Theatre Comique's stage. Born in Manchester, England to English and Irish parents, he made his name as a blackface performer in minstrelsy in the 1860s before moving into variety. By the end of the 1870s, he was the third ranked star after Harrigan and Hart at the Comique. He usually played blackface characters in Harrigan's most famous sketches and musical comedies, but also performed a wide range of stage Irish roles. Although it is difficult to say who performed the comic tramp first, people in the theatre industry remembered his tramp as the predecessors to the comic tramp in vaudeville. William Ellis Horton remembered the first tramp comedian "was Johnny Wild in a sketch called "A Terrible Example."²⁰ Upon Wild's death, the *New York Dramatic Mirror* explained, "In a *Terrible Example* he used to convulse audiences by his comicalities as a reckless tramp. It has been claimed that Johnny Wild's early tramp impersonations formed the model on which many subsequent characterizations of that type were founded both in vaudeville and farce-comedy."²¹ Various newspapers and memoirs commented on Wild's choice to start performing the tramps in whiteface. Referring to his appearance as a "white-faced tramp" and "white vagrant," newspapers cheered Wild's "marvelous sketch of the bumner, whom we now call a tramp."²²

Although he also performed, Harrigan wrote his comic tramps specifically for Wild. Performing with his partner Tony Hart and writing the songs with composer and father-in-law David Braham, Harrigan began his ascent to variety stardom with his song and sketch, "The Mulligan Guard," in 1873. As the 1870s progressed, Harrigan and Hart moved from valuable variety stock company members of Josh Hart's Theatre Comique to its stars. Harrigan wrote the duo's most popular material which focused on Irish-American and working-class life in New York. At the end of the decade and early 1880s, in his Mulligan Guard series, Harrigan blurred the line between variety and musical comedy and made Harrigan and Hart national stars.²³ Contemporaries and scholars credit Harrigan with improving the representation of the Irish and Irish-Americans by making his Irish-American characters productive citizens, if flawed ones, with respectable jobs and families. Even though his Irish and Irish-American characters portrayed many negative stage Irish characteristics grounded in nineteenth-century stage comedy, including the penchant for drink, blarney, and fighting, Harrigan downplayed the negative connotations of these characteristics' and related them to the pursuit of noble causes, such as family, community, and patriotism for Ireland and the United States. Still, at times, members of the Irish-American community spoke out against his caricatures because they feared a negative impact on the Irish-American community.²⁴ This ambiguity also characterized his later comic tramps.

The comic tramp on the variety stage

From its earliest appearances on the variety stage in roughly 1874, until the mid-1880s, the comic tramp navigated the fluid ethnic and racial terrain surrounding the genesis of the tramp in middle-class representations. Unlike most major representations in literature, newspapers, and song that were usually white, comedians performed the earliest comic tramps in blackface and whiteface, with the whiteface versions typically stage Irish.²⁵ During the first few years after the Panic of 1873, blackface and Irish comic tramps were almost indistinguishable, other than their face color. The similarity in character for black and Irish representations was not unusual for popular entertainment in the United States. In spite of the parallel character constructions, systematic oppression and everyday material reality dramatically differed for the Irish and black Americans and inevitably influenced how audiences may have interpreted the blackface and whiteface tramp performances. With Irish, blackface, and Dutch (German) acts dominating variety stages, the choice to perform Irish or blackface tramps reflected the types' popularity with audiences.²⁶

The performances of the comic tramp used racial and ethnic types as a clear visual marker of the tramp menace. Before the tramp figure appeared in print or on stage, as scholars have discussed, print caricatures of black Americans and the Irish often reflected similar prejudices, making the later parallels in tramp representation not unusual.²⁷ Political cartoons, newspapers, and middle-class reform literature offered biological justifications for the belief that both groups lacked the ability to be proper American citizens. Simian caricatures portrayed black Americans and the Irish as having substandard intelligence, violent and alcoholic tendencies, and the lack of desire to work.²⁸ The parallels between black and Irish representations extended to the stage in variety as well as minstrelsy

before the emergence of the comic tramp. As American Studies scholar Eric Lott discusses, in minstrelsy, blackface skits incorporated Irish brogues because “blackface, bizarrely enough, was actually used to represent all ethnicities on the antebellum stage prior to the development of ethnic types.”²⁹ Overlap between racial and ethnic types continued after the American Civil War on variety stages. Lott and historian Robert Toll single out the sketches of Harrigan and Hart as representative of this performance trend, but do not reference the comic tramp sketches specifically.³⁰ I argue that the comic tramp reflects this performance tendency. With many Anglo-Protestant middle-class Americans considering black Americans and the Irish as inherently inferior, their racial and ethnic comic stereotypes provided a visual vocabulary that offered a quickly recognizable stand-in for the tramp’s seemingly invisible crime of lacking ‘means of work’ and failure in proper American citizenship.

Variety was one of the few places, other than minstrelsy, to prominently imagine tramps as black. Although newspapers occasionally identified criminals as black tramps, in newspapers, novels, cartoons, and pamphlets, middle-class representations and rhetoric typically portrayed tramps as white and foreign. Less representation of black tramps may be due to the smaller black tramp population. Historians speculate that black tramps comprised less of the overall tramp population because of the effectiveness of vagrancy and tramp laws and the fear instilled by these laws.³¹ However, mobility remained a vital right that many black Americans claimed after the war. The anti-black violence during the 1863 draft riots in New York City left black Americans with no illusions about northern life and the continued racism and potential for violence in northern as well as southern states. Yet, many black Americans left the south in search of economic opportunity, in the words of historian William Cohen, “voting with their feet.”³² Historian Peter Kolchin notes that this mobility “affirm[ed] their freedom, because free movement was one of the obvious earmarks of their new status.”³³ Although reformers may not have consistently labeled black Americans as tramps, parallel concerns about black Americans joining the industrial economy circulated in post-war culture. After emancipation, officials worried that freed slaves would adapt poorly to contract wage labor. Northern and southern officials gave this justification when using vagrancy laws to force former slaves into labor contracts in the south.³⁴ These actions related to anxieties about racial hierarchies that had been shaken by emancipation and the rights subsequently given to black Americans through the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth amendments.³⁵ Propagating the idea that black Americans either needed to be taught how to work in the industrial economy, or inherently did not fit within the system, also placed them automatically below white workers.³⁶ Within this context, it is possible that the middle classes could not imagine, out of fear and/or racism, the mobile unemployed as comprised substantially of black Americans because they still imagined mobility as primarily a white right.

The black comic tramps portrayed on the variety stage worked against the trend to imagine tramps as solely white, even though Racism frequently appeared on variety stages. White supremacy comprised a substantial part of Irish-American identity and it was present in the variety performances attended by Irish-American audiences. Aside from the continued performances of exaggerated,

racist blackface characters adapted from minstrelsy, performers such as Pastor advocated against black Americans' right to vote in performance, even going so far as to sing "the land should by white men be ruled."³⁷ Harrigan's Irish characters similarly mocked black Americans and their suitability for American citizenship through characters such as the Skidmore Guard who appeared in sketches and musical comedies.³⁸ As Kattwinkel notes about afterpieces performed at Pastor's, "the Union is always in the right, but Andrew Johnson is applauded for his leniency on Southern 'traitors,' and Republicans intent on supplying freed slaves with rights and suffrage are ridiculed."³⁹ Even though parallels existed between blackface and whiteface tramp characters, the racial context points to potential differences in reception.

The early years for the comic tramp at the Theatre Comique were defined primarily by three popular sketches: *Terrible Example* (1874) and *Down Broadway* (1875) written by Harrigan, and *One, Two, Three* (1874) written by Wild. The shows have weak plots and their success seemingly relied on strong comic performances. Blackface and whiteface tramps are depicted as drunk, unemployed, violent, quick, and unable to control their bodies. The script for *One, Two, Three* includes no indication of blackface dialect while *Terrible Example* and *Down Broadway* contain Irish dialect. Regardless, in performance, it is likely they spoke in different dialects. With a significant amount of variety performance improvised or dependent on the actor playing the character, there likely existed other differences as well, which the remaining scripts do not reveal. However, I consider the remaining traces of performance within the scripts to uncover the basic framework of the emerging tramp character.

Wild originally wrote *One, Two, Three* as a minstrel sketch in the 1860s and revised it for the Theatre Comique. Taking place at a dramatic agency for variety actors, job-hunting performers come to the agency and inquire about work. As each person reveals their flaws, such as drunkenness, the character Bounce throws them out for the agent Conner. Wild plays Tom Pepper, the blackface tramp, and the only character to repeatedly come into the office and cause trouble before Bounce tosses his out. The sketch ends in a melee. Starring Wild in the title role as Irish tramp Jimmy Lush, *Terrible Example* focuses on a temperance meeting led by hypocritical Irish-American reformers trying to make a quick profit off meeting fees. As the meeting progresses, various characters cause disturbances and Lush is thrown out several times. The sketch ultimately ends with many of the attendees drinking and a melee. Harrigan's *Down Broadway* revolves around a moving panorama of New York sights and the journey of a character visiting the city for the first time. The sketch attempts to profit off the popularity of the comic tramp character Lush from *Terrible Example*, who appears directly involved or in the background of most scenes, played again by Wild.⁴⁰

Each sketch was revived several times over the following months, demonstrating their popularity with audiences. In addition to the success of *Terrible Example* mentioned earlier, Wild revived and revised his old minstrel sketch *One, Two, Three*, which he performed in May 1874, December 1874, and May 1876. *Down Broadway* proved successful enough that even after Harrigan fell out with Comique manager Josh Hart in 1875 and went on national tour, Hart

produced *Down Broadway* at the Comique again without Harrigan's permission.⁴¹ In these performances, characters recognize the blackface and Irish tramp through a visual vocabulary reflective of their racial and ethnic comedic stereotypes. The blackface and Irish comic tramps seem inherently to be tramps through their physical appearance and movement as well as mostly non-verbal existence. In each instance, the comic tramp helps create the rhythm of the piece through his on-stage mobility and the meanings associated with the excessively mobile tramp.

During the first few years after the Panic, blackface and Irish comic tramps did not verbally identify themselves, if they spoke at all. In their startling visibility, other characters recognize them on sight. When Lush enters the temperance meeting in *Terrible Example*, no one speaks to him or asks him for the fee to enter the talk. The president of the temperance society, Moriarity, notices and recognizes him on sight. His make-up and demeanor automatically make him stand-out and recognizable as the tramp. In one of the few reviews of the performance, the *Spirit of the Times* described the immediate effect of his appearance on the audience, detailing how "Wild also came in for a good share of the applause for his remarkable make-up as the Terrible Example. He had only to look at the house to convulse it with laughter. His facial expression is very grotesque, and he is an established favorite at the Comique."⁴² His make-up and physicality define the character. Without any conversation, Moriarity "throws him out."⁴³

The comic tramps' lack of control over their bodies, in part due to drunkenness, plays a central role in these performances. Repeatedly, the black and Irish comic tramps demonstrate their lack of bodily discipline, standing, sitting, or walking. Tom Pepper, the blackface comic tramp in *One, Two, Three*, enters "very drunk, staggering, with an old [cigar] butt in his mouth."⁴⁴ When Pepper sneaks back into the office, the servant goes to remove him, but Pepper's legs go out from under him.⁴⁵ Similarly, in the *Terrible Example*, Lush "staggers down" and falls against another character when he enters.⁴⁶ When the reformers decide to use Lush as their "terrible example" of alcoholism at their temperance meeting, they place him in a chair, but he slides off the chair and falls, repeatedly, sometimes bringing other characters with him. The visual gag grows throughout the sketch, with the entire Thirteen Ward Glee Club falling over as a result of a later collapse by Lush.⁴⁷ *Down Broadway* also includes business with Lush falling in the streets of New York, along with a group of bummers, a slang term for tramps used throughout the 1870s.⁴⁸ Although most, if not all, the tramps are drunk, their bodies also appear inherently flawed. Aside from demonstrating physical comedy typically found on the variety stage, the comic tramps' physicality suggests that their flexible, floppy bodies cannot become disciplined enough for the regular, rigid, repetitive machine work increasingly dominating the American economy.

The trouble and chaos created by the comic tramps through their physical behavior also identifies them to surrounding characters. Reflecting the negative stereotype propagated by middle-class representations, the comic tramps present a violent threat, albeit a comic one. For Pepper in *One, Two, Three* and Lush in *Terrible Example*, the comic tramps repeatedly fight the other characters who try

to remove the tramps from the room. For example, when Pepper first enters, he “talks ad. lib. and is troublesome” before another character “takes hold of him to put him out; they have quite a tussle together.”⁴⁹ In *Down Broadway*, Lush repeatedly fights with Roger, a tourist to New York, twice in Union Square and once outside Harry Hill’s variety and dance hall. Lush threatens Roger, “put up I’m going to send you home in an express wagon as invalid...You’ll have to get a hearse, when I’m through with you.”⁵⁰

The comic tramps’ presence creates chaos and the fights’ consequences are not minor in the overall structure of the sketches. It was not uncommon for sketches and afterpieces, especially those at the Theatre Comique or Tony Pastor’s theatre, to end with a melee. In these sketches, the comic tramps instigate the chaos that ends the scene or sketch. As the dramatic agent tries to evaluate potential performers in *One, Two, Three*, Pepper enters again “with an armful of all the old poles, sticks and trash he can carry, and lets it fall all about, while he himself jumps up on the table and upsets everything. Confusion, bus. And quick close.”⁵¹ The *Terrible Example* ends similarly with “Example comes on fights Moriarity at the back and is whipping him badly when omnes join in. General melee.”⁵² The second scene of *Down Broadway*, is similarly chaotic. Lush makes his second entrance of the show and without words, Roger and Lush fight and the scene ends.⁵³

As a result of their disruptive presence, other characters actively attempt to throw out the comic tramps in an effort to minimize the chaos. These actions highlight a key aspect of the mobile tramp figure in the imagination; the tramps have no place in contemporary society. The entire rhythm of *One, Two, Three* and *Terrible Example* depends on the entrance and chaos caused by efforts to remove each of the tramps. The title *One, Two, Three* even references the centrality of this action to the sketch as an allusion to “one, two, three bounce,” a count before the servant, the ‘muscle,’ throws the tramp out. Pepper enters, is noticed, chased, and either thrown out or exits on his own a total of five times throughout the sketch.⁵⁴ In *Terrible Example*, the reformers attempt to toss Lush out a minimum of four times.⁵⁵ In *Down Broadway*, Roger explicitly states that the tramps do not belong: “I can’t see why a big city like New York will let those poor men die in the streets without giving them a home in the State’s Prison. Of course the world will say they drink but what won’t the world say about a poor man.”⁵⁶ Roger and none of the other characters in these sketches offer to help the tramps find a job as a solution to their issues. It is assumed that they live outside the contract labor economy. Through his fall, fights, and disruptions, the comic tramp makes his lack of means and lack of work visible through the racial and ethnic caricatures of the variety stage. The comic tramp is represented as lazy, drunk, and disruptive, which many in American society intuitively assumed about black and Irish Americans. As scholar Lauren Onkey notes about Harrigan’s later work, Harrigan “continually reveal[ed] the shared characteristics of black and Irish characters” and “by incorporating the by-then familiar characteristics of blackface minstrelsy,” his later work “celebrated the certainty of Irish whiteness.”⁵⁷ I suggest the transition of the comic tramp may have functioned similarly. Roughly around the late 1870s, the blackface comic tramp figure disappeared when it was no longer needed to reinforce the security of Irish whiteness in relation to mobility.

With the comic tramp's success, it is not surprising that Harrigan wrote another comic tramp for Wild in the *Mulligan Guard Picnic*. Based on characters from his popular song and sketch "The Mulligan Guard," the loose plot of the *Mulligan Guard Picnic* focuses on the Mulligan Guards, an Irish-American local militia, leaving the city with their families for a picnic while dealing with the supposed death of a husband and friend. Mistaken identities, tramp robberies, new romances fated to fail, and boat hijinks fill the sketch. The 1878 version featured the native-born, white tramp, Gypsy Jack. In revised and expanded versions performed in 1880 and 1883, Harrigan added the Irish-American comic tramp, Lemons, who became one of the sketch's central characters. The dramaturgy of mobility surrounding the comic tramp, Lemons, hinted at a more complicated situation for tramps than previous sketches. However simplistic, the comic tramp embodied the tension between the negative stereotype emerging in the middle-class representations and the economic realities facing variety's working-class male audiences. Many in the audience knew the mass of mobile unemployed men roaming their city and the country resulted from more than lack of moral character. People working closely with the mobile unemployed recognized the disjunction between the statements of legislator and reformers and the situation on the ground. Labor newspapers advocated for the mobile unemployed and argued that tramps did not give up their citizenship when they lost their jobs. Throughout the 1870s, the *National Labor Tribune* and other labor newspapers reiterated calls to acknowledge tramps' humanity and the circumstances that led to their conditions.⁵⁸ Although Harrigan's representations never escaped middle-class conceptions of the tramp or the typical stage Irish caricature, his comic tramps helped solidify ethnic white representations of tramps on the variety stage and contributed to the erasure of blackface tramps in variety.

With each new Harrigan sketch in the 1870s, the Irish comic tramp became more verbal and assertive about the causes of his condition, as opposed to exhibiting only poor judgment, laziness, or alcoholism. This assertiveness later played a large role in Lemons' performances. In *Terrible Example*, Lush is primarily a physical character. Unlike the blackface tramps, his lack of physical control extends to his voice. When Lush asks to sing, the temperance president Moriarity says they should "Let him sing, give him a chance to reform."⁵⁹ When he starts singing, the other characters put their "hands to their ears as if horrified at his singing."⁶⁰ Lush controls his voice as well as he controls his body, poorly. This is a popular joke that Harrigan continued in *Down Broadway* and *Mulligan Guard Picnic*. Harrigan's character Moriarity provides the only commentary on the condition of the poor, with his song, "When the Soup House Comes Again," which Harrigan also wrote. Moriarity sings:

When the snow begins to fall, your landlord he will call,
 You must have your money ready when for rent he calls your name,
 So let ye's bear in mind, don't spend your pinnies blind,
 Or you surely will be hungry when the soup house comes again.⁶¹

Although the song recognizes the hardship of the poor during the present moment, acknowledging “Last winter was so hard from alleyway to yard,” it also places the responsibility solely on the individual to support himself, rather than rely on the economic system.⁶²

In *Down Broadway*, Lush is more vocal, but his dialogue is primarily confined to begging for money or a drink or threatening fights. Lush and the other bummers are given a song in which they have an opportunity to describe their own situation to the audience. According to the manuscript, the scene opens in Union Square with a “view of Park and benches with four characters very raggedly attired,” including Lush.⁶³ The song presents the tramps as lazy, petty thieves, and drunks. It also describes them as a spectacle within the city. They sing:

We sleep out on the benches,
And sometimes on the grass;
We’re bums of the dirtiest water,
Policemen let us pass;
We brighten all the railings
Of the Public Parks; you know
It’s there we set ‘till a heavy wet compels us for to go.⁶⁴

Conveniently for others, they ask to be locked up on Blackwell’s Isle, singing “Oh! Send us up to Blackwell’s Isle...We ask you in a heartbroken voice, To give us all Ten Days!”⁶⁵ With this sketch, Harrigan started to make a distinction between deserving and undeserving poor. Before the entrance of the tramps onstage, beggars have their opportunity to make their case. In the chorus, the beggars implore the audience to:

Pity the beggars, oh do!
Unable to work, not willing to die,
Watching the rich walk proudly by,
We wouldn’t steal the weight of a pin –
Have pity on these beggar min.⁶⁶

Even though the song states that “The blind, the lame, the sick, the sore” beg on the street, the last lines hint at the performative nature of these ailments and that the whole song possibly is based on a lie.⁶⁷ Even though they claim they are starving, somehow the beggars are “always fat and never thin- Its peculiar to these beggar min.”⁶⁸ Lush reveals different aspects of the character than in *Terrible Example* by actively seeking out small opportunities to make some money, such as when he challenges a clog dancer to a dance competition in front of Harry Hill’s.⁶⁹ These actions seem to distinguish him from the beggars who dishonestly scheme to make money as opposed to looking for work.⁷⁰

Harrigan continued to give his comic tramp more lines and direct plot involvement with Lemons in the *Mulligan Guard Picnic*. He also builds on the idea that tramps are not inherently lazy. Lemons is the most vocal of all three Irish comic tramps. This allows him to tell the audience about his employment history in a dialogue with the Mulligans’ black servant, Rebecca Allup, played by Hart in

blackface. Lemons explains that he first met Dan Mulligan when he arrived from Ireland. He gave Dan a ride in his cart when he worked as a peddler.⁷¹ When Rebecca says that she has seen Lemons's face in the police gazette, he claims it is because he was once an inspector. He also explains that he worked as "a jailor...and sailor boarding house runner. And I've played in the old Bowery Theatre."⁷² The latter reference may have served as a meta-theatrical joke for audience members familiar with Wild's career performing on various working-class theatrical stages in the city. By listing a bunch of working-class jobs, Lemons places himself in the same category as many of the men in the audience, who also moved from job to job. Lemons might be a tramp now, but his current situation does not mean he never worked for a living and raises questions about how he descended to his current condition. Lemons brags to Rebecca, "I stood high once," even though the dialogue makes clear he likely did not succeed in his many professions.⁷³ Lemons is also willing to work to get what he wants, to join his friends on the picnic. He offers to work on the ship washing glasses if they will let him come along. This action seems to reinforce the argument put forward by reformers that tramps chose not to work, but, at the same time, demonstrates that Lemons is willing to work for the right reasons. In this case, his rationale is not linked directly to alcohol, which is frequently the common reason why other comic tramps volunteer for work, as in *Terrible Example*.⁷⁴

Although negatively portrayed, the Irish comic tramps outsmart and outmaneuver the other characters throughout the sketches. Blackface comic tramps earned laughs through similar bits. For example, after Pepper enters a third time in *One, Two, Three*, the other characters are not able to catch him. The stage directions instruct Pepper to fall "down and Bounce falls over him, but jumps up quickly, and before he gets hold of him Pepper has just slipped out in time. Bounce goes over to his seat puffing and blowing."⁷⁵ In this instance, Pepper does not achieve what he wants, to remain in the office, but he successfully escapes Bounce beating and throwing him out. The Irish tramps also occasionally win small victories against their antagonists. The sketch manuscripts often label stage fights "business," omitting staging details, but it is clear from the manuscripts that comic tramps frequently outwit the people trying to get rid of them. They might not always avoid other characters tossing them out, but in multiple instances, all of Harrigan's Irish tramps escape before the other characters catch them. In *Terrible Example*, Lush sneaks back into the temperance meeting, sits under the table, and smokes his pipe. He remains undetected until the other characters in the scene trace the smoke.⁷⁶ At the close, Lush is winning the fight when chaos breaks out, with the stage directions stating, "Example comes on fights Moriarity [the temperance president] at the back and is whipping him badly."⁷⁷ In *Down Broadway*, Lush might not conclusively win the fight with Roger, but he leaves Roger with a black eye that he sports throughout the rest of the show.⁷⁸

Even though *Terrible Example* does not present a flattering portrait of the tramp, neither does it portray middle-class reformers in a positive light. The premise of the sketch is that two Irish temperance reformers hold a meeting to profit from the tickets they sell to their audience. The sketch illuminates the hypocrisy of the reformers from the start by making it clear in the opening dialogue that they are holding the meeting only to make money. The reformers

also do not follow the advice they give to their audience. When one audience member cannot pay the fee, they agree that he will buy them drinks at the bar that evening. In a later gag, the president, Moriarity, reads the by-laws which state that any member who dies will receive fifty dollars, whereupon everyone at the meeting falls down and plays dead. The president then offers anyone who makes a recovery a drink, at which point the crowd rushes to the front for their drink and Moriarity explains, "I've drained every drop of it."⁷⁹ The reformer characters conform to the politically corrupt Irish caricature, drunk and full of blarney—in the world of this sketch, there are no good guys.

Unlike the image of the tramp as a stranger invader, Harrigan's Irish comic tramps are New Yorkers with local ties, reflecting Harrigan's tendency to develop New York Irish types in his sketches. Through their portrayals, mobility does not eliminate the possibility of having a home. *Terrible Example* provides little information about Lush but the other characters' recognition of Lush implies he might be a regular fixture in the neighborhood, although his exact status is unclear. *Down Broadway* starts to flesh out the Irish comic tramp in more detail. When the bummers leave Blackwell's Isle, they return to New York, their home. As the moving panorama scrolls, taking the audience on a journey through New York, Lush "travels" with them. As the scene changes to a new sight in New York—Union Square, Harry Hill's, the Battery—Lush moves with it. The *New York Clipper* highlighted Wild's appearance as the "drunken bummer who figured in every scene with great fidelity to nature" as one of the show's main attractions.⁸⁰ It is implied that New York is his city and Roger, the tourist, is the stranger.

In the *Mulligan Guard Picnic*, Harrigan makes Lemons's ties to the Irish-American community explicit. As a slightly revised dramaturgy of mobility, the comic tramp remains critical to the action, but, in this case, his community connections make him integral to the show's action and resolution. He also indicates the tramp's capacity for loyalty and compassion, even if the expression of these emotions is inherently silly. When trying to convince Rebecca to give him the food from her basket, he claims a long-standing friendship with Dan, who he refers to as a brother, and the Mulligan Committee, which planned the picnic. When he runs into Dan, he pleads for a ticket, which Dan denies him because he is a drunk and a tramp. In spite of his rejection, Lemons remains loyal to Dan stating, "So long Dan – No harm done. You can count on Lemons all the time."⁸¹ Later, Dan hits Lemons because he will not go away, but Lemons remains steadfast telling him to "Slug me...I'm with you jist the same."⁸² After jumping on to the boat and following the Mulligan crowd on their picnic, he learns that Dan has been in a fight with the tailor who cut off the leg/s of his pants and promises revenge on the tailor on behalf of Dan. Although this is a ludicrous mission, Lemons does not cause trouble because he is depraved, but because he wants to help his friend. The people at the picnic also defend and help Lemons as one of their own. Even when he causes trouble by stealing the milk can, some of the Mulligan Guard cheer for him to win the fight with a farmer. When Rebecca picks on Lemons by giving him soap instead of food to eat, one of the Mulligan Guard tell her to leave him alone.⁸³ Over Dan's objections, Cordelia, Dan's wife, and Bridget, their neighbor insist Lemons join everyone at the picnic table because "The poor man is hungry!"⁸⁴ They even save him when he starts to choke on food. Throughout most of

Lemons's scene, he jokes with the other characters and generally is accepted. They might not condone his drinking or his silly actions, but he is part of the community. This depiction of the tramp is not radical, but it portrays a nuance missing from previous representations. The tramp is not an evil stranger; he is someone you might know.

By making Lemons a hero, Harrigan makes the distinction between the Irish comic tramp and the native-born, white tramp. Although Lemons drinks, fights, and steals, he never attacks anyone on the side of the Mulligan Guard. In contrast, the native-born white tramp, Gypsy Jack, holds up the picnic at gunpoint, taking clothes and food from the group. Lemons see him, the "Jersey sneak," and realizes that he robbed his friends. Lemons attacks him, easily wins the fight, and gets the food and clothes back.⁸⁵ For all his faults, Lemons saves the picnic and the others cheer his heroism.

The comic tramp after the Theatre Comique

The increasing prominence of the Irish comic tramp around 1880 implicitly erased the connection between blackface and the newly emergent comic figure on the variety stage. After his revival of *One, Two, Three* in 1874, Wild, a prominent blackface comedian, performed the characters in whiteface. By reinforcing the main tramp image as white, these figures suggested that the ability to travel in search of work or idleness remained a right of white Americans. Performers like William Hoey and Lew Bloom continued the connection between whiteness and the tramp in variety performances during the 1880s, bridging the popular performances of Wild and the phenomenon of tramp comics at the turn of the century. The alignment of whiteness with tramping did not mean that laziness, drunkenness, poverty, and violence remained the provenance of only white or Irish representations in variety and vaudeville. Blackface comic characters that performers, managers, newspapers, and historians could reasonably consider tramps continued to appear on variety and vaudeville stages, but people tended not to label them tramps.

As vaudeville historian Douglass Gilbert acknowledges, often in variety and vaudeville "blackface acts were brother comics of the tramps and it is no step at all into their dressing rooms where the grease color and occasional accent will be about the only changes found."⁸⁶ Aside from briefly referencing their blackface makeup in the section title and opening sentences, makeup and race are not examined in relation to the performances. Gilbert's quote follows a section on tramp comics, which omits any major reference to race or ethnicity, implying the characters' whiteness. All the major stars highlighted in the section performed tramp comedy in whiteface. Gilbert draws the parallel between whiteface and blackface comics because of their common ragged costume, verbal patter, and jokes focusing on lack of coordination, mistakes and failures, drinking, deceiving, stealing, and begging among other topics. Throughout his book, Gilbert mainly describes acts and relates anecdotes with few other details and limited analysis. For example, in the tramp section, he describes Charles R. Sweet's tramp burglar breaking into houses and telling jokes about money and the police. In his section on blackface comics, Gilbert describes similar jokes and patter performed by

blackface comics like Frank Tinney, whose “method was the acme of ingenuousness.”⁸⁷ Gilbert relates how Tinney used to ask, “Lend me a dollar for a week, old man?” “Who is the weak old man?” someone inevitably replied. Gilbert describes how “strong men laughed like bloody fools.”⁸⁸ Gilbert’s history reflected the categorizations made during the performers’ lives. The whiteface comic performed tramp comedy; the blackface comics performed something else. The word tramp was linked to mobility, while terms like poor or homeless did not have the same mobile connotation. Arguably, this representation of whiteness characterized the major images of tramps in the middle-class imagination and tramps continued to be portrayed primarily as white in newspapers and novels. Officials and reformers may not have wanted Irish and Irish-American wandering poor, but they implied less of a threat to the racial and social structure than wandering black Americans. White northerners and southerners feared black Americans moving north would disrupt the southern economy and create competition for white workers. White Americans also had anxieties about racial mixing leading to society’s degradation. Although Anglo-Protestants discriminated against the Irish, they remained united in their whiteness.

Scholars argue that starting in the 1890s, the comic vaudeville tramp reflected a broader transition from negative to sympathetic inherent in cultural representations of the tramp.⁸⁹ Instead of a primarily negative caricature, historians Kenneth Kusmer, Todd DePastino, and Tim Cresswell argue that the figure came to represent a more complicated portrait of working-class life. They describe this shift as part of a broader cultural pattern demonstrated in literary culture. Through the work of writers such as William Dean Howells and Stephen Crane, the tramp in the middle-class imagination transformed from a mostly negative construction to a more romanticized and rebellious figure in popular culture.⁹⁰ As this article has argued, the contested position of the comic tramp predated its success on the vaudeville stage and the literary transformation detailed by these scholars. In spite of the fragmentary evidence surrounding its performance, the dramaturgy of mobility presented by the comic tramp provides insight into how the figure developed as well as how its ambiguous representations spoke to the figure’s complicated relationship to working-class audiences and their communities. As tramps increasingly became performed as Irish and possibly heroic, the comic tramp in variety further circumscribed how the stage imagined the rights of black Americans.

¹ The failure of Jay Cooke’s investment company triggered the Panic of 1873, the worst depression to date in American history. Caused by the failure of the railroad boom, the Panic then spread to other industries that the nation’s massive railroad expansion propelled, including coal, iron, and steam, as well as the insurance industry and real estate. Although it began in New York, the Panic quickly spread throughout the country and contributed to an international depression. The depression lasted until the economy entered a period of temporary recovery in 1879. For analysis of the Panic of 1873, the ensuing depression and unemployment, see Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1021-1034; Eric H. Monkkonen, *Police in Urban America, 1860-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 88-93; Kenneth L. Kusmer, *Down and Out, On the Road: The Homeless in American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 35-56.

² Todd DePastino, *Citizen Hobo: How a Century of Homelessness Shaped America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 15.

³ Monkkonen, *Police in Urban America*, 88-93; Kusmer, *Down and Out*, 35-56, 170-173; Paul T. Ringenbach, *Tramps and Reformers, 1873-1916* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973), 3-29; Tim Cresswell, *The Tramp in America* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), 130-170;

⁴ For examinations of the tramp in other performance contexts see Arthur Frank Wertheim, *W.C. Fields From Burlesque and Vaudeville to Broadway* (New York: Palgrave, 2014), 50-1; Douglas Gilbert, *American Vaudeville: Its Life and Times* (New York: Whittlesey House, 1940; reprint New York: Dover Publications, 1963), 269-278; Max Schulman, "Beaten, Battered, and Brawny: American Variety Entertainers and the Working-Class Body," in *Working in the Wings: New Perspectives on Theatre History and Labor*, eds. Elizabeth A. Osborne and Christine Woodworth (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2015), 102; Todd DePastino, *Citizen Hobo*, 152-162; Tim Cresswell, *The Tramp in America*, 130-170; Kusmer, *Down and Out*, 170-173.

⁵ Tim Cresswell, *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 3. For discussion of the new mobilities paradigm across cultural geography, sociology, and American Studies, see Rüdiger Kunow, "American Studies As Mobility Studies: Some Forms and Constellations," in *Reframing the Transnational Turn in American Studies*, eds. Winifried Fluck, Donald E. Pease, and John Carlos Rowe (Hanover: Dartmouth College Press, 2011), 214; John Urry, *Mobilities* (Malden: Polity Press, 2007); Peter Adey, *Mobility* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

⁶ Cresswell, *On the Move*, 3.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁹ "Dramaturgy," in Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer*, trans. Richard Fowler (London: Routledge, 2006), 66; Eugenio Barba, "The Deep Order Called Turbulence: The Three Faces of Dramaturgy," *The Drama Review* 44, no. 4 (Winter 2000): 60.

¹⁰ Although the deliberate inclusion of the comic tramp in variety arguably reflected the increasing market appeal of the emerging image of the tramp in the 1870s, there is not enough evidence to detail or analyze the ultimate intention of the variety sketch writers or performers.

¹¹ Gillian M. Rodger, *Champagne Charlie and Pretty Jemima: Variety Theater in the Nineteenth Century* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 5-8.

¹² Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995); David Rodieger, *Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Eric Arnesen, "Whiteness and the Historians' Imagination," *International Labor and Working-Class History*, no. 60 (Fall 2001): 3-32; Thomas Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Cian T. McMahon, *The Global Dimensions of Irish Identity: Race, Nation, and the Popular Press, 1840-1880* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

¹³ *New York Clipper*, 18 October 1873, 230; *New York Clipper*, 6 December 1873, 288; *New York Clipper*, 31 January 1873, 347.

¹⁴ Rodger, *Champagne Charlie*, 6-8, 73-4.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 72-84.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 179; Susan Kattwinkel, "Negotiating a New Identity: Irish Americans and the Variety Theatre in the 1860s," in *Interrogating America through Theatre and Performance*, eds. William W. Demastes and Iris Smith Fischer (New York: Palgrave, 2007), 47-8.

¹⁷ Don Wilmeth, Review of *Champagne Charlie and Pretty Jemima: Variety Theater in the Nineteenth Century* by Gillian M. Rodger, *Journal of American History*, 98, no. 1 (June 2011), 218.

¹⁸ Brooks McNamara, *The New York Concert Saloon* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Rodger, *Champagne Charlie and Just One of the Boys: Female-to-Male Crossdressing on the Variety Stage* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2018); Kattwinkel, "Negotiating a New Identity" and "Tony Pastor's Vaudeville: Serving the New York Community," *The Library Chronicle of the University of Texas at Austin* 25, no. 3 (1995): 50-75.

¹⁹ "City Summary," *New York Clipper*, 21 March 1874, 406; The *New York Clipper* documents the repeat performances through the end of May. "City Summary," *New York Clipper*, 10 October 1874, 222; "City Summary," *New York Clipper*, 27 March 1875, 414; "City Summary," *New York Clipper*, 16 May 1874, 54; "City Summary" *New York Clipper*, 12 December 1874, 294; Advertisement, *New York Clipper*, 3 April 1875, 7; Advertisement, *New York Clipper*, 1 May 1875, 35; "City Summary,"

- New York Clipper*, 14 October 1876, 230; Advertisement, *New York Herald*, 4 May 1879, 17;
- ²⁰ William Ellis Horton, *About Stage Folks* (Detroit: Free Press Printing Company, 1902), 72.
- ²¹ "Johnny' Wild is Dead," *The New York Dramatic Mirror*, 12 March 1898, 23. Charles Edward Ellis repeats a similar sentiment. Charles Edward Ellis, *An Authentic History of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks* (Chicago: Published by the Author, 1910), 275.
- ²² "Spirit of the Stage," *Spirit of the Times*, 14 August 1880, 44; "Johnny' Wild is Dead," 23; "The Variety Stage," *Harper's Weekly*, 12 April 1902, 466.
- ²³ For more on Harrigan, see Richard Moody, *Ned Harrigan: From Corlear's Hook to Herald Square* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1980).
- ²⁴ William H. A. Williams, *Twas Only an Irishman's Dream: The Image of Ireland and the Irish in American Popular Song Lyrics, 1800-1920* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 161. For an example of push back against Harrigan's more positive Irish-American characters, see "Denounced by a Priest," *Kansas City Star*, 5 March 1884, 1.
- ²⁵ For analysis of these later white representations on stage and in literature, see DePastino, *Citizen Hobo*, 152-162; Cresswell, *The Tramp in America*, 130-170; Kusmer, *Down and Out*, 170-173.
- ²⁶ My research did not reveal the existence of Dutch tramps on the variety stage during these years. Considering the fragmented nature of the evidence pertaining to variety, this does not mean they did not exist. For more on the popularity of Irish, blackface, and Dutch acts in variety, see Douglas Gilbert, *American Vaudeville* 37-85; Rodger, *Champagne Charlie*, 98-111.
- ²⁷ L. Perry Curtis, Jr., *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature* (London: David and Charles, 1971); Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 95.
- ²⁸ Steve Garner, "The Simianization of the Irish: Racial Ape-ing and Its Contexts," in *Simianization: Apes, Gender, Class, and Race*, eds. Wulf D. Hund, Charles W. Mills, Silvia Sebastiani (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2015), 216; Kathleen M. Gough, *Kinship and Performance in the Black and Green Atlantic: Haptic Allegories* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 1-83; Lauren Onkey, *Blackness and Transatlantic Irish Identity: Celtic Soul Brothers* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 1-32.
- ²⁹ Lott, *Love and Theft*, 95.
- ³⁰ Ibid; Robert Toll, *Blacking Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 247, 249.
- ³¹ Kusmer, *Down and Out*, 106-7.
- ³² William Cohen, *At Freedom's Edge: Black Mobility and the Southern White Quest for Racial Control, 1861-1915* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991), 248.
- ³³ Peter Kolchin, *First Freedom: The Responses of Alabama's Blacks to Emancipation and Reconstruction* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2008), 4-7, 11, 23. For more on black mobility after the Civil War see Cohen, *At Freedom's Edge*, 248-298; Kusmer, *Down and Out*, 138-140; Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 200-1.
- ³⁴ Amy Dru Stanley, "Beggars Can't Be Choosers: Compulsion and Contract in Postbellum America," *Journal of American History* 78, no. 4 (March 1992): 1267. See also Stanley, *From Bondage to Contract: Wage Labor, Marriage, and the Market in the Age of Slave Emancipation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 98-137; James W. Fox Jr., "Citizenship, Poverty, and Federalism: 1787-1882," *University of Pittsburgh Law Review* 60, no. 2 (Winter 1999): 565-569; James D. Schmidt, *Free to Work: Labor, Law, Emancipation, and Reconstruction, 1815-1880* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 208-218.
- ³⁵ The federal government passed the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth amendments after the American Civil War. The thirteenth amendment abolished slavery. The fourteenth amendment guaranteed equal rights under US law. The fifteenth amendment guaranteed the right to vote regardless of race or previous servitude.
- ³⁶ Kusmer, *Down and Out*, 138-9.
- ³⁷ "Of Course It's No Business of Mine," quoted in David Monod, *The Soul and Pleasure: Sentiment and Sensation in Nineteenth-Century American Mass Entertainment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016), 173.
- ³⁸ Onkey, *Blackness and Transatlantic Irish Identity*, 70-1.
- ³⁹ Susan Kattwinkel, "Introduction," *Tony Pastor Presents: Afterpieces from the Vaudeville Stage* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998). A comparison between poor minstrel characters and the comic tramp falls outside the parameters of this study. For more on minstrelsy and its blackface characters, see Lott, *Love and Theft*; Toll, *Blacking Up*; W.T. Lhamon Jr., *Raising Cain: Blackface*

Performance from Jim Crow to Hip Hop (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Dale Cockrell, *Demons of Disorder: Early Blackface Minstrels and their World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); William J. Mahar, *Behind the Burnt Cork Mask: Early Blackface Minstrelsy and Antebellum American Popular Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

⁴⁰ John Wild, arranged by Charles White, *One, Two, Three* (New York: Robert M. DeWitt Publisher, 1875). *One, Two, Three* was a minstrel sketch that was performed and revised multiple times since its 1861 debut, when it was entitled *Connor's Dramatic Agency*. It was produced subsequently, at least in 1869 and 1874. The script published in 1875 notes that the script contains "improvements" made by various performers, including Wild, John Dougherty, and Mast. Barney after its debut performance. I have yet to find the minstrel script. Edward Harrigan, *Terrible Example*, 1874, Edward Harrigan Papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, n.p; Edward Harrigan, *Down Broadway*, 1875, Edward Harrigan Papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

⁴¹ "City Summary," *New York Clipper*, 16 May 1874, 54; "City Summary" *New York Clipper*, 12 December 1874, 294; Advertisement, *New York Clipper*, 3 April 1875, 7; Advertisement, *New York Clipper*, 1 May 1875, 35; "City Summary," *New York Clipper*, 24 April 1875, 30; "City Summary," *New York Clipper*, 1 May 1875, 38; "City Summary," *New York Clipper*, 23 September 1876, 206; Advertisement, *New York Clipper*, 10 Nov, 1877, 259.

⁴² "Music and the Drama," *Spirit of the Times*, 20 March 1875, 134.

⁴³ Harrigan, *Terrible Example*, n.p.

⁴⁴ Wild, 4.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Harrigan, *Terrible Example*, n.p.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Harrigan, *Down Broadway*, 7-10. This is also typical behavior of Lemons in the Mulligan Guard Picnic.

⁴⁹ Wild, 4.

⁵⁰ Harrigan, *Down Broadway*, 8-9.

⁵¹ Wild, 6.

⁵² Harrigan, *Terrible Example*, n.p.

⁵³ Harrigan, *Down Broadway*, 16.

⁵⁴ Wild, 4-6.

⁵⁵ Harrigan, *Terrible Example*, n.p.

⁵⁶ Harrigan, *Down Broadway*, 10.

⁵⁷ Onkey, *Blackness and Transatlantic Irish Identity*, 70.

⁵⁸ "The Army of Tramps," *National Labor Tribune*, 27 May 1876.

⁵⁹ Harrigan, *Terrible Example*, n.p.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Harrigan, "When the Soup House Comes Again," *Harrigan and Hart's When the Soup House Comes Again Songster* (New York: A.J. Fisher, 1874), Harris Collection of American Plays and Poetry, John Hay Library, Brown University, 8.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Harrigan, *Down Broadway*, 7.

⁶⁴ Edward Harrigan, "The Bumpers," *Down Broadway Gallant 69th Songster* (New York: A.J. Fisher, 1875), American Antiquarian Society, 7.

⁶⁵ Harrigan, "The Bumpers," 7; Harrigan, *Down Broadway*, 7. Blackwell's Isle is a reference to Blackwell's Island in the East River, which was home to the city's penitentiary and workhouse. Tramps like the characters depicted in this sketch likely would get sent to the workhouse when arrested for drunk or disorderly behavior.

⁶⁶ Harrigan, "The Beggars," *Down Broadway Gallant 69th Songster* (New York: A.J. Fisher, 1875), 5-6.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁶⁹ Harry Hill's Dance House featured variety shows and was best described as a cross between a dance house and a concert saloon.

⁷⁰ Harrigan, *Down Broadway*, 18-21.

⁷¹ Harrigan, *Mulligan Guard Picnic* [two act version, likely 1880], Act I, 62.

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- ⁷² Ibid., 64.
- ⁷³ Ibid., 63.
- ⁷⁴ Ibid., 67.
- ⁷⁵ Wild, 4.
- ⁷⁶ Harrigan, *Terrible Example*, n.p.
- ⁷⁷ Ibid.
- ⁷⁸ Harrigan, *Down Broadway*, 21.
- ⁷⁹ Harrigan, *Terrible Example*, n.p.
- ⁸⁰ "City Summary," *New York Clipper*, 1 May 1875, 38.
- ⁸¹ Harrigan, *Mulligan Guard Picnic* [two act version, likely 1880], Act I, 67.
- ⁸² Ibid., Act II, 17. These pledges of loyalty occur throughout the play.
- ⁸³ Ibid., Act II, 51.
- ⁸⁴ Ibid., Act II, 51.
- ⁸⁵ Ibid., 68.
- ⁸⁶ Gilbert, *American Vaudeville*, 278.
- ⁸⁷ Ibid., 279.
- ⁸⁸ Ibid., 279.
- ⁸⁹ DePastino, *Citizen Hobo*, 152-162; Cresswell, *The Tramp in America*, 130-170; Kusmer, *Down and Out*, 17-173.
- ⁹⁰ Wertheim, *W.C. Fields*, 50-1; Gilbert, *American Vaudeville*, 269-278; Schulman, "Beaten, Battered, and Brawny," 102; DePastino, *Citizen Hobo*, 152-162; Cresswell, *The Tramp in America*, 130-170; Kusmer, *Down and Out*, 170-173. The tramp would appear in the circus by the 1920s. John H. Townsen, *Clowns* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1976), 284-305.